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**Teaching English through Blended Learning at Lower Secondary
Level**

**Využití Blended Learning pro výuku anglického jazyka na 2.
stupni ZŠ**

Bakalářská práce

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Cíl, metody, literatura, předpoklady:

Teoretická část práce definuje metodu blended learning a zasadí ji do kontextu dalších metod výuky cizích jazyků. Autor se zaměří zejména na postupy, které metoda využívá, roli učitele a žáka, zhodnotí výhody a nevýhody pro výuku anglického jazyka a popíše typické vlastnosti jazykových kurzů založených na blended learning. Praktická část práce bude obsahovat vlastní autorem provedené šetření, kterým se zhodnotí efektivitu dané metody pro výuku zvolených jazykových aspektů.

THORNE, Kaye. Blended learning: how to integrate online & traditional learning. Sterling, VA: Kogan Page, 2003, ISBN 0749439017. BONK, Curtis Jay a Charles Ray GRAHAM. The handbook of blended learning: global perspectives, local designs. 1st ed. San Francisco: Pfeiffer, c2006, ISBN 9780787977580. REIMANNOVÁ, Irena. Blended learning ve výuce obchodní angličtiny. Univerzita Pardubice, Fakulta filozofická, 2011. ISBN 978-80-7395-347-8. CELCE-MURCIA, Marianne, Donna BRINTON a Marguerite Ann SNOW, ed. Teaching English as a second or foreign language. Fourth edition. Boston: National Geographic Learning, 2014. ISBN 978-1111351694. WALKER, Susan Aisha - WHITE, Goodith. Technology enhanced language learning : connecting theory and practice. 1st pub. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-19-442368-7. DUDNEY, Gavin - HOCKLY, Nicky. How to teach English with technology. Harlow : Pearson, 2007. ISBN 978-1-4058-5303-3. BAREŠOVÁ, Andrea. E-Learning ve vzdělávání dospělých. 1. vyd. Praha: VOX, 2003. ISBN 80-86324-27-3. CHAPELLE, Carol. English language learning and technology: Lectures on applied linguistics in the age of information and communication technology. John Benjamins Publishing, 2003. ISBN 90 272 1703 3. KOPECKÝ, Kamil. E-learning (nejen) pro pedagogy. 1. vyd. Olomouc: HANEX, 2006. ISBN 80-85783-50-9. STEIN, Jared; GRAHAM, Charles R. Essentials for blended learning: A standards-based guide. Routledge, 2014. ISBN 978-0-415-63616-2.

Anotace:

Bakalářská práce se zabývá metodou Blended learning, mapuje její vznik, využitelnost a efektivitu v praxi. Teoretická část obsahuje vhled do využití technologií ve vzdělávání, představuje E-learning jakožto předchůdce metody Blended Learning. Práce dále definuje Blended Learning a klade důraz na klíčové koncepty a typické vlastnosti kurzů založených na této metodě, roli učitele a žáka, výhody a nevýhody pro výuku anglického jazyka. Praktická část obsahuje výzkum hodnotící efektivitu využití Blended Learningu ve výuce anglického jazyka u žáků 7. a 8. třídy na základní škole ve Ždírci nad Doubravou. Výzkum se zaměřuje na dva konkrétní jazykové aspekty, čtení a poslech. Kromě autorem vypracovaného šetření práce také využívá výsledky srovnávacích testů z angličtiny vypracované společností Scio.

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a s použitím uvedené literatury.

Datum:

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Poděkování

Rád bych poděkoval vedoucímu své bakalářské práce Mgr. Michalu Pištorovi za metodické vedení, cenné rady a vstřícnost při zpracování této práce.

ANOTACE

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Bakalářská práce se zabývá metodou blended learning, mapuje její vznik, využitelnost a efektivitu v praxi. Teoretická část obsahuje vhled do využití technologií ve vzdělávání, představuje e-learning jakožto předchůdce metody blended learning. Práce dále definuje blended learning a klade důraz na klíčové koncepty a typické vlastnosti kurzů založených na této metodě, roli učitele a žáka, výhody a nevýhody pro výuku anglického jazyka. Praktická část obsahuje výzkum hodnotící přínos využití blended learning ve výuce anglického jazyka u žáků 7. a 8. třídy na základní škole ve Ždírci nad Doubravou. Výzkum se zaměřuje na dva konkrétní jazykové aspekty, čtení a poslech. Kromě autorem vypracovaného šetření práce také využívá výsledky srovnávacích testů z angličtiny vypracované společností Scio. Práce je psána v angličtině.

Klíčová slova: blended learning, e-learning, technologie ve vzdělávání, computer-assisted language learning, výuka anglického jazyka

ANNOTATION

BENC, Marek. *Teaching English through Blended Learning at Lower Secondary Level*. Hradec Králové: Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, 2017. 62 p. Bachelor Degree Thesis.

The bachelor thesis deals with Blended Learning method, maps its creation, applicability and efficiency in practice. The theoretical part contains insight to the usage of technology in education, introduces E-learning as the predecessor of Blended Learning method. The paper then defines blended learning and focuses on its key concepts and typical features of the courses based on this method, the role of a teacher and a student, advantages and disadvantages concerning English language teaching. The practical part includes a research which evaluates the efficiency of using Blended Learning in English language teaching. The research aims at 7th and 8th grade pupils from Elementary school in Ždírec nad Doubravou. The research deals with two specific language skills, reading and listening. Except for author's own survey, the paper also uses the results of comparative tests provided by Scio company. The paper is written in English.

Keywords: blended learning, e-learning, technology in education, computer-assisted language learning, English language learning

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že bakalářská práce je uložena v souladu s rektorským výnosem č. 1/2013 (Řád pro nakládání se školními a některými jinými autorskými díly na UHK).

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Introduction

The education is never-ending process and so is its modification and improving. Educators always aspire to be more effective and captivating in their teaching so they reach for the necessary tools which help them to accomplish such tasks. It is no wonder that the major source of these tools is the ever-present and swiftly emerging technology. Technology has had its place in education for a long time and its presence in our quickly-changing and modern lives may even seem overwhelming. That might be the reason for creation of synthesis comprising “traditional” and “modern” ways of teaching, often referred to as blended learning. This paper deals with the usage of this synthesis in the area of English language teaching on the lower secondary level, where blended learning is not so commonly established as in higher education. That is the reason of my interest and ultimately the reason for choosing this topic.

The main aim of this paper is to prove the benefits of blended learning concerning particular English language skills and reflect opinions on its implementing and functioning from participants’ and educator’s points of view.

Theoretical part of this paper provides the necessary information about evolution of blended learning, with the focus on e-learning, which represents its “technological” part and therefore plays the key role in defining of this new learning method. For that reason, e-learning is further examined, specifically its technological forms and possibilities of interaction between a teacher and students. The next step is discovering whether e-learning is applicable in language learning, especially in connection with the particular language skills, which are the subject of research in the practical part of the paper. Brief section is also dedicated to the testing of these skills. Blended learning itself is then defined and examined in the terms of uncovering its possible benefits, setbacks and realization. The last section of theoretical part is dedicated to the usage of blended learning in English language teaching. This section uncovers the reasons for implementing technology into English language learning and introduces the essential concepts for creating blended learning environment. Finally, the section presents specific example of blended learning usage in the field of English language learning.

The core of the practical part of this paper is a research conducted on the Elementary school in Ždírec nad Doubravou, where blended learning is used to elevate English language skills. The information retrieved from the school as well as the information gathered in theoretical

part serves to properly assess and describe the implementation of blended learning at the school. The main research is then presented. As blended learning means combination of more approaches, I have also chosen to utilise two different research methods to achieve the main aim of this paper. The first method comprises listening and reading skills tests, which I created specifically to uncover differences between blended learning participants and regular students to potentially prove the benefits of blended learning usage in those particular English language skills. The second method is questioning both blended learning students and their teacher using pen and paper interview as well as group interviews. Main purpose of these interviews is to discover subjective opinions on functioning and benefits of blended learning from participants' and educator's points of view.

All the sources are cited according to ISO 690 standard.

Theoretical part

1 E-learning

It seems that the progress of technology cannot be stopped and we can hardly deny the fact that technology is playing a significant role in our professional and personal lives. Therefore the increasing emergence of technology in education is not a surprise for anyone. This chapter will be focused on the beginnings and development of such emergence, which cannot be accomplished without introducing e-learning. Firstly, to get the best understanding of e-learning, its definition is provided from two different points of view. Once defined, e-learning is further examined, specifically the levels on which it can operate in terms of internet connection and interaction between educator and student. Then we can be more specific as we present its technological forms. Introduced forms are Computer Based Training (CBT), Web based training (WBT) and finally Learning Management System (LMS). Moreover, this chapter will follow the usage of e-learning into the field of language learning. All of these concepts basically helped to lay the foundation for the creation of blended learning, which is the reason for implementing them into this paper.

1.1 Definition

Before we start to discuss blended learning, it is appropriate to highlight the term e-learning, which is often closely connected to it. According to Reimannová (2011), there are two major interpretations to which authors incline. Some of them, focusing more on its technological aspects, recognize e-learning mainly as the opportunity of using computers and other related media in education. Others target primarily the learning process, so their view is more pedagogically centred (Reimannová 2011, p. 16).

We cannot deny that the most fundamental element of e-learning is the presence of technological support, e.g. Internet, CD-ROMs, Intranet or audio and video tapes. Barešová (2011) also recognises two different approaches in defining e-learning, while the more technology-based one is credited to the United States of America. Elliot Massie, American expert on learning technology and the first analyst acknowledged to use the term e-learning, serves as justifiable proof as he describes e-learning as “a tool, which uses network technology to create, distribute, administrate and update educational materials” (Barešová 2011, pp. 28-29). As also stated by Barešová (2011, p. 29), the “American” concept also characterize e-learning as “*content delivery with the help of any electronic media.*”

Nevertheless, the United States of America is not the only country which points out the significance of e-learning's technological aspects. European Commission (2014) shares an interesting point of view as it focuses on quality improvement of education. E-learning is described as a tool to share high quality learning material, which can elevate the quality of teaching and learning. We can observe that this definition is slightly different than the "American" one. It is true that they both focus on content delivery, but this definition suggests that e-learning can be used to improve educational process by using information technology. That means it was not understood only as single entity which purpose is to create and deliver certain content, but also as a means of education improvement.

The pedagogically-centred approach takes this definition one step further as it recognizes e-learning as educational process. Typical "Czech" understanding of e-learning offers the pedagogical dictionary (Průcha et al. 2003, p. 57) in which e-learning is described as "*various kinds of learning with the support of computer, mostly with the use of modern technological means, e.g CD-ROM.*" Therefore Barešová (2011, p. 30) believes that e-learning can be perceived as educational process connected with ICT, creating specific environment in order to reach your teaching goals. In the same vein, Wagner (2004) defines e-learning as: "*educational process using information and communication technologies to create courses, distribute content and provide communication among students and teachers*". It is apparent that for numerous Czech authors the main feature of e-learning is the process itself.

However, they are not the only ones who share this point of view. Open and Distance Learning Quality Council of the United Kingdom provides this interesting and complementary definition: "*e-learning is the effective learning process created by combining digitally delivered content with learning support and services*" (Waller, 2001 cited in NSTA 2016).

In view of all that has been mentioned, we cannot overlook neither the technological nor the pedagogical aspects of e-learning as they create one single entity. This paper however embraces and examines the idea of adding something new to the education process.

1.2 Levels of operation in e-learning

Once we defined e-learning and put it in the right context, we cannot overlook the variety of levels on which e-learning could operate, not only in terms of the accessibility of Internet connection, but also in terms of interaction between the educator and students.

1.2.1 Online e-learning

If education requires connection to either local or global network, we are talking about online e-learning. Educational content is accessible to students in various forms and they are also able to communicate with each other (Kopecký, 2006, p. 9). Kopecký (2006) also distinguishes online e-learning further into its asynchronous and synchronous form, based only on the means of interaction between students and the educator, whilst Barešová (2011) puts also the learning process itself into consideration, regarding asynchronous and synchronous form as different types of education within e-learning. Both of these views are synthesized together as they both comprise interesting and complementary information.

When this communication is happening continually and the educational process is executed in the real time, we are talking about **Synchronous education**. Therefore the time frame of the communication between the educator and their students is exactly set, although they can be anywhere they want during the process. The Internet connection is obviously the essential part of this type of e-learning and it grants the opportunity to use many different means of communication, such as Chat, Video and Audio conference, Shared whiteboard, etc. (Barešová, 2011).

Education, where this interaction is not continual and is happening after some delay, is called **Asynchronous education**. Characteristic feature of this type of e-learning is its time independence, meaning that students can study anytime they want. Asynchronous learning could be also executed without the Internet connection, with the help of CD-ROM, audio or video tapes. However, a good example of Asynchronous learning could be also the online Self-study courses. As mentioned above, the communication between the tutor and students is not in real time and it is done mostly via email or discussion forums (Barešová, 2011).

1.2.2 Offline e-learning

Network connection is not required to apply Offline e-learning. Interestingly, despite this only fact, the characteristics of Offline e-learning by Kopecký (2006) are very similar to Asynchronous learning by Barešová (2011). However, the reason for implementing Offline e-learning is also its frequent combination with face to face interaction, which could be called

blended learning. In such cases, Offline e-learning is mostly represented by a learning program, which is used at home often by Elementary or High school students (Kopecký 2006).

It is apparent that e-learning can be applicable in various forms. Even without psychical presence of the teacher and students in the classroom, there are many possibilities how they can communicate with each other, regardless of continuity of such communication.

1.3 Technological forms of E-learning

This section will summarize findings about e-learning by naming its specific technological forms. The following table provides overview of these forms.

Name	Internet Connection	Benefits
Computer Based Training (CBT)	Offline	Possibility of usage without Internet connection
Web Based Training (WBT)	Online	Large sharing space, quick update of learning content
Learning Management System (LMS)	Online	Same benefits as Web Based Training, organization of learning courses, overview of student's results and teacher's activities, evaluation tools

Source: (Kopecký 2006)

1.3.1 Computer Based Training

CBT is a form of electronic education between the years 1990-1999. Under this term we understand the education supported by computers, where the content was delivered through CD-ROM. This fact implies that CBT is recognised mainly as offline education. Various kinds of educational games, programs and simulations are deemed to be part of CBT (Kopecký, 2006, p. 22).

Although CBT was the beginning of electronic education and we cannot deny its potential, it had several major setbacks. Firstly, it was the impossibility to upgrade a learning content. Secondly, the absence of the educator caused the lack of reaction on student's ideas (Kopecký 2006). Not surprisingly, the producers of educational materials were forced to look for another space, where the learning content could be shared.

1.3.2 Web Based Training

Between the years 1997-1999, the capability of computer network to share the content was being recognised, so the network has become a sharing space for CBT. WBT, as the first

online form of electronic education, solved many of the CBT's imperfections. WBT can allow communication between the educator and the students as well as the immediate and cheaper upgrade of the learning material (Kopecký, 2006, p. 24).

Despite everything that has been mentioned about CBT and WBT, there was still one obtrusive disadvantage of both. It was the absolute inadequacy of organization of online courses as well as overview and control over student's results and teacher's work. This problem became crucial, because WBT was accessible to more and more people. The necessity of more complex and organized solution was evident (Kopecký, 2006, p. 24).

1.3.3 Learning Management System

The solution of the above mentioned problem came with the creation of software application, which served as the accessible point to various kinds of educational sources (Barešová, 2011, p. 62). LMS represents the much needed system and organization and it is also able to provide feedback for students. One of the most commonly used LSM is Moodle, which is successfully being used by many universities, including University of Hradec Králové.

Some authors agree that CBT cannot be considered as a form of e-learning and claim that CBT, for its lack of interaction, serves only as one possible tool which helps to create e-learning (Barešová 2011, Kopecký 2006). While Kopecký (2006) maintains this idea and does not recognise either WBT or LMS as a form of e-learning, Barešová (2011) suggests that the interaction between students and the teacher is a clear sign of e-learning, therefore WBT and LMS are its rightful forms. Apparently there are differences in perception of e-learning.

All in all, technology in education has made significant progress over the years has been constantly evolving into more effective forms. It has started only with the usage of tapes and CDs, but soon there was the possibility to access the Internet and gain its advantages. Nowadays we have whole learning systems, which can both offer and test our knowledge. All of these are being organised and put together in the form of e-learning.

1.4 Computer-assisted language learning

So far we have mapped the understanding of e-learning. It is now time to focus on more specific area, which is the main theme of this paper - language learning. But before we get to combine e-learning with face-to-face interaction, let us first answer the important question whether e-learning can be even applicable and effective in language learning. This chapter will be focused on answering such question.

With the growth of CBT in the 1990s, it was no surprise that a handful of the computer based programs were created for English learners. These programs, called collectively Computer-assisted language learning (CALL), meant a huge progress in creative teaching (Celce-Murcia et al. 2014).

However, there was only a small number of such programs and due to the limited technology at that time, they were not very advanced (Celce-Murcia et al. 2014). Most of the first language learning programs followed very strict and linear path and could be compared to the “*traditional textbook exercises*” (Beatty, 2010, p. 21). Also the sound-based programs were restricted by the limitations of early personal computers. One of the major setbacks was the inability to present recordings of the human voice (Davies 2016).

Not surprisingly, this particular issue was solved very soon simply by combining computer with 12-inch videodisc player. Nonetheless, the popular days of CALL were still yet to come. The situation improved with usage of CD-ROM and DVD, which were able to store extensive amount of text, images and sound. The big break for CALL came with the introduction of World Wide Web to the public in the 1993 (Davies 2016). Suddenly, there was a space, where new websites were being created every day. The reason for the big expansion of CALL is the fact that creating websites was so much easier than making computer programs, which required advanced skills in programming (Celce-Murcia et al. 2014).

1.4.1 The application of CALL in the classroom

The evidence presented thus far shows that there are more than enough opportunities to utilise CALL, either by using storage units, such as CD-ROM and DVD or sharing material through a network. Let us now scope out the possibilities of using CALL in the improvement of particular skills, which are going to be the subject of research in the practical part of the paper.

1.4.2 Listening skills

The first one is the listening comprehension. Listening has always been an important tool in English language teaching. Moreover, Michael Thomas et al. (2012, p. 310) see the availability of authentic audio as “*probably the greatest technological boon to language learning, especially around the intermediate level*“. There is also a big advantage in listening when it comes to usage of a computer. As mentioned by Celce- Murica et al. (2014, p. 417), computers are “*tireless in their delivery*”, meaning that computer will provide as much repetition of particular word or sentence as required without being exhausted or annoyed,

which can be really helpful for practising and improving listening comprehension skills, among others of course.

With the above mentioned development of technology and its emergence into language teaching, it is no surprise that a numerous listening opportunities were introduced to the students, whether it was in the form of websites (e.g., esl-lab.com), podcasts (e.g., grammar.quickanddirtytips.com), or various audiobooks, radio broadcast and interviews (Celce-Murcia et al. 2014).

1.4.3 Reading Skills

Reading comprehension is, without a doubt, another essential skill that needs to be worked on in order to be successful in English language learning. After all, vast majority of world's research is being printed in English (Michael Thomas et al. 2012). Due to the usage of Internet and the above mentioned storage units, the accessibility and quantity of reading material in CALL do not require any further discussion. It seems that nothing is easier than typing in any topic of interest using a search engine and then choosing the most appropriate reading material.

On the other hand, the processing of these materials may not be as effective as of those simply written on paper. According to Agger (2008 cited in Celce-Murcia et al. 2014, p. 413), who is referencing various studies by J. Nielson, there are some issues with online reading: *“online readers tend to skip large blocks of text; shorter paragraphs and bulleted lists get more attention”*. Moreover, not only there might be problems with consistency of reading, but also with its speed: *“the reading pace for online reading is believed to be 25% slower than reading from paper”* (Celce-Murcia et al. 2014, p. 413). These factors definitely should not be overlooked by teachers.

As these findings clearly demonstrate, the practise of reading and listening comprehension within CALL has made tremendous progress along with the development of technology, especially with the introduction and growth of the World Wide Web. This progress has shown that there are more than enough possible opportunities to practise and improve particular language skills with the assistance of a computer. It is questionable, however, how effective can some of them be and whether they are better than the approach that does not require the assistance of a computer.

2 Listening and Reading skills testing

As mentioned above, listening and reading skills are those particular language communicative skills which are to be tested in the practical part of this paper. Therefore it would be appropriate to dedicate this brief section to the issue of testing these skills.

There are various ways how to test listening skills in English language. According to Madsen (1983) these ways can be divided according to the type of response on the given piece of recording in English. The tested subjects can, for example, listen to a story and then answer the questions that are connected with the story by choosing one of the visual cues. This type of testing is combination of *“picture cues”* and *“task response”*, which is considered to be *“rather objective and easy to score”* (Madsen 1983, pp. 129-132).

Another interesting and apparently more challenging type of response is so-called *“open-ended response.”* In this case, there are no visual or written clues for answering the questions attached to the recording. Although this type of testing is more difficult to score, it is also *“closely approximate real life communication”* (Madsen 1983, p. 143).

As for the reading skills testing, it can be divided in very similar manner as the listening skills testing. Generally, however, all language testing, especially that of skills such as reading and listening, should be as close to the context of the actual use as possible in order to be precise (Kopriva 2008).

3 Blended learning

After we laid the foundations, introduced e-learning and its forms as sort of “technological” side of blended learning, let us discover what exactly blended learning means. This chapter comprises review of blended learning development over the years from its beginnings up to today’s perception and to the point, which corresponds with the research done in the practical part of this paper. After that, advantages and disadvantages of blended learning are presented, often in connection with the findings about e-learning presented thus far. Finally, the roles of teachers and students in blended learning environment are discussed.

3.1 Definition

Since this first appearance of the term there has been increasing effort to clarify blended learning concept and place it among other learning methods. For example, in 2003 Margaret Driscoll (2003, p. 1), IBM consultant, provided these definitions:

“blend-ed learn-ing v.

- 1. To combine or mix modes of web-based technology (e.g., live virtual classroom, self-paced instruction, collaborative learning, streaming video, audio, and text) to accomplish an educational goal.*
- 2. To combine various pedagogical approaches (e.g., constructivism, behaviourism, cognitivism) to produce an optimal learning outcome with or without instructional technology.*
- 3. To combine any form of instructional technology (e.g., videotape, CD-ROM, web-based training, film) with face-to-face instructor-led training.*
- 4. To mix or combine instructional technology with actual job tasks in order to create a harmonious effect of learning and working.”*

With these various definitions being stated, Driscoll (2003) thinks that they only show unused potential of blended learning. Therefore we still do not have the exact definition, especially if the author claims that everybody can understand and interpret it differently (Driscoll, 2003). On the other hand, there is no doubt that definition number two and three were getting closer to something what we consider blended learning to be today.

Interestingly, there were other authors in the same period of time, who had also seen the potential of blended learning, but their understanding of the method was more specific. Thorne (2003, p. 16) described it a concept, evolved from e-learning, integrating creative

and technological advances offered by online learning and the best of traditional learning. Moreover, the same author (Thorne 2003, p. 16) considers blended learning as *“the most logical and natural evolution of our learning agenda.”* So Thorne’s perception of blended learning may suggest that this method is the necessary solution of education in our increasingly technology-imbued world.

Similar approach can be observed in the publication of Eger, who also mentions blended learning in connection with e-learning courses. In the description of blended learning, he also includes the possibility of their improvement: *“combination of e-learning and full-time studies, which seems to be more effective than justifiably criticised “pure” e-learning courses.”* Eger (2004, p. 21)

Given these points, it is apparent that blended learning has come a long way from its first appearance in terms of its definition. From very vague and complex explanations to realization of great a potential of blended learning and its possible attributes to erase the weaknesses of e-learning and essentially becoming its logical successor. Main purpose of this paper, however, is not to point out the mistakes of e-learning. It is actually quite the opposite. This paper examines the idea of adding the online environment to the every-day classroom in order to improve student’s language skills. This idea is supported by Stein and Graham (2014, p. 9), who claim that this implementation of online environment can be beneficial by giving flexibility and benefits of using “automated and asynchronous online tools”.

3.2 Advantages of Blended learning

The great potential and flexibility of blended learning have already been discussed. Now we should focus more on the benefits that we can gain from the implementation of blended learning.

One of the biggest advantages of blended learning is the possibility of gaining benefits from both asynchronous and synchronous learning, which were discussed in the section 1.2.1. So as has already been mentioned, asynchronous learning allows students to take their time with working on their online materials as well as communicating with the teacher and other students, whilst synchronous learning gives the opportunity to share the ideas and questions at the same time, with all protagonists being present. (Barešová, 2011) This combination is pointed out by Stein and Graham (2014), who support the flexibility of asynchronous interaction and suggest that one of the possibilities to implement synchronous interaction is

simply conducting it on the onsite meetings of the class. So with blended learning we are no longer obliged to choose between synchronous or asynchronous interaction, and potentially losing the advantages of one of them. (Stein and Graham, 2014)

Furthermore, there is one major advantage that comes hand to hand with implementation of e-learning. It is individualization of education, which is otherwise *“hardly achievable in full-time studies, especially with the presence of educator and larger number of students, for example 20.”* (Reimannová, 2011, p. 52) This view is supported by Stein and Graham (2014), who point out the teachers’ trouble to pace their instruction according to individual needs of students, leaving them with no choice but to adjust the pace to the majority of students, whereas online learners can set their pace and they are able to check the learning material repeatedly. So the advantage of blended learning does not lie only in the variety of possible communication between students and the teacher, but also in the promise of more individualized education.

3.3 Disadvantages of Blended Learning

Despite everything that has been stated above about the benefits of “technological part” of blended learning, there are also several drawbacks connected with e-learning, which can inevitably cause problems with either establishing or maintaining functional and effective blended learning course.

Some authors (Reimannová 2011, Kopecký 2006) agree that the absolute necessity of technological support is one of the general disadvantages of e-learning. Kopecký (2006), however, does not see it as a big problem, at least as far as the Internet connection is concerned as he claims that nowadays it is within nearly everybody’s financial means. With that being stated, we still cannot assume that everyone is able to acquire the necessary tools such as computer and the Internet connection.

Reimannová (2011, p. 56) also warns about health risks, such as *“eye damage”* and *“poor posture”*. Even those factors, obviously, should not be overlooked considering the time that for example elementary school students spend sitting and reading during their day at school.

Furthermore, the materials provided by e-learning may not be the right fit for some students. It is apparent that a text presented on the screen is not sufficient solution for the student, who likes to make notes right into the paper, highlight the important parts etc. (Kopecký 2011). Moreover, we have already discussed the problem with consistency and the speed of reading

on screen in the section 1.4.3. That could be considered as one of the setbacks in blended learning as well.

To summarize, blended learning can be very useful and flexible in terms of various forms of communication as well as being better at meeting the individual needs of each student. Nevertheless, we have to be aware of the drawbacks which can accompany blended learning, especially its “technological part”, and plan it accordingly to satisfy every student and to avoid any harm.

3.4 Role of the teacher in Blended Learning

The combination of two approaches in teaching also inevitably brings more responsibilities for the educator. So it is important to make clear what does it mean to be a teacher in blended learning environment and what are the new responsibilities coming along with such role.

First of all we need to realize the fact that the teacher is no longer “*the only source of knowledge*” (Reimannová, 2011, p. 57). This information implies that there might be an increasing need for guidance in the sea of information that comes with the new environment. According to Mechlová (2006, p. 44) the teacher needs to become a “*tutor*”, someone who takes charge of online communication, creates learning materials and provides help and guidance. Therefore teachers should be innovative and fully engaged in the field of ICT, i.e. become its lifelong students (Mechlová 2006). It may seem that the teacher is the only one who takes care of everything connected with implementation and realization of electronic course. However, Reimannová (2011) claims that these tasks should be dispersed among whole team of people. Nevertheless, the high requirements that are put on the teachers in terms of their education in ICT are evident.

Moreover, there is another ability that teacher needs to develop in order to lead successful blended learning course. Stein and Graham (2014, p. 51) mention the importance of students’ engagement: “*Instruction that does not engage learners will not be effective in the long run. This is especially true in blended courses, as moving activities online may increase the sense of distance between student and classmates.*” This claim suggests that teachers should be able to provide necessary motivation and impulses to increase engagement of students. Similarly, Thorne (2003, p. 48) who refers to the educator as a “*trainer*”, states that effectiveness of learning is directly dependent on trainers’ ability to involve learners in it.

With blended learning, teachers have more possibilities to engage their students using both online and face to face interaction and then choose the most suitable approach for specific students (Stein and Graham 2014).

All in all, the future creators of blended learning course must be aware of increasing demand in ICT capability. However, under ideal circumstances they should not be alone in taking care of all technological aspects of the course. Also with the combination of online and face-to-face interaction there are more possibilities to engage the students.

3.5 Role of the student in blended learning

As for the student's role in blended learning environment, some authors (Mechlová 2006, Reimannová 2011) agree that one of the major roles that a student needs to take up is the role of a team member, who actively communicates with other students in order to achieve the best results. It is no surprise that this role became so important considering all the means of communication possible within blended learning.

4 Blended learning in ELT

This chapter is focused on blended learning in the context of English language teaching. Firstly, there is a brief section concerning the reason for the implementation of ICT to English language teaching. Secondly, the key elements which need to be considered in order to create an efficient blended learning course are introduced. Finally, there is an example of blended learning course used to teach English language.

4.1 Reason for using ICT in English language teaching

To properly establish the context of this chapter, it would be appropriate to find out what might be the main reasons for the sudden need for the implementation of ICT into English language learning and why is it often regarded as the better option over the conventional chalk and talk methods of teaching.

The main reason for applying ICT in English language teaching seems to be the idea of creating more learner-centred environment. Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature points out that teacher-centred approach is not able to entirely fulfil the needs of the students and engages only their ability to memorize, whereas the usage of ICT gives students the opportunity to access extended amount of learning material along with the possibility of processing the material at their own pace (Jayanthi and Kumar 2016).

Moreover, the Jayanthi and Kumar (2016, p. 37) claim that English language teaching needs to be more "authentic", and that could be achieved "*by combining texts, images, sound and video in one device, learners are made to internalize more than one thing at a time*".

Currently, it seems that teaching in general is heading towards the way of student-centred environment at all costs, so English language teaching is no different. It appears that ICT is the right tool to make this "way" happen by giving the students the opportunity to work inside and outside the classroom and therefore moving some of the responsibility for reaching desired goals from the teacher to the student (Jayanthi and Kumar 2016).

4.2 Essential concepts of blended learning in connection with ELT

According to Stein and Graham (2014, pp. 18-23), critical concepts for designing blended courses are:

1. *Incorporating the right technologies*
2. *Mixing synchronous and asynchronous interaction*
3. *Planning for learning time*

Arguably, with the consideration of the claims made by Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature, we can assume that adding the right technology could play a key role in creating successful blended learning course in ELT.

As was described in the first chapter, both synchronous and asynchronous communication can be conducted in numerous ways. The idea of mixture of these types of communication, and therefore potentially fixing each other's weaknesses, could be surely beneficial for every blended leaning course (more information in the next section).

There are various opinions on creating a functional schedule of face-to-face meetings and online learning. Dudeney and Hockly (2008, p. 137) suggest this scheme: "*A language learning course delivered 75 per cent online and 25 per cent face-to-face.*" However, Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013) question the contribution of scheduling with the help of percentage. In the same vein, Stein and Graham (2014) emphasize mainly the flexibility of rhythm in blended learning course, and also add that blended course does not undeniably mean that the participants have to spend more time studying,

4.3 Example of blended learning in ELT

This last section of theoretical part of the paper presents a description and conclusions of the case study aimed at the specific usage of blended learning which in some aspects corresponds with the one that is the subject of research in the practical part of this paper.

The case study was carried out on the Istanbul Technical University and the participants were Turkish students who studied English as a foreign language. There were two classes, each of 36 students. Both classes were exposed to 18 hours of various English language instruction per week. One of the classes had the opportunity to work with LMS program called MacMillan English Campus (MEC). The program offered additional materials to revise and practice all of the instruction given during the face-to-face sessions each week

as well as the opportunity for self-studying. The second class continued to receive just the usual face-to-face sessions. Every other week there were lab sessions, where the blended group received necessary help with technical problems connected with MEC and motivation to keep working with the program. After one term, the blended group was questioned about their opinion on the implementation of online environment and both groups were tested in listening, vocabulary, reading and grammar. Although most of the students were aware of their improvement in English, they also did not like the idea of having online environment in their learning. Interestingly, with the obvious correspondence with the possible disadvantage of blended learning discussed in the section 3.3, one of the reasons for their negative opinion was shortage of printed materials. Results of the tests proved that blended group indeed outperformed the regular one (Tomlison and Whittaker, 2013, pp. 207-210)

Practical part

5 School bio

Before the research itself, it is essential to describe the environment, in which both target groups are learning English language. To effectively assess the results of the research, there are questions that need to be answered first, e.g. whether teachers are being constantly trained in ELT as well as ICT, what textbooks are being used to teach English, etc.

The research is conducted on the Elementary school in Ždírec nad Doubravou, which is a small town in Vysočina region. The school has capacity of 460 students. This number is not yet filled as the school provides education for up to 389 kids from the age from 6 to 15. There are 9 grades divided into 18 classes. Kindergarten with the capacity of 151 children is also a part of the school. Most of the students are from Ždírec nad Doubravou and numerous neighbouring villages. The school aims to provide meaningful education, often through experiential learning. Also the effective cooperation among students as well as motivating evaluation belongs to the main goals of the school (Základní informace 2014).

5.1 Technological support

The school claim to provide above-standard conditions for using information technology because the accessibility of the Internet in all school premises as well as using portable devices, interactive whiteboards, etc. There were several projects that the school was part of and that not only helped to establish this technologically-rich environment, but helped with teacher's training as well.

Project name	Date	Description
Digitally and Interactively	October 2014 - July 2015	To equip school with tablets, interactive whiteboards and data projectors. Teachers training focused on operating these devices and implementing them to education process.
EU- Interactive Teaching	1.9. 2015 - 31.3. 2016	Two interactive whiteboards were lent to the school, one for primary school and one for lower-secondary school. The teachers were to conduct 30 “interactive” classes. The students created up to 55 reports using the whiteboard.
Vysočina Fund – Information and Skills Sharing	1.9. 2015 - 31.3. 2016 and 1.9. 2016 - 31.3. 2017	The school offered training in the field of using modern technologies aimed at general public, including the elderly. 240 students were also educated about Internet safety.

Source: (Projekty 2014)

It seems that the Elementary school in Ždírec nad Doubravou is opened to the usage of modern technologies. Through these projects, funded by either the European Union or the regional fund, the school was equipped with various devices which were supposed to make the classes more interesting. However, equally important fact is that the money was also spent on teacher training. Raising teachers’ technological literacy can be a good sign in terms of setting the right environment for establishing the blended learning course. As mentioned in the chapter 3, blended learning requires a teacher, who is more than familiar with using ICT.

Moreover, the school itself then offered extensive training focused on using ICT and Internet safety awareness led by its employers, mostly by the coordinator of ICT, but also by teachers themselves.

5.2 English language teaching in Ždírec nad Doubravou

The following section provides general information about English language learning on this particular elementary school.

The pupils start with English language in the 3rd grade. Currently, students from 5th grade up to 9th grade are using the third edition of Project textbooks. There were also three major projects, which purpose was to improve the level of English learning and teaching. These projects are listed and described in the table below.

Project name	Date	Description
Let's speak together	13.10. 2014 - 30.6. 2015	Through cooperation with language agency, the school employed native English speaker, who led 15 English language classes a week as well as 6 classes of extracurricular groups.
Read, Speak, Understand	1.7. 2015 - 31.12 2015	Within this project, the school offered (foreign) language course for teachers and students. Shadowing for language teachers (among others).
Technical and language skills in Ždírec n. D.	1.9. 2015 - 31. 12 2015	Developing student's and teacher's oral communication skills through blended learning .

Source: (Projekty 2014)

It is evident that there is an obvious effort to make the language learning more effective and diverse by hiring native English speakers. Since the first mentioned project the school has worked with three other native English speakers, from which there is one currently teaching at the school. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the school is also a proud employer of a Czech teacher, who spent 15 years in The United States of America and holds CPE Certificate of Proficiency in English.

Furthermore, the school offered the opportunity of full exposure to the English language in the form of language courses located in Malta for teachers and in The United Kingdom for students.

The third project is the most important for the purposes of this paper. This project involves implementing of learning software collectively called Scientific Learning, which is still being used by the school and it is one of the major subjects of the research.

5.3 SCATE testing

This short section introduces comparative tests, which are used in Ždírec nad Doubravou to evaluate English language skills of the students.

SCATE (Scio Computer Adaptive Test of English) is a type of English language test provided by the company SCIO, which is one of the leading Czech companies interested in educational measurement. According to Scio, these tests are completely adaptive to the student's level of English language and in the range of 40 to 50 questions testing listening, grammar,

vocabulary etc., are able to determine student's level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (SCIO 2017).

Description of specific CEFR levels (see Appendix 1).

For better overview of students' levels of English, the results of SCATE tests from February 2017 are displayed along with results of author's own testing in the section 7.6.

6 Scientific Learning

This chapter will provide necessary information about online e-learning program called Scientific Learning, which is being used at the Elementary school in Ždírec nad Doubravou to improve English language skills. Firstly, the general information about the program is presented. Secondly, question how this program is “blended” within English language learning at the school is answered. Finally there is introduction of specific modules that the program offers and what are currently being used by the half of the examined group of students.

6.1 Scientific Learning program

Scientific learning program is online e-learning software which was created based on many years of neuroscience research. The program aims to prepare the brain of a student by making “imprints” of English phonemes, supposedly making the language learning much easier that way, and then proceed with vocabulary, grammar, reading and listening skills training. All of this is happening with the help of two main learning programs, FastforWord and Reading Assistant. Each program comprises several modules from the easiest to the difficult ones. This table provides overview of these modules (Tilton 2016).

Fast ForWord	Reading Assistant
Language V2	Grade band K-3
Language to Reading V2	Grade Band 4-5
Literacy	Grade Band 6-8
Literacy Advanced	Grade Band 9-12
Reading Level 1	
Reading Level 2	
Reading Level 3	
Reading Level 4	
Reading Level 5	

Source: (Tilton 2016).

6.1.1 Blending of Scientific Learning in Ždírec nad Doubravou

In the third chapter of theoretical part we have discovered what can be the rules for successful blended learning environment, so the purpose of this section is to find out how is this environment established on the Elementary school in Ždírec nad Doubravou.

All the learning modules are accessible through the web interface called MySciLEARN. This interface could be compared to LMS system, described in the section 1.3.3. MySciLEARN

offers overview of the student's results and activity in each module. The only obvious difference is that in MySciLEARN there is no possibility to create own learning material.

The head of MySciLEARN in Ždírec is the school ICT coordinator. His responsibility is to oversee the activity of all blended learning groups and their teachers at school. He also provides help and guidance to teachers and parents of students in all the problems connected with functioning of the program. As was mentioned in the section 3.4, teachers need to be experienced ICT users, so the fact that the school has a person who is able to educate teachers about ICT is a promising sign.

The blended learning groups are created in MySciLEARN by teachers, who are also responsible for leading face-to-face sessions, where they motivate their students and help with potential problems. It is essential to add that Scientific Learning program is **voluntary**, so not every student in each class is part of it. Therefore the sessions cannot be a part of regular schedule. So each teacher at the school has their own rhythm of conducting face-to-face sessions connected with Scientific Learning program.

The students visit MySciLEARN five times a week at home to access the specific module and complete their 30 minutes task. They can also see their own results and progress in particular module.

Last person who access MySciLEARN is a parent. Parents are encouraged to check on their child's progress and make sure that he or she does the daily task. Some of the parents joined the program as well.

6.2 Fast ForWord

The main focus of this section is introduction of Fast ForWord program and its modules, with the special attention to those which are currently being used by the half of examined group of students, i.e. Reading Level 1-3.

Fast ForWord is a suite of programs that includes two types of learning modules. Every module in Fast ForWord suite follows exact scheduling protocol. The school in Ždírec uses default setting in which each module presents two to three exercises a day, for a total of 30 minutes a day, five days a week (MySciLEARN 2017)

The first type of modules is Language/Literacy series. The main purpose of these modules is to prepare the brain of the students as was described at the beginning of this chapter.

Each module consists of three to seven exercises designed to sharpen student’s ability to differentiate transitions in spoken language. Once a student masters every exercise, the module is considered as completed and the program moves the student into higher level, e.g. after finishing Language/Literacy series, students are **moved on** to **Reading level 1**, then on level 2 and so on. The modules are not restricted by age, therefore it depends entirely on the skill of learners how far they can get (MySciLEARN 2017)

6.2.1 Reading Level 1

This module consists of these 6 game-like exercises, which are listed and described in detail below. All these exercises aim to improve critical reading skills, listening attention, letter-sound associations’, vocabulary, etc. (MySciLEARN 2017).

- 1. Bear bags**
- 2. Magic Rabbit**
- 3. Flying Fish**
- 4. Quail Mail**
- 5. Bedtime Beasties**
- 6. Buzz Fly**

Bear Bags (see Appendix 2).

The object of the exercise: “*Sorting pictures or words into the appropriate phoneme-based categories.*” (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 137)

When the student clicks on the yellow paw, the target sound is pronounced and written or shown on a toast held by “*Mama Bear*”, the student then must choose one of the “bags” on which the word with the same sound is displayed. A point is awarded for each correct answer. As the game progresses, students have to work faster and have less time to choose the correct word (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: letter-sound association, phonemic awareness (MySciLEARN 2017).

Magic Rabbit (see Appendix 3).

The object of the exercise: “*Help the magician change one word into another by identifying the correct letter to spell the word*” (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 140).

The student starts with clicking the yellow paw. A word is pronounced and then presented on the cards. Shortly after the word is pronounced, one letter disappears. Magic Rabbit then pronounces the target word which is very similar to the first one with the exception of one particular sound. The student has to choose the correct letter from the cards displayed above the Magic Rabbit to complete the word on the table. For additional help to students, the target word is also displayed in the form of a picture above Rabbit's hat (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: letter-sound correspondence (MySciLEARN 2017).

Flying Fish (see Appendix 4).

The object of the exercise: *“identify and select the target word within a series of other words”* (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 143).

Game also starts with clicking the yellow paw. The target word is then pronounced. After that, a small number of fish with a word written on their back will fly across the screen one by one. The student's task is to quickly choose the correct word (fish) that matches with the one that has been pronounced at the beginning before it flies off the screen (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: rapid visual identification of words, auditory memory (MySciLEARN 2017).

Quail Mail (see Appendix 5).

The object of the exercise: *“Sort words into their appropriate semantic and linguistic categories”* (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 146).

After clicking the yellow paw, a picture or a word is presented by the mailman. Several mailboxes with different categories will appear after that. The student has to choose the correct category for the word given (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: vocabulary, flexibility during reading (MySciLEARN 2017).

Bedtime Beasties (see Appendix 6).

The object of the exercise: *“Complete sentences by selecting the most appropriate response to fill in the blank”* (MySciLEARN 2017, p.149).

The game starts after clicking the yellow paw. The student has to complete sentences that are written on top and pronounced aloud. The student chooses between four possible words, letters or punctuation marks presented on the cards (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: sentence comprehension, vocabulary, knowledge of punctuation and capitalization (MySciLEARN 2017).

Buzz Fly (see Appendix 7).

The object of the exercise: *“listening to passages while reading along and then answering multiple-choice questions”* (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 151).

After clicking the yellow paw, a piece of text is shown and read aloud. After that, the text disappears and horse will ask the student a question about the text. There are four possible answers presented on a pictures held by the flies. The student must click the picture that displays the most suitable answer (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: listening comprehension, working memory (MySciLEARN 2017).

6.2.2 Reading Level 2

This module is the next step after mastering all exercises in Reading Level 1 module. It also comprises 6 exercises designed to strengthen reading comprehension. The module includes following exercises:

- 1. Bear Bags: More Lunch**
- 2. Magic Bird**
- 3. Fish Frenzy**
- 4. Leaping Lizards**
- 5. Ant Antics**
- 6. Dog Bone**

Bear Bags: More Lunch (see Appendix 8).

The object of the exercise: *“help Papa Bear make more lunch by sorting the words into the appropriate phoneme-based categories”* (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 158).

This game works in the same way as Bear Bags in Reading Level 1 module. The only difference is that the possible answers are displayed only as pictures, which makes the game more challenging (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: phonemic awareness (MySciLEARN 2017).

Magic Bird (see Appendix 9).

The object of the exercise: “*help the magician change one word into another by identifying the correct letters to spell the word*” (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 161).

Game is also very similar to Magic Rabbit from Reading Level 1 module. Magic Bird is slightly more challenging because the student often has to choose a combination of missing letters instead of just one letter.

Improvement in: spelling, letter-sound correspondences (MySciLEARN 2017).

Fish Frenzy (see Appendix 10).

The object of the exercise: “*identify and select the target word within a series of other words*” (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 164).

This game is identical to Flying Fish from Reading Level 1 module.

Improvement in: rapid visual identification of words, auditory memory (MySciLEARN 2017).

Leaping Lizards (see Appendix 11).

The object of the exercise: “*select the correct response to fill in the blank and complete the sentence*” (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 167).

This game is identical to Bedtime Beasties from Reading Level 1 module.

Ant Antics (see Appendix 12).

The object of the exercise: “*match a picture to its descriptive title*” (MySciLEARN 2017, p.169).

By clicking the yellow paw the student starts the game. A picture is displayed on top of the screen as well as four possible answers in the form of a phrase or a sentence.

The student has to choose the one that matches with the activity on the picture (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: developing reading skills (MySciLEARN 2017).

Dog Bone (see Appendix 13).

The object of the exercise: *“listen to passages while reading along, then independently re-read passages and answer multiple-choice questions”* (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 171).

Dog Bone is fairly similar to Buzz Fly from Reading Level 1. However, the four possible answers are presented only in written form, making Dog Bone a bit more challenging.

Improvement in: listening comprehension, reading skills (MySciLEARN 2017).

6.2.3 Reading Level 3

Last module that has been used by the examined group of students is Reading Level 3. Besides developing cognitive skills in order to learn successfully, this module aims at listening accuracy and reading skills. Reading Level 3 consists of six exercises, just like its two predecessors (MySciLEARN 2017).

- 1. Scrap Cat**
- 2. Canine Crew**
- 3. Twisted Pictures**
- 4. Chicken Dog**
- 5. Book Monkeys**
- 6. Hog Hat Zone**

Scrap Cat (see Appendix 14).

The object of the exercise: *“help recycle the bottles and cans by sorting the words into their appropriate categories”* (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 179).

Scrap Cat works in the same way as Quail Mail from Reading Level 1. The exercise is more difficult because of the wider variety of categories to which the given word needs to be sorted. Also the word is presented only in its written form (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: word structure, sound structure, syntax (MySciLEARN 2017).

Canine Crew (see Appendix 15).

The object of the exercise: *“help the crew pave the streets and get traffic moving again by matching the bricks into pairs in the fewest number of attempts”* (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 182).

After clicking the yellow paw the game begins by presenting the student with numerous different words displayed on bricks. The goal is to find matching pairs according to the rules given e.g. find synonyms, antonyms, words that end with the same sound (rhymes) (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: better understanding of phonology, vocabulary, semantics (MySciLEARN 2017).

Twisted Pictures (see Appendix 17).

The object of the exercise: *“help the museum set up a new exhibit by matching the correct descriptive sentences to their corresponding paintings”* (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 186).

This exercise has also similar features as one of its predecessors. Twisted Pictures work in the same way as Ant Antics from Reading Level 2. Simple phrases are, however, replaced by more complicated sentences (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: sentence comprehension, logical reasoning, vocabulary (MySciLEARN 2017).

Chicken Dog (see Appendix 16).

The object of the exercise: *“help Stella sell her tasty hot dogs by completing word spellings”* (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 184).

The main goal of this game is to complete the target word appearing on a hot dog and then always pronounced by choosing the correct letter or letters displayed on the jars. Apparently, this exercise is very much like Magic Rabbit and Magic Bird from Reading Level 1 and 2 (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: letter-sound correspondences, phonemic awareness (MySciLEARN 2017).

Book Monkeys (see Appendix 18).

The object of the exercise: “help the librarian sort books by reading paragraphs and answering questions about those paragraphs” (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 188).

This exercise could be compared to Buzz Fly and Dog Bone, which were designed to test student’s sentence comprehension. In Book Monkeys, the student works with whole paragraph. This paragraph will appear after clicking the yellow paw and remains to be seen until the student clicks the button Done Reading. After that, the text disappears and it is replaced by the question concerning this text. The student has to choose the most suitable answer from four possibilities presented on the screen (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: reading comprehension, vocabulary (MySciLEARN 2017).

Hog Hat Zone (see Appendix 19).

The object of the exercise: “*help the construction crew fill in the missing pipes and girders by selecting the most appropriate words to fill in the blanks*” (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 191).

This grammar practice exercise is very simple to understand. In Hog Hat Zone students are presented with a piece of text written on pipes. The pipes have missing parts which need to be completed by the student by choosing one of the four possible answers displayed above the text, for each missing part (MySciLEARN 2017).

Improvement in: paragraph comprehension, vocabulary, grammar (MySciLEARN 2017).

6.2.4 Summary

After playing free demos which are available on the official Scientific Learning website, the exercises seem to work exactly how they are described by the user guide. The yellow paw button is used to start every activity as well as providing additional help, e.g. repeating the target word in Magic Bird. This linearity seems to be a good idea in terms of making every exercise user-friendly. However, the exercises such as Magic Bird, Magic Rabbit and Chicken Dog are fairly the same, despite of different image. Although these exercises seemed interesting and entertaining at first, it is debatable whether they can stay that way if they are played regularly over a long period of time.

Most of the exercises, especially Canine Crew, Bear Bags and Magic Rabbit are engaging the student’s ability to recognize individual sounds in words, described as phonemic awareness. Other activities such as Ant Antics, Buzz Fly, Dog Bone and Book Monkeys are

designed to sharpen sentence and paragraph comprehension. It is plausible that such activities can contribute to the improvement of reading and listening skills, if done regularly.

Apparently, all of the exercises are based on repetition, which obviously could not be provided by a teacher alone, as discussed in the chapter 3. Nonetheless, with this advantage comes also the unfortunate possibility for the exercises to slip from being captivating and enjoyable to becoming dull and stereotypical. If that case applies, we can assume that the ability of teachers to constantly motivate their students is indeed fundamental.

7 Research

7.1 Research Goals

1. **To prove the benefits of Scientific Learning implementation in the area of listening and reading skills by comparison with students from the same class who do not participate in the program**
2. **Discovering the general opinion on functioning of the blended learning as well as a subjective one on the program's benefits from teacher's and students' point of view.**

7.2 Methods of data capture

The first research goal is reached with the help of **tests** which were designed by the author of this paper. There are two versions of test, one for each grade (7th grade test, 8th grade test). The tests were made specifically to unfold the possible differences in listening and reading skills of the “blended” group and “regular” elementary school students mostly by incorporating exercises in which the blended group should do better considering various areas of their supposed improvement promised by the Scientific Learning program exercises listed above.

The second research goal program is reached through **pen and paper interview** with 7th and 8th grade English teacher who is also the leader of both examined blended groups. This teacher is asked about her personal opinion on Scientific Learning program, whether she is satisfied with its integration or whether she is aware of some improvement among her students who are part of it. There are also questions about functioning of the program which are connected with the changing role of the teacher in blended learning environment, which was discussed in chapter 3. After that, blended groups both from 7th and 8th grade are questioned in separate group interviews. These interviews consist of similar questions, but from student's point of view.

7.3 Description of tested groups

Two groups, each consists of 16 students. The first group comprises 16 regular users of Scientific Learning program. Due to the limited number of such users in just one grade, there were 8 students from 7th grade and 8 students from 8th grade. All of these students started with Reading series at the beginning of 7th grade, so the 7th grade students are finishing up their **first school year** of using the program, whereas 8th grade students are using it

for almost **two school years**, which is of course the reason why the results were listed and compared between the students of same age.

The second group of 16 students was created in the same pattern. There were no specific criteria for choosing each student in this group, so they were chosen randomly. However, it is important to mention that these students are **not Scientific Learning users** and therefore not part of the blended learning. None of the students from both groups suffers from any learning disabilities.

Both 7th and 8th grade students have of course regular English classes three times a week.

The first interview was conducted with young female English teacher, whose responsibilities include leading blended group in both 7th and 8th grade as well as teaching English in both grades. The teacher is a user of Scientific Learning herself.

The first mentioned group of 16 blended learning students was questioned in group interviews.

7.4 Research process

Testing took place on 27th April 2017. The author of the paper was responsible for the realization of testing. With the parent's approval and necessary arrangements made by the school management, the author had the time space of only 45 minutes for each group of students to both test and interview. The tested groups were divided by grade. So the first ones were 16 7th grade students (8 blended learning, 8 regular), and then 16 8th grade students (8 blended learning, 8 regular). Testing took place in the school cafeteria, which was of course empty at the time of testing. The tests were divided into listening and reading sections. Listening section included 2 recordings, which were listened to at the beginning, and then the students proceeded with reading part on which they had the time frame of 20 minutes. After completing the test, a half of each group (blended learning students) was interviewed. The teacher was interviewed independently in her free time, i.e. without any time restrictions. Therefore this interview was longer and more complex than the group interviews.

7.5 Test introduction

This section introduces the tests which were created by the author of this paper, 7th grade test (see Appendix 23), 8th grade test (see Appendix 24)

7.5.1 Listening section

As mentioned above, both tests comprised Listening section which included two parts. In the first part students had to listen to the recording, during which they were filling the missing words in written sentences. Transcript of these recordings for both 7th and 8th grade students is shown below. These recordings were created by the author of this paper (see Appendix 26)

Listening part 1

Transcript for 7th grade: *Hey John, do me a **favour**, run to the store and get some **bread**. This is my friend Peter. He usually **wears** white t-shirt and **blue** jeans. For an airplane trip, I take a large **suitcase**. I bring a **white** shirt and a pair of **pants**. He threw a **rock** at the **frog**, because it did not want to **talk**. To keep your head **cool**, you should wear a **sunhat**. I have a picture that I drew with a **pencil**. It shows a big brown **bear** standing in the **forest**.*

Transcript for 8th grade: *Horses are the most beautiful animals in the world. My horse is called **Lightning**. I have to **take care** of him every day. It is a big **responsibility**. Look, there is a **duck** on that **truck**, it is probably **stuck**. We should help the poor **animal**. I am not **sure** I will be here tomorrow. The only **way** is to **pay today**, unless we find another **way**. Take a **walk** with your **dog** Stanley. But mom, there is **fog** outside. So take a flashlight with you Stanley. Wait a **minute**. Something is **wrong**; a **steam** is coming from my **ice cream**.*

The object of this part: the student has to fill the gaps with the **highlighted** words. For each correctly spelled word is one point, i.e. the point scale for 7th grade students: **0-15**, for 8th grade students: **0-20**.

The reason for implementing this exercise was to test student's perception of basic vocabulary. Many of the exercises in Reading Level 1-3 (Quail mail, Bedtime Beasties, Canine Crew, Book Monkeys) have promised improvement in that area. Moreover, several sentences contained words, which were phonetically very similar, e.g. duck, truck, stuck. Most of the exercises in Reading level 1-3, e.g. Magic Rabbit, Magic Bird, Bear Bags, Fish Frenzy etc. are working with such words and support the ability to distinguish specific sounds.

On the other hand, vast majority of the exercises listed above always presents the target words separately, whereas the test incorporates them into whole sentences. That way the students' listening skills and vocabulary were more objectively compared, with the advantage of the blended group not being so clear.

Listening part 2

The second recording contained a short story to which 4 questions were attached. The recording and the questions were the same for both 7th and 8th grade students. However, there were 3 clues in the form of a picture linked to each question in the 7th grade test. This part was inspired by the picture cues and open-ended response, mentioned in the section 2.

The object of this part was to capture the necessary information from the story and answer the questions

Transcript for 7th and 8th grade: *It is late afternoon, and George feels like playing. So he taps on his brother's door, but his brother is listening to a loud music and does not hear him. George feels so lonely, he used to play hide and seek with his brother every other day, but not anymore. George has become a teenager.*

Each correct answer means one point. Point scale for 7th grade: **0-4**, for 8th grade: **0-5**

This part was the test of listening comprehension. Similar exercise can be observed in Buzz Fly and Dog Bone from Reading Level 1 and 2. This exercise was nonetheless a challenge for both groups, because the recording was played continuously without pauses between sentences, which is not the case in the above mentioned exercises. Moreover, the recording was played only twice, whereas all the exercises in Reading Level 1-3 allow infinite repetition.

7.5.2 Reading section

Reading section involved three different parts. There were activities such as choosing the most suitable response to the question, putting a dialogue into correct order, choosing the best title for the text and answering the questions attached to this text. The dialogue and the most suitable responses were created to match the idea discussed in the section 2, so they are close to the context of actual use. As for the text and the questions attached, they were chosen and created to engage the logical reasoning of the students and make them try to fully understand it, so the supposed improvements of blended group could be revealed.

Reading part 1 (7th grade)

Put the dialogue into correct order.

Point scale: **0-1**, one point for correct order, zero for incorrect order.

Reading part 1 (8th grade)

Choosing the most suitable answer to presented questions.

Point scale: **0-6**, one point for each correct answer.

Reading part 2 (7th grade)

This part was the same as the part 1 for 8th grade, only with different questions.

Point scale: **0-5**, one point for each correct answer.

Reading part 2 (8th grade)

The activity in this part is the same as Reading level 1 (7th grade), different dialogue.

Point scale: **0-1**, one point for correct order, zero for incorrect order.

Reading part 3 (7th grade and 8th grade)

The goal of this activity is to carefully read the given text and correctly answer the attached questions. The texts for each grade were retrieved from British Council websites (Dunne, n.d., Newton, n.d.). The questions were created by the author of this paper.

Point scale: **0-3**, one point for each correct answer.

7.6 Test results

The following tables contain results of authors own testing as well as the SCATE tests from February 2017.

Explanatory notes: F- female, M- male

7.6.1 7th grade test results analysis

Student's label	Scientific Learning	Listening section		Listening total	Reading section			Reading total	Complete result	SCATE Feb. 2017	Current module
		Part1	Part2		Part1	Part2	Part3				
1F	YES	13	3	16	1	5	2	8	24	A1	Reading lvl.1
2F	YES	8	2	10	1	5	1	7	17	A1	Reading lvl.1
3M	YES	15	3	18	0	5	2	7	25	A2	Reading lvl.2
4M	YES	15	4	19	1	5	3	9	28	A2	Reading lvl.2
5F	YES	8	2	10	0	3	0	3	13	A1	Reading lvl.1
6F	YES	8	4	12	1	5	2	8	20	A1	Reading lvl.1
7M	YES	13	4	17	0	5	3	8	25	A2	Reading lvl.2
8F	YES	7	2	9	0	4	0	4	13	A1	Reading lvl.1
		87	24	111	4	37	13	54	165		

Student's label	Scientific Learning	Listening section		Listening total	Reading section			Reading total	Complete result	SCATE Feb. 2017
		Part1	Part2		Part1	Part2	Part3			
9F	NO	13	4	17	0	3	1	4	21	A2
10F	NO	9	4	13	1	5	1	7	20	A1
11M	NO	11	3	14	0	5	1	6	20	A1
12M	NO	8	3	11	0	3	1	4	15	A1
13M	NO	7	2	9	0	1	2	3	12	A1
14M	NO	9	3	12	0	2	1	3	15	A1
15F	NO	8	4	12	1	1	1	3	15	A1
16F	NO	7	4	11	1	4	2	7	18	A1
		72	27	99	3	24	10	37	136	

As can be clearly observed, the blended group outperformed the regular group in every part of the test except for Listening part 2. That is an interesting fact concerning the promised improvement by the Buzz Fly exercise from Reading part 1, which works in very similar manner as Listening part 2. It seems that recording played continuously was indeed a challenge even for the blended group. Although the point difference is not that significant, it might be the reason to think that the stereotypical and linear nature of some exercises in Reading series, pointed out in the section 6.2.4, might have contributed to this result as the students might not have been prepared for more complex task than they are being exposed to on a daily bases.

On the other hand, Listening part 1 was clearly dominated by the blended group. It seems that in this case, the exercises from Reading Level 1-2 listed in the 6.2 are working as promised,

regardless of the concern that these exercises are presenting the key words separately, i.e. not in the whole sentences. Moreover, the blended group was better in every other aspect of the test. The biggest difference was in whole reading section, especially in part 3 where almost every student (6) from the blended group reached maximum points (5). It seems that choosing the most suitable answer to a question was the most challenging activity for the regular group.

Individually, the highest score was achieved by a member of blended group (4M), leaving the best score from the other group 9 points behind (9F).

Some of the students in blended group (3M, 4M, 7M) managed to master Reading Level 1 and were moved on to Level 2, the same students even reached A2 level in SCATE test. They had the most points in author's testing as well. This fact may imply that more practice in Scientific Learning might in fact have influence on students' overall results.

As shown above, even though the activities in the test were not completely in the favour of Reading series exercises, the blended group shown that it is doing better in almost every aspect of the test, especially in the reading section. There was one part of the test (Listening part 2), however, where the blended group was outperformed by regular students. It is possible that Reading Level 1-2 modules might not be as effective as promised at that particular area. Nonetheless, with the consideration of SCATE test results and progress in Reading series modules, it is plausible to assume that to some extent, Scientific Learning program may contribute to the improvement of listening and reading skills of 7th grade students.

7.6.2 8th grade test results analysis

Student's label	Scientific Learning	Listening section		Listening total	Reading section			Reading total	Complete result	SCATE Feb. 2017	Current module
		Part1	Part2		Part1	Part2	Part3				
17M	YES	17	5	22	6	1	3	10	32	B1	Reading lvl.3
18M	YES	19	5	24	6	1	3	10	34	B1	Reading lvl.3
19F	YES	16	3	19	4	0	2	6	25	A2	Reading lvl.2
20F	YES	16	2	18	3	1	3	7	25	A1	Reading lvl.2
21F	YES	15	3	18	6	1	2	9	27	A2	Reading lvl.2
22M	YES	20	5	25	5	1	3	9	34	B1	Reading lvl.3
23M	YES	16	1	17	2	0	1	3	20	A2	Reading lvl.2
24F	YES	17	3	20	5	0	3	8	28	A2	Reading lvl.3
		136	27	163	37	5	20	62	225		

Student's label	Scientific Learning	Listening section		Listening total	Reading section			Reading total	Complete result	SCATE Feb. 2017
		Part1	Part2		Part1	Part2	Part3			
25F	NO	11	1	12	4	0	2	6	18	A1
26F	NO	10	0	10	1	0	1	2	12	A1
27F	NO	9	1	10	4	1	1	6	16	A1
28F	NO	14	0	14	2	1	1	4	18	A1
29F	NO	20	5	25	6	1	3	10	35	B1
30M	NO	16	3	19	4	0	1	5	24	A1
31M	NO	17	1	18	3	0	2	5	23	A2
32M	NO	14	3	17	4	0	2	6	23	A2
		111	14	125	28	3	13	44	169	

As can be observed, the blended group had better results in every part of the test. Interestingly, although the Listening part 2 was of course more difficult in this test because of the absence of pictures, the regular group did not perform better this time. Moreover, the blended group outperformed them by 13 points. Considering the fact that every student in the blended group is working with either Reading Level 2 or Reading Level 3, this fact could indicate that these modules may be more beneficial in the area of more complex listening tasks.

In the same vein, another significant difference (18 points) was in the reading section results. On the other hand, it is not greater than in the 7th grade test considering the difference in point scale. We cannot, however, exclude the possible progress knowing the fact that each activity in this test was more difficult.

Individually, maximum points (35) was reached by a member of the regular group (29F), which is of course a reminder that blended learning does not equal better results. Nevertheless, very similarly to blended group in 7th grade, the students with best results from both SCATE test and author's test are from blended group (17M, 18M and 22M). With this fact we can back up the possibility of Scientific Learning's effectiveness in the field of listening and reading skills.

7.7 Pen and paper Interview

Basic information about interviewee:

Gender: Female

Age: 29

Occupation: English teacher at lower secondary level, leader of blended learning groups

1) *Are you well versed in ICT? How would you evaluate yourself?*

I have average knowledge of working with ICT.

2) *Were you trained in using Scientific Learning program? If so, who trained you? If not, where did you get the necessary information?*

I was in touch with Mrs. Tilton (provider of Scientific Learning in Czech Republic) and her co-worker a few times personally and we discussed some issues via Skype or e-mail, e.g. how to motivate pupils to work, how to push them forward, how to answer their parents' concerns about the program. I discussed more specific matters concerning problems, which appeared during working with the programme with ICT co-ordinator in our school.

3) *Have you done or at least tried some of Scientific Learning programs? If so, have you enjoyed it? What in particular?*

I went through all the programmes. I really enjoyed it and I was successfully working through them furthermore. I lost my motivation in the last level; there were very long texts and some kind of a “drake”, who wasn't willing to let me onwards if my answers weren't completely faultless. I was able to proceed in all other parts and exercises, however not so much with the “drake”, even though it seemed to me that I was getting better, the “drake” didn't think so. That annoyed me.

4) *What does the implementation of Scientific Learning program mean for you and your duties?*

When you enjoy something, you will always find the time to do it. I believe that this program has a great meaning for beginners and especially for children. For me, it is an opportunity to keep and train my English language knowledge. However, I miss the option of dialogue in English, which is provided by a lecturer on an English course, not by a computer.

5) *When some pupils are not too active in the program, what are you doing to prevent it? Do you motivate them? If so, how? If not, who does?*

I lead an English language student group for 7th and 8nd grade pupils, where I help children with some problems they might have with the program and push them forward. We used to have these lessons every other week, but lately I do not have the time to conduct them regularly. Most of the pupils are losing interest in the program, when it becomes more and more difficult. However, some of them still continue successfully. It depends a lot on parents, how and in which way they motivate their children to work with the program.

6) *Do you have a feeling that pupils who are using Scientific Learning program are better than they used to be at English? If so, at which in particular? If not, why do you think they are not getting better?*

Yes, the progress can definitely be seen. They are swifter in vocabulary and understanding.

7) *Can you imagine that this combined education would be obligatory? Do you think it would work? Where do you see possible complications?*

I can imagine the program being an obligatory part of education, but more likely on a school which is orientated on languages. The teacher should then have more space to discuss program with pupils. This is how we are doing it at our school, both pupils and teachers, in our free time = voluntarily. Mrs. Tilton gave us children from China as an example, how they are working hard and by themselves. However, I'm afraid that Czech mentality is very different, with some exceptions of course.

8) *Do you feel that pupils are enjoying the program?*

Yes, they were really excited from the beginning because it was something new, funny. However, they are slowly finding out that it is learning all over again.

9) *What do you think could be improved, so the education with this program would be more effective?*

As I have mentioned before, there should be an option to practice speaking, dialogues. The exercises need to be mixed up and modified so they are still new and exciting for pupils. Also they should add some easier exercises when pupils are on a higher level, so they do not lose motivation when they might not as successful as they were before. It is important to communicate with parents, inform them about the program and how it can benefit their children.

7.7.1 Interview analysis

Despite the fact that the teacher assessed herself to be average user of ICT, we can assume that her abilities are sufficient to lead blended learning group considering the technologically-rich environment described in the 5.1. Also the preparation concerning mainly motivation of students, which importance was mentioned in the 3.4, was very detailed. Personal opinion on the program itself seems to be optimistic regardless of the problem with “drake”. In the answer on question 4, the teacher recognizes the potential of the program, mostly for children.

On the other hand, the answers on questions 5 and 7 reveal possible problems with functioning of the blended learning. It is possible that the reason for decreasing interest of students might be the mentioned irregularity of face-to-face meetings. The answer on question 7 supports this thought as the teacher is sceptical towards “voluntary” system. It is interesting that despite the scepticism, the teacher observes improvement of the blended learning students in English language. The answer on question 8 not only confirms the fact that the interest of the students is slowly decreasing, but also supports the concerns about dullness of the Reading series modules, expressed in the 6.2.4. In the last answer the teacher emphasizes the importance of parent’s engagement. It could be indeed very important considering the irregular meeting schedule.

7.8 Group interviews

As mentioned in the 7.4, due to the very restricted time provided by the school and parents, the only possibility of questioning the students face-to-face was a brief group interview.

7.8.1 7th grade

Number of participants: 8 (blended learning group)

Explanatory notes: S-student, A-author

1. A: *Who taught you to operate Scientific Learning modules?*

S1: We figured it out ourselves; it is easy (laughs)

S2: Teacher showed us how to log into MySciLEARN, but the exercises are just about clicking (others are nodding in agreement)

2. A: *Are you enjoying the modules?*

S1: It is ok.

S3: Yes, it is quite interesting

S4: Not so much

A: *Why not?*

S4: It is kind of slow

S3: I like the horse (Buzz Fly)

S5: The fish is good (Flying Fish)

3. A: *Do you feel that the program helps with your English language?*

S4: A little bit

S5: Yes

S3: Certainly (others nodding in agreement)

S2: I think it helps a lot

A: *In what area?*

S6: Vocabulary

S7: Vocabulary and grammar

4. A: *Do you talk or send emails about the program with each other?*

S8: We talk about it

S7: We talk about it with teacher (others nodding in agreement)

S3: I talk about it with my brother too

5. A: *When you get stuck, who is helping you?*

S1: Teacher (others nodding in agreement)

S3: my brother too, sometimes parents

7.8.2 8th grade

Number of participants: 8 (blended group)

1. A: *Who taught you to operate Scientific Learning modules?*

S1: Our teacher during ICT class, we logged in to the system and tried couple exercises (others nodding in agreement)

S2: it is really easy

2. A: *Are you enjoying the program?*

S2: No, it is repetitive

S3: You are just clicking on something, it beeps, and it does not really matter if some guy is running around in there

S1: It is still the same, and you do not really move anywhere

S4: It is not so bad, you just have to focus and do not make many mistakes, otherwise you will not move to next level

S5: Yes, I think I will be in the third level soon; I just have two exercises left

S6: It is interesting when you get new exercises, but after some time it gets boring (others nodding in agreement)

3. A: *Do you think the program helps with your English language?*

S2: Maybe

S7: Yes

S8: With some vocabulary, that is for sure (others nodding in agreement)

S4: I think it is helping me with understanding of text, that game with the old monkey (Book Monkeys) is hard, but I like it, it helps

4. A: *Do you talk or send emails about the program with each other?*

S1: my brother does it too, so we sometimes talk about it

S2: we talk only with teacher on the meetings, but we do not get together very often

5. A: *When you get stuck, who is helping you?*

S3: We do not get stuck! (Everybody laughing)

7.8.3 Group Interviews analysis

Even though the first interview was short in answers and some students were probably shy to answer in more complex sentences, they were clearly more enthusiastic about the program than 8th grade students. That may be explained by the fact that they have been using Reading series just for one year so far. Moreover, it seems that teacher's concerns about students' losing interest are probably justified.

On the other hand, most students from both groups are feeling that the program helps them with English language. So the teacher's and students' opinions on how beneficial the program is are matching. Apparently, using the program is indeed very easy and it does not require extensive guidance. However, the students do not communicate or cooperate in any way with each other, so the full potential of blended learning, described in the 3.2 is not really fulfilled.

7.9 Outcome

The Elementary school in Ždírec nad Doubravou may be a small town school which is dealing with the smaller number of students, it is however also very progressive in the area of using ICT. The school management seems to be agile considering the number of various projects implemented to improve technical equipment of the school. The attitude of the school towards language learning is on a good level as well. Apparently, the school has appropriate environment for implementing blended learning. The school management, staff and parents were very helpful and allowed displaying of the SCATE and author's own test results as well as current progress in Scientific Learning, all under the condition of remaining anonymous. On the other hand, the preparation of testing, including gathering of regular users of Scientific Learning, students who are not part of the program and scheduling the right time and place for the test, was very problematic. For this reason, the group interviews are perhaps not as informative as they could be if there was more time for their realization. Despite the inconvenience, the results are still sufficient enough to express various opinions on the experience with blended learning.

The testing of blended learning and regular students has proven that even though the usage of Scientific Learning program does not guarantee better results in the area of listening and reading skills, it does contribute to their improvement, considering the vast majority of blended learning students achieving better results both in author's and SCATE testing.

There was only one part of the test in 7th grade where the blended learning students were outperformed, possibly indicating the fact that not every exercise in the Scientific Learning program is working as promised. However, this issue did not appear in the testing of 8th grade students.

The interviews revealed that the general opinion on functioning of the blended learning is rather negative. The teacher points out that the system in which the program is only voluntary, is not the best option. The students are mostly annoyed by some exercises in the program itself, especially 8th grade students, who have been using the program for almost two school years. Nevertheless, both the teacher and students feel that the program is beneficial to their English language skills.

8 Conclusion

English language is one of the most widespread languages used all over the world. It is the main language in technology, research and is also used for other specific purposes. Almost in every part of the world there is at least a sign of English language effect. However, English is not important only because its usage in scientific area; it is spoken by millions of people every day.

For those students, who decided to study English as their foreign language, it is immensely important to master all four skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing. For everyone a different skill is the most difficult or tricky to pick up. According to individual needs in English language learning, there are various methods and programs, which could be used to help learners in a way they need to. Typical teacher centred style of education is neither sufficient nor appropriate to be the only one when learning any foreign language. Different grammatical issues need to be without a doubt firstly memorized and then practised. However, both productive and receptive skills should be developed using more engaging activities, where students are the active participants. In this paper a combination of above mentioned approaches has been discussed, mainly under the term blended learning. This quickly emerging method offers to utilize the best of these two approaches.

The more student-centred approach is often represented by the presence of e-learning environment. Although e-learning was not so efficient in its beginnings, during the technological and scientific development imperfections were erased, especially with the establishment of the Internet. It is no surprise that the usage of e-learning spread across various fields of interest. One of them was language learning, where the possibilities of improving in certain areas by using e-learning, were explored. However, as was mentioned in the very beginning of this paper, education always strives to be more effective and so the idea of blended learning was created.

How this program is actually used in English language learning was described in the practical part of this paper. In the past, blended learning could not be used in its full potential due to the lack of technical support. Nowadays, it can be implemented into regular education process. This usage was the subject of research and examination done by the author. This research has proven that blended learning benefits the development of particular language skills and also that the students and the educator are aware of these advantages.

However, it was stated that blended learning does not guarantee better results. According to users, there is still space for development in the area of functioning, mainly the variety of exercises offered by e-learning software. So perhaps with better implementation of blended learning and more diverse spectrum of activities and tasks, English language skills of students could be improved even more and their loss of interest could be avoided.

Although there are still ways how this method could be perfected, it seems to be working in favour of both students and teachers. As the main goal of English language learning is not only understanding the grammatical rules, but also the ability to be active user of the language. With blended learning, its users have more opportunities to work on their individual development which will ultimately help them learn a foreign language.

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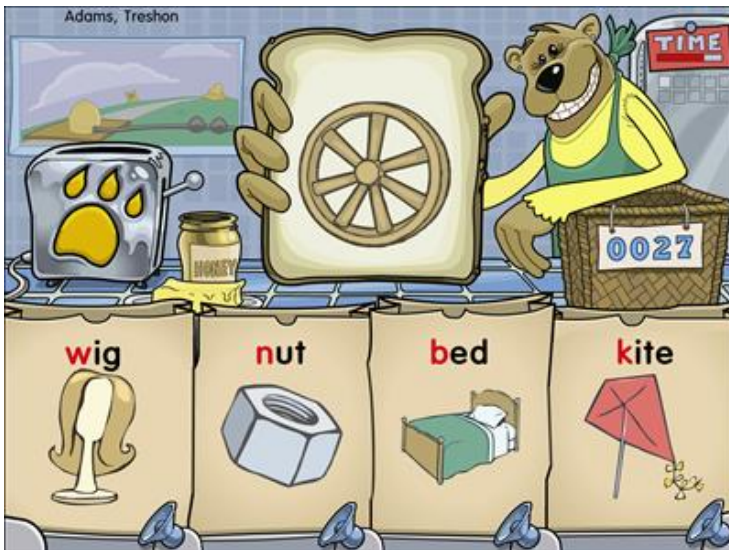
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APPENDICES

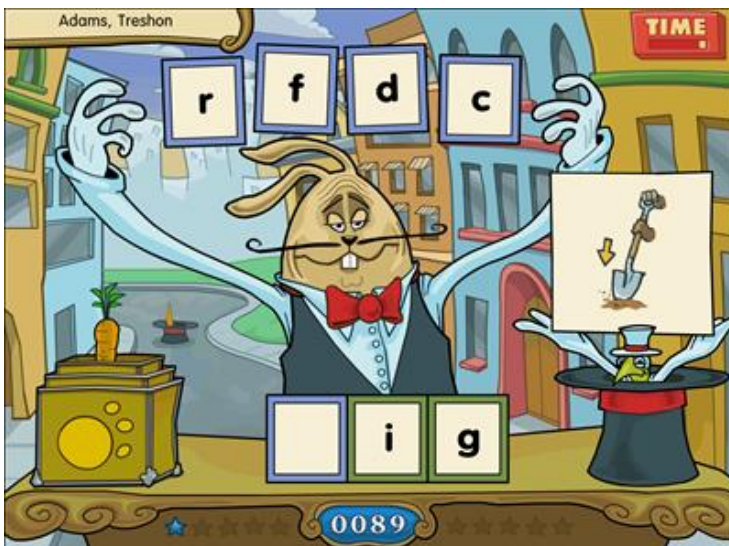
Appendix 1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages- levels
 (https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf)

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Appendix 2: Bear Bags (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 137)



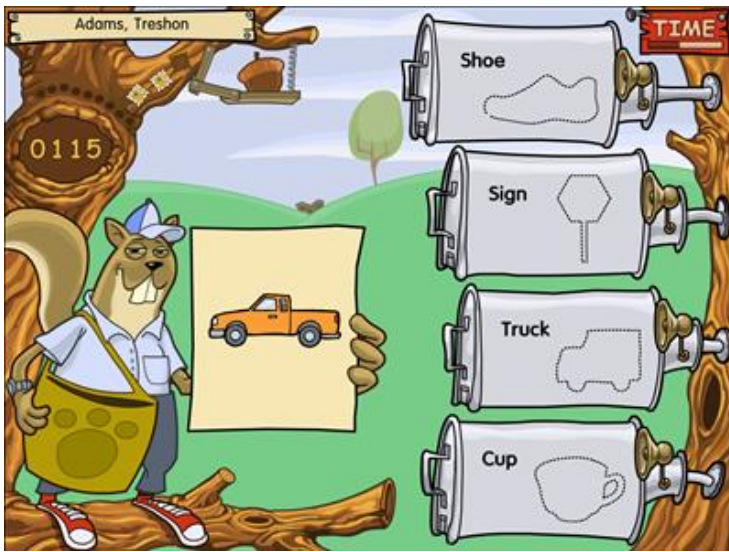
Appendix 3: Magic Rabbit (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 140)



Appendix 4: Flying Fish (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 143)



Appendix 5: Quail Mail (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 146)



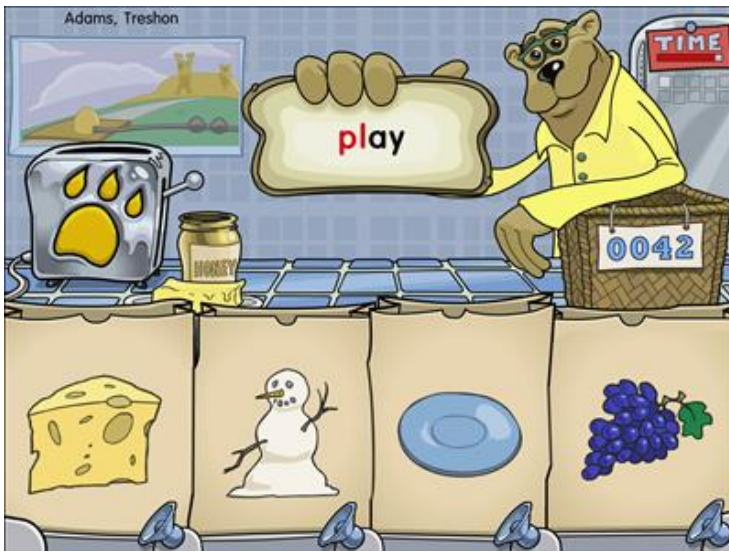
Appendix 6: Bedtime Beasties (MySciLEARN 2017, p.149)



Appendix 7: Buzz Fly (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 151)



Appendix 8: Bear Bags: More Lunch (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 158)



Appendix 9: Magic Bird (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 161)



Appendix 10: Fish Frenzy (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 164)



Appendix 11: Leaping Lizards (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 167)



Appendix 12: Ant Antics (MySciLEARN 2017, p.169)



Appendix 13: Dog Bone (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 171)



Appendix 14: Scrap Cat (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 179)



Appendix 15: Canine Crew (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 182)



Appendix 16: Chicken Dog (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 184)



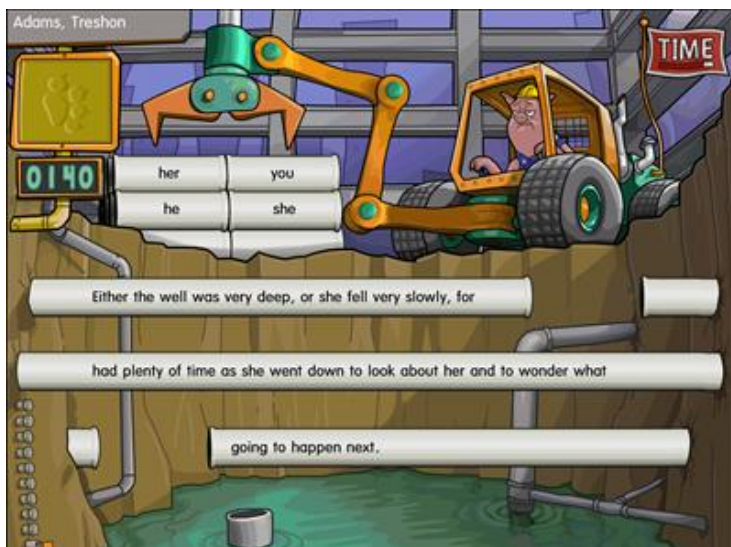
Appendix 17: Twisted Pictures (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 186)



Appendix 18: Book Monkeys (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 188)



Appendix 19: Hog Hat Zone (MySciLEARN 2017, p. 191)



Appendix 20 (Benc 2017)



Appendix 21 (Benc 2017)



Appendix 22 (Benc 2017)



Listening

Part 1- Listen to the recording and fill the gaps with the correct word.

1. Hey John, do me a _____, run to the store and get some _____.
2. This is my friend Peter. He usually _____ white t-shirt and _____ jeans.
3. For an airplane trip, I take a large _____. I bring a _____ shirt and a pair of _____.
4. He threw a _____ at the _____, because it did not want to _____.
5. To keep your head _____, you can wear a _____.
6. I have a picture that I drew with a _____. It shows a big brown _____ standing in the _____.

1. Listen to the recording and choose the correct picture

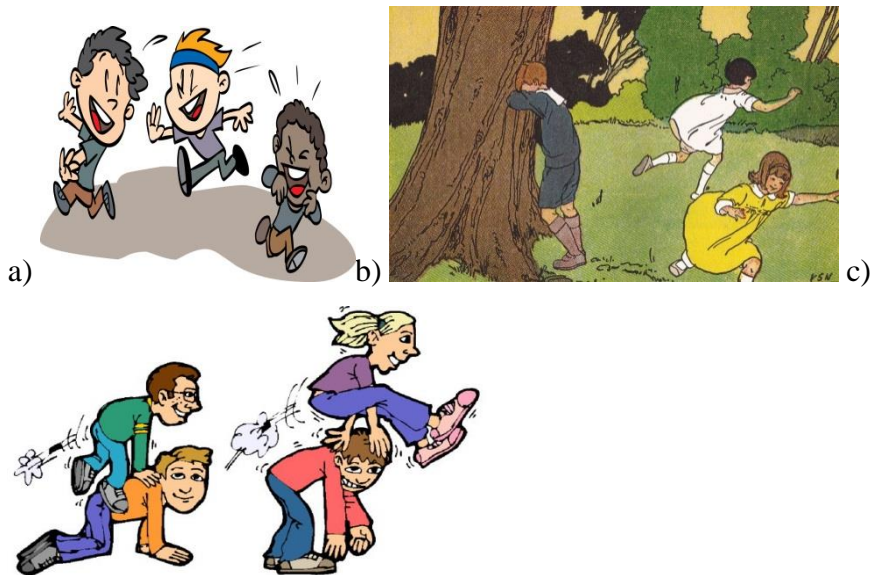
1. How is George feeling?



2. What is George's brother doing?



3. What the boys used to play?



4. When does George want to play?



Reading

Part 1 - Put the dialogue in the correct order. Use numbers from 1-9.

- That's great, I was born in London and I love it there, we should hang out sometime. But I am afraid we have to go now, Bye.

-Hi Susan, How are you?

-Nice to meet you Jessica, where are you from?

-What a coincidence! I am also from England!

-Hi John

-Oh really? Which part?

- London

- I am very well, thank you. This is my friend Jessica, she is here on holiday.

- I am from England

Part 2 – Read the questions and choose the most suitable response.

1. Can I get you something from the kitchen?

- a) I want toilet paper
- b) No, thank you
- c) I am hungry

2. Are you good at swimming?

- a) I like water
- b) I enjoy scuba-diving
- c) I am the best

3. What is your favourite color?

- a) I hate pink and white
- b) Blue is nice, but it is not my favourite
- c) Definitely Purple

4. Do you like snakes?

- a) Yes, they are cute
- b) Cobra is the best
- c) Spiders are better than snakes

5. Hi, How are you?

- a) Bye
- b) Hello, I am ok.
- c) Hi, I am 12 years old.

Part 3 – Read the text carefully and answer the following questions.

Going through the forest is my favourite part of the walk. My dog Benji loves it too. I'm Grace. I live on a farm with my parents and I take Benji for a walk most days after school. While Benji's playing, I stop to take a photo of a butterfly. I'm thinking about posting it on Facebook, but then I hear Benji barking. He's jumping and running around a boy. The poor boy looks worried. 'Benji, stop! Come here!' I call and throw him his ball. I'm about to say sorry to the boy, but he's gone.

1. Choose the most suitable title for the story.

- a) Happy afternoon in the forest
- b) My strange Experience
- c) Missing dog

2. Why did Grace stop?

- a) to take a photo
- b) to catch a butterfly
- c) to post on Facebook

3. How often Grace walks Benji?

- a) sometimes
- b) most days
- c) every day

Appendix 24: 8th grade test (Benc 2017)

Listening

Part 1 - Listen to the recording and fill the gaps with correct words.

1. Horses are the most beautiful animals in the world. My horse is called _____, because he can run very fast. I have to _____ of him every day. It is a big _____.
2. Look, there is a _____ on that _____, it is probably _____. We should help the poor _____.
3. I am not _____ I will be here tomorrow. The only _____ is to _____, unless we find another _____.
4. Take a _____ with your _____ Stanley.

But mom, there is _____ outside.

So take a flashlight with you Stanley.
5. Wait a _____. Something is _____. A _____ is coming from my _____.

Part 2 – Listen to the recording and write the correct answer.

1. What is George's brother doing?
2. How is George feeling?
3. When does George want to play?
4. What did the boys used to play?
5. Why the boys don't play anymore?

Reading

Part 1 – Read the questions and choose the most suitable response.

1. Do you celebrate Christmas?

- a) Not everyone does
- b) Yes, of course
- c) Marry Christmas!

2. Have you seen that new movie?

- a) It was amazing
- b) Which one?
- c) I like movies

3. What is your favourite color?

- a) I am color-blind
- b) Yes, I have
- c) Purple is not so pretty

4. Do you fear spiders?

- a) I hate snakes
- b) I don't mind them
- c) I am scared of their legs

5. Can you climb this tree?

- a) This tree is very big.
- b) Trees are wonderful.
- c) Do I look like a monkey to you? Definitely not

6. What is your favourite sport?

- a) I hate swimming, but scuba diving is fun
- b) It is definitely cross-country skiing, I am a big fan of winter sports
- c) Football is boring, I prefer Ice hockey

Reading

Part 2- Put the dialogue in the correct order. Use numbers from 1-9.

- How old is she?
- What a great idea! Where can I find them?
- Good morning, sir. Of course you can. How can I help you?
- Well, you can always buy her a nice doll.
- Thank you very much.
- The dolls are in alley 5.
- I am looking for a present for my daughter.
- She is turning 8 tomorrow.
- Excuse me, Can I ask you something?

Part 3

Read the text carefully and answer the following questions.

Kay got another message as she was leaving for school.

unknown number: You're so ugly.

She put her phone back in her pocket as she walked towards the bus stop. There were more messages every day now and she felt really depressed. Who was it? Why were they doing this to her? Was it more than one person? The names kept changing. The phone beeped.

candybear76: freak!

She was always friendly with everyone and she didn't know why anyone would do this to her. Now her friends were avoiding her, apart from Becky. She was Kay's oldest friend. The phone beeped again. It was a comment on her Facebook profile picture.

princesspusheen: No one wants to look at photos of you. Loser!

She turned her phone off. When she tried to delete the posts and block the user they came back with different names. Becky thought it must be a hacker. Kay was sending messages to the sites telling them what was happening but they didn't reply

1. Choose the most suitable title for that story

- a) Cyberbullying
- b) Kay and her friends
- c) Becky and her phone

2. Choose the correct answers.

What is the name of the bullied girl?

- a) Kay
- b) Becky
- c) Candybear76

How did Kay felt?

- a) Happy
- b) Depressed
- c) Calm

Appendix 25: Filled-in tests (Benc 2017)

Listening

Part 1 - Listen to the recording and fill the gaps with correct words.

1. Horses are the most beautiful animals in the world. My horse is called Lightning because he can run very fast. I have to take care of him every day. It is a big responsibility.
2. Look, there is a duck on that bank, it is probably stuck. We should help the poor animal.
3. I am not sure I will be here tomorrow. The only way is to pay today, unless we find another way.
4. Take a walk with your dog Stanley. 20/20
But mom, there is fog outside.
So take a flashlight with you Stanley.
5. Wait a minute. Something is happening. A plane is coming from my ice cream.

Part 2 - Listen to the recording and write the correct answer.

1. What is George's brother doing? listening to loud music
2. How is George feeling? like playing (Lonely)
3. When does George want to play? afternoon (close)
4. What did the boys used to play? hide and seek
has become
5. Why the boys don't play anymore? because he is a teenager
- 5/5

something: perfect

Reading

Part 1 – Read the questions and choose the most suitable response.

1. Do you celebrate Christmas?

- a) Not everyone does
- b) Yes, of course ✓
- c) Marry Christmas!

2. Have you seen that new movie?

- a) It was amazing
- b) Which one? ✓
- c) I like movies

3. What is your favourite color?

- a) I am color-blind ✓
- b) Yes, I have
- c) Purple is not so pretty

4. Do you fear spiders?

- a) I hate snakes
- b) I don't mind them ✓
- c) I am scared of their legs

5. Can you climb this tree?

- a) This tree is very big.
- b) Trees are wonderful.
- c) Do I look like a monkey to you? Definitely not ✓

6. What is your favourite sport?

- a) I hate swimming, but scuba diving is fun
- b) It is definitely cross-country skiing, I am a big fan of winter sports ✓
- c) Football is boring, I prefer Ice hockey

Reading

Part 2- Put the dialogue in the correct order. Use numbers from 1-9.

- How old is she? ⁴
- What a great idea! Where can I find them? ⁷
- Good morning, sir. Of course you can. How can I help you? ²
- Well, you can always buy her a nice doll. ⁶
- Thank you very much. ⁹
- The dolls are in alley 5. ⁸
- I am looking for a present for my daughter. ³
- She is turning 8 tomorrow. ⁵
- Excuse me, Can I ask you something? ¹

Part 3

Read the text carefully and answer the following questions.

Kay got another message as she was leaving for school.

unknown number: You're so ugly.

She put her phone back in her pocket as she walked towards the bus stop. There were more messages every day now and she felt really depressed. Who was it? Why were they doing this to her? Was it more than one person? The names kept changing. The phone beeped.

candybear76: freak!

She was always friendly with everyone and she didn't know why anyone would do this to her. Now her friends were avoiding her, apart from Becky. She was Kay's oldest friend. The phone beeped again. It was a comment on her Facebook profile picture.

princesspusheen: No one wants to look at photos of you. Loser!

She turned her phone off. When she tried to delete the posts and block the user they came back with different names. Becky thought it must be a hacker. Kay was sending messages to the sites telling them what was happening but they didn't reply

1. Choose the most suitable title for that story

- a) Cyberbullying
- b) Kay and her friends
- c) Becky and her phone

2. Choose the correct answers.

What is the name of the bullied girl?

- a) Kay
- b) Becky
- c) Candybear76

How did Kay felt?

- a) Happy
- b) Depressed
- c) Calm

~~Handwritten scribble~~

8 sur (SL)

Listening

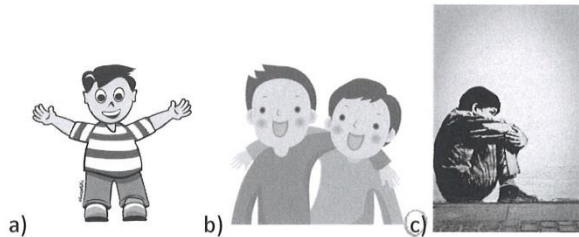
Part 1- Listen to the recording and fill the gaps with the correct word.

1. Hey John, do me a favor, run to the store and get some bread.
2. This is my friend Peter. He usually wears white t-shirt and blue jeans.
3. For an airplane trip, I take a large suitcase. I bring a clean shirt and a pair of gloves.
4. He threw a rock at the frog, because it did not want to talk.
5. To keep your head cool, you can wear a sunhat.
6. I have a picture that I drew with a pencil. It shows a big brown bear standing in the woods.

16/15

1. Listen to the recording and choose the correct picture

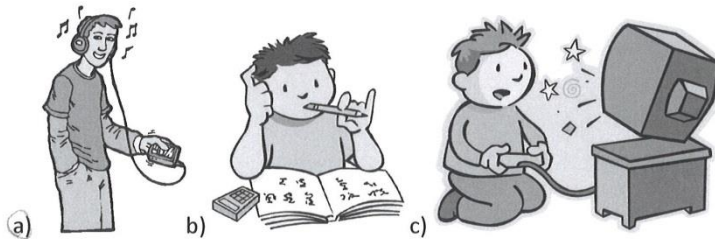
1. How is George feeling?



✓

2. What is George's brother doing?

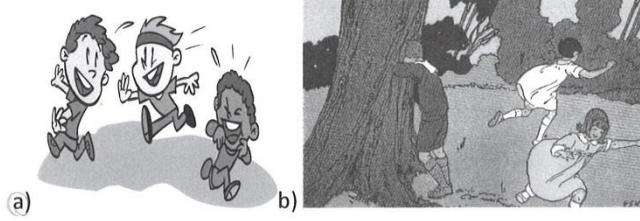
3/4



✓

reformat to L, please!

3. What the boys used to play?



X



4. When does George want to play?



✓

Reading

Part 1 - Put the dialogue in the correct order. Use numbers from 1-9.

- 0 - That's great, I was born in London and I love it there, we should hang out sometime. But I am afraid we have to go now, Bye.
- 2 - Hi Susan, How are you?
- 4 - Nice to meet you Jessica, where are you from?
- 6 - What a coincidence! I am also from England!
- 1 - Hi John
- 7 - Oh really? Which part?
- 8 - London
- 3 - I am very well, thank you. This is my friend Jessica, she is here on holiday.
- 5 - I am from England

Part 2 – Read the questions and choose the most suitable response.

1. Can I get you something from the kitchen?

- a) I want toilet paper
- (b) No, thank you
- c) I am hungry

2. Are you good at swimming?

- a) I like water
- b) I enjoy scuba-diving
- (c) I am the best

3. What is your favourite color?

- a) I hate pink and white
- b) Blue is nice, but it is not my favourite
- (c) Definitely Purple

4. Do you like snakes?

- a) Yes, they are cute
- b) Cobra is the best
- c) Spiders are better than snakes



~~4/5~~
5/5

5. Hi, How are you?

- a) Bye
- b) Hello, I am ok.
- c) Hi, I am 12 years old.



part 3 – Read the text carefully and answer the following questions.

Going through the forest is my favourite part of the walk. My dog Benji loves it too. I'm Grace. I live on a farm with my parents and I take Benji for a walk most days after school. While Benji's playing, I stop to take a photo of a butterfly. I'm thinking about posting it on Facebook, but then I hear Benji barking. He's jumping and running around a boy. The poor boy looks worried. 'Benji, stop! Come here!' I call and throw him his ball. I'm about to say sorry to the boy, but he's gone.

1. Choose the most suitable title for the story.

- a) Happy afternoon in the forest
- b) My strange Experience
- c) Missing dog



2. Why did Grace stop?

- a) to take a photo
- b) to chatch a butterfly
- c) to post on Facebook



2/3

3. How often Grace walks Benji?

- a) sometimes
- b) most days
- c) every day

