

Theoretical aspects regarding communication and games english language essay

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



CHAPTER I THEORETICAL ASPECTS REGARDING COMMUNICATION AND GAMES

1. 1 Communication and Education

Write to be understood, speak to be heard, read to grow. (Lawrence Clark Powell) One of the most interesting issues, which has been debated for a long time, is communication. Communication has become one of the most important preoccupations of a great number of researchers and it can be discussed from many points of view. (Marin 27) It is rather difficult to define communication because it can be approached from many different angles. For example, some authors focus on the communicational value of its sender and/or receiver (Robert and Hunt who state that communication represents the acquisition, the transmission and the understanding of the information); others concentrate on the sent/received message (Longenecker supports the idea that what is important in communication is what is transmitted and not the condition of the sender or receiver). Etymologically speaking, the concept of communication comes from two Latin words "comunis," that is to make a thing be common and "comunico," to share. It can also be found in other languages too, like French ("communication"), Italian ("comunicazione"), Spanish ("comunicación") and so on and they all have the same meaning: "communication". This polysemantic word has a wide range of definitions and here are some examples: " To communicate means to make use of an ensemble of methods, named of communication: it means to speak, to modulate your intonation, to behave in a specific way, to adopt a mimic, specific gestures and attitudes, to choose an attitude, to prepare combined actions, to elaborate physical or normative dispositions, to act

over the environmental elements. Everything in order to solve, as well as possible, a problem concerning a fact of life." (Mucchielli in Marin 23)"

Communication is a process in which people share information, ideas, and feelings." (Hybels 6)" Communication encompasses a wide field, but because we are forced to describe a feature of human experience through the very processes which are the object of study.'" (Price 1)"... an activity in which symbolic content is not merely transmitted from one source to another, but exchanged between human agents, who interact within a shared situational and/or discursive context.'" (Price 5)There are many other definitions of communication, and each has its own usage and tries to offer a variety of positions from which the social construction of meaning is explored. If one studies them thoroughly, he/she comes to the conclusions that all of them have some things in common: Communication is a process in which information, ideas, opinions and thoughts are transmitted from one person to another or from one group to another. Any kind of activity, simple or complex, cannot be conceived outside the process of communication.

According to the American researchers Frank E. X. Dance and Carl E. Larson, communication can be discussed from three big directions: communication as action, communication as process and communication as theory. The act of communication forms the process of communication and refers to the fact that a person transmits a message which contains a certain piece of information. The transmission of information takes place with the help of a common system of symbols, signs, attitudes, which are nothing else but the spoken or the written word, the mimic art etc. The communication as a process refers to a sequence of communicative acts. What is very important

is that this process has precise finalities which can be encountered in people's everyday life, through modifications at the behavioural level or changes in attitude. As far as the theory of communication is concerned, this " is to be found at the intersection of the fields of linguistics, sociology, semantics, the theory of information, the theory of culture, psychology etc. without being identified with one of them. At the same time the theory of communication takes elements from every mentioned field..." (Marin 33)Watzlawick P., Beavin J., Jackson D. state that " everything is communication" and they formulate " the axioms of human communication":

Axiom 1: Communication is inevitable; any human behaviour transmits a message. Axiom 2: Communication has two levels: the informational level and the relational level (communication is not just information, but also implies a suitable behaviour). Axiom 3: Communication is an uninterrupted process (a continuous interaction between the participants). Axiom 4: Communication can be verbal or nonverbal. Axiom 5: The process of communication is symmetrical or complementary (teacher-student) if it is carried out on equality or difference. Axiom 6: Communication leaves a mark on the receiver (otherwise it is irreversible). Axiom 7: Communication implies processes of adjustment and adaptation (if we want the message to have a meaning, we have to take into consideration the life and the linguistic experiences of each of us). (Pârvu)The purpose of these ideas about communication is to underline the importance of communication.

Communication is the essence of interpersonal ties and it expresses the capacity to permanently decode the meaning of social interactions which take place with the help of symbols and social valid meanings. The human

communication has the power to modify behaviours and even to preserve certain qualities. It is an active process of identification and maintenance of social contacts as it is present in all the domains of social life, so, implicitly, in education as well, in which it appears as a particular and personalized form of teaching. Educational communication is an essential part of pedagogical communication which uses the specific contents of an act of learning and which involves an educational message under the form of a lesson. It also implies a continuous interaction between the teachers and the students even if the type of lesson is teaching, learning or evaluation.

Furthermore Luminița Iacob states: " Communication as a form of interaction, implies the activation of the communicative competence, which is gained and also related to aptitudes; its absence or its deficient presence explains the failure or the difficulties which teachers, some of them very well prepared, have in their current activity; being a teacher means to possess not only specialized knowledge, but also the capacity to transpose and translate from an educational point of view, that is the possibility to know what, how much, how, when, in what way, with what, to whom etc. to teach."

(Iacob in Cucuș 333-334) It is not enough for the teacher to be a language and information model because he/she does not inform, but rather communicates. This gives the learning process the value of a dynamic educational intervention and relies on an educational language which influences the student's personality and causes cognitive, affective changes. The accomplishment of educational communication (at the teaching-learning-evaluation level) leads to the achievement of different types of objectives. Just like communication, educational communication contains

certain elements that are vital. Without them, it cannot exist. One cannot talk about communication or educational communication without mentioning the sender-receiver, the message, the channel, the barriers, the context, or the feedback. The sender and the receiver are not only the teacher but also the student. There is one exception though, the primary school because it is just the teacher who has the necessary information, the skills and the abilities as the students are too young and it is the period of time when they acquire the basic knowledge. There is no difference between the sender and the receiver because nowadays we talk about a modern education where the accent is not on teaching but on the student. The latter can intervene in the process of teaching and become a source of information. The sender is the person who possesses structured information, which is clear and he/she has a well defined purpose and begins the act of communication by transmitting an educational message. The receiver gets the message and decodes it, processes and interprets it and then he/she gives an answer. The exchange of information that takes place between the sender and the receiver has to be clear, precise, structured and deductive most of the times. On the other hand the message has to be structured by following some rules. It represents the most complex part of the process of communication and it implies an encoding and decoding process. The message is not only what it is transmitted but also what it is received. It can be transmitted verbally, nonverbally or paraverbally. It must be carefully maintained on the axis of communication as much as it is needed. What it is important is to be correctly decoded. The message gets to the receiver using a channel, the so called communication channel. The channel of educational communication is

a polyvalent channel of inter human communication. The most used channel is the verbal one. Another structural element is the disturbing factor that can be found at the sender and which is in fact, different communicational obstacles (for example a low voice or noises). The educational context is represented by the communicative environment and it must be elaborated in such a way as to be evocative and creative for learning. If the educational context does not support and control the " learning experience" then its role is meaningless and it leads to the failure of teaching. The feedback has an extremely important role because we can see if the message has been understood and the continuity of learning can be assured. The educational communication is seen as a model of forming the communicative capacity at the students and it has a central role in education because it is considered to be the basis of any educational intervention. The content, the methods and the means that the teacher uses, all of them have the mission to create an efficient communication that leads to a high quality education. "... educational communication represents the main modality to reach the objectives proposed by education at the established standards and demanded by the society to the educational system." (Marin 119) There is an extremely varied diversity of forms of communication and this variety is given by the multiplicity of the criteria of classification. The most used one is the communication provided after the instrument of codification of the information and the channel of the transmission of the message and the ones that will be briefly discussed are the intrapersonal communication and the interpersonal communication, which have an extremely important role in teaching. Intrapersonal communication " is the kind of communication that

occurs within us. It involves thoughts, feelings, and the way we look at ourselves." (Hybels 18) Each of us knows and judges himself/herself, asks questions and gives answers and thus this form of communication with the self becomes a source of mental and emotional equilibrium. Interpersonal communication is the most known form of communication and it is characterized by the fact that the sender and the receiver are different. This type of communication is direct and it can appear between two or more persons who interact and influence one another. By means of it, it is desired to teach someone something, to be transmitted or received some different knowledge, to influence behaviours, to express feelings. Interpersonal communication implies knowledge, self-knowledge and inter knowledge. The human mind cannot develop without communication. To communicate means to express yourself and make yourself understood and in order to do this, there are some things to be taken into consideration like the relationship that exists between the persons who interact, relationship which is the result of some attitudes developed by each individual. Verbal and nonverbal communication, written communication and metacommunication are part of interpersonal communication and each has its role and importance. Verbal communication is the most evident form of communication which dates before Christ. This implies language verbal codes which help the message to be transmitted and decoded. The message must have elements of interest and motivation for the listeners, elements of feedback, clarity, coherence etc. Verbal communication is circular and "flexible," that is one can go back to what has been said and he/she can detail it if it is needed. It is also necessary, unlimited and vivid because it

exemplifies the human being's need to communicate in involuntary situations as well, being important in the social evolution of the individual and the society. On the other hand, verbal communication is an important tool of educational communication and it is specific human, it uses the audio and/or visual channel and the word in order to code and transmit the message and it also permits the formulation, the collection and the transmission of some diverse and complex contents. In order to have an efficient communication, there are some qualities that are related to the sender and the receiver and they should be taken into consideration. Some examples are: related to the personality of the speaker (teacher/student): clarity, accuracy, empathy, sincerity, posture, visual contact, attitude etc. related to the qualities of the listener (student/teacher): hearing, understanding, translation in different ways, attribution of meanings, received information, evaluation, desire for listening, interest, listening, attention etc. The paralanguage is the modality we say something, that is the rate, the pitch, the volume, the quality. Some specialists relate it to nonverbal communication (Hybels and Weaver), others to verbal communication (Robert and Hunt). Ion-Ovidiu Pânișoara situates it between the borders of verbal communication and the nonverbal communication. We cannot end the subject of verbal communication without mentioning nonverbal communication. The two types intermingle perfectly and the message becomes more credible and the dialogue between the teacher and the student increases also with the help of nonverbal channels. Nonverbal communication refers to more messages which can be decoded and which transmit meanings, but not by using words. These can complete, repeat or

contradict the verbal message. This type of communication contains unconscious reactions but which are obvious for the people around and it transmits a message, it translates our feelings or what we think. Thus, sometimes, nonverbal communication can contradict the verbal one (the teacher smiles when he/she is angry). One of its functions is to emphasise verbal communication. During the class, the teacher can stress some parts of a message by making use of gestures. Another function is to complete the spoken message. Nonverbal communication cannot be separated from educational communication. " The movement, the gestures and the mimic art of the teacher—as parts of the process of teaching—must be transformed into productive instruments, which come in anticipation of the needs of a concrete didactic situation. " (Grant in Cucoş 341) In conclusion, we speak using our voice, but we communicate with the entire body. Educational communication is a single whole which contains verbal communication, paraverbal communication and nonverbal communication. Although they do not have the same rules, rhythm of encoding, transmission or decoding, the lack of one or the other brings a poor message and it makes communication more difficult (it is said that 55% of communication is nonverbal, 38% is paraverbal and 7% is verbal). Paraverbal and nonverbal communications support and complete verbal communication. This helps the student discover and understand (for instance you cannot make a strong affirmation with a happy voice and a sad face). The components of paraverbal and nonverbal communications support the formative interaction between the teacher and the students, interaction which refers not only to the cognitive and emotional plan but also to the motivational one. Each type of communication has its

role and importance and therefore it should not be neglected. Interpersonal communication in educational context takes place in a specific environment and a specific place (school). The most recent studies show that in a process of communication the receiver bears in mind only 20% of the sender's 100% affirmation. The misunderstandings, the contradictory situations and even the conflicts which appear might be found in the barriers which appear at a certain time. These can be determined by the people talking, by the characteristics of the message or even by the context and they can block the process of communication having as result educational failure. The barriers to communication represent obstacles in the communication process (teacher-student) due to the external or the internal factors. It is known that barriers can reduce the efficiency of the message. They become real obstacles in the educational communication and result not only in educational or social failure but also in a lack of the development of the student's personality. The barriers of educational communication may appear because of the system, and thus they can be easily identified at the level of the sender and the receiver or at the level of the channel, and because of the process which appear as a result of the interaction inside communication. (Pânișoara 47) There are different types of barriers that hinder the ability to communicate. Here are some examples: physical barriers (the easiest to spot: environmental disturbance, physical health, distance, poor hearing etc.), perceptual barriers (internal: lack of knowledge or common experience, interrupting the speaker, asking too many questions, unclear message etc.), emotional barriers (difficult to overcome), cultural barriers (ethnic, religious and social differences), linguistic barriers, gender

barriers, interpersonal barriers (the most difficult to change: withdrawal, rituals), motivational barriers, mental barriers (confused thinking, poor pronunciation, unnecessary repetition etc.) and so on. A real challenge remains finding the possibilities of providing a communication process in which the loss of information in minimum and decoding the message correctly. In this way the barriers will disappear or they will be reduced. However, there are some "rules" that help us overcome barriers: to learn how to use feedback correctly, to try to be sensitive to the receiver's message, to use a simple language, appropriate to the receiver's, to be a good listener and listen to understand. R. Steers identifies other ways of preventing barriers, such as: the communication between the sender and the receiver must rely on trust; the development of the persons' interdependence; the motivation; establishing the agreement. (Steers in Stan 161-162) The barriers appear under different aspects and they are real problems in the process of communication. They can be avoided, reduced, even eliminated. Establishing good communication, with a well defined purpose, choosing the correct time and place for communication, using proper language, with clear ideas—these are only some of the aspects which can help prevent and overcome the barriers which appear in communication.

1. 2 Educational Games: Functions and Specifics

My love is the game, the child laughs. And the teacher should know one thing: the child's head is not a bowl which you have to fill, but a torch which you must light, so that, later it could illuminate with its own light. (Plutarch) The concept of game and its importance and necessity in the child's life have

been debated by many specialists, among whom psychologists and pedagogues. The game is a human activity which begins in childhood and which has a decisive role in the child's progress and it consists in the reflection and the reproduction of the real life in a specific way to the child, as the result of the interaction between the biologic, psychological and social factors. The reality of the world in which we live is transposed into the imaginary plan and in this way the child manages to imitate, in his own way, the life and the activity of the adults. The answers to the questions: " why does the child play?" or " what is the purpose of the game in a child's life?" have been different, depending on their philosophical concept. Some see the game as an instructive activity (St. Hall), others as a means of consuming the excess energy (Spencer, Schiller), and others as a preparatory exercise for adult life (K. Gross etc.). An adequate answer to these questions lies in the explanation of the game having as a starting point the psychological traits of the child. The game has a universal characteristic, it is a permanent reality, a free action which is situated outside the ordinary life and which generates no profit. Here are some definitions of the game: J. Chateau: " the game is a process and a way of shaping..." Iliov: " the game is at the same time work, another reality, fantasy." Claparède: " the game is the best introduction into the art of work." Leontiev: " the game is a fundamental type of activity, with a crucial role in the child's evolution..." On the other hand, D. Elkonin underlines the importance of the game in the child's development. Playing the child develops and he develops because he plays. So, the game represents a group of actions whose purpose is the child's intellectual, technical, moral and physical preparations. Going back to the general

definition of the game, we can say that is a physical and/or mental activity which does not have a practical finality and which is done with pleasure. The psychologists and the pedagogues of the last century state the fact that the game is not only for the little ones, but also for adults, being a way of revealing " the child inside them." The characteristic of childhood is represented by games. Through games the child discovers, explores, experiences and learns. Adding to the word " game" the term " educational", we emphasize the instructive side of the activity and we also reveal the informational content. The educational game is the mixture of the instructive element and the entertaining element. It is not only a controlled learning activity but also a didactic method. The educational game is a type of game that helps the teacher revise, teach and evaluate the information taught to the students. It also enriches their knowledge. (Dicționar de pedagogie) The game is complex because the memory, the attention, the spirit of observation, the will, the imagination, the language are all involved. Their fusion, as well as the role of the teacher result in a better valorisation and development of the student's intellect, in the assimilation of knowledge, in shaping the personality, in the formation of attitudes and skills. One of the functions of the game is the formative-educative function. The ideal in education from these days is that the individual must be an active actor when outlining his own destiny and this is obvious from primary school. The game appears as a way of exploring and knowing the world we live in, a pre-learning activity (Vâgotski, Piaget, Berlyne, Wallon), a place of the manifestation of freedom (Freud), a way of communicating (Bateson). In kindergarten and primary school the game develops the child's mind and

body, his intellect and emotions and it also forms the ego (Claparède), and the self (Chateau). The educational game develops the thinking, the memory, it involves the perceptive capacities, the abilities of reactions, the possibilities of communication, all of these being practised and enriched quantitatively and qualitatively. The game also develops creativity, flexibility and spontaneity and it also stimulates the imagination and the competition. The confrontation with the self or the others moulds the attitudinal, emotional, and motivational processes and helps the student obtain the capacity of controlling the emotions and cultivates the child's whole range of feelings. The informative function brings the student information, concepts, notions that he needs in order to understand and to integrate into the real world. It is known that the educational game is one of the most used methods in the process of the teaching and the education of primary and secondary students and research and studies have proved its efficiency. The educational game facilitates the process of consolidation and influences the development of the student's personality. The learning activity, after the child goes to school, becomes a major concern not only for the parent, but also for the teacher. Changes appear in the child's life, but not as far as the game is concerned. This remains a major problem during childhood as A. Gesell notices. In this way the important role of the educational game is revealed and the game can be used by the teacher during classes. Its efficiency lies in the hands of the teacher who must know how to make the connection between the game, the theme, the task of the game and the available materials, between the explanations, indications and the answered given by him/her. Playing, the student learns with pleasure, he becomes

curious by what the teacher works with him and the shy students gain courage and faith in themselves. Because of their content and their development, the educational games are excellent ways of activating the whole class. The student must accept and respect some game rules. On the other hand, the educational game requires the teacher to respect certain needs and methodological steps. Another function of the educational game is the cognitive function, which transforms the objectives into learning experiences and transposes the teacher's mental projected action into learning. Playing, the child acts practically and systematically and he broadens his horizon, he learns and develops from many points of view. The operational function has an instrumental role because it permits the accomplishment of the objectives. The motivational function, a function characteristic to other games, too arouses interest and increases motivation, the desire to know things and interact, to initiate the students into the mystery of the educational game. The normative function helps the teacher by controlling, correcting and regulating the educational action. The organizational function is a good time manager and permits a correct, exact planning of the student's and the teacher's time. Because of their complexity, educational games can contribute to the accomplishment of various educational objectives. These result in physical development, intellectual development and they contribute to the moral and aesthetical education. What makes the educational game different from other games is its well outlined structure. It has a purpose, a content, a task, rules and elements. The purpose of the game is given by its finality and has the objectives from the syllabus. It must clearly show what the intention of the

game is. Its purposes may vary: the consolidation of some information or skills, the development of speaking, reading etc. The content must correspond to the students' age, it must be interesting, accessible, and it must use specific educational methods and a necessary amount of information. The educational task has an important role because it leads to the realisation of the purpose of the game and it shows what the students have to do during the game. It must be accessible and attractive and according to the students' age. The rules of the game carry out the educational task and they make the connection between the latter and the action of the game. The rules must be formulated and explained in a clear, logical and correct manner so that the students can understand and the teacher must be sure that they have been properly understood by all the students. The elements of the game permit the students' accomplishment of the task to be pleasant and attractive. The methods, the material(s) and the role of the teacher are also included here. The attractiveness, the efficiency, the success of the game depend on the ingenuity of the teacher who must know how, when and how much time to play, how to combine the task (which must be not very difficult but not very easy either) with a symbolic game or with attractive rules in order to keep the " learning torch" alight and which during time to make it illuminate with bigger and bigger flames. We cannot talk about the educational game without mentioning its steps: the organization of the game, the development and the end. Taking into account the rules of the game and the steps is what makes an educational game efficient. We may conclude by saying that the game has an important, complex and practical role in the evolution and the development of the child.

The game becomes an excellent way of learning and developing, a way of exploring the universe, and the reality. It helps the teacher teach, evaluate and the students learn and practise and sometimes it may become a motivational tool. It is one of the most efficient educational methods.

1.3 Communication in Games; Interactive Methods

Educational communication and educational games play an important role in education and they are significant tools for the teacher. Communication is the starting point of a learning/teaching activity. The class activities must correspond to the students' needs and these must offer them the liberty of thinking and talking, promoting success. Learning is the result of the teacher's planned activity and it focuses on the students' communication skills. The educational game can be the solution to one of the problems that education faces nowadays. Although, some teachers consider the game as unimportant as far as the transmission of new information is concerned, there are other teachers who regard it as a good way of teaching, revising, practising and evaluating. Playing the game, the students use English and communicate and thus develop their language. From this point of view there is a strong connection between communication and game. Communication is the basis of educational game, its tool, without which the game could not exist. As it has already been mentioned, communication has different forms, each with its importance and function. But when we come to talk about educational games, we automatically include communication.

Communication is the basis for many methods, and the game is one of them. The educational games, as a central means of the development of the

speaking skill, fulfils one of the most significant school requirements (especially for primary school), that is to teach students many things and notions in an organized manner. Communication becomes a basic and essential way to gain knowledge and to learn. The role of the games is not only to develop communication but also the mind. Many specialists consider the games as excellent communication activities. The use of games can be a powerful " weapon" for learning the language. They offer an ideal working context to the students and communication. The students work and learn in a relaxing atmosphere. After they practise the new vocabulary, the students have the chance to use the language without any stress because, while playing, their attention is on the message and not on the language. This diminishes the fear of being criticised by the others because of making mistakes. In a game the emotion is not a major key but fluency is, the communicative competence, as the games stimulate this ability. The students nowadays are very much interested in computers, cells and very few of them in school, even more when a foreign language is involved, which, if they do not learn it from the beginning, it is hard to like because they do not understand it. The challenge for the teacher is to make the students speak in a foreign language. Once they can overcome this obstacle, fluency is not a problem anymore. But until they get there, it is a long journey. One of the things the teacher can do is motivate his students, he can stimulate them by using games. Games do not mean only fun and relaxation, but much more than that. It improves the language skill and " forces" the student to use the language during the game. Donn Byrne (100) emphasises this and states that the games can be used in two ways: a). they

can improve one aspect of the speaker's language such as: vocabulary, writing, sounds, functions and grammatical items. These types of games focus on accuracy and their purpose is to emphasize what has already been taught. Examples of such games are the traditional ones which offer repetition in a pleasant way. They are very efficient because the students are so much focused on the game that they do not realize that they repeat and practise the language. b). they offer the students the possibility to use the language rather than practise it. The games are focused on fluency and they contain a task that the students must carry out and in order to do that, they must use the language the best they can. Educational communication and educational games are topical and they appear under different forms and in various ways. Combined together they are very valuable to education and they represent an active and participative method in which the students are part of the teaching/learning process. The students relax and the game helps them repeat, learn, practise the English language. The communication is the foundation of the educational game and the game helps them communicate verbally, nonverbally, in written form and develops their language and speaking skill. The game could not exist without communication, and it is a method through which it is exercised. So, there is a crucial connection between the game and the educational communication, as it has been shown in this subchapter. The two turn into efficient tools not only for the teacher who uses them in class to teach English, but also for the student who makes use of them in order to learn.

Interactive Methods

One of the most modern and useful methods used in class is the educational game. But there are other modern methods which are interactive and which have a formative, motivational and informational characteristic. The role of education is to prepare the student for life, for the demands that exist beyond school. Communication plays a very important role nowadays and it is present everywhere and in many ways. Together with interaction, their presence is obvious in everyday life of each of us and " the cultivation of the cooperative spirit (without giving up the competition though) brought by these methods becomes a supporting factor in the person's social insertion." (Pânișoara 139)The purpose of the interactive methods is to arouse the student's interest, to make him more attentive and to force him learn by making him use his imagination, his memory, his power of anticipation. These methods make him desire to learn more, they help him search, demonstrate and find by himself or in groups or pairs the information which he must learn, information which he must process and turn into knowledge. Producing and promoting the interaction between students, the aim of these methods is an active learning, with evident results and the student becomes the teacher of his own formation. The interactive methods focus on communication improvement. For example the brainstorming offers the possibility of freedom of speech, Phillips 66 and the Aquarium technique improve communication and the interactive listening and the Socratic method refer directly to the development of the communication skills. There are many interactive methods but only some of them will be briefly presented here. One of them is " The Cluster" method which is seen as a "

necessary brainstorming" and which stimulates free thinking and creativity. It can be used individually or in groups. The teacher writes a word on the blackboard and the students have to tell words related to this subject. This technique offers the students the possibility to make some connections between ideas and offer them new meanings to the ideas previously learned. It is said to be one of the most efficient methods because it remains in the students' mind for a long time and they acquire the information in an easy and pleasant way. Personally I have used this method for many times and it is a good way of revising different subjects or of beginning a new lesson. For example, at primary school, in order to revise the clothes, I write the word in the middle of the board and the students have to tell me as many clothes they remember.

clothes

Figure I. 1 Example of a structure of the "Cluster" method

There are other themes, subjects or notions that can be revised in this way: school objects, food, numbers, colours etc. The following example is related to a lesson introduction: "The Weather." I wrote the word "season" on the board and the students told me the four seasons. This was the starting point of the new lesson.

Season

Spring

Winter

Summer

Autumn

Figure I. 2 Example of a cluster (primary school)

As an extension, you can also write the activities that are done in each season. This is specific for the 4th grade where the subject is revised and new things are learned by the students.

Season

Spring

It is windy. I walk in the park.

Autumn

It is raining. School begins.

Summer

mer

It is sunny and hot. I eat ice cream.

Winter

It is cold. It is snowing

I make a snowman.

Spring

It is windy. I walk in the park.

Summer

mer

It is sunny and hot. I eat ice cream.

Winter

It is cold. It is snowing

I make a snowman.

Season

Autumn

It is raining.

School begins. Figure I. 3 Example of an extensive cluster (primary school) Another interactive method but which is part of the methods that focus on the development of critical thinking is " KWL reading method" (What we know/What we want to know/What we learned.) It practises not only speaking but also writing. The students write in the first column what they know about the subject, in the second, with the help of questions, what they want to learn more about the topic and in the last column, after they read the text, they write the answers to the questions from the second column. " If there are some questions left which have no answer, they can be used for further investigations." (Crețu 214) The students can work individually, in pairs or groups. Working in pairs or groups, they practise their English because they have to use it in order to ask questions and to talk to their mates.

What we Know

What we Want to know

What we Learned

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Chart I. 1 The chart structure of the KWL reading method The students communicate and work together in order to learn English with another method which is a cooperative method and is called " Think/Work in pairs/Communicate." The starting point is a question asked by the teacher and the students must answer it individually. Then, in pairs, they express

their feelings, they communicate and give the answer to the whole class. This method " may be used before, during or after a presentation or a text." (Crețu 216) These modern methods are characterized by their active aspect, which has " the power" to involve the student in activities, to stimulate their motivation and creativity and cognitive capacities. They engage the student in teaching and furthermore they develop their personality. Such a method is also " Jigsaw," which develops communication, listening, speaking, creative thinking, as well as self-confidence. The class is divided into groups of 4-5 students. The text is divided in the same number as the number of the groups. Each student from a group gets a number from 1 to 4/5 depending on how many students are in a group. Then, the students with the same number are moved together and the text is divided and studied for 15-20 minute, discussed how it will be taught to their mates. After that the students go back to their places and they start teaching their part of the text. If there are questions, his/her mates can ask the student and also the teacher can help if necessary. The students are involved in the teaching of the lesson, they have to find the best way to teach the others and at the same time to listen to his/her colleagues actively." The Gallery method" encourages students to express their own ideas about a certain topic or subject. In groups of 3 or 4 the students work on a certain topic or question which has a final result: it is written on a flipchart paper so that everybody can see the solutions or the answers. Each group goes and sees them and discusses them. This method encourages physical movement in the class, thing that attracts students and makes them curious. There is a direct interaction in the initial group and an indirect one with the other through the

posters. In this way the classroom becomes an environment where the students think and learn. (Crețu 217)The number of interactive methods is much bigger than the ones that appear in this subchapter. Only a few have been presented, the ones that I use most in my classes and which focus, among others, on the communication skills. They place the students in the centre of the teaching-learning process and stimulate them and "invite" them to take part in teaching. They participate actively and/or interactively at their own process of learning.