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A CREATIVE PROJECT AS A SUPPORTIVE TOOL AND A WAY TO DEVELOP  
ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

Master's thesis

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to present a creative project as a tool that supports students in English language studies and enriches their speaking skills; to prove that with the help of creative projects it is possible to vary the banality of the methods used and to support teaching. The next is to analyse speaking skills of the students who are involved in creative projects and to compare their skills with those of students who are not introduced to this type of work; to analyse the potential of using creative projects in English classes and the extent to which they are used.

The question chosen as a topic for the research appears to be of great importance, because at present according to the Estonian National Curriculum (2011), one of the main points of school education is production of a creative project and a research paper. It contains a sub-clause where it is said that students of the third stage of the basic school have to be engaged in creative project writing, while students of the upper secondary level are involved into doing a research. A creative project includes different variants of work made in cooperation with a teacher. It can be a mini research paper, a project, artwork or the like. It is also one of the conditions to be completed while graduating from secondary school. It coincides with learning and educational objectives as well. Creative projects might have a great influence on the study process and support students in their language acquisition thus developing their language skills, especially speaking skills. Moreover, the Estonian National Curriculum (2011) has also a sub-clause depicting formative assessment as the one being forced to support students' development as well as to upgrade their general competences. Creative projects might be a good way to facilitate formative assessment at school providing a student with both an exciting and educative way of learning. The process of producing a creative project provides a coincidence with cross-curricular topics which are also mentioned in the Estonian National Curriculum (2011).

The introductory part of this paper *Types, Requirements and Organization of a Creative Project* gives an overview of the types of creative projects. It presents creative projects' requirements and stages to be completed both by the student and the teacher while producing a project. Also, it describes the role of the teacher supervising the project and the student involved into a creative project. This part of the research is based on the theoretical background developed by the main specialists of the National

Examination and Qualification Centre Ene Kulderknup (2011) and Inge Raudsepp (2011) and the Estonian National Curriculum (2011).

Chapter I *The Implementation of a Creative Project in Practice* refers to the role of creative projects in schooling of Estonian students and presents a creative project as a way to develop students' speaking skills as well as other general competences and to support formative assessment at school. The problematic part of creative projects will be discussed as well. Speaking skills development approaches are presented and the role of speaking is discussed. These points will be handled on the basis of the Estonian National Curriculum (2011), the knowledge of Ene Kulderknup (2011) and Inge Raudsepp (2011), Jack C. Richards (1990), Rebecca L. Oxford (1990), Simon Haines (1989) and Estonian mass media.

Chapter II *A Creative Project in the EFL Class* is the empirical part of the thesis. It attempts to define the role of a creative project as a means of realisation of the National Curriculum general competences and formative assessment. It also compiles the analysis of the third level of basic school students' creative projects presented in Narva School of Humanities and the popularity of the topics chosen by the students; it also introduces an English lesson as the one to present project work in. There are profiles of the students and the analysis of the level of their speaking skills before producing a creative project and after it according to the standards of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Also, these results will be compared to those students who are not involved creative projects. Additionally, students' opinions of the EFL creative project are also included.

The theoretical and practical outcomes of the research are summarised in the Conclusion.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **TYPES, REQUIREMENTS AND ORGANIZATION OF A CREATIVE PROJECT**

In 2011 the new Estonian National Curriculum was introduced and there was a new requirement saying that a school has to organise a creative project for students at the third stage of their compulsory education connected with the topics which are provided in their curriculum. A creative project can be a research work, a project, an artwork or any alike work. It can be presented individually or in a group.

Since the 1st of September, 2013 producing a creative project has become an obligatory stage to finish compulsory education.

According to Kulderknuup and Raudsepp (2011:3) the aim of a creative project is to offer students a chance adequate to their possibilities and interests to support their self esteem and to support:

- Student's perception of the world and his or her creativity as well as to develop a skill to express oneself and facilitate new ideas through the process of emersion of the subjects and working with creative projects ;
- The development of learning motivation, self-reflection and critical way of thinking;
- Student's development as a creative and versatile person;
- General competences such as individual and group work, problem solving, critical way of thinking; argumentative, self-expression and presentation skills; work with different sources and data, searching for activities and following them, analyzing activities and work, IT usage etc.;
- Student's possibility to feel what is better to be learnt, that helps to make proper choices in his or her future studying.

#### **The Project Method**

Furthermore Michael Knoll (1997: para 1) suggests that the project method "is generally considered a means by which students can (a) develop independence and responsibility, and (b) practice social and democratic modes of behavior." He suggests that William Heard Kilpatrick was the first one to present and describe the project as a method to teach and develop in the 20th century.

In other words a project is not a modern invention, but it has been widely used recently in different spheres and has gained more popularity in education. However, the term “project” dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was Italy, where it was used in architectural and engineering education at that time. Kilpatrick made it student-centered and the role of the teacher had become insufficient. Teacher was not a leader of a process anymore; his or her role was minimal. The teacher was a guide. Thus the role of a course book has become minimal as well. Students have received a chance to control and diversify their learning process. They can act “through their senses”, familiarize with the world on their own, concentrating on their interests. Students can solve a problem in a different way that accentuates on empirical learning.

Kilpatrick (1918) says that if education is supposed to be life then children need to practice for this life and he suggests that students can practice now how to live. In other words they should have an option to learn how to learn. The concept of the project method is the same.

As for language learning projects are considered to be “multi-skill activities” that emphasise on subjects (Haines, 1989: 1). Dr John Taylor (2013: para 1) suggests that “project work offers a bridge to independent learning for students /.../ projects can be exciting, personalised learning journeys”. Kathy Bartelmay, a curriculum director in Duke School in Durham, USA, points out that:

Projects are in-depth investigations that challenge students to apply skills, knowledge, and strategies from different content areas as they do authentic research, analyze data, think deeply about problems and draw conclusions. As projects evolve, students build on their unique interests and talents and become experts in a particular area of the project topic. Through project work students not only learn new concepts and content, they develop the competencies essential for future learning: the ability to formulate essential questions, conduct research both independently and collaboratively, evaluate and synthesize results, present those results to others, and reflect on the strengths of their work and the ways they can improve ( Bartelmay, 2011: para 1).

While working with project students are devoted into maintaining the major objective, to create a final product, particular language aims are not given thus they have a chance to practice their knowledge of a language and abilities they have learned in common situations. Projects can be short or long termed activities and they are split into four groups:

- Information and research projects
- Survey projects
- Production projects
- Performance and organizational projects (Haines, 1989: 1).

Project work does not necessarily substitute the use of other methods. This is a way that gives students of different age groups, skills and level of speaking English an opportunity to work in an interesting way. This method also accompanies major methods used in the ESL classroom.

The project method learning is a student-centered learning and puts students' interests first, and it corresponds to the goals of the Estonian National Curriculum 2011 which says that "the school shall contribute to growing youth into a creative, diverse personality who are able to self-actualize in full-fledged manner in different roles: in the family, at work and in public life" (The Estonian National Curriculum, 2011).

When students carry out a project they are in charge of everything: from the point of choosing methods and topic till the point they get the final outcome (Haines, 1989: 2). The advantage here is that students might use authentic sources rather than using their coursebooks. Student's personal interest enables a creative usage of the target language.

### **The Process of Creative Project Organization**

Doing a creative project at school prepares students to deal with various situations that will be faced in their future learning. It is also a sort of experience that provides them with a practice that is necessary for doing their research in the upper secondary school. A creative project at school is a guided process (Kuldernup, 2011). Throughout this process a student masters skills of independent work and gained knowledge, develops creativity, consolidates and enriches his or her acquired abilities.

William Heard Kilpatrick suggested (1918: 4) that projects are *purposes* or *purposeful acts*. If to look at the word from the other side then *pro-ject* is *something pro-jected*. They can appraise of anything that purposes bring out in life. He also adds that with the help of this purposeful activity in the process of learning it is possible to use learner's *native capacities*. Thus this activity succeeds when there is an appropriate management (Kilpatrick, 1918: 18).

In this way creative projects might be considered as purposes that develop learners in the variety of ways. However, students in an EFL classroom are often engaged with the themed project that is done at the end of each topic. What is then the difference between them? EFL projects that are held in the classroom involve students of different levels of language skills and motivation. Though creative projects and themed projects have alike stages of production, the first ones have a different matter. When students choose a creative project, they do it following their interests in and



knowledge or awareness of this or that school subject. Hence creative projects require more devotion and creativity than themed projects and it is a longer process that teaches learners to be independent, creative and enterprising.

The main aspects and requirements of creative project performance and organization are established in the basic part of a school curriculum where a thorough description of the following is presented:

- Creative project organization;
- The choice of a topic of a creative project;
- Student's supervision;
- Creative project presentation;
- Creative project assessment.

The school administration together with teachers, an IT specialist and a librarian develop guidelines of creative project writing that contain a programme of carrying out the project. The school principal approves of:

- The coordinator of a creative project, who can be an assistant principal and class teachers, whose task is to look after the process of undertaking a creative project
- Creative project supervisors, who can be subject teachers or out of school people with a special qualification
- The members of the assessment committee
- The order of supervision, where the teacher's and student's time sheet is mentioned
- Main guidelines and an assessment scale
- The standards of carrying out a creative project and its arrangement
- The case of participating in a target subject contest and creative project equating to this

The choice of the topics is provided by the school itself. Students' task is to choose the subject they are interested in and then, with the help of their supervisor to decide in favour of the type of a project and means used while working with the project.

### **Types of Creative Projects**

According to the Estonian National Curriculum (2011) the final product of a project can be a research, an artwork or any other work connected with a subject; and it has to

correspond to the requirements of writing a creative project. If the student creates some kind of handicraft or an artwork, he or she has to compile a writing part which is completed according to the standards approved by the school. The list of types of projects has to be presented in the school curricula.

A creative project can be considered as accomplished, when the student takes part and achieves remarkable results in national or international contests such as Archimedes (the Estonian national contest) or GLOBE (the international contest of research works) (Kulderknup, 2011: 8).

### **The Role of the Teacher**

The main aspects of supervision of a creative project can be the following (Kulderknup, 2011: 8):

- The teaching and learning load of the both involved into a project cannot be too heavy, so it is important to decide when and how often the meeting or tutorial is going to be included into the timetable of a student and a teacher;
- The organization and supervision of a creative project is recommended to arrange during the first term;
- One supervisor cannot take more than four students or three groups;
- The amount of time spent with one student cannot be less than 15 hours, including time spent managing the project and for independent work as well;
- Supervisor has a guiding role:
  - helps students to make a choice and directs towards the sources of information;
  - advises literature if needed;
  - checks the correspondence of the content with the topic of the work, style sheet requirements and fulfillment of the timetable;
  - advises on the successful presentation of ideas and the form of presentation;
  - specifies the contribution of each group member into doing a creative project.

A creative project supervisor is the one who can advise the authors of outstanding projects to participate in academic competitions, contests and conferences.

Simon Haines (1989: 4) describes the role of the teacher as someone who believes in the successful outcome of a project. He says it is a crucial factor here. During working with the project not only students are the ones who learn, teachers have to learn as well. They learn how to give freedom to their students and “keep out of the way”.

In case the teachers are afraid of wasting time and effort, it is important to make thorough preparations before starting a project. Working on a project is a changing and unstable process and some may think that it is impossible to prepare students for this type of work. But Haines (1989: 5) suggests some practical advice and presents some “lead-in activities to practice specific skills”.

<b>Lead-in activity</b>	<b>Relevance to project work</b>
Giving a short talk	Reporting back / verbal summaries
Proofreading	Correcting written work / editing
Writing a questionnaire	Collecting information or opinions
Conducting an interview	Collecting information or opinions
Expressing information in different ways	Processing information
Making notes	Recording information efficiently
Writing letters	Requesting information/ invitations/ making arrangements

**Table 1.** *Lead-in Activities to Practice Specific Skills.*

If students are not used to work co-operatively, then they might need some activities that can provide them with the opportunity to discuss in order to experience the principle of creating and leading a project. “Coming to an agreement, allocating tasks and discussing a plan of action” are the three means of achieving the goal of a project.

The time for making preparation tasks can be chosen depending on students’ needs. They can be presented in the beginning of the project or while doing it, when students feel the lack of this or that quality.

If at the beginning of a project teacher’s main task is to arise interest, at the final stage of project work the teacher is an organizer and evaluator. His or her role is to make sure that students have attained the goal (Haines, 1989: 4).

## **Creative Project Presentation**

A school has to claim the dates when creative projects can be defended and presented to the audience.

Ene Kulderknup (2011: 9) states that the presentation of a creative project is done after a student has presented his or her work to a supervisor and an assessment committee. The approaches of presenting a project can be the following:

- The defence of a creative project can be done both in school and out of it on the basis of an agreement with an assessment committee;
- It can also be done as a part of a school subject week, like a week of the Estonian language;
- In case of several authors of project work all members have to present the project;
- Students are usually given about 10 minutes to present a project orally;
- A speech has to be done on the basis of a written text;
- During the defence students are strongly advised to use various IT equipment and multimedia.

## **Creative Project Evaluation**

As the National Examination and Qualification Centre suggests (Kulderknup, 2011: 10) the requirements for creative project assessment are presented in the assessment direction. The aim of creative project assessment is to represent the means of attaining the goals as well as to give a feedback on a creative project. It also has to develop a critical attitude to the work itself, to encourage a student for the next project thus supporting his or her personal development.

The assessment is done by the committee that consists of three people, including a creative project supervisor. If a project is completed in a group, then the work of each member is assessed. This task is achieved on the basis of a special diary that should be completed during the process of carrying out the project.

Diane Philips (1999: 15) suggests the evaluating of not only the final product but of the process as well. What? Why? How successful? These are the questions that have to be in mind while evaluating the process of undertaking the project. It has to be done

on a regular basis at the beginning, during and at the end of students' work. The evaluation of a creative project is closely connected to formative assessment, which guides students in their progress of mastering a language.

It is essential to evaluate both for the supervisor of the project and the student because only in this way it is possible to see how the methods and materials are accustomed. The in-process evaluation of a project contributes to the increase of students' interest in the level of their knowledge and it is something that helps students grow into self-reliant people (Philips et al, 1999: 15).

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To follow the National Curriculum's requirement of including creative projects into school activities and taking into consideration the above described types, requirements and organization of a creative project the present research hypothesizes that:

Creative projects can be a good way to support teaching in EFL classes as they provide students with a different and interesting way of learning that can develop their speaking skills and general competences.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A CREATIVE PROJECT IN PRACTICE**

The target of this chapter is to analyse the potential of creative projects being used in ESL classroom and their role in developing speaking skills. However, it is impossible to discuss it without mentioning the process of conversation, language acquisition and approaches to speaking skills development.

Moreover, the latest version of the Estonian National Curriculum emphasises teacher's attention on formative assessment. It is presented here as well as its role in the learning process and the opportunity to accomplish it through creative project evaluation.

Doing various projects teachers and students can face some problematic issues. They are portrayed in this chapter and some advice on how to cope with them is also provided.

#### **1. 1. The Role of Speaking and Conversation in the ESL Classroom**

In sociolinguistics speaking "is a tool to assist the identification and labeling of components of linguistic interaction /.../ in order to speak a language correctly, one needs not only to learn its vocabulary and grammar, but also the context in which words are used" (Hymes, 1974).

On the one hand speaking consists of the target vocabulary, but it concerns the grammatical issues as well. While speaking on this or that topic students not only develop their communicative skills, but they gain practice in building proper grammar structures too.

Doing creative projects students come across various sources of literature on a target topic. They read a lot, search for materials through the Internet, and that is where they might stumble upon authentic material. Further on they communicate with each other using the target vocabulary which is better remembered in the process of its active use. Here it is important not to forget that working with a creative project they choose the topic they are interested in and in this way their desire to search for more and more appealing articles might increase in the process of writing. Each creative project ends with the defence of the end product where students use speaking skills while presenting it. This is the point where their knowledge of the target language emerges.

Here may appear a question concerning speaking skills usage: whether students apply them while defending or there is a place for them in the process of undertaking

projects. Learners definitely need communication while starting, doing and finishing their projects. Speaking is used in different stages of a project. Simon Haines (1989: 2) suggests the following scheme as a sample of language skills required in different stages of work.

Stage	Skill	Main activities
1	Speaking	Class discussion
2	Speaking / writing	Group discussion / Making notes
3	Reading/ writing	Collecting information / Making notes
4	Writing / reading	First draft of work / proofreading (correcting written work)
5	Speaking	Discussion (decision-making) / re-writing (final draft)
6	Speaking	Reporting back (short talks / class discussion)

**Table 2.** *Skills Required in Different Stages of Work.*

Moreover, if a student does his or her project in the form of mini-research, speaking is needed at the stage of interviewing or collecting information from other students using different forms of interrogation to communicate.

What is conversation, then? Jack C. Richards (1990: 67) claims that “conversation is a multifunctional activity”. Multifunction is explained through “the purposes of conversation, turn-taking, topics, repair, formal features of conversation, and the notion of fluency” (ibid.).

Conversation has a great role in the EFL classroom as it is the final product of acquiring grammar and vocabulary. It is not the only one, of course, as writing is some sort of production, too. But during lessons and working with projects students are mostly engaged with speaking activities. The English language is more advantageous here comparing to science subjects as students have a lot of oral activities during their lessons. When young learners make first steps in acquiring the English language, most of the time they use speaking and listening skills. It can be compared to native language acquisition, when a child learns to speak first and only then produces the language in writing. Hence speaking is production. And creative projects contain a process of acquiring and production. At this point it would be appropriate to explain the notion of learning strategies and the ways they can be applied. Work with a creative project is based on using these strategies.

## 1. 2. Approaches to the Development of Speaking Skills Applying Direct and Indirect Strategies

Today there are two main ways in teaching conversation and other important skills like reading, listening and writing – direct and indirect approaches. Rebecca L. Oxford (1990: 57) presents three groups of direct strategies in her book that are used to advance speaking, listening, writing and reading, by mentioning, however, that they work best when being combined with indirect strategies.

The problem of fluent communication and speaking has always been there, and even today, there are learners who cannot produce a fluent talk as teachers do not pay enough attention to developing this language skill or use methods that do not support the usage of the language itself. Students are forced to learn new vocabulary and grammar by drilling; unfortunately, they cannot apply new material afterwards, in other words, they have no real interaction in the language. Rebecca L. Oxford (1990: 1) writes:

Learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. Strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence.

In addition to this she suggests that communication is not only about the act of speech but it also involves all four skills being used. Metacognitive strategies provide students with the adjustment of cognition and they benefit to concentration, planning and assessing of their own development. They help to advance self-determination and persistence that students need to acquire the language and obtain communicative competence (Oxford, 1990: 8).

Particular *cognitive strategies*, like analyzing, and memory strategies are especially effective for *understanding* and *recalling new information*. *Compensation strategies* help students to master *knowledge gaps* and interact easily (Oxford, 1990: 9).

Memory strategies are connected with *creating mental linkages*, *applying images and sounds*, *reviewing well* and *employing action*. Hereafter several ways of memory strategies to produce and memorise new context are presented:

- *Placing new words into a context*. This learning strategy is supposed to be used by producing new material (words and expressions) while speaking or writing (Oxford, 1990: 60).
- *Grouping*. Here it is important to unite the new elements in order to eliminate unessential issues out of context (ibid.: 58).



- *Elaborating/Associating*. This includes the connection of new aspects with the ones that are already kept in mind (ibid.: 60).
- *Using imagery*. The usage of pictures in mind can also help even with the usage of words that represent emotions; here various symbols or diagrams can be practiced. (ibid.: 61).
- *Reviewing*. This strategy is good when reviewing is well organized. Students need to come across the words and phrases they have once learnt again and again. It is a sort of spiral principal to memorise the material (ibid.: 66).
- *Semantic Mapping*. It can be a good way to systematize everything in the form of a map or diagram, so it would be possible to see how ideas accustom together (ibid.: 61).
- *Representing sounds in memory*. This strategy implicates the sounds that can unite the new context with known words, which can be taken from any language (ibid.: 63).
- *Using physical response or sensation*. This means performing or carrying out what is heard or read; students can also accompany the *physical sensations* with parts of speech from the read extract (Oxford, 1990: 66).

If to talk about cognitive strategies they are presented in *practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning and creating structure for input and output*.

- *Repeating* is the strategy where a student has to understand the interpretation of context and it can be used with all four skills. It can be done in the way of listening to different recordings and repeating information in mind. It means reading more attentively to catch the meaning or highlighting it. (ibid.: 70).
- *Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems*. Reproducing authentic material and language trying to repeat pronunciation and intonation is essential, too. It is necessary not just listen but speak as well. Here it is important to try to escape of using *visual and contextual clues*. This strategy can also aid with writing systems. In this way learners have to copy letters, words to memorize their spelling and later produce them in significant speaking (ibid.: 71).

- *Recognizing and using formulas and patterns.* The usage of these two can extremely boost on the way a student understands and uses the target language. Some *patterns* or *formulas* are authentic and they need to stick to learner's mind to be used while interacting (ibid.: 72).
- *Recombining.* At this stage learners need to learn to apply a long context by uniting the words learnt before in a new form. The readymade product can even become nonsense, but it gives a meaningful training (ibid.: 74).
- *Practicing naturalistically.* This strategy means real *communication* and listening to authentic materials. Varieties of native English situations and offering exercises that can force students to use the language for speaking practice are the aspects that are crucial here. Individual or group projects, articles based on interviews are also an opportunity for learners. The last ones give a chance to facilitate students with a relevant and continuous *feedback* and *encouragement* (Oxford, 1990: 74).
- *Reasoning deductively.* Learners need to explain or evolve *hypotheses* after they have received some kind of information. It develops logical thinking (ibid.: 82).
- *Translating.* It can be good if used carefully not to make *word-for-word* translations that can become *a crutch* or unnecessary for the understanding of the language (ibid.: 84).
- *Transferring.* This means to apply linguistic knowledge and conceptual knowledge from a native language to the language that is learnt (ibid.: 85).

According to Rebecca Oxford (1990) from the point of view of indirect strategies that include metacognitive strategies it is important for the student to identify the aim of the task and plan the task itself. Learners need to have enough speaking practice and classroom time cannot provide it. Self-evaluation is a strategy that involves assessing of the progress in the usage of the target language. Learners have to be provided with some kind of *checklists* filled by their teacher, where they can trace the progress they have made. Listeners can work with the speakers to assess the process of speaking and the amount of understood context. Thus projects can afford this practice for learners of the target language.

All these direct and indirect strategies are used while students are devoted to undertaking a creative project and the strategies result in target language production and development, especially in the production of speaking skills.

### **1. 3. General Competences and National Curriculum Requirements**

According to the Estonian National Curriculum (2011) general competences are the skills that provide students with a successful performance in diverse spheres of life. They are evolved through school subjects, out-of-class activities, extra-curricular disciplines and are crucial for proper personality development. Among them are value, social, self-management, learning to learn, communicational, mathematics, and entrepreneurship competences. There are also subject field competences that are closely connected to learning outcomes. The last are the ones to be the basis for general competences and provide students with a feedback of learner's progress (The Estonian National Curriculum, 2011).

To follow the definitions given in the Estonian National Curriculum (*ibid.*), value competence is an ability that makes a student to appreciate the surrounding world, culture, social standards and relationships between people. Social competence is an ability that contributes to being a responsible citizen, who appreciates social values, norms and rules and follows them interacting with people, accepts their differences and is able to work cooperatively in different spheres of life. Self-management competence is an ability to evaluate oneself, one's weaknesses and strengths, be ready to cope with psychological and physical problems. Learning to learn competence is an ability to organize learning environment, plan one's studying process and follow it, analyse one's knowledge and skills thus to manage to see a need in future learning. Communicational competence is an ability to express clear and relevant ideas, considering situation and interlocutors; present one's point of view and explain it implementing relevant style and rich, expressive and proper language. Mathematics competence is an ability to use a language, symbols and methods while solving various problems in different spheres of life and work. Entrepreneurship competence is an ability to create ideas and realize them using gained knowledge and skills in different spheres of life and work; see problems and solutions to them; set the goals and realize them; organize cooperative activities, be initiative and responsible for one's results; to have a flexible reaction and take sensible risks (*ibid.*).

Finishing the third level of studying a student has to conform to these strategies and as for communicative skills he or she has to speak one foreign language along with possessing an ability to read and write in a foreign language. He or she should be able to think logically, creatively, and critically, have spatial reasoning to analyse, discuss and compare, use presentation methods, be open to personal development. Students have to acquire the skills to evaluate, to set goals and to assess the results; they need to be supported in developing one's interests and abilities (ibid.).

As the third stage of learning demands creation of a project, the process of carrying it out might support all general competences mentioned above and develop student's personality according to the requirements stated in the National Curriculum.

#### **1. 4. Formative Assessment and Evaluation**

According to the National Curriculum (2011: para 19) "assessment is a systematic gathering of information about the pupil's development, analysis of such information and providing of feedback". The main aims of assessment are the following:

- 1) to support the pupil's development;
- 2) to provide feedback regarding the pupil's learning progress;
- 3) to encourage and direct the pupil to study independently;
- 4) to guide the development of the pupil's self-esteem, and support the pupil in his or her choice of future educational career;
- 5) to guide the teacher's activities in supporting the pupils' learning and individual development;
- 6) to provide a basis for pupil's progression to the next grade and for the making of the decision on his or her graduation from basic school.

Formative assessment has a slightly different goal comparing with formal assessment with grades. Formative assessment has to encourage students for future development and make it possible for him or her to see and analyse the progress, evaluate own weaknesses and strengths during the process of learning. The learner is able to assess not only his/her own progress but the progress of classmates as well and to give or receive feedback (National Curriculum, 2011: para 20).

Activities offered by Dianne Phillips (Phillips et al, 1999: 17) correspond totally to formative assessment and make it possible to achieve its goals by doing projects. The authors suggest doing preference charts, class reviews, and reports to evaluate achievements.

Preference charts provide information not only for students but for teachers, too. Students can be offered to complete various charts or diaries where they would write about what appeals to them most or not in this or that kind of work, what is meaningful

or productive. Teachers can do *evaluation tasks* where children can assess each other's projects by giving a structured feedback of things they liked in the project and suggestions for improvement. It can also be the ones listed below (Phillips et al, 1999: 18):

- Looking at and reviewing each other's finished work
- Selecting the best examples from different groups for conclusion in the class magazine or for a wall display
- Awarding prizes for the best contributions
- Giving short presentations about the work different groups have done
- Showing a video clip or presenting an audio recording
- Presenting a role-play or sketch

The evaluation tasks have to be done on a regular basis thus getting students to be used to doing this and develop their general competences and skills in order to form learner's personality and interest to learn and achieve goals in different spheres of life.

### **1. 5. Problematic Issues**

Although projects have many advantages there are some problematic sides of this type of work. If to talk about EFL projects teachers might face the lack of interest or motivation as suggested by Simon Haines (1989). Here it would be reasonable to prepare students for this type of work if they are not used to doing projects and wait for the directive approach.

There is also a risk that learners might use their native language instead of speaking English. It is obvious that they use native language out of classroom, but teachers need to encourage learners for using English in their discussions, while giving feedback and analyzing (Haines 1989: 8).

Language mistakes can also worry teacher's mind. It is important to assure learners that they can make mistakes only when they discuss something, but a written product and oral reports have to be grammatically correct. And the teachers should get accustomed to reject learners' mistakes (ibid.).

In case of a group work where there are students with various speed of work it is useful to suggest the faster ones to help the slower ones. It would be appropriate to divide the roles in the group as well.

But anyway doing creative work is more advantageous because:

- Students work cooperatively and independently of the teacher
- Projects are a break from routine
- Students engaged in authentic activities aimed at an aimed product
- Projects provide fluency practice
- Students use the variety of language skills in natural combinations

- Projects can help to build students' confidence (Haines 1989: 7).

But sometimes creative projects can even demand money spending, and it can become a problem not only for the teacher but for the family budget as well. The Estonian newspaper "Postimees" published an article at the beginning of the 2012 school year revealing the worries of teachers. It is claimed that teachers have to spend own money or student's family fund to buy various materials for creative projects, making copies and providing students with handouts and materials. Unfortunately, schools do not cover the expenses made. The budget of a school is so minimal that it cannot sometimes pay for the lessons a teacher gives. "The New Curriculum says that students can be devoted into making so beautiful crafts that are just a dream for the most of schools", a handicraft teacher says (Teder, 2012).

The consultant of the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia agrees that a creative project is huge work, but when this sub-clause was introduced into the National Curriculum it was not meant to give some kind of extra work for teachers, but to provide a student with a positive experience and develop oneself (Teder, 2012).

The studies and materials described above are meaningful for the further research as they illustrate the major ways of acquiring and developing the English language. A creative project is presented there as a means that might support the development of students' general competences, speaking and communication skills applying by direct and indirect strategies through doing creative projects. Creative projects can also help accomplish the goals of the National Curriculum.

However, all the studying made by the scientists and researchers do not mirror exactly how creative projects implement the above-mentioned. They are not specifically presented as a kind of English language learning.

Therefore the further research is going to prove the essential role of creative projects and project learning in the process of learning English in the Estonian school and to describe it as a tool to develop speaking skills along with achieving the goals of the Estonian National Curriculum.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **A CREATIVE PROJECT IN THE EFL CLASS**

This chapter presents a creative project as a means to realize formative assessment and general competences described in the National Curriculum. It also portrays and analyses the third stage students' creative projects undertaken in Narva School of Humanities; it also views the topics chosen by the students in terms of their popularity, and it describes the English lesson as the one to present the project work in. Short characteristics of the students and the analysis of the level of their speaking skills before producing a creative project and after it according to the standards of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages are presented hereafter. Additionally, these results will be compared to those of students who are not involved into creative project activities. While working on the research the students with EFL creative projects were interrogated to ascertain their attitude to creative projects.

#### **2. 1. A Creative Project as a Tool to Develop General Competences and Formative Assessment in the EFL Classroom**

The National Curriculum 2011 establishes a particular emphasis on the development of students' general competences through learning and implementing formative assessment at school. While undertaking creative projects in the EFL classroom students come through many aspects to be learned and developed. And the ones listed above are among of them.

EFL creative projects develop value competence as students work with the language of other culture, thus they learn to appreciate it and relationships between the people of other cultures.

Social competence is achieved through cooperative work with the teacher supervising the project, school administration, classmates and any other people involved into the process of creating a project.

Self-management is needed to evaluate oneself and creative projects aid here as well. Evaluation of the work, process and own progress is accomplished in all stages of EFL creative project production.

Learning to learn competence is the one which students develop while organizing their process of carrying out the project, analyzing own skills and planning their future work in order to make it better.

Communicational competence is developed when students produce the ideas of the future project production, consider interlocutors while speaking.

EFL creative projects teach students to set the goals, create ideas and search solutions. These processes involve mathematical and entrepreneurship competences. Students learn to be responsible for the results and be ambitious.

In order to present students' opinion about EFL creative projects and prove that they develop the competences a small questionnaire was made to demonstrate students' ideas. There were chosen six students who were engaged in EFL creative project performance. They were the students who have chosen English as a subject to create their projects. The number is the following as creative projects are not mainstream activities, they are new things and only creative minded and active students who are interested in research independent activities choose creative projects in the EFL class. Hence, it is not a mass product, which makes it even more topical for research to have data to plan it in the future and to inspire students for participation in it.

The table below shows the questions that were suggested to the students.

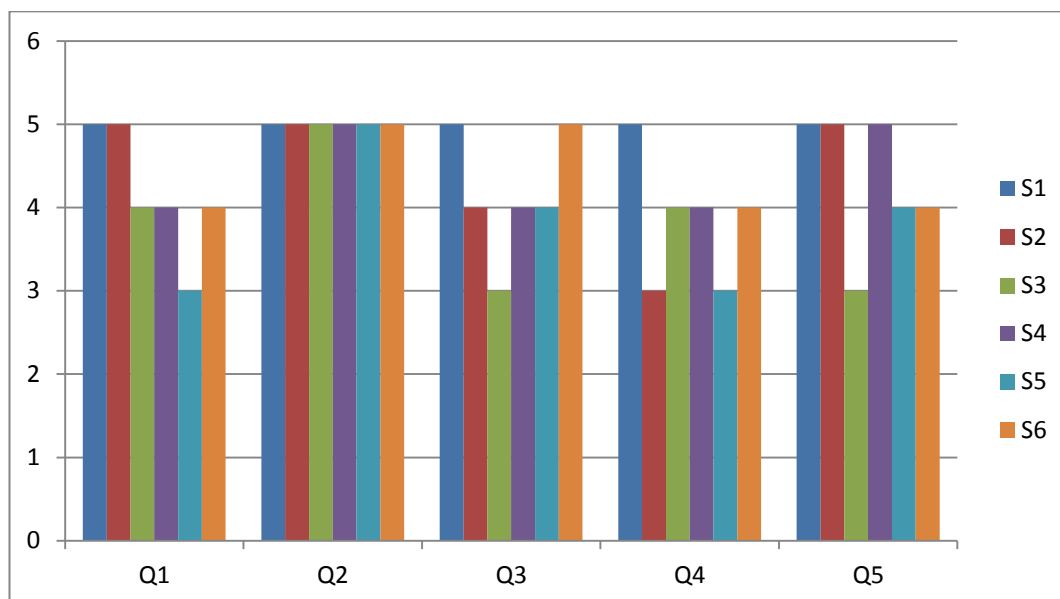
<i>Dear student,</i>				
<i>The following questionnaire was made in order to find out your opinion about EFL creative projects. Please, circle the answer that shows how much you agree with the statement.</i>				
1. Creative projects help students to develop their independence.				
1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
2. Doing EFL creative projects students develop communication skills.				
1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
3. Carrying out EFL creative projects students learn to work creatively, search, analyse and generalize information.				
1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
4. Creative project provide students with a positive experience of independent work.				
1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree



5. Creative projects teach students to set the goals, evaluate themselves, be responsible, develop self-esteem and confidence.				
1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree

**Table 3.** Questionnaire “An EFL Creative Project as a Tool to Develop General Competences”

On the basis of this questionnaire the chart bar is illustrated below to analyse the students’ answers. The names of the students are encoded.



**Table 4.** Results of the Questionnaire Presented in Table 3.

According to this diagram none of the students disagrees with the statements. The majority of the students agrees or strongly agrees that EFL creative projects teach students to be independent. One person out of six does not have a concrete point of view at this aspect.

Question 2 is the one that everyone strongly agrees with providing with the information that students enrich their communicative skills.

The third statement was mostly accepted as the one to agree with. Students believe that creative projects teach them to work creatively and make it possible to learn how to work with various data. Two students strongly agree and three agree with it. One out of six neither agrees nor disagrees with this statement.

Three students agree and one strongly believes that creative projects contribute to a positive experience of independent work. Two out six are in the middle and cannot say definitely whether they agree or not.

And the last statement, which notes that through creative projects students learn to set the goals, develop one's esteem and confidence, evaluate and act responsibly adds to the majority of the learners with three people being confident about it and two agreeing. Only one learner here is not completely assured of this.

According to these results it is possible to claim that EFL creative projects contribute to students' general competences development.

As for formative assessment it is attained while students evaluate each other's progress, give and receive a feedback from their classmates and teachers. The last ones also support them and encourage for further learning and development of one's skills and abilities as creative projects provide them with a positive experience.

## **2. 2. Creative Project as a Part of the Curricula of Narva School of Humanities**

The process of creating a project in Narva School of Humanities coincides with and responds to the requirements of the National Curriculum of doing a creative project. The analysis of the school regulations reveal the following aspects developed by the school administration.

The process of creative project undertaking starts in September when each 7 form student has to choose the topic of his or her creative project. The formulation of the topic can be improved or changed while developing the project but not later than two months before creative project defence. The defence depends on the readiness of the project and can be done throughout the school year whether in December, January or April. Each creative project is possible to defend only if there is a review of the project provided by its supervisor and a Power Point presentation. The presentation needs to contain no less than 5 slides and its duration is no longer than 5 minutes. At the end of a school year the school organizes a School Science Conference and a Festival of Creative Projects where the best works are presented for the students of Narva School of Humanities. It is usually held at the end of May or at the beginning of June.

There are various kinds of creative projects suggested in school documentation and students are also offered to choose the type of a project themselves coordinating it with the assessment committee beforehand.

In case of any money spending required for necessary materials purchase, a special agreement is done between the school and parents of the student devoted into creative project production, where material questions of work creation are pointed out.

### *2. 2. 1. Creative Project Assessment and Evaluation*

Each creative project is assessed taking five criteria into consideration. Each criterion is evaluated on the basis of three –point scale. The criteria are the following:

- The originality of the idea or production of a creative project.
- The level of independence and responsibility in the process of project creation.
- Profundity of topic development and expansion.
- Correct structure and work formation.
- Qualitative work presentation during its defence.

### *2.2.2. The Popularity of Creative Projects in the EFL class of Narva School of Humanities*

According to the data provided by Narva School of Humanities administration English is not a popular language to be chosen for a creative project performance. However, this school year (2013/2014) the English subject was more popular among the students comparing to the previous school years.

In 2012 there were three creative projects. They were Power Point presentations with the subsequent topicality:

- “Dos and Don’ts. Helping the Environment”;
- “Travelling Around the World”;
- “Sights of London”.

In the year 2013 topics of tree creative projects were the following:

- “My English holidays”(a video project);
- “Comparing British and American English” ( a mini research);
- “England in high Middle Ages” (a report with a visual aid).

In 2014 seven creative projects performed in the EFL classroom were introduced:

- “Christmas in Great Britain” (a presentation);
- “The History of the British Monarchy” (a report and a presentation);
- “English grammar” (grammar posters for the EFL classroom);
- “ Travelling in England” (an ESL lesson);
- “A Comparative Analysis of English and Estonian holidays” (a report and a presentation);

- “A comparative Analysis of American and Russian Traditions and customs” (a presentation);
- “Youth Entrepreneurship in Narva”( a youth program international project).

Analyzing the topics and kinds of work it is possible to summarize that students use the variety of types to account for their work, though reports and presentations are the most popular. Some of them are truly creative, the others are not. Students tend to work independently rather than in a group.

### **2. 3. Creative Project as a Tool to Develop Speaking Skills in the EFL classroom in Narva School of Humanities**

As the main aspect of this research is English speaking interaction it was important to analyse the way to assess this students’ skill. A special scale devised by the Council of Europe is a means that aid to maintain this task.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a document that “was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency” (the Council of Europe, 2014: para 1)

Working with the CEFR document was important as it provides the information for clarifying the level of speaking. The target group of the research consisted of 12 students who have been learning English since the second form. The coursebook that is used during the lessons is of the elementary level. The elementary level gives two stages of the language mastery – A1 and A2. The CEFR equips with the description of the speaking level of the language for A1 that is presented below.

RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE
Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly prepackaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" or "then".

**Table 5.** *A1 Qualitative Aspects of Spoken Language Use (CEFR, 2011: 7).*

Hereafter is a table that portrays the aspects of spoken language in A2 level according to the CEFR and it was used in the subsequent assessment.

RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE
Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.	Can answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and," "but" and "because".

**Table 6.** *A2 Qualitative Aspects of Spoken Language Use (CEFR, 2011: 7).*

Further on it was necessary to correlate with a particular level of the target group chosen for the research.

### *2. 3. 1. The Methodology of the Research*

In order to realize the research there was chosen a target group - students at the third stage of their schooling. They were six student of the seventh form in Narva School of Humanities who had been engaged in creative project undertaking and who had chosen English language as a subject to perform the work in. There was also chosen a group of six students who had not carried out a creative project.

Before starting doing research it was necessary to learn the level of speaking skills of the students for their further assessment. It was decided to make it applying the CEFR aspects to a test. It was suggested to assess the following aspects of the oral language: range, accuracy, fluency, interaction and coherence. To make it possible to assess there was chosen Key English Test (KET) to reach the goal. This type of testing was chosen because the level of teaching coursebook is elementary. As it is written in KET Extra test book:

The KET examinations is a part of a group of examinations developed by Cambridge ESOL called the Cambridge Main Suit. The Main Suit consists of five examinations which have similar characteristics, but are designed for different levels of English language ability. Within the five levels, KET is at level A2 in the CEFR (KET Extra, 2008: 6).

Methods and techniques aimed at application of creative projects to the EFL classroom will take place to achieve the purpose of the research.

A non-probability sample is used in the research as the method of sampling is concerned. It represents only itself but not a wide amount as it is a small-scale research with students of one school to be targeted.

Also convenience sampling facilitates here as well because the nearest individuals are engaged as respondents, i.e. the students of a particular school where the researcher works as a teacher and chooses the sample from those who are easy to be accessed.

This sample has a specific purpose - to prove the effectiveness of creative projects in developing speaking skills and general competences. Concerning this information this sample can also be called purposive.

The experiment includes several steps:

- the analysis of speaking skills of the students in a regular EFL class, pretesting their initial level of speaking interaction;
- the presentation of the students speaking skills before being introduced to a creative project and after it along with the analysis of the skills;
- the analysis of the students' opinion about creative project production;
- the analysis of the teachers' opinion about creative project production.

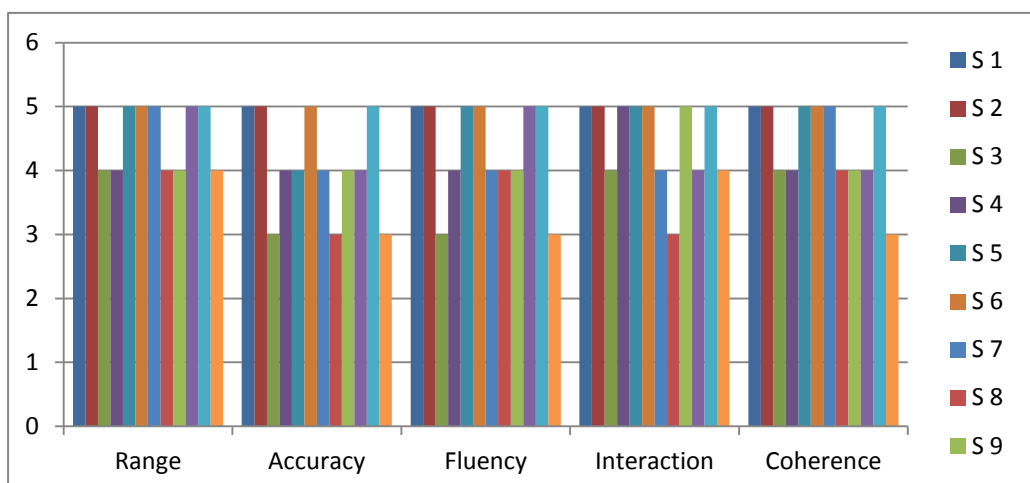
### *2.3.2. Pretesting and Analysis of Students' Initial Speaking Skills*

In order to present the results of the initial level of speaking skills the students were suggested to take a speaking test taken from the test book. The topic was chosen at random and speaking cards for the second part of the test are presented in Appendix 1 of this paper. For the first part of KET the students were asked some general interest questions about their family, interests, free time activities and school. The target group was provided with thorough instructions describing speaking test completion as they were introduced to KET for the first time.

According to the table drawn in the CEFR document and the KET speaking examination the students' speaking skills were assessed. It was delivered on the basis of a five-point grading scale. The diagram with the results is illustrated below.

The diagram below illustrates students speaking interaction. It is possible to see that students master the English language variously. The minority of the learners makes crucial grammar mistakes and has problems with fluency. The most successful aspects of speaking turned to be range, interaction and coherence as the majority has reached

the best results. However, the students have shown good results hence it provides with the knowledge that they have achieved A2 level of the English language.



**Table 7.** *Spoken English Language Use.*

### 2. 3. 3. Profiles of the Students of Narva School of Humanities

This part of the research is going to present the results of the assessment of students' speaking skills. The analysis was conducted in order to present students' profiles.

The students were divided into three groups according to the topics of the creative projects:

- Holidays: Traditions and Customs
- Travelling: Sightseeing
- Youth Projects and Activities

The pairs for the speaking interaction were formed in such a way that one student was the one to produce a creative project in the EFL class and another student was not performing this kind of task. The students' profiles are presented below and their names are encoded. They are the students of 7 *a*, *b* and *d* forms. The profiles are presented on the basis of creative project undertaking as well as pretesting where aspects like range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, and coherence are evaluated.

Students	Students' profiles
S1	She is a bright student who has reached the highest level of five while performing in pretesting activities. She is introduced to a creative project.
S2	He has got 'five' in all aspects of pretesting and is devoted to a creative project.
S3	He has reached a middle level in pretesting. His major problems are

	accuracy and fluency and the rest are on the level of four. He is doing a creative project in EFL.
S4	Her best speaking ability is interaction, while the others got 'four'. She is a creative project performer.
S5	She has got good results in four out of five aspects. The weaker one was accuracy. She is creating a project in EFL.
S6	She is excellent in all five speaking skills and is engaged with an EFL creative project.
S7	She showed good coherence and range, but a bit worse accuracy, fluency and interaction. She is not doing an EFL creative project.
S8	She has got 'three' in accuracy and interaction and 'four' for range, fluency and coherence. She does not present an EFL creative project.
S9	His interaction was better than the rest of the five and gained five points while the other aspects received 'four'. He is not an EFL creative project performer.
S10	He has 'four' for accuracy, interaction and coherence. Fluency and range are one point better. He does not carry out an EFL creative project.
S11	He was a five-point performer in pretesting. He is not introduced to an EFL creative project.
S12	Coherence, fluency and accuracy were his poor aspects, while range and interaction are better and were accomplished to 'four'. He does not produce an EFL creative project.

**Table 8.** *Students' Profiles.*

In order to make the sample feasible six groups were arranged to perform their speaking interaction for further analysis. As far as students' speaking skills were tested beforehand and their profiles were compiled the students were formed into pairs taking preceding knowledge into consideration. As a result the students were provided with a partner with a resembling level of spoken language and the subsequent groups were managed: S1 – S7, S2 – S11, S3 – S12, S 4 – S8, S5 – S9, S6 – S10.

#### *2. 3. 4. Presentation and Analysis of EFL Creative Projects*

As the first six students are EFL creative project carriers they have managed four creative projects.



- “ Travelling in England” (an ESL lesson, individual work of S6)
- “A Comparative Analysis of English and Estonian holidays” (a report and presentation, an individual work of S3)
- “A comparative Analysis of American and Russian Traditions and Customs” (a presentation, group work of S1 and S2)
- “Youth Entrepreneurship in Narva” (a youth programme international project, group work of S4 and S5).

“Travelling in England” was a successfully performed type of a creative project. It was done by a very intelligent and responsible student with a great motivation for learning English. She derived a lesson as a part of English-speaking Countries topic targeting her interest at England. It was an interactive lesson for the students of the 7<sup>th</sup> form. The lesson was held in the computer class where learners had to complete several tasks using information from the websites provided. A Power Point presentation and worksheets were delivered to the students. At the end of the lesson they had to produce a plan of their trip mentioning the places they would like to visit while staying in England and explaining the value of these places.

The work was done with a high level of independence, responsibility and accuracy. During the process of working on the project she made minor grammar mistakes and was helped mainly with the instructions for teaching and organizing a lesson and explanation of the creative projects requirements while doing and defending it. Finally, the goals were achieved and S6 received ‘five’ at the defence. Her work can be used by teachers in EFL lessons.

“A Comparative Analysis of English and Estonian holidays” was an individual project carried out in the form of a report and presentation. The topic concentrated on the holidays which are of great importance for the people of the countries presented in the project. They were New Year, Christmas, St. John’s Day, Guy Fawkes Night, Halloween, St. Martin’s Day, Easter, Independence Day and Commonwealth Day. The holidays were compared by the criteria of symbolism, history, and ways to celebrate.

The student performing the creative project needed a lot of support not only in work coordination, but also in sustaining his vocabulary and grammar. He did everything on time, though, and followed the instructions as well as he was responsible. S3 got ‘four’ for the presentation at the defence. Fluency, accuracy and pronunciation were not so well performed.

“A comparative Analysis of American and Russian Traditions and Customs” is a group work of S1 and S2. This work includes the analysis of the holidays like New Year, Christmas, Easter, Veteran’s Day, Russia Day and Thanksgiving. One of the students was responsible for the topic of American holidays and another for the Russian ones. The aim of their work was to analyse the holidays’ traditions and to compare them. Mini research was also conducted among the students of form 7 in order to ascertain their opinion about the above holidays and the knowledge of their traditions. The results were presented in diagrams and analysed. Their Power Point presentation can be used during EFL lessons by teachers to teach American customs and traditions and compare them to the native ones.

S1 and S2 were interested in the process, responsible and independent. They used various sources of information and delivered a successful presentation at the defence. Their language skills were performed at an excellent level.

“Youth Entrepreneurship in Narva” is a creative work made in order to participate in the youth programme project. It was a project application form for the participation in an international project. S4 and S5 discussed the aspects of entrepreneurship and creativity in their work. They came up with various games and activities for developing these skills. As a result of the youth project they are going to Italy this summer to an international youth camp where they will apply their knowledge. The girls worked very independently and were doing everything with great interest and engagement. The activities developed by the students can be used by teachers.

The goals of the creative project were achieved. The presentation for the defence was made using Prezi website, so it was also done creatively. All the aspects of the spoken language were performed excellently while defending. The work got a ‘five’ mark.

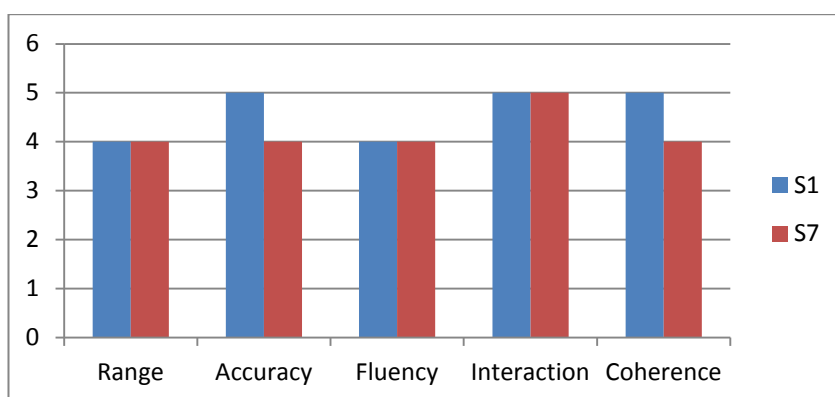
#### *2.3.5. Testing and Analysis of Students’ Speaking Skills before and after ESL Creative Project Production*

This part of research presents the students’ speaking skills before they were engaged in carrying out the ESL creative project and after it. On both stages the skills of students involved in creative project production and students who are not put to this work in the EFL classroom were assessed. The evaluation was accomplished with the help of the speaking cards that were developed by the teacher. They are introduced in Appendix 2. The speaking test was derived taking a KET examination speaking part as an example.

The results of the speaking tests of the students are presented below with their analysis afterwards.

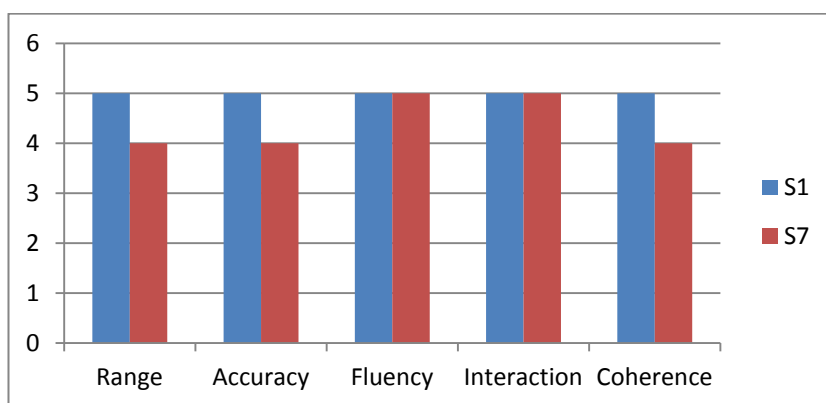
The first pair of the bar chart presented in Table 5 shows the results of the test of S1 and S7 before S1 was devoted into the ESL creative project. They were provided with the topic “Holidays: Traditions and Customs” and had to discuss Easter and Maslenitsa.

The second bar chart (Table 9) shows the results of the test made after S1 defence of the project. The holidays to be talked about are St. Johns Day and Halloween.



**Table 9.** *S1 and S7 Speaking Skills Testing (1).*

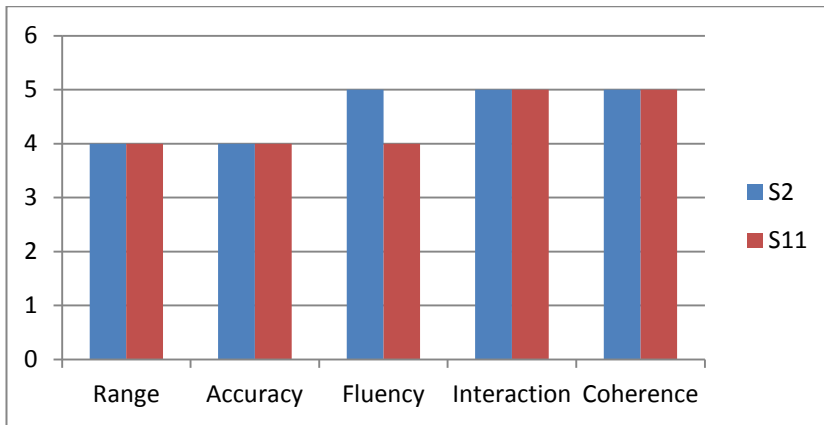
According to the table above S1 gets equally good results for range and accuracy and excellent results for interaction. However, S1 performed better as her speech was more accurate and coherent.



**Table 10.** *S1 and S7 Speaking Skills Testing (2).*

According to the table above S1 gets excellent results in all five aspects of speaking interaction. However, S7 is as fluent as S1 and interacts at the same level.

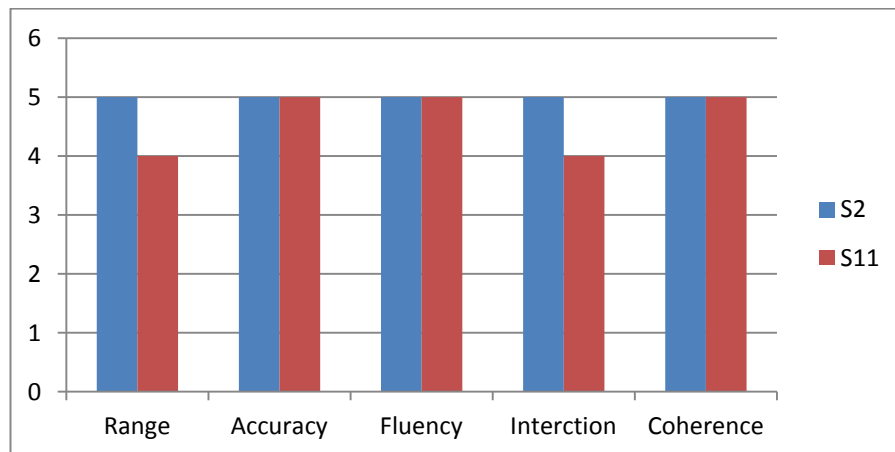
The second pair of respondents is S2 and S11. Their topic for the first test is “Holidays: Traditions and Customs” and holidays like Maslenitsa and Easter. These results are presented in Table 11.



**Table 11.** *S2 and S11 Speaking Skills Testing (1).*

The graph above illustrates students' results in their speaking test before S2 started doing a creative project. S2 and S11 have equal results for range, accuracy, interaction and coherence. Their mark is four. Though S11 was weaker than S2 interacting with each other and received 'four' while S2 has got 'five' and performed very fluently.

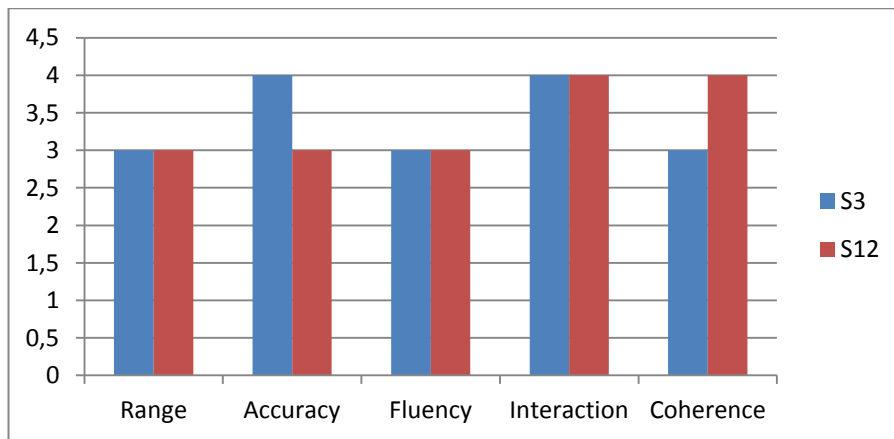
The results for the second part of testing are shown in Table 12. The discussion was made about St. John's Day and Halloween.



**Table 12.** *S2 and S11 Speaking Skills Testing (2).*

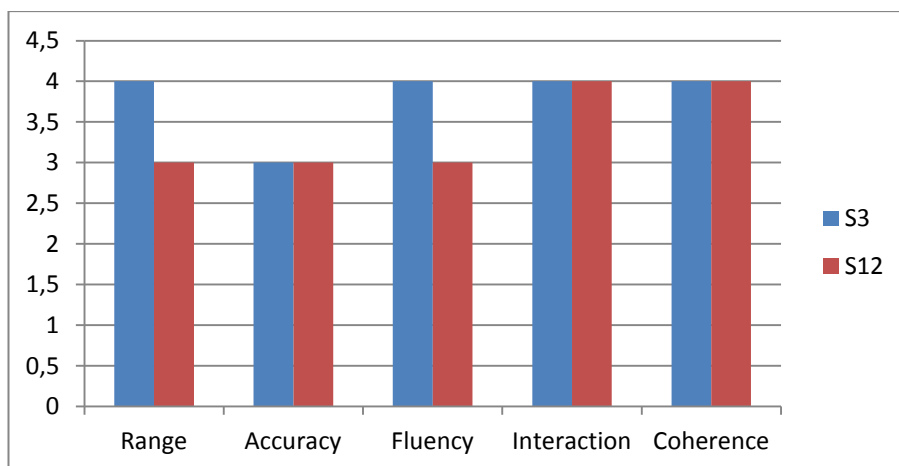
The table above demonstrates the performance of speaking interaction of S2 and S11 after S2 has completed his creative project in EFL. It is seen from the graph that S11 had poorer results for range and interaction. However, he is as accurate, fluent and coherent as S2 is. S2 was excellent in all five aspects.

The third pair of students is S3 and S12. S3 is the one to carry out the project. Their speaking cards' topic was "Youth projects and activities". During the first testing the students were asking and answering questions about the summer camp and youth project. The results are provided below in Table 13.



**Table 13.** *S3 and S12 Speaking Skills Testing (1).*

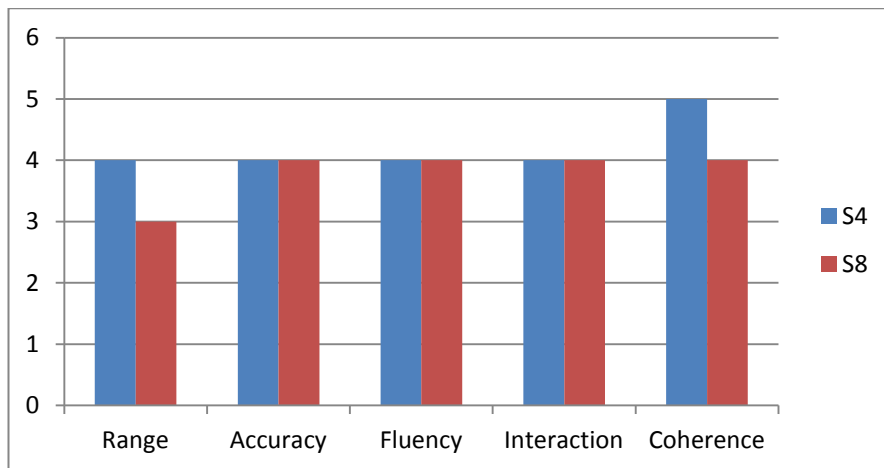
The table above presents the results of the speaking test before S3 was introduced to a creative project. It is evident from the table above that both students had poor interaction. They both have ‘three’ for range and fluency. S3 has also got the same mark for being coherent while speaking and S12 was not as accurate as S3 was. However S12 was better than S3 in using various linking words.



**Table 14.** *S3 and S12 Speaking Skills Testing (2).*

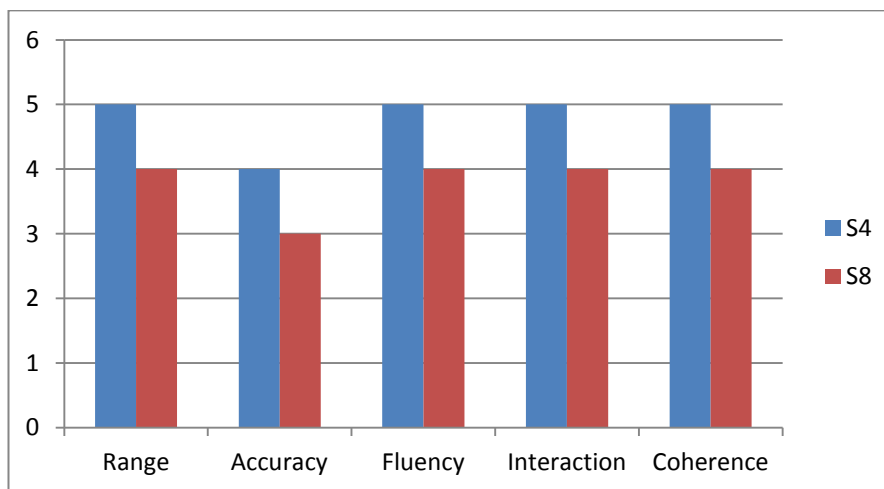
The graph above shows the results for the second speaking test that the students were provided with after S3 EFL creative project defence. The speaking interaction was about the summer job offer and the homeless support. Both students lacked accuracy while speaking. S3 uses basic sentence patterns quite well and is better than S12 in being accurate. His speech is much more fluent than the one of S12. Both students’ interaction and coherence are good, though.

The fourth pair of test-takers is S4 and S8. Their speaking test’s theme was “Youth Projects and Activities”.



**Table 15.** *S4 and S8 Speaking Skills Testing (1).*

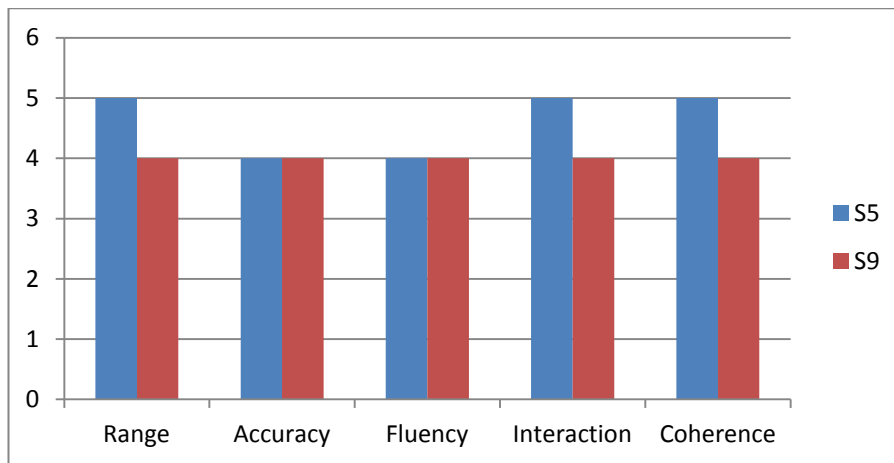
The chart above provides the results of the first speaking test. *Summer camp* and *environmental youth project* are the topics to be discussed. These results are the ones before S4 has done the EFL project. S4 was good in four aspects out of five, which are range, accuracy, fluency and interaction. Coherence is the one to be better than the rest ones and is excellent. S8 performed good coherence, interaction, fluency and accuracy while range was her poor aspect.



**Table 16.** *S4 and S8 Speaking Skills Testing (2).*

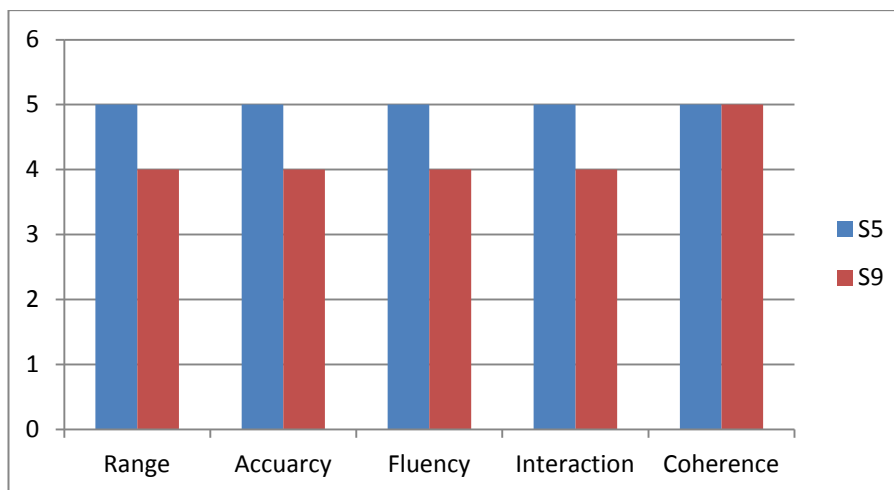
The graph presented above illustrates speaking aspects proficiency of S4 and S8 after S4 has defended her EFL creative project. It is seen from the table that S4 has excellent range, fluency, interaction and coherence performance. She was not so outstanding for being accurate and has the mark ‘four’. S8’s accuracy was poor as well and worse than S4’s one. S8 has also got lower results for range, fluency, interaction and coherence.

The fifth pair of this sample is S5 and S9. The theme for their speaking test was “Youth Projects and Activities”.



**Table 17.** *S5 and S9 Speaking Skills Testing (1).*

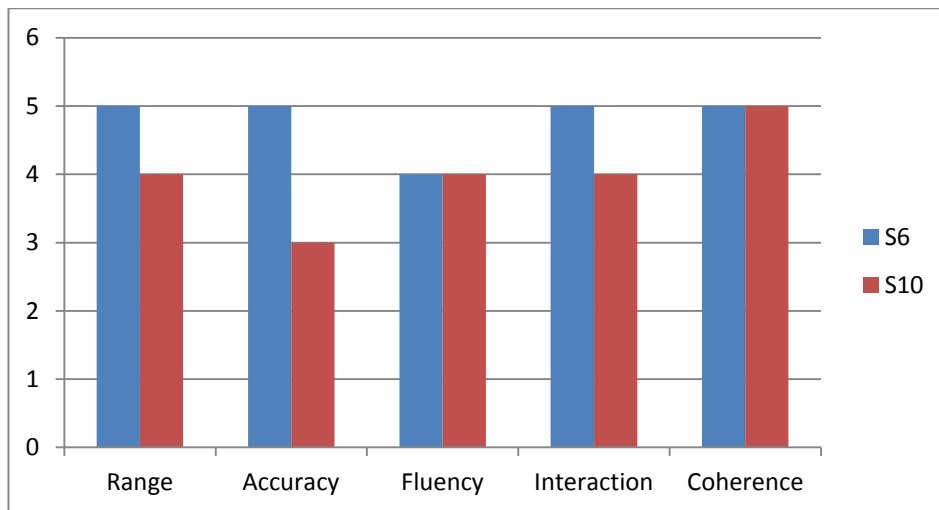
This graph shows the results of the first testing before introducing the EFL creative project by S5. The speaking cards of S5 and S9 concern the topics of the environmental youth project and the international summer camp. The bars illustrate that S5 has excellent coherence, interaction and range, though she is not so accurate and fluent. S9 has different results and is poorer but good at all five aspects.



**Table 18.** *S5 and S9 Speaking Skills Testing (2).*

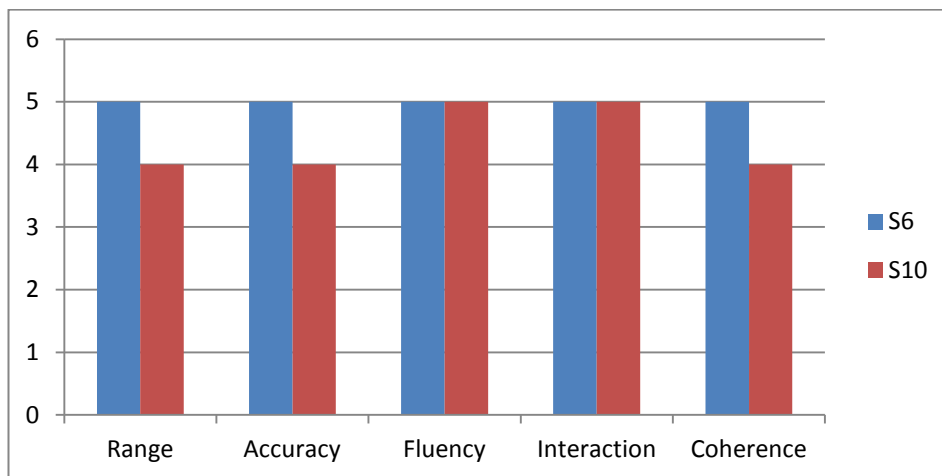
This graph presents the results of testing of S4 and S9. The speaking test was done after S5 had completed her EFL creative project. The results are accomplished on the basis of discussion of the homeless support and job advertisement. S5 performed excellent results while completing the speaking test. S9 was also good, but more coherent than fluent and accurate. S9 has lower results for range and interaction, too.

The last pair to take the test is S6 and S10. Their theme is “Travelling: Sightseeing”.



**Table 19.** *S6 and S10 Speaking Skills Testing (1).*

This chart bar shows the results of the testing of S6 and S10 before S6 started doing the EFL creative project. They discussed a school trip and a boat trip. According to this chart S10 has got a good fluency, interaction and range. S10’s best aspect of the spoken language is coherence, but accuracy is the one to be the weakest of all five aspects. S6 has good range and interaction performance. S6’s range and interaction are exceptional as well. However, fluency is not as great as range, accuracy, interaction and coherence and reach only the ‘four’ mark.



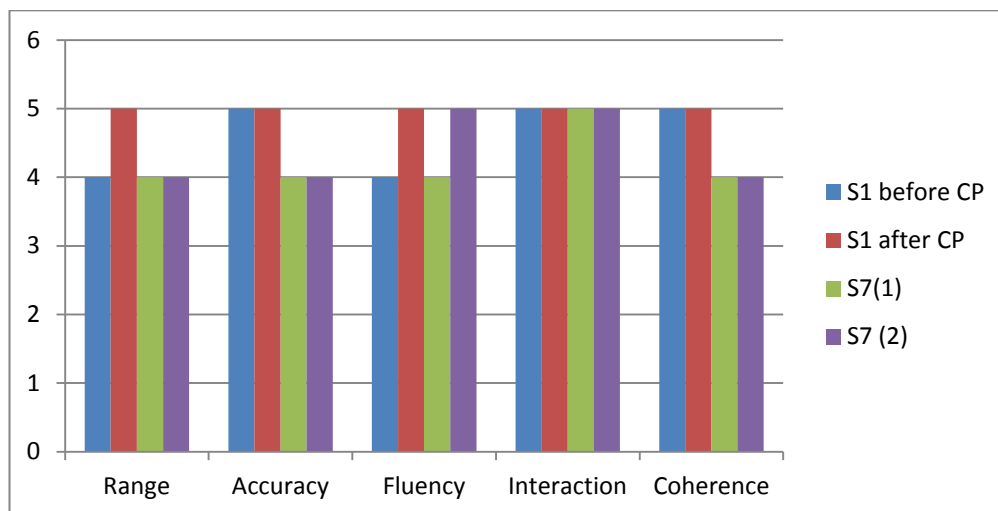
**Table 20.** *S6 and S10 Speaking Skills Testing (2).*

The table above demonstrates the results of S6 and S10 in the second half of the testing, after S6 had carried out the EFL creative project. The testing included the speaking cards about the trips consisting of visits to palaces, castles and gardens. S6 reaches splendid results and excels S10 in being accurate and coherent. S6 has also got a better range. S10 has equal results for range, accuracy and coherence production;



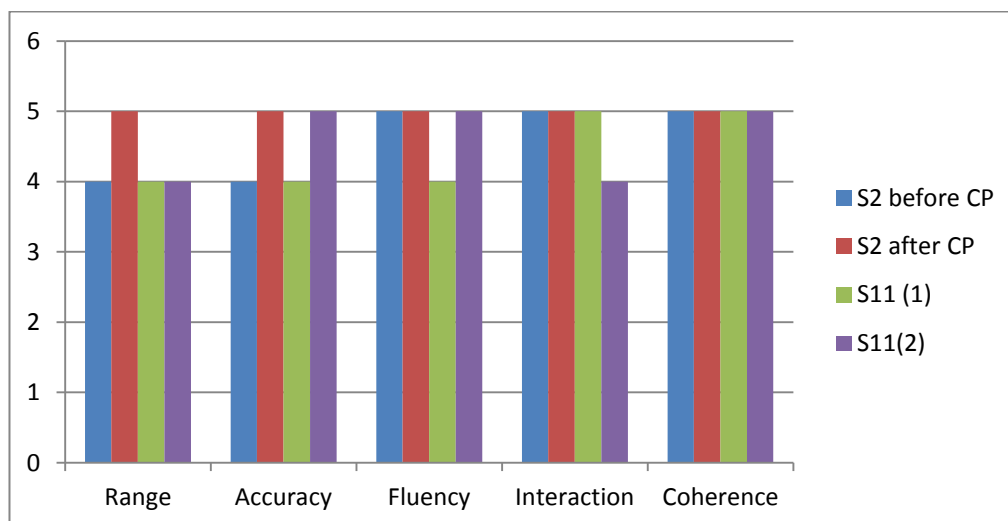
fluency and interaction are his best aspects and are one point higher than the ones listed before.

The emphasis of the subsequent part of the sampling is made on the generalization and comparison of the results presented in the graphs above in order to see if EFL creative projects has increased the level of speaking interaction.



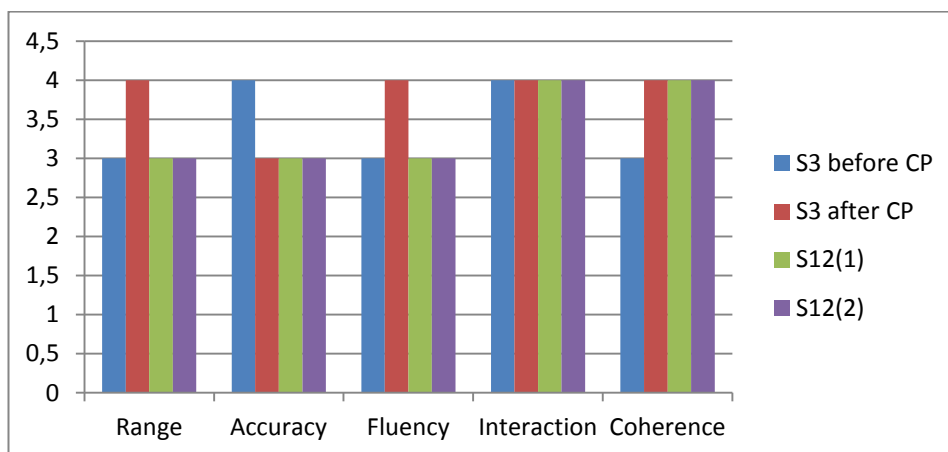
**Table 21.** S1 and S7 Spoken Language Aspects' Comparison before and after EFL Creative Project Production by S1. (CP stands for creative project here).

According to this graph it is possible to conclude that while working with the EFL creative project S1 has increased the speaking skills. The range and fluency have improved. The longer sentence patterns have appeared and the speech has become more confident with a rich vocabulary. However, the spoken language of S7 has retained the same level with a small increase of coherence.



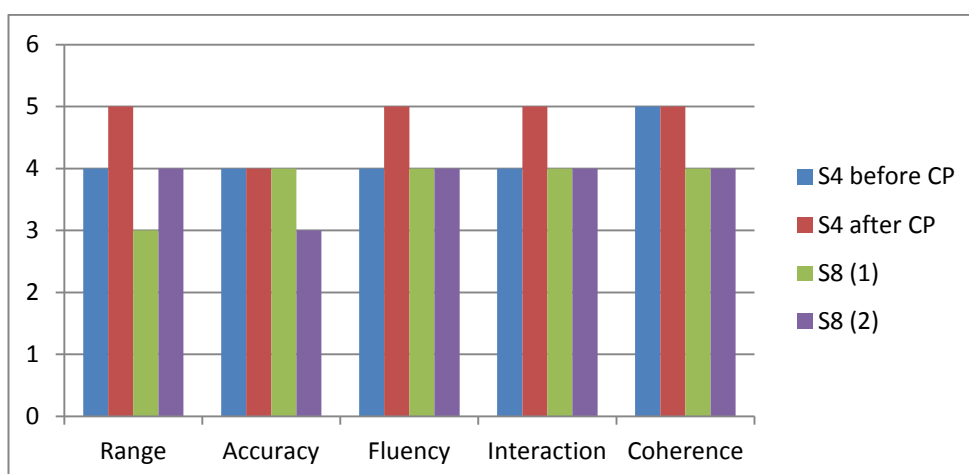
**Table 22.** S2 and S11 Spoken Language Aspects' Comparison before and after EFL Creative Project Production by S2. (CP stands for creative project here).

This graph demonstrates the results of S2 and S11. S2 has improved the choice of words and grammar patterns have become more complicated. Minor mistakes in pronunciation have been made after the project production. Fluency, interaction and coherence of S2 have stayed the same. S11 has achieved a few advances in being fluent and accurate, though, has not gained any experience in answering questions and lowed own results.



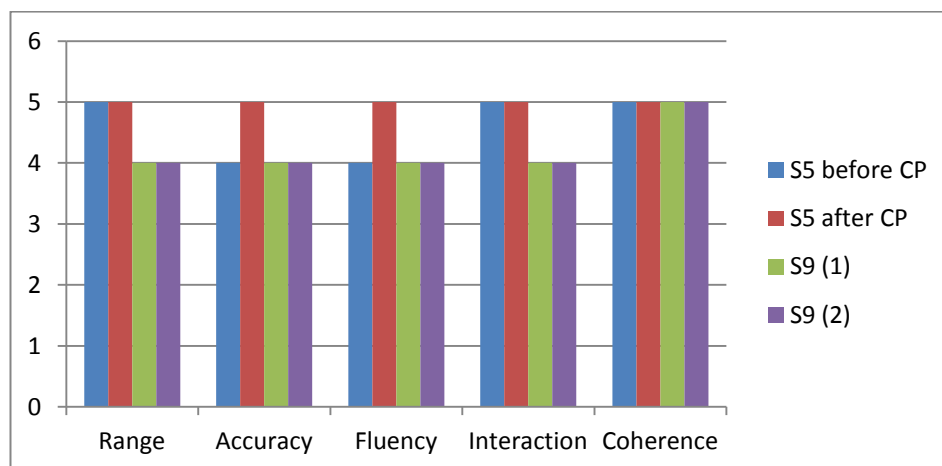
**Table 23.** S3 and S12 *Spoken Language Aspects' Comparison before and after EFL Creative Project Production by S3. (CP stands for creative project here).*

The chart bar above shows the comparison of the spoken language aspects of S3 and S12. According to it S3 has become more fluent and coherent in spoken interaction. S3 has also improved the choice of vocabulary and sentence structure building. However, S3 has lost one point for accuracy and has made grammar mistakes in the choice of the tenses. S12 has stayed at the same level and has not improved any of the aspects throughout the school year.



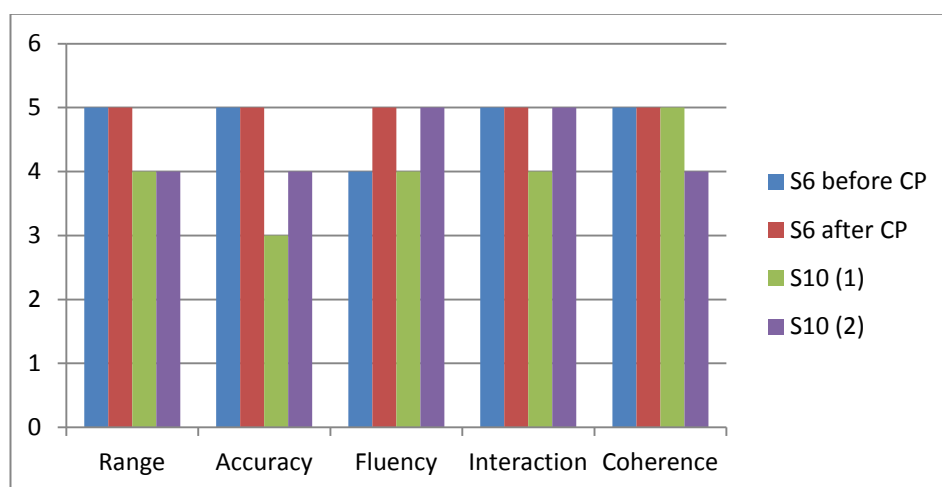
**Table 24.** S4 and S8 *Spoken Language Aspects' Comparison before and after EFL Creative Project Production by S4. (CP stands for creative project here).*

The table above provides information about S4 and S8's progress while speaking. S4, who was involved in the EFL project, has showed an increase in three aspects like range, fluency and interaction. The ability for being coherent and accurate has accomplished the same level. S8 has a decrease in accuracy, but his level of range has gained one point. The rest of the five aspects of spoken language have remained stable.



**Table 25.** S5 and S9 Spoken Language Aspects' Comparison before and after EFL Creative Project Production by S5. (CP stands for creative project here).

The graph above demonstrates the improvement of S5's speaking skills while working with the EFL creative project. S5 was not as accurate and fluent as he has become after the project completion, though interaction coherence and range have frozen at the same level. S9 has not either increased or decreased in the process of learning and the level of the four aspects has remained steady. However, S5 made fewer pronunciation mistakes while speaking.



**Table 26.** S6 and S10 Spoken Language Aspects' Comparison before and after EFL Creative Project Production by S6. (CP stands for creative project here).

The chart above mirrors the results of the last pair to be tested – S6 and S10. S10, who has not been involved into EFL creative project writing, has gained one point for being accurate and fluent while speaking and for the interaction with the interlocutor. Yet the level of coherence has increased from five to four. S6, who has been engaged with the project, has stayed at the same level of five in range, accuracy, interaction and coherence production. However, S6 has become more fluent and self-confident while speaking.

Taking all the analysis above into consideration, it is possible to conclude that EFL creative projects provided perfect conditions for raising the level of learners' speaking skills. All the students involved in the project production have improved their speaking interaction comparing to those who have not been introduced to this type of work. The last ones have also gained a little progress, as they have been practicing their speaking skills in the lessons throughout the school year; yet this is an obvious result of their language learning.

The findings of the analysis and the conclusion above have confirmed the hypothesis and indicated that EFL creative projects implemented in practice in the EFL classroom have been an effective tool in terms of developing students' spoken language aspects as well as their general competences.

## CONCLUSION

The thesis presents how the EFL creative project production can serve as an effective tool for a teacher to develop students' speaking skills and general competences in the EFL classroom. For this purpose the National Curriculum for secondary school has been considered, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages has been applied, and creative projects were organized and carried out in the EFL class. Additionally, a comparative analysis based on initial testing and testing of learners' aspects of spoken language has been conducted and students' opinions of EFL creative projects have been elicited.

As a basis for the subject of the research the analysis of the theoretical background has been carried out. This has determined the role of speaking interaction in language learning and analysis of the approaches to speaking skills development through direct and indirect strategies application. Formative assessment and general competences were presented in order to illustrate how they are supported by EFL creative projects. The problematic aspects of creative projects production in Estonia were discussed as well. This part of the research has been based on the theoretical background developed by the researchers Jack C. Richards (1990), Rebecca L. Oxford (1990), Simon Haines (1989), the Estonian National Curriculum (2011) and the Estonian printed media (newspaper article by Merike Teder (2012)).

The major findings of the theoretical background analysis are the following:

- Speaking is a tool that in order to learn needs to be accompanied not only by vocabulary and grammar, but also the context in which words are used.
- Conversation and speaking have essential roles in the EFL classroom as they are the final products of acquiring grammar and vocabulary along with writing
- Direct and indirect approaches applied through EFL creative projects develop speaking skills.
- General competences are the skills that provide students with a successful performance in diverse spheres of life.
- The aim of learning is to evolve general competences through school subjects, out-of-class activities, and extra-curricular disciplines and creative project can

be the one of them.

- While working creative projects learners reach the goals of formative assessment.

In the empirical part of the thesis the National Curriculum for Secondary School has been analysed in terms of its goals and competences which can be realised through EFL creative projects. The implementation of creative projects in the educational process in Narva School of Humanities at the third stage of compulsory education has proved the success of EFL creative project production as the means to develop speaking skills and general competences. This conclusion is based on the following findings:

- Students like to develop speaking skills while gaining target vocabulary and grammar patterns in the environment of creative project production.
- Students feel that their language enriches when they work on a project.
- Creative projects support formative assessment as students learn to evaluate and provide a feedback.
- The process of creating a project helps students to evolve self-esteem.
- Students feel confidence and develop independence while undertaking a creative project.
- Students like to experience a positive influence of independent work completion.

The present study confirms previous findings of the researchers in the area of language skills development and project production. It also contributes additional evidence that suggests a different and interesting way of learning that can develop students' speaking skills. Moreover it defines the role of a creative project as a means of realisation of formative assessment and general competences which secondary school graduates are required to acquire.

## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Diplomitöö eesmärgiks on näidata kuidas loominguilise projekti toodang inglise keeles kui võõrkeeles võib osutada kasulikuks vahendiks õpetaja jaoks õpilaste rääkimisoskuste ja põhipädevuste arendamisel EFL klassiruumis. Põhikooli riiklik õppekava, ja Euroopa keeleõppe raamdokument olid võetud arvesse ning loominguilised projektid olid korraldatud ja läbi viidud EFL klassiruumis. Lisaks, eeltestimisel ja õppijate kõnekeele aspektidel põhinev võrdlusanalüüs oli tehtud ja õpilaste arvamused EFL loominguiliste projektide kohta olid esile toodud.

Uurimuse käsitletava teema aluseks analüüsiti teoreetiline taust. Rääkimise interaktsiooni mõju keele õppimisele ja erinevad lähenemised rääkimisoskuste arendamisele otsese ja kaudse strateegiate kaudu olid määratud. Formatiiivne hindamine ja põhipädevused olid esitatud, et illustreerida nende toetust EFL projektide poolt. Samuti olid arutatud loominguiliste projektide toodangu problemaatilised aspektid Eestis. Selle uurimuse osa põhineb teoreetiliselt taustal arendatud Jack C. Richards (1990), Rebecca L. Oxford (1990), Simon Haines (1989) poolt, kaasa arvatud materjalid Eesti põhikooli riiklikust õppekavast(2011) ja Merike Tederi ajalehe artiklist (2012).

Teoreetilise tausta analüüsi põhileiud on järgmised:

- Rääkimine on vahend, mille õppimiseks on vaja mitte ainult sõnavara ja grammatikat, vaid ka sõnade kasutamist kontekstis.
- Vestlus ja rääkimine on olulised EFL klassiruumis, sest nad on grammatika ja sõnavara omandamise lõpptulemused kirjutamise kaasa.
- Otsesed ja kaudsed lähenemised kasutatud EFL loominguiliste projektide läbi arendavad rääkimisoskusi.
- Põhipädevused on oskused mis võimaldavad õpilasi eduka esinemisega erinevates elusfäärides.
- Õppimise eesmärgiks on areneda põhipädevused kooli õppeainete, väljaspool kooli toimuva õppe, huviringide kaudu ning loominguiline project voiks saada üht nendest.
- Loominguilise projekti töötamise ajal õppijad saavutavad formatiiivse hindamise eesmäärke.

Diplomitöö praktilises osas analüüsiti põhikooli riikliku õppekava eesmärke ja pädevusi seoses sellega, kuidas nad saavad realiseerimist EFL loominguliste projektide kaudu. Loominguliste projektide rakendamine Narva Humanitaargümnaasiumi põhikooli kolmanda astme õppeprotsessis tõendas EFL loominguliste projektide edu rääkimisoskuste ja põhipädevuste arendamisel. Selline kokkuvõte põhineb järgmistel põhileidudel:

- Õpilastele meeldib rääkimisoskusi arendada sihtkeele sõnavara ja grammatika malle saavutades loominguliste projektide toodangu keskkonnas.
- Õpilased tunnevad, et nende keel rikastab, kui nad töötavad projekti kallal.
- Loomingulised projektid toetavad formatiivset hindamist, sest õpilased õpivad hindama ja tagasisidet andma.
- Projekti toodangu protsess aitab õpilastel enesehinnagut tõsta.
- Õpilased arendavad kindlustunnet ja iseseisvust projekti töötamise kallal.
- Õpilastele meeldib iseseisvustöö lõpetamisest positiivset mõju tunda.

Praegune uurimus kinnitab keeleoskuste arendamise ja projektide toodangu alal uurijate eelmiseid leide. See annab lisatõendust, mis pakub erinevat ja huvitavat õppimisviisi rääkimisoskuste arendamisel. Samuti uurimus määratleb loomingulise projekti rolli formatiivse hindamise realiseerimise vahendina ja põhipädevused, mida nõutakse põhikooli lõpetajatelt.



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1A

## *Lightwood Bird Park*



*Look at beautiful birds from Europe, Africa and Asia*

Learn how birds fly

February to December

10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

£2 children

£4 adults

Call 859261

2B

### Football lessons

- where?
- day?
- for adults?
- cost? £?
- time?



1B

Bird park

- what / see?
- open / February?
- what / learn?
- child's ticket? £?
- phone number?



2A

# FOOTBALL LESSONS

Tuesdays and Fridays

For players 12 – 16 years old

6 – 8 p.m.  
£3 per lesson

**Must wear  
football boots.**



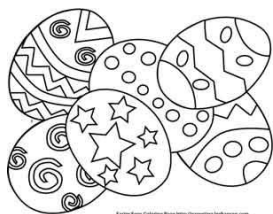
NORTH ROAD SPORTS CENTRE

## Appendix Speaking Cards 2. Holidays: Traditions and Customs

### Student A

#### Easter celebrations

- Place to visit?
- Things to see?
- Traditional activities / participate?
- Traditional meal / include?
- Types of presents / give?



### Student B

#### EASTER FUN IN NEW YORK CENTRAL PARK

Come and enjoy our fascinating activities!

Easter Parade

Egg hunt, roll and dying

Easter pastry and ham

Easter bunnies and chocolate eggs



## Appendix Speaking Cards 2. Holidays: Traditions and Customs

### Student A

Say goodbye to winter

#### MASLENITSA CELEBRATIONS

Sledging, snowball fights, horse riding, sleighing

Pancakes

Lady Maslenitsa bonfire

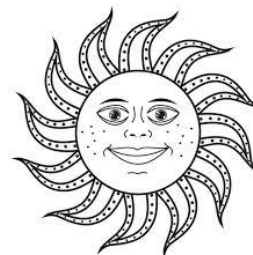
Traditional games and fun are there just for you!



### Student B

#### Maslenitsa celebrations

- Reason / celebrate?
- Traditional activities / see?
- Mascot of the holiday?
- Traditional activities / participate?
- Traditional food / try?



## Appendix Speaking Cards 2. Holidays: Traditions and Customs

### Student A

Visit the traditional feast of the year!

#### ST JOHN'S DAY

Bonfire on the beach to scare away evil

Roundelay, baths and swimming

Delicious barbecues and home-made beer

Find a blooming fern

Compete for the best wreath making



### Student B



#### St. John's Day celebration

- Why / bonfires?
- Activities / participate?
- Typical food and drinks?
- Symbol of the holiday?
- Completion / participate?

## Appendix Speaking Cards 2. Holidays: Traditions and Customs

### Student B

Join us this scary night in Elm Street Youth Club

### HALLOWEEN

Experience the spirit of the holiday in a haunted house

Best costume and Jack O' Lantern

Bob for apples

Mummy making

Trick or treat?

Ghosts, fingers, brains and a lot more to tease your appetite!



### Student A



### Halloween party

- Organizer?
- Traditional activities / include?
- Competitions?
- Ghosts / see?
- Food?



**Appendix Speaking Cards 3. Youth projects and activities.**

**Student A**

Spend summer in the most pleasurable way!

Have fun and learn at the same time



Germany  
4 weeks  
Youth Summer Camp  
Qualified teachers  
Accommodation and food

Tel: 37255689

**Student B**

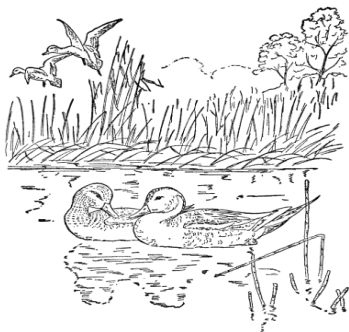
Summer camp

- Country / travel?
- Length / stay?
- Facilities /include?
- Level / teachers?
- Facilities?

**Appendix Speaking Cards 3. Youth projects and activities.**

**Student B**

Youth project  
Work and learn  
**HELP THE ANIMALS**



Nature reserves

Berkshire, England

Summer time

Comfortable accommodation

Tel: 39855395

**Student A**

Youth project

- Type of project?
- How long?
- Facilities?
- Length of staying?
- Destination?

### Appendix Speaking Cards 3. Youth projects and activities.

#### Student A

Young and responsible

MAKE SUSSEX CLEAN

July

Mon to Thu

10.00 – 14.00

£3 / hour

Meals

Uniform

Tel: 36548915

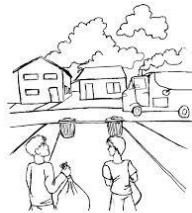


Illustration von der Website www.made.com

#### Student B

Summer job offer

- Type of work? Target group?
- Time? Days?
- Salary?
- Lunch?
- Clothes?

### Appendix Speaking Cards 3. Youth projects and activities.

#### Student B

Charity fair  
HELP THE HOMELESS

Mon 15 June – Thu 18 June

City Hall square

Sell and give money to the needy

or

Bring clothes and food to

Wilshire Shelter

Tel: 359858788



#### Student A

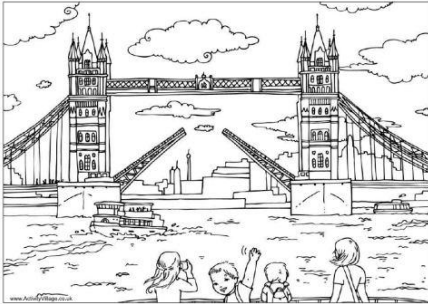
#### The homeless support

- Type of activity?
- Dates?
- Place?
- Way to support the homeless?
- Charity alternatives?

**Appendix Speaking Cards 4. Travelling: Sightseeing.**

**Student A**

Sail along the banks of the Thames



9 am – 9 pm

£ 5 children

£ 8 adults

Discounts for groups

Romantic dinner opportunity

Parties

Book first

Tel: 35869333

**Student B**

London Trips

- Kind of trips?
- Time available?
- Prices?
- Special offers?
- Reservation for an occasion?

**Appendix Speaking Cards 4. Travelling: Sightseeing.**

**Student A**

**LONDON CASTLES AND PALACES**

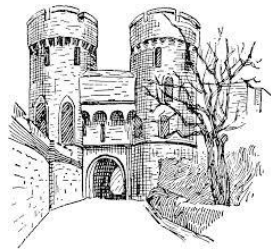
Learn the history of London  
and

the mystery of the places

Kensington Palace

Windsor Castle

Hampton Court Palace



Groups max. 20 people

£ 30adult

£25child

Book online or telephone

[www.bookingtrip.com](http://www.bookingtrip.com)

Tel: 356224556

**Student B**

London trip

- Places to visit?
- Purpose / trip?
- Group size?
- Prices?
- Ways to reserve?

**Appendix Speaking Cards 4. Travelling: Sightseeing.**

**Student B**

*London Gardens in one day*

- ✓ Royal Botanical Gardens
- ✓ Hampton Court Palace Gardens
- ✓ Eltham Palace Gardens

Medieval landscapes, magnificent displays  
30,000 types of plant



Open air picnic

(bad weather – lunch at a restaurant)

Order till the end of April and get 20% discount

For further information

Tel: 35666421259

**Student A**

London trips

- What gardens?
- Reason to visit?
- Meals?
- Raining? Opportunities?
- Discount conditions?

**Appendix Speaking Cards 4. Travelling: Sightseeing.**

**Student B**

School trip  
Wednesday 15 May



Cartoon Museum  
and  
Pollock's Toy Museum

£ 30 child  
£ 45 adult

Train tickets are included  
Emily Watkins, tel: 3569871222

**Student A**

School trip

- Date?
- Places to visit?
- Entrance fee?
- Vehicle / get to?
- Contact person?



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