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USING CLT WITH LARGE CLASSES IN UNIVERSITY LEVEL EFL TEACHING: A CASE STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

Communicative practice realised through communicative activities in a language classroom is expected to have an important role in the process of increasing learners' communicative competence. However, the attempt to use a range of CLT-related pair and group activities with large classes in university EFL teaching presents challenges of language interaction as well as of instructional organization. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness and the suitability of communicative activities in a large multilevel EFL classroom in a college in south-eastern Europe. It first described previous research followed by the context and the issues which prompted the study. Mixed method research data included a learning preferences survey, post-lesson notes, and an open-ended evaluation. Data analysis showed mixed responses in terms of activity preference and effectiveness on the part of the learners/participants in the study. Concerns remain about the optimal choice of activities, the search for which presents an ongoing goal. The findings suggest that, when designing CLT-based activities, learning about students' needs and preferences in a particular teaching context is crucial for ensuring success in the classroom. It could be concluded that while the current teaching/learning situation mainly fulfils its goals, the research has highlighted some areas for improvement.

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CONTENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AL – The Audiolingual Method

CBI – Content-Based Instruction

CLL – Cooperative Language Learning

CLT – Communicative Language Teaching

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

ELT – English Language Teaching

ESP – English for Specific Purposes

FL – Foreign Language

L1 – First Language

L2– Second Language

TEFL – Teaching English as a Foreign Language

TBL– Task-Based Learning

SL – Second Language

SS – Students/ learners

T – Teacher

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted (Kumaravadivelu, 1993:12; Brown, 1994:77; Hedge, 2000:44; Nunan, 2003:606; Hu, 2004:26; Lightbown and Spada, 2006:38; Richards and Rodgers, 2001:151; Savignon, 2005:635; Richards 2006:2; Brown, 2007:5; Littlewood, 2007:243) that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can be considered the most popular and desirable model of teaching in contemporary foreign language instruction. As foreign language education is expected to meet the growing need for communicative skills, the term 'communicative' can be found in every EFL university syllabus at the educational institution described in this work. Nevertheless, in a highly exam-oriented setting such as this one, it is difficult to ensure communicative lessons on a continuous basis. Furthermore, I became aware of the increasing difficulty which my students exemplified in relation to communicative activities over the course of time. It would be easy to ascribe this decrease in communication to the unfavourable enrolment policy changes six years ago which resulted in very large groups of approximately 90 students. However, considering the more successful students' participation in the previous year, I felt that a thorough investigation should be conducted which was expected to reveal the reasons behind this unfavourable change in communication, and to include both parties in the learning process – my students and myself as their teacher.

This dissertation attempts to explore the communicative activities in a university EFL programme. The main purpose of the study is to examine how the communicative activities used in class are received by the learners, with the final aim of eliminating interaction obstacles in subsequent English language courses. Previous research on the topic was reviewed prior to the current research. It is hoped that this case study will make a new contribution to the field as it combines CLT activities with large university level EFL classes, a combination of factors absent from the previous research.

The dissertation consists of six chapters. Following the introductory chapter, Chapter two outlines the definitions and theories which underlie the CLT approach and its main point – communicative competence, followed by the practical realization of the CLT approach – communicative activities. Chapter three describes the unique educational setting which largely determines the directions and limitations for EFL teaching at university level. Chapter four focuses on the methodology and the instruments used in this work, whereas Chapter five analyses the results obtained after conducting the research, and discusses the findings with general proposals for improving the students' communicative abilities with respect to their learning needs. Finally, Chapter six concludes the dissertation as it assesses the success of the project and offers direction for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW - CLT IN EFL TEACHING

The worldwide appeal of CLT would be difficult to deny (Knight, 2001:155; Richards and Rogers, 2001:151; Bax, 2003:278; Savignon, 2005:635; Richards, 2006:1; Littlewood, 2007:243; Waters, 2012:440). The number of reference books, articles and conference papers on CLT continues to expand, with the purpose of exploring its meaning and use in a variety of settings. Educational authorities around the world strive to modify their national policies to adapt to various modes of CLT (Li, 1998:678; Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999:494; Nunan, 2003:606; Hu, 2004:26; Littlewood, 2007:244; Coskun, 2011:85). Furthermore, it would seem difficult to find a teacher who claims not to teach 'communicatively' to some extent (Nunan, 1988:26). Additionally, it appears that after examining various CLT publications, early and recent alike, three observations can be made regarding this approach. Firstly, the existence of more than one form of CLT makes this approach difficult to specify and a uniform definition of it is absent from relevant literature in the field (Littlewood, 1981:16-22; Howatt, 1984:279; Savignon, 2005:635; Hunter and Smith, 2012:431; Waters, 2012:440). Secondly, CLT seems to have provoked a number of heated debates, with papers in favour of CLT matched with opposing replies (Xiaoju, 1984; Swan, 1985a; Swan, 1985b; Widdowson, 1985; Li, 1998; Gill, 2000; Thornbury, 2000; Bax, 2003a; Bax, 2003b; Harmer, 2003; Sheen, 2004). Conversely, the previous teaching methods have not appeared to lead to such serious discussion and disagreement. Moreover, some authors (Li, 1998; Butler, 2005; Coskun, 2011) question the practicality of CLT in their contexts, based on their empirical studies of its implementation. Finally, the sheer number of published articles, conference papers and books to this day is impressive, and it continues to expand, either dealing with the issues of CLT (Hall, 2012; Hunter and Smith, 2012; Waters, 2012) or some of its advanced forms, such as Task-Based Learning or Task-Based Instruction (Skehan, 2003; Ellis, 2005; Willis and Willis, 2007; Ellis, 2009).

With these premises taken as a starting point in this dissertation, the next section will briefly describe the key elements of CLT based on the references to the relevant literature in the field.

2.1 A brief overview of CLT

CLT has been commonly described as a practical application of *an approach* rather than *a method* of teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:154; Brown, 2007:241). Based on the *approach-method-technique* hierarchy proposed by Anthony (1963:63-67), the term Communicative Approach comprises a 'unified but broadly based theoretical position about the nature of language and of language learning and teaching' (Brown, 2007:241). In other words, the theory underlying CLT is viewed as too wide in scope to suit the description of a teaching method alone, as it specifies the beliefs about language and language learning. As Savignon points out, 'CLT thus can be seen to derive from a multidisciplinary perspective that includes, at least, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and educational research' (Savignon, 1991:652; Savignon, 2005:637).

In keeping with the apparent complexity of the term, the following table presents an overview of CLT definitions adapted from popular sources (Table 2.1). The major principles centred on each definition are rather similar in content as they are concerned with notions such as '*communicative competence*', '*communicative ability*', '*language use*', '*authentic use*', '*interaction*', and '*communicative functions*', to name a few. The content of a particular definition differs in scope and detail rather than in any disagreement or contradiction of the terms used. In addition, these CLT descriptions appear unaffected by the occasional change of particular ELT terms in recent years (Hall, 2012:548; Hunter and Smith, 2012:436-7). Moreover, they contribute to the unifying support for CLT on the part of its proponents quoted below (Table 2.1).

AN OVERVIEW OF CLT DEFINITIONS	
Littlewood (1981:x-xi)	Features of CLT: 1 Communicative ability is the goal of foreign language learning 2 Language is considered in terms of the communicative functions it performs, not only in terms of its structures (grammar and vocabulary) 3 Language learners must develop strategies for relating language structures to their communicative functions in real situations
Nunan (1991:279)	CLT is characterised by: 1 An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the L2 2 The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation 3 The provision of opportunities for learners to focus on the learning process itself 4 Important elements to learning are learners' own personal experiences 5 An attempt to link language learning with language activation outside the classroom
Richards and Rodgers (2001:155)	CLT aims to: 1 Make communicative competence the goal of language teaching, and 2 Develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication
Savignon (2005:639-640) (adapted from Berns, 1990:104)	The core tenets of CLT: 1 Language teaching is based on the view of language as communication 2 Diversity is part of language use with L2 as well as with L1 language learners 3 A learner's competence is considered in relative, not absolute, terms of correctness 4 More than one variety of language is recognized as a model for language learning 5 Culture is seen to play an instrumental role in shaping communicative competence 6 No single methodology or fixed set of techniques is prescribed 7 Language use serves the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual functions and is related to the development of the learner's competence in each 8 Learners must use language for a variety of purposes, in all phases of learning
Brown (2007:241)	A definition of CLT: 1 Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of CC and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence 2 Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes 3 Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques 4 In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts

Table 2.1. CLT Definitions (adapted from Littlewood, 1981:x-xi; Nunan, 1991:279; Richards and Rodgers, 2001:155; Savignon, 2005:630-640; Brown, 2007:241)

Whereas CLT advocates mostly agree on its major principles as Table 2.1 demonstrates, CLT criticism comes in many forms. Some opponents predict its end (Bax, 2003a/2003b), the traditionally-oriented dismiss it entirely (Swan, 1985/2007), followed by the professionals who have called into question the very idea of a teaching method (Pennycook, 1989; Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the widely utilised teacher training resources (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Brown, 2007) present CLT towards the end of their ELT chronology, thus implying

its 'prominence' in the method hierarchy (Hunter and Smith, 2012:430). In other words, as in the account of ELT history (Howatt, 1984), CLT is typically viewed as the way of teaching which 'has superseded Audio-Lingualism' (Knight, 2001:147) along with other preceding methods. For the sake of comparison, the Audiolingual Method and CLT features are contrasted in Table 2.2 below, adapted from Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983:91-93).

Audiolingual Method	Communicative Language Teaching
1. Attends to structure more than form and meaning.	1. Meaning is paramount.
2. Demands memorization of structure-based dialogues.	2. No memorization - if used, dialogues centre around communicative function.
3. Language items are not contextualised.	3. Contextualisation is a basic premise.
4. Language learning is learning structures, or words.	4. Language learning is learning to communicate.
5. Mastery or 'overlearning' is sought.	5. Effective communication is sought.
6. Drilling is a central technique.	6. Drilling may occur, but peripherally.
7. Native-speaker-like pronunciation is sought.	7. Comprehensible pronunciation is sought.
8. Grammatical explanation is avoided.	8. Any device which helps the learners is accepted.
9. Communicative activities only come after a long process of rigid drills and exercises.	9. Attempts to communicate may be encouraged from the very beginning.
10. No use of native language.	10. Judicious use of native language is accepted.
11. Translation is forbidden at early levels.	11. Translation may be used if needed.
12. Reading and writing are deferred till speech is mastered.	12. Reading and writing can start from the first day, if desired.
13. The target linguistic system will be learned through the overt teaching of its patterns.	13. The target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate.
14. Linguistic competence is the desired goal.	14. Communicative competence is the desired goal.
15. Varieties of language are recognized but not emphasized.	15. Linguistic variation is a central concept.
16. The sequence of units is determined solely by principles of linguistic complexity.	16. Sequencing is determined by any consideration of content function, or meaning which has interest.
17. The teacher prevents the learners from doing anything that conflict with the theory.	17. Teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language.
18. 'Language is a habit' so errors are prevented.	18. Language is created through trial and error.
19. Accuracy, in terms of formal correctness, is a primary goal.	19. Fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal: accuracy is judged in context.
20. Students interact with the language system, embodied in machines or controlled materials.	20. Students interact through pair/group work, or in their writings.
21. Teachers specify the language that students use.	21. Teachers cannot know what language will occur.
22. Intrinsic motivation springs from an interest in the structure of the language.	22. Intrinsic motivation springs from an interest in what is being communicated by the language.

Table 2.2. The Audiolingual Method contrasted with Communicative Language Teaching (adapted from Finocchiaro and Brumfit, 1983:91-93)

The contrasted features (Table 2.2) are expected to clarify the differences in classroom practices and the underlying principles of language learning and teaching. In summary, as opposed to AL, CLT sees language as a means of communication with communicative competence as its chief goal, rather than a system of rules to be memorized; authentic communication is achieved through the integration of all language skills, with the focus on fluency and language functions, rather than on language forms. Additionally, all activities are employed with a 'communicative intent' (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:85) where trial and error in learning are expected and tolerated. Moreover, given the type of research in this work, CLT activities and the corresponding authentic materials will be dealt with in section 2.1.2 in greater detail. Nevertheless, in relation to the aim of this work, another CLT feature should be identified here, that is, the change in teacher and learner roles. As opposed to traditional settings, learners are expected to collaborate in CLT activities usually through pair or group work; they interact predominantly with each other and with the learning material in order to sustain the communication process and maximize the negotiation of meaning for each participant. As a result, the new roles of the CLT teacher – 'needs analyst', 'group process manager', 'counsellor' – assume that the traditional authoritarian and teacher-centred teaching practices are incompatible with any strand of this approach (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:167). Teachers are expected to develop materials based on the needs of a particular class. They also act as facilitators of communication and organize effective communicative activities. In addition, CLT classes are seen as 'less predictable' and very demanding for non-native teachers (Knight, 2001:158), which remains both 'a point of concern' and 'a challenge' for those with insufficient training or proficiency (Canale and Swain, 1980:27; Harmer, 2002:86).

It is important to note that there is more than one realisation of CLT, in keeping with the fact that no single CLT model is universally accepted (Brown, 1994:77; Savignon, 2005:635). For the sake of comparison, several CLT variants are presented in Table 2.3 below. Although each type should be examined separately, they exemplify certain similarities as each author recognizes two opposing views proposed in the attempt to further define CLT.

VARIANTS OF CLT		
Ellis (1982)	formal approach	promotes L2 'learning', a conscious process that results from formal study (distinction based on Krashen, 1981)
	informal approach	promotes L2 'acquisition', a natural process that occurs when the learner comes in contact with samples of L2
Howatt (1984)	'weak' approach	attempts to integrate communicative activities into a wider programme of language teaching –'learning to use L2'
	'strong' approach	claims that language is acquired through communication – 'using L2 to learn it'
Richards and Rodgers (2001)	'classical view of CLT'	CLT aims to (a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching, and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication
	'current communicative approaches'	earlier practices – natural approach, cooperative language learning; recent developments – content-based instruction and task-based language teaching
Waters (2012)	'learning to communicate'	equipping learners with a knowledge of form
	'communicating to learn'	providing learners with the ability to communicate

Table 2.3. Variants of CLT (adapted from Ellis, 1982:73; Howatt, 1984:297; Richards and Rodgers, 2001:151-223; Waters, 2012: 440-443)

The variants in Table 2.3 are not the only examples of CLT diversity. Some CLT proponents favour the 'weak' approach (Littlewood, 1981:16-21), emphasizing the importance of structure-oriented and controlled practice prior to communicative language work. In contrast, other practitioners advocate the 'strong' form such as 'Dogma ELT' (Thornbury, 2000:2), that is, 'a materials-light, conversation-driven philosophy of teaching' (Meddings and Thornbury, 2009:103). In between, various degrees of 'strong' practices can be found in Task-Based Learning, Content-Based Instruction, or Cooperative Language Learning, whereas product-oriented teaching processes are used in Text-Based and Competency-Based Approaches (Richards and Schmidt, 2002:90; Richards, 2006:27-45). The co-existence of so many CLT forms corresponds to the fact 'that practitioners from different educational traditions can identify with it, and consequently interpret it in different ways' (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:157). Nevertheless, what all CLT variants have in common is a communicative model of language and language use. With this important CLT feature in mind, the next section will outline communicative competence as the main point of all CLT practices.

2.1.1 Communicative competence

The concept of 'communicative competence' was introduced (Hymes, 1972:281) in order to contrast Chomsky's theory of 'linguistic competence' (1965:3). Since abstract grammatical knowledge described by Chomsky (1965) was viewed as insufficient in the descriptions of language, a new term was proposed and a model of language use in the social context (Table 2.4).

HYMES'S THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE
In order to be communicatively competent, a speaker needs to know the following: 1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally *possible*; 2. Whether (and to what degree) something is *feasible* in virtue of the means of implementation available; 3. Whether (and to what degree) something is *appropriate* (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated; 4. Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually *performed*, and what its doing entails.

Table 2.4 Hymes's theory of communicative competence (adapted from Hymes, 1972:281)

In this theory, social interaction was seen as primary, as opposed to abstract knowledge of grammar. The notion of 'communicative competence' was further discussed and its implications for language teaching analysed by Canale and Swain (1980:29-34, later specified by Canale, 1983:18); they identified grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Table 2.5).

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE			
Grammatical competence	Sociolinguistic competence		Strategic competence
Knowledge of lexical items, and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology	Sociocultural competence	Discourse competence	Verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which may compensate for breakdowns in communication
	Knowledge of the relation of language use to its non-linguistic context	Knowledge of rules governing cohesion and coherence	

Table 2.5 Communicative competence (adapted from Canale and Swain, 1980:29-31 and Canale, 1983:18)

The four components of communicative competence demonstrate the knowledge of forms, use and appropriateness to the context, as well as the knowledge of cohesion and coherence along with communication strategies that can compensate for potential problems. Although developments of this model have been proposed (Bachman, 1990:85; Hedge, 2000:56), its original form was significant in determining the base of the CLT language theory (Savignon, 2005:637) and the types of corresponding classroom activities that will be described in the next section.

2.1.2 Communicative activities

Since the construct of communicative competence is viewed as the ultimate goal in CLT, then communicative practice realised through communicative classroom activities is expected to have an important role in the entire process. However, the conditions and the timing of their use have been a matter of disagreement. For instance, Littlewood (1981:86) proposes 'pre-communicative activities' (structural and quasi-communicative activities) as a precondition to true 'communicative activities' (functional and social interaction activities). Similarly, Richards distinguishes between 'mechanical', 'meaningful' and 'communicative practice' (2006:16). In contrast, Savignon, (1983:24) suggests ensuring opportunities for communicative practice from the beginning of instruction, regardless of 'structural controls' of grammar or vocabulary. The choice of the CLT version ('weak' vs. 'strong') appears to underlie the difference in the attitude to communicative activities. Furthermore, Hedge (2000:57) and Richards (2006:15) quote a set of criteria proposed by Brumfit (1984:69) which underlie his 'fluency activities' aimed at successful classroom communication (Table 2.6).

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FLUENCY ACTIVITIES PROPOSED BY BRUMFIT
• The language focus should be on the meaning, not on the form.
• There must be a negotiation of meaning between the speakers.
• The content should be determined by the learner who is speaking or writing (the learner's ideas, opinions, and information).
• What a learner hears should not be predictable, that is, there should be an information or opinion gap.
• The skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing will be dealt with simultaneously from the beginning.
• Teacher intervention to correct should be minimal as this distracts from the message.

Table 2.6 Fluency activities adapted from Brumfit, 1984:69

According to Brumfit (1984:69), fluency activities ensure language interaction similar to 'competent performers' in L2, as opposed to accuracy work – dealing with language forms. In addition, 'the unpredictability of normal discourse' (Hedge, 2000:58) and the negotiation of meaning in the classroom is obtained by the following activity types – information-gap, reasoning-gap, and opinion-gap (Prabhu, 1987:46-47). The description of this typology is provided in Table 2.7.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY TYPOLOGIES PROPOSED BY PRABHU
1) Information-gap activity, which involves a transfer of the given information from one person to another.
2) Reasoning-gap activity, which involves deriving some new information from the given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns.
3) Opinion-gap activity, which involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation.

Table 2.7 Three principal activity typologies adapted from Prabhu, 1987:46-7

The activity typology is in keeping with the features of successful communication identified by Johnson and Morrow – information, choice and feedback – which ensure practice 'as close as possible to...normal communication' (1981:77). Nevertheless, given

the variety of existing CLT models, it is hardly surprising that their practical realisations differ depending on the educational source in question. For instance, various sets of communicative activities can be found in EFL methodology literature (Nunan, 1989; Brown, 1994; Hedge, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Harmer, 2002; Richards, 2006).

TYPOLOGIES OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES					
author	Nunan, 1989	Brown (based on Crookes & Chaudron), 1994	Hedge, 2000	Larsen-Freeman, 2000	Harmer, 2002	Richards, 2006
level	intermediate to advanced	unspecified	low-intermediate to advanced	high-intermediate	unspecified	unspecified
a c t i v i t i e s	•Work in groups to solve problems •Give opinions about specific issues •Describe complex processes •Scan a text for the given key words •Read a text and give the main points •Find logical relationships marked by conjunctions in texts •Free writing •Give an unprepared presentation (familiar topic)	•Role play •Drama •Simulation • Language games •Problem solving •Discussion •Interview •Composition •Report (project work) • Propos (conversation or speech on general real-life topic)	•Project work •Jigsaw activities (reading and writing) •Problem solving •Language games •Ranking-presenting a list of criteria •Discussions-presenting various opinions •Using authentic materials (listening and reading)	•Authentic materials (newspaper articles, radio/TV broadcast) •Role play • Language game •Scrambled sentences of a text • Picture-strip stories (or other problem solving tasks	•Communication games and puzzles •Role play •Problem solving •Simulation •Information-gap activities •Writing a story together •Discussion •Finding similarities/ differences •Ordering and ranking •Jigsaw reading •Predicting and guessing	•Role play •Discussion •Jigsaw activity •Information-gathering •Information-gap activity •Information-transfer •Task-completion (game, problem-solving, puzzle) •Reasoning-gap (obtain information through inference) •Opinion-sharing (ranking, comparison) •Using authentic materials

Table 2.8 Typologies of communicative activities (adapted from Nunan, 1989:199-201; Brown, 1994:143; Hedge, 2000:43-69; Larsen-Freeman, 2000:121-136; Harmer, 2002:85-271; Richards, 2006:14-20)

The underlined items in Table 2.8 demonstrate similarities among typologies throughout the given overview, whereas the presented examples are by no means the only CLT realisations in classroom use. Furthermore, the list of communicative activities appears to be the subject of debate and highly context-specific. For instance, Savignon rejects the idea of a 'fixed' list of communicative activities although she discusses several techniques (language games, simulations, role plays) in particular classroom investigations (1991:265). Additionally, whereas Canale and Swain (1980:36) propose 'development of classroom activities that encourage meaningful communication' in L2 as an important direction for future research, Richards (2006:14) states that the 'quest has continued to the present', and points out the need for the kind of classroom work that will ensure a balance of fluency and accuracy. Moreover, defining the scope and the characteristics of communicative activities that exemplify the principles of CLT methodology remains an ongoing goal for researchers, 'material writers', and 'practicing teachers' (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:172).

After examining the types and features of communicative activities, the next section will outline current research on the topic of this work with respect to the given parameters of university level EFL, large heterogeneous classes and CLT activities.

2.2 CLT, large classes and the University context

Recent research literature on language teaching contains much information on CLT (in section 2.1). However, the combination of factors in this work – CLT activities, large heterogeneous university level EFL classes – appears infrequent in the current articles, which can be seen in a selective review of the available data. For instance, the common topics include the outcome of CLT implementation in context (Valdez and Jhones, 1991; Nunan, 2003; Harmer, 2003; Hu, 2004; Littlewood, 2007), teachers' attitudes, beliefs, perceptions or misconceptions in introducing CLT (Thompson, 1996; Li, 1998; Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999; Li, 2001; Butler, 2005; Hawkey, 2006; Hiep, 2007; Coskun, 2011),

investigations and reports of classroom silence (Lee and Ng, 2010; Harumi, 2011), the management of learning and learning materials in CLT classrooms (Kumaravadivelu, 1993; Sheen, 2004; Waters, 2012) or a general CLT theme overview (Liao, 2004; Hiep, 2007; Griffits, 2011; Hunter and Smith, 2012).

Activities in CLT articles occur rather frequently, dealing with 'classical' kinds or task-types alike (Ellis, 1998; Nunan, 1991; Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Butler, 2005; Ellis, 2009), but when combined with university settings, the topics decrease in number, ranging from the adaptation of cooperative learning (Ning, 2010), the use of traditional activities in communicative classrooms and the examination of traditional/communicative dichotomy (Kim, 2010; Griffits, 2011) to the survey of CLT application for contextualized language practice in college-level French textbooks (Waltz, 1989).

Working with large groups occurs in current research articles related to teacher training for this purpose (Hayes, 1997), emotional aspects of teaching (Hogan and Kwiatkowski, 1998), adapting techniques for large classes (Sarwar, 2001) and the theory underlying the teaching of English to large groups with reference to a large-scale research project (Norton and LoCastro, 2001).

Apart from the previous articles where university classes present a research setting for general EFL topics (Hogan and Kwiatkowski, 1998; Kim, 2010; Griffiths, 2011), Coleman (1987) discusses the experiment related to changing the behaviour of teachers and learners aimed at university EFL classrooms in particular, whereas the experiment discussed by Armanet and Obese-jecty (1981) aims to modify the traditional pedagogical practice through the use of collaborative projects at university level. Similarly, the issue of learner reticence is discussed in relation to collaborative planning and mutual learner-teacher interaction (Xie, 2010; Zhang and Head, 2010). Furthermore, Harmer (2003), Gupta, (2004) Le Ha (2004), Liao (2004) and Hiep (2005; 2007) provide points and

counterpoints for a culture-specific CLT perspective challenging the existing stereotypes in L2 learning and teaching.

Although these studies discuss many of the principal EFL issues, the majority focuses on one or two of the four factors in this study – university level, heterogeneous groups, large classes, and CLT activities. In addition, the contexts described include Chinese, Indonesian, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Pakistani, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Australian, Canadian, Cuban, USA, and Turkish EFL/ESL classrooms, while both the area in this case study and south-eastern Europe which surrounds it appear scarce in the past and present research.

After the examination of current research literature pertaining to the topic of this study, the next section will present the details of the educational setting in relation to the type and purpose of this work as well as the conditions for EFL teaching determined by this institution.

CHAPTER 3

EFL TEACHING AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL: A CASE STUDY

The characteristics and requirements of the academic institution where I teach, a college in Southern Serbia, have a strong influence on English language learners and teachers alike. This brief overview of the relevant conditions and constraints in relation to foreign language teaching aims to describe the teaching situation which prompted the investigation and analysis in this work. As the educational setting is somewhat unique, it would be very difficult to present the case investigated without explaining how this institution determines general teaching options.

3.1 The decision-making processes in relation to teaching

The college described in this paper consists of eleven departments; four departments deal with language learning whereas seven provide instruction in social sciences. All department programmes include foreign language courses (FL), but their level and length are determined by the faculty, that is, the respective department staff and general university guidelines.

According to the conditions prescribed by the Ministry of Education, students' secondary school FL course determines the language option at college. In other words, students who have previously attended EFL courses must continue this program at college, without the possibility of taking a different language course. Additionally, the college in question allows no beginner foreign language courses, as doing so would contradict the University policy on its role in the overall educational system.

3.2 Students

The students attending English language courses are non-native speakers of English with four to eight years of previous language study. Although their entry is decided by the institution's own department-specific entrance examination, their FL proficiency is not considered in the enrolment process. Moreover, there are no placement tests, as each department has a single FL course level: intermediate for seven and upper-intermediate for four departments. As a result, many students have difficulties in following the language course due to their insufficient prior knowledge. Judging from their course evaluation responses, they are also reluctant to participate freely in any form of communication in class. These limitations may also account for instances when students cannot pass the FL exam despite the fact that they are highly successful in other department-specific subjects. Finally, as far as the number of students is concerned, the group I will focus on in this study, first year Psychology majors, consists of approximately 90 learners, aged 18 to 22. In practice, the actual number might range from 90 to 105, as older students are also expected to attend lessons until they pass the final EFL examination.

3.3 Teachers

The college has its own EFL teaching staff, but space constraints prevent the potential collaboration of English teachers or pooling of resources. The EFL courses are frequently taught by the majority of English teachers in rotation. In addition, it is not uncommon for a language teacher to be reassigned in the middle of the year to a different department. In order to minimize the potential problems during such changes, the same commercially produced course books (Soars and Soars, 1997) approved by the Ministry of Education are used by every department for all language work except for instances when the ESP component is included.

3.4 EFL Courses

The EFL courses were designed by senior teaching staff and approved by the accreditation process at national level. As a result, they are not prone to change before the forthcoming college licence revision. The EFL course structure comprises a general EFL overview in the first semester aimed at consolidation, where prescribed textbooks are used. ESP for respective departments is partly the focus of instruction in the second semester; the course books from the previous semester are used for the grammar component, whereas the ESP materials are produced by the teaching staff and are based on subject-specific books and journals. As far as the time available is concerned, FL instruction involves classes taught in two 90-minute sessions per week for a period of 30 weeks in the academic year. The lessons are conducted in two different formats. The first session in the week, labelled as a 'lecture', covers grammar and vocabulary work, aimed at helping with final exam preparation. The second session type, labelled 'practice', usually deals with multiple contents, from the remainder of the exam preparation to speaking and the appointed reading materials.

Finally, all foreign language courses end with a final examination which is taken in two parts, given on different days. There is a structured grammar test first and the subsequent oral examination is conditioned to a passing mark in the grammar test. In other words, students who fail the grammar test are not allowed to take the oral part. This condition accounts for the detailed grammar practice in all English language courses, according to the pre-determined syllabus, in order to maximize student passes each year.

3.5 Stating the problem – formulating research questions

Although there are no formal meetings to discuss the outcomes of FL courses, various sources (class notes, end-of-term course evaluation, staff discussions, and examination results) usually

provide the starting point for a variety of issues related to teaching and learning in this setting. This case study was planned as an attempt to investigate the question which appeared the most prominent after the first semester of 2011/2012:

Which communicative activities should be used with my first-year EFL university students in order to make lessons more communicative?

In order to answer this question as the basis for this research, the following had to be investigated:

a) What are the language learning preferences of my learners?
b) Which communicative activities were used in lessons, and how were they received by the learners?
c) What is the learners' perception of the communicative activities?

In keeping with these issues, or sub-questions, the research within this dissertation is, in part, based on the data provided by myself as the teacher and collected during the regular classroom activities in the second semester of 2012; the remainder of the data was obtained in co-operation with the students in question, in the attempt to compare and contrast the two perspectives involved. Overall, this research was aimed at strengthening or weakening my view that appropriate CLT classroom activities in a university level EFL course can advance communicative development.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research questions and methodology

The research underlying this work aims to answer the following main research question:

Which communicative activities should be used with my first-year EFL university students in order to make lessons more communicative?

In order to ensure a thorough investigation, the main research question has been divided further (in Chapter 3):

a) What are the language learning preferences of my learners?
b) Which communicative activities have been used in lessons, and how have they been received by the learners?
c) What is the learners' perception of the communicative activities?

Since the approach adopted and the methods of data collection 'will depend on the nature of the inquiry and the type of the information required' (Bell, 2005:8), this investigation has attempted a 'mixed methods research' approach, that is, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007:42). Whereas the quantitative component is supplied by the initial online-based questionnaire on learning preferences, the qualitative part comprises my post-lesson notes and an open-ended course evaluation by students, in keeping with 'the pragmatic position underlying mixed methods research' (Dörnyei, 2007:30). Since these data sources are supplied by different parties – my students/participants and myself, an attempt has been made to ensure 'triangulation' (McDonough and McDonough, 1997:51), that is, to

examine the same issue 'from different perspectives and thus to be able to confirm or challenge the findings of one method with those of another' (Bell, 2005:116). Additionally, the rationale behind the approach and method choice is in keeping with the common practice regarding the combination of numerical and narrative techniques in ELT 'case studies' (McDonough and McDonough, 1997:208). As Dörnyei points out, 'case study methodology has been suitable to be utilized in relation to diverse contexts and topics' (2007:155). Therefore, such methodology is expected to provide a detailed description of a teaching/learning issue within my own teaching context.

4.2 Participants

The participants in this research are my first-year Psychology majors at the institution where I work. They are a mixed group of male and female non-native English speakers, aged 18 to 22, who come from a variety of backgrounds and share the same L1. Prior to attending their compulsory English classes at the College, they had, on average, 6 years of English language study. Out of approximately 100 participants, a large majority had neither travelled abroad nor had much experience using English in everyday contexts. Finally, the rationale behind participant selection goes beyond 'convenience or opportunity sampling' (Dörnyei, 2007:98), that is, the accessibility of subjects. On the contrary, the participants were selected purposefully for this research since it was designed for this particular group. Moreover, as explained in the general research instruction, this empirical investigation is expected to benefit and thus motivate the participants as its purpose is to improve their success in the course and ultimately 'ensure more effective teaching' (Bell, 2005:28).

4.3 Data collection

The investigation has applied a 'multimethod' approach, that is, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research of a 'small-scale' (McDonough and McDonough, 1997:220) using

'primary', or original data sources (Brown, 2001:1). Therefore, the instruments used in the research include an online questionnaire on learning preferences, post-lesson notes, and open-ended course evaluation (in Appendix). Additional instruments were considered, such as class recordings, observation, and investigating other teachers' experiences. However, they were not feasible in this context at the time of research. Moreover, it is not uncommon for sampling issues to be often determined by 'practical criteria', such as the willingness to participate in investigation, or access to certain procedures (Dörnyei, 2007:99). Finally, a diary or log has been kept throughout the research process, aimed at 'tracking progress', recording everything from ideas, reminders or experienced difficulties and potential solutions (Bell, 2005:180).

4.3.1 Online questionnaire on learning preferences

The 30-question questionnaire on learning preferences designed by Willing (1988:106-107) has been widely used in ELT literature (Nunan, 1988:91-96; Richards and Lockhart, 1996:60-62; Brown, 2001:297-298; Harmer, 2002:43). The reasons for using an established questionnaire in this research are twofold. Firstly, the content appeared suitable for obtaining a detailed insight into students' language learning preferences, considering that my usual needs-analysis questionnaire was insufficient in anticipating the teaching issue examined in this work. Secondly, borrowing a recognized questionnaire seems justified when starting a first-time multimethod research project (Dörnyei, 2003:52).

The questionnaire was translated to students' L1 to maximize their responses. Two questions were modified minimally to ensure applicability. Prior to administration, it was piloted with a similar learning group and amended for clarity of instructions. Furthermore, the questionnaire was anonymised to ensure a high return rate and accurate responses (Dörnyei, 2007:115), and administered using a well-established online resource (www.surveymonkey.com) over a period of one month (June 2012). Out of approximately 100 students, 86 completed the questionnaire. The responses were further utilized for constructing the next research stage – the open-ended course evaluation.

4.3.2 Post-lesson notes

My post-lesson notes were made after 12 consecutive 90-minute weekly sessions (February – May 2012). They are an attempt to record the outcome of communicative activities as closely as possible, and to reflect on the findings for future work. Although not as detailed as teaching diary entries, the notes serve as an immediate 'lesson report', describing the main features of the lesson, namely the communicative activities that comprise the basis of this research (Richards and Lockhart, 1996:9). The notes were taken in L1, and subsequently typed and translated into English. Additionally, these notes were used as a basis for constructing the open-ended evaluation.

4.3.3 Open-ended course evaluation

This evaluation was conducted at the end of the course with 22 participants from the group involved in the preferences questionnaire. To ensure successful cooperation, questions were shown in advance and only students who agreed to participate took part. An attempt was made to include students with various prior course results – approximately 4 or 5 students with the same average mark – in order to sustain the representative character of the sample (Dörnyei, 2007:101). The evaluation included 7 items: 6 open-ended questions and 1 student-generated list of suggestions for new activities. It was done in L1, and then translated into English by a colleague to ensure objectivity, as a form of 'peer checking' (Dörnyei, 2007:61). Additionally, the translation was not edited to sustain objectivity.

Having described the research instruments, I will present the obtained results along with the analysis and discussion in the next section.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The following chapter deals with reporting the results obtained after conducting the research using all three instruments. In addition, this report will be followed by the analysis of the results as well as the discussion of all relevant data.

5.1 Presentation and discussion of the online questionnaire scores

The questionnaire on learning preferences (Willing, 1988:106-107) was translated into L1, anonymised and administered using an online resource (www.surveymonkey.com) over a period of one month, June 2012 (in Appendix 1). Students were asked to indicate their preferences on a 4-point scale. Out of approximately 100 students, 86 completed the questionnaire. An overview of preferences is provided in Table 5.1, whereas the complete survey summary can be found in Appendix 2. Considering that this research was designed as a small-scale case study with the online questionnaire providing basic information prior to the qualitative components, the online results were presented by means of 'simple arithmetical procedures', namely percentages and averages (Bell, 2005:201-215). Additionally, the number of participants is included, given that 'in small studies, it is dangerous to use percentages without the associated numbers' since they can 'give the impression that the sample is bigger than it is' (Bell, 2005:221).

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS ON LEARNING PREFERENCES (Willing, 1988:106-107)		
Question	**Reply**	**%/Subjects**
1. In English class, I like to learn by reading.	Good	50.0% (43)
2. In class, I like to listen and use cassettes/CDs.	A little	50.6% (43)
3. In class, I like to learn by games.	Good	38.4% (33)
4 In class, I like to learn by conversations.	Best	47.7% (41)
5. In class, I like to learn by pictures/film/video.	Best	41.7% (35)
6. I want to write everything in my notebook.	Good	37.2% (32)
7. I like to have my own textbook.	Best	65.1% (54)
8. I like the teacher to explain everything to us.	Best	68.7% (57)
9. I like the teacher to give us problems to work on.	Good	42.2% (35)
10. I like the teacher to help me talk about my interests.	Best	53.7% (44)
11. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.	Best	69.9% (58)
12. I like the teacher to let me find my mistakes.	A little	39.0% (32)
13. I like to study English by myself (alone).	Good	42.0% (34)
14. I like to learn English by talking in pairs.	Good	39.5% (32)
15. I like to learn English in a small group.	Good	38.5% (30)
16. I like to learn English with the whole class.	A little	51.9% (42)
17. I like to go out (with the class) and practise English.	A little	28.4% (23)
18. I like to study grammar.	A little	42.0% (34)
19. I like to learn many new words.	Best	65.4% (53)
20. I like to practise the sounds and pronunciation.	Best	58.0% (47)
21. I like to learn English words by <u>seeing</u> them.	Best	49.4% (40)
22. I like to learn English words by <u>hearing</u> them.	Best	57.5% (46)
23. I like to learn English words by <u>doing</u> something.	Good	43.2% (35)
24. At home, I like to learn by reading newspapers in English.	A little	41.3% (33)
25. At home, I like to learn by watching TV in English.	Best	65.4% (53)
26. At home, I like to learn English by using CDs.	No	54.3% (44)
27. At home, I like to learn by studying English books.	A little	49.4% (40)
28. I like to learn by talking to friends in English.	Best	37.5% (30)
29. I like to learn English by watching, listening to other people.	Best	38.3% (31)
30. I like to learn by using English in communication (email, Skype).	A little	42.5% (34)

Table 5.1. Learning preferences results

Before dealing with the obtained results, the survey content should be re-examined briefly. As explained in Chapter 4, the objective of this questionnaire was to establish general EFL learning preferences of the investigated group. One of the factors underlying learner belief can be found in differences in learning styles, which have been described as specific cognitive performances that 'serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment' (Keefe, 1979, cited in Willing, 1988:40). In other

words, different learning styles frequently coincide with the differences that people exemplify in learning contexts. Richards and Lockhart (1996:60) cite Knowles (1982) who proposes four types of learning styles:

LEARNING STYLES AND SURVEY QUESTIONS	
Concrete learning style	Learners use active and direct means of processing information. They are spontaneous, curious and interested in information that has immediate value. They prefer variety in learning. They work with verbal and visual material. *Typical questions*: 2. In class, I like to listen and use cassettes/CDs. 3. In class, I like to learn by games. 5. In class, I like to learn by pictures/film/video. 14. I like to learn English by talking in pairs.
Analytical learning style	Learners enjoy independent work, problem-solving and prefer a systematic presentation of new learning material. They are serious and vulnerable to failure. *Typical questions*: 9. I like the teacher to give us problems to work on. 12. I like the teacher to let me find my mistakes. 18. I like to study grammar. 27. At home, I like to learn by studying English books.
Communicative learning style	Learners prefer a social approach to learning. They require personal feedback and interaction, and learn well from discussions and group activities. They thrive in a democratically run class. *Typical questions*: 4. In class, I like to learn by conversations. 25. At home, I like to learn by watching TV in English. 28. I like to learn by talking to friends in English. 29. I like to learn English by watching, listening to other people.
Authority-oriented learning style	Learners are said to be responsible and dependable. They need structure and sequential progression. They relate well to a traditional classroom. They prefer the teacher as an authority figure. They like to have clear instructions and feel uncomfortable with consensus-building discussions. *Typical questions*: 6. I want to write everything in my notebook. 7. I like to have my own textbook. 8. I like the teacher to explain everything to us. 11. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.

Table 5.2. Learning styles (adapted from Richards and Lockhart, 1996:60)

This questionnaire aimed to determine how various styles contribute to learners' preferences in six distinctive areas: class activities, teacher behaviour, classroom grouping, aspects of language, sensory options, and learning outside the classroom (Nunan, 1988:91). According to the obtained results, the ten most frequent preferences were as follows:

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ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS: THE TEN MOST FREQUENT LEARNING PREFERENCES (Willing, 1988:106-107)				
N.	**Learning style**	**Question**	**Reply**	**%/Subjects**
1	Authority-oriented	11. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.	Best	69.9% (58)
2	Authority-oriented	8. I like the teacher to explain everything to us.	Best	68.7% (57)
3	Authority-oriented	19. I like to learn many new words.	Best	65.4% (53)
4	Communicative	25. At home, I like to learn by watching TV in English	Best	65.4% (53)
5	Authority-oriented	7. I like to have my own textbook.	Best	65.1% (54)
6	Concrete	20. I like to practise the sounds and pronunciation.	Best	58.0% (47)
7	Communicative	22. I like to learn English words by hearing them.	Best	57.5% (46)
8	Concrete	26. At home, I like to learn English by using CDs.	No	54.3% (44)
9	Authority-oriented	10. I like the teacher to help me talk about my interests.	Best	53.7% (44)
10	Communicative	16. I like to learn English with the whole class.	A little	51.9% (42)

Table 5.3. The most frequent preferences

As the results demonstrate, the prevailing preference reflects the authority-oriented learning type. This was consistent with my pre-investigation impression of the group following numerous occurrences in the classroom (the reluctance to participate in discussions or negotiate topics, the avoidance of self-discovery of errors, and the insistence on explicit grammar explanation) which appeared to match authority-oriented learners. Moreover, additional types occurred in the first ten preferences – 3 communicative styles and 2 opposing views of the concrete style (one in favour of it and one against it). However, these questions mainly dealt with outside-the-class activities (watching TV, practising pronunciation at home) which did not address this classroom issue.

The results appear less uniform in the ten least frequent preferences (in Table 5.4) but consistent with the most frequent choices:

	ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS: THE TEN LEAST FREQUENT LEARNING PREFERENCES (Willing, 1988:106-107)			
N.	**Learning style**	**Question**	**Reply**	**%/Subjects**
1	Analytic	13. I like to study English by myself (alone).	Good	42.0% (34)
2	Analytic	24. At home, I like to read newspapers in English.	A little	41.3% (33)
3	Concrete	14. I like to learn English by talking in pairs.	Good	39.5% (33)
4	Analytic	12. I like the teacher to let me find my mistakes.	A little	39.0% (32)
5	Communicative	15. I like to learn English in a small group.	Good	38.5% (30)
6	Concrete	3. In class, I like to learn by games.	Good	38.4% (33)
7	Communicative	29. I like to learn by watching, listening to other people.	Best	38.3% (31)
8	Communicative	28. I like to learn by talking to friends in English.	Best	37.5% (30)
9	Authority-oriented	6. I want to write everything in my notebook.	Good	37.2% (32)
10	Concrete	17. I like to go out with the class and practise English.	A little	28.4% (23)

Table 5.4. The least frequent preferences

A variety of styles with only one authority-oriented option occurred (Table 5.4), which was consistent with the previous results. The fact that 3 communicative and 3 concrete options, which share several traits, appear in the least favourable preferences coincides with the results in the ten most popular options and observances during regular classroom activities. What seemed inconclusive at this point was the significant presence of communicative and concrete styles both in the least and the most popular preferences. Additionally, certain types of work related to similar pronunciation practice occur both as favourable and as unfavourable concrete styles (Table 5.3). Therefore, it appeared that my students equally favoured and opposed such types of work. This contradiction in students' preferences may be accounted for by their prior EFL learning. In the examination-oriented primary/secondary programmes, as explained in Chapter 3, traditional L2 teaching prevailed and students had little experience in using English actively in class. Additionally, their reluctance to participate, as shown by both authority-oriented and non-communicative choices, may indicate insecurity or unwillingness to take risks. Nevertheless, their earlier passive role was contrasted with the desire to participate actively, exemplified in 5 out of 10 of the most popular preferences.

After examining the survey results, additional investigation into classroom work appeared necessary to obtain further information. The next investigation stage included examining my own post-lesson notes on the classroom activities.

5.2 Presentation and discussion of the post-lesson notes

The post-lesson notes seemed appropriate for 'providing direct information about language, language learning, or language learning situations' (Brown, 2001:4). They described the reception of communicative activities between February and May 2012. They were originally written in L1 but subsequently translated into English for this study. While certainly not extensive, they provided an immediate indication of what went on in the classroom as an informal 'lesson report' (Richards and Lockhart, 1996:9). The writing was done during or after the lessons and these observations aimed to provide accurate information about the outcome rather than to ensure efficiency by suggesting improvement. To put it differently, the post-lesson notes were not intended originally for research. Nevertheless, they could be viewed as a form of 'primary research' source (Brown, 2001:1) that is closely connected to all primary sources in this research, qualitative and quantitative alike.

The hand-written notes were typed and a content sample included in Appendix 6. After consideration, 9 activities with corresponding post-lesson notes were included in this discussion due to space constraints, namely the activities appearing in the open-ended evaluation. To make the analysis easier to follow, three activities were included by the names used in students' responses; they were presented in inverted commas in Table 5.5. The presentation of the notes comprised a sketch of each activity followed by the original notes for clarity (Table 5.5).

COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES AND POST-LESSON NOTES		
	Content and context	**Post-lesson notes**
Role play	Students prepared/wrote dialogues in pairs based on the topic of birthdays, rehearsed together, and then tried them out in front of the class.	Did not work at all as planned. Students didn't want to act out, just read out using their notes. Too shy or insecure about their abilities? Insufficient preparation time? Still, some of them tried to get a little humour in the dialogue (a silly present, an outrageous party).
Games	The game ('Chinese whisper'): SS whispered the assigned phrase one by one until the last one repeated it out loud. The phrase changed considerably by the end.	SS liked this, even the quiet ones joined in (DG, MM, JP...). And we proved the psych. text facts by playing – all true about our memory! The end phrase was hilarious. Lots of laughs at the end.
Discussions (common topics)	Students prepare in groups and then present their views on an everyday topic such as the best ways for exam/test preparation.	Trying to have students using their English AND getting some information from their friends on study skills (what works best for them), helping each other study? Some sort of 'loop input' here? Students were a little confused at first, as if expecting the topic to backfire, or to be used against them (still working towards SS-T trust), then slowly warming up to the discussion, even getting a bit noisy at the end.
Discussions (psychology)	Students prepare in teams and then discuss the topic of school violence using different viewpoints (classmate, school psychologist, and teacher).	This one started OK but then... too much silence between groups, not all SS involved equally. They complained there they all had very similar ideas... the topic also brought back some painful memories for V. Should've thought of that before class! She was very brave to volunteer to speak of it.
Comparing and ranking	Pairs order/rank items in the discipline manual, from the most favourable to the least popular and provide support for the choices.	Was all this too demanding for SS? Or perhaps, my instructions not clear enough? This was a new type for them. At first they liked it, had some nice comments. All finished the notes but then had very little to say/explain in the end.
Gathering information	Students compare two short texts on the same topic in small groups, extract information and make lists of similar and different points.	They liked the first 'Eccentricity' text so I expected this to work. The vocabulary was settled before this, they seemed clear on the task. It's so frustrating when things start OK and then just... Was it intimidating to write/hand in later – this was NOT a test!
'Positive/ negative examples'	Students talk about friendship, share opinions and point out positive/negative examples of their choice (first in groups, then whole class).	Only a very small number of students took part, the usual few (M, D, J, K...). Why? This was the topic they chose earlier, so it must be about how I did it with them? Expected to be simple/motivating enough, turned out – not successful...
'Guessing (objects)'	Students take turns guessing hidden objects (from the box) related to the vocabulary, and then ask other groups to guess.	Several students came up after class (together!) to ask for more activities like this one, if possible. They said they enjoyed it more than anything so far.
'Using one's own ideas in class'	Groups compose short stories using different objects per group as clues.	It seems that SS enjoyed the activity. They were active – almost all of them. One group didn't like the set of objects they got for the activity, but still managed to complete the writing.

Table 5.5. Post-lesson notes on activities

According to the presented results (Table 5.5), the success and the engagement in the activities of my learners varied throughout the course. My post-lesson notes recorded both successful and unfavourable learning situations including the activities that fall between these categories. Additionally, three instances showed success in the beginning that faded toward the end of the activity, whereas one observation dealt with the opposite situation. Nevertheless, it was surprising to revisit and examine these notes in the light of the initial research, that is, in comparison with the online preference results. Namely, there was a marked discrepancy between unfavourable in-class outcome in two activities (Discussion/psychology, Comparing/ranking) and their high rating in the preference results. Similarly, a significant preference for role play in the online survey was contrasted with the avoidance to fully participate in this activity according to the post-lesson notes. It appeared that learning situations which included both spoken responses and written processing of new data in groups posed problems. Therefore, this observation would be difficult to ascribe to students' diffidence to speak to the group and insufficient prior knowledge alone, although their influence was difficult to deny. According to my post-lesson notes, although favoured by my students in the previous survey, these activities appeared to be the type of in-class work where their participation seemed hindered. This was a point requiring further investigation since numerous linguistic, contextual and personality factors could relate to 'willingness to communicate' (Dörnyei, 2005:207).

In contrast with the previous discrepancies, the results of three observations were consistent with the online preferences survey. Games and discussions on common topics rated positively in the online questionnaire, which matched their outcomes in the classroom despite the problematic beginning of the latter activity. However, 'gathering information' using written sources was seen as unfavourable in the survey and its in-class result matched that rating. This example showed consistency with the survey scores in a case that was not immediately perceived as either positive or negative.

Finally, contrary to my earlier impression, the overall results were not entirely negative (positive/negative ratio was 4:5). This strengthened my belief in the importance of classroom

investigation which included recording observations. Table 5.6 sums up all the outcomes according to their perceived success level, with the earlier learning preference percentages added for comparison where applicable:

Post-lesson notes and an overview of activity outcomes			
Positive (3)	**Positive start/Negative finish (3)**	**Negative start/Positive finish (1)**	**Negative (2)**
Games (**50.0%**) 'Guessing (objects)' 'Using one's own ideas in class'	Discussions (psychology) (**90.9%**) Gathering information (**45.5%**) Comparing and ranking (**81.8%**)	Discussions (common topics) (**86.4%**)	Role play (**50.0%**) 'Positive/negative examples'
Observed reasons: 1. 'They said they enjoyed it'. 2. 'It seems that SS enjoyed the activity. They were active...' 3. '...even the quiet ones joined in...'	*Observed reasons*: 1. '[There was]...too much silence...' 2. 'Was it intimidating to write?' 3 'Was all this too demanding for SS?'	*Observed reasons*: 1. '[They were]...slowly warming up to the discussion...'	*Observed reasons*: 1. '...a very small number of students took part.' 2. '... [the reason]...how I did it..?'

Table 5.6. Post-lesson notes: outcomes of the activities

As these post-lesson notes dealt with the outcomes and subjective observations, they appeared insufficient to complete the evaluation of my classroom activities. Further investigation seemed appropriate at this stage; extensive additional information was obtained by means of an open-ended survey.

5.3 Presentation and discussion of the open-ended course evaluation

This evaluation was conducted at the end of the course with 22 students from the investigated group previously involved in the online survey. To obtain the representative character of the sample, students with various course results were included (4 or 5 students with the same average mark). The evaluation included 6 open-ended questions and one student-generated

list of suggestions for communicative activities. It was done in L1, translated by a colleague and not edited, so as to sustain objectivity (in Appendix 4).

According to common practice, all responses have been typed out, colour-coded for clarity and printed on separate sheets to allow for the search for 'recurring themes' (Bell, 2005:226). To do so, 'thick description' was necessary with sufficient detail using 'the descriptive language the respondents themselves use' (Brown, 2001:241). In other words, original responses were quoted to illustrate salient points in the analysis. Although anticipated in informal discussions with students, preconceived categories were not used for objectivity. Common themes were expected to occur during a non-linear or 'iterative' and inductive re-reading of responses as the data was expected to guide the analysis (Dörnyei, 2007:242-3). Additionally, coding categories were reviewed by a colleague to reduce bias. Furthermore, similar or related categories were grouped 'under a broader label' and the possibility to form such theme clusters could be viewed 'as a sign of the validity of the code' (Dörnyei, 2007:252).

Table 5.7 presents an overview of recurring themes in the open-ended survey:

RECURRING THEMES IN THE OPEN-ENDED SURVEY					
	Learning opportunities	Interest and motivation	Students	Teaching	Learning obstacles
Positive response type	21	13	25	8	5
Negative response type	15	13	11	12	36
Total	36	26	36	20	41

Table 5.7. Recurring themes in the open-ended survey

After multiple turns of data examination, these themes emerged as the most prominent as well as most general, although minor categories were subsumed in the description. They will be examined together in the next sections along with corresponding data samples.

5.3.1 Learning opportunities

Learning opportunities in this description encompass creating favourable 'learning conditions' (Kumaravadivelu, 1993:13). The majority of responses grouped in this theme dealt with the subcategories of *Activities* and with what could be generally described as *Language use*. Other responses in relation to this theme were too diverse and not as numerous, and therefore, not included in this discussion. Additionally, positive and negative levels of response value for each subcategory were noted, that is, positive and negative comments related to *Activities* and *Language use*.

Similarities between respondents' comments regarding *Activities* can be found both in positive and negative responses in that subcategory. The positive views typically dealt with particular instances of activities favoured by respondents during our course and the reasons why they were perceived as such. Group work and free expression were described as the most popular traits of these activities. The original responses were as follows (different colour and questionnaire number denote different respondents):

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: *Activities+*
The exercises that included describing something or writing about a certain topic or a happening were easy. Here I actually think about the exercises in which the content is important and in which a lot of attention is not paid to grammar (i.e. exercises in which grammar is in the background, though I must not say something like that). **Q3** Communicative activities should be obligatory. **Q15** Informal conversation is easy because one does not have to focus on grammar and attention is paid to the use of as many words as possible. **Q20** It is easy to construct a sentence. **Q16** The possibility of working in a group [was good in our activities], opinion exchange, getting to know new speaking styles. **Q21**

Table 5.8. Learning opportunities – positive comments on activities

It could be inferred from the comments in Table 5.8 that these views referred to students whose prior learning was suitable for their university level EFL course. This coincided with my post-lesson notes, where observations described participation of the most advanced

students. In contrast, negative responses in relation to *Activities* covered various topics; the difficulty in using grammar rules and appropriate vocabulary while paying attention to content was evident, as well as dissatisfaction with the first part of the prescribed syllabus (general, non-ESP English) which coincided with students' secondary school EFL learning in multiple areas. Additionally, the problem of mixed levels was addressed and the difficulty such students experienced in trying to participate in activities aimed at promoting communication. The negative responses were as follows:

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: *Activities* -
Communicative activities should also be adapted to those who are not so good at speaking English. **Q10** [In any activity] it is difficult to use adequate tenses in a sentence. It is difficult to organize a good structure of a sentence and to combine all that into a whole. I also think that students whose knowledge of English is not so wide have a smaller active vocabulary which they use. **Q2** It is more difficult to remember a particular word in a particular moment. Q16 It is tiring (boring) to cover and speak about topics and texts that are similar to high school material. **Q11**

Table 5.9. Learning opportunities – negative comments on activities

The negative comments in Table 5.9 confirmed my observations from the post-lesson notes regarding the reluctance to participate in communicative activities on the part of a number of students. However, an overview of activities from the student-generated list in this open-ended survey contradicted the majority of textual responses in the subcategory of *Activities* (Table 5.10):

COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR UNIVERSITY EFL STUDENTS				
Students evaluate the suitability of the activities used so far in the course	**Yes**	**Maybe**	**No**	**Response count**
Role play	45.5% (10)	4.5% (1)	**50.0% (11)**	22
Games	**50.0% (11)**	4.5% (1)	45.5% (10)	22
Discussions (common topics)	**86.4% (19)**	4.5% (1)	9.1% (2)	22
Discussions (psychology)	**90.9% (20)**	4.5% (1)	4.5% (1)	22
Comparing and ranking	**81.8% (18)**	0.0% (0)	18.2% (4)	22
Gathering information	**45.5% (10)**	36.4% (8)	18.2% (4)	22
	Answered question			22
	Skipped question			0
	Total			22

Table 5.10. Open-ended evaluation: communicative activities summary

As the results demonstrate, typical communicative activities (discussions, games, and information/opinion gap) were evaluated as the most favourable except for role play. These responses contrasted the comments provided in the *Activities* related to the theme of *Learning opportunities*. However, the group of 22 open-ended survey respondents included only 8 advanced students and the response rate of 22 confirmed that all students participated in the activity evaluation regardless of their level of knowledge. Therefore, it could be concluded that students with insufficient prior learning also valued communicative activities but experienced difficulty in participating. These findings were important for further understanding of the survey data. Additionally, the following overview based on a student-generated list of new suggestions from the same survey revealed students' understanding of communicative activities, their type and appropriateness for their EFL course:

ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR UNIVERSITY EFL STUDENTS		
Students propose additional activities	**Use in earlier classes**	**Response count**
Talking about positive/negative examples	✔	1/13
Mime	x	1/13
Guessing unfamiliar objects	✔	1/13
Word games	x	1/13
Debate	✔	1/13
Listening to music	x	1/13
Presentations on topics	x	2/13
Translating texts from L1 into English	x	3/13
Watching and discussing films	x	1/13
Reading and discussing poetry, literature	x	2/13
Using one's own ideas in class	✔	1/13
Answered question		**13**
Skipped question		**9**
Total		**22**

Table 5.11. Open-ended evaluation: additional communicative activities proposed by students

As Table 5.11 demonstrates, these responses were difficult to generalize since typically one suggestion was provided per activity, except for three responses, whereas only 13 out of 22 students volunteered their suggestions for this list. Furthermore, not all propositions enhanced communication. To be specific, translation exercises, which rated highest in the list (3 out of 13 students), are viewed as inconsistent with a communicative methodology despite occasional experiments (Kim, 2011). Nevertheless, these findings additionally confirmed

students' preferences for traditional types of in-class work in keeping with their learning preferences revealed in the online survey.

Additional points related to the recurring theme *Learning opportunities* were grouped in the subcategory of *Language use* as follows:

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: *Language use -*
What is difficult is pronouncing certain words properly and speaking according to the rules of grammar. **Q22** A lot of attention should not be paid to grammar. Our vocabulary and sentence construction are more important. **Q18** [What I find difficult is] the lack of logic in grammar. **Q19** Although I sometimes know what I want to say, in a specific moment I cannot remember the appropriate word or expression. **Q18**

Table 5.12. Learning opportunities: negative comments on language use

The comments in Table 5.12 revealed students' difficulties in activating the existing knowledge in communicative situations and their dislike of formal grammar instruction, which contradicts the findings of Hawkey about 'the teacher and learner perceptions over grammar' (2006:246). Both issues also occurred in post-lesson notes and in the online survey on learning preferences. In turn, favourable comments mainly dealt with similar points such as pronunciation and group interaction:

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: *Language use +*
It is interesting to learn to pronounce the English language correctly so that we could be as good as possible if we were in a situation to speak in their language. It is interesting to talk to our colleagues and to improve ourselves together. **Q17**

Table 5.13. Language opportunities: positive comments on language use

In summary, all open-ended data pertaining to the recurrent theme of *Learning opportunities* corroborated the previous research data except for the students' inclination towards the traditional mode of teaching in parallel with the communicative one. The observation that students feel more comfortable with the ways of teaching they are familiar with is not new in common practice and research (Hedge, 2000:69; Littlewood, 2007:245; Zhang and Head,

2010:8). Further reasons could contribute to this situation, such as learners' fear of making mistakes and a lack of opportunity to use English for communicative purposes, but also 'the nature of teacher-student interaction' (Xie, 2010:12).

Some of the solutions in this case could be 'the negotiation of learning activities', 'bilingual assistance where necessary', and a 'maximum amount of negotiation and consultation' (Nunan, 1988:95) or involving students' actively 'in the creation of activities' (Zhang and Head, 2010:8). Additional alternatives to overcoming the traditional-communicative dilemma could include using 'macrostrategies' to maximize learning potential (Kumaravadivelu, 1993:12), creating group rules for justified L1, and allowing for written preparation before speaking (Willis and Willis, 2007:217-220).

5.3.2 Interest and motivation

In the recurring theme *Interest and motivation*, the *Interest in the classroom work* subcategory provides only positive comments probably due to the phrasing of the related question ('what did you find interesting?'). This is confirmed in the second subcategory of *Topics*, where both positive and negative values were present due to direct questions. Responses about students' *Interest in classroom work* varied in content:

INTEREST AND MOTIVATION: Interest in classroom work+
Communication in English is interesting. Q**16**. Everybody had a chance to join in and say what he or she thinks. Q**15** Explaining new terms and the ways of using a word which I did not know is the most interesting for me. Discussing professional texts and occurrences that we can spot in everyday life is also interesting for me. **Q11** The most interesting things include (...) explanations of a specific notion in English without using its "name" while the others guess what notion somebody is talking about. **Q6** The way students speak in English is interesting although their English is not perfect. Different interesting exercises sometimes lead to laughter. The information that can be found in English course books is very useful to me for the future. **Q1**

Table 5.14. Interest and motivation: positive comments on interest in classroom work

As shown in Table 5.14, comments described a variety of classroom issues ranging from particular ESP learning content to student interaction. Several instances of a favourable learning atmosphere were observed where students felt comfortable taking risks. The exception to the positive ranking of *Interest in classroom work* was described in the following comment:

INTEREST AND MOTIVATION: Interest in classroom work-
It is difficult for somebody who does not have a wish to work on his or her own more than what is enough for a mark. I think that this is the problem (at least in my case), and not the case when one has butterflies in their stomach or similar factors. **Q10**

Table 5.15. Interest and motivation: negative comments on interest in classroom work

Low motivation which underlies this response could be ascribed to the fact that Psychology majors view department-specific subjects as their priority and their highly demanding programme leaves little time for other courses. This topic frequently occurred throughout the course in informal discussions with students. In this recurring theme, further responses share similar reasons in terms of interesting *Topics*:

INTEREST AND MOTIVATION: Topics+
Topics were interesting. Q15 The most interesting things include communicative activities on a specific topic (such as childhood, what we would like to do, etc.) Q6

Table 5.16. Interest and motivation: positive comments on topics

In contrast, negative comments directly contradicted the previous statements:

INTEREST AND MOTIVATION: Topics-
Different uninteresting texts that are covered [are boring], what is important here is finding an interesting text that would suit everyone. **Q17** It is sometimes boring when we do something we are not interested in. When we talk about unknown and uninteresting topics. **Q4** It is difficult when students are not interested; and it is difficult to be active and speak if a lot of them are not interested and quiet. **Q17**

Table 5.17. Interest and motivation: negative comments on topics

Since the number of overall positive responses equals the negative ones, the results would be difficult to generalize. However, these responses further clarified the issues in the previous recurring theme which touched upon the subcategory of interest. For instance, dissatisfaction with the non-ESP English in the first semester (in keeping with the prescribed syllabus) was noted, particularly due to its resemblance to secondary school EFL courses. According to all data sources and ongoing discussions with students, only the general English topics were seen as uninteresting. Therefore, it could be concluded that my group of Psychology majors would benefit from a more flexible syllabus or a 'course organization' that maximizes the use of psychology-related EFL material, thus increasing their motivation and interest in EFL learning (Willing, 1988:1; Willis and Willis, 2007:180).

5.3.3 Students

Another recurring theme which was identified in the survey data and developed into the component of this analysis concerned the students. The subcategories that reflected the majority of responses in relation to the theme of *Students* were *Peer learning* and *Willingness to communicate*. The subcategory of *Peer learning* encompassed mainly positive responses as follows:

STUDENTS: Peer learning+
It is most interesting for me to listen to others (colleagues who speak very well), to follow their intonation, the way in which they formulate sentences and their discussion. **Q3** The most interesting thing is that we have the opportunity to hear other people's opinions (about the topic that is being discussed). It is also good that we can see how much we have advanced compared to the previous period (whether we have increased our vocabulary and how much).**Q13**

Table 5.18. Students: positive comments on peer learning

These comments confirmed the common view that 'the participation of individual learners is significantly affected' by group dynamics. (Dörnyei, 2005:89). Furthermore, they coincided with the idea of lessons being 'jointly constructed' by a teacher and learners together in a process where 'the social dynamics of the group insists that lessons evolve' (Breen, 2001:133). Similarly, the positive responses related to the subcategory of *Willingness to communicate* reflected the importance of the group members working together:

STUDENTS: Willingness to communicate+
It is easy to speak and to understand each other. It is also interesting to learn in a group. One can learn more easily when we all try to deal with something the best way we can. **Q17** I do not have any problems as far as speaking in English is concerned. **Q16**

Table 5.19. Students: positive comments on willingness to communicate

In contrast to the final response in Table 5.19, negative comments dominate in *Willingness to communicate*, which can be seen in the following open-ended survey data:

STUDENTS: Willingness to communicate-
Not all students take part in communicative activities. Answers are given only by those who decide to do that on a voluntary basis. During that discussion, the other part of the group is passive. **Q9** It is difficult to talk about something that is unknown, strange and unfamiliar to us. **Q14** It is not good when only few individuals take part in activities while other students do not, and in this way they affect somebody else's concentration and mood. Q**17** Not everybody has courage to say what they want. **Q5** Not everyone wants to speak during the class. **Q15** What is difficult is that some people have stage fright and they are afraid of saying something wrong (something that is not in accordance with the group or something that is not grammatically correct – the group may make fun of them). **Q13**

Table 5.20. Students: negative comments on willingness to communicate

The notion of *Willingness to communicate* was used here to denote the disposition to initiate and sustain communication conditioned by affective and cognitive factors such as personality, motivation, self-confidence, and 'intergroup climate' (Brown, 2007:157). It was interesting to note two points in the negative comments in this subcategory (Table 5.20). Initially, students' responses mainly dealt with the difficulties they experienced in their own in-class participation. However, additional data revealed that active students also experienced problems in cases when other students in the group avoided participation. This observation further confirms the assumption that 'relationships exist between the social processes of the classroom group and the individual psychological process of second language development' (Breen, 2001:122). Moreover, communicative activities typically entail learners in 'face-to-face encounters in the classroom' as they cannot be performed in isolation (Hedge, 2000:62). These issues could be reconciled by addressing the reasons for the lack of *Willingness to communicate* as stated in the survey, especially if related to my puzzling topic of suitable communicative activities. The attempt to find 'a reasonable challenge' for both advanced and weaker learners to ensure their engagement (Prabhu, 1987:56) remains a teaching challenge on its own.

5.3.4 Teaching

The recurring theme of *Teaching* included the subcategories *Teaching modes* and *Teacher*. Although it was the theme with the fewest comments, nevertheless, they were perceived as an indispensable part of the overall analysis.

TEACHING: Teaching modes+
If an activity is organized well, it can lead to the improvement in speaking English, learning new words and meeting other people. It can also help us get by in a foreign country and besides that it can be interesting. **Q2**   The professor gave us enough time to think of a story, to jot down the main ideas and then we talked. Some of the communicative activities were our homework. **Q15**

Table 5.21. Teaching: positive comments on teaching modes

The positive comments described the situations which students perceived as favourable in terms of *Teaching modes*, namely their learning progress and the intention of studying beyond the need to pass the examination. Moreover, students demonstrated the awareness about the connection between teaching activities and their own progress. Additionally, the examples of particular teaching situations which contributed to their learning were included. In contrast, the negative comments on *Teaching* concerning *Teaching modes* contained similar observations but expressed from the opposite viewpoint:

TEACHING: Teaching modes-
[S]tudents should not be called on and made to say something. **Q11**   Communicative activities should also be adapted to those who are not so good at speaking English. **Q10**   In some cases there was not enough time for thinking about the topic of the communicative activity. **Q9**

Table 5.22. Teaching: negative comments on teaching modes

The negative comments in relation to *Teaching modes* revealed students' objections to the aspects of teaching that were perceived as unfavourable. In two responses, posing direct questions to a student in front of the group was viewed as inhibiting in terms of communication and 'task self-esteem' (Brown, 2007:155). Another group of answers was inconsistent with the previous data in this survey regarding the wait-time in activities. In addition, the negative answers equalled the number of positive ones, so conclusions were difficult to draw. However, the majority of responses suggested the issue of perceived difficulty of communicative activities for the given respondents. This problem was anticipated after observing the previous research data and the initial needs-analysis questionnaire which demonstrated the multi-level nature of the group. Additionally, this echoes the problem addressed by Hess who recognized the challenges that both learners and teachers face when groups were formed externally, irrespective of 'language and literacy skills' (Hess, 2001:2). Since similar responses occurred in more detail in further data, this issue will be fully addressed in the next recurring theme.

The next survey data on the *Teacher* contained both positive and negative comments. It was interesting to note that students regarded their teacher as a significant factor in the teaching-

learning process and the number of both response types led to a category on its own. These observations were fully consistent with the initial online survey data which leaned towards the authority-oriented learning styles. The positive sample comments were as follows:

TEACHING: Teacher+
Certain things should be said or repeated although they may seem easy and familiar to everyone. **Q12**   It is easy because the professor appreciates almost every effort to say something and because she encourages students to express their own opinions no matter how good they are at speaking. **Q13**

Table 5.23. Teaching: positive comments on the teacher

However, the following negative responses were perceived as not only helpful but also crucial in discovering any points of difficulty in communication work:

TEACHING: Teacher-
It is not good when those who are good at speaking English speak fast, and the professor then continues that conversation in English and then there is something funny and everybody laughs and I do not know what it is all about. **Q10**   I do not like it when only a specific group of students is active and the professor asks those who are not active and who do not know what is being talked about. **Q13**

Table 5.24. Teaching: negative comments on the teacher

The responses showed similarities with the previous recurring themes, but also contributed to the related issues. For instance, the problem of non-participating students was addressed again, confirming the earlier observations on its negative influence on 'the social dynamics of a group' (Breen, 2001:122). In addition, new insights into the outcomes of communicative activities in the classroom were obtained in further data. Namely, observations were made regarding the teacher's tendency to focus on the advanced students. This result was in contrast with my own perception of in-class work and, therefore, of greatest importance for the implications of this study. One possible explanation for this finding could be the teacher's attempt to overcome frequent classroom silence in this particular group. In such cases, due to 'low tolerance for silence', as observed by Zhang and Head (2010:2), every effort on the part of the advanced students was encouraged and continued. Conversely, the weaker students

were neglected in this process as they were unable to follow the L2 interaction. As Lee and Ng point out (2010:303), since there were no sufficient opportunities, in the future 'reticence will be encouraged as the learners' wish to communicate is not stimulated'. These findings are in line with Breen's observation that '[t]he definition of the classroom situation that we hold will influence how we perceive the classroom group and how we might act within it' (Breen, 2001:123).

Although discouraging, these findings were valuable and certainly thought-provoking. What remains inconclusive at this point is the extent to which students voiced their dissatisfaction since the responses might have been influenced by the non-anonymous nature of the open-ended survey.

5.3.5 Learning obstacles

The recurring theme named *Learning obstacles* encompassed the subcategories of *Prior learning* and *Large groups*. The responses grouped in this section predominantly dealt with negative observations, which was revealed in the previous research data and was consistent with the present findings. Additionally, these responses by far outnumbered the rest in all recurring themes and subcategories, which undoubtedly showed the dimension of this problem for the students. Comments on *Prior learning* were as follows:

LEARNING OBSTACLES: Prior learning-
It can be difficult if we do not know enough words, then we cannot express ourselves in the way we want to. **Q12**
Students' levels of knowledge should be equalized so that they could communicate in accordance with their knowledge. **Q20**
It is easy for somebody who knows a sufficient number of words which they cannot learn exclusively in class but from movies or dictionaries if they are interested in improving their knowledge. **Q10**

Table 5.25. Learning obstacles: negative comments on prior learning

This category of responses addressed the problem of multi-level groups which were externally formed regardless of the actual level of students' knowledge. The difficulties that students encountered while working under such conditions were expressed in diverse comments, ranging from the voicing of concerns to practical suggestions for improvement in organization. The weaker students' perception of their situation contrasted the view expressed by Hess that working with multi-level classes 'summons the best and the most effective aspects of both intellectual and emotional natures' (Hess, 2001:4). Moreover, their frustration was particularly evident in the comments pertaining to the inability to fully participate in communication for the lack of sufficient vocabulary. In addition, these findings supported the views of Hogan and Kwiatkowski (1998:1409) on large group teaching who perceive such conditions as 'intimidating, inhibiting, and frustrating'.

The subcategory of *Large groups* contained predominantly negative comments as expected from all data sources:

LEARNING OBSTACLES: Large groups-
We work in very big groups and a specific number of answers can be given to a certain question, so sometimes until it is my turn, other students have already given answers with which I agree and I have very little to add. **Q12**   It is not good that in some cases we have to be pushy in a way in order to have a chance to speak in class. There are a lot of people in the classroom and the student who wants to speak always remains unnoticed. **Q11**   In order for communicative activities to become better there should be fewer students in a group, because, on the contrary, everything goes too slowly and becomes boring very soon. Q4   Create more groups in which there would be 15 to 20 students so that everyone could pay attention to the lecture and show that they have not listened to it in vain. **Q5**   It is tiring when discussions are in big groups, such as ours, and they usually last long (until those who are interested have expressed their opinions) or when there is an opposite situation when the teacher has to "make" students express their opinions. This affects the whole group, it makes the group tired. **Q13**

Table 5.26. Learning obstacles: negative comments on large groups

Comments in relation to *Large groups* were mainly uniform in content. Students expressed their dissatisfaction with their group size which was seen as a crucial factor in a variety of communication problems. Their main concerns dealt with their inability to participate, the

slow pace of the lessons, limited conversation options, and ineffective discussions, all due to a large number of students.

Several observations could be made on the basis of these responses. Firstly, a number of approximately 90 learners in a group presented itself as the main difficulty in the learning process. Although the examples of a large group may range from '20 in the past' and '35-70' today (Hess, 2001:2), '100 +' (Sarwar, 2001:128), and even 'in the neighbourhood of 600' in certain cases (Brown, 1994:415), few would dispute that teaching 90 learners constitutes a challenging task. Since large multi-level groups are contextually determined in this case, they are highly unlikely to be reduced in the foreseeable future. Therefore, all teaching solutions would have to be found and applied within these institutional conditions.

Secondly, these results partly disproved the assumption underlying the main research question regarding the choice of communicative activities suitable for this context. In fact, the data showed that communicative activities were an important, but by no means a sole condition for successful learning. There were a number of additional factors involved, such as teacher-student and student-student interaction, lesson pace and content, and the multi-level nature of the group.

Thirdly, the data called for a re-examination of the role of the teacher and students. As Hayes points out, 'any change must result from individual teachers modifying their own classroom behaviour and leading students to alter theirs', giving them greater responsibility (1997:114). Therefore, pair and group work could be used not only for completing an activity but also for maximizing students' cooperation and peer learning so that 'the weak learner is supported and the stronger one learns through helping' (Willis and Willis, 2007:226). Similarly, difficulty in attending to all students in class and concern about individual attention could be 'linked to a teacher-centred view of the classroom', whereas the learners should be more responsible for control (Hayes, 1997:113).

Finally, the findings support the view that accommodating learning activities to suit large classes would improve the overall teaching/learning situation. For instance, various ideas have been proposed: starting with 'teacher-led activities' then moving towards more communicative options (Nunan, 1988:95; Willis and Willis, 2007:223), 'individualization' and 'self-directed learning' (Sarwar, 2001:127), 'cooperative learning' (Ning, 2011:60), 'open-ended activities' (Hess, 2001:6), and 'learner strategies' (Norton and LoCastro, 2001:495). Additionally, Willis and Willis advocate TBL for learners to be able 'to work at their own level' (2007:225).

In summary, Table 5.27 presents an overview of recurring themes in all sources of data:

RECURRING THEMES IN ALL SOURCES					
	Learning opportunities	Interest and motivation	Students	Teaching	Learning obstacles
Learning preferences survey	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Post-lesson notes	✔		✔	✔	
Open-ended survey	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

Table 5.27. Recurring themes: an overview

The recurring themes helped trace 'the meaning of patterns across all the theoretically salient or descriptively relevant micro- and macro- contexts in which they [were] embedded' (Brown, 2001:242). As Table 5.27 shows, the interdependent themes, from *Learning opportunities* to *Learning obstacles*, were expected to contribute to 'the validity of the [original] code' (Dörnyei, 2007:252).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Implications of the study and the research questions

This study aimed to answer the main research question related to the appropriate communicative activities for my large EFL group of university students. In order to conduct a thorough investigation, the main research question was divided into the following sub-questions. In this chapter, they will be examined in the light of research data:

a) *What are the language learning preferences of my learners?*

The first survey dedicated to answering this question revealed the dominant preference for the authority-oriented learning style in the investigated group (in Chapter 5), whereas additional but not as numerous preferences coincided with the communicative and concrete styles. Such contradiction in learners' preferences would be difficult to reconcile as the traditional-communicative dichotomy is typically viewed as mutually exclusive. Moreover, literature frequently fails to offer concrete advice; '[s]omehow or other, the teacher…needs to convince learners of the value of communicative activities' (Nunan, 1988:96). However, 'research shows that an effort to accommodate learning styles by choosing suitable teaching styles, methodologies and course organization can result in improved learner satisfaction and attainment' (Willing, 1988:1). Therefore, given the initial teaching problem and the obtained data, it could be concluded that this effort is inevitable for successful teaching.

b) Which communicative activities have been used in lessons, and how have they been received by the learners?

The second part of research (post-lesson notes) dedicated to answering this question reveals mixed outcomes regarding the communicative activities used in the course. Their fluctuating success level entailed both positive and negative results, further contributing to the paradox that my students both favoured and disliked communicative activities as they preferred the familiar teacher-centred style (in Chapter 5). Given the traditional nature of their prior EFL learning, this observation stresses the importance of preparing the students sufficiently for activities beyond their usual learning experience.

c) What is the learners' perception of the communicative activities?

The open-ended evaluation which aimed to answer this question demonstrated similarities with the previous data in terms of learners' preferences for both traditional work (translation) and communicative activities (discussions, games). Additionally, it clarified the fact that weaker learners valued communicative work but experienced difficulty in participating due to insufficient prior knowledge (in Chapter 5). Further data revealed additional inhibiting factors such as the problem of working in large groups, fear of risk-taking and making mistakes, time-management in activities, and particular teaching modes and topics.

Finally, the main research question could be answered in relation to research:

Which communicative activities should be used with my first-year EFL university students in order to make lessons more communicative?

The overall results partly disproved the assumption that suitable communicative activities ensure successful in-class communication. In fact, according to the obtained results (in

Chapter 5), these activities were proved to be an important but not an exclusive communicative factor since the entire process of classroom communication is expected to include the additional conditions such as student-student and teacher-student interaction, lesson pace, variety and content, and the heterogeneous nature of this large group. Moreover, the examined activities were not perceived by my students as unfavourable, with minor exceptions; when dissatisfaction occurred, it was mainly due to the issues of management and learning efficiency.

Therefore, several implications can be identified based on the findings in this study. First, the results prove the importance of conducting initial needs assessment with new learner groups using learning preferences questionnaires and adapting lessons accordingly. Furthermore, the research showed that my usual 'needs analysis' questionnaire proved insufficient to anticipate the learning problems underlying this study so that modification would be required in the future.

Second, in keeping with the revealed preferences (Chapter 5), using pair/group work should not be exclusively speech-related in the future as 'CLT involves encouraging learners to take part in...communication in as many different contexts as possible' (Thompson, 1996:11). Complementing speaking activities with a variety of reading and writing practice broadens the concept of communication similar to the flexible use of pair/group work at virtually every stage of the lesson.

Third, the findings will have important implications for the teaching context. Since the group size is not prone to change, the exam-oriented, large-group teaching reality must employ practical solutions in terms of 'measurable, short-term achievable goals' (Sarwar, 2001:135). The proposed solutions (Chapter 5) aim to 'enlarge the circle' of participating students by allowing multiple abilities to come forward (Hess, 2001:15). Additionally, future practice should include developing interconnected, multilevel activities that ensure personal choices.

Next, the data supports the previous research that additional ways of maximizing learners' participation need to be considered, such as introducing 'individual', 'self-directed' work at home, in order to make students 'responsible for their own learning' (Hess, 2001:159; Sarwar, 2001:127). My students' dislike of out-of-class work (Chapter 5) could be overcome by using motivating ESP materials in keeping with their age and interest as their understanding and acceptance of 'what it means to be a learner' (Nunan, 1988:96) is essential for the success of the teaching/learning process.

Finally, these results call for the re-examination of my own role of a teacher in a potentially communicative classroom, from 'an organizer' to 'a facilitator of learning' (Hedge, 2000:27). The data implied that the more difficulties occurred in lessons, the more I tried to maintain and increase control over the learning process, thus moving farther away from communicative goals (Chapter 5). In turn, optimizing pair/group work, getting the help of advanced students, encouraging self-directed learning, and providing optional activity requirements could be some of the options to counteract the control issues and share learning responsibilities with my group.

In summary, the success of a case study is typically viewed related to 'the extent to which the details are sufficient and appropriate for a teacher working in a similar situation...The relatability of a case study is more important than its generalizability' (Bassey 1981:85). In other words, although this study sample is too small for generalizations, it is hoped that future research might entail larger participant groups in this institution in order to examine the consistency of results across different departments, different academic years, and if possible, different teachers. The findings may contribute to the improvements in course design and adaptations at the tertiary level.

6.2 Limitations of the study

 Being a small-scale case study, this dissertation was not without deficiencies in terms of research design, data collection, sample, and overall analysis of the obtained results. Firstly, the timeline of the study could be regarded as its initial weakness. As the research was conducted at the end of the EFL course for overall organizational reasons, the instruments and duration were determined in accordance with the given period and conditions. Similarly, different instruments, such as lesson recording, observation and interviewing other EFL teachers were not feasible under these circumstances. Additionally, the viewpoint of the psychology staff would have been immensely helpful regarding their observations on students' activity in their department-specific classes in contrast to EFL classes.

Secondly, the main instruments used in this study (the online learners' preferences survey and the open-ended evaluation questionnaire) match the accepted 'exemplar-based typology' categories of the most frequent method combinations (Dörnyei, 2007:172). However, the first component in the 'quan →QUAL' variation in my research is typically used for participant selection for the qualitative part, unlike its purpose of obtaining background information in my study. Nevertheless, such a course of research is still considered acceptable due to 'the flexibility of this model' (Dörnyei, 2007:172) and its suitability for 'small-scale studies' using a 'multimethod' approach (Dörnyei, 2003:131; McDonough and McDonough, 1997:220).

Thirdly, the data collection procedures were purposefully limited to the first-year Psychology majors, as the research aimed to investigate effective communication in that group. However, a larger study including several learner groups over a number of consecutive years would have yielded more informed results on the subject, providing a wider angle on the problem. Additionally, including my first-year EFL learners from other departments at this educational institution would have been complementary to a larger study. Another point in participant selection was the problem of 'respondent self-selection', typically present in an anonymous

survey (Dörnyei, 2003:75), such as my online questionnaire which started this project. As the representativeness of such a sample depends on the respondents' own willingness to participate, the 'volunteers' who choose to participate may be different in terms of motivation or other characteristics (Brown, 2001:85). However, since not all results reflected the opinions typically associated with motivated and advanced learners, the sample was considered suitable for the purpose of the study.

Finally, the analysis of the obtained results might be influenced by subjectivity when the researcher is also the teacher of the investigated group. This is especially expected in cases such as this one where the teacher's post-lesson notes complemented the data. In order to avoid or at least minimize this problem, a gradual 'two-phase' process of 'systematic analysis' was attempted which included highlighting the key points in illustrative quotations of responses and forming broader categories on the basis of given items to allow for their comparison (Dörnyei, 2003:117).

6.3 Conclusion

This study examined the appropriacy, usage and effectiveness of communicative activities that were used in a large multilevel EFL group of first-year Psychology majors in a college in south-eastern Europe. The mixed method research procedures included the preliminary investigation of learning preferences followed by the examination of post-lesson notes, and the analysis of open-ended course evaluation. By examining my students' quantitative and qualitative responses and contrasting them with my own post-lesson observations I attempted to gain insight into our classes from their perspective.

The main findings revealed the dominant preference for the authority-oriented learning style with significant exceptions of communicative/concrete preferences. This conflicting tendency was mirrored across all further data which exemplified mixed results regarding the outcomes

of communicative activities in lessons. Additional investigation demonstrated that learners' insufficient prior knowledge and teacher-centred, traditional learning hampered their communicative attempts. Therefore, the original hypothesis that suitable communicative activities ensure successful communication was partly disputed as the findings called for the inclusion of other conditions, not only pedagogical (timing activities, monitoring work and giving feedback) but also management-related (organizing pair/group work in a large group, attending to all students in class time) and affective (dealing with weaker students who feel lost, assessing students' interests and moods). The discussion of the results shows support for previous studies regarding the necessity for additional modes of students' participation and their approach to learning, but also stresses the importance of enhancing learner responsibility within the teaching context. Furthermore, the findings in this study corroborate similar research in relation to the educational and affective factors in large group teaching.

Limitations of the study point to the procedural weaknesses which suggest that similar work could yield more comprehensive results under different circumstances. Namely, the effort to replicate this study but also enlarge its scope, duration, and the number of research instruments might be a valuable contribution. Similarly, the potential subjective element in the analysis of the findings would be difficult to ignore, since the teacher of the investigated group conducted the research in this study. Therefore, limitations of the analysis should be added to its deficiencies.

Based on the results and the implications of the study, recommendations for future ELT practice involve multiple modifications but also the inclusions of new elements with respect to teaching/learning that surpass the need for more appropriate communicative activities. Given the specific combination of factors in this setting (exam-oriented EFL courses, large and heterogeneous university groups, numerous learning preferences), the changes in current practice relate to learning content, activity adaptation and management, but in particular to the teaching style which should be suited to the communicative intent. In addition, introducing a range of out-of-class learning possibilities is expected to benefit the students, particularly in

combination with sufficient preparation for various communicative activities as they differ from their traditional learning experience.

Being relatable rather than generalizable, this small-scale case study could be used to inform and to provide a basis for policy decisions within the educational institution. Moreover, this study could be of importance to teachers and educational authorities working in similar contexts. Similarly, since both the local context and south-eastern Europe which surrounds it appear underrepresented in the past and present investigations, this study could be an opportunity to provide valuable information missing in the current research.

Future research could include the same or an expanded study conducted in EFL/ESP courses across disciplines in the university. A longitudinal form of the study could be used to follow several consecutive learner groups. The findings may be an indicator of the educational course to take in terms of course design and adaptations at the tertiary level.

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APPENDIX I

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE: HOW DO YOU LEARN BEST? (Willing, 1988:106-107)

1. In English class, I like to learn by reading.   no   a little   good   best

2. In class, I like to listen and use cassettes/CDs. no   a little   good   best

3. In class, I like to learn by games.   no   a little   good   best

4. In class, I like to learn by conversations.   no   a little   good   best

5. In class, I like to learn by pictures/film/video.   no   a little   good   best

6. I want to write everything in my notebook.   no   a little   good   best

7. I like to have my own textbook.   no   a little   good   best

8. I like the teacher to explain everything to us.   no   a little   good   best

9. I like the teacher to give us problems to work on.   no   a little   good   best

10. I like the teacher to help me talk about my interests.   no   a little   good   best

11. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.   no   a little   good   best

12. I like the teacher to let me find my mistakes.   no   a little   good   best

13. I like to study English by myself (alone).   no   a little   good   best

14. I like to learn English by talking in pairs.   no   a little   good   best

15. I like to learn English in a small group.   no   a little   good   best

16. I like to learn English with the whole class.   no   a little   good   best

17. I like to go out (with the class) and practise English.   no   a little   good   best

18. I like to study grammar.   no   a little   good   best

19. I like to learn many new words.   no   a little   good   best

20. I like to practise the sounds and pronunciation.   no   a little   good   best

21. I like to learn English words by <u>seeing</u> them.   no   a little   good   best

22. I like to learn English words by <u>hearing</u> them.   no   a little   good   best

23. I like to learn English words by <u>doing</u> something.   no   a little   good   best

24. At home, I like to learn by reading newspapers in English.   no   a little   good   best

25. At home, I like to learn by watching TV in English.   no   a little   good   best

26. At home, I like to learn English by using CDs.   no   a little   good   best

27. At home, I like to learn by studying English books.   no   a little   good   best

28. I like to learn by talking to friends in English.   no   a little   good   best

29. I like to learn English by watching, listening to other people.   no   a little   good   best

30. I like to learn by using English in communication (email, Skype).   no   a little   good   best

(The original questionnaire was administered in L1)

APPENDIX II LEARNING PREFERENCES SURVEY SUMMARY (retrieved from https://www.surveymonkey.com)

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE: HOW DO YOU LEARN BEST? (Willing, 1988:106-107)

1. In English class, I like to learn by reading					
no 1.2% (1)	a little 23.3% (20)	good **50.0% (43)**	best 25.6% (22)	Rating Average 3.00	Response Count 86
answered question 86 skipped question 0					

2. In class, I like to listen and use cassettes/CDs					
no 21.2% (18)	a little **50.6% (43)**	good 17.6% (15)	best 10.6% (9)	Rating Average 2.18	Response Count 85
answered question 85 skipped question 1					

3. In class, I like to learn by games					
no 22.1% (19)	a little 23.3% (20)	good **38.4% (33)**	best 16.3% (14)	Rating Average 2.49	Response Count 86
answered question 86 skipped question 0					

4. In class, I like to learn by conversations.					
no 10.5% (9)	a little 12.8% (11)	good 29.1% (25)	best **47.7% (41)**	Rating Average 3.14	Response Count 86
answered question 86 skipped question 0					

5. In class, I like to learn by pictures/film/video					
no 3.6% (3)	a little 25.0% (21)	good 29.8% (25)	best **41.7% (35)**	Rating Average 3.10	Response Count 84
answered question 84 skipped question 2					

6. In class, I want to write everything in my notebook					
no 10.5% (9)	**a little** 26.7% (23)	**good** **37.2% (32)**	**best** 25.6% (22)	**Rating Average** 2.78	**Response Count** 86
answered question 86 **skipped question 0**					

7. I like to have my own textbook					
no 1.2% (1)	**a little** 15.7% (13)	**good** 18.1% (15)	**best** **65.1% (54)**	**Rating Average** 3.47	**Response Count** 83
answered question 83 **skipped question 3**					

8. I like the teacher to explain everything to us					
no 1.2% (1)	**a little** 9.6% (8)	**good** 20.5% (17)	**best** **68.7% (57)**	**Rating Average** 3.57	**Response Count** 83
answered question 83 **skipped question 3**					

9. I like the teacher to give us problems to work on					
no 13.3% (11)	**a little** 37.3% (31)	**good** **42.2% (35)**	**best** 7.2% (6)	**Rating Average** 2.43	**Response Count** 83
answered question 83 **skipped question 3**					

10. I like the teacher to help me talk about my interests					
no 1.2% (1)	**a little** 13.4% (11)	**good** 31.7% (26)	**best** **53.7% (44)**	**Rating Average** 3.38	**Response Count** 82
answered question 82 **skipped question 4**					

11. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes					
no 0.0% (0)	**a little** 9.6% (8)	**good** 20.5% (17)	**best** **69.9% (58)**	**Rating Average** 3.60	**Response Count** 83
answered question 83 **skipped question 3**					

12. I like the teacher to let me find my mistakes					
no 11.0% (9)	**a little** **39.0% (32)**	**good** 29.3% (24)	**best** 20.7% (17)	**Rating Average** 2.60	**Response Count** 82
answered question 82 **skipped question 4**					

13. I like to study English by myself (alone)					
no 13.6% (11)	**a little** 34.6% (28)	**good** **42.0% (34)**	**best** 9.9% (8)	**Rating Average** 2.48	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

14. I like to learn English by talking in pairs					
no 13.6% (11)	**a little** 35.8% (29)	**good** **39.5% (32)**	**best** 11.1% (9)	**Rating Average** 2.48	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

15. I like to learn English in a small group.					
no 12.8% (10)	**a little** 30.8% (24)	**good** **38.5% (30)**	**best** 17.9% (14)	**Rating Average** 2.62	**Response Count** 78
answered question 78 **skipped question 8**					

16. I like to learn English with the whole class					
no 27.2% (22)	**a little** **51.9% (42)**	**good** 18.5% (15)	**best** 2.5% (2)	**Rating Average** 1.96	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

17. I like to go out (with the class) and practise English					
no 17.3% (14)	**a little** **28.4% (23)**	**good** 25.9% (21)	**best** **28.4% (23)**	**Rating Average** 2.65	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

18. I like to study grammar					
no 16.0% (13)	**a little** **42.0% (34)**	**good** 29.6% (24)	**best** 12.3% (10)	**Rating Average** 2.58	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

19. I like to learn many new words					
no 1.2% (1)	**a little** 4.9% (4)	**good** 28.4% (23)	**best** **65.4% (53)**	**Rating Average** 3.58	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

20. I like to practise the sounds and pronunciation					
no 3.7% (3)	**a little** 7.4% (6)	**good** 30.9% (25)	**best** **58.0% (47)**	**Rating Average** 3.43	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

21. I like to learn English words by <u>seeing</u> them					
no 1.2% (1)	**a little** 14.8% (12)	**good** 34.6% (28)	**best** **49.4% (40)**	**Rating Average** 3.32	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

22. I like to learn English words by <u>hearing</u> them					
no 0.0% (0)	**a little** 6.3% (5)	**good** 36.3% (29)	**best** **57.5% (46)**	**Rating Average** 3.51	**Response Count** 80
answered question 80 **skipped question 6**					

23. I like to learn English words by <u>doing something</u>					
no 1.2% (1)	**a little** 32.1% (26)	**good** **43.2% (35)**	**best** 23.5% (19)	**Rating Average** 2.89	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

24. At home, I like to learn by reading newspapers in English					
no 18.8% (15)	**a little** **41.3% (33)**	**good** 22.5% (18)	**best** 17.5% (14)	**Rating Average** 2.39	**Response Count** 80
answered question 80 **skipped question 6**					

25. At home, I like to learn by watching TV in English					
no 1.2% (1)	**a little** 9.9% (8)	**good** 23.5% (19)	**best** **65.4% (53)**	**Rating Average** 3.53	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

26. At home, I like to learn English by using CDs					
no **54.3% (44)**	**a little** 25.9% (21)	**good** 9.9% (8)	**best** 9.9% (8)	**Rating Average** 1.75	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

27. At home, I like to learn by studying English books					
no 17.3% (14)	**a little** **49.4% (40)**	**good** 22.2% (18)	**best** 11.1% (9)	**Rating Average** 2.27	**Response Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

28. I like to learn by talking to friends in English					
no 6.3% (5)	**a little** 33.8% (27)	**good** 22.5% (18)	**best** **37.5% (30)**	**Rating Average** 2.91	**Response Count** 80
answered question 80 **skipped question 6**					

29. I like to learn English by watching, listening to other people					
no 0.0% (0)	**a little** 37.0% (30)	**good** 24.7% (20)	**best** **38.3% (31)**	**Rating** **Average** 3.01	**Response** **Count** 81
answered question 81 **skipped question 5**					

30. I like to learn by using English in communication (email, Skype)					
no 17.5% (14)	**a little** **42.5% (34)**	**good** 20.0% (16)	**best** 20.0% (16)	**Rating** **Average** 2.43	**Response** **Count** 80
answered question 80 **skipped question 6**					

APPENDIX III

OPEN-ENDED SURVEY

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?

2) What did you find easy?

3) What did you find difficult?

4) What was not good?

5) What did you find boring?

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students (you can choose more than one):
   a) acting, role play
   b) predicting, guessing
   c) (everyday) discussions
   d) (professional) discussions
   e) comparing experience
   f) gathering information
   g) positive/negative examples

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

(The original survey was administered in L1)

APPENDIX IV

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRES ON COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

QUESTIONNAIRE 1

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English? The way students speak in English is interesting although their English is not perfect. Different interesting exercises sometimes lead to laughter. The information that can be found in English course books is very useful to me for the future. **Q1**

2) What did you find easy? It is very easy when a certain grammatical unit is familiar to you, when you have dealt with it before. It is also easy when there are not too many complex questions and exercises because answers can be given straightaway. **Q1**

3) What did you find difficult? It is difficult when there are very difficult exercises because of which we sometimes have to take private lessons since we did not cover them successfully during the lecture. **Q1**

4) What was not good? It is not good when there is noise during our lectures, when a lot of people talk loudly and we cannot hear the teacher, which is of course very important for us. **Q1**

5) What did you find boring? It is boring when the class lasts longer and we want a break straightaway. It is also boring when certain grammatical units are being covered and I think they are not important at all for studying English. **Q1**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   h)   acting, role play + Q1
   i)   predicting, guessing – Q1

j) (everyday) discussions + Q1

k) (professional) discussions + Q1

l) comparing experience + Q1

m) gathering information – Q1

n) positive/negative examples + Q1

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

The situation is made more difficult when primarily students are not quiet and when everybody does not get their chance to say what they want to say. Not all students possess the same amount of knowledge, someone can speak very well when something is done in groups and someone cannot, so jealousy or certain misunderstandings among students can arise, sometimes those students who do not speak English so well can even be laughed at. **Q1**

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English? If an activity is organized well, it can lead to improvement in speaking English, learning new words and meeting other people. It can also help us get by in a foreign country and besides that it can be interesting. **Q2**

2) What did you find easy?

What is easy is that our previous knowledge of English enables us to use at least basic communication. For those who know English well more exercises are provided, and those who do not know English so well can improve it. Our speaking is not marked so strictly because of the big mistakes. **Q2**

3) What did you find difficult?

It is difficult to use adequate tenses in a sentence. It is difficult to organize a good structure of a sentence and to combine all that into a whole. I also think that students whose knowledge of English is not so wide have a smaller active vocabulary which they use. **Q2**

4) What was not good?

It is not good that children do not acquire a good foundation of the English language in their primary schools, which is most likely due to the negligence of the teacher, and these children can hardly later catch up with children who attend private classes of English. **Q2**

5) What did you find boring?

There is mostly nothing tiring. Nowadays English is a widely used language and practising it contributes to the improvement of students' English and increases the possibility of getting by in situations when we are not in our country. **Q2**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play + Q2
   b) predicting, guessing + Q2
   c) (everyday) discussions – Q2
   d) (professional) discussions + Q2
   e) comparing experience + Q2
   f) gathering information + Q2
   g) pantomime, explaining objects, word games + Q2

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

What makes the situation more difficult is the point that all students in a group are probably not at the same level as far as their knowledge of English is concerned, so some excel and do not help those who have trouble finishing the task in English. Groups are formed either with students who speak English well or with those who do not, so they cannot help each other to advance further. **Q2**

QUESTIONNAIRE 3

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?

It is most interesting for me to listen to others (colleagues who speak very well), to follow their intonation, the way in which they formulate sentences and their discussion. **Q3**

2) What did you find easy?

The exercises that included describing something or writing about a certain topic or a happening were easy. Here I actually think about the exercises in which the content is important and in which a lot of attention is not paid to grammar (i.e. exercises in which grammar is in the background, though I must not say something like that) **Q3**

3) What did you find difficult?

Grammar, the sequence of tenses especially. **Q3**

4) What was not good?

The fact that I have not learnt it as much as I want. Everything else is OK. **Q3**

5) What did you find boring?

The situations when "everybody would like to say everything" and on the other hand when everybody is silent, i.e. when "nobody says anything". **Q3**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a)   acting, role play + Q3
   b) predicting, guessing – Q3
   c) (everyday) discussions + Q3
   d) (professional) discussions + Q3
   e) comparing experience – Q3
   f) gathering information + Q3
   g)   / Q3

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

The differences in the level of knowledge among individuals. Sometimes arguments or misunderstandings about something can be an aggravating circumstance. **Q3**

QUESTIONNAIRE 4

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English? The most interesting thing is when we voice our opinions about something and when we do not rely too much on the text. **Q4**

2) What did you find easy?
   /   Q4

3) What did you find difficult?
   When we talk about unknown and uninteresting topics. **Q4**

4) What was not good?
   Sleepiness is a big problem, and sometimes the texts we are talking about are boring. **Q4**

5) What did you find boring?
   It is sometimes boring when we do something we are not interested in. **Q4**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a)   acting, role play – Q4
   b) predicting, guessing – Q4
   c) (everyday) discussions + Q4
   d) (professional) discussions ? Q4
   e) comparing experience + Q4
   f) gathering information ? Q4
   g) / Q4

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?
To give students interesting topics to talk about, to motivate them by giving them additional points… In order for communicative activities to become better there should be fewer students in a group, because, otherwise, everything goes too slowly and becomes boring very soon. **Q4**

QUESTIONNAIRE 5

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
Analyzing professional texts, word association games. **Q5**

2) What did you find easy?
/ Q5

3) What did you find difficult?
/ Q5

4) What was not good?
Not everybody has courage to say what they want. **Q5**

5) What did you find boring?
The same group of people disturbs the class. **Q5**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play – Q5
   b) predicting, guessing – Q5
   c) (everyday) discussions + Q5
   d) (professional) discussions + Q5
   e) comparing experience + Q5
   f) gathering information ? Q5
   g) / Q5

To give interesting exercises. Create more groups in which there would be 15 to 20 students so that everyone could pay attention to the lecture and show that they have not listened to it in vain. **Q5**

QUESTIONNAIRE 6

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
The most interesting things include communicative activities on a specific topic (such as childhood, what we would like to do, etc.) or explanations of a specific notion in English without using its "name" while the others guess what notion somebody is talking about. **Q6**

2) What did you find easy?
/ Q6

3) What did you find difficult?
What is the most difficult is explaining professional terms and using certain professional words in speech. **Q6**

4) What was not good?
I do not like the fact that the sessions are early in the morning and all the students are sleepy. **Q6**

5) What did you find boring?
Too serious topics are boring. **Q6**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play? Q6
   b) predicting, guessing + Q6
   c) (everyday) discussions + Q6
   d) (professional) discussions + Q6

e) comparing experience – Q6

f) gathering information ? Q6

g) debates + Q6

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?
More interesting topics that are familiar to students and that would induce them to work more, and maybe groups with fewer students so that everybody would have a chance to prove themselves. **Q6**

QUESTIONNAIRE 7

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
/ Q7

2) What did you find easy?
The easiest – reading texts in English. **Q7**

3) What did you find difficult?
The most difficult – explaining English words in English **Q7**

4) What was not good?
/ Q7

5) What did you find boring?
It is boring to read texts in English **Q7**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
a) acting, role play + Q7
b) predicting, guessing + Q7
c) (everyday) discussions – Q7
d) (professional) discussions + Q7
e) comparing experience + Q7

f) gathering information – Q7

g) listening to music, reading poetry, watching documentaries + Q7

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?
To give interesting topics for discussions. Presenting things visually would contribute to better discussions in English. **Q7**

QUESTIONNAIRE 8

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
Topics for discussion which include our personal interests, experience, etc. **Q8**

2) What did you find easy?
/ Q8

3) What did you find difficult?
Professional terms and texts. **Q8**

4) What was not good?
Morning classes and explaining certain words more than it is necessary. **Q8**

5) What did you find boring?
Just like the previous answer. **Q8**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
a) acting, role play – Q8
b) predicting, guessing – Q8
c) (everyday) discussions + Q8
d) (professional) discussions + Q8
e) comparing experience + Q8
f) gathering information + Q8
g) / Q8

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

Topics which generally include our personal interests might contribute to that. The classes should be held a bit later, it is very tiring when they are early in the morning. **Q8**

QUESTIONNAIRE 9

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?

Discussions about psychology, comparing experience on different topics and interests (music, films, etc.). **Q9**

2) What did you find easy?

Retelling texts that have been covered in class. **Q9**

3) What did you find difficult?

A discussion about certain topics from the field of psychology about which we do not have enough knowledge. **Q9**

4) What was not good?

Not all students take part in communicative activities. Answers are given only by those who decide to do that on a voluntary basis. During that discussion, the other part of the group is passive. **Q9**

5) What did you find boring?

In some cases there was not enough time for thinking about the topic of the communicative activity. **Q9**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play – Q9
   b) predicting, guessing – Q9
   c) (everyday) discussions + Q9

d) (professional) discussions + Q9

e) comparing experience + Q9

f) gathering information + Q9

g) a discussion about a film or a literary work Q9

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?
We should be working in smaller groups (or in pairs). **Q9**

QUESTIONNAIRE 10

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
The use of spoken language as something more practical and tangible is interesting as practice for something that we have learnt and that will be of use to us when we travel abroad. **Q10**

2) What did you find easy?
It is easy for somebody who knows a sufficient number of words which they cannot learn exclusively in class but from movies or dictionaries if they are interested in improving their knowledge. **Q10**

3) What did you find difficult?
It is difficult for somebody who does not have a wish to work on his or her own more than what is enough for a mark. I think that this is the problem (at least in my case), and not the case when one has butterflies in their stomach or similar factors. **Q10**

4) What was not good?
It is not good when those who are good at speaking English speak fast, and the teacher then continues that conversation in English and then there is something funny and everybody laughs and I do not know what it is all about. Communicative activities should also be adapted to those who are not so good at speaking English. **Q10**

5) What did you find boring?

It is very tiring, at least for me, to do communicative activities in small groups. It is much better when the professor asks the whole group for the opinion so who thinks of something interesting he or she will say that. Students should not be forced to speak; maybe nobody from the group will or can speak English. **Q10**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play + **Q10**
   b) predicting, guessing + **Q10**
   c) (everyday) discussions + **Q10**
   d) (professional) discussions + and –   it should be taken into consideration that we are not professionals yet **Q10**
   e) comparing experience + **Q10**
   f) gathering information + **Q10**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?
   Maybe that should be applied to students of English, their lectures are in English so it is natural that they speak in English, I know some people who even dream in English. For psychologists speaking in English is not natural, maybe it is even unnecessary. Very often people do not understand each other even when they talk in Serbian, let alone in English – when a group, for example, has to agree on how to present something. Those who are not so good at spoken language are in the worst position here because neither would they understand what his or her colleague is explaining to him or her, nor would they be able to explain it themselves. **Q10**

QUESTIONNAIRE 11
1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English? Explaining new terms and the ways to use a word which I did not know is the most interesting for me. Discussing professional texts and occurrences that we can spot in everyday life is also interesting for me. **Q11**
2) What did you find easy? Explaining simple stuff and everyday terms. **Q11**

3) What did you find difficult? Sometimes it is difficult to find an appropriate expression or phrase. **Q11**

4) What was not good? It is not good that in some cases we have to be pushy in a way in order to have a chance to speak in class. There are a lot of people in the classroom and the student who wants to speak always remains unnoticed. I also think that speaking should be voluntary, and students should not be called on and made to say something. **Q11**

5) What did you find boring?
It is tiring (boring) to cover and speak about topics and texts that are similar to high school material. **Q11**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play – **Q11**
   b) predicting, guessing – **Q11**
   c) (everyday) discussions +**Q11**
   d) (professional) discussions +**Q11**
   e) comparing experience +**Q11**
   f) gathering information + **Q11**
   g) translating from Serbian into English and vice versa **Q11**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?
It would be easier if communicative activities were organized for a small number of students. Then, work in groups would include speaking in English. If there are a lot of people in the classroom and if students notice that they are not supervised, they talk and work in Serbian right away. Smaller groups, in which more people are interested in conversation and in which there is no hindrance and prejudice, are a much better solution. **Q11**

QUESTIONNAIRE 12

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?

It depends on the topic, but mostly interesting things that I have heard about or read about a given topic. I think that the best part is when we get to voice our own opinion.**Q12**

2) What did you find easy?

Certain things should be said or repeated although they may seem easy and familiar to everyone. **Q12**

3) What did you find difficult?

It can be difficult if we do not know enough words for a given topic, then we cannot express ourselves in the way we want to and that can be demotivating for a student. **Q12**

4) What was not good?

We work in very big groups and a specific number of answers can be given to a certain question, so sometimes until it is my turn, other students have already given answers with which I agree and I have very little to add. **Q12**

5) What did you find boring?

It can be tiring when we get a topic that we do not like. **Q12**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play + **Q12**
   b) predicting, guessing + **Q12**
   c) (everyday) discussions + **Q12**
   d) (professional) discussions + **Q12**
   e) comparing experience + **Q12**
   f) gathering information ? **Q12**
   g) translating professional texts into Serbian; explaining new words in English **Q12**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

Motivate students, maybe even be boring while insisting. It should be better to work in pairs in which there should be a student with better results and a student whose results are not so good. Students should be given better grades when they are doing this type of exercise. An atmosphere where it is not the most important thing to pronounce everything correctly, where nobody will be laughed at and where everybody should try to say something should be supported. **Q12**

QUESTIONNAIRE 13

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?

The most interesting thing is that we have the opportunity to hear other people's opinions (about the topic that is being discussed). It is also good that we can see how much we have advanced compared to the previous period (whether we have increased our vocabulary and how much). **Q13**

2) What did you find easy?

It is easy because the teacher appreciates almost every effort to say something and because she encourages students to express their own opinions no matter how good they are at speaking. **Q13**

3) What did you find difficult?

What is difficult is that some people have stage fright and they are afraid of saying something wrong (something that is not in accordance with the group or something that is not grammatically correct – the group may make fun of them). **Q13**

4) What was not good?

I do not like it when only a specific group of students is active and the professor asks those who are not active and who do not know what is being talked about, which means that the way of teaching is not interesting (the way of teaching which is interesting to most students should be created). **Q13**

5) What did you find boring?

It is tiring when discussions are in big groups, such as ours, and they usually last long (until those who are interested have expressed their opinions) or when there is an opposite situation when the professor has to "make" students express their opinions. This affects the whole group, it makes the group tired. **Q13**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play + **Q13**
   b) predicting, guessing + **Q13**
   c) (everyday) discussions + **Q13**
   d) (professional) discussions + **Q13**
   e) comparing experience + **Q13**
   f) gathering information ? **Q13**
   g) speaking to somebody from the English-speaking region + **Q13**
   h) translating texts into the Serbian language + **Q13**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?
   To create smaller groups/pairs so that they would have students who know English at the same level. To choose an interesting topic for discussion with which students are also familiar. To allow students to use Serbian only for the words for which they do not know the translation. To give less time for group-work (3 minutes) and enough time for presenting (let's say 2 minutes) – the longer the group-work, the higher the chance that students will start talking in Serbian. **Q13**

QUESTIONNAIRE 14

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
   The most interesting topics for discussion are usually about films, music or psychology. **Q14**

2) What did you find easy?
   It is too easy to talk about a topic which is connected to our profession, hobbies, etc. **Q14**

3) What did you find difficult?

It is difficult to talk about something that is unknown, strange and unfamiliar to us. **Q14**

4) What was not good?

What is not good in communication is confusion about tenses, but also discord, word order and unfamiliar speaking rules. **Q14**

5) What did you find boring?

Long discussions, too many explanations. **Q14**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play + **Q14**
   b) predicting, guessing + **Q14**
   c) (everyday) discussions + **Q14**
   d) (professional) discussions + **Q14**
   e) comparing experience – **Q14**
   f) gathering information + **Q14**
   g) / **Q14**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

You should practise with students in smaller groups. **Q14**

QUESTIONNAIRE 15

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?

Topics were interesting. Everybody had a chance to join in and say what he or she thinks. **Q15**

2) What did you find easy?

The teacher gave us enough time to think of a story, to jot down the main ideas and then we talked. Some of the communicative activities were our homework. **Q15**

3) What did you find difficult?

It is difficult to remember everything that you have to say as well as words in English. **Q15**

4) What was not good?

Not everyone wants to speak during the class. Communicative activities should be obligatory. **Q15**

5) What did you find boring?

Homework, because students have too many obligations. Not everyone finds topics interesting. **Q15**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play – **Q15**
   b) predicting, guessing – **Q15**
   c) (everyday) discussions +**Q15**
   d) (professional) discussions +**Q15**
   e) comparing experience +**Q15**
   f) gathering information ? **Q15**
   g) presentations on topics **Q15**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

Bring a student who does not speak Serbian, and in that case the group will be forced to speak exclusively in English. To divide students into smaller groups which will come to classes in/as smaller groups, and in this way the teacher can control the situation. **Q15**

QUESTIONNAIRE 16
1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
Communication in English is interesting. **Q16**.

2) What did you find easy?

It is easy to construct a sentence but it is more difficult to remember a particular word in a particular moment. **Q16**

3) What did you find difficult?

See 2. **Q16**

4) What was not good?

I do not have any problems as far as speaking in English is concerned. **Q16**

5) What did you find boring?

When it is necessary to pay attention to certain grammatical constructions that are to be used in a sentence. **Q16**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play ? **Q16**
   b) predicting, guessing +**Q16**
   c) (everyday) discussions +**Q16**
   d) (professional) discussions +**Q16**
   e) comparing experience –**Q16**
   f) gathering information ? **Q16**
   g) presentations on professional topics **Q16**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

A mutual topic in which everybody in the group would be interested and about which they would willingly like to talk. **Q16**

QUESTIONNAIRE 17

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?

It is interesting to learn to pronounce the English language correctly so that we could be as good as possible if we were in a situation to speak in their language. It is interesting to talk to our colleagues and to improve ourselves together. **Q17**

2) What did you find easy?

It is easy to speak and to understand each other. It is also interesting to learn in a group. One can learn more easily when we all try to deal with something as well as possible. **Q17**

3) What did you find difficult?

It is difficult when students are not interested; and it is difficult to be active and speak if a lot of them are not interested and quiet. **Q17**

4) What was not good?

It is not good when only a few individuals take part in activities while other students do not, and in this way they affect somebody else's concentration and mood. **Q17**

5) What did you find boring?

Different uninteresting texts that are covered, what is important here is finding an interesting text that would suit everyone. Q**17**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play + Q**17**
   b) predicting, guessing + Q**17**
   c) (everyday) discussions +Q**17**
   d) (professional) discussions +Q**17**
   e) comparing experience +Q**17**
   f) gathering information + Q**17**
   g) / Q**17**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

Maybe by creating a situation in which everybody would speak in front of other students who would listen to one another, but this would take a lot of time. Students could speak in pairs or in groups while other students are listening to them. **Q17**

QUESTIONNAIRE 18

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
   To express our opinions, to learn new words and expressions, to practise how to say one thing in more different ways, and to explain to other students what we know. **Q18**

2) What did you find easy?
   A lot of attention should not be paid to grammar. Our vocabulary and sentence construction are more important. **Q18**

3) What did you find difficult?
   Although I sometimes know what I want to say, in a specific moment I cannot remember the appropriate word or expression. **Q18**

4) What was not good?
   There are over 50 people in a group, which makes communication more difficult, and we should practise listening more by listening to texts or watching movies. **Q18**

5) What did you find boring?
   Sometimes the topics that we talk about are not interesting enough. **Q18**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play – Q**18**
   b) predicting, guessing ? Q**18**
   c) (everyday) discussions +Q**18**
   d) (professional) discussions +Q**18**
   e) comparing experience +Q**18**
   f) gathering information + Q**18**
   g) / Q**18**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?

A member of a group should be someone who does not speak Serbian at all, and the other members of the group will use English more out of consideration for the foreign "student". **Q18**

QUESTIONNAIRE 19

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?

   Quick-wittedness, creativity and the presence of analogy. Q**19**

2) What did you find easy?

   Conversation. Q**19**

3) What did you find difficult?

   The lack of logic in grammar. Q**19**

4) What was not good?

   An unequal level of previous knowledge in the group. Q**19**

5) What did you find boring?

   Explanations and discussions that are connected with the material that was covered in primary and high schools. **Q19**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:

   a) acting, role play + **Q19**
   b) predicting, guessing – **Q19**
   c) (everyday) discussions +**Q19**
   d) (professional) discussions +**Q19**
   e) comparing experience – **Q19**
   f) gathering information + **Q19**
   g) an oral/written analysis of characters from the texts ? **Q19**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?
Classify students according to their levels of knowledge and according to the scope of their vocabularies. **Q19**

QUESTIONNAIRE 20

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
What is interesting is conversation, uninterrupted expression of one's thoughts, commenting on texts and retelling our own experience. **Q20**

2) What did you find easy?
Informal conversation is easy because one does not have to focus on grammar and attention is paid to the use of as many words as possible. **Q20**

3) What did you find difficult?
Grammar, paying attention to tenses. **Q20**

4) What was not good?
Classes that start at 8 o'clock in the morning and poor concentration as a result of that. **Q20**

5) What did you find boring?
When a certain text has been retold several times by several people, and when it is my turn I do not feel like talking about it. **Q20**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
   a) acting, role play + **Q20**
   b) predicting, guessing – **Q20**
   c) (everyday) discussions + **Q20**
   d) (professional) discussions + **Q20**
   e) comparing experience + **Q20**

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f) gathering information – **Q20**

g) / **Q20**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?
Students' levels of knowledge should be equalized so that they could communicate in accordance with their knowledge. **Q20**

QUESTIONNAIRE 21

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
The possibility of working in a group, opinion exchange, getting to know new speaking styles. **Q21**

2) What did you find easy?
(activities, talking to the teacher, talking to other students) **Q21**

3) What did you find difficult?
Formulating certain complex sentences. **Q21**

4) What was not good?
Impossibility of saying something due to the number of students in a group. **Q21**

5) What did you find boring?
Revising the stuff we learned earlier. **Q21**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
a) acting, role play + **Q21**
b) predicting, guessing + **Q21**
c) (everyday) discussions + **Q21**
d) (professional) discussions + **Q21**
e) comparing experience + **Q21**
f) gathering information + **Q21**

g) / Q**21**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)?
Insufficient number of known words. **Q21**

QUESTIONNAIRE 22

1) What did you find interesting with activities that included communication in English?
Interesting topics for discussion (different texts). Q**22**

2) What did you find easy?
Understanding each other easily, retelling. **Q22**

3) What did you find difficult?
What is difficult is pronouncing certain words properly and speaking according to the rules of grammar. **Q22**

4) What was not good?
It is not good that classes are mostly too early. **Q22**

5) What did you find boring?
Revising the easy stuff is boring. **Q22**

6) Appropriate communicative activities for the first-year students:
a) acting, role play + **Q22**
b) predicting, guessing + **Q22**
c) (everyday) discussions ? **Q22**
d) (professional) discussions + **Q22**
e) comparing experience + **Q22**
f) gathering information ? **Q22**
g) creating one's own ideas **Q22**

7) What makes the situation more difficult when in class students in pairs or groups should finish the task (entirely in English)? Misunderstandings, not knowing the other students in the group. **Q22**

APPENDIX V

OPEN-ENDED SURVEY SUMMARY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES

COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR UNIVERSITY EFL STUDENTS				
Students evaluate the suitability of the activities used so far in the course	**Yes**	**Maybe**	**No**	**Response count**
Role play	45.5% (10)	4.5% (1)	**50.0% (11)**	22
Games	**50.0% (11)**	4.5% (1)	45.5% (10)	22
Discussions (common topics)	**86.4% (19)**	4.5% (1)	9.1% (2)	22
Discussions (psychology)	**90.9% (20)**	4.5% (1)	4.5% (1)	22
Comparing and ranking	**81.8% (18)**	0.0% (0)	18.2% (4)	22
Gathering information	**45.5% (10)**	36.4% (8)	18.2% (4)	22
	Answered question			22
	Skipped question			0
	Total			22

ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR UNIVERSITY EFL STUDENTS		
Students propose additional activities	**Use in earlier classes**	**Response count**
Talking about positive/negative examples	+	1/13
Mime	-	1/13
Guessing unfamiliar objects	+	1/13
Word games	-	1/13
Debate	+	1/13
Listening to music	-	1/13
Presentations on topics	-	2/13
Translating texts from L1 into English	-	3/13
Watching and discussing films	-	1/13
Reading and discussing poetry, literature	-	2/13
Using one's own ideas in class	+	1/13
Answered question		**13**
Skipped question		**9**
Total		**22**

APPENDIX VI

POST-LESSON NOTES ON CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

SAMPLE POST-LESSON NOTES
February 29
This one did not work at all as planned. Students didn't want to act out, just read out using their notes. Too shy or insecure about their abilities? Insufficient preparation time? Still, some of them tried to get a little humour in the dialogue (a silly present, an outrageous party).
March 14
Trying to have students using their English AND getting some information from their friends on study skills (what works best for them), helping each other study? Some sort of 'loop input' here? Students were a little confused at first, as if expecting the topic to backfire, or to be used against them (still working towards SS-T trust), then slowly warming up to the discussion, even getting a bit noisy at the end.
March 21
They liked the first 'Eccentricity' text so I expected this to work. The vocabulary was settled before this, they seemed clear on the task. It's so frustrating when things start OK and then just... Was it intimidating to write/hand in later – this was NOT a test!
March 28
Only a very small number of students took part, the usual few (M, D, J, K...). Why? This was the topic they chose earlier, so it must be about how I did it with them? Expected to be simple/motivating enough... turned out – not successful...
April 4
It seems that SS enjoyed the activity. They were active –almost all of them. One group didn't like the set of objects they got for the activity, but still managed to complete the writing.
April 11
Was all this too demanding for SS? Or perhaps, my instructions not clear enough? This was a new type for them. At first they liked it, had some nice comments. All finished the notes but then had very little to say/explain in the end.
May 9
Several students came up after class (together!) to ask for more activities like this one, if possible. They said they enjoyed it more than anything so far.
May 16
This one started OK but then... too much silence between groups, not all SS involved equally. They complained

there they all had very similar ideas... the topic also brought back some painful memories for V. Should've thought of that before class! She was very brave to volunteer to speak of it.

May 23

SS liked this, even the quiet ones joined in (DG, MM, JP...). And we proved the psych. text facts by playing – all true about our memory! The end phrase was hilarious. Lots of laughs at the end.