

# DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

„Let's Talk Reading: The Role of Literature in  
Communicative Language Teaching“

Verfasserin

Barbara Rohacek

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 2014

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 190 344 299

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

UF Englisch UF Psychologie und Philosophie

Betreuerin:

Assoz. Prof. Mag. Dr. Susanne Reichl



## Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Mag. Dr. Susanne Reichl for her support, her calmness and her positive attitude.

I also want to thank Mag. Angerer, the headmaster of the BRG/BORG St.Pölten, for enabling my action research. Furthermore, I also want to thank my students who did such a great job although it was the last week before their Christmas holidays.

I also want to thank my family, who has always supported and encouraged me in my studies and throughout my life. Thank you for all the strength and the love you have given me.

At last but not least, I want to thank my friends and especially my partner Thomas, who supported me and patiently tolerated my varying moods.



## **Declaration of Authenticity**

I confirm to have conceived and written this paper in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors and any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are all clearly marked within the text and acknowledged in the bibliographical references.

Vienna, March 2014



## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Reading in the EFL classroom .....</b>	<b>3</b>
a. Factors influencing Second Language Reading.....	3
b. Reading and its interactive elements.....	7
c. Benefits of teaching literature in the EFL classroom.....	10
I. Strategic and Linguistic Aspects.....	12
II. Cultural and Personal Aspects .....	14
III. Communicative Aspects.....	17
d. Criteria for selecting Literature.....	19
e. Class Readers .....	24
f. Role of Illustrations .....	27
<b>3. Communicative Language Teaching .....</b>	<b>30</b>
a. Communicative Competence.....	30
b. Defining Communicative Language Teaching .....	32
c. PPP: A traditional Approach .....	35
d. Task-based Language Teaching.....	37
I. Definition of a task.....	37
II. The TBL framework .....	42
III. Teacher Roles and Learner Roles in TBLT .....	46
IV. Texts in Task-based Language Teaching.....	50
e. Difference between PPP and TBLT .....	51
<b>4. Action Research: <i>Max and Molly's Guide to Trouble</i>.....</b>	<b>54</b>
a. Doing Action Research .....	54
b. Rationale and Selection Criteria.....	57
c. Context and task design.....	59
d. Evaluation background und data collection.....	67
e. Analysis and Interpretation .....	69
<b>5. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>6. Bibliography.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>7. Appendix.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>8. German Abstract.....</b>	<b>97</b>

## 1. Introduction

The motivation to write this diploma thesis originates from two major concerns I experienced when I was teaching English in a lower secondary school. The first concern was students' limited ability to interact spontaneously and fluently. They did not dare to talk, because they were too afraid of making mistakes. Secondly, they had never read any text longer than two or three pages with their former teacher. They were solely used to intensive reading and had never done any reading for general meaning or pleasure before. I avoid using the term 'extensive reading' here, which will be explained in sections 2.c and 2.e. Those circumstances were very thought-provoking for me and I decided to see my diploma thesis as a chance to deal with these two aspects in order to be able to avoid similar problems in my future EFL classes.

Before thinking about a way of how to integrate or even combine communicative language teaching and pleasure reading in the EFL classroom, it is important to look at the two curricula for foreign languages in lower and upper AHS-secondary school, which lay the groundwork for every single teaching design. Concerning communicative competence, the following statement taken from the lower secondary-AHS curriculum is significant:

### **Kommunikative Kompetenz als übergeordnetes Lernziel**

Als übergeordnetes Lernziel in allen Fertigkeitsbereichen ist stets die Fähigkeit zur erfolgreichen Kommunikation – die nicht mit fehlerfreier Kommunikation zu verwechseln ist – anzustreben. Somit sind die jeweiligen kommunikativen Anliegen beim Üben von Teilfertigkeiten in den Vordergrund zu stellen. (BMUKK 2000a: 2)

As it is clearly stated here, communicative competence has to be seen as the superior learning aim in foreign language education. This is also the case in the upper secondary AHS- curriculum, which proves that a communicative language teaching approach can easily be justified according to both curricula. However, concerning pleasure reading and reading for general meaning, it is not that obvious. The curriculum says that teachers should help their students to train different reading strategies and to develop a certain autonomy in order to be able

to deal with texts written in a foreign language (BMUKK 2000a: 1). When looking at the descriptors represented in the curriculum, which are based on the Common European Framework of References, there is also an emphasis on different reading strategies, like searching for information. Fortunately, reading for general comprehension is also part of the curriculum (BMUKK 2000b: 5), but the extent to which it should be implemented is not defined and thus part of the teacher's responsibility.

Given this context, this paper tries to look at a way reading literary texts, in the form of a class reader, can contribute to the development of students' communicative competence. The aim is to encourage and motivate students to read long texts or whole books and to use this as a basis for communicative language teaching. There are already CLT lessons which are text-based (cf. Willis 1996 or Willis & Willis 2007), but these texts are usually not longer than one page and they are normally read in class. I want students to read at home as well, in order to increase their exposure to the target language and use this reading experience in class to create a communicative purpose. I want students to enjoy reading and, consequently, to enjoy talking about it as well.

The thesis will consist of two main parts which are subdivided into several sections, a theoretical and a practical one. The theoretical part will sum up the state of art concerning reading in the EFL classroom and communicative language teaching. The practical part will represent classroom activities which are based on the two main aspects discussed in the theory part, trying to combine them and to put them into practice. Furthermore, it will include the results gathered from an action research, which means that I actually tested the activities in an EFL classroom and analysed the data, looking at whether the activities were actually viable and expedient or not.

## **2. Reading in the EFL classroom**

### **a. Factors influencing Second Language Reading**

Being a teacher means being a professional. According to Furlong *et al.* (2000: 4-5), this implies knowledge, autonomy and responsibility on the side of the teacher, three concepts which are closely interrelated. Teachers constantly face complex and unpredictable situations, because each student and each class is different. Consequently, they need a specialised body of knowledge in order to deal with the complexity they face. There are no regular patterns that can be followed from class to class. Applying this specialized knowledge means that they have to make decisions, work autonomously and act with responsibility. This introduction might seem rather far-fetched in relation to the actual topic of this section. However, it should emphasise teachers' need for understanding factors that influence students' reading process, since this is part of the specialised knowledge they need as professionals for teaching reading successfully. Without knowledge of these factors, teachers will not be well equipped to help their students. Therefore, this section will discuss some of the most important influential factors teachers should keep in mind when teaching reading.

Before looking at these factors it is also necessary to understand what it is that fluent readers actually do, otherwise teachers will not know what they are aiming at when they are teaching reading. Grabe (1991: 378) states that "fluent reading is rapid, purposeful, interactive, comprehensible, flexible, and gradually developing." This suggests that the decoding process must be rapid in order to be able to make inferences and connections which are needed for comprehension. Furthermore, the reader needs to have a clear purpose in mind when approaching texts to gain motivation. Reading must be seen as an interactive experience between the reader, text and background knowledge for it to be effective. Fluent readers also expect to understand what they are reading, they are constantly constructing meaning while reading. Flexibility stands for the use of different reading strategies like skimming ahead, considering titles etc. Finally, it should be kept in mind that reading is a long-term process which improves gradually and takes a lot of effort (Grabe 1991: 378-9). This description of fluent reading represents its complexity and proves

that teachers in L1 and FL have to be patient when teaching reading as it takes considerable time and resources. The following paragraphs will now look at factors influencing reading in a foreign language. Before that, it needs to be clarified that this paper is aiming at Austrian students who learn English outside of an L2 context, thus they will be referred to as FL rather than L2 learners, although most of the research addressed mainly focuses on L2 learning and often, L2 is used for FL situations.

Reading in L1 is different from reading in FL for a number of reasons. One of the most prominent factors is that L1 and FL learners are usually from different age groups and consequently are in a different stage of cognitive development. Grabe (1991: 386) calls this *L2 acquisition and training background differences* and argues that FL readers lack the range of oral language vocabulary and the intuitive sense of grammar that L1 learners already have. At first, this seems to be a disadvantage but since FL learners are older than L1 learners, they have “a more well-developed conceptual sense of the world [...], considerably more factual knowledge about the world and they can make elaborate logical inferences from the text” (Grabe 1991: 186-7). Therefore, they can make use of meta-cognitive strategies, which shapes their basic way of approaching a text. This concept is also supported by Aebbersold and Field (1997: 34), who argue that the ability to describe and discuss features and rules of one’s own language makes it easier to improve the L2 reading process.

Other factors influencing the development of FL reading skills are students’ reading proficiency in L1, the degree of difference between L1 and FL and also their language proficiency in FL. Wallace (2001: 22) states that “reading abilities can be generalized across languages” and therefore, being a good L1 reader makes one a more proficient FL learner because of the ability to transfer reading skills from L1 to FL (Aebbersold and Field 1997: 25). This means that being a fluent L1 reader positively influences the FL reading process. However, it can also be the case that students’ L1 causes difficulties. Grabe (1991: 387) calls this *language processing differences* and gives an example by stating that “transfer effects caused by false cognates or near cognates can influence vocabulary recognition.” Cognates are “words in different languages that have a similar form or meaning” (Yule 2006: 238). If, however, two words only seem to be cognates, but they are actually not,

they can confuse the learner and cause misunderstandings. Furthermore, the difference between the writing system or alphabet used in L1 and FL is also decisive. Students with a similar alphabet in their L1 will have fewer problems than those with an entirely different writing system (Aebersold and Field 1997: 28). For example, a Chinese student will have more difficulty in learning to read English than a German student. This difference between L1 and FL gains even more importance when thinking about the fact that the number of students in Austrian classrooms who do not have German as their mother tongue has increased significantly within the last decades. Consequently, Austrian English teachers can no longer teach English on the basis of students' knowledge of German, but they have to take the diversity of students' linguistic background into account and react accordingly. However, the greatest factor in FL reading is students' proficiency in FL (Aebersold and Field 1997: 34). Students need to have a basic level of FL proficiency to be able to read a text successfully. This level is called threshold and is crucial in the sense that "below a certain FL threshold, readers will process an FL text as a piece of foreign language, whereas above that threshold, their FL reading can resort to a number of strategies transferred from L1" (Reichl 2009: 183). Consequently, the ability to transfer reading skills from L1 to FL mentioned above is only possible when a certain threshold of language competence is crossed. When selecting a text for the reading classroom, students' FL language proficiency is a significant selection criterion. This will be dealt with in more detail in section 2.d.

Two last, but still very important factors influencing the FL reading process are students' cultural background concerning reading and also their general background knowledge. Aebersold and Field (1997: 28) hold the opinion that cultural differences are profound and are the largest category of factors influencing FL reading. Each individual student has a different learning history. This is highly influenced by the teacher's own cultural attitudes and beliefs about reading which stay with students for a long time and thus are also transferred to the FL reading process. Even the reading strategies are connected to students' cultural background. Some children are trained to memorize and recite religious texts for instance, while others are asked to talk about plots and characters of fictional stories they have read at home. Consequently, some students might only make use

of specific reading strategies due to their cultural background. Aebersold and Field (1997: 34) briefly sum up most of the cultural influences on FL reading:

The most far-reaching and influential factors in L2/FL reading are those of cultural orientation. The students' attitudes towards text and purpose of reading, the types of reading skills and strategies they use in the L2, their beliefs about the reading process, their knowledge of text types in L1 (formal schema), and their accumulated background knowledge (content schema) in the L2 are all major influences in their L2/FL reading.

An important point of criticism in relation to this cultural factor is mentioned by Reichl (2009: 181), who states that their model of culture is not complex enough and that it would be more reasonable to refer to differences concerning "learning or reading contexts".

Students' background knowledge mentioned above is decisive in the sense that they will have difficulty understanding any content they are completely unfamiliar with and thus teachers need to make necessary information available for them in order to promote comprehension. The reading process is heavily influenced by the reader's past and therefore the "meaning-making processes often start some time before the first line of the text is actually read, before the first page of the book is opened" (Reichl 2009: 36). Several factors such as the book's cover, title or contextual factors i.e. the time of the day can "activate processes that will crucially guide comprehension processes" (Reichl 2009: 36). Before reading a text about rituals of the Maasai for instance, students need to know who they are, where they come from etc., otherwise students will face greater difficulty in understanding the text. This highlights the importance of students' background knowledge when approaching reading and the need for teachers to activate appropriate contextual knowledge by making use of pre-reading activities to support students' comprehension process.

In conclusion, it can be seen that reading is "a consequence of both L1 and FL factors, and is additionally influenced by individual reader factors" (Reichl 2009: 180). These factors are often hard to identify, but nonetheless should also be considered when planning a reading lesson, e.g. by offering different teaching methods and approaches. Of course, this was just a very limited insight into this field of research and there is much more to say about it, but the aim of this section was simply to raise teachers' awareness and to show that teaching reading is a

very complex process influenced by a variety of different factors. All these factors are interactive, just as reading itself is an interactive process, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **b. Reading and its interactive elements**

Ray Williams (1986: 43) argues that “classroom procedure should reflect the purposeful, task-based, interactive nature of real reading” and therefore, the interactive nature of reading needs to be looked at in order to be able to incorporate it into the language classroom. Writing and consequently also literature, is one form of communication which in contrast to face-to-face interaction, does not take place simultaneously (Nünning and Surkamp 2006: 18). This means that the production and the reception do not happen at the same time and the only connection between transmitter and receiver is the text itself. This aspect, as well as the cognitive and emotional dimension of reading and its impact on foreign language teaching will be dealt with in this section.

As it has already been mentioned, literature as a form of communication is marked by an asynchrony of production and reception. An author or transmitter produces a text/message which constitutes the medium through which the reader/receiver receives the message. The time span between production and reception can be of any length. However, a necessary condition for understanding the message is that transmitter and receiver speak the same language and have similar ideas of the world (Nünning and Surkamp 2006: 18; Wallace 1992: 43). In the EFL classroom, however, readers often still lack necessary language knowledge or knowledge about social conventions. Thus it is the teacher’s duty to support the students and help them to bridge this gap and so the teacher has to mediate between text and learner.

From a cognitive point of view, it is important to notice that the reader is involved in two processes which constantly interplay. Firstly, *bottom-up-processing*, which refers to the “decoding of letters, words, and other language features in the text” (Hedge 2000: 189). Obviously this process is significant in foreign language teaching, since it is something unfamiliar for a foreign language learner and still

has to be trained. Learners need to be able to process words and structures successfully in order to gain meaning. Secondly, *top-down-processing*, which describes “the application of prior knowledge to working on the meaning of a text” (Hedge 2000: 189). This means that the reader refers to his or her schematic knowledge or, in other words, his or her knowledge of the world. Meaning can only be constructed if the reader has enough background knowledge to successfully decode a message. Hedge (2000: 189) names six types of knowledge which help readers to make sense of a text. These include syntactic, morphological, general world, sociocultural, topic and genre knowledge. Therefore, on the cognitive level, interaction also refers to “the interplay among various kinds of knowledge that a reader employs in moving through a text” (Hedge 2000: 189). Consequently, teachers also have to activate appropriate schematic knowledge by using pre-reading activities in order to make the text more accessible for the language learners. This shows that language as well as schematic knowledge, as it has been mentioned in the previous section, need to be taken into consideration when teaching literature, otherwise students will not be able to successfully interpret a text.

This interrelation between language and schematic knowledge is seen as vital in relation to reading by Kenneth S. Goodman (1967: 2), who holds the following opinion:

[Reading] is a psycholinguistic guessing game. It involves an interaction between thought and language. Efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time. The ability to anticipate that which has not been seen, of course, is vital in reading.

From his point of view, readers make use of graphic, syntactic, semantic and phonological cues in order to make sense of a text (Goodman 1967: 10). Readers relate the text to their own background knowledge and reread a text passage as soon as new or unexpected information appears. For teaching, this means that the teacher has to help the learners to choose the most productive cues and to distinguish between useful and useless information. They have to support students in “[using] their knowledge of language structure to draw on their experiences and concepts” (Goodman 1967: 9).

Also the emotional dimension plays an important role when trying to understand a text as emotions and personal associations guide the reader's attention and influence their perception (Surkamp and Nünning 2006: 21). The emotional aspect of education is often overshadowed by the presumably more important cognitive aspect, although they are equally essential. Readers give weight to specific interpretations not only on the basis of their schematic knowledge but also on the basis of their norms and value-systems, their feelings, affections and reactions caused by the text. Consequently, individual interpretations need to be accepted and promoted in foreign language teaching. Lothar Bredella (2000: 160-1) argues that interpretation is a dynamic process. It develops from the foundations of the reader's schematic knowledge and emotions but is limited by the text itself. The range of interpretations is predefined by the text but within this range, the reader's knowledge of the world, norms and value-systems can unfold and influence the interpretation of the text. The reader cannot change the events within the text and therefore cannot be responsible for the consequences, which allows him or her to fully embark on the content of the text. This creates a secure feeling and constructs a perfect framework for the interactive process of reading. For the teachers, this means that they have to enable students to bring in their personal experiences and interpretations of the text, but also to acknowledge and accept restrictions based on textual specific guidelines and structures.

Finally, reading is also characterised by another form of interaction, namely the "interaction of an evolutionary and a socialised factor" (Reichl 2009: 33). This relates to the idea that our cognitive strategies can always be ascribed to survival strategies and thus this also relates to reading. Susanne Reichl (2009: 33) suggests the following:

Reading seems to be characterised by the interaction of an evolutionary and a socialised factor: from an evolutionary point of view, there is a natural tendency for the mind to work as efficiently and as economically as possible, to maximise output from minimal input. Reading, however, as a skill that people have to acquire systematically, requires concentration, time, and sometimes hard work, which often stands in contrast to the economic factor.

This point of view puts reading into a much broader context. Instead of seeing reading as an isolated skill, as it is often done in second language teaching, it

should be seen as based on “more general thinking abilities that are an integral part of all cognitive ability” (Reichl 2009: 33). Furthermore, this aspect stresses the significant role of reading in the world outside the classroom and also the importance of connecting reading to a broader theory of general cognition which also refers back to the previous section about factors influencing reading in the EFL classroom.

As it can be seen, the interactive nature of reading is far-reaching. The different elements of literary communication, as well as the cognitive, emotional and communicative dimension, need to be taken into consideration by the teacher when planning reading lessons. Although this might seem overwhelming, especially for novice teachers, all these aspects are worth bearing in mind, can enrich students’ reading experience and make the lesson much more lively, interactive and rewarding.

### **c. Benefits of teaching literature in the EFL classroom**

It is indisputable that there is a magnitude of reasons for the use of literature in the EFL classroom. First and foremost, it offers exposure to the target language, which students would normally not get outside the classroom. But it is not solely an ideal vehicle for illustrating language use, it can also induce personal development or offer a source for cultural enrichment. The aim of this section is to give a brief insight into the benefits of using literature in foreign language teaching, but before doing so some basic considerations need to be discussed.

Although it would seem reasonable to advocate reading ‘authentic’ texts in the language classroom, it needs to be kept in mind that the matter of authenticity is a relative one. As Widdowson (1998: 715) argues, the term ‘authentic’ seems to be inappropriate “as the classroom cannot replicate the contextual conditions that made the language authentic in the first place”. Instead the term ‘appropriate’ should be used, which refers to language which “can be made real by the community of learners, authenticated by them in the learning process” (Widdowson 1998: 715). Therefore, this section will argue for reading texts which

are appropriate for the learners and which make language learning a reality for themselves.

Furthermore, a basic distinction needs to be made between intensive and extensive reading. Intensive reading can be described as 'reading to learn', while extensive reading can be seen as 'learning to read' (Extensive Reading Foundation/ERF 2001: 2). Intensive reading activities are intended to train students' reading strategies and they are supposed to learn something about the language itself, e.g. unknown vocabulary or grammar. Extensive reading, which will be dealt with in more detail in section 2.e., means individual reading of longer texts for general meaning and over a longer period of time. The aim is to build reading fluency without the students being consciously aware of the learning process (ERF 2011: 2). Students do not only read in class but also independently at home (Hedge 2000: 202). This obviously increases students' exposure to English, which is extremely valuable since class contact time is very limited in Austria. The activities in this paper will show a mixture of extensive and intensive reading. Although the main focus will be on extensive reading, texts will also be analysed in order to develop students' grammatical/lexical competence. This means that the kind of reading involved in this paper will neither be referred to as extensive nor as intensive reading, but more general terms, like reading for pleasure or general comprehension, will be used.

Dealing with the benefits of reading in the EFL classroom, however, the focus will mainly be on reading literature in general. Some of the arguments, especially in section 2.c.i., are rather general and also true for factual texts, but later on, the focus will be on reading literature. And although reading is the centre of attention here, it is important to keep in mind that it should also be seen in the light of the aim of this paper, which is to look at the contribution reading literature can make to students' communicative competence.

## I. Strategic and Linguistic Aspects

The most acknowledged reason for teaching literature is its valuable contribution to students' linguistic ability (Collie & Slater 1987: 4; Carter and Long 1991: 2). Reading extends learners' awareness of language and familiarizes them with a variety of different linguistic aspects. Therefore, it is a popular source for language-based activities in the EFL classroom. This section, however, will not only look at the linguistic advantages of teaching reading, but also at its restrictions.

First of all, it is important to mention that using literature in the EFL classroom trains students' reading and text comprehension skills (Surkamp and Nünning 2006: 15). Reading is an important technique which enables us to acquire and process information, a vital skill in today's society, which is characterized by its fast-moving nature. This fast pace also needs to be reflected in students' reading competence, they need to learn how to read in order to be able to acquire and process new information as fast and efficiently as possible. Using literature in the EFL classroom is an important contribution as it gives students the chance to approach new words and sentence structures in a controlled environment. Broadly speaking, it offers preparation for real-world-challenges.

People always read for a specific purpose and this purpose also determines how they read, or in other words, the strategy they use for reading. There is a difference for instance between reading signposts and newspaper articles. Signposts are read quickly in order to find the right way, while newspaper articles can be read slowly and in detail in order to fully understand them. Hedge (2000: 195) lists the following reading strategies:

- *Receptive reading* is undertaken when the reader simply wants to enjoy and understand the given text.
- *Reflective reading* includes re-reading and reflecting on specific text passages.
- *Skim reading* is used to get an overall impression of the content.
- *Scanning* means searching quickly for specific information in a text.
- *Intensive reading* means careful examination of a text, word by word.

Using a variety of texts in the EFL classroom which create different purposes gives students the opportunity to train different reading strategies. This means that reading activities should always have a specific purpose. Rivers and Temperley

(1978: 187) list, among others, gathering information, pleasure and amusement and keeping in touch with friends and colleagues. These purposes will also make an important contribution to students' motivation. Most importantly, however, using different kinds of texts in foreign language teaching helps students to develop different kinds of reading strategies they will need for their everyday life.

On the lexical level, reading can help learners to develop an idea of how words are used in different contexts. As Hedge (1985: 23) states, "it is through extensive reading that a student can best come to understand which words are appropriate in which context." So through reading, words are not just learnt individually from lists in connection with their most frequent meaning, but they are contextualized and the diversity of their possible meanings and connotations is displayed. This is also expressed by David Wilkins (1972: 132), who thinks that through reading the learner "is exposed to the lexical items embedded in natural linguistic contexts, and as a result they begin to have the same meaningfulness for him that they have for the native speaker." Deducing meaning from context is essential in foreign language learning and connected to Kenneth Goodman's (1967: 2) idea that reading is a 'psycholinguistic guessing game'. Furthermore, reading also develops the reader's idiomaticity, meaning a sensitivity to expressions that are natural to native speakers of a language (Wilkins 1972: 132).

Also on a syntactic level, reading can function as an important role model, keeping in mind that the lexical and the syntactic level are inseparably linked with each other. As Collie and Slater (1987: 5) put it:

Reading a sustainable and contextualised body of text, students gain familiarity with many features of the written language – the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, the different ways of connecting ideas – which broaden and enrich their own writing skills.

But it does not solely influence students' writing skills, it can also have a positive impact on their communicative ability, which will be dealt in section 2.3 in more detail. So as it can be seen, reading offers a comprehensive picture of how language works and helps to develop students' knowledge of language use. They learn how vocabulary and grammatical structures they have learnt actually work in communication. Carter and Long (1991: 9) call this the 'language model' of literature teaching, which "is normally associated with language-based

approaches. These aim to be learner-centred and activity-based and to proceed with particular attention to the way language is used.”

In relation to language use, an interesting distinction is made by H.G. Widdowson (1978: 3), who distinguishes two levels of linguistic knowledge: the level of *usage* and the level of *use*. *Usage* refers to the knowledge of the language system of English, while *use* refers to the realization of this system for effective communication. Traditionally, literature has been used and is still often used to teach language *usage*, whereas today it is also seen as an important tool for developing an awareness of language *use*. This means that literature is not only a good example of how the language system works, but also of how to use it for successful communication which is the ultimate objective in English language teaching.

Therefore, although it is true that literature can function as a language model in the EFL classroom, it should not exclusively be seen as an instrument for teaching specific vocabulary or different sentence structures. Texts should not be selected because of “distinctive linguistic features, but because they promote reading” (Wallace 1992: 74). A primary focus on linguistic aspects of a text can demotivate students and spoil their reading experience.

## **II. Cultural and Personal Aspects**

Another benefit of teaching literature is its contribution to students’ cultural enrichment by deepening their understanding of cultural diversity. This is made possible, for instance, by the fact that “a literary work can transcend both time and culture to speak directly to a reader in another country or a different period of history” (Collie and Slater 1987: 3). It gives an important insight into the culture of people whose language is being learnt by telling the reader something about their social backgrounds, their beliefs and interests, their thoughts and feelings, their joys and fears. Teaching literature “enables students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space” (Carter and Long 1991: 2).

On the basis of vividly portrayed fates of individual people, students get to know foreign lifestyles, values, norms and world-views. As Collie and Slater (1987: 4) explain:

It is true that the 'world of the novel, play or short story is a created one, yet it offers a full and vivid context in which characters from many social backgrounds can be depicted. A reader can discover their thoughts, feelings, customs, possessions: what they buy, believe in, fear, enjoy; how they speak and behave behind closed doors.

This change of perspective gives students an opportunity to reflect on their own attitudes and value system and broadens their horizon concerning perception and understanding, which also expands their personal room of manoeuvre (Surkamp and Nünning 2006: 14-5). Understanding that there is not just one way of living and developing tolerance towards other cultures will help them to perceive and appreciate new approaches. Furthermore, foreign characters and their lifestyle can induce sympathy and understanding, but also encourage a critical evaluation of the depicted world-view (Surkamp and Nünning 2006: 15). This shows that through depicting another culture, literature can also cause a significant personal development. In comparison to factual texts, concrete depictions of individual cases in literary texts enable the reader to experience and relate to 'the other'.

Involvement is not only useful on the personal but also on the language level. Collie and Slater (1987: 5) point out the importance of personal involvement by stating that "engaging imaginatively with literature enables learners to shift the focus of their attention beyond the more mechanical aspects of the foreign language system." Keeping the language learning process in mind, the outcome is much higher if the students are involved and interested in what they are reading. Their motivation and interest will help them to deal with difficult words or phrases, since due to curiosity and emotional involvement, linguistic obstacles will appear much more manageable.

Of course, there is more to the cultural aspect of teaching literature than this individual and rather emotional point of view depicted so far. Culture is seen as a multidimensional concept including a social, material and mental dimension (Surkamp and Nünning 2006: 34). Each of these concepts should be part of foreign language teaching. The material dimension represents texts and other artefacts, which means that teaching literature should not be limited to specific sorts of texts,

but be widely varied to represent its diversity. The mental dimension is similar to what has been discussed earlier in this section facilitating the idea that cultural differences concerning view-points, norms and value-systems should also be part of teaching literature. The social dimension represents social conventions and institutions which highly influence development, shape and reception of different medial forms of expression (Surkamp and Nünning 2006: 34). These three concepts should be kept in mind when teaching literature in the EFL classroom.

In relation to the cultural aspect it is also worth mentioning that literature should also be seen as valuable in the sense that it is originally not designed for teaching a foreign language, but actually “shows the reality of the language” (Daskalovska and Dimova 2012: 1183) or, as Barnett (1989: 145) states, literary texts “motivate students, offer a real context, transmit the target language culture, and prepare students to read outside the classroom”. Students are confronted with something which is initially intended for a native speaker and therefore gain familiarity with many different cultural and linguistic forms and conventions. Additionally, reading literary texts in their original form gives students a feeling of satisfaction (Ur 1996: 155), which strengthens their confidence concerning reading and language use in general.

There is already a strong tendency to use original material in the EFL classroom but often this solely includes maps, letters, postcards or newspaper articles. Although this is to some extent beneficial, Widdowson (1983: 33) observes that:

It is not easy to see how learners at any level can get interested in and therefore motivated by a dialogue about buying stamps at a post office. There is no plot, no story, no mystery, there is no character; everything proceeds as if communication never created a problem. There is no misunderstanding, there's no possibility of any kind of interaction. What happens is that learners simply mouth the sentences of their partners, and you don't actually get them interested in what they are doing.

This statement clearly points out the important role of students' interest, which is more likely to be awakened by original, challenging and exciting texts the students can identify with.

In conclusion, one of the benefits of teaching literature is the ability to convey insights into different cultures which stimulates a change of perspective, cultivates empathy and tolerance and helps to unfold students' critical and ethical power of

judgement. Therefore, it does not only promote language learning but broadens their horizon and helps them to evolve into a self-reflected human being and an important part of society. Furthermore, using original material in the language classroom is the ideal approach for preparing students for the real world and gives them assurance in their ability to use the language.

### **III. Communicative Aspects**

Communicative competence is a generally accepted goal in ELT and also a dominant part of the Austrian AHS curriculum, as it has already been discussed in the introductory part. Allwright (1979: 167) strongly emphasises that “if communication is THE aim, then it should be THE major element in the process”. This means that communicative activities are a vital part of every foreign language classroom. The tendency to use reading material which was originally written for native speakers, has definitely increased in communicative methodology and therefore the question which will be dealt with in this section is in how far teaching literature can be useful for communicative language teaching?

The status of literature in communicative language teaching has changed significantly. Traditional approaches, up to the late 1960s, gave priority to grammatical competence as the basis for language proficiency and therefore a literary text was seen as a source for vocabulary and grammar exercises rather than a stimulus for communication (Richards 2006: 6). Surkamp and Nünning (2006: 13) raise an important point concerning the communicative aspect of teaching literature. They argue that literary texts provoke more questions, reactions and statements than most school books, which are mainly read to introduce new words and structures rather than to focus on content. Therefore, communication is less likely when working with school books because students can hardly make use of personal experiences or develop empathy. When reading a literary text, students can identify with the characters and their personal story. They build up a relation which constitutes a basis for communicative purposes. Furthermore, reading literature, just like communication, is an interactive process, a concept which has been dealt with in section 2.b.

As it was mentioned in the section about cultural and personal aspects of teaching literature, working with literary texts provokes different thoughts and feelings in each individual student, a disparity which can be very useful in language teaching (Bredella 2000: 135). Wallace (1992: 43) argues that each interpretation of a text is influenced by psychological, cognitive, affective and social factors and this diversity of interpretations offers a great opportunity for interaction between students. Through literature they can get involved emotionally as well as creatively, and relate the text to their own experiences. A great number of action-oriented and student-centred activities can be done on the basis of their various opinions, in which the students do not only talk about the text, but also about themselves, their views and therefore create a real communicative purpose. According to Dave and Jane Willis (2007: 9), personal involvement increases students' communicative confidence and fluency and creates "golden moments in a language classroom". This means that one aim of teaching literature is to create an information or opinion gap which also exists between speakers in the real world. Since one of the aims of communicative language teaching is to "involve learners in purposeful tasks which are embedded in a meaningful context and which reflect and rehearse language as it is used authentically in the world outside the classroom" (Hedge 2000: 71), literature seems to constitute an ideal foundation.

However, one point of criticism which should be mentioned in relation to literature and its communicative benefits is that the language in literary texts does not reflect the language of the real-world. Therefore, it is sometimes considered as inauthentic and unrealistic. The choice of text is decisive in this respect, since reading *Ulysses* by James Joyce, for instance, might not be the ideal choice when trying to create a model of real-world communication. On the contrary, the language in *Max and Molly's Guide to trouble* is very close to this model, especially due to the numerous dialogues used in the book. As it can be seen, this is definitely something which has to be taken into consideration when choosing a book as a basis for communicative language teaching.

In conclusion, it can be said that literature considerably enriches the language input in a foreign language classroom. Using literature increases learners' exposure to the target language, which is absolutely vital when learning a foreign language. Duff and Maley (1990: 6, quoted in Daskalovska and Dimova 2012:

1185) name three types of justifications for using literary texts in foreign language teaching, which briefly resume the most important points: linguistic, methodological and motivational.

Linguistically, the use of literary texts is justified on the grounds that they offer genuine samples of a very wide range of styles, registers, and text-types at many levels of difficulty. Methodologically, they offer opportunities for genuine interaction between learners because of their openness to multiple interpretations. Motivationally, they deal with matters that are likely to engage learners in a personal response from their own experiences.

This reflects the diverse opportunities which are created when dealing with literature in the EFL classroom. Creativity, personal and linguistic development, as well as students' communicative ability appear to benefit from this approach.

#### d. Criteria for selecting Literature

Selecting appropriate reading materials is essential, since it can build students' reading confidence, their reading ability and a live-long love for reading in English. Inappropriate material can "lead to a vicious circle of poor reading" (ERF 2011: 4), as it is depicted in the following figure:

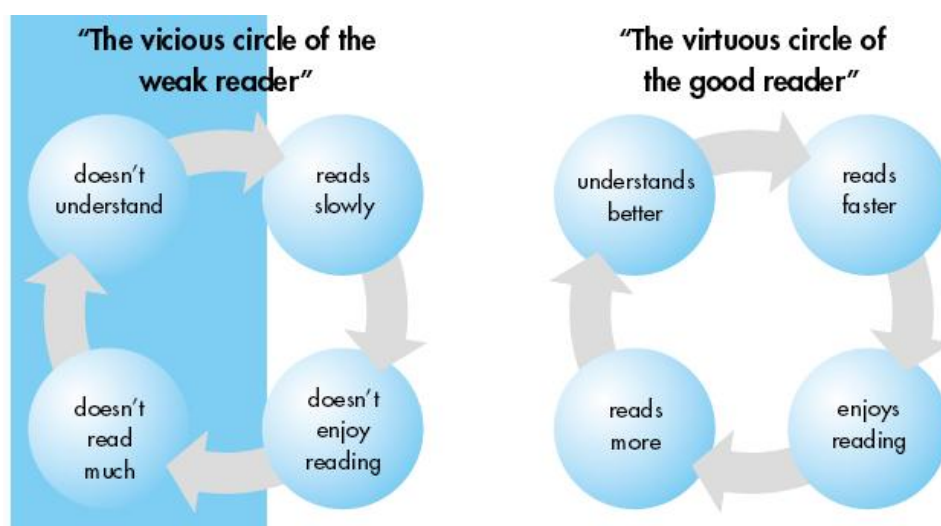


Figure 1 Reading circles (Extensive Reading Foundation 2011: 4)

As it can be seen, appropriate reading material can be extremely motivating, while inappropriate material can spoil students' reading experience. Students who are not able to understand a text have to read slowly and thus are rather unlikely to enjoy the text. This means that they will probably not read a large number of

books, which will not help them to foster their general text comprehension, consequently they will have difficulty understanding a text and so on. With students who are able to understand a text, it is vice versa. Therefore, there are various aspects which need to be taken into consideration in order to avoid a 'vicious circle of poor reading' and to pave the way for successful reading.

As Tricia Hedge (1985: 37) points it out, there are two main questions a teacher has to ask him/herself when trying to find a useful text. Firstly, it is important to ask "what sorts of books will be attractive and interesting to my students and encourage them to read?" and secondly, "Which books are appropriate for my students in terms of content and language difficulty?" With these questions in mind, the importance of attractiveness, interest, appropriate language level and content becomes clear, something which is different for each group of language learners and which will be discussed in this section.

Students' interest and motivation are interrelated and crucial for successful reading, or as Ray Williams (1986: 42) argues, "in absence of interesting texts, very little is possible". Interest increases students' motivation and one way of arousing their interest, is to include them into the process of choosing the right book (Nünning and Surkamp 2006: 42; Hedge 1985: 39). One possibility for choosing an appropriate class reader would be to let the students fill out a questionnaire about their general reading preferences, choose some books on basis of this information and finally decide on one of them together in class. Also letting them choose on the basis of summaries or short extracts is possible. It is important, however, that they are actively integrated in the selection process when working with a class reader instead of individual reading. This pre-reading effort will be profitable, since their understanding varies with the extent to which they are involved with the text, which means that students are more likely to successfully handle a higher level of language difficulty if they are interested in the text. Making this a positive experience can be immensely rewarding for the students and can substantially strengthen their motivation (Hedge 1985: 39).

Furthermore, learners' interest can also be influenced by the technical presentation of a book, its length as well as its original target audience . This includes front covers, size, variety of print, use of headings and subheadings, relationship between artwork and text and so on. This then is also something

which needs to be considered by the teacher. Different student-centred activities can be done on the basis of these characteristics, e.g. headings and subheadings can be used to create a story before actually reading the book, which increases their interest in relation to the difference between their own and the real story. Additionally, the length of the text is also decisive (Nünning and Surkamp 2006:45). The scope needs to be manageable for the students, for example if it is a book with one thousand pages, students might be afraid of not being able to cope with it and lose interest. Another important criterion when trying to arouse students' interest is the original target audience. Texts which were originally written for native speakers "are generally more interesting than those written for pedagogic purposes" (Wallace 1992: 76). This may cause problems for the reader as original texts can often be very difficult to read, especially for early and intermediate readers but this issue will be dealt with later in this section.

The selection also depends on the aim/objective the teacher is trying to reach. If the aim is to introduce specific cultural aspects of England or the UK, a book written by an American author about the American life-style would be inappropriate. If the aim is to create empathy and intercultural understanding, short stories or novels would definitely be expedient. Having a specific aim or objective in mind as a teacher, means that literature is used for a specific purpose. This however, should not only be the case from the teacher's perspective but also from the view-point of the language learner. As Hedge (2000: 207) puts it, teachers need to "create purposes which will motivate [students] to read." If there is no specific reading purpose, students only see texts as a learning device, read them word by word and fail to interpret the meaning. One way of creating such a purpose would be to raise expectations which are confirmed or denied through reading the given text.

Concerning the role of aims and objectives, my paper offers a good example. It deals with the role of literature in communicative language teaching, the problem is though, that the term literature needs to be narrowed down. Genres like the novel, short stories, epic poems, the lyric and the play all fall within the boundaries of literature (Beckson and Ganz 1977: 145). Looking at the type of language used in the different genres, a general distinction can be made between prose and poetry. Prose is characterized by "literary expressions not marked by rhyme or

metrical regularity" (Beckson and Ganz 1977: 216) while poetry is marked by patterns like rhythm or metre. In order to develop students' communicative ability, which is the general aim, both genres can be extremely valuable. While poetry can be used as a speaking occasion, prose can offer a model of everyday language use which gives students an example of successful and real communication. Especially for intermediate students, novels which mainly consist of dialogues can function as a communicative role model. Obviously, there is much more to communicative language teaching, but this will be dealt with in chapter 3 .

As it has already been referred to, the language level is also an important criterion for selecting literature. Sometimes it is anything but obvious which language level would be most appropriate for students, but generally it can be said to be "more sensible to underestimate a student's ability than to overestimate it" (Hedge 1985: 52). If the material is too difficult, students can easily get frustrated and discouraged, whereas easier material can simply be upgraded but generally will not cause any harm. Students should be able to read the book without a dictionary and should understand almost everything (ERF 2004: 4). If there is no information about the language level given by the publisher, procedures like "cloze testing" or "cloze procedure" (Hedge 1985: 53; Wallace 1992: 77) can be used for assessing the language level. For this, the students have to find missing words in a text passage and "the number of correctly guessed words indicates how well the students can reconstruct the author's message" (Hedge 1985: 55). Another way of avoiding frustration caused by linguistic difficulty is by using graded readers, simplified versions of a text or texts written for young adults. When working with simplified versions, the teacher has to decide whether the quality of the simplification is high enough. Concerning theme, length, character cast and stylistic complexity, however, texts originally written for young adults seem to be most suitable for young language learners (Donelson and Nilsen 1980: 14-15). They often deal with themes like personal growth and development, are rather short, less complex and their main character is usually a young adult students can identify with.

Another important criterion is students' background knowledge, since "successful reading in a foreign language [...] is affected by the way in which the subject matter of the book relates to a learner's existing background knowledge" (Hedge 1985:

44-5). Hedge (1985: 45-48) argues that there are different kinds of background knowledge, consisting of general knowledge, specific knowledge and cultural knowledge. If students have to deal with completely unfamiliar content in addition to the cultural and linguistic gap they have to bridge, they might not be able to handle the challenge and become frustrated. Texts should neither exceed the linguistic nor the psychological or mental capability of the students (Nünning and Surkamp 2006: 45). The content should be within their horizon or just slightly above it in order to avoid mental overload. Therefore, students' age and psychological development are also important. Obviously this is something which is very hard to identify for the teacher, but, nevertheless, it is a criterion which should be kept in mind and as teachers usually know their students quite well, one possibility is to draw on their personal experience.

All the aspects mentioned so far try to answer the questions raised in the introduction. However, these questions mainly focus on the learners' perspective, but selecting material must also be seen from a practical point of view. First of all, the text should be suited to the intended approach, especially, for instance, when doing task-based language teaching. This shows that selecting a text is also connected to the teaching techniques used by the teacher. Secondly, texts should not be too long, or if they are longer they should offer pauses, e.g. different chapters, so that it is easier for the teachers to handle and to avoid frustration on the learners' side (Willis 1996: 70). Teachers and students will profit from a step-by-step development. Furthermore, accessibility is also an important factor. The texts need to be available for the students, so it might be worth using books from the school library, or possibly buying copies for the library so that students have unlimited access.

In conclusion, teachers need to be very attentive and considerate when choosing literary material for language teaching. They should keep in mind that "if it is meaningful and enjoyable, reading is more likely to have a lasting and beneficial effect upon the learner's linguistic and cultural knowledge" (Collie and Slater 1987: 6) and therefore should look for books which are relevant to the learners. Although it is very important not to underestimate the importance of linguistic or cultural gaps, interest, appearance and relevance seem to be most crucial for successful reading. Students will not be able to enjoy or identify with a text which is fraught

with linguistic obstacles and they are even less likely to enjoy it if they are not even interested in it.

### e. Class Readers

Extensive reading is an approach to language teaching which has been propagated widely. Bamford and Day (2004: 2-3) explain extensive reading as a set of ten principles:

1. The reading material is easy.
2. A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available.
3. Learners choose what they want to read.
4. Learners read as much as possible.
5. Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower.
6. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
7. Reading is individual and silent.
8. Reading is its own reward.
9. The teacher orients and guides the students.
10. The teacher is a role model of a reader.

As research shows this is an extremely valuable approach since it improves students' language skills in many respects. They do not only become better readers, also their vocabularies get richer and their writing, listening and speaking abilities improve (Bamford and Day 2004: 1). However, looking at the ten principles, extensive reading would not be the most adequate approach considering the learning aims of this paper, which will be mentioned in chapter 4. This is true for a number of reasons.

As it is expressed in the third principle, self-selection of reading material constitutes the basis for extensive reading. This means that each student can choose his or her individual book. Furthermore, according to Bamford and Day (2004: 2), students can stop reading whenever they feel that they are not interested any longer. However, there are a number of pragmatic reasons which do not allow individual reading and justify the use of class readers. But before dealing with these pragmatic reasons, it needs to be mentioned that denying individual choices concerning reading material does not mean that students cannot

participate in the selection process at all. As it has been addressed in section 2.d., active participation in the selection process can just as well motivate students and arouse their interest. As Wallace (1992: 75) formulated very appropriately:

This issue of interest is a difficult one. Clearly there will be considerable individual differences as well as preferences shared by groups of learners. Nonetheless it may be possible to identify texts which are inherently motivating.

Integrating students in this process of identifying texts will make it possible to find reading material which is inherently motivating. This means that using a class reader does not necessarily mean less motivation and less interest on the students' side.

Other principles which do not completely tie in with the learning aims are principle seven and eight. Although reading should be its own reward, in order to develop students' communicative ability through reading, there is a need for activities which are based on students' reading experience. Of course, these activities should not spoil students' reading pleasure or discourage further reading, but students have to read up to a certain point to be able to participate in the class activities. This also reflects the problem with principle seven. Although learners can read at their own pace, all students have to reach a certain point at a certain time, which means that reading is not completely individual. There have to be specific guidelines as a basis for activities and group works, which directly leads to the pragmatic reasons justifying the use of a class reader.

There are a number of pragmatic reasons. First of all, it is easier for teachers to develop activities when all the students share the same foundation. Developing pre-, while-, and post-reading activities or task-based activities for approximately twenty to twenty-five different students and their individual reading material is virtually impossible. However, another option would be to create such activities on the basis of the diversity of reading material. An example would be that students have to collect specific information from the book and the task is to present it to their classmates after reading, or they have to look for specific problems and how they are dealt with in comparison to someone else's book. This kind of activity, however, asks for a high level of learner autonomy and thus might not be appropriate for students at an elementary level. Since the practical part of this paper puts emphasis on lower secondary students, using a class reader is definitely

more reasonable. It is easier to prepare and predict for the teacher and it is also easier for students to support each other when they experience difficulties. They all share a common basis which they can build upon.

Secondly, experienced teachers know that some students tend to have difficulty in choosing their own reading material. They do not always come to a decision on what they want to read and forget that they have to buy it and bring it to class. If the whole class decides on one book, it is easier for the teacher to support the decision process and he or she might also order the books for the whole class. If possible, the books can also be bought by the school library which would enable other teachers to use them later on as well. Furthermore, this would also mean a financial relief for some parents.

Thirdly, using a class reader enables teachers to go into more detail. Allowing individual choices means that the teacher might be confronted with a number of books he or she does not know and therefore has to familiarize with, which is very time-consuming. Using the same book allows more time for reading and analyzing it beforehand and for preparing appropriate activities. When using a book as a basis for task-based language teaching, careful preparation takes a lot of time and effort and would probably exceed teachers' existing capacity when working with a lot of different books. Especially young teachers might be overwhelmed by this challenging task. Using a class reader is challenging enough for them at the very beginning. More experienced teachers might have less difficulty when working with individual reading.

As it can be seen, the reasons for using a class reader are rather pragmatic in nature and the idea is definitely not to argue completely against the use of individual reading. However, since the aim of this paper is to look at the contribution literature can make to students' communicative development, it is easier to work with one book in order to allow teachers to have more time to focus on the communicative aspect as well.

## **f. Role of Illustrations**

A great number of children's books also include illustrations. When using such books in foreign language teaching, teachers should be aware of the role of illustrations and also think about how they can be used in a meaningful way. Although some people argue that images distract students from the verbal text and potentially hinder the development of fluent and confident reading, this section will, after pointing out the difference between illustrated books and picture books, try to emphasize the advantages of illustrations in children's literature and how they can be used in the EFL classroom.

First of all, it is important to distinguish between illustrated books and picture books. In both cases, pictures have a decorative function, but they play different roles concerning story-telling. The pictures in illustrated books direct the readers meaning making process by showing, for instance, what the characters look like. This means that they create additional input, but they do not change the story itself. In picture books, however, images and words are "inextricably linked and have equally important roles in telling the story" (Goodman 2009: 296). They can specify the message of the text, add additional information, or even create a contrast or an ironic aspect in relation to the text. In this paper, however, the focus is on illustrated books, in which the pictures rather optionally support students' understanding of the story.

Before dealing with the functions of illustrations in more detail, it should also be clarified which kind of illustrations we are talking about and how text and illustration should be connected. There are some illustrations which show a scene, meaning several actions following each other, or others which just show one particular moment. This paper focuses on selective illustrations which depict one specific moment of a story. Usually it is the climax and the most important elements of the current action which are represented. The aim, however, is not to reveal the solution or the outcome but to create tension (Ries 1991: 12). But not only the action, also the text style is reflected in the illustration. An ironic and funny text includes ironic and funny illustrations. There is an stylistic consensus between text and picture.

Illustrations have a variety of functions. They visualize, elucidate, motivate and help the reader in understanding the text. Illustrated books can help students in understanding new vocabulary. If the pictures on a page simply depict parts of the story told on the same page, students can use them to enhance their grasp on the content and look out for meanings of unfamiliar words. The following example is taken from *Max and Molly's guide to trouble: How to catch a criminal* (2011: 88-9):

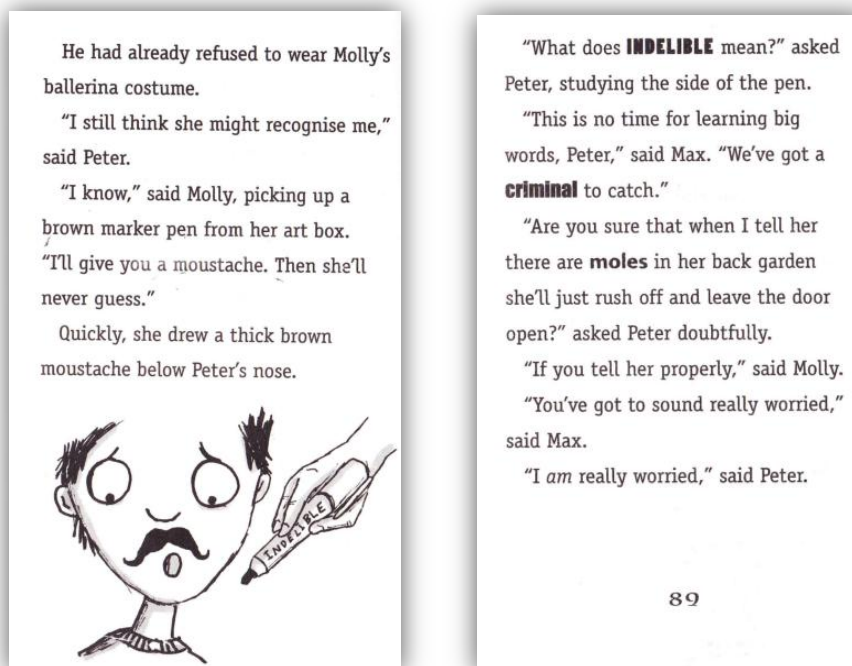


Figure 2 Text passage taken from Barker 2011b: 88-9

As it can be seen from the words "moustache" and "indelible" difficult vocabulary is not always approachable from the text alone but illustrations make it easier for students to make connections. Also the expression of the boy's face shows that "indelible" cannot be something entirely positive. Additionally, it can also be seen that some of the content words are bold which signifies their relevance in understanding the action and supports the students in concentrating on the main message. Furthermore, the representation of an action or an object using two different forms of media consolidates the students' concept of it, which means that they are more likely to remember something if they cannot only read, but also see it (Sahr 2005: 159).

Illustrations can also contribute to the communicative aspect of language teaching. Each picture, as well as the front page, can be used to create a communicative purpose by provoking students' curiosity. One possibility would be to hand out

some illustrations of the first chapter without any text and let the students, first individually then in groups of 3-4, create their own story according to the pictures. Then, in groups, they have to agree on one final version and present it to the rest of the class. After that, the first chapter is read and differences to their own stories can be discussed in class. This does not only serve as a communicative purpose, but is also a good pre-reading activity to ensure purposeful reading.

Finally, an important argument for making use of illustrations is that pictures increase the attractiveness of books to children. When they first look through a new book, they are immediately drawn to the pictures and if they like them, it can be extremely motivating, since they offer aesthetic pleasure. Since motivation is an extremely important factor in using literature in foreign language teaching, making use of illustrated books for intermediate students can be extremely rewarding.

### **3. Communicative Language Teaching**

Language teaching has undergone many changes within the last fifty years. As it has already been mentioned earlier in this paper, traditional approaches to language teaching mainly focused on grammatical competence, which was seen as the basis of language proficiency (Richards 2006: 6). However, as most people have already experienced themselves, although grammar is an important part of language learning, one can also communicate successfully without being aware of all the grammatical rules. Therefore, currently, the focus is less on form, but predominantly on meaning with the aim to enable students to communicate successfully. This general idea leads to the following definition of communicative language teaching:

Communicative language teaching sets out to involve learners in purposeful tasks which are embedded in meaningful contexts and which reflect and rehearse language as it is used authentically in the world outside the classroom. (Hedge 2000: 71)

This reflects the need to foster students' communicative competence in order to prepare them for the world outside the classroom. The first step as a teacher in order to meet this need is to get an awareness of what communicative competence actually is, which will be discussed in the following section.

#### **a. Communicative Competence**

There is an ever-growing need for good communication skills in English. Learners want to be able to master English accurately and fluently, which creates a demand for quality language teaching. The goal of communicative language teaching is communicative competence, which makes it possible for students to use language for meaningful communication. This section deals with the components of CLT, meaning the aspects of language knowledge which are included in communicative competence. Teachers need to be aware of these components, otherwise they will not be able to define clear learning aims when trying to develop students' communicative competence.

*Linguistic competence*, or *grammatical competence* (Richards 2006: 2; Yule 2006: 169), is one of these components and refers to “knowledge of language itself, its form and meaning” (Hedge 2000: 46) or as Yule (2006: 169) states, it represents the “accurate use of words and structures”. This includes, for instance, knowledge about pronunciation, sentence structure, spelling and vocabulary. It is an essential part of communicative competence and it is definitely part of CLT to aim at formal correctness, but it should not be forgotten that risk-taking and errors are also an important part of this whole process of achieving communicative competence, as it will be discussed later in this section.

Another component of successful communication is to know how to vary the use of language according to setting and participants. This is called *pragmatic competence* and is defined as “knowing how to express an intention clearly and in a way which is appropriate both to the person to whom it is expressed and the setting in which it is expressed” (Hedge 2000: 411). This obviously also has to do with social knowledge and is closely related to *sociolinguistic competence* which is the “ability to use language in ways appropriate to contexts of use, role relationships, and communicative purposes” (Hedge 2000: 412). Learners need to be aware of the social conventions and the *context of use* meaning the “social, psychological, and physical setting in which a communicative event takes place” (Hedge 2000: 408). For teachers, this means that students have to learn, e.g., how grammatical forms and functions are related, how stress and intonation can be used to express emotions and attitudes or when and how to make use of formal or informal language.

Being able to deal with limitations of one’s language knowledge in order to maintain communication is also an important component and is known as *strategic competence*. Yule (2006: 169) describes it as the “ability to overcome potential communication problems”. There are different strategies students can make use of in order to express something although language resources are lacking. They can simply use body language, like miming and gesturing, or just try to express something, which is called *achievement strategy*. This can be very useful in the sense that the listener might step in and helps to find the right words (Hedge 2000: 53, 407). Another opportunity is the so-called *reduction strategy*, which means that the learner simply changes the message to avoid expressions he or she is not sure

about (Hedge 2000: 411). This means that teachers also have to encourage learners in taking risks, give them space to make use of these strategies and provide the language needed.

The last component which will be dealt with in this section is *fluency*, which is the “ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain of inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation” (Hedge 2000: 54). This means that students should be able to take part in conversations and respond coherently within all its twist and turns. The implication on language teaching then, is, e.g., to confront students with everyday situations in which they have to gather information within a certain timeframe while using appropriate language in a coherent and fluent way.

Looking at all these components of communicative competence, it seems to be an extremely complex aspect of foreign language teaching. However, it is important to keep in mind that this is not something the students have to learn within one lesson. Achieving communicative competence is a process which takes a very long time, therefore, teachers have to exercise patience and take this challenge step by step. It is important to have clear aims and objectives in mind and when, for instance, focussing on fluency, accuracy in the grammatical forms has to take a back seat. This train of thought directly leads to the next section dealing with characteristics of communicative language teaching.

## **b. Defining Communicative Language Teaching**

Learner autonomy (Jacobs and Farrell 2003: 10) is one of the most important characteristics of CLT, which is implemented in various ways. Students get more rights as well as more responsibilities in relation to their own learning process. Learner autonomy does not only refer to working alone, small group or pair works e.g. are also a way of enhancing this learner autonomy (Jacobs and Farrell 2003: 11). This also ties in with the fact that CLT should reflect the social nature of learning (Jacobs and Farrell 2003: 12). Learning is not something which should only be done in isolation, it is a social activity which develops through interaction with others. Therefore, group activities are essential in foreign language learning.

This focus on learner autonomy obviously also influences the role of the teacher. It is no longer the teacher who is in charge of the whole process, but also the learners themselves. On the one hand, this seems to be a relief for the teacher, but on the other hand, he or she needs to provide clear instructions and aims for the learners. They have to set the frame in which the students can unfold. It is important to help the students creating a purpose for themselves and connect to their lives. A personalized way of learning and a clear purpose increases their motivation and stimulates the whole process. This shift from teacher- to learner-centeredness is crucial for CLT and demands restraint on the teacher's side.

Another important characteristic of CLT is the focus on meaning. Richards (2006: 25) argues that "meaning is viewed as the driving force for learning". This can even be approved from a cognitive point of view, since we learn best when we store information not individually but in meaningful chunks (Jacobs and Farrell 2003: 15). Meaning-based activities do not focus on grammatical accuracy, but learners are judged on whether or not they communicate successfully. Therefore, teachers are not supposed to hinder communication by correcting every single error or mistake, but they should only interrupt if errors threaten successful communication. Revell (1984: 7) even argues that "teaching communicative competence means reassessment of our attitude towards error". In CLT errors are seen as an important part of the learning process. However, the fact that priority is given to meaning and fluency rather than to accuracy, does not mean that it is completely irrelevant. In CLT the focus on form is somehow embedded in the focus on meaning, whether the focus on form should precede or follow will be discussed later on. Concerning teaching material in CLT, it would be reasonable to make use of genuine material which makes it more meaningful, since it builds a bridge to the world outside the classroom. Furthermore, this meaning focus obviously also encourages interdisciplinary teaching. Content can be taken from other subjects like biology, geography, religion etc. which would build up a connection and create a more holistic picture of teaching and learning (Jacobs and Farrell 2003: 13).

Individual learner differences are also an important aspect concerning CLT. They derive from the fact that each student has different background knowledge, ethnic, sex, learning style, needs and so on. This diversity should not be seen as an obstacle, all this different viewpoints constitute real-life communicative purposes.

“Language teachers and students interpret classroom activities through their own frames of reference” (Barnes 1976 quoted in Jacobs and Farrell 2003: 17), which can be quite different or even contradictory. Teachers need to be aware of this diversity and use it instead of persistently trying to create uniformity. This means that they should apply a variety of activities in order to present different approaches and give students the opportunity to find the one which works best for them.

All these characteristics mentioned so far also need to be reflected in assessment. Even if the teaching methodology is highly communicative, if traditional assessment instruments, like multiple choice or true-false items, are used, there will be harmful backwash. In other words “if the test content and the testing techniques are at variance with the objectives of the course, there is likely to be harmful backwash” (Hughes 2003: 1). In order to reflect the attempt of CLT, assessment instruments should mirror real-life conditions and involve thinking skills. They should demand learner autonomy and should be predominantly meaning focused. Unfortunately, this kind of assessment is extremely time consuming, expensive and neither as reliable nor as valid as a standardized multiple choice test (Jacobs and Farrell 2003: 19). As a teacher, however, it is essential to be aware of these factors and to try steering an acceptable middle course.

After dealing with the most important characteristics of CLT, it is definitely useful to look at their implications in relation to classroom activities. Richards (2006: 23-4) offers a great summary of the most important aspects of effective classroom activities in communicative language teaching:

- They seek to develop students’ communicative competence through linking grammatical development to the ability to communicate. Hence, grammar is not taught in isolation but often arises out of a communicative task, thus creating a need for specific items of grammar. Students might carry out a task and then reflect on some of the linguistic characteristics of their performance.
- They create the need for communication, interaction, and negotiation of meaning through the use of activities such as problem solving, information sharing, and role play.
- They provide opportunities for both inductive as well as deductive learning of grammar.
- They make use of content that connects to students’ lives and interests.

- They allow students' to personalize learning by applying what they have learnt to their own lives.
- Classroom materials typically make use of authentic texts to create interest and provide valid models of language.

All these characteristics of classroom activities perfectly reflect the nature of communicative language teaching. It is a naturalistic approach which tries to involve the students by connecting to their own lives. Keeping this in mind, the interactive and lively nature of CLT activities will make foreign language teaching much more attractive and interesting for the students, since they can grasp its relevance for their own reality. Furthermore, what seems most striking is that the CLT paradigm reflects a holistic concept of “going from whole to part rather than from part to whole” (Jacobs and Farrell 2003: 14). Language, for instance, is no longer simply based on and composed of different grammatical rules, but it is seen as a whole and from this perspective grammar is looked at, as one part of this whole concept of language.

### c. PPP: A traditional Approach

As it has already been mentioned, the main aim of teaching a foreign language is to support the development of students' ability to communicate effectively. Most teachers combine teaching communication with teaching structure in order to achieve this overarching goal of successful communication (Larsen-Freeman 2001: 35). A traditional approach which was developed in the 1970s and 1980s is PPP, Presentation – Practice – Production (Hedge 2000: 164). As the name already suggests PPP is divided into three phases, moving from teacher control towards greater learner freedom. It has been widely used in language teaching and continues to be used today. This section presents a short description of the three phases, followed by some criticism which has aroused concerning this approach.

The first phase is the so-called *presentation phase* in which a new grammar structure or rule is explicitly described and presented to the students. This is followed by the *practice* phase in which the new structure is practiced in a controlled context. Learners practice saying or writing the new language structure correctly, which means that the focus is clearly on accuracy. In the *production*

*phase*, however, students are asked to use their own content and information in order to develop fluency, which means to enable them to use the new pattern in a natural way. This will also help students to see the usefulness of what they have learnt and its relation to the world outside the classroom. Typical production activities in this phase are, among others, dialogues, short texts or oral presentation in which teachers can see whether students are able to successfully transfer the new structure they have learnt.

This kind of approach will sound very familiar to most of the readers due to their own learning history and thus they might think that this method sounds very reasonable and target-aimed. However, this standard lesson sequence is heavily criticised in the sense that it does not reflect principles of second language acquisition since it seems to rest on a simplistic view of language learning. As Skehan (1996: 18) argues:

The underlying theory for a PPP approach has now been discredited. The belief that precise focus on a particular form leads to learning and automatization (that learners will learn what is taught in the order which is taught) no longer carries much credibility in linguistics or psychology.

This is also supported by the fact that learners who do well in the practice phase often fail to transfer the ability into the production phase, and even if they are able to use the new structure correctly in the production phase, they are often not able to transfer it outside the classroom. Experienced teachers will be more than familiar with situations like that and the fact that what is taught is not necessarily learnt as well. The PPP approach, however, relies on the assumption that what is taught is indeed also learnt (Willis and Willis 1996: V). Furthermore, presenting abstract rules to young EFL learners seems to be highly inappropriate (Larsen-Freeman 2001: 35) and focusing on a single language item simply restricts learners' experiences of language (Willis 1996: 135). Therefore, this has led to the emergency of a pedagogy which focuses on fluency rather than accuracy. This means that "students' grammar needs are determined on the basis of performance on fluency tasks rather than predetermined by a grammatical syllabus" (Richards 2006: 8). This criticism outlined so far constitutes the basis for the approach focusing on meaning instead of form depicted in the following section.

## d. Task-based Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching is seen “as a logical development of communicative language teaching as it draws on several principles that formed part of the [CLT] movement from the 1980s” (Richards 2001: 223). Some of these principles are, among others, the focus on real communication, the use of meaningful language and meaningful tasks. In this section the term ‘task’ will be defined, followed by a depiction of the TBL cycle, a description of teacher and learner roles as well as the role of written texts in TBLT and, finally, its major differences to the traditional PPP approach.

### I. Definition of a task

Before dealing with the matter of task-based language teaching, the underlying concept of a ‘task’, which constitutes the central unit of planning and teaching in TBLT, needs to be analysed. Since there is no universal definition of a ‘task’, this section will at first deal with different definitions in order to outline the commonsensical understanding of a ‘task’. After that, some underlying assumptions of this approach in relation to language and learning theory will be presented in order to elucidate the main characteristics of TBLT on a theoretical basis.

In the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, the term ‘task’ is defined as “a piece of work [somebody] has to do” or as “an activity which is designed to help achieve a particular learning goal, especially in language teaching” (1571). These two different definitions reflect a distinction made by Nunan (2004: 1), who differentiates between a target task or real-world task and a pedagogical task. The former refers to uses of language outside the classroom, in everyday life. Pedagogical tasks represent real-world tasks which are transformed from the real world to the classroom and, therefore, become pedagogical in nature (Nunan 2004: 1-2). Long (1985: 89) defines target-tasks as

a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus examples of tasks including painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a

patient, sorting letters, making a hotel reservation, writing a cheque, finding a street destination and helping someone across the road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play and in between.

Although some of these tasks, like painting a fence, seem to be manageable without any use of language, they need to be seen in a broader context since painting a fence also includes buying brushes and paint. However, as it can be seen, there is no grammatical or technical approach whatsoever included in the definition. It focuses on meaning and mirrors everyday activities for which we need to be able to communicate and, therefore, offer a perfect and easily comprehensible reason for learners to acquire a second language.

In this paper, however, the focus will be on pedagogical tasks. There are various definitions of such a task and in order to figure out the most important features of a pedagogical task, five different definitions will be looked at, analyzed concerning their similarities and differences and followed by a discussion of the key components.

**Table 1 Definitions of a 'task'**

Author	Definition
Richards (1986: 289)	an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language [...]. For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing command may be referred to as tasks. Tasks may or may not involve the production of language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative [...] since it provides a purpose for the classroom activity which goes beyond the practice of language for its own sake.
Nunan (2004: 3)	a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form.
Willis J. (1996: 23)	[an activity] where the target language is used by the learner

	for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome.
Skehan (1998: 95)	an activity in which <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meaning is primary</li> <li>• learners are not given other people's meaning to regurgitate</li> <li>• there is some sort of relationship to comparable real world activities</li> <li>• task completion has some sort of priority</li> <li>• the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome</li> </ul>
Bachman and Palmer (1996: 58-9)	an activity that involves individuals in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular situation or setting.

First of all, it is important to mention the role of *meaning*. Richards, Nunan, as well as Skehan stress the focus on meaning and its priority over form. One of the main ideas behind this is that it is better to risk making a mistake than not to say anything. If the students only remain silent, they are less likely to learn (Willis 1996: 24). Furthermore, if students feel the strong need to communicate, they will find a way to get meaning across somehow. This directly leads to three other important aspects of a task, mentioned by Richards, Willis, Skehan as well as Bachman and Palmer, which are strongly interrelated, namely *goal*, *outcome* and *completion*. Tasks are goal-oriented, they must have a specific purpose which can be served by understanding and conveying meanings. It is exactly this challenge of achieving the outcome which makes task-based language learning an attractive and motivating classroom procedure (Willis 1996: 24). Success and satisfaction are key factors in sustaining motivation. Therefore, successful task completion is essential and it is the teacher's responsibility to define what is regarded as such, so that the students exactly know what they are aiming at. Therefore, the *learner's engagement* is also one of the aspects of a task. Skehan even stresses the fact that learners should not simply repeat other people's meaning, but express their own point of view. Students are asked to act autonomously and focus on their own individual meaning. One last key element of TBLT is the relation to the real world, as also mentioned in Skehan's definition. This perfectly ties in with the general aim of language teaching, which is to enable students to communicate successfully in the world outside the classroom. As it can be seen, the different definitions share

many aspects and seem to be best summed up by Skehan's approach. In addition to this, very useful questions have been designed by Willis and Willis (2007: 13):

The more confidently [you] can answer *yes* to each of these questions the more task-like the activity.

- 1 Does the activity engage learner's interest?
- 2 Is there a primary focus on meaning?
- 3 Is there an outcome?
- 4 Is success judged in terms of outcome?
- 5 Is completion a priority?
- 6 Does the activity relate to real world activities?

As it can be seen, all the main characteristics of task-based language teaching mentioned above are included in these questions and, therefore, it is a good way to check whether an activity is really task-based or not.

After dealing with the main characteristics of a task, some assumptions about the nature of language will be looked at which underlie the current approaches to TBLT. These principles will be subdivided into those concerning language theory and those concerning learning theory. From the language point of view, the focus on meaning can be explained by the fact that "language is primarily a means of making meaning" (Richards 2001: 226). The actual use of language is to convey meaning, therefore students need to create a real desire to communicate which can only be reached by meaning-focused activities. Furthermore, "conversation is the central focus of language and the keystone of language acquisition" (Richards 2001: 228). Stephan Krashen, an American linguist, makes an important distinction between acquisition and learning. "Acquisition is the subconscious process that happens naturally and leads to fluency; learning being the conscious process" (Willis 1996: 5). This also reasons the focus on meaning in TBLT, since it triggers communication and makes it more likely to acquire language subconsciously.

Concerning learning theory, there are also clear principles underlying TBLT. First of all, input as well as output is necessary for successful language acquisition. Years of exposure to comprehensible input without any opportunity for productive use of language clearly hinders full language development (Richards 2001: 228). TBLT offers both, opportunity for in- and output. Willis (1996: 11) names three essential conditions for language learning, namely exposure, use and motivation. Students

need to be confronted with real spoken and written language in use, but should also be able to use language in order to do things like exchanging meaning. Furthermore, motivation also plays a significant role in language learning. Task activities and their achievement are extremely motivating for a number of reasons mentioned by Richards (2001: 229), like the use of authentic language, clear aims, the involvement of partnership and collaboration or the connection to learners' experiences. The last point seems to be particularly important, students should be encouraged to express their feelings, ambitions and desires and to experiment with spoken and written language instead of producing a given form or pattern. Saying what they feel or want to say is much more motivating, since it is, again, closer to the natural use of language. This obviously includes a high-risk-exchange on the side of the students as they have to rely on their existing language knowledge.

These assumptions definitely highlight the focus on natural language use in TBLT. However, this was just a very brief and rather superficial depiction since there is much more to say about language and learning theory, but this would go beyond the scope of this paper and the aim was only to give a general idea of it in relation to TBLT. What is important to keep in mind is that task-based language teaching focuses on meaning, needs to provide a clear outcome, prioritises completion, engages learners' interest, creates involvement, also personally, and creates a relation to the real world. This sounds very challenging when thinking of the implications on language teaching, therefore, the following sections will give an overview of the TBL framework (Willis 1996: 155), discuss the different steps which need to be taken in TBLT and introduce different types of tasks. Afterwards, the focus will be on tasks based on text as this is an important aspect in relation the aim of this paper.

## II. The TBL framework

Task-based language teaching does not mean teaching one task after the other, but it must be seen in a broader context. Willis (1996: 39-10) sees it as a TBL framework including three different phases. The first one is the *pre-task*, the second one the *task-cycle* and the third one the *language focus*. These phases are illustrated in the following figure. Such a clear framework gives the learners a feeling of security. As soon as they are used to it, they know that they do not have to worry about any language difficulties since this will be dealt with after the actual task. This means that they will become more confident in making use of their existing language knowledge. Nevertheless, this framework also shows diversity represented by the different topics, texts and task-types included (Willis 1996: 40). In this section, however, each phase will be dealt with individually and afterwards the role of the teachers and learners will be looked at in relation to them.

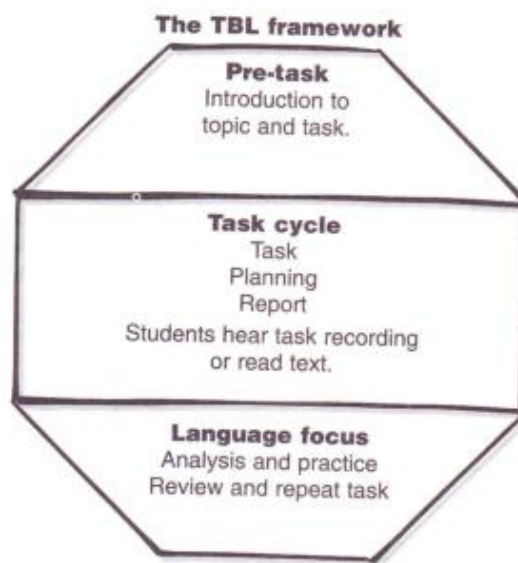


Figure 3 Overview of TBL framework (Willis 1996: 132)

The idea of the so-called *pre-task phase* is similar to the one of pre-reading activities. Students are introduced to the topic and the task, which means that background knowledge as well as topic related words and phrases are activated. This includes a definition of the topic area, which highly depends on different aspects like the students' cultural or socioeconomic background. Students from the

countryside, for instance, might need more background information about the topic 'Life in a big city' than students living in a city anyway. It is the first step, therefore, to help learners to familiarize with the topic area (Willis 1996: 42). The next step is to activate, recall and highlight useful words and phrases which they will need for the task and also outside the classroom. If necessary, also some new words can be introduced which are vital for managing the task. The overall aim is to "boost students' confidence in handling the task" (Willis 1996: 43). Learners should be actively involved in this whole process and create interest. It is important to raise their awareness in why they are doing this activity to keep them interested and goal-oriented. This is already connected with the third step which is giving instructions concerning the actual task and ensuring that learners know what it involves, what the goal is and what the required outcome is. So after the *pre-task phase* students should be familiar with the topic, useful words and phrases related to it and they should know what they have to do in the next phase and what their aim is. Williams (1996: 45) even argues that the more specific the goal is, the more likely the students are to really talk to each other.

The next phase is the so-called *task cycle*, which consists of three components, namely *task*, *planning* and *report*. The first stage, the *task*, is developed autonomously by the students. They are allowed to use whatever language they already have to express themselves (Richards 2001: 239). There is an emphasis on spontaneity and confidence building within the privacy of a small group. This helps the students to develop fluency and different communicative strategies (Willis 1996: 54). The teacher has to step back and let the learners deal with the task on their own. He or she should only observe and encourage the students and make sure that they are doing what they are expected to do and that there is equality concerning workload within the groups. Teachers have to learn to distance themselves for this particular stage. An important distinction needs to be made at this point, namely that tasks can either be *open* or *closed*. *Closed* task means that there is one 'correct' answer, e.g., students are asked to find seven difficulties between two pictures, whereas with *open* tasks the outcome is unpredictable. In this case, learners are free to decide on their own solutions and ways of achieving them. Therefore, from a teacher's perspective, open tasks are less predictable than closed ones (Willis and Willis 2007: 156).

The function of the *planning* stage is, on the one hand, to prepare for the report, but on the other hand, also to “avoid the risk of learners achieving fluency at the expense of accuracy and to spur on language development” (Willis 1996: 55). As opposed to the previous stage, here the emphasis is on clarity, organization and accuracy (Richards 2001: 239). Students can plan and rehearse what and how they want to say or write their report. The teachers’ role is very different in this stage, the aim is to help learners plan effectively and maximise their learning opportunities. They should give advice and support their students. Before starting the planning phase, it is important to mention that one of the group or pair members has to present the outcome afterwards. This will cause them to take the whole process more seriously. Furthermore, clear time limits or word limits are also necessary for their report, they need clear guidelines.

The last stage of the *task cycle* is the *report* in which the students have to report briefly to the whole class, this can be within a timeframe of 20 seconds and 2 minutes. Here it is essential not to forget to create a clear purpose for this stage as well. So far students worked for the report, but as lots of teachers might have already experienced, students often become inattentive as soon as someone else is presenting. Therefore, there needs to be a purpose for the others to listen (Richards 2001: 239-40). One possibility is, for example, to ask the students to compare their outcome with the others’, or, if working with lists, try to consolidate their own and the other pairs’ or groups’ lists to see how many items they can get altogether (Willis 1996: 57). This means that everyone needs to know what it is they have to do with the information after the report. Teachers need to take these reports seriously, respond and react to them. They should not focus on the mistakes, but on the students’ improvement. These positive reactions can be very motivating for the students (Willis 1996: 59).

The last phase in this TBL framework is the *language focus*. At this stage, the students are already familiar with the meaning and now they have the chance to deal with the form that carries this meaning. This allows a focus on form in relation to meaning (Willis 1996: 101). A key element of this phase, like in all the others, is learner-centeredness. This is true for both parts of the language focus phase, which consist of an analysis and a practice part.

In the analysis part, students work with the same materials which were dealt with in the *task cycle*. An example for this would be to ask the students to underline or circle every 'a' and every 'an' in the text they have read and try to figure out when to use 'a' and when to use 'an'. This is obviously a language focus activity for beginners in order to analyse the use of indefinite articles. Teachers and students can start off together, but then the students should work individually or in pairs. During this time the teacher can help and answer individual questions. Afterwards, he or she reviews the analysis in plenary and, together with the students, might also note down the outcome and grammatical rules in relation to it (Richards 2001: 240).

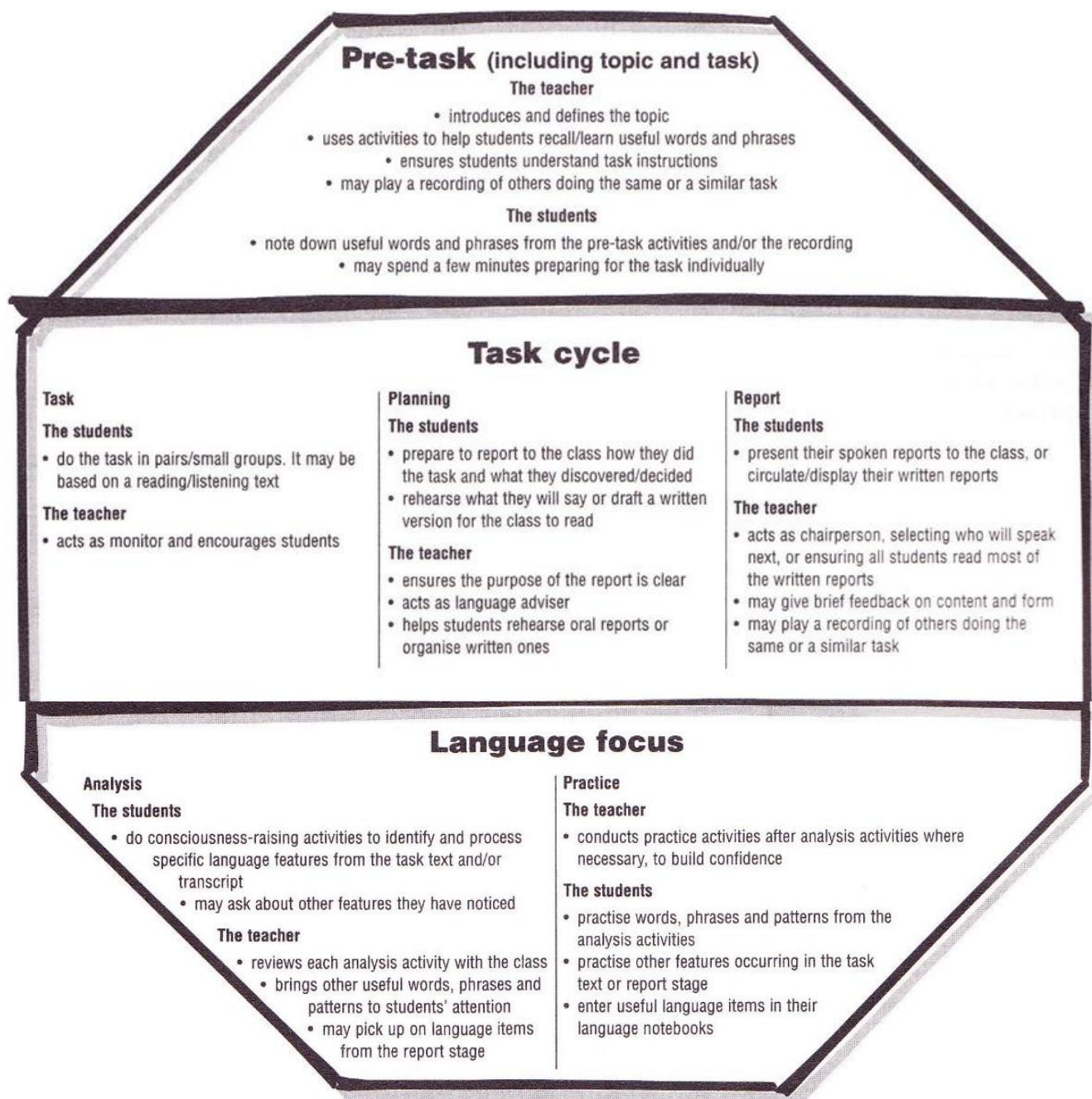
The practice part should also be based on the text used for the *task cycle*. The teacher offers practice activities based on the analysis work, which is very useful for consolidation and revision (Willis 1996: 110). There are various ways how this can be done, individually, in pairs or in groups. One example for such an activity would be 'Listen and complete' (Willis 1996: 111). Students write down useful phrases or sentences from the text in teams, afterwards one team member reads out part or half of the phrase or sentence and the team that is first able to complete it successfully gets a point. As it can be seen, this can even have a very playful character, which makes practicing new phrases much more interesting for young learners.

As it could be seen in this section, the different phases of the TBL framework are quite diverse, but also share similarities, like that they all focus on meaning and have a specific purpose. This diversity of methodological approaches also asks for different roles of learners and teachers which will be dealt with in the following section.

### III. Teacher Roles and Learner Roles in TBLT

Since TBLT is a learner-centred approach, learners are seen as active participants in their own learning and there are specific roles learners have to slip into. Richards (2001: 235) names three primary roles that are implied by task work. First of all, learners have to see themselves as *group participants*. Since TBLT includes a lot of group- and pair work, students have to get used to being part of it. Some students might only be used to working individually or with the whole class, in such a case teachers have to be patient and give them time for adaptation. Secondly, students also have to act as *monitors*. They should not only focus on the message of a task, but also on the way it is conveyed. The aim is to make them realize how language is used in communication, therefore they have to be able to reflect on these task characteristics. In the language focus phase for instance, they should identify and note down useful words or phrases which came up in the task itself. The third role is that of a *risk taker and innovator*. In many cases students will lack full linguistic resources, but this will force them to make use of different communicative strategies in order to get their message across and that is the idea behind it. They have to guess from the context, interact with other learners and ask for clarification. All this is part of the real-world-communication and something students should get used to in order to communicate effectively.

As it can be seen in Figure 4 on the next page, Willis (1996: 155) illustrates an overview of learner roles as well as teacher roles according to the different phases of TBLT, pre-task, task and language focus.



**Figure 4 TBL framework including teacher and learner roles (Willis 1996: 155)**

As it can be seen, in the pre-task phase students have to prepare themselves for the task itself by noting down useful words or phrases. During the task-cycle, they are group participants who have to prepare themselves for being presenters by rehearsing or noting down what they will say. In the language focus phase, they have to act as analysers by identifying and processing specific language features which are practiced afterwards.

Concerning the teacher role, Willis and Willis (2007: 148) generally state that it is important to understand that task-based language teachers “still fulfil their traditional role of providing language knowledge and input, but they also have to promote real language use and provide a clear link between the classroom and the real world. “ This means that they are still a source of input, but they also have to create opportunities for authentic language use and have to take the role of a manager who enables the learners to work on tasks. From this rather basic description of the teacher’s role, some more specific duties can be defined.

To begin with, teachers have to be *managers* and *facilitators* (Willis & Willis 2007: 149-50; Swan 2005: 391). Task-based language teaching is characterized by a lot of group- and pair work, because this increases the frequency of language use among the students. This approach, however, has to be thoroughly planned by the teacher. Students have to know what they are expected to do and what the outcome is they are trying to reach. Otherwise, they are very likely to lose control. This also means that teachers have to monitor the groups carefully and in case it does not work at all, even stop the group work. As it can be seen, learners’ conditions and needs are foregrounded. This is also essential for the teacher acting as *facilitator*. Teachers have to find the right balance between a challenging and a frustrating task. In case teachers are not sure about the level of difficulty, it is important to keep in mind that an easy task causes less harm than a too difficult one. Richards (2001: 236) calls this the role of the *selector* and *sequencer* of tasks, meaning that teachers have to select or create the tasks and adapt them to the learner’s needs, interests and language level. Furthermore, they also have to prepare them either implicitly or explicitly for the tasks in the pre-task phase, thus *preparing learners for tasks* is also one of their duties (Richards 2001: 236).

Next to managing, facilitating, monitoring and selecting, teachers also have to act as *motivators* (Willis & Willis 2007: 150). Firstly, this requires a positive attitude

on the teacher's side. Although it is important to be critical, it is even more important to give learners encouragement by trying to find something positive instead of solely focusing on mistakes. Nothing succeeds more like success. Therefore, they need to change their perspective from searching for mistakes to acknowledging, e.g., new words or phrases that have been acquired and used correctly. Secondly, it is very motivating for students to call their attention to their own progress. Teachers should not only confront students with their weaknesses, but also with their achievements and help them to take pride in them.

Additionally, Willis and Willis (2007: 150-1) make an important distinction between *Language knower/adviser* and *Language teacher*. The latter refers to the fact that during the last phase of TBLT, which focuses on form, teachers can adopt their traditional teacher role including explanations, demonstrations or elicitations of appropriate language forms, which requires careful preparation. As Ellis (2009: 235) argues, TBLT also includes opportunities for "the explicit teaching of language." Acting as a *Language knower/adviser*, however, simply means to help learners when they are struggling with expressing themselves appropriately or when they are asking for advice. The teacher is not explaining something in front of the class, but supporting groups or individual learners, this is often done by rephrasing or repeating learners' contributions. In this role, teachers should rather see themselves as equal participants with greater language knowledge and experience.

Looking back at figure 4, teacher roles can be described according to three phases again. In the pre-task phase teachers act as introducers who lead the students into the topic. Already in this early stage, they also function as managers and facilitators, since they have to provide useful activities to help students to learn or recall important words and phrases and they have to give task instructions and make sure that they are understood. During the task cycle, they also have multiple functions. They act as monitors and motivators while the task is fulfilled, language advisers while the report is planned and as chairpersons during the actual report of students' outcome. Furthermore, they can also give feedback on content and form after the report. In the last phase, they act as language teacher, facilitator and manager. This brief summary based on the framework given by Willis and Willis (1996: 155) already shows the diversity of roles teachers have to fill. Therefore, it

is very important to be aware of it and to act accordingly, which means, e.g., to distance oneself from acting as a language teacher instead of a language adviser during the task cycle.

#### **IV. Texts in Task-based Language Teaching**

Keeping in mind that the aim of this paper is to look at the contribution reading literature can make to the development of students' communicative ability, it is time to look at the role of texts in task-based language teaching. The TBLT approach is used to enable communication by focusing on meaning and fluency in the first place and on language form and accuracy in the second place. The question is now, how reading can be successfully integrated in the TBL framework to induce a need for communication?

Willis (1996) and Willis & Willis (2007) offer a number of examples how texts can be used in task-based language teaching. Looking at different sample lessons, they use pamphlets, newspaper or magazine articles, short texts taken from the internet etc. What is striking is that these texts are all very short and usually not more than one page in length. Looking at the criteria Willis (1996: 70) suggests for selecting appropriate texts, she points out that short pieces of text should be used, or slightly longer ones that can be split. This means that reading gives a short input and creates a speaking occasion, but is not done for its own sake.

However, as it has already been mentioned earlier, one of the aims of this paper is to foster reading for pleasure and general meaning. This means that reading should not only take place in the classroom, but students should also be encouraged to read at home, in order to increase their exposure to the target language. This reading experience is then used as a basis for task-based language teaching. Therefore the practical part of this paper will include a rather new approach which tries to combine class readers with task-based language teaching. However, before dealing with the practical part of this paper, some basic differences between PPP and TBLT will be discussed, which again highlight the benefits of task-based language teaching in relation to the development of students' communicative competence.

### e. Difference between PPP and TBLT

After looking at both approaches individually, it is worth analysing the main differences in order to decide on the most suitable one in relation to the aim of this paper. The difference between the common paradigm of language teaching PPP and TBLT cannot only be identified by means of different lesson plans, but goes much deeper starting with the different approaches concerning the kind of knowledge needed for second language acquisition. A clear distinction is made between implicit and explicit knowledge. Implicit knowledge “is procedural, is held unconsciously and can only be verbalized if it is made explicit. It is accessed rapidly and easily and thus is available for use in rapid, fluent communication”(Ellis 2005: 214). Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is “held consciously, is learnable and verbalizable and is typically accessed through controlled processing when learners experience some kind of linguistic difficulty in the use of the L2” (Ellis 2005: 214). This means that explicit knowledge is, among others, knowledge about grammar, lexis and phonology including the metalanguage for being able to talk about this knowledge.

PPP and TBLT advocate different approaches concerning the role of explicit knowledge in foreign language learning. PPP represents the so-called *interface-position* which argues that “explicit knowledge becomes implicit knowledge if learners have the opportunity for plentiful communicative practice” (Ellis 2005: 215). Therefore, grammatical structures, for instance, are first presented by the teacher, then they are practised by various activities in a controlled context and finally they are used in different contexts chosen by the students to develop fluency. TBLT, on the contrary, denies that explicit knowledge can become implicit knowledge and argues that they are entirely distinct (Ellis 2005: 15). This *non-interface-position* leads to an approach which focuses on meaning rather than on form in the first place, since it clearly emphasises the importance of implicit knowledge. So TBLT has a clear focus on meaning, while PPP rather focuses on form, which is based on the varying assumptions concerning the role of explicit knowledge.

Besides the different approaches concerning the knowledge needed for language acquisition, there is also a difference concerning the underlying learning theory.

PPP derives from a behaviourist view of learning, while TBLT derives from a constructivist view of learning. Behaviourism sees learning as simply changing behaviour by rote learning, learning by heart, practicing or by encouraging specific behaviour. So teachers show students how to do it and they simply imitate the teacher's behaviour. Constructivism, on the contrary, very much focuses on students' problem-solving- and self-competence. It is based on the idea that reality is constructed by the perception of each individual (Häcker & Stapf 2009: 537). Therefore, it is not teacher but learner centred, they shall discover things themselves and work independently.

The distinctions between TBLT and PPP made so far have been very fundamental, Willis (1996: 135-36) presents the difference in a more practical way using the following figure for means of illustrations.

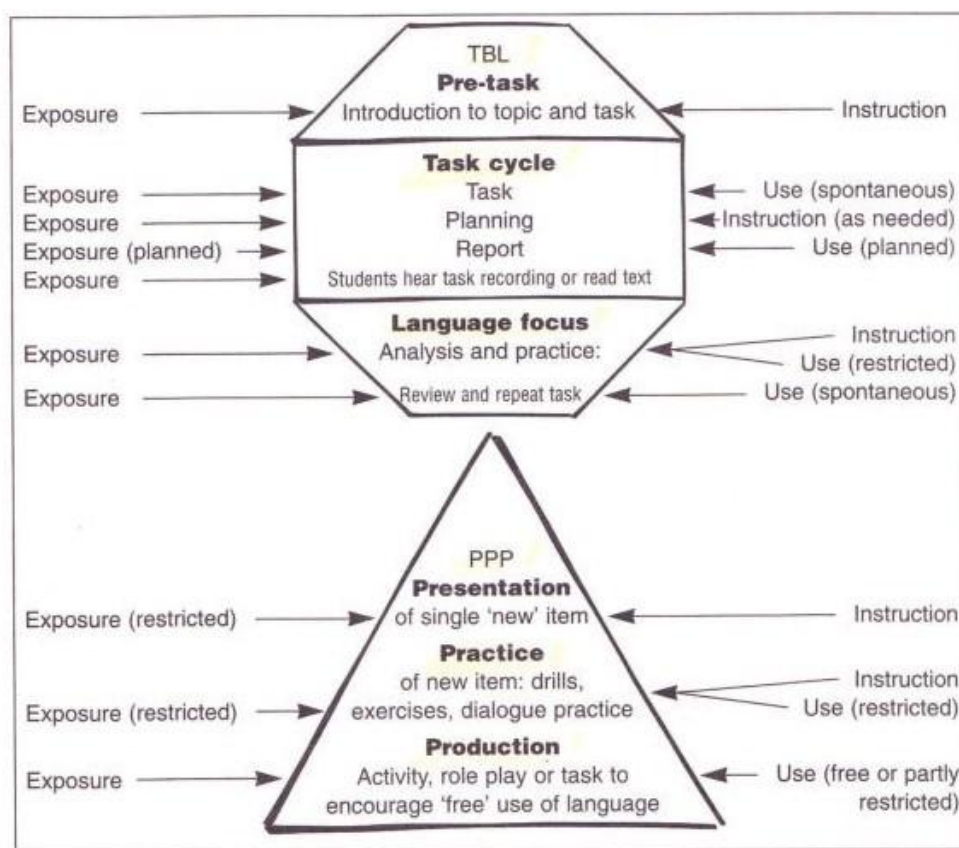


Figure 5 Comparison: PPP and TBL (Willis 1996: 135)

As it can be seen here, TBL offers more opportunities for free language use and a higher frequency of exposure. Concerning use, the task is free of any kind of

language control whereas PPP does not provide any opportunity for entirely free language use. Regarding fluency and accuracy, Jane Willis (1996: 137) argues that “[a] PPP cycle leads from accuracy to fluency; a TBL cycle from fluency to accuracy (combined with fluency)”. Furthermore, she argues that TBL offers a holistic language experience which is then analysed to learn efficiently, while PPP deals with separate language items which are presented without a context and then practiced in some activities. As it can be seen, there are significant differences between PPP and TLBT and regarding the aim of this paper, which is basically to develop students’ communicative competence, TBLT seems to be the more suitable approach. However, now it is time to have a look at the realization of this idea to use a class reader as a basis for task-based language teaching.

#### 4. Action Research: *Max and Molly's Guide to Trouble*

In the practical part of this paper, I will try to combine task-based language teaching with reading for pleasure and general meaning. This means that I will introduce tasks which are based on a class reader instead of short texts. As I have also tested the activities in class, I will first introduce the concept of an action research, which is the underlying concept of my research. Secondly, I will give a rationale for choosing *Max and Molly's guide to trouble: How to be a Genius* by Dominic Barker for testing this approach. Thirdly, the setting in which the activities were tested and the actual tasks will be presented and described in relation to the theory part. This will be followed by some evaluation background and a description of the methods used for gathering data in the EFL language classroom. Finally, the data will be analysed and interpreted on the basis of specific guidelines.

##### a. Doing Action Research

As it has been discussed in section 2.a, being a teacher means being a professional which implies, among other things, a need for professional development. Action research is an enquiry which enables, in our case, teachers to investigate and evaluate their work (McNiff & Whitehead 2008: 7). As the name already suggests, action research asks for action. It is not simply about discussing various ideas or theories which might improve teaching a second language, but it is also about taking action. Thus the potential of action research lies in the connection of idea and action (McNiff & Whitehead 2008: 12). This section provides the basis for the actual research of this paper by depicting some characteristic features of the research method used, as well as a brief rationale for doing action research in this context.

To begin with, action research is not done by professional researchers but by the practitioners themselves. This means that the people who undertake the research are part of the situation they are investigating (McNiff & Whitehead 2008: 7). Actually, they are not only part of it, but they and the quality of their influence on

their students' learning constitute the centre of this research method (McNiff & Whitehead 2008: 85). One of the main reasons for doing this rests upon the constructivist view that "[w]e are responsible creators of our own lives, individually and collectively, and we are potentially influencing others all the time, so we have to ensure that our influence is as life-affirming as possible" (McNiff & Whitehead 2008: 113). In order to improve this influence on others, self-evaluation has to take place. Richard Winter (1996: 14) argues that action research constitutes the necessary link between self-evaluation and professional development, as it has been mentioned above. He argues that this link is created through the interaction between reflection and changes in practice, two separate aspects which are best achieved together.

This link is also reflected in the common features characterising action research:

- 1 Action research is contextual, small-scale and localised – it identifies and investigates problems with a specific situation
- 2 It is evaluative and reflective as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice.
- 3 It is participatory as it provides for collaborative investigation by teams of colleagues, practitioners and researchers.
- 4 Changes in practice are based on the collection of information or data which provides the impetus for change. (Burns 1999: 30)

As these features indicate, the aim is to improve specific situations. It is not about coming up with generalities, but about finding a way of improving a current situation within a specific context. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that the interaction with colleagues is essential. Although the researcher focuses on his or her own influence, working together with other teachers is very useful in reflecting critically on oneself.

An important question which comes up here, is where the need for this cycle of action and reflection comes from? Obviously, there is no need for changes in practice if everything is working out the way it should. Consequently, action research always begins with the experience of a concern (McNiff & Whitehead 2008: 32). This leads to a number of questions including, among others, "What is my concern? Why am I concerned? What experiences can I describe to show why I am concerned? What can I do about it? What will I do about it?" (McNiff &

Whitehead 2008: 79). Trying to answer these questions helps to collect and order one's thoughts and to decide whether it actually makes sense to carry out such a research. These questions also constitute the basis for the action research in this paper.

When I was working as an English teacher at the BRG/BORG St.Pölten, I experienced two major concerns which motivated me to write about the contribution literature can make to communicative language teaching. First of all, students are not used to communicating fluently. They are solely trained to communicate by using specific words and phrases from their textbooks, focusing mainly on accuracy. Whenever I asked them a question which they were supposed to answer spontaneously, they were completely overwhelmed and felt extremely uncomfortable. Therefore, I decided to concentrate on finding a way to create a stress free atmosphere for them to develop fluency. Secondly, I realised that students had never done any kind of extensive reading before I became their teacher. Consequently, they did not associate reading with pleasure, but only with intensive reading activities which they already found a bit annoying.

Constantly having these two concerns in mind, I thought about what I could possibly do about it? I wanted them to read more than one page every now and then, to enjoy reading and I wanted them to develop their communicative competence, especially their fluency. This explains why I dealt with reading in the EFL classroom and communicative language teaching in the previous chapters. In this chapter, I want to try to combine these two things successfully. But since I think it would not be target-aimed to just do this theoretically by designing some lesson plans, hoping that they might work, action research is necessary. This means testing lesson plans based on the assumptions drawn from the theory part in a real language classroom.

## b. Rationale and Selection Criteria

Before introducing different task-based activities on the basis of the book *Max and Molly's Guide to Trouble: How to be a Genius* by Dominic Barker, this section will offer a rationale for choosing this particular book. As it has been mentioned in section 2.d., one way of drawing students' interest and increasing their motivation is by letting them participate in the process of choosing the book. In the case of this paper, however, this is not possible since the number of lessons I was allowed to teach was very limited and this process would have simply been too time-consuming. Nevertheless, I used the book in my

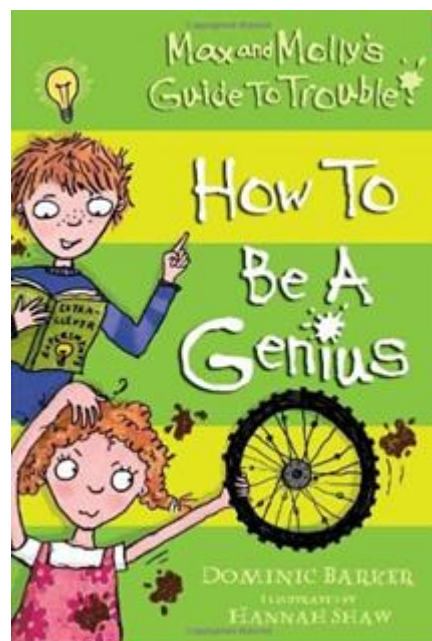


Figure 6 Title page (Barker 2011)

tutoring lessons and my students described it as funny and interesting. Due to this positive feedback, I hope it will be motivating for other students of the same age as well. Contentwise it is easy to understand, since it mainly deals with everyday situations students are familiar with and thus they can easily identify with it. To give an idea what the book is about, here is a very short plot summary:

This book is about the eight-year-old twins Max and Molly Pesker. They consider themselves as being real-life geniuses, although their parents do not seem to be of the same opinion. Due to their inventive minds, they show how to mend a puncture with mud or how to cover old Mr Everett's dog with mud. However, unfortunately some people are not able to understand their brilliancy.

Another reason, besides the content, for choosing this book is its technical presentation, which is very appealing. As it can be seen, the cover is colourful and the illustration of the main characters is humorous and already tells something about their age and gender. Furthermore, font size and type face sometimes vary in relation to the content of the book. This variety creates a unique and very lively look and sometimes even supports students' comprehension of the text, as it can be seen in the examples given below:

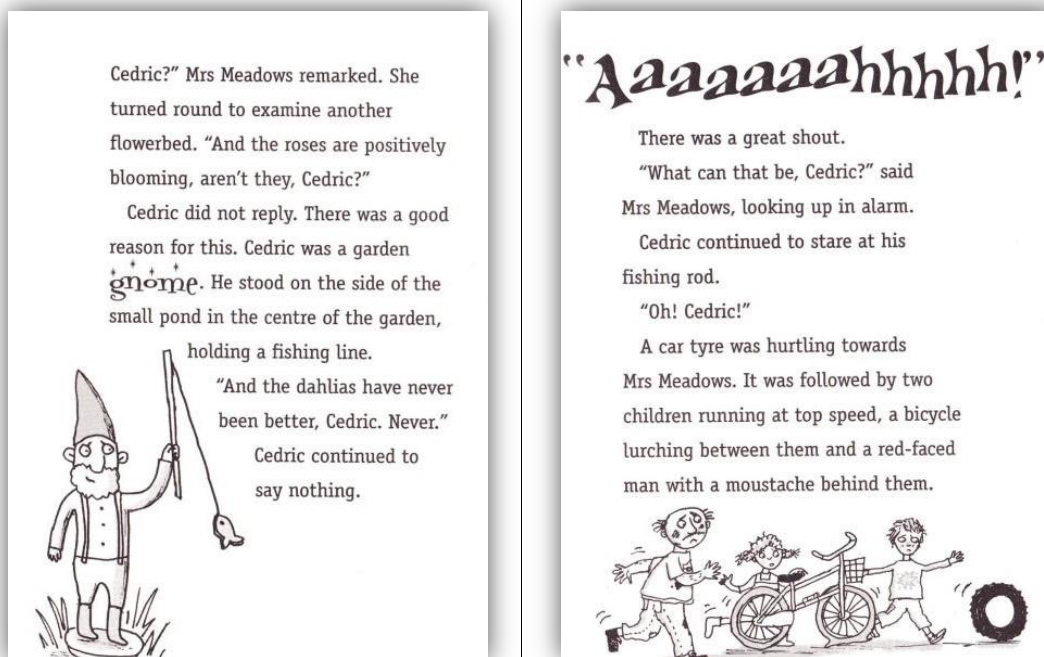


Figure 7 Text passage taken from Barker (2011a: 48-9)

The font size as well as the type face sometimes vary from the normal text and thus emphasise its meaning. On the first page, the word 'gnome' is highlighted and also illustrated. As it has been mentioned in section 2.f., illustrations can support students text comprehension. On the second page, the intensity of the 'great shout' is depicted by a varying font. Furthermore, the length of the book, which is 122 pages, and the large font size make the book appear easily manageable for the students which also increases their motivation for reading.

What might also influence students' motivation are the fact that this is no graded reader, the high frequency of dialogues and the similarity between the main characters and the students. Since the intention is to use the book for 13-year-old students in an Austrian lower secondary school, the possibility is rather high that this is their first reader which was not written for pedagogic purposes but is originally aimed at native speakers. Knowing that they are reading something people in the UK might read as well can be quite encouraging for some of them. Furthermore, this book consists in a large part of dialogues and thus is a great model of everyday language use which perfectly ties in with the original aim of this thesis. Students are confronted with written examples of face-to-face communication which constitutes a communicative role model. This is also

supported by the fact that the story deals with everyday-life situations similar to those of the students themselves and thus they are likely to identify with it. Identification constitutes another reason for selecting this book. The children in the book and the intended audience are at a similar age and therefore students are more likely to identify with and develop empathy for the characters than if the book would, for instance, be about 50-year-old adults from a completely different cultural background.

The final aspect which should be discussed is the appropriateness of the book in relation to the pedagogical purpose. Since the last chapter of this thesis deals with task-based activities on the basis of this book, the suitability of the book for creating such tasks is also decisive. This, however, seems to be given for a number of reasons. As the book is subdivided into different chapters, individual chapters can be used for creating different tasks. Also the headings of these chapters and the illustrations in the book can be useful to create prediction tasks, for instance. Also the content, which the students can easily relate to, offers room for discussion and thus creates a good basis for tasks. What might be a bit difficult, is the language level of the book, since there is a rather high number of unknown words and phrases in it. This implicates that the pre-task phase has to be used to enhance students' reading comprehension.

### **c. Context and task design**

In this section, the context in which the tasks were tested and an outline of the actual tasks will be depicted. The lesson plans which were used for teaching the actual lessons, including timeframe, material needed, interaction format, specific learning aims etc., can be found in the appendix. Concerning the context it should be started with the fact that the activities were initially planned for students at secondary school in the latter half of their second year. Since the testing phase took place in December, students were still in the first semester of their second year and the risk was too high that the tasks would be too difficult. Consequently, the tasks were tested in a third form of a lower secondary school which consisted of seventeen students, thirteen being male and four being female. It took place at the

BRG/BORG St.Pölten in the last week before their Christmas holidays. Due to time reasons, one complete task including pre-task, task cycle and language focus, and one task without language focus were tested.

Before looking at the tasks in more detail, the students' level of competence also needs to be analysed as it constitutes the basis for the learning aims. According to the Austrian Curriculum (Bmukka 2000: 5), their current level of competence should be A1 in speaking and A2 in reading. Until the end of the year, they are supposed to reach A2 in speaking and A2 to B1 in reading. Here are the corresponding descriptors taken from the CEFR for Languages:

### Speaking

**Table 2 Overall reading comprehension, level A2/B1 and overall spoken interaction, level A1/ A2 taken from *CEFR for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* p.10 & 12.**

<b>A2</b>	Can interact with reasonable ease in structured situations and short conversations, provided the other person helps if necessary. Can manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort; can ask and answer questions and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations.
	Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters to do with work and free time. Can handle very short social exchanges but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.
<b>A1</b>	Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally depended on repetition at a slower rate of speech, rephrasing and repair. Cans ask and answer simple questions, initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.

### Reading

<b>B1</b>	Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension.
<b>A2</b>	Can understand short, simple texts on familiar matters of concrete type which consist of high frequency everyday or job-related language
	Can understand short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items.

On the basis of these descriptors specific aims and objectives can be defined. The following objectives, which are partly taken from the European Language Portfolio (Abuja *et al.* 2007: 43, 46 & 49), create the basis for the tasks:

- Students can understand narratives dealing with familiar topics, even if they do not know every single word
- Students can establish connections between reading and personal experiences
- Students can take part in simple conversations (e.g. about family, friends or school)
- Students can express their opinion on specific topics by using simple language
- Students can prepare and report simple stories based on pictures or words
- Students take risks in order to develop their fluency when talking about familiar topics

As it can be seen, the first two objectives deal with reading competence while the others are concerned with students' communicative ability. However, it is important to keep in mind that the main focus is not on training specific reading skills, like it is mostly the case when preparing students for standardized testing. The focus is on using class readers as a basis for communicative language teaching, which means that the text is not solely used as a source of language input, but its meaning is used to create a communicative purpose. The following tasks are an example of this combination of a class reader and task-based language teaching.

### **Pre-task phase 1**

The main aim of this pre-task phase is to engage students' interest and to provide valuable reason for reading, since motivation is an essential part of successful reading. Furthermore, curiosity, personal involvement and the eagerness to start reading will cause linguistic obstacles to appear more manageable (cf. section 2.c.ii). It is important to note that this pre-task phase takes place at the end of a lesson in preparation for the following one.

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Aims/Objectives</b>
<b>1</b>	2 min.	As an introduction, a poster (appendix, p. 84) is put on the blackboard with an illustration of Max and Molly on it. The	to raise interest and familiarise students with the main

		teacher states that these two are the main characters in the novel.	characters
2	8 min.	Students get a worksheet (appendix p. 84) with keywords and definitions/illustrations on it which they have to match correctly. This will be compared in class afterwards. The introduction of these keywords is necessary in order to manage the following tasks successfully.	to provide students with necessary vocabulary
3	15-20 min.	In small groups, students get another worksheet (appendix p. 85). Together they have to think about how old the characters on the poster might be, what their names are etc. Furthermore, they also have to create a story which could happen in the first two chapters using the new words they have just learned. Their individual connotations to the illustrations create a perfect basis for group discussions. These ideas are then discussed in class. The main purpose of this activity is to engage students' interest for reading the book, but it is also a good speaking activity.	to create a purpose for interaction  to train students' communicative competence  to arouse students' curiosity about the book
4		At home, students have to read pages 5-16 and gather information about the characters, which gives them a clear purpose and a reason to engage with the text.	to build a base for the actual task  to read for pleasure and general meaning

### Task Cycle 1

The actual task cycle following this pre-task phase is a so-called 'memory challenge' in which the students are asked to work together without the text to see how much of the story they can recall. As this is already a real task, it will consist of

a task, a planning phase and a report. The allotted time frame is just a benchmark and needs to be adapted to the students' needs, but it is necessary to give them a time limit in order to keep them focused. What is also important to mention is that in this task the reading takes place before the actual task, it serves as a basis for discussion. In the next task, however, the role of reading will be a different one.

	Time	Description	Aims/Objectives
1	10 min.	<b>Task</b> A precondition for this task is that each student has read the text at home. Students are divided in groups of four, have to put away their texts and discuss the statements on the worksheet (appendix p. 85) given by the teacher. Some of them are incorrect and need to be revised. Without using the text, students have to rely on their existing language knowledge during the discussion. The focus is on meaning and a clear outcome and the students work autonomously. The emphasis is on spontaneity and confidence building within the privacy of a small group. The teacher only acts as monitor and encourages students (cf. sections 3.d.ii and 3.d.iv)	to generate free language use by giving reason for interaction  to create a clear purpose/ outcome  to practice speaking spontaneously and fluently by expressing one's own opinion/suggestions  to focus on meaning and to take risks in order to fulfil communicative purpose
2	5-7 min.	<b>Planning a report</b> Students prepare a report in which they introduce Max and Molly using the correct/corrected information. Any student can be chosen by the teacher to present to the class. This assures that each student participates in the preparation phase. The focus is not only on fluency anymore, but also on accuracy. The teacher acts as	to prepare a report  to focus on fluency as well as accuracy

		language adviser, makes sure that the purpose is clear and helps to rehearse their oral report (cf. section 3.d.iv)	
<b>3</b>	10 min.	<b>Report</b> A presenter is chosen by the teacher and while he/she is presenting, the other students have to listen and check whether they agree with what is being presented. This gives them a clear listening purpose. After the reports, possible disagreements are discussed in class. The teacher will give a short feedback after each report, not just in order to correct mistakes but also to mention improvements.	to present spoken reports fluently and accurately  to improve students' communicative skills by giving proper feedback  to give opportunity for discussion and free language use in class

### Form Focus 1

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Aims/Objectives</b>
<b>1</b>	10-15 min.	<b>Analysis and Practice</b> Students are asked to circle or underline all the verbs in the first two chapters describing a direct speech. Teacher gives an example: "Can't stop now!" <u>yelled</u> Max. This is then compared in class including a discussion of what the word actually means. In pairs, students get a worksheet (Appendix, p. 86) where they have to match the words with their definitions and afterwards fill in a gap text which is also compared in class. This way students can focus on form in relation to meaning.	to understand form which carries the meaning  to get to know words describing direct speeches

The second task will be a so-called ‘prediction task’, which work particularly well with narrative texts (Willis and Willis 2007: 34). As opposed to the previous task, not all the reading is done before the actual task, which means that reading becomes a bit of a task within a task. Furthermore, the pre-task phase is shorter since the students are already familiar with the book and the main characters.

### Pre-task phase 2

	Time	Description	Aims/Objectives
1	5-7 min.	Students have to read pages 17 and 18 individually in class. The pages have to be printed out, since students are not allowed to read any further, otherwise the prediction task will not work. While reading, unclear words and phrases can be asked. Then, the teacher has to tell the students that they have to find out what Max and Molly’s dad means by ‘family quality time’.	to raise interest  to enable a focus on meaning by clarifying keywords

### Task Cycle 2

	Time	Description	Aims/Objectives
1	15 min.	<p><b>Task</b></p> <p>The teacher hands out a worksheet (appendix p. 87), explains the task and gives an example. Individually, students think about their own family quality time, which provides discussion material for the group work afterwards and a connection is built to the students’ own lives.</p> <p>Then, the teacher divides the class into groups of 3 to 4 and hands out another worksheet (appendix, p. 87). One student after the other presents his or her own ideas</p>	to generate free language use  to develop fluency and different communicative strategies

		to the rest of the group and they have to agree on the five most likely ways of how the Peskers could spend their family quality time and discuss what could possibly go wrong. The teacher acts as language adviser and makes sure that the task is properly done. It is a valuable exercise for stretching their language resources to meet a communicative need, since there might lack vocabulary to express the activities. The aim is to foster strategic competence and learner autonomy.	
2	5-7 min.	<b>Planning a report</b> Learners pool their ideas and their language knowledge to prepare an oral report to the class in which they present their five most likely ideas. Any student can be asked by the teacher to do the report. The teacher acts as language adviser again and the focus is on clarity, organization and accuracy.	to prepare a fluent and accurate report
3	10 min.	<b>Report</b> One student of each group is chosen by the teacher to present the outcome of the group work. The other students have to listen and, after the report, vote for ONE possibility they believe to be most likely to happen in the story. The whole management is done by the teacher.	to present spoken reports fluently and accurately  to improve students' communication skills by giving proper feedback  to create a purpose for reading
4	10 min.	Afterwards, students read p. 18-30. They will read for meaning and not so much concentrate on language form. The teacher can be used as language resource if	to check guesses/satisfaction of curiosity  to read for meaning/

		necessary. Then there will be a brief discussion about whether the students' prediction are correct or not.	train text and reading comprehension
--	--	---	--------------------------------------

## Form Focus 2

	Time	Description	Aims/Objectives
1	10-15 min.	<b>Form focus</b> Students have already been introduced to the past continuous in previous lessons. Therefore, the teacher asks students to recall how it is formed, which is noted down on the blackboard. Then the students get a gap text (p. 88) and have to fill in past simple or continuous. All the sentences are taken from the book, so that they can check themselves afterwards (p. 17-30). This will then be compared in class.	to understand form which carries the meaning  to repeat the use of past continuous and emphasis its relevance

As it has already been mentioned, due to time reasons the form focus of the last task could unfortunately not be tested in a real language classroom. However, in the next section the basic assumptions for evaluating the outcome as well as the ways of gathering data will be explained.

### d. Evaluation background und data collection

Before analysing the data, it is important to clarify what it actually is I want to find out. This brings us back to the two concerns mentioned in section 4.a. The first one being the absence of fluent communication on the basis of students' existing language knowledge and the second one being the absence of reading for meaning

and pleasure. Therefore, on the basis of the theoretical knowledge gained so far, the following questions can be raised:

- Are students able to deal with limitations of their language knowledge in order to maintain communication? If this is the case, how do they deal with it? Do they take risks in order to reach their communicative purpose?
- Are students able to participate in conversations and respond coherently within all its twist and turns?
- Do they understand the meaning of the given text? Do they enjoy reading?

As it can be seen, the main focus of the first question is on students' strategic competence. It will be looked at whether they find a way to overcome potential communication problems and if they do so, which strategy they choose. This means that they have to risk making mistakes, they have to dare a high-risk exchange in order to achieve their communicative purpose. In the second question, the focus is on fluency. Of course, it has to be considered that their level of competence is A1 to A2 in speaking and thus fluency has to be put into perspective. The last question deals with the basis of their communicative purpose, whether they are able to understand it and whether they did not only see it as an exercise for training a reading strategy, but actually enjoyed reading.

In order to answer these questions, specific data needs to be gathered. I decided for three different approaches.

- Field notes
- Audio recordings
- Survey

Field notes were mainly used to note down general impressions during or after the lesson. Audio recordings seemed to be most useful when dealing with students' speaking skills as it is impossible to listen to all the groups at the same time. Therefore, I used four audio recorders and placed one of them in each group in order to be able to analyse the data in more detail afterwards. It is worth mentioning here, that the students seemed to be extremely distracted by the audio recorders when they were first used at the beginning. Later on, however, they were so bound up in their work that they forgot about them. At the end of my

teaching sequences, I also handed out a survey to get some individual feedback from the students as well. For this, it is important to mention that students got different statements and had to circle numbers from one to four. One meaning 'strongly agree', two 'agree', three 'disagree' and four 'strongly disagree'. 'Undecided' was consciously left out, so that students had to make a clear decision.

### e. Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis will be split into two main parts, communication and reading. First of all, the communicative aspect will be elaborated, meaning the first two questions dealt with in the previous section:

- Are students able to deal with limitations of their language knowledge in order to maintain communication? If this is the case, how do they deal with it? Do they take risks in order to reach their communicative purpose?
- Are students able to participate in conversations and respond coherently within all its twist and turns?

Listening to the recordings and analysing my notes taken during the lesson, there are four main findings which seem to be most relevant in relation to this paper. First of all, I had a close look at how students deal with limitations of their language knowledge in order to maintain communication. The most common way is depicted in the following example:

**Example 1**                      **S1:** he u:hm (.) says they don't (.) uhm they shouldn't (.)  
<L1de> aso sie sie suin jo ned owe rutschn mim Bauch. {well  
they are not supposed to slide down on their bellies.} (.) waü  
der hot gsogt gehts <1> die Treppen runter. </1> {because he  
said go down the stairs.} </L1de>  
**S2:** <L1de> <1> aja stimmt </1> {all right true} </L1de>

Whenever they meet with a linguistic obstacle, they immediately switch to their L1, which is German in this case. In this example, the student starts speaking

English, but as soon as he realizes that he is not able to find the right words to express himself, he switches to German. It generally needs to be mentioned that there is a significant overuse of students' L1 during group work. As one of the students commented at the end of the survey: 'I always talk a lot during group work, but mainly German'. However, after reading a great number of experience reports from different EFL teachers, it became obvious that I am not the only one facing this problem. Whenever all students in one group or class have the same mother tongue, they mainly use this language in order to fulfil the task. The question is however, how teachers can prevent an overuse of L1 and encourage learners with the same L1 to use English during pair and group works? Willis and Willis (2007: 221) suggest to draw up a set of rules together with your students, for when they are allowed to use their L1 and encourage them to keep to these rules by displaying them, by going around and monitoring and by asking students to consciously evaluate themselves according to the rules after the task. Furthermore, it is also important to have a closer look at why and when students use their L1 in class, which directly leads to my next and second finding.

I looked at when students speak English and what exactly the reason could be for switching to their L1. What was striking was that they were usually able to express their main ideas in English, but they were lacking interactive phrases and there were hardly any features of spontaneous speech. This often caused a communicative breakdown when speaking English and when they stuck to English, the conversation appeared to be rather incoherent and halting. In order to demonstrate a difference, example 2 was slightly changed in an extra column next to the original.

#### **Example 2**

S1: I say it's right.	S1: I say it's right.
S2: THEY say it's WRONG.	S2: Well, but they say it's wrong.
S3: we guess	S3: Perhaps we could just guess?
S4: it isn't Peterson.	S4: Hm...but I think it isn't Peterson, but Pesker.
Pesker.	

#### **Example 3**

S1: go swimming?
S2: <soft> go swimming? </soft>

S1: <L1de> halt e- e- wär ein VORschlag. wär ein VORschlag.  
{well that would be a suggestion.} </L1de> go swimming?  
there's a shark in the water <L1de> wär das Problem. {would  
be the problem.} </L1de>

As it can be seen in the two original examples, there are no features of spontaneous speech and they do not use any transitional words and phrases which show an interrelationship of ideas. Simple hedges, fillers or transitional words like 'but', which indicates a contrast, cause a conversation to be much more coherent and also fluent. As it can be seen in the extra column, the words used to express the main information were not changed at all, but it was simply expanded by some features of spontaneous speech. This brings something to my mind that I was not aware of before doing this action research. Features of spoken language and transitional words and phrases should also be trained actively in the foreign language classroom. Since communicative competence is the overall aim of English language teaching, this is definitely something which also has to be taken into consideration. Further analysis of the data I have collected, also shows that students have problems with reacting to what their partner says and with expressing any kind of relation to what has already been said earlier. I guess this is already an essential part of many language classes, but since I have never been taught this way myself and never observed any colleague teaching things like that, I was not consciously aware of it. Features which are characteristic of spontaneous spoken language have to be taught and trained as an important part of successfully developing students' speaking skills.

The third aspect I would like to mention is a very positive one. Looking at the following examples, it becomes apparent that students correct each others' mistakes during group work and that they also sometimes motivate each other to speak English. There was one group in which two students were constantly speaking English and thus the other group members also participated in English, although they did not do so in the first place, as it can be seen in example four. Example five, on the other hand, shows that one student even reminds the other one to speak English. As it can be seen in all these examples, students can

positively influence and improve each others' speaking skills by correcting each others' mistakes. In example six, students try to use the word 'predictable', which they have learnt in the previous lesson, but they have problems recalling the correct pronunciation. One group member, however, is able to pronounce it correctly and thus the others can learn from it.

#### Example 4

S1: Max and Molly and their parents have freckles.  
 S2: Max  
 S1: have freckles.=  
 S2: =HAS freckles.  
 S1: Max and Molly have freckles.  
 S2: m- Molly  
 S1: no?  
 S3: <L1de> nur NUR da Max hat {only Max has} </L1de> freckles. </L1de> u:hm (.) I mean only Max has freckles.

#### Example 5

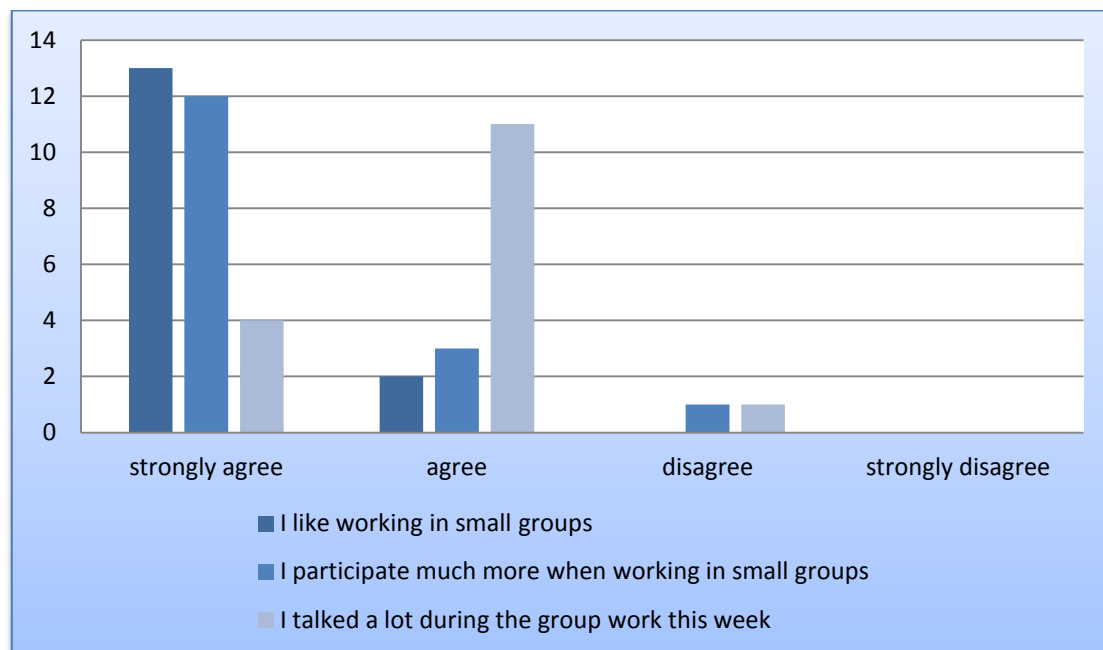
S1: <L1de> so (aber) jetzt brauch ma noch EINS <2> <un> xxx </un> </2> {so (but) now we still need one more} </L1de>  
 S2: <2> [S1] </2> ENGLISH.  
 S1: u::h (.) okay. sorry. we u::h (.) nee:d  
 S2: <ono> ni:tʃ </ono>=  
 S1: =we need uh (.) we need any more.  
 S2: ONE more.

#### Example 6

S1: Max and Molly think that their dad is <pvc> unpredictable <ipa> ,ʌnpredɪk'teɪbl </ipa> </pvc>  
 S2: false.  
 S1: <pvc> predictable. <ipa> predɪk'teɪbl </ipa> </pvc>  
 S2: <pvc> predictable. <ipa> predɪk'teɪbl </ipa> </pvc>  
 S3: No, it's predictable.

Since group work seems to offer considerable potential, I also wanted to know about students' individual attitudes towards the group work used in these activities. Therefore, the second part of the survey, which was handed out at the end of the week, dealt with this question. I wanted to know their opinion and

wanted them to reflect on their own participation. The tables below illustrate the results of this survey:



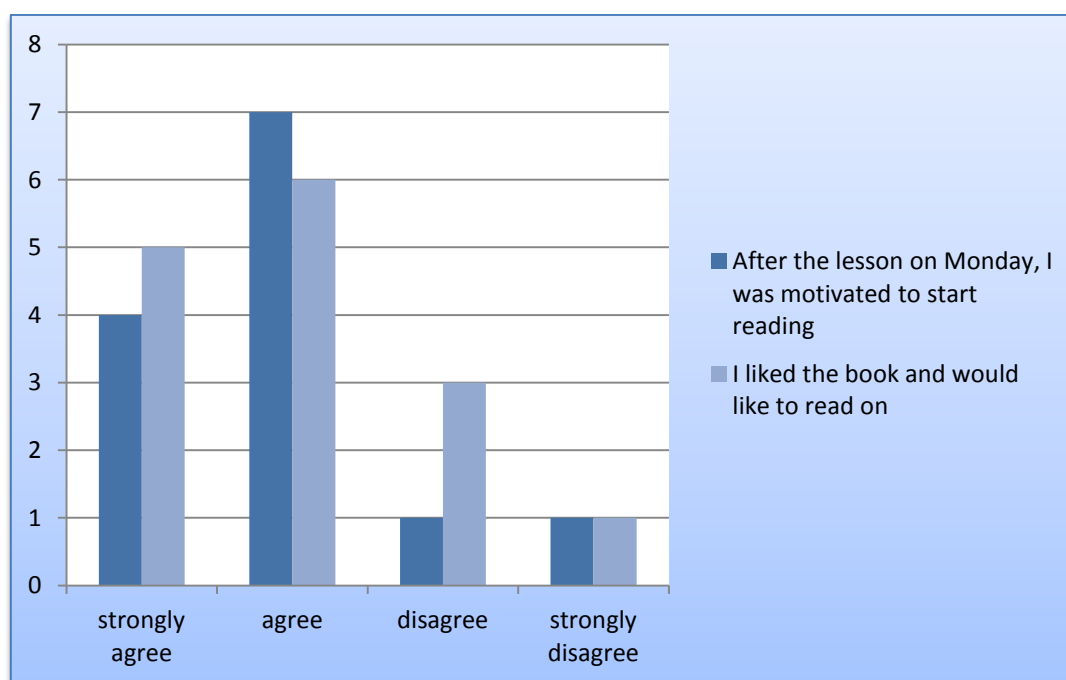
**Figure 8 Results: Group work**

It can be seen from the data in figure 8 that students generally have a very positive attitude concerning group work. They enjoy working in small groups and thus there is also a higher participation in comparison to working with the whole class. This was even stated explicitly in some comments given at the end of the survey. Referring to the group work which was tested during this week, the majority felt that they talked a lot. This result definitely correlates with the analysis of the audio recordings. Of course, there are some students who are generally more talkative than others, but on the whole the participation was very high. This result strengthens the importance of group work when trying to improve students' communicative ability.

The last aspect which should be discussed is the matter of creativity. Analysing my field notes and the recordings in relation to the lesson plans, it became obvious that students talked much more when the task was a creative one. Furthermore, also the participation of individual students was higher when dealing with creative tasks. While the first pre-task phase and the second task required creative answers, the first task only dealt with the discussion of facts and thus there was more interaction and participation during the pre-task phase and the second task.

Willis and Willis (2007: 218) also refer to this phenomenon and argue that tasks which require imagination, creativity or involve humour positively influence group dynamics and encourage students to talk a lot more. This indicates that when trying to train students' speaking skills, the activities should not be based on facts, but should be as creative as possible. This means that, especially in connection with extensive reading, the focus should not solely be on comprehension questions, but the story should constitute a basis for creative activities.

After analysing all the data in relation to the communicative aspect, it is also important to look at the role of the text which was used in connection to it. Although it would have been interesting to analyse the influence reading the text had on students' communicative ability, this would go far beyond the scope of this paper. However, as the aim is to foster reading for general meaning and pleasure, I used a survey at the end of the week also to get individual feedback from the students concerning their reading experience.

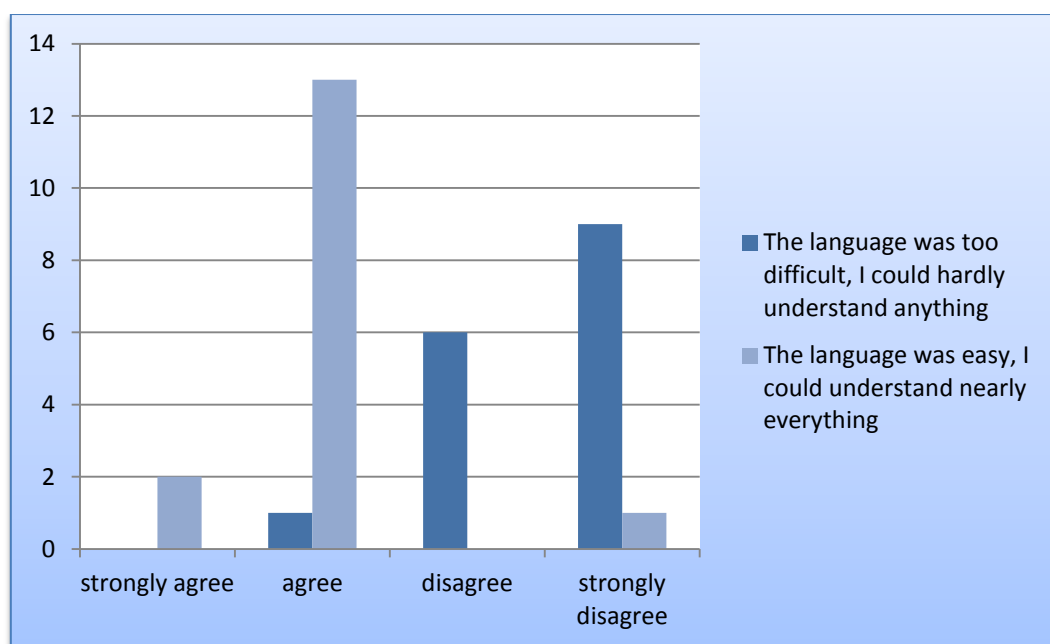


**Figure 9 Results: Reading experience**

First of all, I wanted to know whether the pre-task phase on Monday was successful and encouraged them for starting reading. As it can be seen from the table above, eleven students were motivated to start reading and only two were

not motivated . This proves that the pre-task phase aroused interest on the side of the students and thus fulfilled its aim. Secondly, I wanted to know whether they generally liked the book and would like to read on. A positive answer to that would not only indicate that they liked it, but it would also tell that the activities based on the book did not spoil their reading pleasure. The table shows that eleven out of fifteen students liked the book and would like to read on. Three students disagree and only one strongly disagrees. This shows that students enjoyed reading for meaning and pleasure and that the activities did not have a significantly negative influence on it.

Furthermore, I also wanted to reassure that the language used in the book was not too difficult or too easy and that the instructions of the tasks were clear enough for everyone. The results of the survey show that the language was appropriate.



**Figure 10 Results: Language level**

I asked the same question in two different ways to make sure that they were concentrating when answering the questions. Looking at the light blue bars, the majority of students agree that the language was easy. However, as they do not strongly agree, it was still a bit challenging which is definitely desirable, as it has been mentioned in section 2d. The dark blue bar shows a similar result. Students could obviously cope with the language level of the book. Concerning the clarity of

instructions, all students agreed that they knew exactly what they had to do, which implies that the tasks were not adversely affected by unclear instructions.

Taken together, the following conclusions can be drawn from this action research. Concerning the communicative aspect, the high participation, the amount of student-talking-time and the positive effects the group work had on the students, the tasks were definitely successful. On the contrary, the overuse of students' L1 and the limited willingness to take high-risks in exchange, results in a need for a different error culture. The distinction between a focus on fluency and a focus on accuracy has to become more obvious for the students and thus it also needs to be made explicit in class when there is time to be creative and spontaneous in reaching ones' communicative aim and when it is time to concentrate on formal correctness. Furthermore, I talked to the English teacher of the class and she told me that they have never done TBLT before. This means that this approach was entirely new for the students and it is possible that they still have to learn to rely on their existing language knowledge and to interact spontaneously instead of simply repeating given dialogues from their text books. Concerning the text-base, it can be concluded that it was appropriate for the students and that they enjoyed reading for general meaning and pleasure. Of course, intensive reading is also very valuable, but students are more likely to become life-long and passionate readers when they also get the opportunity to read for sake of reading.

## 5. Conclusion

The theory part of this thesis has explained the central importance of reading and communicative language teaching in the EFL classroom. It includes important background knowledge about factors influencing second language reading, about its interactive elements, about the benefits of teaching literature in the EFL classroom and it also offers some practical information, e.g. selection criteria. This is then followed by some basic information about communicative competence and a discussion about the most appropriate approach, which turned out to be TBLT and thus it was also dealt with in great detail.

Returning to the research question posed at the beginning of this study ‘In which way can class readers contribute to the development of students’ communicative ability?’, it is now possible to state that one way is to use a class reader as the basis for a task-based language teaching approach. Communicating in English is something students can usually not train at home, but this is not the case for reading. A class reader increases students’ exposure to the target language outside the classroom and makes it possible to focus on their communicative competence during the lesson. This is extremely beneficial in regard to the limited number of English lessons in Austrian schools. However, it needs to be kept in mind that I am not trying to state that this is the only feasible and effective way to teach English as a foreign language, but it can be seen as one valuable ingredient in this cocktail of ELT methodology.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from my action research is that students just like teachers have to learn to take high risks in order to foster students’ communicative competence. Teachers have to learn to allow more space for the students to take risks. They have to let them make mistakes to develop confidence. This does not mean that accuracy is of no importance, but language learning should also give room for discovery and self-development. Of course, it is easier for a teacher to prepare a grammar lesson or a speaking lesson focusing on predefined phrases, since they feel that it is their duty to be in control of everything which is going on in their lesson. However, some uncertainty on the side of the teacher means a higher chance for the students to take risks and thus to train fluent and spontaneous interaction. As it has already been mentioned earlier,

this calls for a change of attitude concerning error management culture in Austrian language teaching classrooms. Either students get the chance to learn to manage their mistakes, or they will manage them.

Furthermore, this research helped me to enhance my understanding of successful and target-aimed task design. When creating the tasks for my action research, I made a mistake which helped me to understand the importance of creativity in communicative language teaching. This paper emphasises reading for pleasure and general meaning, but in the first task the students had to discuss statements which also asked for factual knowledge. This kind of task did not cater for the actual learning aims, which I became aware of after testing it in class. In order to motivate students for pleasure reading and reading for general meaning, it is essential to avoid activities which ask for factual knowledge about the story. This indicates the importance of using creative tasks which are based on the story instead of putting pressure on the students by asking for specific factual information. This could ruin their reading pleasure.

However, the generalisability of these results is subject to certain limitations. For instance, this approach was only tested with students in the first semester of the third year at lower secondary AHS-school. Therefore, further research would be necessary to explore the effect of this approach at different age and language levels. Furthermore, the tasks presented in this paper are just examples and it would be worth doing further research on the development of different TBL lessons on the basis of a class reader. Since I only had a limited amount of time in the classroom, I could solely work with the first few chapters of the book, but it is also possible, for instance, to create prediction tasks which refer to the whole story and not just parts of it. Lastly, another issue that was not addressed is assessment in relation to this teaching approach. If the tasks focus on meaning in the first place, it would be unacceptable to assess students almost exclusively according to accuracy.

To sum it up, there is a lot to learn from this paper, but there are also limitations which need to be considered. However, it aimed at developing students' awareness concerning the value of reading and at preparing them for spontaneous interactions in the real world outside the classroom. Trying to reach these aims

can be a long and difficult path requiring lots of patience, but it will definitely be worth it and I hope that this paper helps to take one step further on this path.

## 6. Bibliography

- Abuja, G.; Horak, A.; Keiper, A.; Nezbeda, M.; Öhler, R.; Stefan, F. 2007. *Europäisches Sprachenportfolio: Mittelstufe (10-15 Jahre)*. Graz: Leykam.
- Aebersold, JoAnn; Field, Marie Lee. 1997. *From Reader to Reading Teacher: Issues and Strategies for Second Language Classrooms*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Allwright, Richard. 1979. "Language Learning through communication practice". In Brumfit, C.J.; Johnson, K. (eds.). *The communicative approach to Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bachman, L.; Palmer, A. 1996. *Language Testing in Practice*. Oxford: OUP.
- Barker, Dominic. 2011a. *Max and Molly's Guide to Trouble: How to be a Genius*. London: Orchard Books.
- Barker, Dominic. 2011b. *Max and Molly's Guide to Trouble: How to catch a Criminal*. London: Orchard Books.
- Barnes, D. 1976. *From Communication to Curriculum*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Barnett, A.M. 1989. *More than meets the Eye: Foreign language Reading*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Beckson, K.; Ganz, A (eds.). 1977. *Literary Terms: A Dictionary*. New York, NY : Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- BMUKK. 2000a. *Lehrplan AHS-Unterstufe: Lebende Fremdsprache*.
- BMUKK. 2000b. *Lehrplan AHS-Oberstufe: Lebende Fremdsprache*.  
[http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/11854/lp\\_ahs\\_os\\_lebende\\_fs.pdf](http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/11854/lp_ahs_os_lebende_fs.pdf) (20 Nov 2013)
- Bredella, Lothar. 2000. "Fremdverstehen mit literarischen Texten". In Bredella, Lothar; Meißner, Franz-Josef; Nünning, Ansgar; Rösler, Dietmar (eds.). *Wie ist Fremdverstehen lehr- und lernbar? Vorträge aus dem Graduiertenkolleg „Didaktik des Fremdverstehens“*. Tübingen: Narr, 133-163.
- Brumfit, Christopher. 1984. *Communicative Methodology in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Burns, Anne. 1999. *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Collie, J.; Slater, S. 1987. *Literature in the Language Classroom: A resource book of ideas and activities*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Council of Europe. 2001. *Common European Framework of References for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment: Structured overview of all CEFR scales*. [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/elp-reg/Source/Key\\_reference/ Overview\\_CEFRscales \\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/elp-reg/Source/Key_reference/Overview_CEFRscales_EN.pdf) (30 Nov 2013)
- Daskalovska, N.; Dimova, V. 2012. "Why should literature be used in the language classroom?". *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences* 46, 1182-1186.
- Donelson, K.; Nilsen, A. 1980. *Literature for today's young adults*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Duff, A.; Maley, A. 1990. *Literature*. Oxford: OUP.
- Extensive Reading Foundation. 2001. *The Extensive Reading Foundation's Guide to*

- Extensive Reading*. [http://erfoundation.org/ERF\\_Guide.pdf](http://erfoundation.org/ERF_Guide.pdf) (12 Dec 2013)
- Ellis, R. 2003. *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: OUP.
- Ellis, R. 2005. "Principles of instructed language learning". *System* 33(2), 209-224.
- Ellis, R. 2009. "Task-based language teaching: sorting out the misunderstandings". *International journal of applied linguistics* 19(3), 221-46.
- Furlong, J.; Barton, L.; Miles, S.; Whiting, C.; Whitty, G. 2000. *Teacher Education in Transition: Re-Forming Professionalism?*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Goodman, S. 2009. "Words and Pictures: Introduction". In Maybin, J.; Watson, N.J. (eds.). *Children's Literature: Approaches and Territories*. England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Goodman, K. 1967. "Reading: a psycholinguistic guessing game". [http://readbysight.com/images/reading\\_a\\_psycholinguistic\\_guessing\\_game.pdf](http://readbysight.com/images/reading_a_psycholinguistic_guessing_game.pdf) (20 Oct 2013).
- Grabe, W. 1991. "Current developments in second language reading research". *TESOL Quarterly* 25(3), 375-406.
- Häcker, H.; Stapf, K. (eds.). 2009. *Drosch: Psychologisches Wörterbuch*. Bern: Huber.
- Hedge, T. 1985. *Using Readers in Language Teaching*. London : Modern English Publ.
- Hedge, T. 2000. *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: OUP.
- Hughes, A. 2003. *Testing for Language Teachers*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Cambridge: CUP.
- Jacobs, G.M.; Farrell, T.S.C. 2003 . "Understanding and Implementing the CLT (communicative language teaching) paradigm". *RELC Journal* 34(1), 5-30 <http://rel.sagepub.com/content/34/1/5.full.pdf+html> (17 Oct 2013).
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 2001. "Grammar". In Carter, R.; Nunan, D. (eds.). *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge: CUP
- Long, M.H. 1985. "A role for instruction in second language acquisition: Task-based language training". In Hyltenstam, K.; Pienemann, M. (eds.). *Modelling and Assessing Second Language acquisition*. Clevedon Avon England: Multilingual Matters.
- McNiff, Jane; Whitehead, Jack. 2008. *All you need to know about Action Research*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Nunan, D. 2004. *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Nünning, A.; Surkamp, C. 2006. *Englische Literatur unterrichten*. Stuttgart: Klett.
- Nünning, Ansgar; Jucker, Andreas H. "Cultural Studies und anglistisch-amerikanische Kulturwissenschaft: Grundriss, Leitbegriffe und Perspektiven." In Nünning, Ansgar; Jucker, Andreas H. *Orientierung Anglistik/Amerikanistik: Was sie kann, was sie will*. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt. 135-169. 1999.
- Reichl, S. 2009. *Cognitive principles, critical practice : Reading literature at university*. Göttingen: V & R Unipress, Vienna Univ. Press.
- Revell Jane. 1984. *Teaching techniques for communicative English*. London:

- Macmillan.
- Richards, J. C. 2001. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Cambridge: CUP.
- Richards, J. C. 2006. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. Cambridge: CUP.  
[http://www.cambridge.org/other\\_files/downloads/esl/booklets/Richards-](http://www.cambridge.org/other_files/downloads/esl/booklets/Richards-)
- Richards, J.; Platt, J.; Weber, H. 1986. *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*. London: Longman.
- Ries, Hans. 1991. "Grundsätzliche Überlegungen zur Illustration von Kinder- und Jugendliteratur". In Baumgärtner, C.; Schmidt, M. *Text und Illustration im Kinder- und Jugendbuch*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann.
- Rivers, W. and Temperley M. 1978. *A practical guide to the teaching of English as a second or foreign language*. New York: OUP.
- Sahr, M. 2005. „Bilderbuch, Comic und Film – willkommeneg Begleiter der Kinder“. In Franz, K.; Lange G. *Bilderbuch und Illustration in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*. Baltmannsweiler : Schneider-Verl. Hohengehren.
- Skehan, P. 1996. "Second Language acquisition research and task-based instruction". In J. Willis, J.; Willis, D. (eds.). *Challenge and Change in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Heinemann. 17-30.
- Skehan, P. 1998. *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. Oxford: OUP.
- Swan, M. 2005. "Legislation by hypothesis: The case of task-based instruction". *Applied Linguistics* 26(3), 376-401.
- Ur, P. *A course in language teaching*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Wallace, C. 2001. "Reading". In Carter, R.; Nunan, D. (eds.). *The Cambridge guide to Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Wallace, C. 1992. *Reading*. Oxford: OUP.
- Wehmeier, S. 2005. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. (7<sup>th</sup> edition). Oxford: OUP.
- Widdowson, H.G. 1978. *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford: OUP.
- Widdowson, H.G. 1983. "Talking Shop: Literature and ELT". *ELT Journal* 37, 30-35.
- Widdowson, H.H. 1998. "Context, Community and Authentic Language". *TESOL Quarterly* 32(4), 705-16.
- Wilkins, D. A. 1972. *Linguistics in language teaching*. London: Arnold.
- Williams, R. 1986. "Top ten principles for teaching reading". *ELT Journal*, 40(1), 42-45.
- Willis, D.; Willis, J. 1996. *Challenge and Change in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Willis, D.; Willis, J. 2001. "Task-based language learning". In Carter, R.; Nunan, D. (eds.). *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Willis, D.; Willis, J. 2007. *Doing Task-based Teaching*. Oxford: OUP.
- Willis, J. 1996. *A framework for Task-based Learning*. Harlow: Longman Pearson Education.

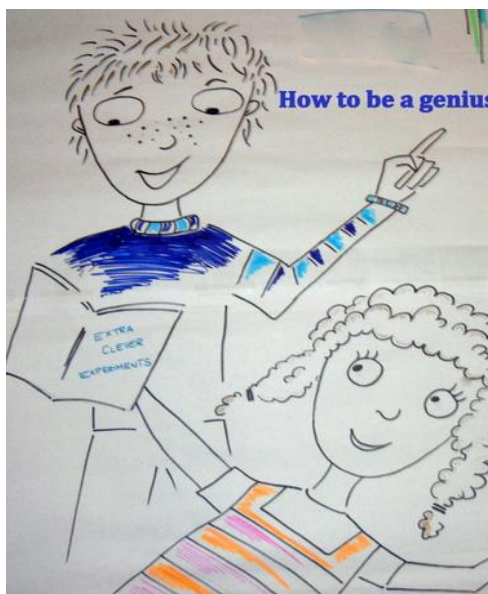
Winter, Richard. 1996. "Some principles and Procedures for the Conduct of Action Research" In Zuber-Skerritt, Ortrun. (ed.). *New Directions in Action Research*. London: Falmer Press.

Communicative-Language.pdf (12 Oct 2013).  
<http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/782/ahs8.pdf> (20 Nov 2013)

*Extensive Reading*. [http://erfoundation.org/ERF\\_Guide.pdf](http://erfoundation.org/ERF_Guide.pdf), (8 Jan 2014)

## 7. Appendix

### Poster for Pre-task phase 1

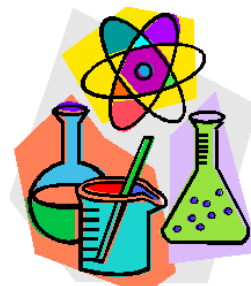


### Worksheet 1

**lump - genius - scientific experiment - predictable - gravy - gravity  
freckles - discovery**



you know in advance that something will happen or what it will be like



the force that makes things fall down when they are dropped

a process of finding something or learning about something that was not known about

a person who is unusually intelligent or artistic, or who has a very high level of skill, especially in one area



#### Picture Sources:

*Food52.* <http://food52.com/recipes/7509-chestnut-and-pear-gravy> (10 Dec 2013)

*NeoClipart.* <http://www.neoclipart.com/science-clipart/12810-science-lab-safety-clipart.html> (10 Dec 2013)

*123RF.* [http://de.123rf.com/photo\\_8329098\\_illustration-der-ein-kind-mit-einer-beule-auf-seinem-kopf.html](http://de.123rf.com/photo_8329098_illustration-der-ein-kind-mit-einer-beule-auf-seinem-kopf.html) (10 Dec 2013)

*My Reader's Block.* <http://myreadersblock.blogspot.co.at/2011/02/meet-me-on-monday-36.html> (10 Dec 2013)

## Worksheet 2

### *How to be a genius*

What are their names?	
How old are they?	
Are they related?	
Write 5 sentences about what happens in the story. Use the following words: lump genius scientific experiment predictable gravy gravity freckles discovery	

## Worksheet 3

**In groups of 3-4, discuss the following statements without looking at the texts again. Are they all correct? If not, give REASONS and revise them.**

1. Max and Molly's surname is Peterson.
2. Max did an important scientific experiment by trying to make a lump out of nothing.
3. Max and Molly think that their dad is unpredictable.
4. Max and Molly are nine-year-old twins, Molly being twelve minutes older than Max.
5. Max and Molly both have freckles.
6. Max and Molly explained to their mum that Isaac Newton discovered gravity by pouring gravy on his roast beef.
7. Max and Molly always do what their dad tells them to do.
8. Their dad thinks they will be geniuses when they are grownups.

**THEN: Prepare a report in which you introduce Max and Molly. Use the information given above.**



## Worksheet 4

**Look at the words in the book, try to figure out their meaning and match them with the right definitions.**

1	shout		to say something in form of a question, in order to get information
2	urge		to have the same opinion as somebody else
3	repeat		to tell somebody that something is definitely true or is definitely going to happen
4	ask		to shout loudly, for example because you are angry, excited, frightened or in pain
5	warn		to shout in a loud deep voice, because you are angry
6	assure		to advise or try hard to persuade (überreden) somebody to do something
7	bellow		to tell somebody about something, especially something dangerous or unpleasant that is likely to happen
8	agree		to tell somebody about something in a way that makes it easy to understand
9	yell		to say something in a loud voice; to speak loudly/angrily
10	demand		to mention something in order to give somebody information about it or to make them notice it
11	explain		to say something again or more than once
12	point out		to ask for something very firmly (bestimmt)

**Without looking at the text again, try to fill in the appropriate verb.**

1. "COME DOWNSTAIRS!" \_\_\_\_\_ their dad.
2. "Higher!" \_\_\_\_\_ Molly.
3. "Come downstairs, both of you!" \_\_\_\_\_ dad.
4. "Do you have a lump?" \_\_\_\_\_ Molly.
5. "I will NOT ask again!" \_\_\_\_\_ dad from the bottom of the stairs.
6. "I did a lot of growing in those twelve minutes," he \_\_\_\_\_ his sister.
7. "Max and Molly" I want you downstairs! This instant!" \_\_\_\_\_ dad.
8. "I told you he'd say it again", said Max. "He is very predictable", \_\_\_\_\_ Molly.
9. "Can't stop now!" \_\_\_\_\_ May as he whooshed down the stairs.
10. "Didn't you hear me calling?" \_\_\_\_\_ dad.
11. "We were very busy," she \_\_\_\_\_.

## Worksheet 5

Think about your own **family quality time**. How do you spend family quality time at home?

	Family Quality Time
0	visiting the zoo
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

## Worksheet 6

In groups, agree on five things the Peskers could do in their **family quality time** and think about what could possibly go wrong?

	Family Quality Time	What could go wrong?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

## Worksheet 7

### Fill in past simple OR continuous

1. Mum \_\_\_\_\_ (sit) on the sofa with a cup of tea and a slice of chocolate cake, \_\_\_\_\_ (watch) TV.
2. "I \_\_\_\_\_ (enjoy) spending quality time with my cup of tea and piece of chocolate cake, " protested mum.
3. Mum \_\_\_\_\_ (take) one last longing look at her tea and cake and \_\_\_\_\_ (follow) everyone out to the driveway where four bikes \_\_\_\_\_ (wait).
4. Instantly Max \_\_\_\_\_ (discover) a problem.
5. The sun \_\_\_\_\_ (shine) in Trull, the small town where the Peskers lived.
6. Max and Molly \_\_\_\_\_ (point) at mum's flat front tyre.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Lesson Plan

School	Class	Date/Time	Number of students (male/female)
BRG/BORG St.Pölten	3D	16 <sup>th</sup> of December 2013	15 (12/3)

### Brief Rationale:

The last 15-20 minutes of this lesson will be used as a *pre-task phase* in preparation for the following lesson including the actual *task cycle*. Students are familiarized with the characters of the book, they get to know important keywords and create a reading purpose. The actual reading will be done at home.

### Precise definition of aims and objectives:

- allowing students to practice speaking spontaneously and fluently about something that may provoke the use of new words and phrases
- familiarising students with important keywords in preparation for the actual reading process
- Creating a reading purpose
- introducing them to the new class reader *Max and Molly's Guide to Trouble: How to be a Genius* by Dominic Barker

Time frame	Procedure	Interaction format	aims/ objectives (Teacher and students)	materials
20 min.	1 A poster is put on the blackboard with an illustration of Max and Molly on it	Teacher → Class	to raise interest	Poster  worksheet 1
	2 Teacher states that these two are the main characters in the novel		to familiarise students with the main characters	worksheet 2
	3 Students get worksheet 1 with keywords and definitions/illustrations on it. They have to match them correctly.		to create a purpose for interaction	books/copies of the text for home-exercise
	3 In pairs students think about	Pair work		

the questions on worksheet 2

4 Ideas are discussed in class

Teacher →

Class

to provide

students with

necessary

vocabulary

**Home-exercise:** Students have

to read pages 5-16 and find out

as much as possible about the

characters: relationship, age, etc.

to prepare

students for

the actual task

cycle

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Lesson Plan

School	Class	Date/Time	Number of students (male/female)
BRG/BORG St.Pölten	3D	18 <sup>th</sup> of December 2013	16 (3/13)

### Brief Rationale:

In this lesson the actual *task* is done. The story of the book is used as a speaking occasion. During the task, the focus is on fluency while the planning and the report phase also concentrate on accuracy. This is followed by a *form focus* in which useful words from the text are consciously worked on.

Time frame	Procedure	Interaction format	aims/ objectives (Teacher and students)	materials
<b>5-7 min</b>	<b>Task</b> Students are divided in groups of four, have to put away their texts and discuss statements given by the teacher. Some of them are incorrect and need to be revised.	group work	to generate free language use by giving reason for interaction  to create a clear purpose/ outcome  to practice speaking fluently by expressing one's own opinion/suggestions	worksheet 3 including statements
<b>5-7 min</b>	<b>Planning a report</b> Students prepare a report in which they introduce Max and Molly using the correct/corrected information. Others listen to it and check whether they	group work	to prepare a fluent and accurate report	poster

	agree or not. Example will be given by the teacher. [These are Max and Molly Pesker...]			
<b>10 min</b>	<b>Report</b> Presenter is chosen by the teacher, others have to check whether they agree with what is being presented. After the reports possible disagreements are discussed in class. If something cannot be recalled correctly, they shall check back on the texts	Students → Class  Class Teacher → student	to present spoken reports fluently and accurately  to improve students' communication skills by giving proper feedback  to give opportunity for discussion to practice free language use	poster
<b>5 min</b>	Optional (if there is time left) Teacher refers back to the poster which was worked with last lesson and asks students to collect all the information they have about the two characters. Teacher asks students to compare themselves to Max and Molly by asking questions like: Does anyone else have a twin brother or sister? Who of you has freckles? etc.	Teacher ↔ Class	to give opportunity for free language use  to create personal involvement by figuring out similarities	poster
<b>10-15 min</b>	<b>Form Focus</b> Students are asked to circle or underline all the verbs in the	Individual	to clarify the meaning of words describing direct	Worksheet 2 role-plays

first two chapters describing a direct speech. Teacher gives example: "Can't stop now!" yelled Max. This is then compared in class.

speeches

to use the words actively (*in a playful way*)

Students get a worksheet where they have to match the words with their definitions. Get 3 minutes to compare it with a partner → comparison in class. Then they have to fill in a gap text which is also compared in class afterwards.

Individual  
→ Pair  
work

Optional (if there is time left)  
This is followed by a short game:  
Students can volunteer to act out a sentence. Others have to guess the verb describing the direct speech.

Student →  
Class

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Lesson Plan

School	Class	Date/Time	Number of students (male/female)
BRG/BORG St.Pölten	3D	20 <sup>th</sup> of December 2013	16 (13/3)

#### Brief Rationale:

This *task* will be a so-called prediction task, which work particularly well with narrative texts. As opposed to the previous task, not all the reading is done before the actual task, which means that reading becomes a bit of a task within a task. During the task students will be asked to relate to their own lives and experiences, which hopefully increases their motivation to communicate.

Due to time reasons the grammar part will not be tested in this lesson.

Time frame	Procedure	Interaction format	aims/ objectives (Teacher and students)	materials
<b>5 minutes</b>	(Short) <b>Pre-task phase</b> Students have to read pages 17 and 18  Unclear words and phrases can be discussed	Individual reading  Teacher ⇔ Class	to raise interest  to create a purpose  to enable a focus on meaning by clarifying keywords	print out of p. 17 and 18 – so that students cannot read any further
<b>15 min</b>	<b>Task</b> Teacher hands out worksheet 5 and explains task– students think about their own family quality time [example]  Teacher divides class into groups of 3/ or pair work and hands out worksheet 6. One student after the other presents his or her own ideas to the rest of the group and they have to agree on the five most likely ways of how the Peskers could spend their	Pair or group work	to generate free language use  to develop fluency and different communicative strategies	worksheet 5 and worksheet 6

	family quality time and discuss what could possibly go wrong! Can still change their original ideas of course.			
<b>5-7 min</b>	<b>Planning a report</b> Learners pool their ideas and their language knowledge to prepare an oral report to the class in which they present their five most likely ideas. Any student can be asked by the teacher to do the report.	group work	to prepare a fluent and accurate report	none
<b>10 min</b>	<b>Report</b> One student of each group is chosen by the teacher to present the outcome of the group work. Other students have to listen and, after the report, vote for ONE possibility they believe to be most likely to happen in the story. Management is done by the teacher.	Students → Class  Teacher → Class	to present spoken reports fluently and accurately  to improve students' communication skills by giving proper feedback  to create a purpose for reading	blackboard and chalk (to note down most likely opportunities)
<b>15 min</b>	Students read p. 18-30 Teacher can be used as language resource if necessary  Briefly talk about who was closest the original version in class	Individual Reading  T → Class	to check guesses/satisfaction of curiosity  to read for meaning/ train text and reading comprehension	books/copies
<b>10-15 min</b>	<b>Form focus</b> Students have already been introduced to the past continuous in previous lessons. Teacher asks students to recall how it is formed – is noted down on the		to repeat the use past continuous and emphasis its relevance	worksheet 7

blackboard	Individual
Students get a gap text and have to fill in past simple or continuous. Sentences are taken from the book, can check themselves afterwards (p. 17-30)	Teacher ⇔ Class
Comparison in class.	

## 8. German Abstract

Diese Arbeit hat einen fachdidaktischen Schwerpunkt und beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, wie man die Freude am sinnerfassenden Lesen, in Form von Klassenlektüre, mit der Entwicklung von kommunikativen Kompetenzen in Verbindung setzen kann. Geprägt durch wirtschaftliche Interessen, stehen die kommunikativen Kompetenzen der einzelnen Lernenden im Zentrum der europäischen Bildungsstandards. Die Rolle der Freude am sinnerfassenden Lesen wird jedoch nicht explizit in den Lehrplänen der österreichischen AHS-Schulen erwähnt und von dem Erwerb diverser Lesestrategien überschattet.

Wie kann nun eine Verbindung dieser beiden Aspekte im Englischunterricht hergestellt werden? Das Lesen von langen Texten oder Büchern bietet die Möglichkeit den Zielsprachenkontakt der Lernenden außerhalb des Unterrichts zu maximieren und die eigentliche Unterrichtszeit für die Entwicklung der sprachlichen Fähigkeiten zu nutzen, da das zu Hause nur sehr eingeschränkt möglich ist. Das bedeutet, dass die gelesenen Texte als Kommunikationsanlässe im Unterricht genutzt werden können. Um die Umsetzung dieses Konstrukts zu ermöglichen, bzw. zu veranschaulichen, ist diese Arbeit in zwei Teile unterteilt. Ein Theorieteil, der sich zum einen mit den Grundlagen von Lesen im Fremdsprachenunterricht und zum anderen mit der Lehre von kommunikativen Fähigkeiten beschäftigt. Dies beinhaltet auch eine genaue Auseinandersetzung mit dem sogenannten „task-based language teaching approach“ - ein methodischer Ansatz, der üblicherweise nur mit sehr kurzen Texten verbunden wird, dennoch aber als Grundlage für den Aufbau der erstellten Unterrichtsaktivitäten im praktischen Teil der Arbeit dienen soll. Diese auf Basis der Theorie erarbeiteten Aktivitäten werden im zweiten Teil nicht nur dargestellt, sondern wurden auch im Zuge einer „action research“ im Englischunterricht getestet. Die Ergebnisse dieser empirischen Forschungsarbeit werden ebenfalls diskutiert und mögliche Implikationen, wie z.B. die Rolle der Risikobereitschaft Seiten der Lernenden und Lehrenden im kommunikativen Lernprozess, werden aufgezeigt.

Als Grundlage dieser beispielhaften Aktivitäten dient das Kinderbuch „Max and Molly’s Guide to Trouble: How to be a Genius“, geschrieben von Dominic Barker. Der Inhalt, die sprachlichen Mittel sowie die darin enthaltenen Illustrationen

bieten sich für die Umsetzung in diesem Kontext sehr gut an. Zusammenfassend ist es das Ziel dieser Arbeit eine Möglichkeit aufzuzeigen, wie man die Freude am Lesen fremdsprachlicher Literatur erhalten und nutzen kann, um der Entwicklung von kommunikativen Fähigkeiten fördern.

# Curriculum Vitae

**Barbara Rohacek**

<b>Education</b>	
<b>02/2013- to date</b>	University of Vienna – Teacher education program (English/Psychology & Philosophy)
<b>09/2012 – 01/2013</b>	University of Aberdeen – English Literature: Romanticism and contemporary Irish and Scottish Literature
<b>10/2009 – 09/2012</b>	University of Vienna – Teacher education program (English/Psychology & Philosophy)
<b>2001-2009</b>	Lower and upper secondary school - BRG/BORG St.Pölten
<b>1997-2001</b>	Primary school Neulengbach
<b>Internships</b>	<b>SS 2013</b> English Teacher at the BRG/BORG St.Pölten  <b>WS 2011-SS2012</b> Tutor/educational sciences at the University of Vienna  <b>SS 2012</b> Internship Psychology/Philosophy - Wieselburg  <b>WS 2011</b> Internship English - Vienna
<b>Languages</b>	German  English
<b>Further Education</b>	Diverse computer courses – 2011 Moodle course
<b>Signature</b>	