



Weblogging: Innovation for Communication in English Class

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The notion of self-publishing, which is what Blogger and blogging are really about, is the next big wave of human communication. The last big wave was Web activity. Before that one it was e-mail. Instant messaging was an extension of e-mail.

Eric Schmidt

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to exemplify how weblogging can raise learners' language awareness and prepare them for communication in the networked world. The research aimed at the investigation of applying innovative techniques for written and oral communication in English classes. An exploratory study of using a variety of ICT activities at tertiary level was conducted. Class experiences of creating weblogs for learning purposes and using them for online activities with university students who learn English for Specific Purposes are described.

The methods employed for data gathering and treatment consisted of administering specially designed questionnaires, analyzing students' responses, carrying out weblogging activities, providing feedback to learners and evaluating learners' performance in various online activities, and finally assessing the utility of weblogging.

Our findings show that the experience of writing for an audience provides an important opportunity for learning English. Although there is a limitation to the study - the data are from a small sample of participants - this study yielded some practical insights and implications which are presented in this article.

1 Introduction

Recent innovations in e-learning include weblogs which can serve as a valuable tool for teaching writing in a foreign language. The advantages of blogging in language classes include the following (to name but a few): instant publishing online; having a readership; providing additional reading practice; and creating an online portfolio of student written work.

In this article we describe our research into application of weblogs for raising language awareness in learners at the tertiary level. This research documents the effects of learner self-

assessment of language proficiency, experience in online listening, and writing an opinion essay on professional theme. Language awareness is raised by learner reflections on written work and experience in revising work. The implications of blogging on learner development are also discussed.

2 Review of literature on weblogs in ELT

Application of information and communication technology (ICT) in language learning has become very popular. However, teachers “must look at technology as integral to providing learning experiences that focus on authentic and applicable language and content, that are differentiated according to learner needs, and that support learners in developing literacy across situations” (Egbert, 2006, sect. “Getting there”, para. 2).

Recent innovations such as weblogs offer learning opportunities online (Godwin-Jones, 2003). Blogging does not require any knowledge of HTML. Blog entries are usually followed by a comment button, allowing readers to write a response, which is then logged and linked, along with all other comments, into the original text. Blogs are easily linked and cross-linked to create larger on-line communities. Language learners can use a personal blog as an electronic portfolio that shows development over time. By publishing the blog online, the student has the opportunity of writing for readers beyond their classmates. Readers in turn can comment on what they have read. Weblog entries are made by typing directly into the browser and with the click of a button are instantly published on the Internet. Bloggers can also customize the layout of their blogs, e.g. by adding pictures to enhance their attractiveness.

Three types of blogs have been described by Campbell (2003): the tutor blog; the learner blog; and the class blog. The tutor blog is run by the tutor for the learner, and its purpose is to give reading practice to the learners, promote exploration of English websites, encourage online exchange by use of comment buttons, provide class or syllabus information, and serve as a resource of links for self-study. Learner blogs are run by individual learners themselves. Learner blogs are best suited for reading and writing classes. The class blog is the result of the collaborative effort of an entire class. It can be used for posting messages, images, and links related to classroom discussion topics. Class blogs could also be used as a virtual space for an international classroom language exchange (Campbell, 2003).

Students’ attitudes to weblogs differ: some students loathe blogs for their poor or non-standard English, others love their authenticity and liveliness (Eastment, 2005, p. 358). Blogs can help students reflect on their learning and be a rich source of ideas and authentic contemporary language, but strangely, there do not seem as yet to be many EFL blogs (Eastment, 2005, p. 359).

There are numerous reasons for using blogs, such as to provide a real audience for student writing, to provide extra reading practice for students, to increase the sense of community in a class, to encourage students to participate, to create an online portfolio of student written work (Stanley, 2005). The novelty factor creates student interest in starting to use blogs. It is claimed that blogs work best when learners get into the habit of using them. If learners are not encouraged, blogs can quickly be abandoned.

According to Walker (2005), who applied weblogging in his classes, by the end of the semester the majority of students said they had enjoyed weblogging and found it valuable. Some students wrote with great enthusiasm and adapted their templates daily to reflect on the newly acquired skills and new aspirations. Some students absolutely hated being forced to blog. Most of the students stopped blogging when the semester was over, but about 20% continued.

Campbell (n.d.) researched learner attitudes to weblogs by administering an anonymous survey to 57 learners in four classes. His results can be summarized as follows: the large majority (86%) feel that the blog is ‘OK’ or ‘good’, most students only rarely or occasionally read the entries, preferring instead to go straight to the class websites for homework or presentation information. Learners seem to prefer to do only what is required of them. This assumption is reinforced by decreasing numbers of learners following links in the entries and making comments. The majority (95%) rarely or never utilize the EFL learning resources available for self-study via permanent

links in the margins of a weblog. Although most learners recognized the value of a blog, they claimed that they didn't have the time to take advantage of it.

The features of successful blog-based class as defined by Johnson (2004) are these: 1) a blog for class notes and a blog for posting group feedback; 2) blogs viewed by all students; 3) students have their own individual blogs for posting assignments; 4) only the teacher and the student can view the individual blog; 5) the teacher can add comments to student's submissions, but not vice versa; and 6) the weblogging service should be free.

Good features of a blog application were analyzed by Hall (n.d.), who pointed out: 1) students' reactions to the blogs were generally positive; 2) most students were very diligent in posting to their blogs; 3) students were able to read each other's opinions and observations; 4) the instructor received invaluable feedback from the students about class activities; 5) class members were able to share differing opinions freely. There were a lot of very tastefully designed blogs. Bad features of blogs, according to Hall (n.d.), were: 1) entries were often written for the sake of completing an assignment; 2) students commented less and less on each other's blogs as the semester progressed; 3) some of the student's blogs were virtually ignored by their classmates; 4) many students did not have computers at home; 5) some students forgot passwords, usernames, and e-mail addresses; 6) a few students never took to blogging; 7) blogs soon become outdated and discontinued after the class ended.

Teaching writing and reading English for Specific Purposes through weblogs was studied by Arani (2005), who maintains that approximately three quarters of the class of forty students preferred writing the weblog to the more traditional written journal; most students believed that the weblog can improve English; seven disagreed; 15 students said that they would definitely continue using the weblog; 15 said they definitely would not, and 10 were unsure.

Learner development is directly related to language awareness. In particular, language awareness is essential in writing because it refers to the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language (Carter, 2003, p. 64). Language awareness does not simply involve a focus on language itself, but it also implies cognitive reflection upon language. In order to raise language awareness learners must be constantly given choices in learning. Choices include a diversity of activities and cater for learners' multiple intelligences. Language awareness can be successful if learners keep reflecting on their learning. Administering questionnaires relevant to language learning makes it possible to draw students' attention to new factors that can facilitate and enhance learning and make them reflect upon the learning process. The application of blogging for accomplishing various assignments encouraged students to think about their performances in class activities.

The crucial question to be explored therefore is how to raise language awareness in learners and prepare them for communication in the networked world by applying weblogging in ESP classes.

3 Participants and research methods

The participants in this research project were first year students in the Faculty of Social Policy at Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania. They were studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The design of the ESP course reflected the learners' needs in professional language and was adjusted to the requirements of students seeking a Bachelor of Law degree. The total number of respondents was 33, and the majority of them (30) were females aged 19 and 20. The average level of their L2 proficiency, which is assessed by administering the Oxford Placement Test at the outset of ESP course, was pre-intermediate, although there were a few students of intermediate proficiency. The research project on the application of weblogging in ESP classes lasted one term, in Spring 2006.

The employed methods of data gathering and treatment consisted of administering specially designed questionnaires, analyzing students' responses, carrying out weblogging activities, providing feedback to learners and evaluating learners' performance in various online activities, and analyzing the utility of weblogging.

Two questionnaires were designed in accordance with scientific standards (Z. Dornyei, 2003, p, 16). The first questionnaire sought to research the students' needs through self-assessment of language skills and performance in various class activities. The questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix 1. The data are described in Section 4.1. The second questionnaire tried to establish students' perceptions of their experiences in weblogging. The data are described in Section 4.5.

Excerpts from students' weblogs, which provide information on self-assessment and learner likes and dislikes, are included in Appendix 2.

Excerpts from students weblogs, which provide additional information on listening online activities, are referred to in Appendix 3.

The design of the research included the creation of weblogs for each participant of the project. The individual blogs were created by employing a free service available online <http://www.blogger.com>. Fortunately, our English language classroom is equipped with computers, and there was no difficulty in creating a personal blog for each learner.

Students' blogs have been downloaded to the teachers' weblogs at <http://anusienelilija.blogspot.com> and <http://mazeikiene.blogspot.com>, respectively. All blogs are also available through the project initiator's & coordinator's weblog <http://gkavaliauskiene.blogspot.com>. Therefore any learner's blog can be accessed by clicking on his or her surname, and all entries can be viewed or commented on.

The majority of participants declined to personalize their weblogs, i.e. provide their personal information, although some students did: they contributed nice pictures of themselves, their pets or flowers. We did not pressure our students to be too personal. We wanted to give them time and space to get accustomed to the novel online activities. The various assignments were carried out during consecutive classes.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Self-assessment of language skills and performance

The first assignment was the self-assessment of language skills and performance in class activities. The learners were requested to evaluate their proficiency in the first entry in their individual blogs. They were asked to evaluate themselves by giving themselves a mark on the scale of 5 to 10 (grade scale): 10 – excellent, 9 – very good, 8 – good, 7 – adequate, 6 – satisfactory, 5 – weak. Self-assessment grades were not recorded in blogs, though. Students were requested to write the grades on slips of paper. This was done in order to preserve their self-esteem, i.e. conceal the identity of the student.

The self-assessment data are shown in Table 1. The numbers in the columns show the percentage of respondents that judged their skills by awarding themselves an appropriate grade. Reading skills are assessed favorably probably because it is easy to conceal flaws in reading comprehension. It is apparent that listening, writing, and speaking skills are judged differently: nobody feels they excel at them, and students give themselves lower grades. This learners' feedback is very valuable for teachers who wish to analyze students' needs in order to plan classroom work that benefits students most.

Language skills	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Satisfactory
Reading	12%	65%	23%	-	-
Listening	-	24%	29%	35%	12%
Writing	-	18%	41%	41%	-
Speaking	-	29%	35%	18%	18%

Table 1: Learners' perceptions of their language skills (33 respondents)

The learners' self-assessment of their performance in vocabulary tests, presentations and class discussions is displayed in Table 2.

Language knowledge / performance	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Satisfactory
Vocabulary	-	29%	29%	42%	-
Presentations	29%	29%	42%	-	-
Discussions	6%	29%	18%	29%	18%

Table 2: Learners' perceptions of their performance in class activities. (33 respondents).

As shown in Table 2, none of the students gave themselves excellent grades for knowledge of ESP vocabulary. However performance in presentations is evaluated higher. It stands to reason: presentations are prepared in advance, and students are more successful in making 'ready-made' speeches. Evaluation of performance in discussions is more modest: speaking impromptu in front of the audience is never an easy task, particularly for shy students. This may explain why so many learners evaluate their performance in discussions poorly.

Excerpts from learners' weblogs that illustrate attitudes to class activities and greater or lesser degree of success in using language skills are quoted in Appendix 2.

It should be noted that learner self-assessment provided insights into students' needs. Teachers became aware of the necessity for perfecting writing and listening skills and enlarging learner knowledge of active vocabulary.

4.2 Listening online

The second assignment included individual online listening to recordings by a famous British linguist, Professor David Crystal. These recordings go under the title 'Keep Your English Up To Date', and now are available at the BBC language learning website:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/radio/specials/1728_uptodate/

On this website there are altogether 26 recordings. Each student was requested to choose two recordings of his/her liking, listen to them as many times as necessary for complete comprehension, then subsequently read the tape-script, which is available for each theme, and listen again. Finally, students had to describe their listening experience in individual weblogs. The unusual feature of this exercise was the lack of ear-phones at the computers in the classroom. Therefore, as learners chose to listen to different recordings at the same time, the 'noise' in the classroom affected the audibility. In the teachers' opinion, such interference resembles to some extent real-life listening environment and provides conditions for learners to relax, concentrate on their own task, and not to worry for not being able to follow everything immediately. Each learner's description of this experience can be viewed in her or his individual blogs. Some learners are aware of the utility of real-life listening, i.e. background noise is not supposed to be a hindrance, although others prefer ideal listening conditions, i.e. complete silence in the classroom. Such an experiment of individualized listening allows learners to work at their own pace, make choices for themselves, improve their listening skills as well as heighten their awareness of cultural issues through listening. Knowing that a skill of listening is much to be desired for many learners, individualized listening practice is a must in class settings.

4.3 Writing opinion essays and comments

The third assignment was the writing of an opinion essay on one of the suggested ESP themes such as Human Rights, Freedom of Speech and Expression, The Law and the Family. Written essays can be viewed and assessed in the students' blogs. It is worth noting that some students wrote extensively and expressed interesting ideas, but some just mentioned trivial things without

giving deeper insights into the topic. This shows these learners' lack of preparation for accomplishing his or her assignments.

The fourth assignment included reading their peers' blogs and writing comments. Not surprisingly, some learners turned to their native language in this task. Overall everybody was positive about their peers' entries. There were no critical remarks or negative comments. Students were obviously aware of the public nature of their publication and avoided being critical or categorical in their judgments.

It is worth noting that not every participant of the project accomplished all assignments. The major reason was the students' absences from classes. Learners were not expected to fulfil their assignments in their spare time, although some students, who did not complete tasks in class, volunteered to finish assignments at home. Another common drawback was that some forgot their usernames and passwords which only they would know as owners of the weblogs. If the blogger is not able to retrieve this information he will be unable to edit the pages of his/her weblog, or to update it, i.e. to change or add extra information. Moreover, some of the learners' weblogs were lost, mainly because students were unable to recall the titles of their blogs. This drawback was also observed by Hall (n.d.) and described in the literature review above.

4.4 Analysis of written work

The analysis of students' writing was performed at the end of the weblog project. Here we will have a quick look at the systematic nature of errors and try to draw conclusions as to their nature and reason.

Generally speaking, errors can be divided into 'interlingual errors', i.e. errors that occur between English and the mother tongue, and 'intralingual errors', i.e. those that occur within the language being learned (Bolitho & Tomlinson, 2005). Amongst the causes of the errors are: mother tongue interference, overgeneralization, interference from items within English – cross association and false analogy. Errors might have more than one source; there could be two or more causes operating at the same time. Errors made by the students do not demonstrate any difficulties in understanding the course material. One gets the impression that many errors are made because of the students' carelessness or absent-mindedness. Some examples of spelling errors: a) personal pronoun "I" and words – "English", "British", "American" are not written in capital letters; b) some plural nouns ending in "y" – e.g. summarys. Other common errors are missing articles, confusing the usage of the possessive case, missing -s in the 3rd person singular in simple present tense, use of double negatives, misplaced apostrophes, subject-verb disagreement, usage of wrong prepositions and tenses, confused vocabulary, and misuse of the infinitive "to be". These errors were due to mother tongue interference. Word order mistakes are also frequent, and they are caused by the fact that word order in the students' mother tongue is rather flexible. It should be noted that both intralingual and interlingual errors were encountered in the analyzed writing, and moreover, they are typical of Lithuanian learners of English.

Knowing/understanding the cause of the errors can help teachers to help learners. When teachers are aware of learners' problems they are in a better position to decide what to do. The action teachers take can depend on a lot of different variables: whether the error is frequent or not, if it is important for communication or not, whether it takes place in a controlled or uncontrolled activity, if it is an individual problem or widespread amongst the students (Bolitho & Tomlinson, 2005).

After analyzing the students' writing assignments, we wrote our comments in each learner's blog and asked the students to correct their errors. The remedial work was supposed to have been done by the learners in the same section as the comments, so that everybody can see how well learners have done it. It is well known that generally students dislike doing remedial work on paper assignments. The reason is quite simple: students are only interested in grades and many do not even bother to read teacher's remarks. In this experiment, grades were not awarded as to motivate learners to do their best in correcting their writing. Grades for taking part in this project

and accomplishing assignments were awarded before the end of the semester. Naturally, each student was graded depending on his/her actual performance.

4.5 Final phase of research

The final phase of research consisted of two parts: first, the analysis of students' responses to the questionnaire and, second, the teachers' online feedback, which was given in the form of comments on each learner's written assignments.

The questionnaire on the application of weblogging for learning English is presented in Appendix 1.

Learners' responses to Likert scale questions on a scale 1 to 5 (1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – not sure, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree) were collated to calculate the means, standard deviations, and the frequencies of optional choice. The obtained data are shown in Table 3.

Utility of Activities	Likert Mean	Likert Standard Deviation	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1. writing & publishing	3.93	0.88	-	3.5%	11%	61%	21%
2. listening	3.96	1.18	7%	3.5%	18%	28.5%	43%
3. reading blogs & writing comments	3.96	0.82	3.5%	-	21%	64%	14%
4. writing essays	3.89	0.72	-	7%	11%	68%	14%
5. I'll use my blog in the future	3.39	0.74	-	7%	57%	25%	11%

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations and Frequencies of Responses on Likert Scale.

On the average, the respondents rated items 2 (listening online) and 3 (reading other people's blogs and writing comments) favorably: the means for both items are the highest in comparison to other items. However, the standard deviations (SD) differ: 1.18 and 0.82. The former indicates a higher scatter than the latter. Online listening is supported by 71.5% of respondents. Online reading and commenting is favored by 78% of students. The means for writing and publishing online (item 1 in Table 3) and for writing online essays (item 4) are close, 3.93 and 3.89 respectively, although SD for the item 1 is higher (0.88) than for the item 4 (0.72). The higher value of SD signifies larger spread. The positive attitude to these two questions is shared by the same number of students – 82%.

The most interesting responses are obtained on the future use of blogs (item 5 in Table 3). The Mean is just 3.39, i.e. the smallest value in this Table, but the SD is not large, just 0.74. 57% of respondents are not sure if they will use their blogs in the future, while the frequency of positive responses is 36%. This result is better than those reported by Campbell (n.d.) or Hall (n.d.), probably due to the fact that we diversified the blogs activities, and learners did not become bored with them. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, adding variety to class activities and giving learners choices in learning stimulates motivation and interest.

Excerpts from students' weblogs, which qualitatively illustrate the data in Table 3, are reproduced in Appendix 3.

Teachers' feedback completes analysis of weblogging. Teachers gave feedback individually by writing comments in each learner's weblog. Our approach to writing comments was straightforward: be as positive as possible, concise, up to the point and avoid harsh remarks. As previously mentioned our students are usually interested in their grades and quite often do not read

their teachers' remarks on their paper written assignments. In blogging, no grades awarded, but learners were aware that their blogs could be viewed by any Internet browser or member of the public. Therefore students did their best to make their blogs presentable. Regrettably, remedial work (error correction in the comments section of a blog) was not done by all project participants although students showed their awareness of various mistakes during discussion. The usual excuse that students made was that it had to be done outside classroom hours at the end of the semester, when students were very busy preparing for exams and credits.

5 Conclusions and implications

The extent to which learners consciously focus on aspects of language and the degree of noticing its particular features have been debated by linguists and practitioners. This study documents some ways to raise language awareness which is important for language processing and learner development.

In the presentation of our results, we outlined opportunities for raising language awareness by employing an application of ICT technique allows learners to carry out assignments at their own pace and under non-threatening conditions. The online methodology involves creating an individual weblog by each student and using it for describing his or her own experiences in learning English and accomplishing written assignments.

In this study we employed the assignments of self-assessment, online listening, and writing an opinion essay and commenting on peers' weblogs. The learners' self-assessment of productive and receptive language skills had indicated weaknesses in the acquisition of writing and listening. The students' descriptions of assignments in their blogs allowed us to analyze their written work, provide feedback in the form of comments and encourage learners to do remedial work in the comment areas. Individual online listening at one's own pace can prompt and motivate learners to improve their skills of listening without being intimidated by possible failure.

This study has yielded the following insights which may lead to further research and/or development in teaching practice. First, weblogs can be used in English classes for raising language awareness and promoting learner development. Second, weblogging can enhance students' motivation due to the novelty and diversity of possible learning activities. Third, learning at one's own pace can help learners overcome their fear of making errors and enhance self-esteem. Fourth, weblogging is an enjoyable activity, which attracts the vast majority of students who are keen on having their own website. Fifth, teachers can provide individual feedback for individual learners, and learners can receive feedback from classmates and/or any Internet reader. Finally, there is another aspect, which has received too little attention in our research, i.e. learners' reflection on their performance and achievements. This opportunity was not fully explored in this study due to the termination of the academic term and the ESP course, but it could be of interest to teachers who wish to improve the quality of teaching. Moreover, even when the learners' products in weblogs are less than perfect, they show how students learn and what teachers teach. Orienting learners toward personal publishing on weblogs can help prepare them for communication in the networked world.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire: Application of Weblogs for Learning English.

1. Writing and publishing online is useful for improving writing skills. a) strongly disagree, b) disagree, c) not sure, d) agree, e) strongly agree.
2. Individual listening to authentic English recordings online is helpful for developing listening skills. a) strongly disagree, b) disagree, c) not sure, d) agree, e) strongly agree.
3. Reading other people's blogs and writing comments is beneficial to raising language awareness. a) strongly disagree, b) disagree, c) not sure, d) agree, e) strongly agree.
4. Writing an opinion essay on the ESP theme online is beneficial for consolidating professional knowledge. a) strongly disagree, b) disagree, c) not sure, d) agree, e) strongly agree.
5. I will continue to use my blog in the future: a) strongly disagree, b) disagree, c) not sure, d) agree, e) strongly agree.

Appendix 2

Excerpts from students' weblogs on self-assessment of language knowledge and skills. (Language is not corrected).

<http://idomarkaite.blogspot.com/>

In fact all the things that we do in our English classes I like, everything I think It's ok. We participate in discussions every time, because we are interested in things during the lessons. I have learned a lot of new words since my studies in this university. Every lesson we are talking, so we have a possibility to improve our English skills. I have no bad words about our English classes.

I like reading mostly, because I can concentrate on the text ant what I am reading. I can sum up my minds. What I dislike is listening, but it depends on what topic we are listening sometimes it is easier sometimes it's harder to understand what the characters are talking. Writing and speaking It's ok as well, I like speaking and participate in discussions. The easiest way to me to show my English skills is making presentations. Learning vocabulary it is so boring to me, so my vocabulary is only good, not excellent.

Teacher talks about interesting topics, I learned more about USA law and English law, about It's system, sometimes we have a possibility to watch a film deal with the topic.

<http://mpaulauskaite.blogspot.com/>

My English skills:

READING: I think I have no problems in reading, because I like read English literature very much, and I think it is a very available for me. But sure, I should improve my reading.

WRITING: I think writing is my weak point, the biggest problem is unknown words.

LISTENING: I like listenings, but sometimes it is a very difficult to recall all information.

<http://gadamonYTE.blogspot.com/>

Writing:

My English writing skills are also quite good. Off course, I make mistakes, but who doesn't make them?

Listening:

Situation with listening is a little bit complicated. When I'm watching movies in English or listening English music I usually understand, what is being said. But when I'm doing listening tasks in university during the English classes (the same thing for me was at school) it's very hard to understand. I noticed that the main thing for my understanding, is that I need to see man's face while he is talking. Then I understand almost everything.

Speaking:

It depends on subjects. Sometimes it's really hard for me to start conversations during English classes. Not only to start, but also to come in on that. But when I'm communicating with people from other countries the problem disappears. I can easily talk with them. Also, because of my work, time to time I'm making interviews with foreign people. Till today I have made a few interviews with people from Great Britain, and really it wasn't hard for me to communicate with them.

Vocabulary:

My vocabulary is quite poor. I know that. And this became a problem at school in the early forms. It is because of my lazy. I lost a lot of English words and now it's a very big vacancy, which blocks my English today.

Making presentations:

It's not hard for me to prepare for it, but it's quite hard to introduce it to others.

Discussions:

If I have something to say, I do it, but if I don't so I'm staying quietly.

<http://mijiedre.blogspot.com/>

To begin with, I would like to write good points of English classes. To the point from my view, texts, which we are given for us are not so difficult. Besides we are given the vocabulary, because these words are specific and from the law vocabulary. Moreover, these texts are valuable, for instance, we read texts about systems of British and American law. So reading is one of the most easiest and interesting things. Another plus is that we often write tests (that I don't like of course, but tests control my knowledge). The third thing, which I like is, that we make presentations about some issues. We are learning to speak clearly. Of course, I am afraid to stand in front of audience. However, English classes have some minuses. I put a strain on participating in discussions. In discussions I am like a little mouse :), I don't want to speak, because, when I speak I make a lot of mistakes, and very often I don't know how to express my opinion. So I think it would be better, if we work in groups. Another minus is that we rarely repeat the grammar, or write essay or something else. So because of that I feel that I forgot how to write some words.

<http://evinskute.blogspot.com/>

To start with, I like almost everything in my English class, of course there are some things that I don't like to do. First of all, I like the way how English classes goes. I like reading tasks, because doing them I learn interesting things, especially I like articles from newspapers new vocabulary from them are very useful. What's more, I like listening because it is very interesting to hear people speaking in different accents. Furthermore, I don't mind to learn new vocabulary but doing this I face with one and very big problem- my laziness, but know I am fighting with it and I hope to win this war.

On the other side, there are some things that I don't like to do. I don't like to speak during my English classes it is because I am shy and sometimes I afraid to express my ideas because I don't know some words. As we see from this fact i have to win the war with my laziness. In addition, I don't like participating in discussions because while I create my idea others tell the same. But I think this is fault of myself, if I learn more new words, it would be easier to participate in discussions.

<http://beatam.blogspot.com/>

What I like in my English class:

- to have discussions with teacher and peers, because you can tell your opinion about some topics.
- to retell topics, because when you better remember what is topic about.
- sometimes to write tests, because it is easier to learn new words.
- to make presentations, because during making presentation you are searching for new material which you need for better understanding your topic and to present it.
- to read articles that gives our teacher from newspapers, because that stories are very interesting and I think also useful.

What I dislike in my English class:

- listening, because very often quality of tape is bad so you can't understand what they are speaking about. Also sometime people on the tape are speaking very fast...
- writing essays, because you can get such a topic of essay on that you don't have much arguments and because of this you get low mark.

<http://bozenaa.blogspot.com/>

In my opinion there are some disadvantages too. First of all, I don't like that students are so passive during the lessons. If the teacher doesn't make them to speak they keep silence. One more disadvantage is that we have very less listening tasks. Listening tasks are very difficult for me that is why I would like to have more such tasks and train my ears. It is a pity that we will have English classes only three terms because most probably we won't remember all the information and necessary words without practicing English. One more disadvantage is that we don't practice writing essays. I think that we should do that regularly because it is one of the most difficult tasks during the exam.

<http://vikuteee.blogspot.com/>

The one thing I could do well is reading, because it is easy to read the word you know. Speaking about writing, I am not sure that I could write without any mistakes, because my grammar is really weak, I have no good ideas, it is difficult to concentrate and write just a simple essay. It is easier to write essay at home, not in English classes.

Speaking about listening I would like to say that I really dislike that thing, because my skills are weak. I never hear a lot of things which are important, often I dream about something else and these are the reasons why my skills are not very good at listening. One more thing I dislike in English classes is speaking and participating in discussions, because to do these things it is need to know many words or phrases, concentrate, speak clearly and loudly. I do not feel good at speaking, to tell you the truth, I am shy and I can not speak loudly, because there are students who have better skills on speaking and I do not want to break them good minds.

One another thing, in English classes I like to learn new words. Sometimes I feel good at new words, but it is sad that after any months I forget a lot, but needless to say that I feel good about my vocabulary.

Making presentations is thing that I like, because it is interesting and useful for everyone. This work is hard, but I feel good at making presentations, because then I do this work with my heart.

<http://valyte.blogspot.com/>

What I like and dislike in my English classes/

First of all, reading. One of my hobby is reading books in my free time, I like all kind of books. In this moment I am reading Alice in Wonderland (in English), the main reason is to improve my English.

The next will be writing. It is weak. I need more practice.

Listening - one of the most interesting task in our English class.

Speaking - I don't like speaking, I am afraid to express my opinion, one of the reason self-confidence. Vocabulary - English have very rich vocabulary, and if you want to speak well, you need to learn more and more different words. I confess that sometimes I am lazy to learn new words, so this is reason my vocabulary not plenty.

Making presentations - very hard task, because involve all your English knowledge + speaking to the audience, which can be very frightening.

Participating in discussions - I don't like this task at all, I always let to express opinion other people, who have more ideas and knowledge then I. I agree, that I am passive in my English class, one of the reason – I am afraid to tell something wrong.

<http://gicebe.blogspot.com/>

To tell the truth, I dislike writing because sometimes I do some grammatical mistakes. I am tend to prepare to all lessons and I am always keen on improving my skills. Generally speaking, I know a lot of words in English and I can say that my vocabulary is quit rich. Certainly, I especially fancy speaking in this language as I have a lot of bright ideas. Reading is not so attractive part of English course as others are, because I prefer to read only Lithuanian literature because then I can understand the main ideas and all the text really good. To make a presentation is a creative task, sometimes I can spend a lot of time doing it, but I believe it is a pleasure. Taking everything into account, I adore my English.

<http://daiwaj.blogspot.com/>

In my English classes I like reading various texts because I can get a lot of new information sometimes even some funny things. I can't say my reading is excellent bun it is very good. However, I don't like speaking because it is very difficult for me to express my minds in English. So I would say my English speaking skills are satisfactory. Talking about my English vocabulary it is also pretty poor. Moreover, my English grammar isn't very good and i would evaluate my writing satisfactory. And finally, I like to make presentations but i have to work very hard and it takes me a long time to prepare a good presentation.

<http://justesanglu.blogspot.com/>

To tell the truth I find it difficult to assess my English knowledge.

I think I know quite a lot. But I feel I need to improve my English, because I feel I have forgotten some English things. Sometimes I find myself forgetting the spelling of some English words. Or sometimes I even do not remember the words I have learnt before. In my opinion such things happen because of lack of practice. I would like to spend some time abroad among English speakers where I would be under the necessity to speak English. I think that would be the perfect way to improve my speaking skills which also are not good enough. I wish I spoke English perfectly :)

<http://dgicevskyte.blogspot.com/>

Well, what can I say about English... As a language it is one of the most beautiful languages for me and I always was keen on learning it. I can't say that my English vocabulary is pure or that my comprehensive skills are really bad. I also don't say that I am brilliant at English especially when we talk about grammar or spelling. Grammar is quite misty to me, but I do not get upset (I think speaking is more important than writing), because I have some problems not just with English grammar/spelling but with other languages as well. In addition, I think that a little more work on my vulnerabilities will definitely improve those places that I understand or remember harder.

I liked my English classes at school, because of variety of tasks that we had to do. Each of it was developing different part of English: listening, reading, individual talk, writing, even creativity and ability to enrich vocabulary. Furthermore, we learned how to work in pares and alone.

What I like the most in English is reading It doesn't matter do I read loudly or in silence. I just like to read generally. I believe that reading is the best way to improve any part of English, for example, reading, comprehension, even grammar or spelling. It helps you to remember different phrases, adage, idioms and etc. However, the most effective way to memorize new words is to have someone to talk to loudly in English daily. That is why most students want to go to foreign countries at least for a summer.

Appendix 3

Excerpts from students' weblogs on listening online experience. (Language is not corrected).

<http://javinaite.blogspot.com/>

Hole-in-the Wall. This listening task was quite interesting and I found it not so difficult as I imagined before.

In my opinion it is very useful to experience such tasks as they improve my listening skills. There were some new words, which helped to improve my English. I would like to have more such listening practice in the future.

<http://jpetkute.blogspot.com/>

Spam.

Today I had a listening task online from the www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish page. I chose the topic about the spam, because this word is very often met in our today's life. This little, but very jumpy word keys up me every time I check my e-mail. So I was curious to know something more about it. I have found out more than I expected. Not only the meaning of the word, but it's origin as well. It shocked me a little. I even couldn't imagine that this word has any relation to the word "meat". That's great :)

To tell the truth, it was a little bit difficult to hear the speaker, because there were other 8 girls trying to do the same. Fortunately, there was a text written as well, so it made easier all the work. I even wondered that there was no words I couldn't understand. It means only one, I was lucky today by choosing this topic, or my English isn't so poor as I thought :) As many as I could hear, the pronunciation was understandable too. Maybe it because of the voice of the man, I don't want to flatter myself, but it can be my English listening ability is getting better and better. One thing I can say I really enjoyed this work.

<http://dliutkevicius.blogspot.com/>

Saddo. That was the tape script that I listened today. I used to think that my English is advanced, but my today's experience made me change my mind. It was rather difficult to understand the context of what I have heard. Of course it might be of the topic that I have chosen. But anyway I'm disappointed in myself.

It was really hard to listen for the first time. I'm sure I missed some of the words or at least got it not in the way that I should the second listening was quite easier. Of course it was because I have heard it for the second. Also reading of tape script had great influence. It was much easier to understand than the first time.

New words? I guess there were none. At least there were no words that I could not have made the meaning myself, based on the context.

<http://rpaliokaite.blogspot.com/>

Toy boy.

I just have listened a topic and read the tape script about toy boy. First of all the topic was interesting because I have never heard such reduplications before. The text was easy to read

because just some words were unknown. But it was a little difficult to hear a listening recording because the sound was not loud and the noise in the class impedes to concentrate on work. What is more I think that such tasks help better improve English. And everybody works bigger interest and enthusiasm.

<http://migiedre.blogspot.com/>

Hole in the wall. Now I would like to share my impression about this task. Firstly, I had to choose one topic and listen to this recording .I chose,, hole in the wall". During the listening I heard the meaning of this phrase. So Hole in the wall means an automatic cash dispenser. However I heard some unknown phrases such as hypheps, hither or oomph, which I translated from the vocabulary. So, this task was useful. However, I had some difficulties, because everybody were hearing different recordings at the same time. Because of that I had to listen my topic several times. After that I read the text and then I understood more. Summing all up it seems that this task was and useful and a bit difficult, but very interesting.

<http://bozenaa.blogspot.com/>

Today we have done a very interesting task during our English classes. We were doing listening tasks online. It was a little bit difficult to listen to the recordings because all the students listened at once. Well, while listening to the recording I learned many new things. I liked such kind of task very much. During the task I not only practiced listening but I also found out much new information. I liked such kind of task very much.

<http://vikuteee.blogspot.com/>

At the beginning, I would like to say that listening is one of the weak things in my life. When I know that after few minutes I'll listen any text I am scared off it and I hear nothing. That is really sad.

However, working on the website and doing listening task, I would like to say that this time was easier to me. Of course, it was difficult to hear some new words, because I do not know them. One more thing, everybody was listening and because of the noise I had to concentrate more seriously. I want to mention that this text was a little bit difficult or may be that man spoke too fast. On the other hand I understood everything when I read a tape script.

Listening another text was easier than the first, because persons who had an interview were not English people. As far as I know, other countries who speak English, they speak more clearly and not so fast. So, that is the reason why I understood everything and I need not read the tape script.

In my opinion, it was not so difficult to hear something as I have imagined. So I think that step by step I will hear everything what is mentioned on the listening task.

<http://zbudaite.blogspot.com/>

Listening for this text was more difficult, because there were a lot of unknown words. However it was quite easy to guess those words from the context. In generally, I am not satisfied with my listening skills, they're terrible!