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**Pedagogical intervention to strengthen communication skills in English of high school students at  
Jahodníky school.**

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **1. Type of document**

Applied project

## **2. Title of the document**

Pedagogical intervention to strengthen communication skills in English of high school students at Jahodníky school.

## **3. Authors:**

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## **4. Key Words**

English, Slovakia, Strategies, communication, foreign languages, methods, teaching, learning, intervention, observations, language skills.

## **5. Description**

This project presents an analysis of the current level of English of high school students and also ways to strengthen basic communication skills level A2 from the Common European Framework for languages CEFR with students of 8th grade in Martin, Slovakia. This project considers necessary an intervention to improve students' performance by doing activities to present English as an interesting subject for students to interact through a wide variety of ways presented as significant curricular contributions in the teaching of English in Slovakia, it also presents an observation and conclusion on how students can improve their communication skills in English by implementing different strategies which seek to improve specifically their speaking skill.

## **6. Sources**

This section of the project describes the theoretical foundations such as language skills, methodologies for teaching English as a foreign language as well as various definitions of linguistic competence several authors. Other aspects such as didactics, learning strategies, educational processes, motivation, communication in the classroom, are addressed likewise.

## **7. Contents**

An insight to the situation at this school as well as a literature review, a discussion of academic theories and studies of the topic, methods, application of activities and analysis, results and finally appendixes as evidence of the application of the project.

## **8. Methodology**

Qualitative research, group classes, individual interviews, observations, personal conclusions and observations.

## **9. Conclusions and Recommendations**

From the analysis of results it is concluded that:

1. Students participated meaningfully during this intervention as long as they were constantly encouraged and supported by both teachers and classmates.
2. Working as a foreign teacher at this institution for an academic year turned out to be a good opportunity for students to engage and participate more in class developing better communication skills.
3. Applying the communicative Approach allowed students to engage in most of the activities as English was the main source of communication.

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

The teaching of English has a rich history in most countries becoming a priority in today's education. Given the increase in the number of individuals with the need to communicate in a foreign language makes it a challenge for both institutions and educators to teach English at a proper level. The attention of experts is still focused on the population itself that is why the need to learn it results as the facilitation which opens up wider possibilities for them to succeed in a society which is becoming more and more demanding when it comes to having the proper competencies to perform an efficient act of communication. Slovakia is a nation which uses traditional approaches for teaching languages; in this case, subject-mattered center and it becomes difficult for institutions to achieve the goals proposed by the curriculum in terms of graduating fully-bilingual students.

The aim of this project is to make an intervention in the process of teaching English as a foreign language at Jahodníky school to improve students' communication skills. This project intends to analyse the results of implementing different techniques and methods to teach English in a more friendly manner which allows students to participate as much as possible to reinforce their speaking skill. The project is divided into three chapters; chapter one describes a context and problem, chapter two taps into literature review and the last chapter shows an outline of the proposed methods for carry out the project. The process itself of teaching English to students whose mother language is Slovak at elementary school, the description of methods, language skills analysis and conclusions are also addressed. The project is carried out using an action research methodology which allows the teacher to improve both the teaching and learning of English, there are also interviews conducted through semi-structured questions after one year of the application of the project.

## **1.1 PROJECT JUSTIFICATION**

Slovakia is a small country which belongs to the European Union since 2004. It has had several changes in its curricular design in recent years. Education in Slovakia is free and despite having great support from the United Nations in the implementation of academic programs that strengthen the acquisition of basic skills in foreign languages, there is still a significant amount of work to do to see these efforts in a daily basis (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2018).

The educational system in Slovakia is compulsory and takes 10 years from 6 to 16 years old; then there is an option between a 2-year high school which prepares students for university and finally bachelor degrees which take from 3 to 4 years and masters taking 2 years of study (Ministry of Slovak Education, 2018).

### **1.1.1 Jahodníky school**

Jahodníky school located in Nade Hejnej 4 - 03601 Martin, Slovakia has a very challenging mission which is to create an adequate environment for students to develop their personality, supporting them to achieve the expected goals set in their curriculum. This mission is accompanied with a lot of work that both administratives and teachers have to do in order to create multiple paths leading to one goal, meaningful education. Now, the common goal is trust and security as the everyday basis of school life. Children are encouraged to feel compassion and love for neighbors. This school teaches children ages 4 to 16 years old and students start learning foreign languages since first grade German, Russian and English (Základná škola, 2018).

English the most important in their curriculum as it is important all over the European Union. However, because of the current changes that have been in their curriculum it is necessary to think about proposing a project which focuses on analyzing their current level to strengthen the basic competences in English, specifically at level A2 from the CEFL, due to the fact that some students currently have a very low level of English. For this reason, this school is the perfect scenario for an intervention which aims to pave ways to the improvement of language skills. This institution has an approximate number of 380 students which 62 of them belong to 8th grade. Generally these groups have 2 hours of English on weekdays and are not exposed to extracurricular which can help them practice their communication skills. Grade 8B, which is the candidate for this project, is composed of 13 students whose ages vary between 13 and 14 years old. Other characteristics of this group have to do with the difficulties that do not allow them to move towards the development of basic skills at the time of engaging conversations in English.

### **1.1.2 Definition of the problem**

A situation that occurs with this group is the lack of understanding when listening to the audios of the materials teachers and students use at school. Like most public schools in Slovakia Jahodnický adapts

in their curriculum books and workbooks from popular publishing houses such as Oxford and Cambridge. Additionally, the lack of interest in the subject, as well as the low performance in class and finally the evaluation process from the students' side is worrying. English is considered important by students however, they do not seem to make any efforts in learning it because students at this age are usually lazy and have no interest in learning. Other social factors which have been noticeable after teaching for a year at this institution is the fear of speaking in public, lack of confidence when reading texts out loud. Another worrisome situation is that this group only takes one hour of English during the week, which do not seem to be an appropriate amount for them to meaningfully learn a foreign language. As mentioned earlier, this institution does not have any extracurricular activities which strengthen their knowledge. The institution does not have English native speakers to better contextualize the importance or need to speak English at a proper level. This is why the intervention of this project seeks to provide contexts and activities, in which students feel more confident when speaking English in an academic and personal context. Although at this moment many public schools in Slovakia have great support at the level of infrastructure and didactic resources for learning English, the culture of Slovak people tends to be passive in terms of learning, in other words, students are shy and uninterested in socializing with foreigners. Traditionally, learning English in Slovakia(former Czechoslovakia) is focused on obtaining grammatical knowledge only.

After working for a year at this institution as an English teacher it has been evident that group presents factors that hold back students from making an effort to engage in conversations with foreigners. In my case as being from Colombia and all the influence I had during my learning of English came from United States which somehow made it difficult for students to understand a different accent.



## **2 OBJECTIVES**

### **General Objective**

To apply a project to improve communication skills in English of high school students at Jahodníky Škola.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To propose creative activities to engage students in the learning of English.
- To apply teaching strategies to strengthen English level A2 at the educational institution.
- To make observations and personal conclusions about the experience as a teacher for 1 academic year at the institution.
- To establish the factors associated with low interest in learning English students from 8th grade.

### **3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A considerable aspect when it comes to achieving a better level in a foreign language is when we inquire into the definition of the four skills of the English language.

Basic language skills are considered receptive and productive inherent from all of us as human beings. Harris (1993). Reading and listening are receptive skills while speaking and writing are productive skills that not only require the ability to recognize different language elements to produce speech or text.

#### **Listening**

It refers to an interactive process that consists of perceiving and constructing messages in our minds through cognitive and affective mechanisms which are essential to be able to understand what other people say. This ability is one of the most important in language learning since it requires concentration and plenty of training to have an effective act of communication between two or more people.

#### **Speaking**

This ability requires the speaker to use a set of rules, patterns and grammar to be able to convey a message. This is the most difficult language skill due to the fact that people need to remember vocabulary and associate their personal experiences, previous knowledge and comprehension to be able to respond and keep a conversation going on. This ability requires the speakers to take turns. It is important to point out that when a person is speaks he/she usually turns to his/her mother tongue for references, ideas, definitions and memories that are associated with their first language to continue talking to other people. A typical mistake students make is to translate everything they say into their mother language. Developing the speaking skill in English requires time and non-stop practice.

#### **Reading**

Reading is an interactive process that it is developed along with writing activities. According to Goodman's Kenneth (1970, cited in Brown, 2001). Reading is a process that includes factors such as: intellectual skills (strategies to infer or interpret meaning, retention of information, experience to

understand a text, etc.) and the knowledge of a variety of signs linguistic (morphemes, syllables, words, phrases, etc.). Reading is an activity that consists of interpreting and deciphering, through sight, the phonic value of a series of written signs, either mentally (silently) or loudly (orally). The reading of texts is the main source of personal enrichment, because it allows us to acquire useful knowledge, improve our communication skills, develop our analytical skills, help us to think clearly or solve problems, also to recreate, among others.

## **Writing**

This skill is usually considered a type of reinforcement and extension of the other skills mentioned above. It is very important in the process of learning the English language as it initially helps develop oral expression and hearing. This skill is very important as well as the previous because it articulates cognitive processes and requires imagination and creativity when it comes to creating a variety of written texts: reports, essays, articles, letters, diaries, messages, announcements, directions, recipes, invitations, maps, etc. Unlike oral language, the written language is (Brown, 2001):

- In writing we have only written symbols (graphemes) to develop the message, while in oral expression we have stress, rhythm, intonation, pauses and nonverbal cues that facilitate understanding of the message.

## **3.1 METHODOLOGIES AND TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

According to (Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistic, 1997) defines "method" as "a way of teaching a language, which is based on principles and systematized procedures that in turn represent the conception of how a language is taught and learned”

For the teaching of English, different methods and techniques are used to achieve a better learning and each one of them emphasizes characteristics and principles of the language. Below are several of them having been used throughout the history of English teaching.

## **Grammar Translation**

The main objective of learning with this method is to achieve understanding, this method is characterized because instructions are given in the mother tongue to the students, the use of the English is little, it is typical to find that students have to do translations of texts in a foreign language into their mother tongue or vice versa.

## **Silent Way**

This method was an innovation in the strategies for teaching a foreign language invented by Caleb Gattegno. Here, the teacher plays a very important role because he/she becomes a facilitator, stimulator and guide who intends or provokes the students to participate in class and be responsible for his own learning process.

## **Direct method**

This method was used in order to demonstrate that a language could be taught without having to resort to the method of translation.

This method is characterized because the use of the tongue is not allowed maternal the teacher on the other hand does not need to know the mother tongue of the students, the lessons begin with dialogues and anecdotes in a style conversational, actions and images are used for greater understanding of the subject Consequently, grammar and culture they learn inductively, literary texts are read for pleasure and are not analyzed grammatically, likewise the teacher must be a native speaker of the target language or must know the language as if it were a native (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

## **Total physical response method (T.P.R)**

It is based in the coordination of speech and action, it was introduced by James J. Asher a talented researcher and psychologist whose interest in teaching foreign languages made him realize about this discovery. He observed that in the production period the child learns to understand and understand but does not say much, then he realized that children responded physically to verbal stimulus.

## **Natural approach**

This method was introduced by Tracy D. Terrell's and Stephen Krashen (Krashen, Terrell, 1996). Who stated that it is possible to understand a foreign language through figures, actions and situations grammar and lexical, helping the student to use the foreign language not as an artificial practice but through the motivation of the use of it, starting with the use of single words until it is possible to achieve a coherent pace. In other words, through the natural interaction that a child has with his environment as he grows up.

## **Communicative Approach**

Its main objective to build communicate in the target language, assuming that the content of their lessons must have semantic notions and social functions, not just linguistic structures. The student works regularly in groups or in pairs, in situations where one has the information that the other needs, students are immersed in dramatizations (role-plays) that adjust the use of the foreign language in real-life situations and different social contexts. The activities and materials are authentic and reflect the real scenarios. The skills are integrated from the beginning in activities that require the four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking). Additionally, the application of this approach allows a constant communication which helps to correct errors from the interaction between students, teacher and context. This has been a suitable approach to perform different activities within the classroom that are meant to achieve the goal of improving their communication skills.

### **3.1.2 Definitions of competences**

In this subchapter it is important to mention that language competencies are also key components for the teaching of English. According to Chomsky linguistic competence refers to: "a system of rules that, internalized by the student, conform their verbal knowledge (expression) and allow them to understand an infinite number of linguistic statements (comprehension)", referred to know how to use the grammatical rules of the language (Chomsky, 1965). Hymes, 1972, defines Communicative Competence as the «capacity that the learner acquires of knowing how to properly use a language leading him to distinguish

the different possible social situations», referred to know how to use the functions of the language in social communicative situations. Bearing in mind the above, it is possible to affirm that students need to be able to feel comfortable using proper grammar to produce and thus develop more confidence when it comes to having a conversation in English. The teacher and the class environment play an important role within this process as they provide the tools for students to be able to interact (Góngora, ed., 2008).

### **Definition of communicative competence**

The communicative competence (Hymes, 1972, p. 269) encompasses the four fundamental aspects of language such as oral and written communication; auditory and reading comprehension, also includes the promotion of grammar use. Canale and Swain (1980, p. 242) identified four components of communicative competence. The first of these is the grammatical competence, which includes the knowledge of the language code, this in turn includes components such as: vocabulary, word formation, meaning, sentence formation, pronunciation and spelling. The second component is the sociolinguistic competence, which includes the knowledge to produce and understand the language in different sociolinguistic contexts taking into account some factors such as the status of the participants, the purpose of the interaction and the rules established for the interaction. The third component is communicative competence, the ability to combine and connect oral expressions and written sentences in a meaningful context. The fourth component is the strategic competence which includes the use of language to achieve the objective of communication.

After presenting the analysis of the different methods that exist for the teaching of a second language or foreign language, it is very difficult to apply a single method to achieve a specific objective, especially if this objective is very broad to the degree of wanting to make students master the language. This research focused on applying the skill of communication and listening skill to ensure that students achieve a better level of language competence.

## Competences from the CEFR

The common European Framework for languages is widely known all over the globe since it fully describes what students are able to do when interacting in a foreign language. There are six levels described as follows A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 (Little, 2018).

Level group	Level group name	Level	Level name	Description
A	Basic user	A1	<b>Breakthrough or beginner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.</li> <li>· Can introduce themselves and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people they know and things they have.</li> <li>· Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</li> </ul>
		A2	<b>Waystage or elementary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment).</li> <li>· Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Can describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.</li></ul>
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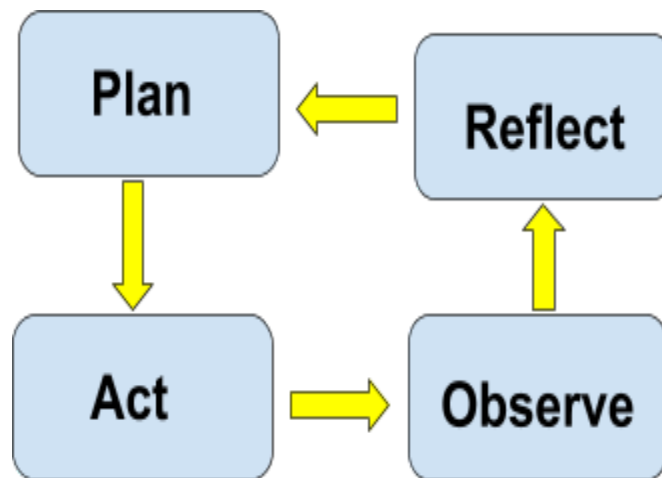
**Chart 1.** Common European framework for languages.



## 4 METHODOLOGY

Irny and Rose (2005) defines methodology as the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It also comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a particular branch of any knowledge.

Bearing the above in mind, this project includes the action research methodology which has become a key component for research and development projects. To give a better understanding on how this method works, it is important to see the following diagram:



**Chart 2.** Diagram of action research method.

Action research is principally a strategy for the development of teachers as researchers in the classroom so that they can use their research to improve their teaching and at the same time their students' learning outcomes. It is hard to say who named it this way but what it is possible to know, is that many authors whose researches were involved in what action research is today, some of them involve: action research (Lewin, 1946), action learning (Revons, 1971), reflective practice (Schon, 1983), action design (Argry, 1985), experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), the PDCA cycle (Deming, 1986), PLA, PAR, PAD, PALM, PRA1 , action evaluation (Rothman, 1999), and transformational learning (Marquardt, 1999).

According to Elliott (1991) this method of investigation is a process that teachers welcome to respond in an appropriate way to the situations that arise in professional practice.

The aim of this project is to provide students with the necessary tools and support to improve their communication skills in English.

### Organization of activities performed during one academic year

Activity name	Aims	Outcomes and observations
<p><b>Getting to know you.</b></p> <p>2 Sessions of 45 minutes</p>	<p>-Get to know students names and preferences through various activities in which they had to provide detailed information followed by a games.</p> <p>- Review simple past tense.</p> <p>The following presentation was used:  <a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B-1qm2C4lZd8Mlp4d1Y2cUJc1E">https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B-1qm2C4lZd8Mlp4d1Y2cUJc1E</a></p>	<p>Students participated actively since it was their first time talking to a foreign teacher in English. It was evident that many of them were shy and felt unprepared to start talking about their preferences..</p> <p>The content for this activity took a whole month since students had to write an autobiography in which several grammar tenses were used to present it to the whole class additionally several English tenses were reviewed: Present simple, present continuous, past simple and future simple.</p>
<p><b>Comparing Colombia and Slovakia.</b></p> <p>4 sessions of 45 minutes</p>	<p>The aim of this activity was to test students' listening skill by showing them a presentation about colombia in which they were asked many comprehension questions followed by two interactive activities</p> <p><a href="https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1eCFkmMofJpPaxZmJJ9zH3szZ2XmMt3zFeCWPRCP-BT4/edit?usp=sharing">https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1eCFkmMofJpPaxZmJJ9zH3szZ2XmMt3zFeCWPRCP-BT4/edit?usp=sharing</a></p> <p><b>Colombian Traditions</b>  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FV9DWMBVsDA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FV9DWMBVsDA</a></p>	<p>Students were asked to prepare a presentation of Slovakia as a group and talk about their country taking into account the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National symbols</li> <li>Places and capitals</li> <li>Customs and traditions</li> </ul> <p>Most of the students showed a very positive attitude towards the development of this activity and they were forced to work in groups, think and organize their ideas to be able to do a presentation in front of their</p>

	<p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1x9HmlBI7o&amp;t=7s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1x9HmlBI7o&amp;t=7s</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvl_1cwvaR8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvl_1cwvaR8</a></p>	<p>peers. The outcomes were very satisfying. Students worked hard and prepared the following presentation.</p> <p><b>Slovakia</b>  <a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PB6aOK0yJz4-gN5JabW3CbyLLzNJ1_-b/view?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PB6aOK0yJz4-gN5JabW3CbyLLzNJ1_-b/view?usp=sharing</a></p>
<p><b>Hitting the road on holiday</b></p> <p>4 sessions of 45 minutes</p>	<p>Roleplay everyday life situations in which students demonstrate a basic understanding on how to talk about their holiday plans, destinations and activities performed in summer.</p> <p>Future simple review- Will and going to.</p> <p>The following presentation was shown.  <a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=1O0_3XjEL6oyIYn6DMDTWGgvb65NgzUKI9mrwKcikNIY">https://drive.google.com/open?id=1O0_3XjEL6oyIYn6DMDTWGgvb65NgzUKI9mrwKcikNIY</a></p>	<p>Students demonstrated a very positive attitude during the completion of this activities because they did not know a lot of vocabulary related to traveling, another important fact is that students were also engaged in role-plays and situations in which they had to rely on new vocabulary.</p>
<p><b>What I do for fun</b></p> <p>4 sessions of 45 minutes</p>	<p>-Talk about what they like to do for fun, free time activities, hobbies, etc.</p> <p>- Zero conditional and first conditional .</p> <p>Worksheets  <a href="http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/keystone/state/ca/pdf/apar/SKill-Sharpners-3/SS3_U01_p003.pdf">http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/keystone/state/ca/pdf/apar/SKill-Sharpners-3/SS3_U01_p003.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.macmillaninspiratio">http://www.macmillaninspiratio</a></p>	<p>Students were very receptive towards the development of this activity, they were very engaged when watching the videos as some of them identified with some of the most extreme sports. Girls were more interested than boys which was surprising but turned out to be a good point for them to start discussion in terms of who is better at sports girls or boys.</p>

	<p><a href="https://www.n.com/original/files/2010/07/INSP1_ws11.pdf">n.com/original/files/2010/07/INSP1_ws11.pdf</a></p> <p>Extreme sports <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDKc6z4LRgQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDKc6z4LRgQ</a></p> <p><a href="https://en.islcollective.com/resources/printables/worksheets_doc_docx/lets_talk_about_what_if_conditionals-lets-talk/4488">https://en.islcollective.com/resources/printables/worksheets_doc_docx/lets_talk_about_what_if_conditionals-lets-talk/4488</a></p>	
<p><b>Bright future ahead</b> 4 sessions of 45 minutes</p>	<p>- Review future tenses Will and going to</p> <p>-Talk about future plans</p>	<p>During the development of this activity many students did not feel certain about whether to use going to or will in english, that's why extra homework plus several worksheets were needed for them to be able to master this grammar.</p>
<p><b>What I want to do when I finish school</b> 4 sessions of 45 minutes</p>	<p>- Learn job-related vocabulary <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nalkpQ_cIt0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nalkpQ_cIt0</a></p> <p>-Relative clauses.</p> <p>The following presentation was used during the development of this activity <a href="https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1yyqgOIyBFX6uS4_478fPSIqwb1ZVY3KtqJUuROCNJDO/edit?usp=sharing">https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1yyqgOIyBFX6uS4_478fPSIqwb1ZVY3KtqJUuROCNJDO/edit?usp=sharing</a></p>	<p>Students participated very actively and had to perform several job interviews, additionally, they had to write an example of a CV which they found very useful for their future jobs or careers.</p>
<p><b>Fame and fortune</b> 4 sessions of 45 minutes</p>	<p>-Present perfect tense. For and since.</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B-1qm2C4lZd8Q2tSOXhIUVVScTA">https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B-1qm2C4lZd8Q2tSOXhIUVVScTA</a></p> <p>-Review of regular and irregular</p>	<p>Students watched a documentary in which they were shown several situations of people who went bankrupt because of vice and drug abuse. They had the opportunity to talk about their favorite characters from movies, music bands and describe in general the</p>

	<p>verbs</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=1XqW5ykyGETJnBRuLhAOChUTMhz-iEHR4">https://drive.google.com/open?id=1XqW5ykyGETJnBRuLhAOChUTMhz-iEHR4</a></p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B-1qm2C4lZd8b2dhNjZaTWZSOFk">https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B-1qm2C4lZd8b2dhNjZaTWZSOFk</a></p>	<p>pros and cons of being famous in this society.</p>
<p><b>Health and safety</b> 4 sessions of 45 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relative pronouns. Should, might.</li> <li>- Body systems and functions.</li> <li>- <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mc5Wq0offG0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mc5Wq0offG0</a></li> <li>- Express health status by using common vocabulary</li> <li>- <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3Yr7NSSm48">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3Yr7NSSm48</a></li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<p>Students were a little bored at the beginning of this lesson since they had to speak about different functions and systems. Some of them expressed that they don't like science at all and it was a bit difficult to carry out some of my interactive activities. Over all they did a good job on these sessions and the biggest outcome was for them to learn more about the human body and be aware of their eating habits and the consequences of these.</p>
<p><b>Relationships</b> 4 sessions of 45 minutes</p>	<p>-Basic phrasal verbs</p> <p>Worksheets used for the lesson <a href="https://agendaweb.org/verbs/phrasal-verbs-worksheets-lessons">https://agendaweb.org/verbs/phrasal-verbs-worksheets-lessons</a></p>	<p>Students had a hard time learning how to form different phrasal verbs, that's why all these sessions were taught taking into account that this was a new topic and that in their mother tongue (Slovak) they don't have any of these language modification. Many of them needed extra homework to be able to understand the most common ones and use them to express their ideas and thoughts regarding human relationships.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation process</b> 2 sessions of 45 minutes</p>	<p>-Review all vocabulary and contents studied through the</p>	<p>Students had to present a project in which their speaking skill had</p>

	academic year as well as additional activities performed in class	to be demonstrated. Some of them chose to do roleplays, other decided to learn poems, other decided to do presentations about their dream job or future career. The point of evaluating their speaking skill was very positive by the fact that they really seemed to have enjoyed the lessons and even though they had lot of homework from other subjects they were constantly making efforts to engage in these conversational lessons. As a final activity I designed a certificate of completion which was a good strategy to keep them motivated to learn and at the same time to show themselves their current progress.
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**Chart 3.** List of performed activities during one academic year (9 months)

**Schedule:** Classes with 8b were taught every Tuesday for 45 minutes.

#### 4.1 METHODS OF RESEARCH

As a research method, I chose direct contact through a semi-structured interview. Since it is necessary to collect the data for analysis to maintain thematic concentration. The plan's evaluation is aimed to verify the effect of my teaching process during one academic year at this institution.

##### Selection of participants

For this project, I chose one of the 8th grade groups which is made up of 13 students. The following chart provides more information about the group.

<b>List of students: Full name and age</b>
Laura Šestáková. 13 years old
Lucia Piecková. 14 years old
Natália Novotná. 13 years old

Julia Súderová. 13 years old Ester Poláčková. 14 years old Michaela Mrukviová. 14 years old Michaela Tatarková. 13 years old Veronika Mart'áková. 14 years old Matej Kubis. 14 years old Matej Zeleňák. 13 years old Oliver Hlinka. 14 years old Adam Oravec. 13 years old Samuel Banacky. 14 years old.
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**Chart 4.** List of students.

After the completion of the intervention, 3 participants were interviewed using the following semi-structured interview:

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you been learning English?
3. What is your opinion about learning English?
4. How often do you practice your English and where?
5. How do you feel about taking English lessons with me as a foreign teacher?
6. Do you feel you understand English better now in comparison with last year?
7. What do you find different between my methods of teaching a class versus the traditional methods in Slovakia?
8. What do you find easy or difficult about my lessons?
9. Which one from my sessions helped you improved your English?
10. Would you recommend other students to take lessons with me?

**Interview 1.** Matej Zeleňák. 13 years old

- **How old are you?** - *I am 13 years old.*
- **How long have you been learning English?**- *I am not sure. I don't know.*
- **What is your opinion about learning English?**- *It is necessary for my future job as an IT engineer.*
- **How often do you practice your English and where?**- *When I come to school.*
- **How do you feel about taking English lessons with me as a foreign teacher?** - *I think it's great to have international teachers.*
- **Do you feel you understand English better now in comparison with last year?** -*Yes, a little. I am not very good.*
- **What do you find different between my methods of teaching a class versus the traditional methods in Slovakia?**- *I like your lessons because I can be myself and everything is not grammar. You called us by name and it's funny when you pronounce our last names.*
- **What do you find easy or difficult about my lessons?** -*Some videos you use, sometimes they speak too fast and I don't understand everything.*
- **Which one from my sessions helped you improved your English?**- *I don't know, maybe when you asked me to write about my future job.*
- **Would you recommend other students to take lessons with me?** -*Yes, teacher.*

**Chart 5.** Interview 1



**Interview 2** Lucia Piecková. 14 years old. Transcript

- **How old are you?** - *I'm good thank you. A little cold now. Oh sorry teacher I am 14 yes.*
- **How long have you been learning English?**- *Many years, maybe 5 because I take english class since I was 7 or 8 years old.*
- **What is your opinion about learning English?**- *I like it, it's very important for future jobs and also to interact with people from around the world. I like it because I listen to music in English so I spend time after school watching interviews on You tube of my favorite singers.*
- **How often do you practice your English and where?**- *Maybe everyday because I like watching serials on netflix. Sometimes I change the audio to Slovak if I don't understand well.*
- **How do you feel about taking English lessons with me as a foreign teacher?** - *I like it very much because it's fun, my previous teachers never taught us in a fun way, it was very grammatical and traditional so I didn't like it. I know I speak English horrible but I like it.*
- **Do you feel you understand English better now in comparison with last year?** -*Yes, I started to watch new serials at home the ones you recommended me so I feel I can understand more and more the problem is that sometimes I don't know how to respond or explain things.*
- **What do you find different between my methods of teaching a class versus the traditional methods in Slovakia?**- *My other teachers are always angry and they only scream at us to be quiet but you are never angry with us. I like your lessons because you use videos, games and interesting ways of teaching us vocabulary.*
- **What do you find easy or difficult about my lessons?** - *American accent is a little difficult for me to understand because I listen to British celebrities and movies, so this is difficult and also that you speak fast sometimes. Easy the exercises in class.*
- **Which one from my sessions helped you improved your English?**- *Recording myself, I feel better because I have a horrible pronunciation.*
- **Would you recommend other students to take lessons with me?** -*Of course.*

**Chart 6.** Interview 2

**Interview 3.** Veronika Mart'áková. 14 years old

- **How old are you?** - *I am 14 years old.*
- **How long have you been learning English?**- *Maybe 4 years, this is my second year in this school.*
- **What is your opinion about learning English?**- *I need it for my career and for school.*
- **How often do you practice your English and where?**- *With my brother in law when he comes for christmas and also in school.*
- **How do you feel about taking English lessons with me as a foreign teacher?** - *My mom is happy that I can understand english more and I feel happy too because it's good.*
- **Do you feel you understand English better now in comparison with last year?** -*Yes, of course. I like video games and I understand a little more now.*
- **What do you find different between my methods of teaching a class versus the traditional methods in Slovakia?**- *My old teacher gave us a big book to read. I don't like reading very much. You teach us and you're always happy that's good. You call us by name and remember all of us.*
- **What do you find easy or difficult about my lessons?** -*Easy, your pronunciation because I watch american movies and serials, difficult some exercises from the copies. I don't like grammar.*
- **Which one from my sessions helped you improved your English?**- *I am very shy, so I think recording a video of myself helped me to be more open.*
- **Would you recommend other students to take lessons with me?** -*Yes, to my sister she's in another school.*

**Chart 7.** Interview 3

## 5 ANALYSIS

The importance of motivation when introducing the new topics was very important as it gave students more confidence and allowed them to participate in class. The interview results showed several similarities since two of them agreed that recording themselves to listen to their own pronunciation turns out to be a good technique to improve one's accent. They all agreed that taking lessons with a non-Slovak speaking teacher helped in the sense that they had to force themselves to use English as the main source to communicate in class. Additionally the fact I had a different accent encouraged them to watch serials and documentaries from different speakers to compare their accent and understand, recognize differences and similarities. All students agreed that approaching students with a positive attitude, smiling and calling them by their names is a good way to make them feel more comfortable and thus to have them work during the lesson. It was noticeable that the activities were carried out satisfactorily because these teenagers developed confidence, motivation and concentration using the proposed vocabulary and expressions learned in each class. It should be noted that although there certain difficulties for some students, most of them responded effectively to the sessions.

When analyzing the students' overall performance throughout the interventions and interviews, it was identified that they developed more confidence to speak in English in each session. Some of them responded positively to my instructions and given tasks. The result of the majority of activities was quite positive because they did not only learned to recognize pronunciation patterns but also grammar tenses. Frequent questions were asked to test their comprehension. Some of them did not very well but the point again was to give them confidence to be able to have basic conversations in English in a daily basis. Students learned new vocabulary in order to use it in the classroom. Likewise, the activities were carried out satisfactorily 100% in English since I am unable to speak Slovak.

## 6 RESULTS

After identifying several factors which held students back from talking and participation in class the following analysis were reached:

- Working with the communicative Approach allowed students to engage in most of the activities as English was the main source of communication. The list of topics proposed for each session were developed through the chosen techniques to work each activity.
- Teaching English for a year in Slovakia allowed me to learn more about different scenarios which are completely different from Colombia, I did not only gained more knowledge but also improved my teaching skills.
- Students were attracted to the way they acquired and strengthen the vocabulary worked in English, which sparked interest towards a language that for them was alien to their process of teaching and learning.
- The acquisition and strengthening of the vocabulary was presented for the students in a dynamic way, allowing them to express themselves naturally and giving them many possibilities to speak in class.
- Students were not only able to express their thoughts through different activities, but they enhanced their creative capacity, giving them another way of expressing their emotions, thoughts and, most importantly the strengthening of the speaking skill in English.
- Through the planning of each session for this project I learned to be more resourceful and open for changes within each lesson keeping in mind that having a plan B and plan C is absolutely necessary for English teachers.
- Through the application of the action research, I did not only reflect on the students' opportunities for improvement but also noticed that as I teacher I have to be always open for suggestions and improvements in the pedagogical field.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

After performing all the proposed activities of this intervention, it is possible to conclude that:

- Being aware of the importance of English in our society will allow students and teachers to reflect and transfer new knowledge helping students to think more critical to judge and resolve real-life situations using the language.
- Having a non-Slovak speaking teacher for an academic year showed a significant cultural shift because students were exposed to different traditions, celebrations and ways of socializing which enriched them with new vocabulary.
- All students from grade 8th B needed to be motivated and pushed towards the learning of English in a friendly manner so they were able to achieve the academic outcomes proposed in each session of the project.
- The acquisition and strengthening of the vocabulary was presented for students using current information from sources such as: YouTube, magazines, and TV allowing them to express themselves naturally and giving them many possibilities to interpret and assimilate their environment.
- Applying communicative approach allowed students to improve the acquisition of English vocabulary with the help of activities, which were designed in a dynamic, playful, creative and participatory way.
- As a suggestion I think teachers should be more friendly, they should address students with a positive and encouraging attitude.
- Students should also have access to an online platform in which they can reinforce the contents of their curriculum in a way that keeps them connected.
- Teachers should avoid using Slovak language at all times. English as the target language should be spoken by all, this way students will have to rely on English to communicate within the school.

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## 9 APPENDIXES

**Appendix 1:** The following photographs were taken during the intervention of the project.



Board race. Jobs



Discussions about their dream job.



Discussions about working conditions.



Role-play. Job interviews





Introductory game about Slovak traditions.



addressing holidays and traditions in Colombia.



In this picture students are working of some worksheets in which they had to learn about new phrasal verbs.



Comparing Colombian versus Slovak traditions during a year.