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Low Speaking Performance in Learners of English

Bachelor Thesis

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Declaration

I hereby declare that I have worked on this thesis independently and used only the sources listed in the bibliography.

Brno, 15 April 2009.   Václav Hemerka

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1 Introduction

There can be a variety of reasons behind a learner´s decision to learn a foreign language. Similarly, the learner´s expectations, aims and purposes can be very different. But practically all students of foreign languages, regardless of their age, social and cultural background, or profession, share the same desire: to be able to speak the language. One can hardly prove that they know a foreign language when they cannot use it efficiently in oral presentation. Even nowadays, in the age of mass media and electronic communication, the vast majority of verbal information exchange among people takes place through oral communication. Thus of the four basic skills in language learning – listening, reading, speaking, writing – speaking seems to be the most important one in terms of judging a learner´s effective ability to use the language.

One of the most widespread problems among learners of foreign languages is their considerably lower speaking performance when compared to their passive knowledge. Those learners

- are not able to express their thoughts and opinions satisfactorily
- generally use a more simplified language which does not match their overall acquired level
- often make mistakes and slips
- speak slowly and less fluently, making frequent pauses and thinking of suitable or correct words
- are usually very shy and hesitant when it comes to speaking, try to avoid such situations if possible, do not cooperate with the teacher or with their peers
- respond briefly, often using only one word answers, e.g. "Yes" or "No"
- sometimes have nothing to say at all

In such learners, the poor speaking performance is a big handicap, as it makes their ability to use the language for its most important purpose – the exchange of information – limited. This leads to a frustration and anxiety; not seldom do such people lose all love for the language and get discouraged from further studying.

I consider the problems with speaking performance very annoying, partly because of the fact that I experienced them myself and very often wondered what was wrong. Also, I had always wanted to know whether the occurrence of such problems is frequent, or whether I was an exception. That is why I decided to choose this matter as the topic for my bachelor thesis.

The thesis will be divided into two parts. In the theoretical part, EFL learning with particular focus on communication will be discussed from a broader point of view. Several relevant terms, such as *linguistic x communicative competence* or *performance* will be introduced and explained. The importance of building the communicative competence as the base for good language production will be emphasized; we will look at the areas the communicative competence consists of. I will try to give reasons why "knowing grammar and vocabulary" is by far not the only condition for succesful oral communication. Next, we will learn something about the distinction between two possible ways in which languages can be approached – from the point of *structures* and *forms,* and that both of the two approaches should be incorporated and meaningfully linked in EFL teaching. And finally, I will depict two very different approaches – Communicative Language Teaching and the Lexical Approach – and provide arguments why I think that the implementation of them (or at least some of the theories and strategies they suggest) could be beneficial for the improvement of students´ communicative skills.

The practical part will be concerned with a survey I carried out among students of English in order to find out more about the issue of (low) speaking performance. I will analyse and interpret the results, provide graphs showing the statistics and then discuss each question from the survey individually. We will thus get more concrete ideas whether and how important speaking is for EFL students, what they think about the issue, how frequent the occurrence of "problems with speaking" is and what those problems are. Finally, the appendix contains one sample questionnaire I used for the survey.

Theoretical part

2 Language, or communication?

As I have already mentioned in the introduction, different learners can have different reasons for learning a foreign language. Some of them might want to increase their confidence by the decision to start learning the language, others might need to keep their brains fit, quite a number of learners may only want to fill their free time productively. It is also no exception to hear reasons such as learning the language because of strong liking for it or for the nation in which the language is spoken, the desire to be able to understand foreign language texts or TV programmes, as well as pointing out the fact that learning a foreign language is simply "in fashion" and it would be embarassing to stand aside.

Somehow or other, one might notice that all these reasons appear to be rather "non-productive", "passive", not expecting too much active production of language. This does not mean that any of them could be labelled as insufficient, or inappropriate. Whatever reason for learning a person has, it is well-founded. Nevertheless, there can be litttle doubt that those people who want to learn English so as to be only passively acquaint with it are in the minority. Most of the learners wish to be capable of using English actively - for communication.

Communication is unexceptionably the most common and significant function of any language. That is exactly why languages came to existence – people have always felt the need to express themselves and to set up communication among each other. It was the need to communicate that led to the invention and development of languages – not the existence of languages that led to communication. All these facts together break down one of the most tragical myths in language teaching: *The goal of teaching a language is not the language itself - it is efficient communication in the language.* Unless we are linguists, the focus of our interest is not the system of language as such. We want to master the system in order to be able to make use of all of its potential to communicate information. The language only serves as a means, an an instrument which enables us to carry out various acts of communication. Thus, if we go into small details, the terms "learning (or teaching) a foreign language" are inaccurate in terms of how they reflect the process they signify. Instead, they should be "learning (teaching) how to communicate in a foreign language".

In his article about teaching languages for communication, Allwright introduces a fundamental question, which all EFL teachers should ask themselves before they actually start teaching somebody. The question is: "Are we teaching *language* (for communication), or are we teaching *communication* (via language)?" (Allwright, as quoted in Brumfit and Johnson 167). Not having read the previous paragraph, the reader would probably, without any hesitation, go for the first option. Based on what has been said, however, they may be at least uncertain. Allwright goes on to present the relationship between communication and language, or more precisely, communicative competence and language competence, using the following diagram:
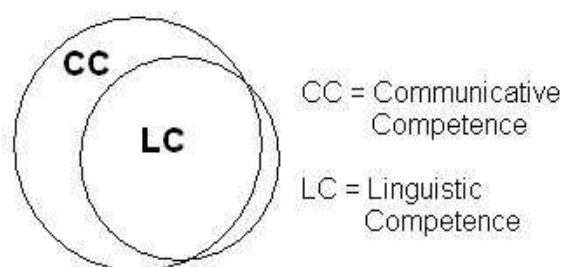

Figure 1: The Realtionship Between CC and LC, according to Allright

The implication from the diagram would be that communicative competence is clearly a broader term than linguistic competence. Allwright says that "some areas of lingustic competence are essentially irrelevant to communicative competence but […] in general, linguistic competence is a part of communicative competence." (Allwright, as quoted in Brumfit and Johnson 168). As a result of that, teaching for linguistic competence would mean ignoring quite a large area of communicative competence, whereas teaching for communicative competence means that all but only a small part of the total area will be catered for (Allwright, as quoted in Brumfit and Johnson 169).

If the whole message Allwright had in mind was to be put into more simple words, we could say that communicative competence is almost completely based on, and thus involves, linguistic competence. This is not true when put vice-versa, though. Knowledge of language in itself, however advanced, is of little use when the speaker does not know how to operate with it so as to put their ideas and intentions across. Newmark demonstrates this on a model situation in which a learner is perfectly acquaint with the structures of language, but still, does not know how to ask a stranger in the street to get his cigarette lit. The way how to do it, as Newmark

suggests, is to ask: *Do you have a light?* or *Got a match?* The two mentioned sentences are what a native speaker would probably say when they were confronted with such a situation. However, the learner, unaware of the way how it is "normally done", might as well go for some other constructions, e.g. *Do you have a fire?*, *Do you have illumination?* or *Are you a match´s owner?*, which are not used in the given context (Newmark, as quoted in Brumfit 161).

Now that we have become conscious of the importance of teaching English for communication, the conception of communicative competence will be discussed. We will also look at what factors the competence comprises, and finally, suggest the anticipated outcome of teaching communicative English – that is, what skills and abilities a "communicatively competent" student should have.

3 Communicative competence

A number of learners of English who admit "having certain problems with their spoken performance" complain that somehow they cannot "put their passive knowledge into the active use of language." Some of them might have been learning English for many years, so insufficient knowledge of grammar and limited range of vocabulary are not always to be blamed for such state of affairs. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (or CEFR), learners at level B2, which is upper-intermediate, should already be able to "interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party" (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, as quoted in Wikipedia). For such learners, it should be possible to put the intended meaning across in virtually all standard situations ("standard" means here such situations in which standard, everyday English is used and no special language required). Yet obviously, reality is very often far from the ideal state described in the CEFR. Despite the fact that the learners know enough language required for fulfilling the desired communicative act, they are very often unable to perform it once the situation takes place. To find out more why this is so, we have to learn something about the distinction between competence and performance.

3.1 Competence versus performance

In linguistic, the term *competence* is used to describe the learner´s capacity to produce a language. That is, a complex of all language the learner is familiar with, and therefore should potentionally be able to use. Another term, *performance,* denotes the production of actual utterances as a result of certain psychological processes (de Kort and Leerdam, as quoted in Scha). The first one to have introduced them was an American linguist N. Chomsky, who defined them in the following paragraph:

> Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-communication, who knows its (the speech community's) language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of this language in actual performance. (1965:3)

Later on, some linguists started to criticize Chomsky´s restricted notion of competence. One of them, D. H. Hymes argued that in Chomsky´s conception competence does not mean anything else than the knowledge of grammar of the foreign language. Hymes suggests that competence, however, should be viewed as "the overall underlying knowledge of the language system", not just "grammatical competence" (as quoted in Brumfit 13). Rather he brings in the term *communicative competence* and goes on to give an account of four sectors, of which the knowledge of grammar is one. Hymes calls this first sector *possibility* and explains that it is concerned with whether a certain structure is grammatically correct or not. Another sector deals with *feasibility.* A sentence can be grammatically correct, but not feasible – this being so, the addressee would have problems decoding the message or, eventually, they would not understand it at all. *Appropriateness to the context* is the third sector. Part of the learner´s communicative competence should be also the awareness of what is appropriate in which situation. And lastly, the aspect *whether or not something is in fact done* plays an important role in the learner´s competence, as they should know whether an utterance they want to use normally occurs, whether or not it is in fact used (for better illustration of this, see the part depicting Newmark´s model situation in chapter 2) (Hymes, as quoted in Brumfit 14).

3.2 Competence as the base for speaking

When a speaker of any language, no matter if the language is their first, or second, speaks the language, their performance results from their competence. The rightness of Hymes´s broader conception of competence can be proved when we consider the question of what qualities make people good speakers. Presumably, the use of correct, appropriate and easily comprehensible language comes to our mind in the first place. People who often have to search for words, make a lot of pauses, slips and false starters, frequently use fillers, e.g. *err* or *you know*, often go for inappropriate words and awkward constructions, can hardly earn being labelled skillful speakers. Nonetheless, the perfect use of language is not always the condition for holding the attention and interest of the audience. Not seldom can the somehow lower quality of the formal aspect of speech be compensated by the content. Thus a number of other features of the speaker play a role, e.g. their intelligence and general knowledge, expertise in the area the speaker is talking about, originality, inventiveness, characteristic style, wittiness, quick witidness, ability to improvise and speak off the cuff, politeness and the awareness of what is appropriate and what not, familiarity with realia and current isues etc.

Not only should a competent speaker know how to form meaningful sentences, but they also need to take into consideration the effect they want their utterance to take on the addressee. Do they want them to listen carefully, make them laugh, feel sorry, happy, embarrassed or sympathetic? Would they like to appease them, convince them of something, arise curiosity? Do they wish to sound sincere, sweet, ironic, warning or angry? Is it necessary to be polite and not to impose? Or, on the other hand, would it be more effective to speak to the point immediately? Also, a good speaker cannot do without knowing how to start a conversation politely, maintain it, participate evenly, respond appropriately to what the other person says, agree and, if necessary, disagree in a good manner, and, of course, end it.

Each of the cases mentioned above requires a specific use of vocabulary and structures, as well as pronunciation. We are all aware of how sometimes even small nuances concerning the selection of words, the stylistic form and also the tone of voice can affect the way how the addressee construes the message. How many misunderstandings could be avoided if people were given the opportunity to say something once again, in a better way, and at the same time "erase" the former utterance. Unfortunately, it is generally known that words once spoken cannot be taken back, so it would not be wise for them always to rely on the possibility to

correct themselves. Thereby the more succesful strategies a speaker has developed to deal in various situations, the more chances are that they will be able to address the others the way they intend (and do so at the first attempt). These strategies cannot come into existence by chance – they develop from the range and quality of the speaker´s communicative competence.

3.3 Building the communicative competence

Once a teacher is aware that the communicative competence consists not only of linguistic knowledge, but depends also on various personal, social, cultural and strategic factors, they will very probably realize that teaching for better communicative competence must be approached in a broader sense than it usually is. Of course, the better the linguistic competence is, the more easily and comfortably, as well as more precisely and sophisticatedly, can the speaker express themselves. That is why the constant improving of the linguistic competence is crucial and cannot be overshadowed by focusing on the other mentioned factors (let alone neglected because of the same reason). Yet none of the elements contributing to good communicative competence ought to be looked over, as the presence of blind spots or inaccuracies within any of them negatively affects the person´s overall speaking performance. Dealing with all of the elements thoroughly, together with concentration on the interrelations among them, will help fill the gaps in the learner´s communicative competence and link the individual factors that it consists of. By doing so, not only will we contribute to increasing the competence in general,+ but also to its better "solidity".

4 Structural and functional views of language

Depending on whether we analyze language with regard to its structures, or functions, two different views can be distinguished. These are the structural view and the functional view of language.

4.1 Structural view

According to the structural view of language, language is seen as "a system of structurally related elements for the transmission of meaning" (SIL International). These elements can be phonological units, grammatical units and operations, and lexical units. The aim of the structural view is to master these elements and their acceptable structural relations. In other words, the structural view of language seeks the knowledge of what is possible and acceptable in the language. For instance, the sentence: *I have been to France three times.* is acceptable English, whereas: *I was in France three times.* not. Even though the latter would be understood by a native speaker as well, from the point of view of grammar it is not correct because the past simple tense is not used in referrence to events that happened in the past and when the time is not specified. Similarly, the following sentence: *I in France have been three times.* would indeed be apprehended by a native speaker of English, though it is not correct because of wrong word order. The awareness of how the language items are structured prevents from producing grammatically and syntactically wrong English. It ensures that the form of the language a speaker produces is proper.

Some of the approaches concerned with the structural view of language are the Audiolingual method, Total Physical Response, or the Silent Way (SIL International). The structural view is also the focus of all grammar-oriented approaches to foreign language teaching.

4.2 Functional view

By contrast, the functional view of language deals with how the structures (or forms) can be used to perform various communicative functions; that is, how meaning can be expressed using the structures in language and what language functions can linguistic forms fulfill. The equation between linguistic forms and communicative functions does not always apply. In a number of cases, forms and functions differ and we speak about so called indirect speech acts. Consider the following example: the sentence *Could you be quiet?* is interrogative in form but it can fulfill the function of a question (whether the addressee would be at all able to be quiet), or a directive (telling the person to be quiet). If the addresser of the utterance wants to ask the person to be quiet, they can tell them so in a variety of ways, e.g. saying *Could*

you be quiet?, Be quiet!, It would be nice if you were quiet. etc. Thus, one form can deliver more communicative functions, and one function can be delivered by a variety of forms (Widdowson, as quoted in Brumfit 119). As long as a speaker of foreign language is aware of how the forms and functions can be related, they can communicate the desired meaning effectively by "inserting" the meaning into the form.

The most popular approaches building upon the functional view of language are Communicative Language Teaching (will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5), or Task-Based Language Learning.

4.3 Relating forms to meanings

Both the structural and the functional view play their irreplaceable role in EFL teaching. This means that both of them should be incorporated in teaching and some reasonable balance between them should be reached. Problems arise whenever the balance is deflected, which in the vast majority of cases means that the structural view is favoured and the latter looked over. Not seldom do teachers of English think that it is quite enough to teach their students the correct forms through tens of grammatical rules, and the rest – that is, the spontaneous production of meaningful language will come automatically as a result of the fact that they provided the students with as much grammar as possible. This, in my opinion, is a radical mistake. Over-relying on the structural view of language and at the same time ignoring the functional aspects causes that students taught in such a way become walking dictionaries and grammar reference books, but totally unproductive in their speaking. I will try to explain why.

Very often, teaching grammar means nothing more than bringing restrictions. Students are presented new grammar by being told things like: *This is said this way, but be careful not to use it with that. There are also several exceptions from this rule which modify the rule somehow; and sometimes, the rule is not valid at all…*I guess that it is not difficult to imagine what impact this must have on such student who suffers from not being sure how to say something. Having been told rules like that, they will probably not say anything at all, for their limited potential to produce language has been even more limited.

By discussing that I do not want to say that grammar should not be taught. As I have already suggested in the very first sentence of this chapter, neither of the two views of language should be neglected. Evidently, it is extremely difficult trying to imagine how only functions could be taught and forms not, as functions are dependent on forms. Nevertheless, by the same logic, how can somebody believe that dogmatic clinging to structures without the emphasis on how they can be related to various meanings must be good enough an approach to guarantee exquisite language production? That is why the functional view of language ought to be given higher prominence. And I am not worried that this would be at the expense of grammar knowledge – to the contrary, it would support the structural view in that the overall students´ performance would improve a big deal.

5 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), also known as the Communicative Approach, is an approach to ESL teaching that emphasizes the importance of learning the language for communication and interaction. It originates in Britain in the 1960´s as a response to the rising criticism of Situational Language Teaching, the principles of which are practising the language in various situational events and concentration on its forms and structures (Richards and Rogers). By contrast, Communicative Language Teaching accentuates the "functional and communicative potential of language." (Richards and Rogers 64) More specifically, learners are taught to become proficient in communication and giving meaning, rather then master the forms of language, e.g. grammar or pronunciation.

At the beginning of this chapter, I have explained that there is a distinction between two different views of language - structural and functional. According to Littlewood, "the structural view of language concentrates on the grammatical system, describing ways in which linguistic items can be combined" (1981: 1). When related to EFL teaching, this could be interpreted as teaching the learners how to say something correctly and/or acceptably. There is if course nothing wrong with this view and it does not collide with CLT. In some cases, for example in Littlewood´s conception of pre-communicative activities, the implementation of purely structural view of language is fully justified. He claims that it gives the learners perfect control over linguistic forms, so that later they do not have to worry about the structure and can concentrate solely on the meaning. (1981: 89) However, we already know that the structure

does not necessarily have to correspond with the meaning (as discussed in subchapter 4.2). That is why the functional view of language is promoted in CLT – that is, how to perform the desired communicative act in the most natural, comprehensible and correct way.

It is not easy to define what exactly it means to incorporate CLT in language teaching, since it does not represent any explicit method. Rather we speak about an approach, or a framework, that, though there are clear objectives and several guidelines, leaves a lot of space for the teacher to adapt their own methods. One of the basic features of the approach might be activating the available language in various tasks and "learning by doing" – that is, practising the communicative and social interactive functions of language to become more advanced, natural and flexible in producing them. Howatt in his distinction between a "strong" and a "weak"version of CLT claims:

> There is in a sense, a 'strong' version of the communicative approach and a 'weak' version of it. The weak version which has become more or less standart practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching... The 'strong' version of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former could be described as 'learning to use' English, the letter entails 'using English to learn it. (1984: 279)

The activities used in CLT are based rather on communication and cooperation among students than on dialogues between the teacher and a student. The role of the teacher in CLT is less dominant – they become the facilitator and monitor in the class, not the only "almighty authority". Usually, students are made communicate from the very beginning, not after any silent period. Pair work and, perhaps more often, groupwork is practised so as to ensure more intensive and even participation. Fluency is focussed more than accuracy and making mistakes is seen as part of the learning process. High attention is paid to the careful contextualization of language (Miguel Bengoa Elt).

As it is with any other approach, CLT has its supporters, as well as opponents. The arguments for the approach are that the learners are taught to become communicatively competent, flexible and creative speakers. Such learners should not get scared when they "are

taken by surprise" by other speakers of English. They should also be able to vary the language according to current situations without much effort.

On the other hand, the critics of CLT warn against overusing the approach. They point out that students cannot be given total freedom in saying what they want because the language syllabi prescribe what grammar and lexis is to be learnt at a particular stage of the course (Bergische Universität Wuppertal). Also, they worry that the learners "may be tempted to simply memorize certain phrases which prove to be useful in recurring communicative situations without, however, learning to creatively construct new grammatical forms that might serve their speech intentions better" (Bergische Universität Wuppertal).

6 Lexical Approach

6.1 Lexical chunks

According to the Lexical Approach to EFL teaching, language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar. In other words, language is to a high degree made of stretches of speech which are often referred to as *lexical chunks.* These are fixed or common expressions containing two or more words which can be often found together. Where there are two or more lexical words which are commonly used together, we speak about *collocations,* which are a subset of lexical chunks.

There are a lot of types of lexical chunks. They can be everyday expressions, e.g. greetings and valedictions (*hi there, nice to see you, how do you do, see you later, have fun, take care*), exclamations (*oh my God!, how interesting!, what a mess!*) etc. Some examples of collocations can be various combinations of an adjective plus a noun (*sunny weather, high voltage, Merry Christmas*), an adverb plus an adjective (*totally exhausted, densely populated, relatively small*), two nouns (*sense of humour, letter of complaint, man of action*), an adverb plus a verb (*answer briefly, go quickly, kill accidentally*) and other. But we should not forget to mention that some expressions which can commonly be found in conversations, e.g. question tags (*will you?, isn´t it?, all right?),* responses expressing that we (don´t) feel or do the same (s*o do I, neither do I, I do, I don´t*), formulae of courtesy (*excuse me, thanks a lot, you´re welcome, let me please…, be so kind…*)*,* expressions used to politely agree or disagree (*you´re*

right, I think so, I couldn´t agree more, you´re right but…, that´s not the way I see it, that´s not true), interrupt the other speaker (*if you just let me finish, to finish my point, I´m sorry to jump in*) or show emotions (*poor you!, oh dear!, glad to hear that!*), are also lexical chunks. Such stretches of language have an enormous value in communication in a (foreign) language.

Supporters of the Lexical Approach point out that hardly any stretches of language we produce are fully "innovational" and that in a majority of cases we build on memorized, more or less modified lexical patterns. Lewis says that "language consists of chunks which, when combined, produce continuous coherent text" (1997: 7). That is why the Lexical Approach stands in opposition to grammar-oriented approaches and objects to the widespread opinion that it is good knowledge of grammar which, together with a good range of vocabulary, is the most crucial condition for succesful communication in English.

6.2 Teaching isolated words x lexical chunks

With regards to the fact that a large proportion of all language we produce consists of certain fixed or common chunks of words, a question may arise about whether it is proper for the learners to be taught new vocabulary in isolation. If a student understands the process of learning new vocabulary as only memorizing the English translation of a certain word, then obviously something is wrong. Only knowing "how something is translated" has nothing to do with being able to communicate efficiently in a foreing language. There are plenty of other aspects one has to be familiar with than just knowing the English equivavalents of words – all possible meanings of the word, how the word is spelled and pronounced, what word class does it belong to, what the plural is (in case it has an irregular one), whether the word is countable or uncountable, whether the word is used in singular or plural, any grammatical or contextual restrictions concerning the usage of the word, how the word forms different word classes etc.

However, even if the learner is perfectly cognizant of all the aspects mentioned above, it still does not mean that they can use the word correctly in phrases and sentences. Of at least equal importance are also other aspects, e.g. what adjective, adverb, noun, preposition, verb etc. the word goes together with and what collocations, phrases, and idioms can be formed using the word. For instanace, if a student is told that the English translation of the Czech *žena* is *woman* and of *pěkný* it is *pretty* without being told that this adjective is not used for

describing the physical attractiveness of a man, they would of course think that the adjective can be used with reference to both sexes. Similarly, a Czech student who knows that ´wines´ can be *red* or *white*, but does not know that *růžové* is *rosé*, would very probably use *pink*, which is wrong. But even in those cases where there are more possibilities and all are correct, the knowledge of which words go with which will help produce more advanced constructions. We can illustrate this when we consider the differences between saying, for instance, *big truth* and *inevitable truth,* or *more popular* and *increasingly popular*.

To demonstrate the importance of teaching language in chunks and patterns, let us have a sample everyday English conversation:

Person A: So, <u>what are up to</u> <u>these days</u> ?
Person B: <u>Not much</u>. <u>I've been busy putting</u> some web pages <u>together</u>.
A: <u>What about</u> ?
B: Conversations in American English. <u>You know</u>, slang, <u>common expressions</u>, et cetera ...
A: Cool ! <u>Could I take a look</u> ?
B: <u>By all means</u> ! Actually I was going to <u>run them by you</u>. <u>You got a few minutes</u> ?
A: Absolutely. <u>Give me ten minutes</u>. <u>I'll grab a bite to eat</u> and <u>I'll be right back</u>.
B: Sure. <u>Take your time</u>. <u>I'll be around</u>.

(from http://shahriar.tripod.com/conversations.htm)

Underlined are those phrases and chunks which, in my opinion, less-advanced Czech speakers would be unlikely to produce on their own if they were not familiar with them. Without being taught the underlined expressions, the conversation between two Czech students who have been taught language in isolation could, for example, look like this:

Person A: So, what are you doing now?
Person B: Nothing much. I´ve been busy because I have been creating some web pages.
A: What pages?
B: Conversations in American English. Err… Slang, normal expressions…
A: Cool! I want to see them, can I?
B: Of course! Actually I wanted to show them to you. Have you got a few minutes?
A: Absolutely. But after ten minutes. I´ll eat something and then I´ll come.

B: Sure. Don´t hurry. I´ll be somewhere here.

Although some of the replaced expressions are equally acceptable, even intermediate students would presumably not have problems identifying which of the two conversations is more probably sample of an authentic dialogue between two native speakers.

6.3 The benefits of teaching language in chunks

The point in learning language in chunks is that it takes the speaker less effort. Language consists of words and words are combined into phrases. When the speaker is working with the language more at the level of phrases, they can more easily and promptly produce utterances, without the need to think about every single word and whether it can be combined with other words. We already know that the potential of any language to produce grammatically correct phrases and utterances is immense, but by far not everything which is grammatically correct is also acceptable. And what is acceptable does not always have to be actually used. That is why speakers taught language in isolation often have problems to say a correct and acceptable sentence because they combine separate words, rather than phrases into sentences.

It is startling to realize how many language teachers and students seem not to be aware of the importance of language chunks in teaching (learning) a language. Such people do not realize that, especially at higher levels, fluency in speaking is to a great degree accomplished by knowing and frequently using them. The more chunks a learner is familiar with, the less often they have to make pauses and search for words when speaking. And not only fluency, but better accuracy as well can be reached, as the speaker knows which word goes with which and thus they are able to express their thoughts correctly. Also, lexical chunks contribute to the economy principle in language[1] because the speaker does not have to explain so often what exactly they had in mind. And finally, a good reason for paying more attention to lexical chunks is the fact that when using and modifying them, a learner´s speaking becomes much more advanced, colourful and likeable for the hearer.

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[1] *The Economy Principle in Language*, sometimes also referred to as *The Principle of Least Effort,* can be defined as "tending towards the minimum amount of effort […] to achieve the maximum result, so that nothing is wasted" (Vicentini, 38). Following the economy principle in language means the choice of language devices so that the message is clear for the addressee and the purpose of the communication is achieved, and at the same time trying ot avoid ambiguity, repetitiveness, and redundancy.

Practical part – survey

7 Introduction

The practical part of my thesis brings the results of my own survey focusing on the issue of low speaking performance and possible problems with it. The survey was carried out in March 2009 at Státní jazyková škola Brno, Kotlářská 9, 611 49 (http://www.sjs-brno.cz; the assisting person was PhDr. H. Ťoková) and Klasické a španělské gymnázium Brno, Vejrostova 2, 635 00 (http://www.gyby.cz; the assisting person was PhDr. Jarmila Červenáková).

7.1 Research method

I asked 50 students to fill in a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 15 questions, most of which were of multiple-choice type. In some of them, the respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer. Also, they were allowed to answer some qustions in their own words whenever they felt that none of the suggested options was corresponding. The questionnaires were anonymous and there was no time limit for filling them in. I enclose one sample questionnaire in the appendix.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section was aimed at the respondent´s general self-evaluation and feedback, as well as their goals and priorities in foreign language learning. The second part focused on speaking only; the respondents were asked to reflect on their speaking performance, write whether they felt they had any problems with it, try to characterize the problems, think about the causes of them and, last but not least, also about the possible solutions.

7.2 Research sample

One half of the respondents were language school students, the second half grammar school students. The students from grammar school were in the last year of their studies, which means that they were going to take the maturita exam in summer. They had three hours of

English a week. The language school students were from two different classes – post-secondary daily students (20 hours a week) and afternoon course of general English for adults (3 hours a week). All the respondents had been learning English for at least 5 years.

There were, of course, quite expressive differences among the three different courses of English concerning the intensity and way of teaching, the differences in age of the learners and their motivations etc. Although these differences undoubtedly determine the level of speaking of the students, I decided to choose the participants for the research sample purely according to the level they officially achieved, as I wanted the research sample to be more varied and represent more the differences between students from different institutions.

The achieved level of the students was mostly intermediate (all grammar students and most of the language school students). Some of the language school students were already upper-intermediate, whereas some still pre-intermediate. I decided to choose intermediate students for my survey because the level should already be sufficient for some degree of fluent speaking. Also, the grammar school students were finishing their compulsory study of English, so I wanted to know what their speaking performance would be at that stage.

7.3 Purpose of the survey

By means of the survey I primarily wanted to collect as much information relevant to the topic of my thesis as possible. I wanted to find out how the presence of "problems with speaking English" would be frequent. According to what I had repeatedly heard from people when we had been discussing this matter, I supposed that the students who would admit problems with their speaking, or the fact that they feel their speaking could be much better, would be in majority. Furthermore, I was interested in their self-reflection, the way they perceived the problems themselves. That is why they were asked to try to characterize the problems (if they felt there were any), guess the possible causes of them and suggest how in their opinion the problems could be eliminated or at least reduced.

Besides the above mentioned fundamental information, I also wanted to search for any relations between speaking and the other three skills, and whether the performance in all of them would be even or whether there would be any more pronounced differences. Another

subject of my interest were the learners´ priorities in learning English. That is, what level of English would they like to achieve one day, whether the good communicative competence was important for them, whether and to what extent they cared about the general level of their spoken performance, as well as about its grammatical correctness.

8 Analysis and interpretation of the results

The answers to the questions will be dealt with stepwise. Questions 1 to 4 will not be analysed, for they were asked in order to get background information about the respondent, irrelevant to the topic.

8.1 Question 5

How would you evaluate yourself? Give marks (1 = the best mark – 5 = the worst mark) to each of the four basic skills in language learning (reading, writing, listening, speaking).

The respondents were asked to evaluate themselves in how they felt they were competent at each of the four basic skills in EFL learning – that is, reading, writing, listening and speaking. They were asked to use marks as if they were at school, from 1 = excellent competence to 5 = poor competence. Through this question I wanted to find out about the respondents´ self-evaluation of each of the four skills. I was most interested in speaking, of course, concretely in what place would speaking be at, but also in how it would compare to the other three skills, whether there would be any expressive gaps among the skills.

Results

With regards to the fact that there were considerable differences between the answers of respondents from language and grammar school, I divided the results into three categories – language school respondents, grammar school respondents and then all respondents together. The number below each of the columns represents the average of all marks given to the skill. The higher the mark (and the column) is, the worse the respondents perceive themselves to be

at that particular skill. The skills are not ordered according to the positions they got to. First of all, the two graphs showing the differences in answers between language and grammar school students:

Skills - Language School
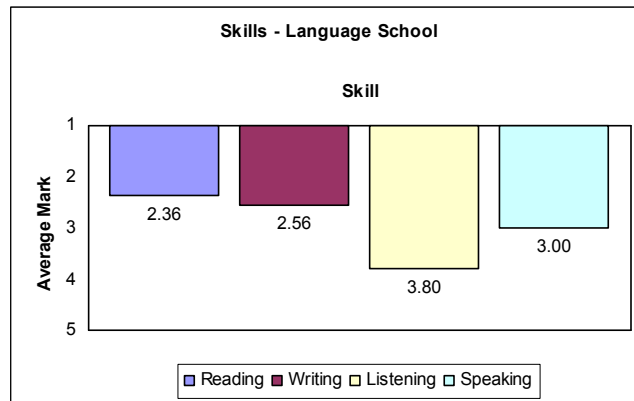
Graph 1: Skills – language school

Skills - Grammar School
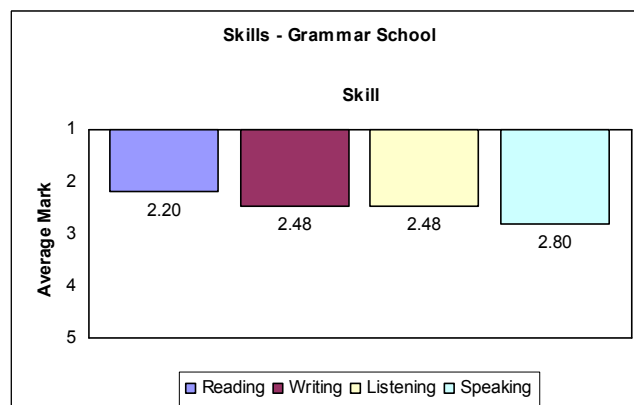
Graph 2: Skills – grammar school

As we can see, the least problematic skill for students of both groups is in their opinion reading, closely followed by writing and, in the case of grammar school students, also listening, which earned exactly the same evaluation there. Quite surprisingly, in the case of language school the position of listening was completely different, as it, with its average of 3,8, clearly "earned" the label of the most problematic skill of all.

Speaking, represented by the light blue column, got to the last but one position in the first case and in the latter case to the last. This verifies the presumption that students seem to rate speaking among more challenging skills. Finally, the graph showing the total results:
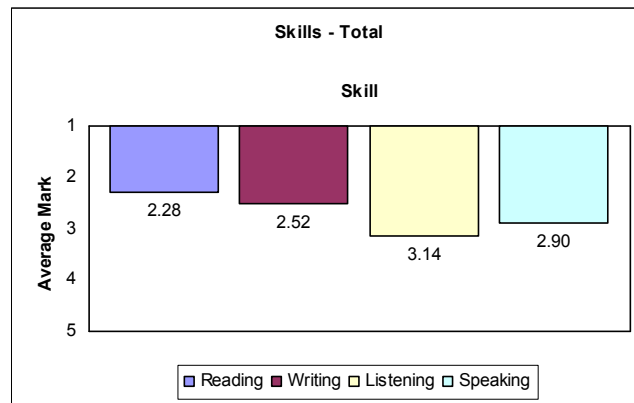
Graph 3: Skills - total

8.2 Question 6

Order the basic skills in ELF learning according to their importance for you. Use numbers 1 to 4, where 1 = the most important – 4 = the least important.

Here, the respondents were asked to order the four basic skills in EFL learning according to their importance for them as students of English. They were supposed to use numbers 1 to 4, going from 1 = the most important skill, to 4 = the least important. Similarly as it was with the previous question, I wanted to know more about the four skills, of which I was particularly concerned with the students´ opinions about the importance of speaking. Nonetheless, I wanted to compare the positions of the other three skills as well.

Results

When considering my attitudes about the prominent importance of good speaking for almost all students of English, it will probably be no surprise if I say that I had expected the vast majority of the respondents to mark speaking as the most important skill. However, I must admit that I had not expected the results to be so striking and unequivocal. Speaking never got worse mark than 2 and only 4% of the respondents put it to the second position after listening. The rest, that is 96%, clearly expressed that speaking and oral communication were paramount for them.
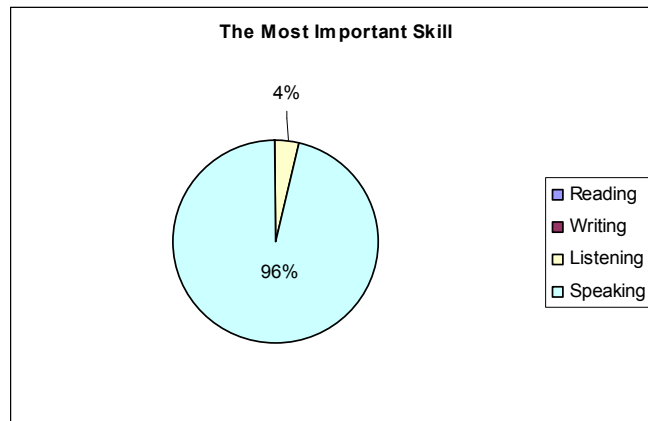
Graph 4: The most important skill

The second graph shows the average from marks the skills received, ordered from the most important skill to the least. I would only like to remind you here that unlike in the previous question where the students were asked to evaluate themselves using the full scale of marks (1 to 5), here the worst possible mark was 4. (1 = the most important skill, 4 = the least important skill). That means, the smaller the number (and the shorter the column) is, the more important the students find that skill.

The second graph shows the positions of skills. I would only like to remind you here that the students were told to order the skills, using marks from 1 = the most important, to 4 = the least important.
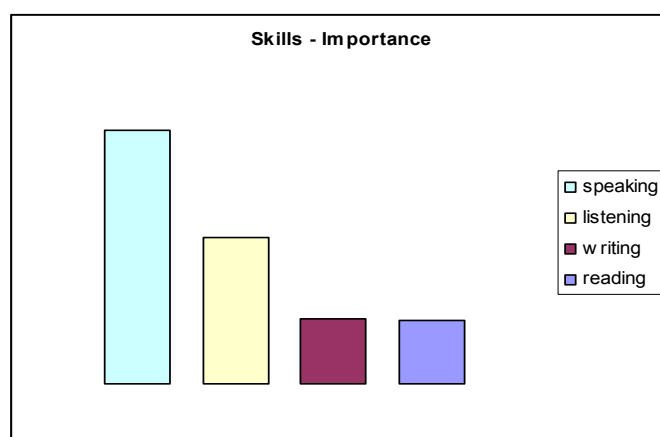
Graph 5: The importance of skills

The average marks were 1.04 for speaking, 2.30 for listening, 3.24 for writing and 3.26 for reading. As I have already written, speaking became without any doubts the clear winner in

terms of the importance for the students. With listening in the second position, it seems that students give priority to the two "audio" skills. By contrast, it is not possible to proclaim the loser in this battle because the two remaining skills scored almost exactly the same average numbers.

8.3 Questions 7, 8, 9 and 10

How important is for you the ability to express yourself and communicate in English?
To what extent is the overall quality of your speaking performance important for you?
To what extent is the grammatical correctness of your speaking performance important for you?
*What level of speaking performance would you like to achieve eventually?*

The next four questions concentrated on speaking only. The purpose of them was to find out how valuable the good communicative competence was for the respondents as English speakers (question 7), how important they found the overall quality of their spoken performance (8), and in particular its grammatical correctness (9). Last but not least, I also asked them to provide the level of spoken performance they would like to achieve one day (10). These questions were multiple-choice and the respondents could choose from 4 or 5 options the one that suited them the best. I expected from the data collected from these four questions to suggest to what extent, if at all, students of English care about their speaking. I also wanted to know the respondents´ goals in learning spoken English, since I am convinced that the teachers should know them and to a certain degree adjust their approach according to them. If an individual does not demand anything else than just to be able to converse a bit with the locals when on holiday, it is quite different from the situation when somebody plans to live and work in a foreign country. Undoubtedly, in the former case the person will be happy if they say anything at all and the addressee catches the message, while in the latter such level would definitely not be satisfactory.

Results

I will be dealing with the four questions together, for they are to a high degree interconnected. Here are the results of question 7, in which the respondents were to indicate the
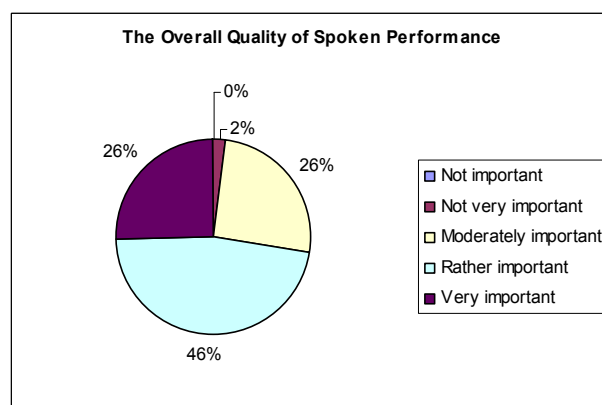
importance of good spoken performance for them. They could choose one from four options, which were: it is of *little, medium, high,* or *vital* importance.
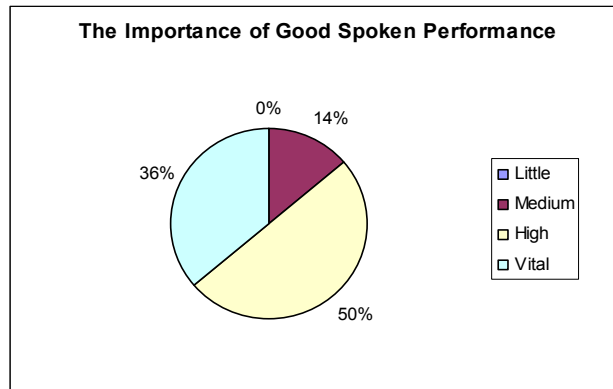
Graph 6: The importance of good spoken performance.

As we can see, more than 4/5 of the respondents, exactly 86%, labelled the good spoken performance as at least highly important. Roughly only one in seven considered it to be of medium importance, while no one considered the spoken performance to be only little important.

In the next question, they were to express how important was for them the overall good quality of their spoken performance. This once, there were offered five options to choose from, namely: *not at all, not very, moderately, rather,* and *very* important. The results were as follows:
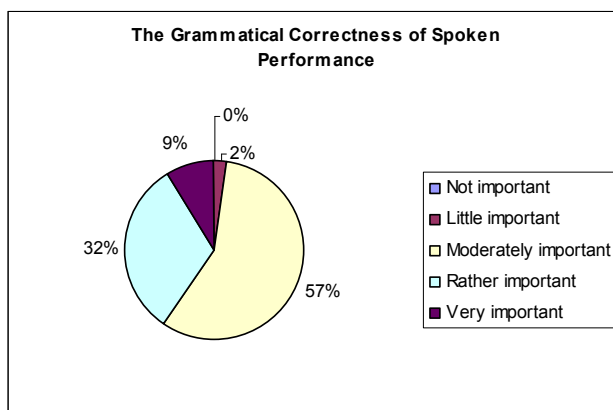

Graph 7: The importance of the overall quality of spoken performance.

The most respondents, almost one half, considered the fact whether their spoken performance was in general of good quality to be rather important. One fourth of them found it

moderately important and the same number very important. We can thus see that 98% of all the respondents do care about the good quality of their speaking, whereas only 2% do not pay any particular attention to it. No one marked the fact whether their speaking was good as completely unimportant.

I was particularly interested in whether and to what degree the respondents cared about the grammatical correctness of their speaking. Some people tend not to be much concerned with the grammatical correctness of what they say. On the other hand, some worry about grammar so much that it almost inhibits them from saying anything at all. Therefore I was interested in whether there would be any differences between 8 and 9 in terms of percentual distributions. The difference can be spotted immediately:

The Grammatical Correctness of Spoken Performance

0%

9%

2%

32%

57%

- Not important
- Little important
- Moderately important
- Rather important
- Very important

Graph 8: The importance of the grammatical correctness of spoken performance.

While one respondent in four considers the overall quality of their speaking very important, only one in ten is equally concerned with the grammatical correctness. But the biggest shift took place in the yellow field. When compared to the overall quality, twice as many students find the grammatical accuracy only moderately important.

Finally, the students were asked to state what was their desired level of spoken performance – that is, what level would they like to achieve one day. They were given four options: *to be able to "communicate somehow", to be able to speak without much effort, to be able to speak at a good level and without any problems,* and *to be able to speak at an excellent level*:

The Desired Level of Spoken Performance

0%

20%

24%

56%

- To be able to "communicate somehow"
- To be able to speak without much effort
- To be able to speak at a good level and without any problems
- To be able to speak at an excellent level
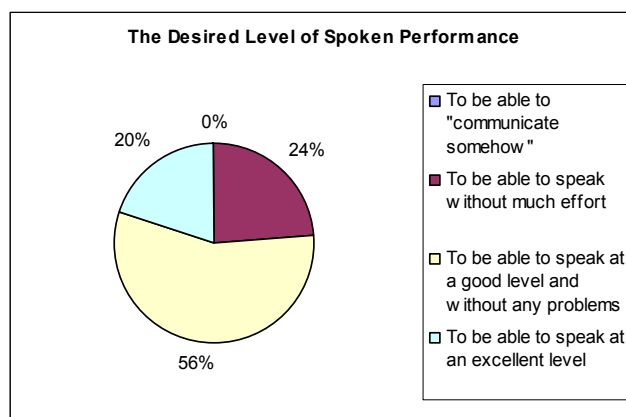
Graph 9: The desired level of spoken performance.

3/4 of them expressed the wish to become very competent speakers. One in five even wanted to be proficient one day.

To summarize the findings from questions 7, 8, 9 and 10, it could be said that students do realize the importance of speaking in EFL learning in the vast majority of cases. They are very much concerned with the overall quality of their spoken performance but considerably less anxious about its grammatical accuracy. In my opinion, this discrepancy agrees with with the presumptions stated in the theoretical part of my thesis – that is, the good knowledge of grammar, especially if it is not supported by sufficient knowledge in the other areas which the communicative competence consists of, does not automatically ensure good language production. Also, it would vindicate the generally accepted assumption that the most students would prefer speaking a lot at the price of occasional inaccuracy to speaking a little, though 100% correctly.

8.4 Question 11

Do you think that you are taught communicative English? If not, specify what would you change.

Starting with question 11 I approach the pivotal part of my survey. The purpose of this question was to reveal whether the respondents thought they were taught English so as to be able to use it for oral communication. They were asked to tick either *yes* or *not quite*. In case

they thought that they were not, they were supposed to specify what could have been improved.

Results
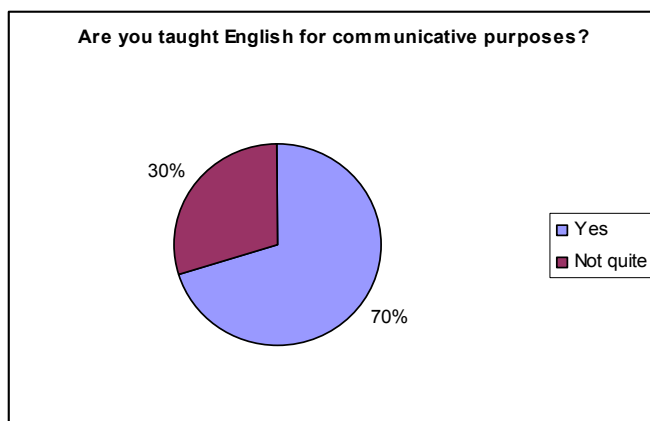
Graph 10: English for communicative purposes.

It is worth mentioning that the results from the grammar school and language school were practically identical. 70% of the respondents believed they are taught communicative English, which would definitely be a pleasant discovery if the rest were not so critical in giving reasons why they did not think so. The most frequently mentioned reason was that there should be more STT (student talking time) in the lessons. The respondents demanded *more conversation* (6 respondents), *more exercises based on conversation* (4 respondents), one even expressed their wish to be asked to *give more oral presentations*. Also, some wished to be provided with *more vocabulary in the lessons* (3 respondents). One student complained about *too many students in the class,* another one blamed *the way of teaching the language in general,* but unfortunately did not provide more specific answer, and one student would appreciate *more contact with native speakers*. And finally, I dare to quote one particular answer, which was probably the most radical of all:

I learn 'scholastic English', which is totally useless in life. After all, I would appreciate having any reasons to communicate with the teacher…

8.5 Question 12

Do you face any problems when speaking English?

. The last four questions were aimed at low speaking performance, its possible causes and ideas how the performance could possibly be improved. First and foremost, I needed to find out how many of the respondents felt they had "any problems" with their speaking. With regards to the fact that the question could possibly sound ambiguous and unclear, I provided several examples such as: *your speaking is not as good as you would wish, you have often problems to express yourself, speak continuously, maintain conversation, you frequently have to search for the right word* or *make quite a lot of mistakes.* The respondents could choose between *yes* and *no.*

Results
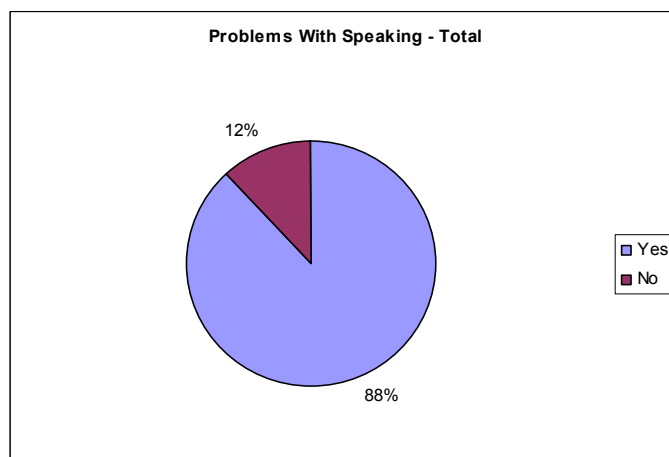
Graph 11: Problems with speaking.

Almost 90% of the respondents admit having certain problems when speaking English. The results from grammar and language school varied. It was no surprise to learn that the students from language school "did slightly better" – here, the ratio was 84% yes to 16% no, whereas in the grammar school 92% to 8%. These findings could perhaps be accredited to the fact that language schools sometimes put more emphasis on communicative activities so that the students have more opportunities to practise speaking and become both more competent and confident. However, the overall outcome could be interpreted in only one possible way –

the presence of problems with speaking is really very frequent and students are well aware of them.

8.6 Question 13

If you feel you have any problems when speaking, specify them.

Quite obviously, there would be little point in just learning about the percentages and not looking for each individual´s characterization of the problem. That is why the respondents were asked to briefly describe their difficulties in case they went for the answer *yes* in question 12.

Results

Since it is difficult to make statistics from open questions because there are no two or more answers which would be completely the same, I will quote some of the responses:

I make a lot of mistakes and often do not know how to say what I want, even though I know it theoretically.

I very often search for words and think how to construct sentences.

[...] I can´t speak because in the lessons we belabour the same again and again – topics, which can hardly be used in everyday speaking.

limited vocabulary → problems to express what I want

Whenever I speak English, I cannot think of suitable words. I do not experience this problem when I write in English.

I am ashamed of my pronunciation.

It would be better if I had more time to think in advance. Also, when I speak within myself, it is O.K.

too many students, too little space for those who are bad at speaking…

I am inhibited and nervous.

inability to think and react so quickly

Still, it could be said that among the most frequently mentioned "symptoms" were the usage of less advanced vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracy, inability to be prompt in responding and low speaking performance or even silence because of inhibition.

8.7 Question 14

If you feel you have any problems when speaking, what do you think might be the cause(s) of them?

Once the respondents have described the problems they struggle with when speaking, I asked them to reflect on the possible causes of the problems. Unlike in 13, in this question again they were offered several options to choose from. They could mark as many options as they wanted, not just one, or write their own ideas in case of need. The options offered were: *insufficient knowledge of English, not enough opportunities to use English actively for communication, not enough opportunities to listen to spoken English, not enough opportunities to be in an English-speaking environment, the way of learning English in general, psychical causes (inhibition, nervosity, incommunicativeness, fear of saying something incorrectly etc.)* and *other causes – please, describe them.* Similarly as question 13, this question was to be anwered only by those respondents who admitted having any problems with speaking and matched *yes* in 12.

Results

The graph below presents the results. The individual causes are ordered from the most frequently mentioned to the least. I would like to remind that the respondents were allowed to tick more than just one possibility, which in the majority of cases they did. The number above each of the columns represents the total number of "votes" the corresponding cause received.
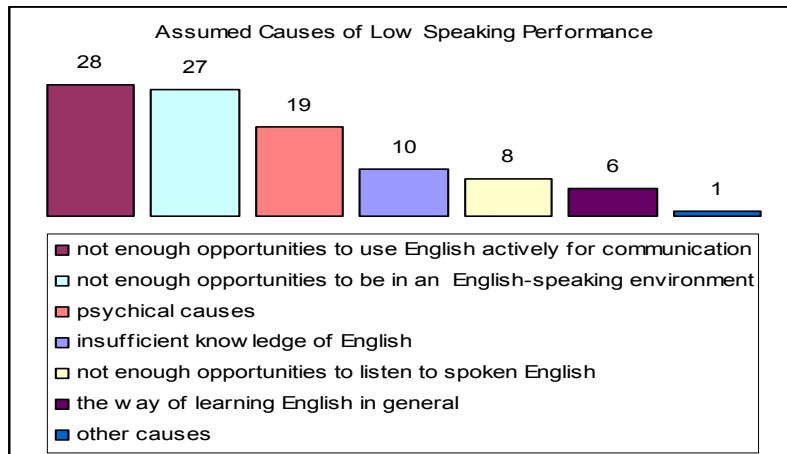
Graph 12: Some of the causes of low speaking performance.

To sum up, we can see that the students would mostly appreciate having more opportunities to use their English for communication and also také advantage of being more often in an English-speaking environment. The third most "popular" were various psychical causes. By the way, the combination of these three options was also the most common answer. As for the last column representing other causes than those offered, only one respondent marked the option and stated that they thought they *did not study hard enough.*

8.8 Question 15

If you feel you have any problems when speaking, how do you think the problems could be overcome (or minimalized)?

The last question of the survey sought suggestions how the problems with speaking (if the respondent admitted having any) could be overcome, or at least minimalized. Again, the respondents were offered several options and they could tick more than just one. If they felt that none of the options expressed their opinions, they were welcome to provide their own ideas. The solutions suggested were as follows: *more intensive studying, change the way I learn the language, taking use of opportunities to use English actively for communication, taking use of opportunities to listen to spoken English, be more often in an English-speaking environment, travel to an English-speaking country* and *other ideas – please, specify them.*

Results:

Similarly as in question 14, the graph below shows the numbers of ticks received.
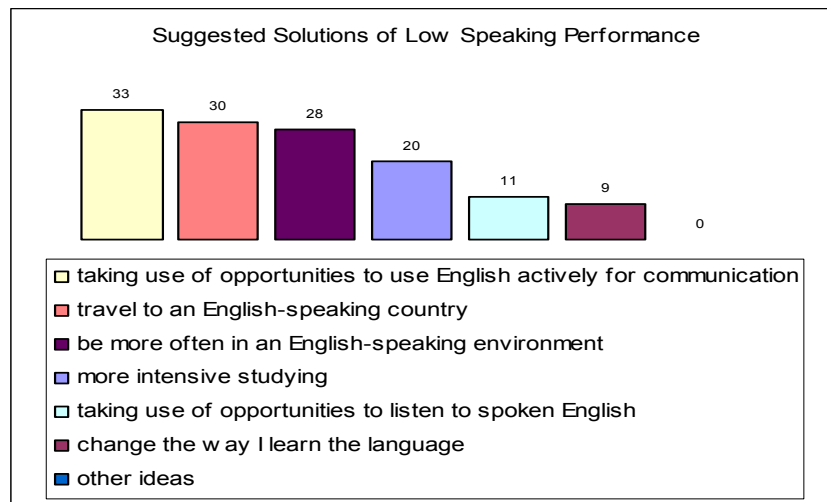
Graph 13: Suggested solutions.

The respondents think that the best way how to fight with poor or unsatisfactory speaking performance is practise it. Almost the same number of them also believe that the problem can be sold if they travel to a country where English is spoken as the mother tongue. Only slightly less think that being exposed to and having to use English in an English-speaking environment would help. Not a few students admitted that more intensive studying would also be beneficial. And finally, some considered listening to spoken English important, while several others would completely change the way of learning the language.

9 Conclusion

The findings from the survey presented in the practival part are neither revolutionary, nor very surprising. Even though some details and numbers are quite remarkable, the survey as a whole does not make any "epochal discoveries." The results bring some of the most common problems and difficulties the students struggle with, as well as some valuable feedback and suggestions for possible improvements. In general, it could be said that students do realize the importance of good speaking and communication both in EFL learning and in everyday life. They seem to be well aware of the fact that knowing English means (among other factors, of course) being able to speak. It is also evident that most of the students would not want to reconcile with being only passive speakers of English. This is undoubtedly encouraging news.

On the other hand, though, *nine students in ten* are either unsatisfied with their speaking, or not confident enough speakers. Even if we take into consideration that a lot of learners of foreign languages are too critical when assessing themselves, this fact is, without exaggeration, alarming. No matter what the teacher who teaches such a student thinks, no matter what the objective quality of the student´s real performance is – one of the primary goals of language teaching should be making the learner competent and also confident speaker. The students most often complained of having to search for the right words or use of grammar, but also of inhibition, uncertainty and bad pronunciation. A number of them would appreciate having more opportunities to speak. And quite a number have problems with spontaneity and reacting instantly, which could be accredited to lack of rehearsal opportunities.

The frequency of occurrence of various problems with speaking proves that by far not every student who feels that they do not speak well can be labelled as neurotic, sheepish, lazy, or not having enough talent. I do not want to blame anybody for such a state of affairs and I am not saying that the system of teaching is wrong either. I also do not want to investigate for any concrete causes and suggest "panacea", as it is neither my wish, nor my right. Nevertheless, it would be advisable for at least some teachers of English to reflect on the outcome of the survey and then also on the way they teach. They could then ask themselves several questions such as: "Do I encourage my students to speak? Do I make them feel confident and willing to express themselves, do I provide them with enough opportunities to speak and converse, do I focus on communicative English sufficiently? Does teaching English, in my opinion, mean more than

just teaching them vocabulary and grammar so that they are able to fill in various exercises and pass the tests? Do I care about how they perceive their speaking and do my best to help them deal with their problems?"

Yet the teachers cannot solve the students´ problems instead of them. Of course, the way the teacher approaches teaching matters a lot but the students themselves control the learning process and are responsible for their progress. It is up to them to make the best of all opportunities to improve their language skills. There is no doubt that if a learner wants to become a better speaker than they are, they cannot rely only on what they acquire in the classroom. A highly motivated, goalseeking and independent learner – which is probably the dream of all language teachers – will need to prove to themselves whenever possible that they are really able to communicate efficiently and at a fair level. But their motivation and effort should result from the awareness of the significance of good speaking and oral communication. And I think that the task of us as (future) language teachers is to persuade them of and act according to that significance, not assign speaking anyhow lower importance or even pretend that it does not have to to be practised much in the classroom.

Perhaps the findings will be of some benefit for both the teachers and the students, at least in that they will realize that speaking and its practising in language learning cannot be underestimated or skimped on, and that building and improving one´s communicative competence in EFL learning is definitely worth every effort.

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10 Appendix

Vážená paní/slečno, vážený pane,

dovolte, abych Vás požádal o anonymní vyplnění tohoto dotazníku, který slouží k získání dat pro moji bakalářskou práci. Jejím obsahem je analýza problematiky slabšího mluveného projevu a komunikativní schopnosti u některých studentů cizího jazyka, konkrétně angličtiny. Vašeho vyjádření si velmi vážím a děkuji Vám za spolupráci.

Václav Hemerka

student oboru Lektorství anglického jazyka na Ped. fakultě MU v Brně

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1. Jak dlouho se učíte anglicky? Označte, prosím, správnou odpověď.

    □ méně než rok
    □ 1 rok – 2 roky
    □ 2 roky – 5 let
    □ 5 let – 10 let
    □ více než 10 let

2. Vámi dosažená úroveň pokročilosti je:

    □ beginner (začátečník)
    □ elementary (základní znalost)
    □ pre-intermediate (mírně pokročilý)
    □ intermediate (středně pokročilý)
    □ upper-intermediate (více pokročilý)
    □ advanced (velmi pokročilý)
    □ proficient (vynikající znalost)

3. Kde se učíte anglicky?

    □ škola (základní, střední)
    □ jazyková škola
    □ jazykový kurz pro více lidí
    □ individuální výuka (1 učitel, 1 žák)
    □ samostudium
    □ jiný způsob – prosím uveďte:

    _____

4. Proč se učíte anglicky? Můžete zaškrtnout více možností.

    □ Potřebuji angličtinu pro svou (budoucí) profesní kariéru.
    □ Potřebuji angličtinu ke studiu.
    □ Chci cestovat nebo vycestovat do cizí země.
    □ Chci mít pocit, že jsem něco dokázal/a, že něco umím.
    □ Domnívám se, že znalost angličtiny je v dnešní době velká výhoda, ne-li nezbytnost.
    □ Jen tak, nemám zvláštní důvod.
    □ Jiné důvody – prosím uveďte:

    _____

5. Jak byste u sebe ohodnotil/a každou ze čtyřech základních dovedností v angličtině (čtení, psaní, poslech, mluvení)? Hodnoťte, prosím, jako při známkování ve škole,
    tj. 1 = nejlepší známka až 5 = nejhorší známka. Odpovídají známku označte křížkem.

	1	2	3	4	5
čtení	○	○	○	○	○
psaní	○	○	○	○	○
poslech	○	○	○	○	○
mluvení	○	○	○	○	○

6. Seřaďte, prosím, jednotlivé dovednosti, zmíněné v předchozí otázce, podle jejich důležitosti pro Vás jako studenta/studentku angličtiny. Označte dovednosti čísly 1 až 4, kdy 1 = podle Vás nejdůležitější až 4 = nejméně důležitá.

    čtení

    psaní

    poslech

    mluvení

7. Jak je pro Vás, jako studenta/studentku angličtiny, v angličtině důležitá schopnost dobrého ústního vyjadřování a komunikace?

    □ málo
    □ středně důležitá
    □ velmi důležitá
    □ naprosto zásadně důležitá

8. Do jaké míry je pro Vás důležité, zda má Váš mluvený projev celkově dobrou úroveň?

    □ vůbec nijak
    □ nijak zvlášť
    □ středně
    □ poměrně dost
    □ velmi

9. Do jaké míry je pro Vás důležité, zda je Váš mluvený projev gramaticky správný?

    □ vůbec nijak
    □ nijak zvlášť
    □ středně
    □ poměrně dost
    □ velmi

10. Jaké úrovně mluveného projevu byste v angličtině chtěl/a dosáhnout?

    □ Jen takové, abych se nějakým způsobem „domluvil/a."
    □ Takové, abych uměl/a bez větších obtíží mluvit a konverzovat.
    □ Takové, abych uměl/a bez problémů mluvit a konverzovat, a to na dobré
      úrovni.
    □ Takové, abych mluvil/a a konverzoval/a na vynikající úrovni.

11. Domníváte se, že se učíte tak, abyste byl/a schopen/schopna používat angličtinu pro komunikativní účely? Pokud ne, napište, prosím, co byste změnil/a, aby tomu tak bylo.

        □ Ano, učím.   □ Ne, ne tak docela.

        Změnil/a bych:

        _____

12. Vnímáte u sebe nějaký problém, týkající se Vašeho mluveného projevu v angličtině? (např.: není takový, jak byste si představoval/a, míváte problém se vyjádřit, mluvit souvisle, udržovat konverzaci, musíte často „hledat správné slovo“, děláte poměrně často chyby atd.)

        □ ano   □ ne

13. Pokud jste na předchozí otázku odpověděl/a ano, pokuste se, prosím, svůj problém stručně popsat:

_____

14. Pokud jste na otázku č. 12 odpověděl/a ano, v čem podle Vás spočívá příčina Vašeho problému? Můžete označit více možností.

        □ v nedostatečné, případně ještě stále malé znalosti jazyka
        □ v nedostatku příležitostí jazyk aktivně používat pro komunikaci
        □ v nedostatku příležitostí k poslechu mluvené angličtiny
        □ v nedostatku příležitostí pohybovat se v prostředí, kde se mluví anglicky
        □ ve způsobu výuky, jakým se jazyk učím
        □ v mé psychice (např. stud, nervozita, uzavřenost, obavy, že něco řeknu
           špatně atd.)
        □ jiné příčiny – prosím uveďte:

        _____

15. Pokud jste na otázku č. 12 odpověděl/a ano, jak by se podle Vás tento problém mohl dát odstranit, nebo alespoň minimalizovat? Opět můžete označit více možností.

        □ intenzivnějším studiem
        □ změnou způsobu, jakým se jazyk učím
        □ vyhledáváním příležitostí k aktivnímu používání jazyka (konverzace)
        □ vyhledáváním příležitostí k poslechu mluvené angličtiny
        □ pohybováním se v prostředí, kde se mluví anglicky
        □ vycestováním do země, kde se mluví anglicky
        □ jiné způsoby – prosím uveďte:

        _____

Děkuji Vám za Váš čas věnovaný dotazníku.