

New Ways to Teaching and Learning



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A Letter from the ATECR President

December 2012

Dear Colleagues,

First of all, let me thank you for the confidence you entrusted to me to preside the Association of Teachers of English.

The main goal of the Association is to disseminate information about English language instruction and provide exchange of ideas, information and resources, to share common beliefs and worries, and to strengthen English language teachers' sense of identity. Being a teacher nowadays is not easy and we should support one another and persistently strive for an improvement and stabilisation of language instruction we are all attracted by. As a "freshman" in the position of president, I will surely need your support. Any ideas concerning the Association will receive a warm welcome. It is a pleasure to inform you of the two colleagues cooperating with me, Mgr. Zuzana Katerová (FAF UK) in the position of a vice-president and Mgr. Iva Shejbalová (ZŠ Gočárova HK) as a treasurer.

As tutors of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and members of CASAJC (Czech and Slovak Association of Language Centre Teachers at Universities) we would like to connect the two worlds together and establish new working relations. We will also continue in various activities, such as the Franklin SpellEvent, and try to attract your attention to any new ones (for instance we are currently thinking of organising the Speech Contest). Strengthening the position of regional centres and getting more people to work for the Association is of our vital interest. As for our external liaisons, I firmly believe in the importance of cooperation with other European Associations.

I am probably not alone with the conviction that the 8th International and the 12th National ATECR Conference organized by the Department of English Language and Literature was a sensational success. In the years of the on-going effects of the

economic crash, it was an extraordinary achievement to bring together lecturers from our country, Great Britain, Turkey, Serbia, even Thailand, all willing to share their ideas, research conclusions and experience as well as participants from all levels of education eager to listen. Participants were given the chance to attend many interesting lectures and had the opportunity to enjoy and participate in workshops that covered wide range of topics (from the primary up to the tertiary education). Let me express my thanks and admiration to the Organising Committee who had done such a wonderful job. Now we have two years to organize another conference and it is my duty to find a university willing to host such a big event. On this very occasion I would like to address all colleagues if any volunteer would be inclined towards the idea of preparing and organizing the next conference for our Association.

Finally, let me say that I welcome the opportunity to continue in the great tradition of the Association and sincerely hope that together we will succeed in completing the goals of the Association and foster the teaching and learning of the English language in the Czech Republic. In the meantime I would like to wish you a lot of strength and success in your careers!

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‘Learning by Teaching’ as a Strategy Fostering Learner Autonomy

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Thinking of how to teach students to learn a second language successfully and how to help them on their way to learning has become one of the topical issues in ELT today. The learner autonomy concept, therefore, with its focus on learners and specifically self-directed learning, opens new perspectives for searching and experimenting various non-conventional learning strategies and techniques including ‘learning by teaching’ – the strategy this contribution is focused on.

Historically ‘learning by teaching’ has found quite a wide range of pedagogical implementations so far. Among those were Andrew Bell’s (Scotland) and Joseph Lancaster’s (England) educational experiments with students as teachers’ assistants, or Sudbury Schools experience where a lot of teaching was done by students. One of the recent attempts of peer-teaching include Jean-Pol Martin’s French lessons (Germany) and the Autonomy Project of HKIEd (Hong Kong)

All of the above-mentioned implementations inspired the author to make an attempt to use this strategy with final-year students of a technical secondary school of transport in Prague within their regular English classes. Along with the project itself the action research aimed at the efficacy of a new strategy was launched and carried out. The research outcomes are presented in this paper as follows:

- Preliminary stage (introductory discussion, setting up goals and planning)
- Project implementation
- Outcomes and data interpretation

1. The preliminary stage

The two introductory questions (see Figure 1) became initial points of the in-class discussion which revealed the most problematic area in students’ language skills development. It turned out to be **speaking**, which was the main reason for

finding an effective learning strategy that would lead students to fluent and spontaneous speaking.

Figure 1:

Why do I need to know English well?	How to learn English so I can speak well?
<p>The most frequent points of the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To communicate while travelling ▪ To use it for a social network communication ▪ To pass a graduation exam in English 	<p>The most frequent points of discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To use English in the classroom (dialogues, speeches, discussions) ▪ To have conversations via SKYPE ▪ To teach each other in English

Both a teacher and the students finally came to a conclusion that the only way to learn how to speak is to start speaking in the target language. The strategy ‘learning by teaching’ seemed to be the most appropriate to suggest because a teacher generally does a lot of speaking while teaching as well as he/she does a lot of learning before teaching. With this idea in mind we launched the project.

2. Project implementation

A six-week project included three parts – peer-teaching (work in pairs), teaching a small group of peers and teaching the whole class (the students decided to teach in pairs; in other words, there were two ‘teachers’ in front of the class). All students were given the opportunity to choose what they were going to teach. Half of them were determined to teach grammar (tense revision). The other half decided to teach technical topics about transport (new material). After several workshops in small groups and overall discussion on how to proceed, my students started teaching each other. Three previously mentioned stages of teaching gave the students a chance to practice their teaching several times. As to my role of a teacher, I tried to assist, help and support my students with suggestions and provided guidance during the whole project. On the other hand, as a researcher I monitored and measured the process of speaking during pair- or group-work. Hence, the major method of research was participant observation, and the data used for the analysis included teacher’s

notes and students' artifacts such as handouts, power point presentations, their reflective articles and e-mails.

3. Project outcomes and data interpretation

Out of 16 participants of the focus group two were absent during the project due to their poor health conditions. Two students did not teach the whole class (at the final stage). All students were asked to write reflective articles about the project in Czech (to get the most reliable responses) and to write informal e-mails in English. Both artifacts returned by 13 students were used for the data analysis.

All three parts of the active stage of the project were measured by a teacher. The chart below (see Figure 2) demonstrates the findings concerning speaking skills development and shows a great increase in terms of the use of English towards the end of the project, which indicates a strong potential of the 'learning by teaching' strategy.

Figure 2:

	TEACHING A PEER		TEACHING A GROUP		TEACHING THE WHOLE CLASS	
Time monitored	5 minutes		10 minutes		15 minutes	
Language used during interaction	En: 45%	Cz: 55%	En: 87.5%	Cz: 12.5%	En: 100%	Cz: -

The analysis of students' after-project reflective articles and e-mails shows that 'learning by teaching' was accepted by most students with enthusiasm. In their reflections, 11 out of 13 participants found a new strategy effective and useful. The aspects they discussed involved their feelings about learning by teaching, the overall classroom atmosphere description, thoughts about their preferences in terms of traditional and non-traditional learning/ teaching process. Some students suggested ways of improvement to be used in further projects. All of them were asked to reflect on our primary roles and functions in the class (learners and a teacher) indicating any

changes occurred during the project. Below are some representative examples of their responses:

Figure 3:

3.1 Overall feelings:

Learners	'Teachers'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>'I've learnt a lot of new things'</i> ▪ <i>'This is the best way of learning'</i> ▪ <i>'I've learnt in a funnier and more interesting way than usual'</i> ▪ <i>'this kind of learning was more effective compared with the traditional way'</i> ▪ <i>'It was a good learning experience'</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>'we had a good chance to speak in front of everyone'</i> ▪ <i>'everyone listened to me and paid attention'</i> ▪ <i>'I had a good feeling about the fact that others learnt something from me'</i> ▪ <i>'It was nice to share what I've learnt'</i>

3.2 Atmosphere

The most frequently accounted characteristics were *'positive', 'interesting', 'impressive', 'everyone was involved', 'we had a chance to work together', 'we could choose and plan things by ourselves'*. Those responses definitely suggest that the strategy was both a worthy and beneficial approach. It fosters intrinsic motivation and creates an inspiring classroom atmosphere.

3.3 Students' preferences

The analysis of students' preferences in terms of conventional vs. innovative teaching/learning process demonstrates three different points of view. Ten students think that a new strategy proved to be more effective than the traditional textbook-based learning. One student considered combining both ways, traditional and this alternative. Two students preferred a traditional learning/teaching process. Hence, the findings reveal that students generally are open to new forms of learning / teaching and are also open and willing to experiment.

3.4 Suggestions for improvement

Most students expressed their desire to continue working on new learning strategies and on project-based assignments in general without any specific suggestions on improvement. Only two voices reflected towards changes in the future:

- *'We should have more choice in which way we learned'*
- *'Those who take the roles of teachers should make a stronger agreement about what they want to teach to avoid repetition'*

As it was previously said, most students of the focus group gave a very positive feedback on the project. However, two of them were not happy about their learning/teaching involvement. They were sure that a conventional figure of a teacher worked for them much better. Nevertheless, they indicated that the whole atmosphere of the project was positive and that most students felt enthusiastic. Two other students had mixed feelings and along with expressing excitement they wrote about their insecurity and the lack of confidence. All of those remarks should be taken into consideration by a teacher further on.

3.5 The teacher's role

What I as a teacher found especially interesting in the students' reflections was their assessment of my new role in the project. They described my activities as follows:

The teacher:

- *'explained what was unclear'*
- *'helped and gave advice'*
- *'suggested appropriate techniques'*
- *'pointed out what needed improvement'*
- *'gave us freedom of choice'*
- *'gave feedback, answered our questions'*
- *'gave directions, guided'*
- *'motivated'*

One of the students called me *'a mentor'* rather than a teacher. That is exactly what we, teachers, should actually go for.

IV. Conclusion

The empirical action research introduced in this article 'learning by teaching' strategy has demonstrated a great increase not only in speaking capacities of the secondary school students but also a positive change in their attitudes towards learning English. The project itself undoubtedly fostered learner autonomy and supported the growth of students' intrinsic motivation. The overall outcomes have ensured the author in the remarkable efficacy of self-directed learning and its prospective development in the future.

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Teaching Critical Thinking: Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Business Man' and the Lure of Success

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"Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher." - **William Shakespeare, 1598**

"In human society, thinking's the greatest transgression of all... Critical thinking – there is the ultimate subversion." - **Philip Roth, 1997**

1. Introduction

Critical thinking is one of the most important skills university teachers can impart to students. Because thinking is an essential part of our lives, the prospect of expanding students' thinking implies widening the perspective they have about who they are, how they view the world, the values they have when making choices, and the potential impact they make on society. Developing critical thinking skills not only improves students in an intellectual way, but also have an impact on the quality of their lives. It is incumbent on us not to be *"parrot-teachers,"* but to teach the habits of a skeptical and curious mind.

One of the most pervasive influences students can confront in their lives is the world of business. Business and its economic and cultural manifestations have a potent impact on practically all aspects of our lives, both in professional and personal areas. Critically thinking about the choices we are confronted with in connection with the business world is a task dealt with by many students, including those who study both in economic faculties as well as pedagogical faculties. Many of our students in the teacher-trainer program may decide to pursue a career in the private sector rather than public school teaching. Future teachers should be prepared to impart critical thinking skills to their pupils as well. Critical thinking skills may be developed through a combination of analysis of selected literary texts dealing critically with the world of business and applying them to students' life experiences, for example as consumers.

2. Literary texts

Customarily, fiction concerning the conflicts of the business world is thought to be most suitable within the literary realm of realism or naturalism. While most of the famous business novels in American fiction fall within these two literature movements, this is not exclusively the case in short fiction. Authors of the literary period of romanticism such as Washington Irving (“The Devil and Tom Walker”), Herman Melville (“Bartleby the Scrivener” and “The Lightning-Rod Man”) and Nathaniel Hawthorne (“The Celestial Railroad”) wrote numerous fictional stories centered around the ominous spirit of nineteenth century American commerce. Likewise, a post-naturalist genius from Ireland, James Joyce, includes in the collection *Dubliners* a story entitled “Counterparts” centered in part on the alienating effects of the international business world.

3. Publishing History of Poe’s Story “The Business Man”

The gothic tales and poetry of Edgar Allan Poe have long been considered among the most popular literary works to come from the United States. His detective stories furnished ground-breaking forms to that genre, and his critical essays on the creative process have been influential as well. It is his humorous sketches, however, that remain less known and less-regarded in Poe’s oeuvre that is frequently regarded as quite sophisticated in secondary literature. The humorous stories share with his gothic tales an abundance of extravagant and outrageous, even grotesque elements. Occasionally they reflect the patterns of the popular vaudeville and farce though they also require some knowledge of classical literature which Poe refers to regularly.

“The Business Man,” originally entitled “Peter Pendulum, the Business Man” in February 1840 in *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine*, was Poe’s only short story published in the magazine which he himself edited until June 1840. Later published in *Broadway Journal* and in book form in 1845, Poe shortened the title to “The Business Man” and the protagonist’s name was switched from “Peter Pendulum” to “Peter Profitt.”

The main character may be derived from an insulting allusion by Poe to his foster-father, the Scottish-born Virginia tobacco merchant John Allan. In what would otherwise appear to be a rather original take of what makes business lucrative, Profitt

vehemently and disparagingly opposes “genius,” “inventiveness” as well as any inductive thought process in his method while at the same time practicing fraud, reflecting Allan’s dislike for the poetic direction which Poe inclined to take in his studies. Moreover, Profitt is overbearingly boastful of the precise, purportedly deductive method employed in his continuously fruitless accomplishments, demonstrating virtually no business acumen.

4. The Story’s Method

The orderly narrator realizes that methodical business practice is the avenue to success. After a succession of increasing unprofitable fiddles, this business man regards himself with unwavering confidence to be a big city success because of this unwavering dedication to method, and that people “know him” for this characteristic. The ironic but entertaining point of the story is the contrast between the narrator’s insistence on the rigor of his methods and the restricted chance for success in his trivial business schemes.

5. Critical Thinking in “The Business Man”

Students read this humorous short story in order to critically appraise the business world from different perspectives. As this story is a farce, it can cause difficulties if students are not prepared. The means of preparation is not only to disclose the fact that no such business man can exist (unlike the portraits of business men in realism and naturalism), but that specific tactics are used by Poe to poke fun at the business man who takes himself all too seriously. It is then a useful method of critical appraisal to apply the various aspects of business in Poe’s fiction (accounting, advertising, real estate, litigation, the service industry, the music industry, communications and finally animal control) to today’s practices.

Students are asked to write out business activities in the plot, listing duties (“cause”) of the jobs and the “effect” they produce. Also, they should describe the comic element Poe employed. In our in-class discussion, we brainstorm about those aspects of business Poe wished to criticize. The table below shows these student activities:

Résumé	Cause	Effect	Literary comic element
As a small child	As a boy Peter Profitt suffers a “fortunate” whack on the head	Bump on Profitt’s head is an “organ of <i>order</i> ” which creates his appetite for system and regularity	Irony: a massive head injury causes a rational “organ” to grow and develop; chaos creates order.
1st job	At 15 Profitt’s father gets him to work at a “Counting-house,” work akin to book-keeping.	Profitt suffers from extreme headaches caused by this work.	Irony: a definitive methodical approach to business, i.e., accounting, causes pain to his “organ” of order.
2nd job	At 16 Profitt leaves home and does Walking Advertising for a tailor.	Bickers over petty charges: “in my case it was <i>method</i> – not money – which made the man.”	Pun off of the German saying: “Kleider machen leute” or “clothes make the man” in publicity work with a tailor.
3rd job	Creates a company in the “eye-sore trade.” Builds ugly eye-sores (“orna-mental mud hovel”) next to newly-built villas or palaces.	Argues that a 500 % profit upon the principal cost of the “eye-sore” investment does not provide an ample profit; for refusing his top claim he vandalizes a bordering palace.	Comic extravaganza: Profitt goes to jail for vandalism and loses all of his connections to the “eye-sore trade.”
4th job	Begins work in the “Assault and Battery” business. Profitt provokes people to assault him and then sues them in the local court of law.	Quarrels with his attorney about the “value” of the pain resulting from the assault.	Farce: the person assaulted is Peter Profitt. His profit in two cases is fifty cents and seventy five cents. He finds his health more valuable than money.
5th job	With a fat dog named “Pompey,” Profitt works “for some years” in the “Mud-Dabbling” trade. Profitt polishes shoes or boots after they get muddy (Pompey rolls in mud and then rubs his fur on the customer’s boots).	Argues with Pompey about the division of the profits (the dog desires one-half).	Grotesque: the failed business negotiation between animal and man reduces the level of the man of commerce, Peter Profitt, to that of a beast.
6th job	With an old organ, which is adjusted to make a jarring noise, Profitt grinds such a repulsive sound that upset people pay him money to move on to another location.	Profitt is not as successful as he could be: he has no monkey, and he has to compete with other dreadful noises such as Democratic politicians and “mischievous little boys.”	Profitt compares the noise of annoying politicians with the clamor of his organ-grinding.
7th job	Peter Profitt enters the “sham-post” trade: he delivers bogus letters to larger companies and collects the reverse-charged postage.	Profitt regrets having to run too much to produce his revenue. Also, he regrets hearing the abuse of people whose names he signs the bogus letters with.	Irony: Profitt declares scruples of conscience after committing fraud for erroneous grounds.
8th job	Profitt’s cat-growing trade is to breed cats and cut off their tails as the local government pays money to eliminate wild cats infecting the town.	This final business continues to the end of the story to bring in “a good income” so that Profitt is considered a “made man.”	Conclusion: he runs for political office in the local New York legislature, the same annoying people he complained about earlier.

6. Language

Students are asked to examine how Poe satirizes business practices through his use of language. Hints, for example, are offered about his use of the oxymoron (“methodical Jack o’ Dandy” and “a systematic Will o’ the Wisp”). As Elizabeth Duquette points out, the meaning of the name “Profitt,” besides an increase of wealth, is also a homophone: “prophet,” and Poe likewise plays with the word “do” with “due” as in, compensation demanded on a certain date (Duquette, p. 6).

There is also an unusually exaggerated mix of register among the businessmen in the story. The aforementioned examples of commerce language puns are further enlivened by transactions conducted in the rough, rather obscene language of the apparently vulgar classes of penurious Americans while the justification of the method, or the philosophy offered about the free market system, is expressed in the most cultivated and high-toned language of, one might expect, a highly educated gentleman, though in fact the people engaged in these petty transactions and yet promulgating these noble philosophies are in fact the very same fictional characters.

7. Conclusion

The virtue of “The Business Man,” a first-person account of how a genial small-time entrepreneur stays afloat in the city, is its straightforward assumption that the con-man mentality is the moral norm. Profitt moves from job to job but his vexatious dissatisfaction does not lead him to brood on the nonsensical attempts to achieve legitimate business success. There is such a dissonance or gap between what Profitt pursues and what he actually achieves. As such, Poe’s antihero espouses a philosophy which seems to embody the tenets of the prevailing American narrative of business and progress. Yet, as a businessman Peter Profitt’s imagination and logic exist in such a confusing, contesting way as to induce fatalism and, from a worldly or material point of view, complete failure. His name is the ultimate irony: Peter Profitt never makes a profit. Yet he considers himself “a made man” after a variety of business enterprises and feels ready for political office, the next logical step forward for his *curriculum vitae*. Leo Lemay argues in an article that the autobiography of an American self-made business man turned politician, Benjamin Franklin, is the target for satire in Poe’s “The Business Man” (Lemay, pp. 28-39).

In his antihero's arguments for the free market where justification of this market amounts to the highest reaches of American civilization, Poe satirizes the American template for modern progress. As an analysis of Poe's "The Business Man" – the plot (with many areas of the business work satirized), the language and the very philosophy of business are scrutinized, students will acquire a skill about thinking critically by applying the satire to the business world we live in today and hopefully get a better grasp of the paradox in today's world of commerce.

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The Vowel Length Difference before Final Voiceless Consonants – Some Practical Teaching Tips

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1. Introduction

It is claimed that in some languages (including English and Czech) there are pairs of consonants whose members can be distinguished from each other in terms of whether they are “strong” (*fortis*) or “weak” (*lenis*). These terms refer to the amount of energy used in their production (*fortis* sounds are said to be made with a relatively high degree of effort, *lenis* consonants with a relatively low degree of effort).

At school, however, it is better to avoid these terms and call *lenis* sounds “voiced” and *fortis* sounds “voiceless”. A voiced sound is made with the vibration of the vocal folds (so we can hear the voice). A voiceless sound is made without the vibration (with Czech learners we can alternatively call them “whispered”, which is not scientifically correct, but may work best).

Although there are arguments against such simplification (it is argued that English /b, d, g, v, z, Z/ often have little or no voicing in normal speech, especially in initial and final positions, and it is therefore misleading to call them voiced), the terms *fortis/lenis* are difficult to remember, Czech learners are not familiar with them and are not able to sense the difference between them. The most efficient way then, is to teach that consonants can be distinguished by the presence or absence of voicing.

Why do we need to teach students about the distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants? One of the most important aspects concerning the pronunciation of both vowels and diphthongs in English is that vowel length is directly dependent on the nature of the following sounds. On the one hand, voiceless consonants /p, t, k, tf, f, θ, s, S/ shorten preceding vowels. For example, in the word *cat* /æ/ the sound /æ/ is short and “clipped” (similarly, the diphthong /aɪ/ in *bite* or *height*).

Like vowels, sounds /l, m, n, ŋ/ are also shortened if they come before a voiceless consonant. In words such as *belt*, *bump*, *bent*, or *bank*, the combination of

the vowel + /l, m, n, ŋ/ sounds shorter than in words where no voiceless consonant follows.

The quantity of the vowel is dependent on the context to the extent that e.g. in the word *beat* (where /i:/ comes before a voiceless /t/ sound) the vowel may be of the same length or even shorter than the vowel /I/ in *bid* (where /I/ is followed by voiced /d/).

On the other hand, if a vowel occurs before a voiced consonant /b, d, g, dʒ, v, D, z, Z, m, n, ŋ, l/, it is not shortened and therefore is much longer. Compare *bad* and *bat*. In *bad* the /æ/ sound is considerably longer. In the same way, the diphthong /aI/ in *hide* is longer than the “same” diphthong in *height*.

The “un-shortened” quantity of a vowel sound is also found at the end of a word where a vowel is in the final position. If we take the pair *right* and *ride*, and then compare *rye*, the length of the /aI/ diphthong when no consonant follows is practically the same as in *ride*; the /aI/ in *right* is much shorter than the /aI/ in *ride* and *rye*.

The vowel length difference before final voiceless consonants is apparently found in many languages, but in English this difference – which is very slight in most languages – has become the most important factor in distinguishing between geminate consonants in their final position (e.g. t – d, p – b, k – g).

It is very important that Czech learners abide the vowel length, because differences in vowel length can change the meaning of an utterance. Compare: *I always send the emails...* (where /e + n/ before /d/ of *send* is relatively longer and slower) with *I always sent the emails...* (where /e + n/ before /t/ is shortened and clipped). The t/d sound itself of *send/sent* does not give a clue to the meaning, because it passes into the following /D/ without an explosion. The most important difference is then in the length of the vowels (including the neighbouring /n/).

Czech learners often make mistakes in that they pronounce words like *bit* and *bid* with the same (short) quantity, or words like *beat* and *bead* with the same (this time long) quantity, just in the way they pronounce the vowel length in Czech. Learners also fail in abiding the variable length of the first element in English diphthongs and pronounce *robe* as *rope* and *rode* as *wrote*, being unaware of the fact that vowel length in diphthongs can alter the meaning of words.

The best way to imitate English words is quick, clipped pronunciation of the vowel preceding a voiceless consonant, and slower pronunciation before a voiced sound. Comparing English and Czech pronunciation can also be useful, e.g. the first

element of /a/ in English *hide* is considerably long and corresponds to /áj/ in Czech word *háj*, while /a/ in *height* is much shorter and corresponds to /aj/ in Czech *haj*.

Here are selected pairs of words which teachers can use to show the differences in vowel quantity, depending on the context. In the first word in each couple, the vowel is shortened by the following voiceless consonant, in the other word, the vowel length is unchanged:

- 1/ *beat – bead, seat – seed, feet – feed, cease – sees, leaf – leave*
- 2/ *bit – bid, hit – hid, pick – pig, hiss – his, lit – lid*
- 3/ *let – led, bet – bed, set – said, peck – peg, lent – lend*
- 4/ *lack – lag, sat – sad, cap – cab, back – bag*
- 5/ *duck – dug, tuck – tug, buck – bug, cup – cub, bus – buzz*
- 6/ *heart – hard, cart – card, half – halve, calf – carve, start – star*
- 7/ *not – nod, lock – log, dock – dog, cot – cod, mop – mob*
- 8/ *brought – broad, caught – cord, bought – board, port – poured, sought – sword*
- 9/ *put – pull, foot – full, hook – hood, putting – pudding*
- 10/ *root – rude, proof – prove, suit – sued, the use – to use, loose – lose*
- 11/ *hurt – heard, search – surge, purse – purrs, curt – curd, work – word*
- 12/ *ice – eyes, height – hide, right – ride, might – my, light – lied*
- 13/ *fount – found, lout – loud, the house – to house, count – round, out – owl*
- 14/ *rate – raid, plate – played, fate – fade, late – laid, safe – save, race – raise, eight – aid*
- 15/ *Joyce – joys, voice – boys, choice – noise, point – coined*
- 16/ *rope – robe, wrote – road, colt – cold, post – pose, coat – code*
- 17/ *fierce – fears, pierce – piers*
- 18/ *scarce – scares*

2. Suggested activities

Activity 1 – comparing different quantity and quality of vowels

Pronounce:

- a/ *hit – heat, hid – he'd, fit – feet, did – deed, sit – seat, sin – seen*
- b/ *beat – bead, bit – bid, set – said, back – bag, heart – hard, lock – log*

Activity 2 – pronunciation and ear training (The teacher or one student in each pair when working in couples, dictates words from lists A and B in random order. The listeners decide whether the words are in list A or list B.)

- List A: *calf, cup, curt, right, plate, eight, wrote, coat, not, lent, dock*
List B: *carve, cub, curd, ride, played, aid, rode, code, nod, lend, dog*

Activity 3 – pronunciation and ear training (The teacher or any student dictates any words where the vowel length is directly dependent on the nature of the following sounds, for example: *port, sees, leaf, poured, feet, mob...*)

Activity 4 – vowel length discrimination (Students decide which of the following words does not belong in the group.)

Which is the odd one out?

- 1/ *beat, seat, feet, leave (leave)*
- 2/ *bid, hit, pig, lid (hit)*
- 3/ *let, bed, bet, peck (bed)*
- 4/ *lack, sad, cab, bag (lack)*
- 5/ *tight, eyes, hide, ride (tight)*
- 6/ *right, might, light, lied (lied)*
- 7/ *rate, plate, fade, late (fade)*

Activity 5 – same/different exercise drills (The purpose of this exercise is to ascertain whether or not the students can hear the contrast in vowel length. The teacher pronounces pairs of words and the students are asked to identify whether the words are the same or different and respond “different” or “same”.)

Same or different?

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1/ <i>sat, sad</i> | D |
| 2/ <i>let, led</i> | D |
| 3/ <i>bet, bet</i> | S |
| 4/ <i>bed, bed</i> | S |
| 5/ <i>bed, bet</i> | D |

Activity 6 – practising discrimination in the context of real language (The teacher makes a statement and the students declare the “message” to be true or false according to whether it makes sense or not. It is assumed that the students know the vocabulary and comprehend the grammatical structures.)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1/ He rode a letter. | F |
| 2/ She wrote an email. | T |
| 3/ You should never beed a dog. | F |
| 4/ Don't feet the animals. | F |
| 5/ The house is hiss. | F |

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Pre-listening Stage and Teaching Listening from the Adult Learner's Perspective

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1. Introduction

Since the beginning of Communicative Language Teaching (approx. the late 1970s) we have taken for granted that teaching listening comprehension should be an integral part of every general English course and that a listening session in the classroom should consist of three stages: 1. pre-listening, 2. while-listening and 3. post-listening (e.g. Anderson and Lynch 1988: 58; Underwood 1989: 28; Hedge 2000: 249; Field 2008: 17). However, how often do we teach listening specifically? And do we understand what we do? Do we know what exactly happens in each stage? What is the relative proportion of each of the stages? What do we do in the pre-listening stage? Is the pre-listening stage useful for all proficiency levels? Should we use the same pre-listening techniques for higher and lower proficiency levels? How many times do we repeat (replay) one listening text?

These are some of the questions which had been running through our minds for some time and so we decided to ask the students in our face-to-face courses in the Department of Language Studies about their experiences, opinions and attitudes to teaching/learning listening, with a focus on the pre-listening stage. In this paper, we would like to share some of the results.

After introducing the methods in Section II, the results and discussion in Section III will cover the following topics: 1. Students' self-evaluation in the main language skills and language systems, 2. Needs analysis, 3. Teaching and learning listening in the language classroom in general, and 4. The pre-listening stage in the listening session. Section IV attempts to draw conclusions for both teaching listening and using pre-listening techniques in the classroom, with a special focus on lower proficiency levels.

2. Methods

The purpose of the research project was to find out how listening is taught in the adult language classroom and learn more about our adult students' needs and opinions. The character of the quantitative research was mainly descriptive.

The questionnaire survey was carried out at the Department of Language Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (ASCR), where we teach mainly PhD students and employees of the ASCR (age: 21-73, mean age: 39). We teach six foreign languages, among which English dominates with approx. 72% of our students, French covers approx. 13%, German approx. 12%, and Spanish approx. 3%. We offer courses at all levels (CEF A1-C2). One third of our courses is taught by native speaker teachers. As far as English is concerned, in summer term 2012, there were 42 courses of general English, 19 exam preparation courses, and 12 conversation courses.

In the period between October 2011 and April 2012, a questionnaire was developed in order to collect data from our students about their opinions, needs, experiences, and feelings about learning listening in the classroom.

The questionnaire survey was carried out in the period between May 9 and June 1, 2012. In cooperation with the IT department, an online version of the questionnaire was prepared and piloted. The purpose of the survey was explained in advance firstly by the department teachers in their courses and secondly in the introduction to the online questionnaire. The link to the online questionnaire was sent to all our students of face-to-face courses (1,016 students) via email [1]. The questionnaire was anonymous and the students received two more reminders via email. In order to ensure a high response rate, proactive contact strategy was adopted (Vicente and Reis 2010). The survey took three weeks.

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to answer 47 questions with their foreign language (FL) course in mind. Most of the courses have just one teacher. The students attending courses shared by two teachers (Cambridge exam preparation, e.g. PET / FCE / CAE / CPE) were given the instruction to choose just one of their teachers and answer the questionnaire with that particular teacher and course in mind. Nevertheless, there was also an option to fill in the questionnaire twice, separately for each teacher.

The response rate was 47%, which may be considered very high given the fact that it was an online survey (Gavora 2010: 134). We received 473 replies in total [2], out of which 374 (i.e. 79%) were responses from students of English as a foreign language (EFL).

The SPSS software was employed to analyse the collected data, firstly for the whole sample and secondly for the EFL students sample. There were hardly any differences between the results from the two samples. This paper concentrates solely on the results from the EFL students sample (see Tab. 1).

Tab. 1: Sample Description

	Men				Women		
Gender	27 %				73 %		
	21 - 27	28 - 34	35 - 41	42 - 48	49 - 55	56 - 62	63 and more
Age group	27 %	21 %	13 %	11 %	14 %	10 %	4 %
	Ph.D.	MA	BA	Higher Edu.	Secondary school		
Education	21 %	57 %	5 %	2 %	15 %		
	A1	A2	B1	B2	C		
Proficiency level	4 %	22 %	18 %	37 %	19		

3. Results and discussion

Statistical analyses of the data revealed a lot of notable results we would like to comment on:

1. *Self-evaluation: How students assess themselves in the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and language systems (grammar, lexis, spelling, pronunciation, and communicative language functions) [Q4-5]:*

The learners graded their own language skills on the scale from 1 to 5, as if in school (Czech grading system: 1 – the best grade, 5 – the worst grade). Speaking and listening, the skills of oral communication, obtained the worst results (average grade: mean 2.78 in speaking and 2.77 in listening), whereas the students' reading skill obtained the best grade (mean: 1.92). As for the levels, the higher the level, the higher the students' self-assessment of their listening skills (contingency coefficient: 0.342). The best mark was given at A1 level in 0% cases and at C level in 16%, whereas the worst marks surprisingly reached their peak at B1 level. One reason might be that B1 students, when preparing for the FCE exam, are more critical and realise better than at lower levels the key role of listening in communication (affecting both the Listening and Speaking parts of the exam). On the other hand, in the students' assessment of their language systems (knowledge), there were only slight differences, with lexical knowledge scoring the worst (mean: 2.60) and pronunciation scoring the best (mean: 2.38). Overall, however, the students assessed all their language systems (knowledge) higher than their speaking and listening skills.

Conclusion: Listening is as important as speaking and deserves our attention (especially at lower levels, see below). This is also supported by the fact that 63% of the learners stated that one of their primary purposes of language study is 'communication when travelling' [Q46].

2. *Needs analysis: Which language skill(s) and knowledge students need to improve most [Q6-7]:*

The respondents could choose a maximum of two language skills and two language systems they want to improve most. In agreement with the previous issue (point 1, [Q 4-5]) the learners stated that they most want to improve speaking (91%) and listening (55%), the skills they assessed as their worst. Nearly half of the students chose the combination of 'speaking and listening' (49%). Concerning the language systems, they would like to improve mainly communicative language functions (69%) and lexis (54%). These results confirm our previous research results

(Ždímalová 2009a: 9, a questionnaire survey on 100 adult students from the Czech Technical University Language Department), where the students identified speaking skills and knowledge of lexis as their priorities for improvement. The fact that adult students crave improvement mainly in speaking is also consistent with other researchers' findings (e.g. Richards 2009). Furthermore, it may be supported by the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (Swain 2000: 97-114; Rost 2002: 94) which says that students best improve their communicative competence in the foreign/second language via using the language in speaking.

Conclusion: The students' need to improve firstly speaking and secondly listening is most probably based on the students' lack of communicative competence in the two oral communication skills (see point 1, [Q4] above), and on the students' beliefs that they can best improve their communicative competence by speaking. For the above mentioned reasons it is vital to **integrate speaking and listening** in the listening session, as sometimes mentioned elsewhere (e.g. Hinkel 2006; Lynch 2009: 110; Vandergrift 2007: 205), so that we maximize the Students' Talking Time (STT) in the classroom (Scrivener 1994: 14).

3. *Teaching/learning listening in the language classroom [Q10, 18, 21, 15-16, 12-13]:*

- **A) How students evaluate the quality of teaching listening [Q10]:** The learners evaluated the quality of their teachers' teaching in the course in three areas, 1. teaching in general [Q9], 2. teaching listening [Q10], and 3. teaching speaking [Q11], by assigning grades on the scale from 1 to 5 (as if in school). Teaching listening obtained the worst evaluation (mean: 1.82), closely followed by teaching speaking (mean: 1.77), whereas the quality of the teachers' teaching in general obtained the best grade (mean: 1.53).
- In the evaluation of the quality of teaching listening the respondents used all the grades on the scale and, according to the results, three distinct groups can be identified: excellent teachers (grade "1": 41%), very good teachers (grade "2": 41%) and teachers that may need to improve their teaching of listening (grades "3/4/5": 18%). This issue will be analysed further in our research project in the near future and predictors will be identified for the successful

(high-quality) teaching of listening from the students' point of view. So far, we can draw the following conclusions.

- As far as levels are concerned, the average mark was between 1.65 (given by C level students) and 2.08 (given by A1 students). However, the 0.43 difference in evaluation of the teachers' quality of teaching listening may not be considered significant in the light of the fact that at C level students are said to have the listening skill automatized (e.g. Rost 2002: 110; Field 2008: 213) and that they do not need to focus on practising listening as much as the lower levels.
- In terms of **mode of interaction in the classroom** [Q20], the most frequently used variants are:
 - 1. '*Students work individually, the teacher asks for the answers and then the whole class discusses them.*' – 54% of the learners. [Q10: average mark: mean: 1.83].
 - 2. '*Students work in pairs: they discuss possible answers. The teacher asks the pairs for their solutions and then the whole class discusses whose answer/solution is the best.*' – 22% of the learners. [Q10: average mark: mean: 1.70].
 - 3. '*Students work in pairs: they discuss possible answers. The teacher asks the pairs for their solutions and then the teacher supplies the answers.*' – 17% of the learners. [Q10: average mark: mean: 1.98].
- We can qualitatively compare only these three variants as the other ones had very low N values (N<10). Out of the three variants, the teachers were evaluated best when using the following mode of interaction: '*Students work in pairs: they discuss possible answers. The teacher asks the pairs for their solutions and then the whole class discusses whose answer/solution is the best.*' This applies to all levels, and teachers who use mainly the above mentioned mode of interaction received an average mark of 1.7. On the other hand, interaction that includes groups of 3-4 students may be considered less effective by students as the average mark in Q10 is 2.00. These results confirm that students would welcome Field's proposal of lower teacher engagement and higher learner interaction when teaching listening (Field 2008: 44).

Conclusion: There are definitely things we can improve in our teaching of listening, e.g. facilitating pair work and discussion of answers according to Field (2008: 45) or Vandergrift (2007: 199), ensuring lower teacher intervention and higher learner interaction (e.g. Scrivener 2012), and offering learners more variety (see below).

- **B) Types of listening used in the classroom and percentage of time devoted to them [Q18]:** On average, the teaching of listening in our courses consists mainly of the following types of listening:
 - 1. Listening to audiorecordings from the course textbook or supplementary textbooks: 65% of the time.
 - 2. Listening to songs with a focus on their lyrics: 7% of the time.
 - 3. Listening to authentic recordings of native speakers (e.g. from You Tube): 7% of the time.
 - 4. Listening while viewing the course DVD/video: 6% of the time.
 - 5. Listening to the teacher reading a text: 5% of the time, etc.
 - The remaining 10% are distributed among the other types, which all received a mean figure only between 0 - 4% of the time.

Most of the learners answered that their teachers use several different types of listening. However, 26% stated that their teachers use listening to 'course/textbook' audiorecordings 100% of the time. In those cases, such listening to audiorecordings seems to be overused at the expense of the other types (e.g. video), and some authors warn us about this kind of danger (e.g. Field 2008: 58-9; Rost 2002: 105). Analysis of Q10 shows that the more listening to 'course/textbook' audiorecordings prevails, the worse evaluation the teachers get in Q10.

Conclusion: The results confirmed that listening to 'textbook' audiorecordings forms the largest proportion in the teaching of listening, and at the same time that there are considerable differences among the teachers. Students evaluate better the teachers who use a variety of listening types and media in the classroom.

- **C) Types of listening that students would like to do more often in the classroom [Q21]:** The students lack the following types of listening, with the

percentage meaning how many students would prefer more frequent class use of the particular types (Students could choose max. five top options):

- 1. Listening to authentic recordings of native speakers (e.g. from You Tube): 42% of the learners.
- 2. Listening while viewing original films/DVDs/videos: 34% of the learners.
- 3. Listening while viewing the course DVD/video: 27% of the learners.
- 4. Listening to songs with a focus on their lyrics: 26% of the learners.
- 5.-6. Listening to audiorecordings from the course textbook or supplementary textbooks: 24% of the learners.
- 5.-6. Listening while viewing a foreign language TV channel: 24% of the learners.

Conclusions:

Based on the analysis of Q21, it is possible to draw conclusions that apply to all proficiency levels.

The variety principle: It is obvious that the students' preferences and tastes vary as the range of the types they lack [Q21] is much wider than the types we use most often in the classroom ([Q18], see point B above). This may have many reasons; mainly that variety is the spice of the classroom (Field 2008: 58) and that students differ not only in their personalities but also in their learning styles (e.g. Reid 1997, see Q41 below).

The authenticity principle: The students would like their teachers to use authentic listening texts (mainly authentic recordings of native speakers, original films/DVDs/videos, and listening to songs) more often. Authentic texts are very useful (e.g. Rost 2002: 125; Vandergrift 2007: 200) and this applies even to the lower-proficiency levels (Field 2008: 277; Choděra 2006: 142).

The visual support principle: The learners prefer those types of listening which involve visual support, e.g. viewing films/DVDs/videos or a TV channel. It is much better if listeners can connect with the speaker by seeing him/her (e.g. Riley 1981: 145; Lynch 2009: 19), not only for 'lip-reading', but also for understanding the context of the whole situation and the nature of the communicative language

functions involved in the encounter. The results also correspond to the distribution of learning styles (visual/auditory/kinaesthetic) among learners, where the visual learning style is usually the most predominant. In our sample 59% of the learners prefer the visual learning style [Q41]. Instruction based on preferred learning styles of learners is likely to be more effective (e.g. Gardner 1993; Reid 1997; Rost 2002: 105).

- **D) The time spent on teaching/learning listening in the classroom vs. what percentage would be ideal from the students' point of view [Q15-16]:** On average, the learners stated that 23% of the class time is spent on the teaching of listening, whereas they think that 30% of the time should be devoted to it. The comparison of levels shows that the main dissatisfaction is at levels A2 and B1 where the learners wish to increase the percentage by 7% and 9% respectively.

Conclusion: The results confirm that from the students' point of view listening in the classroom deserves more attention, especially at lower-proficiency levels, and that teachers should reserve more time for a systematic listening instruction, which is in agreement with the current literature on the teaching of listening comprehension, e.g. Rost (2002), Field (2008), Lynch (2009), and Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010).

- **E) Use of students' mother tongue (L1) as a means of communication in the classroom vs. how much students want to use it [Q12-13]:** The percentage in answers to both questions strongly correlates with the proficiency level. In the whole sample, L1 is used on average 18% of the time and the students would like it to be used 11% of the time. The learners' answers vary a lot, especially concerning the reality in the classroom.
- The highest-proficiency students (at C level) seem to be very satisfied; they have 7% and they want 5%. However, the lower the level the more dissatisfied the students, e.g. the B1 students have on average 22% and would like only 11%, the A2 students get 30% but want only 20%, and the A1 students have 47 % and want 29%. Based on the differences between the mean figures, we

can see that mainly the lowest-proficiency students would like L1 to be used in the classroom less than it is in fact used.

- As far as age is concerned, the younger the students the less time they want L1 to be used in the classroom. The main reason is that younger students have been exposed to English much more intensively than the previous generations because of the focus on oral communication in Communicative Language Teaching (Richards and Rodgers 2001) and globalization in general, including opportunities for travelling and other effects of the post-revolution era in the Czech Republic.

Conclusion: The higher the level, the less L1 is used as a means of communication in the classroom and the less the students want L1 to be used. In general, higher-level students are more satisfied, and it is fair to mention that they often have native-speaker teachers. The teachers of lower levels should attempt to use L1 as a means of communication in the classroom less often than they do.

F) How many times students listen to one listening text [Q19, Q33k]: In the ELT literature, recommendations vary as to whether the listening text should be repeated or not and how many replays there should be. Authors usually suggest two (e.g. Elkhafaiti 2005: 505) or three replays (e.g. Vandergrift (2003: 433; 2007: 199), but Field (2008: 45) proposes even five replays of the same text. It is no wonder that the students' answers range from 1 to 5 replays because the teachers' approach to this issue naturally varies too. On average, one listening text is played 2.3 times (median: 2 times), with 62% of the 'twice' answer and 31% of the 'three times' answer. Interestingly, in another question on students' problems with listening to audiorecordings, 24% of our students stated that it is '*not sufficient for them to listen to the text twice*' [Q33k]. These results are in agreement with pedagogical steps suggested by Vandergrift (2007: 199), in which prediction stage is followed by three verification stages.

Conclusion: In general it can be said that our teachers play one listening text two or three times and the majority of the students consider it sufficient. One fourth of the students would prefer to listen to one text more than two times. Ideally, we

can provide such students with listening for HW in order for them to listen to it as many times as they need. In fact, 14% of our learners stated that they listen to 'listening HW set up by their teachers' [Q36b].

4. Pre-listening stage in the listening session [Q28, 24, 26-27, 23-29]:

A) Usefulness of the inclusion of pre-listening techniques in the pre-listening stage [Q28]: Many teachers consider the pre-listening stage useful (e.g. Elkhafaifi 2005, Ždímalová 2009b), but what does the survey tell us about the students' opinions on this issue? A large majority (89 %) of the learners approve of the inclusion of pre-listening techniques, with 58% considering the pre-listening techniques 'definitely useful', 31% 'rather useful', 4% 'rather useless', 1% 'definitely useless', and 6% stating that they 'do not know'. Not surprisingly, among the few learners (5%) who do not find pre-listening techniques useful were mainly young learners (age 20-27) from high-proficiency levels (B2-C) who are generally better at listening and do not consider it their priority for improvement (their priority being mainly 'speaking' or a combination of 'speaking and writing').

Conclusion: Based on the data, the inclusion of pre-listening techniques proved to be highly relevant to our students at all proficiency levels.

B) Students' evaluation of how well their teachers can use pre-listening techniques (in the classroom) [Q24]: This evaluation strongly correlates (correlation coefficient: 0.54) with the students' evaluation of their teachers' teaching of listening [Q10] (see point 3.A above). Most students think that their teachers are able to use pre-listening techniques very well (average mark: mean: 1.76). Only 3% of the students gave the worst two marks (marks 4 or 5, in the Czech marking system). This negative evaluation is dispersed across all proficiency levels.

Conclusion: Teachers who can use pre-listening techniques effectively are in most cases also considered very good teachers of listening. The worse teachers

can use pre-listening techniques, the worse they are evaluated in the quality of teaching listening. Of course, the question remains whether and how accurately students can judge such features of our teaching.

C) How often the pre-listening techniques are included: reality in the classroom vs. students' preferences [Q26-27]: The results show that pre-listening techniques are applied before the majority of listening texts; on average in 70% of all listening texts (median 80%). Surprisingly, at higher levels the pre-listening techniques seem to be used more often (e.g. in 87% at C level) than at lower levels, the worst result being at A2 level: in 63% of all listening texts. We expected this to be just the other way round; given the automaticity of listening skill at higher levels (e.g. Rost 2002: 110; Field 2008: 213) we assumed that at higher levels there is less need for pre-listening techniques than at lower levels. Do our research results mean that pre-listening techniques are really used more often at higher levels or may the results mean that students just interpret the reality in the classroom this way? If pre-listening techniques are really used more often at higher levels, why is it so? One reason might be that at higher levels students are more experienced language learners and demand pre-listening techniques as effective tools for preparation; a completely different reason might be that higher levels usually have better qualified teachers, who may tend to use pre-listening techniques more often. Perhaps a further reason for the higher prevalence of pre-listening activities at higher levels might be exam classes and the importance of listening exam paper strategies. Nevertheless, the first author of the article teaches lower-proficiency students and attempts to use pre-listening techniques in 100% of cases. Based on her teaching experience, we are inclined to believe that the differences between lower and higher levels are mainly caused by the fact that lower-proficiency students (A1-A2) underestimate the reality in the classroom (the amount of percent) because they do not feel adequately prepared for listening and do not succeed in listening the way they would wish to. Therefore, it is more useful to compare students' answers in Q26 and Q27 and study whether and how much the learners wish to increase the use of pre-listening techniques at different levels. The results show that lower-level students want to increase the frequency of

using pre-listening techniques much more than higher-level students, e.g. A2 and B1 students by 8%, and C students, on the other hand, seem to be satisfied with what they are getting (mean: 80%) and want slightly less (-1%).

Conclusion: In general, pre-listening techniques are used quite often, on average in 70% (mean) of all listening texts (median 80%). Lower-proficiency learners are less satisfied with the frequency of using pre-listening techniques than higher-proficiency learners, and want to increase it by 8%, whereas higher-proficiency learners want the same frequency as they are getting (mean: 80%) or slightly lower (-1%).

D) Pre-listening techniques used most often [Q23] vs. pre-listening techniques considered the most effective [Q29]: According to our learners, the most often used techniques are:

1. pre-teaching key words (66% of the learners);
2. free conversation on the topic of the listening text (55% of the learners);
3. picture description and discussion on the topic (42% of the learners);
4. story prediction based on the pictures (38% of the learners);
5. brainstorming topical lexis (35% of the learners).

In the students' evaluation of the most effective techniques, 'pre-teaching key words' keeps the first position (75% of the learners), whereas the second position is occupied by 'brainstorming topical lexis' (58% of the learners), which obtained the highest value gain across all proficiency levels.

Conclusion: The students definitely consider the most effective those pre-listening techniques that focus on the development of lexis, which is in agreement with the needs analysis results (see point 2 above).

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the 2012 online questionnaire survey, it can be concluded that teaching listening is as important as teaching speaking and deserves our

attention. The learners stated that their priority is to improve mainly speaking and listening. Concerning the listening types, the students would prefer more frequent class use of authentic listening texts and 'visual' types of listening (films, DVDs), which would ensure more variety in the listening sessions. In general, learners would also like to limit the use of L1 as a means of communication in the classroom, especially at lower-proficiency levels. As for the number of 'multiple replays' of one listening text, the learners are satisfied with two to three replays.

As far as pre-listening techniques are concerned, their inclusion is considered useful by the majority of learners. In the evaluation of the quality of teaching listening, the students evaluate higher the teachers who are able to use pre-listening techniques more effectively. On average, pre-listening techniques are used in 70% of all listening texts. At lower levels pre-listening techniques seem to be underused, whereas at higher levels the students are satisfied. The learners across all levels view as the most effective those pre-listening techniques that focus on lexis, namely 'brainstorming topical lexis' and 'pre-teaching key words'.

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Notes

[1] We used a complete coverage of the wide-ranging census according to Ryšavý [2011: 89] who says: "If there are good reasons to suppose that the investigated population uses the Internet and communication via email frequently, then nothing prevents the researchers from approaching the whole target population via the Internet".

[2] Unfortunately, in our case it is not possible to describe non-response rate in more detail and to distinguish contact rate from cooperation rate, mainly because of financial and organizational reasons. Therefore, in the analysis we are working with our group of respondents appropriately as with a countable population which has its own statistical limitation as for statistical induction.

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NEFLT: Network of Educators of Foreign Language Teachers

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The initiator and the main holder of the grant is the English Department at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, with partnering universities of Brno, Masaryk University, the University of Ostrava along with the University of Hradec Králové.

NEFLT has been created to facilitate cooperation among tertiary education of future foreign language teachers as well as to offer help with applied teaching at extramural, secondary, primary and pre-school levels of education. The languages covered by knowledge representation and integration within the project are English, German, Russian and French.

NEFLT enhances cooperation among institutions and is supportive of mutual transfer of experience as well as it functions within the framework of instructions and expertise through workshops, seminars, lectures, contact platforms, scholarship and a methodological advisory centre.

The NEFLT team aim to create and/or improve relationships between educators of foreign tongues as well as to set relationships between the educators and the school language teachers. Within the grant activities, we concentrate on analysing current foreign language teaching programmes (both public and private) and trends, map the job opportunities on the labour market and carry out the statistics of the findings/research, organize workshops to enhance language educators' competence, concentrate on global and multicultural state of the art issues in language teaching and much more. The grant is to help primary and secondary teachers who are welcome to come to see us or write to the team members and we are pleased to answer questions, so feel free to go to <http://neflt.ujep.cz> where the full range of NEFLT activities is to be tracked together with further details about Methodological

Advisory Centre, the practical support to teachers, with materials to download and contacts offered to ask anything concerning foreign language teaching/learning English (as well as Russian, French and German).

The grant has included a number of workshops organized and led by well-known scientists, linguists and other professionals as well as seminars for practical teaching (the Internet site includes information about German Language Teaching, the Modern History of Russia, Modern Issues in Graphology, American Tertiary Schooling System, Teaching Languages at the Pre-school Level, Language Teaching IT, et cetera). One of the highlights of the NEFLT season was a conference entitled Challenges IV (October 25 - 26 2012), at the English Department of UJEP, English speaking conference with international speakers, David Newby to name but one, who held the plenary speech of high erudition.

NEFLT is here to be of help to you, your colleagues, your students and many others who are interested in mastering foreign languages or mastering the teaching of foreign tongues. We would be happy to hear from you!

For Your Information:

ACERT, Asociace certifikovaných jazykových škol, or the Association of Certified Language Schools is hosting a conference at the end of March:

"BEST PRACTICES and PERSPECTIVES in MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING"
31.03.2012 in the Městské knihovně (City Library) in Prague
(see their website <http://acert.cz/> for details)

The Association of Certified Language Schools, an associate member of EAQUALS, is a civic association, whose members are language schools that meet the criteria for membership in the Association laid down in its Charter and that satisfy the standards specified in the Inspection Scheme.

The Inspection Scheme consists of a logically conceived and effective system for inspecting schools/institutions; this system gives individual schools/institutions support while maintaining and improving the quality of their services.

Member schools are re-inspected every 3 years. The aim of the Association is to improve the quality of service on the language education market for the joint benefit of language schools and their students.

Association of Certified Language Schools focuses primarily on:

- monitoring the quality of its members' tuition, tutorial staff and facilities,
- the observance of professional ethics,
- communication with the media,
- informing the public about teaching systems, international examinations, new trends, etc.,
- making comments on legislation concerning language education in the Czech Republic.

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