

Charles University
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MASTER'S THESIS

Teaching Aspects of Connected Speech

Výuka aspektů souvislé řeči

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I hereby declare that this master's thesis is entirely my own work and that no other sources have been used in the preparation of the thesis other than those mentioned in the list of References. I further declare that this thesis has not been used to obtain any other degree.

Prague, April 2017

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I would like to thank Mrs. Květa Plajnerová who kindly allowed me to conduct the research during her English classes and all the students who participated in it. My thanks also go to my boyfriend Lukáš Hadamčík who patiently provided me with technical support and helped me modify all the recordings. In addition, I would like to thank my friend Iva Cherry for proofreading the thesis. Finally, I would like to express immense gratitude to my teacher and supervisor Mgr. Kristýna Poesová, Ph.D. for all the time she devoted to me, for her guidance and encouragement, and for her invaluable remarks and suggestions.

ABSTRAKT

Tato práce se zabývá výukou aspektů souvislé řeči. Teoretická část analyzuje aspekty souvislé řeči z fonetického a didaktického hlediska a dále zkoumá vztah mezi výukou aspektů souvislé řeči a rozvojem dekodovacích dovedností. Praktická část představuje výzkum zaměřený na účinky explicitní výuky a procvičování vybraných aspektů souvislé řeči na porozumění autentické mluvě. Výsledky naznačují, že dvanáct 45minutových lekcí založených na autentických televizních seriálech mohlo mít významný pozitivní vliv na rozvoj poslechových dovedností účastníků se studentů. Výsledky rovněž ukazují, že studenti považují trénink za zábavný a užitečný.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

výuka výslovnosti, aspekty souvislé řeči, poslech, dekodovací dovednosti, televizní seriály

ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns teaching aspects of connected speech. The theoretical part briefly introduces aspects of connected speech from a phonetic and didactic point of view. It further scrutinizes the relation between teaching aspects of connected speech and the development of decoding skills. The practical part presents research aimed at the effects of explicit instruction and training in selected aspects of connected speech on understanding of authentic speech. The results indicate that twelve 45-minute lessons based on authentic TV series may have had a significant positive influence on the development of the students' listening skills. They further show that the students found the training enjoyable and useful.

KEYWORDS

pronunciation teaching, aspects of connected speech, listening, decoding skills, TV series

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1 Introduction

I, like many of my friends, received very little instruction in pronunciation in my English classes at primary and secondary school. Therefore, when I started attending phonetics and phonology courses at university, I was all the more appreciative of the benefits provided by pronunciation teaching, and I could not understand why it received so little attention. Pronunciation training brought me two significant positive changes. First, as a result of improved pronunciation, I started to be perceived as more advanced, increasing my language learner status. However, as I experienced it, the second and greater asset proved to be an overall improvement in my listening skills.

I have always loved stories – in books, films, as well as in TV series. Due to the increasing influence of Western culture, many of my favourite narrations have been written in the English language. The desire to be able to read or watch them in their original versions was one of my strongest motivations to study English. The transition from translations to unabridged English books was rather smooth, likely also due to the wide availability of graded readers and the nature of the written word. However, I struggled greatly to understand authentic recordings. Even during my initial years at university, I was unable to enjoy watching my favourite TV series with ease. I had to concentrate intently on the actual words spoken, and yet, I knew I was missing a lot of information. I felt frustrated and disappointed. I had no difficulty completing listening exercises in class and I could not grasp why I was failing to apply my knowledge and skills in real life. The only thing that somewhat comforted me was the fact that my friends faced the same obstacle.

Studying aspects of connected speech was a truly eye-opening experience. Having realised that the problem quite possibly lay in the instruction rather than in my abilities, I wanted to find out what specific changes needed to be made to prevent my students from having the same experience. This brings me to this thesis and to my personal aim, which is to design effective and enjoyable teaching materials that are based on authentic TV series and that will improve students' listening skills.

The theoretical part of this thesis introduces aspects of connected speech and discusses the reasons why these should (not) be taught. Additionally, it focuses on the relation between teaching aspects of connected speech and the development of listening

skills. Finally, it presents the advantages and disadvantages of video use in the language classroom.

The practical part presents research aimed at the effects of explicit instruction and training in selected aspects of connected speech on understanding of authentic speech. An experimental group of pre-intermediate to intermediate students received twelve 45-minute lessons based on authentic TV series. The experimental and control groups also took dictation cloze tests before and after the lessons. The efficacy of the instruction and training was determined with regard to the author's reflection, the students' feedback and the dictation cloze test scores. Finally, the results were also discussed with reference to similar studies.

THEORETICAL PART

2 Connected speech

Connected speech may be defined as pronunciation changes of citation forms of words that happen when the words are spoken in context (Alameen & Levis, 2015). In the past, these changes were associated with fast, informal and even lazy or substandard speech (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, & Griner, 2011; Brown, 2012). Nowadays, researchers claim it is a natural part of speech as it occurs on all levels of formality and rates (Kaisse, 1985; Rogerson-Revell, 2011), even though both factors – speech rate as well as register – may, together with linguistic context, contribute to the intensity of changes (Alameen & Levis, 2015).

Researchers and textbook authors use different terms and even different classifications of aspects of connected speech. Some of them only include the processes of assimilation, linking, elision and contractions (e.g. Celce-Murcia et al., 2011), others also add accentuation, weak forms, rhythm and intonation (e.g. Cruttenden, 2014). At the moment, there is not a universally accepted categorisation of aspects of connected speech. For the purposes of this work, Rogerson-Revell’s model is followed. She describes two main processes that appear in connected speech: accentuation, which serves to indicate the meaning of utterances by using appropriate stress and intonation; and modification, whereby individual speech sounds are articulated differently under the influence of neighbouring sounds (Rogerson-Revell, 2011). Clarey and Dixon (1963) believe that these changes result from “a simple law of economy, whereby the organs of speech, instead of taking a new position for each sound, tend to draw sounds together with the purpose of saving time and energy” (p. 12).

Based on the two processes, Rogerson-Revell (2011) recognises the following aspects of connected speech:

- accentuation (sentence stress);
- rhythm;
- weak forms (reductions);
- assimilation;
- elision and contractions; and

- linking.

Due to its extent and complexity, Rogerson-Revell (2011) studies intonation separately. This is also the reason why it is not included in this thesis.

The next sub-chapters provide brief phonetic descriptions of the selected phenomena, which are followed by a didactic view on the matter, specifically recommendations regarding what to focus on when teaching pronunciation.

2.1 Accentuation

In order to emphasise the most important information in their utterance, speakers stress some syllables that they pronounce. Stressed syllables require more energy than others to be produced since they are longer, louder and higher in pitch (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

The placement of sentence stress largely depends on the meaning that the speaker wishes to convey. This may be demonstrated by comparing Cruttenden's example; responses to the question "*What was the weather like?*" may express different messages based solely on the stress pattern. The response "*It rained every day!*" indicates that the speaker emphasises the rain whereas by the answer "*It rained every day!*" the speaker points out the fact that the rain was continuous (2014, p. 270).

Since it is typically the content or lexical words that carry the message (as opposed to function or grammatical words that generally express grammatical relationships), their syllables are stressed (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). An overview of content and function words is provided in *Table 1*.

Content / lexical words	Function words
nouns	articles
main verbs	auxiliary verbs
adjectives	personal pronouns
possessive pronouns	possessive adjectives
demonstrative pronouns	demonstrative adjectives
interrogatives	prepositions
<i>not</i> / negative contractions	conjunctions
adverbs	
adverbial particles	

Table 1 Content words versus function words (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 212)

However, this basic stress pattern wherein function words are unstressed may be modified, should the context demand it (Rogerson-Revell, 2011). Compare the example of a basic stress pattern where the content word is stressed, “*I saw him,*” with the utterance “*I saw him,*” in which the speaker wishes to emphasise that it was *him* he saw, not anybody else.

The ability to recognise stressed words is essential especially when learners listen to native speakers (NSs), as important signals are sent through the accentuation patterns. Moreover, producing incorrect accentuation may be confusing to the listeners, particularly NSs (Rogerson-Revell, 2011). The knowledge of sentence stress (and rhythm) also helps learners to understand the need for reduced forms.

2.2 Rhythm

The rhythm of English is created by the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) describe its sound as “DUM di di / DUM di di / DUM di di / DUM” (p. 208). Traditionally, English was considered to be a stress-timed language where stresses appear rather regularly and the duration of an utterance is derived from the number of stresses. In other words, speakers have roughly the same time to say the unstressed syllables, irrespective of their number, in between two stressed syllables. See an example in **Table 2**. The time provided for each utterance to be made is the same, even though the sentence becomes longer. In order to fit the rhythm, unstressed syllables often need to be reduced: they are shorter and the “pure” quality of vowels disappears. On the contrary, when

two accented syllables appear next to each other, they tend to be prolonged (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Kelly, 2000; Rogerson-Revell, 2011).

	●			●		●
	CATS			CHASE		MICE.
The	CATS	have		CHASED		MICE.
The	CATS	will		CHASE	the	MICE.
The	CATS	have been		CHASing	the	MICE.
The	CATS	could have been		CHASing	the	MICE.

Table 2 “Cats chase mice” rhythm drill (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 210)

Syllable-timed languages then stood somewhat in opposition to the stress-timed ones. In their case, the duration of an utterance depends on the number of syllables and all syllables receive a certain degree of stress; therefore, no reduction in vowel quality is required (Kelly, 2000).

However, this clear distinction is nowadays considered inaccurate. Both syllable- as well as stress-timing have not been sufficiently confirmed by research and hence it is not generally accepted (Rogerson-Revell, 2011; Cruttenden, 2014). For example, Cauldwell (1996) rejects the classification completely, whereas Roach (2009) suggests that rhythmical differences between languages should be viewed rather as a continuum with individual languages having only a tendency towards being stress-timing or syllable-timing. The outdated and seemingly irrelevant distinction is described here due to its didactic use.

In English, very rhythmic and clearly patterned speech appears mainly in formal situations (such as public speaking), in advertising, or in poetry and drama. The extent to which this also occurs in everyday speech is questionable (Kelly, 2000). Yet, Kelly (2000) recommends teachers to use rhythmic language, for example nursery rhymes, in the classroom, since it raises awareness of the role of stress and reduced forms. This is important because a sharp distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables, a characteristic feature of stress-timed languages, remains a natural part of ordinary English and significantly helps NSs process the input (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2011). Moreover, teachers have observed that students develop their fluency when training stress-timing with short stretches of language (Cauldwell, 1996).

The question of rhythm and unstressed syllables seems to be even more pressing to students whose first language has a syllable-time tendency. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) state that “learners from syllable-timed language backgrounds tend to stress syllables in English more equally, without giving sufficient stress to the main words and without sufficiently reducing unstressed syllables” (p. 210). Since the Czech language has the characteristics of a syllable-timed language, teachers of Czech students should pay special attention to the issue of rhythm and weak forms (Palková, 1994; Skaličková, 1982).

2.3 Weak forms

Approximately 50 English function words may be pronounced in two different forms, strong or weak, depending on the context in which they occur. If these words are accented, their strong form is used, with full vowels pronounced. This happens mostly when:

- a) speakers emphasise the words in order to convey a distinct meaning (*I can win.*);
- b) speakers signal a contrast (*I saw him, not her.*);
- c) the words are in final positions in a sentence (*Peter's taller than Paul is.*);
- d) the words are cited (*The preposition "for" is often used with the present perfect.*)
- e) the words are spoken alone, out of context (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2011).

However, function words do not usually carry the main information and consequently, due to English rhythm and stress, have to be used in their weak forms, unaccented. Their vowels are reduced in length and quality, many being transformed into a schwa /ə/, a weak /i/, or a weak /u/. In addition, some initial and final consonants may be dropped completely, for example the *h* in *him* or the *d* in *and* (Cruttenden, 2014; Kelly, 2000; Rogerson-Revell, 2011). The list of the most frequent weak forms is provided in **Appendix 1**.

Whether it is desirable to teach weak forms largely depends on learners' aims. Cruttenden (2014) observes that if learners wish to communicate with NSs and/or aim at near-native pronunciation, they should definitely make use of weak forms. He even suggests that as weak forms are significantly more frequent, teachers should teach them as the usual, unmarked form, while the strong counterparts should be presented as marked (ibid.). Although speech containing only strong forms may still (with effort) be intelligible, it sounds

very unnatural, ineffective and choppy and could discourage NSs from communication. Furthermore, when learners are not familiar with weak forms, their ability to understand NSs is significantly impeded (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2011). On the other hand, Jenkins (2002) claims that using weak forms when talking to non-native speakers (NNSs) may in fact hinder communication.

2.4 Assimilation

Assimilation is a process whereby one consonant sound influences its neighbouring consonant sound (within one word as well as across word boundaries), leading to various modifications. There are three basic types of assimilation according to the direction of change:

- a) → progressive, where the previous sound affects the form of the following sound;
- b) ← regressive, where the previous sound adopts certain phonetic characteristics of the following sound; and
- c) ↔ coalescent, where both neighbouring sounds merge to create a new sound (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2011).

The resulting modifications may be of a different nature. They may affect the place of articulation, the manner of articulation, or voicing of the impacted sound. Examples of common types of assimilation are shown in *Table 3*.

Direction of change	Modification type	Example
progressive	manner and place of articulation	read these /ri:d di:z/ Under the influence of the preceding alveolar plosive /d/, dental fricative /ð/ changes to alveolar plosive /d/.
progressive	voicing	cats /kæts/ dogs /dogz/ The pronunciation of the ending -s (plural nouns, third person singular verbs) depends on the voicing of the preceding sound. Once the sound is voiced, it is pronounced as /z/. If it is voiceless, it is pronounced as /s/. The same rule applies to the past-tense -d ending.
regressive	place of articulation	good boy /gʊb bɔɪ/ Under the influence of the following bilabial plosive /b/, alveolar plosive /d/ changes to bilabial plosive /b/. in public /ɪm pʌblɪk/ Under the influence of the following bilabial plosive /p/, alveolar nasal /n/ changes to bilabial nasal /m/.

Direction of change	Modification type	Example
coalescent		<p><u>Did you</u> see him? /didʒə/ Final alveolar consonant /d/ is followed by initial palatal approximant /j/, together creating a new sound, a palato-alveolar affricate /dʒ/.</p> <p>He <u>hates your</u> mother. /heɪtʃə/ Final alveolar consonant sequence plosive /t/ and fricative /s/ are followed by initial palatal approximant /j/, together creating a new sound, /tʃ/.</p>

Table 3 Common types of assimilation (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 167-171; Rogerson-Revell, 2011, p. 162-165)

Regarding assimilation teaching, both Kelly (2000) and Rogerson-Revell (2011) prefer recognition over production. They believe that awareness of this aspect immensely helps to understand NSs. Yet, unless learners wish to acquire a near-native accent, aiming at producing assimilation is seen as rather ineffective. Assimilation does not affect intelligibility and may even sound inappropriate in speech that is not fluent (Kelly, 2000; Rogerson-Revell, 2011). Cruttenden (2014) also warns those aiming for near-native pronunciation of a negative transfer of L1 assimilatory habits. This is highly relevant to Czech speakers who tend to adopt voicing assimilation, e.g. pronouncing “*black ball*” incorrectly as */blæɡ bɔ:l/ instead of /blæk bɔ:l/ (Volín, 2003, p. 67).

2.5 Elision and contractions

When words are produced in isolation, all the sounds are pronounced. However, if the words are parts of a stream of speech, speakers talk fluently and rather fast, certain phonemes may be omitted completely. This aspect of connected speech is called elision (Cruttenden, 2014). The most common situations in which elision occurs are introduced in **Table 4** (Rogerson-Revell, 2011).

Elision may even be indicated in the spelling system via contractions of auxiliaries and modal verbs (e.g. *I've broken my leg.*). Contracted forms help suppressing less important information and thus contribute to making the main message more prominent. Conversely, contractions of negative auxiliaries are stressed and used to accentuate negation (e.g. *I won't do it.*) (Rogerson-Revell, 2011).

Situation	Example
Loss of medial consonant, typically /t/ or /d/, in clusters of three consonants	acts /æk(t)s/ He lo <u>ok</u> ed back. /hi: lɒk(t) bæk/
Loss of weak vowels in unstressed syllables	potato /p(ə)'teɪtəʊ/
Loss of initial /h/ in weak forms of pronouns	Leave <u>h</u> im alone. /(h)ɪm/
Loss of final /v/ or /f/ in <i>of</i> before consonants	waste <u>o</u> f time! /weɪst ə(f) taɪm/

Table 4 Typical situations in which elision occurs (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 172-173; Rogerson-Revell, 2011, p. 166-169)

Being knowledgeable about elision proves to be essential for learners since it helps them understand NSs. Using elision productively is beneficial with regard to fluency although it is not necessary for intelligibility. Contractions are as important as weak forms in communication with NSs because they are both very frequent processes in fluent speech. The lack of contractions in speech may confuse native listeners (Rogerson-Revell, 2011).

2.6 Linking

Fluent English may be challenging for NNSs since it does not pronounce individual words separately. On the contrary, the sounds placed at word boundaries often merge together in order to ease the shift from one word to another. This process is termed linking and is achieved for example through resyllabification (pseudo-resyllabification) or the insertion of a new sound (Kelly, 2000; Rogerson-Revell, 2011). The most frequent environments in which linking appears are described in *Table 5*.

Situation	Example
Consonant-to-vowel linking (resyllabification) The final consonant is attached to the following initial vowel. Voiceless plosive consonants are not aspirated even though they are moved to an initial position.	find <u>o</u> t /faɪn daʊt/ wept <u>o</u> ver /wep təʊvə/
Vowel-to-vowel linking linking /j/ When a word finishes with /i:/ or a diphthong ending in /ɪ/ and the following initial sound is a vowel, speakers tend to pronounce /j/ to link the words. linking /w/ When a word finishes with /u:/ or a diphthong ending in /ʊ/ and the following initial sound is a vowel, speakers tend to pronounce /w/ to link the words.	she <u>i</u> s /ʃi:ɪz/ high <u>u</u> p /haɪɪp/ who <u>u</u> re /hu:weɪ/ how <u>u</u> often /haʊwɒftən/

Situation	Example
<p>linking /r/ In non-rhotic accents (where /r/ is not pronounced unless before a vowel), /r/ may actually be pronounced to link two words which would otherwise have vowel-to-vowel link.</p> <p>intrusive /r/ /r/ may be pronounced even though it is not represented in the spelling of the word. The so called intrusive /r/ mostly occurs in two cases: a) when a word finishes with a schwa /ə/ and is followed by an initial vowel sound, or b) when a word ends in a vowel sound and at the same time is followed by the word <i>and</i>.</p>	<p><u>here</u> <u>is</u> /hɪəˈrɪz/ <u>four</u> <u>eggs</u> /fɔːrɛgz/</p> <p><u>media</u> <u>event</u> /miːdiəˈriːvɛnt/ <u>law</u> <u>and</u> <u>order</u> /lɔːrənɔːdə/</p>
<p>Geminate consonants Provided two identical consonant sounds meet at a word boundary, NSs do not pronounce them twice, but instead they pronounce one lengthened sound.</p>	<p><u>stop</u> <u>pushing</u> /stɒpːʊʃɪŋ/ <u>big</u> <u>gap</u> /bɪgːæp/</p>
<p>Plosive-plosive or plosive-affricate linking (inaudible release) If a plosive or an affricate ensues another plosive, the first plosive is not released.</p>	<p><u>pet</u> <u>cat</u> /petːkæt/ <u>good</u> <u>jury</u> /gʊdːdʒʊəri/</p>

Table 5 Typical situations in which linking occurs (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 165-167, Rogerson-Revell, 2011, p. 169-171)

The views on teaching linking appear to be very similar to those on elision. The awareness of the processes of linking is beneficial for understanding NSs, it facilitates the discrimination of individual words. At the same time, the ability to link the words increases learners' fluency (Rogerson-Revell, 2011). This area may be particularly challenging for Czech learners as they do not tend to link words in their first language. On the contrary, Czech speakers usually separate every word-initial vowel by a glottal stop,¹ especially in careful speech (Volín, 2003). Volín (2003) provides an example sentence, *A odnesla si atlas k oknu*, which contains four glottal stops /ʔa ʔodneslasɪ ʔatlas kʔoknu/ (p. 63). The glottal stop may also be used in English, this however happens rather exceptionally – when the speaker wishes to put special emphasis on a word beginning with a vowel, e.g. in *very angry* /veri ʔæŋɡri/ (Cruttenden, 2014, p. 317; Volín, 2003). As a result of this negative transfer, Czech learners have a tendency to both (a) overuse glottal stops at the expense of linking and thus sound unnatural and choppy, as well as (b) have problems with recognising individual words in a stream of speech.

¹ A glottal stop is a “voiceless non-phonemic speechsound created by a brief closure of glottis” (Volín, 2003, p. 63).

3 Reasons (not) to teach connected speech

According to Alameen and Levis (2015), the research devoted to connected speech is currently rather limited. The cause of this may lie in the inconsistent classification of its aspects, or in the transient nature of connected speech, both making it very difficult to investigate (*ibid.*). Yet, many textbook authors and researchers claim that teaching aspects of connected speech may be very beneficial for the improvement of speaking and/or listening skills. As may be seen below, the determinative criterion appears to be the prospective interlocutor.

3.1 Speaking skills

It is generally agreed that the overall aim of pronunciation teaching is *intelligibility*, that is being understandable, rather than the acquisition of a native-like accent since this is considered unrealistic for the majority of EFL learners (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Besides intelligibility, Munro and Derwing (1995) introduce two other notions highly relevant to EFL pronunciation teaching: *comprehensibility* and *accentedness*. The former refers to the perceived ease with which a listener understands the message, and the latter to the listener's perceived degree of difference in accent. The three concepts are rather independent of each other. Therefore, it may happen that a speaker is intelligible and yet the listener has to make great effort to understand them (*ibid.*).

Due to the lack of research in respect of connected speech, it is not currently confirmed whether improvement in connected speech in fact enhances a speaker's intelligibility (Alameen & Levis, 2015). However, Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) claim that the ignorance of aspects of connected speech may, at the very least, lead to low comprehensibility. "Learners who use incorrect rhythm patterns or who do not connect words together are at best frustrating to the native-speaking listener" (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010 p. 163). Brown (2012) adds that native speakers may perceive these interlocutors as less friendly, natural, sympathetic or personal. Moreover, disconnected speech may sound prissy, cold, ridiculous, or even choppy (Brown, 2012; Dauer, 1993). In conclusion, for communication with NSs, the ability to produce aspects of connected speech seems to be very beneficial since it contributes to the learner's fluency and makes it more pleasant for the interlocutor to participate in a conversation.

Once the fact that learners should learn aspects of connected speech (at least) to become more comprehensible is acknowledged, other questions arise as to the learnability and effectiveness of training in connected speech. In this regard, fairly few studies have been conducted so far, for example the research into linking carried out by Melenca (2001), and Alameen (2014), or the research into reduced forms carried out by Khaghaninezhad & Jafarzadeh (2013). Overall, they proved that explicit instruction and training raise awareness as well as improve learners' speaking skills. It was also confirmed that the results of training in linking are long-term and the knowledge may be transferred to novel contexts (Alameen, 2014). At the same time, however, Melenca (2001) found out that when practising all types of linking at once, it tends to become puzzling (2001).

In opposition to the more traditional approach, there are researchers who criticise the fact that intelligibility, comprehensibility and accentedness are judged predominantly (or even exclusively) based on native speakers' criteria. These supporters of English as an International Language (EIL) presume that English-language learners are eventually more likely to communicate with non-native rather than native speakers of English outside the classroom. Crystal (2003) for example estimates that there are twice as many non-native as native speakers of English. Consequently, as non-native listeners tend to process information differently (using predominantly a bottom-up approach – please see chapter 3.2), distinct requirements for pronunciation teaching are needed (e.g. Jenkins, 2002, Low, 2016).

EIL researchers believe that the use of connected speech may indeed become counterproductive (e.g. Jenkins, 2002, Low, 2016). Based on her research, Jenkins (2000; 2002) proposes a new pronunciation syllabus for EIL, the *lingua franca core*, where she focuses on segmental phenomena, the only exception being nuclear stress. She claims that neglecting features of connected speech, such as reductions or assimilation, does not impede intelligibility among NNSs. On the contrary, she believes that weak forms as well as the omission of sounds in consonant clusters in fact hinders intelligibility among NNSs and therefore should be avoided.

Jenkins' ground-breaking proposal once again stimulated a long-standing debate as to whether to emphasise segmentals or suprasegmentals in pronunciation teaching, and more generally, what the teaching priorities should be. Some researchers have challenged Jenkins' work. Dauer (2005), for example, although acknowledging Jenkins' ideas in many respects,

asks whether possible interactions with native speakers (even though less frequent than interactions with NNSs) should be disregarded completely in pronunciation teaching.

3.2 Listening skills

While teaching connected speech in order to improve learners' speaking skills may be viewed as somewhat controversial, many researchers agree that it is essential for the development of learners' listening skills (e.g. Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). This is mainly based on the fact that, apart from NSs–NNSs' face-to-face interactions, there are numerous other situations in which L2 speakers are required to understand native speakers (e.g. when watching English-speaking films or TV series).

Listening is a complex procedure which includes many cognitive subskills or microskills, such as distinguishing individual sounds, recognising contractions, predicting, or inferring meaning (Nemtchinova, 2013). These subskills may be divided into two main processes: *bottom-up* and *top-down*. When employing the bottom-up process, the listener uses a speaker's auditory signals to decipher the message (Siegel & Siegel, 2015). The signals are analysed progressively through different levels: auditory-phonetic, phonemic, syllabic, lexical, syntactic, semantic, propositional, pragmatic, and interpretive (Field, 2003). The listener therefore constructs the meaning by the recognition of the components of spoken language. It includes the abovementioned distinction of individual sounds, recognition of contractions as well as, for example, recognition of stress, intonation, rhythm and their functions, and recognition of reduced forms and word boundaries (Brown, 2001).

The top-down process, on the other hand, uses linguistic as well as paralinguistic and extralinguistic signals. By means of these signals, previous knowledge and experience of the world (schemata) are activated. Schemata help the listener to identify the context of a given situation: the setting, interpersonal relationships, mood, and topic. Eventually, the knowledge of the context allows the listener to predict and make inferences of the form and meaning of the message. This leads to constant forming of various hypotheses during a listening activity, which are either confirmed, revised or completely rejected when compared to auditory signals (Harmer, 2001; Mendelsohn, 2006). The top-down subskills comprise for example predicting, making inferences, guessing the meaning of words from the context, and noticing paralinguistic and extralinguistic clues.

The two main processes are complementary (Scrivener, 2005). Nemtchinova (2013) states that “skilled listeners simultaneously engage in top-down and bottom-up processing, using both types of skills to construct meaning” (p. 15). However, listeners seem to prefer one strategy over the other and it is a matter of debate which strategy predominates. Field (2004) believes that less advanced listeners do not have the necessary decoding skills and are therefore mostly dependent on top-down processing. On the contrary, Jenkins (2002) found that, as opposed to native listeners, non-native listeners tend to rely mostly on the acoustic signals and adjust “the context and/or co-text to bring them into line with the acoustic information rather than vice versa” (p. 90). Further research in this area is needed, but what remains certain is the fact that the ability to use bottom-up processing improves overall listening skills and that bottom-up processing may be enhanced by raising awareness of pronunciation issues (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

When it comes to understanding authentic listening materials, L2 learners may have serious problems, especially if they are unaware of connected speech processes. The negative effect of connected speech on learners’ listening comprehension was verified by several studies (e.g. Henrichsen, 1984; Ito, 2001). Alameen and Levis (2015) explain that “learners’ inability to decipher foreign speech comes from the fact that they develop their listening skills based on the adapted English speaking styles they experience in an EFL class” (p. 165). Learners may simply expect to hear citation forms and carefully articulated teacher’s talk or edited recordings, but instead they are confronted with reduced forms, linking, elisions and other aspects of connected speech.

Teaching connected speech is very likely to help with the development of learners’ bottom-up processing. Just as with speaking skills, limited available research shows that training in connected speech has positive results on listening skills. The improvements were found to occur in learners’ perception of connected speech, for example in a study by Carreira (2008); and less frequently also in listening comprehension, for example in a study by Khaghaninezhad & Jaazadeh (2013).

3.3 Models and aims

In conclusion, the effectiveness of teaching connected speech is highly dependent on learners’ aims. It is considered to be contributory when learners are expected to come into contact with native speakers. In case they are going to talk to them, learners should train the aspects of connected speech productively so that they facilitate NSs comprehension.

Recognition is then crucial for the development of listening skills (again provided learners listen to NSs). On the other hand, for communication with NNSs, connected speech appears to be a burden rather than a merit.

In this respect, Cruttenden (2014) distinguishes three main models/targets for L2 learners:

- a) **General British** (GB, formerly known as RP) and regional GBs, a native model is chosen by learners who expect to need English mainly in NS interactions. The dominant preference for a British variety (mainly in continental Europe) is supported by a greater availability of a wide range of good quality textbooks and pronunciation dictionaries based on British English (Cruttenden, 2014);
- b) **Amalgam English**, a model suitable for L2 learners who are going to use English mostly as “an L2 and/or lingua franca within their own country (and maybe including neighbouring countries) and who may only have limited meetings with L1 speakers” (Cruttenden, 2014 p. 327). Amalgam English is a more realistic target as it combines native speaker Englishes with occasional L1 features (ibid.); and
- c) **International English** (IE) which is useful for learners who plan to speak English with non-native speakers. Such learners only need a minimum standard as IE is more tolerant of local L1 features than Amalgam English although the boundary is rather blurred (Cruttenden, 2014).

It seems fairly difficult to predict what Czech secondary pupils will use English for. The author of this thesis is convinced (based on her personal experience) that pupils come into contact with native varieties as they enjoy listening to various podcasts and, more commonly, watching videos featuring NSs. Receptive knowledge of aspects of connected speech is therefore needed. Concerning productive skills, the decision is significantly less straightforward. Even though NS interaction is statistically less likely, it should not be disregarded completely. Therefore, Amalgam English appears to be a reasonable compromise. Cruttenden (2014) advises that learners with this aim should productively focus mainly on accentuation patterns as well as the most frequent weak forms. He does not recommend to use assimilation and elision (ibid.). With respect to Czech learners' L1 background, linking should also be practised. However, awareness of all aspects of connected speech is beneficial for the understanding of NS speech.

Having reflected the information above, the author decided to focus on the development of receptive skills in her research. She formulated her ultimate aim as follows: *to teach connected speech in order to raise awareness of aspects of connected speech so that learners are able to better understand authentic English speech in films and TV series.* Although the main objective is the improvement of receptive–listening skills, the training of productive skills proves to be beneficial and should not be excluded. Kelly states that “attempting to teach a productive competence in connected speech, however successful this turns out to be, is a very good way of enhancing students’ understanding of fast and fluent connected speech” (2000, p. 116).

The author of this thesis also believes that when focusing on aspects of connected speech, students should be informed why they study them, in what situations their knowledge and production proves to be (less) useful, and how they should adapt their speech when talking to NSs or NNSs respectively. Therefore, they may independently decide how relevant it is for them to use the aspects of connected speech productively.

4 Connected speech and listening skills

As has been outlined in chapter 3.2, insufficient instruction in connected speech affects learners' listening skills. In order to cope with authentic (NS) speech in real contexts, students need to be aware of aspects of connected speech. Knowledge of how citation word forms change in an utterance improves their decoding skills, particularly the ability to recognise individual words in a stream of speech. Thorn (2012) even considers learners' unfamiliarity with aspects of connected speech as the major obstacle they must overcome in the process of decoding. According to Cauldwell (2013), intentional work on the sound substance and bottom-up strategies could considerably accelerate the development of listening skills in general. Therefore, the integration of the instruction in aspects of connected speech with the training in decoding skills seems very beneficial.

Unfortunately, bottom-up listening skills appear to be rather neglected in English classes. Leading experts on listening skills development (e.g. Field, 2008; Thorn, 2012; Cauldwell, 2013) have been criticising the way decoding listening skills are (not) taught. Cauldwell (2013) points out that even though teachers are good at promoting top-down strategies such as predicting or guessing from the context, they fail to teach bottom-up processes. Teachers' reluctance to address the sound substance is assigned to the lack of training and the nature of sound substance itself, which makes it very difficult to grasp (or even teach): it is invisible and transient, and listeners process it individually in their minds (ibid.). As a consequence, listening activities are primarily focused on listening comprehension exercises. They are reduced to the mere testing of listening skills: questions are set, students listen, answers are checked. In other words, listening instruction is directed to the product (what is said), rather than to the process (how it is said) (Field, 2008). The sound substance is not discussed; decoding abilities are hoped to be acquired individually and automatically through osmosis, that is, solely by high exposure to the target language (Cauldwell, 2013). The phases of a typical listening activity are described in *Figure 1*.

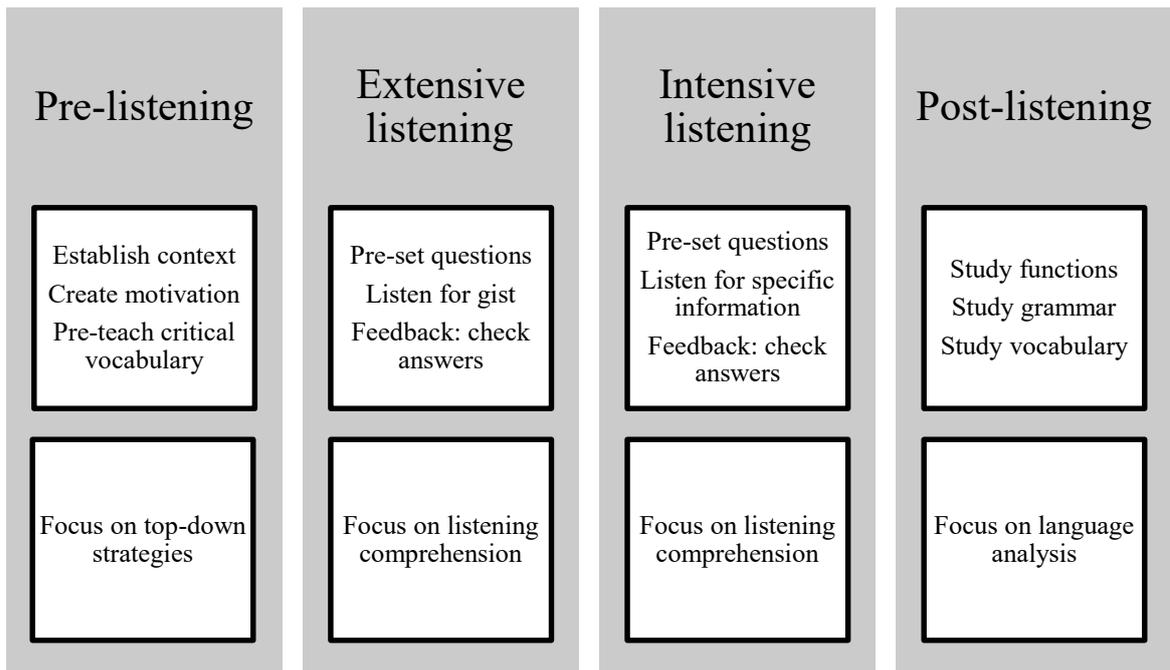


Figure 1 Phases of a conventional listening activity (Cauldwell, 2013; Field, 2008)

Field (2008) claims that teachers devote too many precious minutes to the pre-listening stage at the expense of the listening stage. “There is little justification for spending too much time on pre-listening activities, which often involve skills other than the target one and which may distort the listening experience by giving away too much information in advance” (p. 85). As a result, the time allotted for feedback is very limited. The proportions of a conventional listening lesson as well as Field’s suggested revision are illustrated in *Figure 2*.

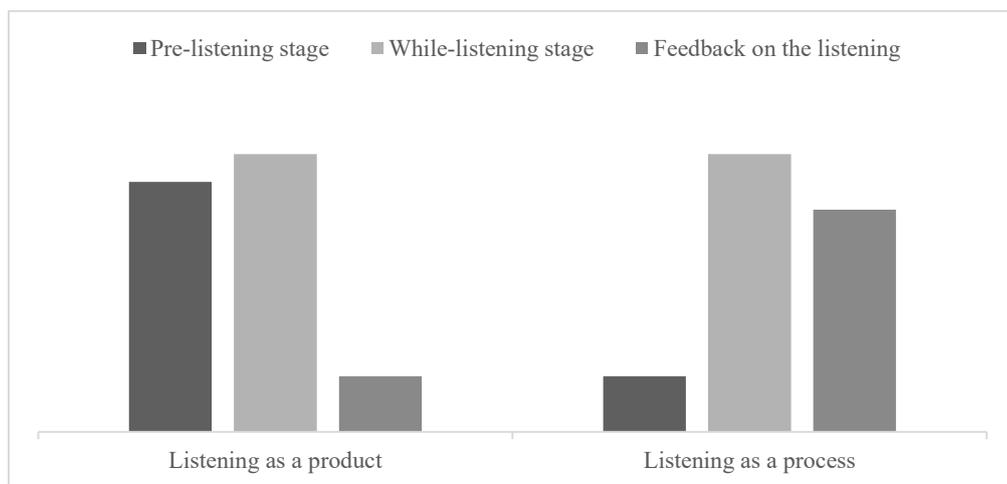


Figure 2 Distribution of time in a listening activity (adapted from Field, 2008, p. 84)

Instead of quickly providing answers from listening exercises, teachers should encourage students to re-listen and identify problematic passages. This should be followed by a detailed analysis of the breakdown of comprehension and possibly also by remedial exercises (further listening practice of the challenging phenomenon) (Field, 2008). Alternatively, teachers may plan the work on bottom-up listening skills more systematically. They should design listening activities with the clear aim of developing a specific decoding subskill.

Thorn (2012) describes yet another weakness of current listening exercises that results in learners' insufficient practice in bottom-up processing: the improvement in listening skills is often not considered the ultimate goal of the lesson. Instead, listening activities become a means to provide context for the subsequent vocabulary or grammar analysis (see *Figure 1*). The listening texts are thus scripted to fit this purpose. Consequently, the recordings feature slower and carefully articulated lines lacking in aspects of connected speech. Students are thus exposed to unreal language which fails to prepare them for authentic speech.

Because of a lack of authentic listening materials on the current market, Thorn (2012) believes that teachers who wish to provide decoding skills practice need to design their own lessons. Suggesting to select authentic input that students would consider interesting and motivating, she recommends to use it to create two basic practice exercises for the development of decoding skills: gap fills and dictation. In gap fills teachers should remove the words that the students already know, but which are affected by connected speech processes and therefore are not pronounced in their citation forms (e.g. weak forms). The dictation exercise has three possible variations. The teacher can either extract isolated sentences and play them individually, or remove several sentences from a coherent listening recording and then play the whole recording without any pauses multiple times. Alternatively, learners may also be asked to count the words prior to writing the sentences down (ibid.). The third option is to stop a recording and ask students to write down the final four or five words. Thorn (2012) also advises to let students do the activities in pairs or groups as they may be rather daunting.

Apart from the fact that designing materials is time consuming, Cauldwell (2013) describes another challenge that teachers may face when preparing decoding skills practice. He calls it *a blur gap*. It is the inability to perceive the changes that take place in the

pronunciation of words in connected speech. Native speakers and proficient language users construct the meaning mainly based on the stressed words, without having to intently focus on the words in between. They automatically surmise the unstressed words from the context, and therefore they do not perceive that the words are (for instance) reduced. To be able to predict which words are suitable for the exercises may require intense concentration (ibid.).

However gloomy the current state of affairs regarding the availability of materials appears to be, the author of this thesis remains optimistic as she sees some changes gradually taking place. In 2012, an extensive collection of activities focusing exclusively on aspects of connected speech titled *New Ways in Teaching Connected Speech* was published (Brown, 2012). In some course books, one may also find more authentic listening materials (e.g. *NGL Life* series by National Geographic) and more emphasis on pronunciation. Moreover, there are even such series which focus on bottom-up processes using authentic input. Thorn herself wrote her own series, *Real Lives, Real Listening*, wherein she provides authentic listening texts supplemented with exercises focused on decoding skills, including the introduction and practice of aspects of connected speech. The listening texts also feature new grammar and vocabulary (2013). Another example is the *Keynote* series by National Geographic Learning which opens every unit with an authentic TED Talks video and an accompanying *authentic listening skills* section which develops one relevant specific listening subskill that helps learners cope with authentic input. It also concentrates on bottom-up strategies (such as understanding contrasts, elision, weak forms, or word boundaries), and therefore often raises awareness of aspects of connected speech. However, the best feature of the series is most likely the fact that the video activity is fully integrated into the topic of the unit and more importantly into the syllabus of the book, alongside vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, writing and reading (Dummet, P., Stephenson, H., & Lansford, L., 2016).

Unfortunately, the author of this thesis has encountered no coherent set of materials that would feature authentic input, provide practice in decoding skills and be aimed at teenagers' interests (both *Keynotes* and *Real Lives, Real Listening* are concerned with topics predominantly for adults). It is the immodest ambition of this thesis to at least partly fill the gap and provide awareness-raising lessons for teenagers based on engaging authentic video samples. However, the author is well aware of the fact that she cannot provide a systematic treatment of the issue that would be fully integrated into a teenagers' course.

5 Video use in language teaching

Because TV series excerpts are used as the main source of input in the designed lessons in the practical part of this thesis, a short description of the advantages and the disadvantages of video use is provided in this chapter.

One of the greatest assets of using video is the fact that it shows *language in context*. In comparison to audio recordings, language accompanied with images is much more authentic. As Boțîrcă aptly points out, “we very rarely hear a disembodied voice in real life” (2007, p. 267). Seeing a situation supplies learners with context clues, such as extralinguistic features (proximity, posture, facial expressions, gestures, etc.) that greatly help in comprehending the meaning. Video enables learners to combine both top-down as well as bottom-up strategies. Even though the lessons themselves might be focused primarily on the development of bottom-up skills, learners get a chance to use both, just as they do outside the classroom. In addition, when choosing authentic video materials, teachers provide learners with *real language*. Stempleski explains that, apart from “ungraded and unsimplified English, spoken at normal pace and in typical accents”, it also means introducing language that is contemporary (1990, p. 9). This is closely connected to the learners’ *motivation*. Students realise they are learning something that is currently used by native speakers and they are also aware of the fact that they need to know the language if they wish to comprehend similar discourse. Furthermore, learners experience a sense of accomplishment once they understand authentic materials which may in turn inspire them to watch similar video clips in their free time (Stempleski, 1990, p. 10). Finally, video “adds variety to the lesson” (Boțîrcă, 2007, p. 268) and students generally perceive video lessons as *more interesting and enjoyable*, which further motivates them to study (supported for example in two studies carried out by Williams, & Lutes, 2007).

However, when introducing a video lesson for the first time, it is necessary to be prepared for the fact that students may actually feel a bit disappointed because it may *not meet their expectations*. Video “is mainly used in the learner’s home for entertainment, escapism, and relaxation, all of which encourage a passive form of watching”; it may often be perceived as something “extracurricular and therefore unimportant” (Keene, 2006, p. 223-225). In consequence, students may feel deceived when, instead of watching one whole episode of a TV series, only a short excerpt is shown, and, in addition, they are asked to do various accompanying activities. Teachers should thus explain the importance and

effectiveness of active learning to students in advance, as well as provide engaging activities that would lead to a change in learners' *passive attitude*. Another obstacle that may arise is learners' initial *discomfort and frustration* with authentic materials. As Cauldwell puts it, in traditional classrooms "the focus is on what learners can cope with rather than teaching them to become comfortable with the realities of spontaneous speech" (2013, p. 267). Learners are used to graded, simplified recordings, and therefore their first meeting with spontaneous speech may become rather distressing. It is the role of the teacher to moderate the negative consequences on learners' confidence by emphasising that it is the nature of the sound substance that makes the understanding difficult, not learners' abilities (Cauldwell, 2013).

PRACTICAL PART

6 Aims and hypotheses

The practical part of this thesis sets two main objectives. First, it aims to find out whether explicit instruction (raising awareness) and training (both receptive and productive) in aspects of connected speech lead to improvements in students' bottom-up listening skills; and thus enable learners to better understand authentic English speech in TV series. Its secondary aim is to observe whether teaching connected speech using TV series is enjoyable and/or beneficial to students.

With regard to the data obtained from the most recent research and available literature presented in the theoretical part of this thesis, the hypotheses were stated as follows:

- 1) Explicit instruction and training in selected aspects of connected speech results in better understanding of fast informal authentic speech.
- 2) Students find it useful to study the selected aspects of connected speech.
- 3) Students enjoy learning about the selected aspects of connected speech using TV series.

7 Methodology and procedure

To be able to verify or reject the hypotheses, the following methods and procedure were selected. Fifteen students underwent four-week pronunciation and listening training which was focused on aspects of connected speech and the development of bottom-up listening skills. For the purposes of the training, the author of this thesis designed activities and teaching materials featuring authentic TV series. To ensure that the selected TV series were sufficiently popular among the students so that they would find the lessons engaging, a short questionnaire had been distributed to the participants beforehand.

In addition, a dictation cloze test was created and conducted before and after the instruction. It was administered not only to the participating students, but also to a control group of students who did not receive any training in aspects of connected speech, hence the efficacy of the training could be assessed more accurately. After the instruction, the participants were also given a questionnaire asking them to evaluate the instruction. *Figure 3* illustrates the stages of the process chronologically. In the following chapters, the methodology and procedure are described in more detail.

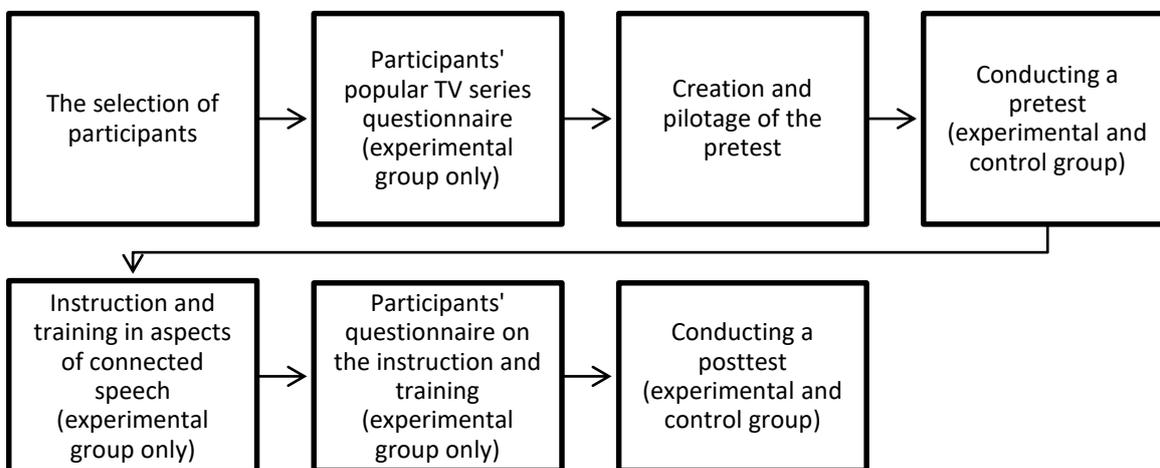


Figure 3 Chronological procedure of the research

7.1 Participants

The author of this thesis wished to provide the pronunciation and listening training herself. Since at the time of the research she had been teaching secondary school students of a level appropriate for the training based on authentic TV series (A2+/B1+), she requested

them to participate in the training. The instruction was given during regular English classes at an 8-year grammar school in Prague. A total of 15 students received the training. They were divided into two groups according to their age and abilities, and were taught separately. Group 1 took twelve 45-minute lessons whereas group 2 received only ten 45-minute lessons of the instruction and training due to the students' attendance at a school ski trip.² The training took place in March. Before taking the instruction, the students had followed *NGL Life* course books (Dummet, Hughes, & Stephenson, 2013), pre-intermediate and intermediate level respectively, and had therefore worked with videos on a regular basis. They had also been vaguely familiar with some aspects of connected speech, especially linking and weak forms.

The author of this thesis did not teach any other students of similar age and level to that of the experimental group for the duration of this research. Therefore, an English class taught by a different teacher was selected as a control group. Except for the teacher, all other characteristic features were comparable. The control group consisted of 15 pre-intermediate to intermediate level students who attended a 6-year grammar school in Prague and who had three 45-minute English classes per week. The students in the control group were not to receive any specific training in aspects of connected speech and the lessons followed the *New Opportunities Intermediate* course book (Harris, Mower, & Sikorzyńska, 2006). The details regarding the groups are summarised in **Table 6** below.

	Experimental group		Control group
Teacher	teacher A (author of the thesis)		teacher B
Teacher age	25 years		56 years
School	8-year grammar school		6-year grammar school
Obligatory lessons	3x 45 minutes per week		3x 45 minutes per week
Course book used for regular lessons	NGL Life Pre-Intermediate NGL Life Intermediate		New Opportunities Intermediate
Age	14-16 years		15-17 years
Classes	group 1	group 2	group 3
Year (8-year school)	4 th year	5 th year	6 th year

² Regarding the instruction and training of group 2, lesson 9 was omitted completely and selected activities from lesson 10 and 11 were put together to form one lesson only.

	Experimental group			Control group
No. of students	8	7 ³	1	13 in total
	16 in total			
Level	A2+ to B1		B1 to B1+	A2+ to B1+

Table 6 Experimental and control group details

To find out more about the teaching style of teacher B, she was given a short questionnaire to fill in (please see *Appendix 2*)⁴. Most importantly, the teacher was asked about the use of authentic audio/video materials and the teaching of aspects of connected speech in her regular classes. The teacher stated she did not use authentic materials very often, and when she did employ them, these mostly constituted of film clips and served to provide geographical details of English-speaking countries, to illustrate topics, and to evoke discussion. These situations, however, were likely to be rare, as the teacher expressed strong dislike for using modern technology on numerous occasions throughout the meeting. As for teaching aspects of connected speech, the teacher claimed she paid some attention to weak forms and linking, but that she did not do so very often. Nevertheless, in a more detailed specification, the teacher wrote that she focused on “linking words – when training formal letters, essays”, which may indicate a misunderstanding of the phrase “aspects of connected speech”, mistaking “linking” for “linking words”. Based on the obtained information, it was expected that explicit instruction in aspects of connected speech and exposure to authentic audio/video recordings during regular classes of the control group would be very limited.

7.2 Pretest

To analyse the students’ decoding skills and to find out about their experience of learning English, both the experimental and the control groups took a pretest before the commencement of the instruction. This consisted of a short questionnaire and a dictation cloze test, both of which may be found in *Appendix 3*, for the accompanying recordings, please see *Appendix 4*.

³ Seven students participated in the instruction and training, unfortunately only four of them took both the pretest and the posttest. Six students filled in the feedback form.

⁴ The completed questionnaire is available with the author.

The aim of the questionnaire was to find out how often the students talk to native speakers and watch TV series in English, whether they use subtitles, and what TV series they watch. All these factors may influence a student's development of bottom-up listening skills and should therefore be taken into consideration.

The second part of the pretest, the dictation cloze test, was based on a TV series clip, since authentic TV series represented the main source of input also in the subsequent training. The American TV series *Modern Family* was chosen for this purpose, because the majority of the experimental group students did not know it or did not know it very well (10 students), or they had not liked it and thus supposedly had not watched it (2 students).⁵ In addition, the author of this thesis was very familiar with the TV series, enabling an easier selection of a suitable excerpt.

It was decided that the students would first watch the whole excerpt uninterrupted to become accustomed to the voices, as the dictation cloze task alone would be too demanding for them. The students would then answer a questionnaire about their experience of learning English and their familiarity with the TV series: whether they recognised it, how many episodes they have seen so far, how often they watch it.⁶ Finally, the dictation cloze test itself would follow. The students would be given a worksheet with thirteen sentences selected from the excerpt. Every sentence would be played twice and the students would be asked to fill in the missing words. The selected sentences would not be directly consecutive, eliminating the role of context and co-text. In addition, inserting the questionnaire between the uninterrupted excerpt viewing and the dictation cloze test was done deliberately, also aiming to reduce the involvement of top-down listening strategies.

7.2.1 Dictation cloze test creation

When selecting an appropriate excerpt, two criteria were observed. First and foremost, it had to feature a sufficient number of instances of aspects of connected speech. Moreover, since the students were to watch the whole clip first, it also had to present a

⁵ Based on data obtained from the questionnaire on popular TV series. Please see chapter 8.1 for more information.

⁶ Even though it was assumed that the participants from the experimental group had not watched the TV series, accurate data were demanded. In addition, data from the control group needed to be obtained as well. Familiarity with the TV series may significantly influence students' results.

comprehensive story. The excerpt was obtained from season 1, episode 12, *Not in My House* (Levitan, Lloyd, Williams, Koch, 2010). In the presented situation, Cameron and Mitchel, a gay couple, are about to leave their house to see a puppet show when they notice their gardener is crying. Despite Mitchel’s disapproval, Cameron offers to help the gardener. Cameron and Mitchel have a disagreement: Mitchel blames Cameron for constant interfering in other people’s lives and his attempts to solve their problems for them. He leaves for the puppet show alone, but eventually changes his mind and returns to reconcile. Having apologised to Cameron, he enters his house only to find out that the gardener’s wedding is taking place there. The scene is humorous and provides a lot of visual support and contextual clues, hence it is not difficult to understand its global meaning. However, occasionally the characters talk very rapidly, their speech is informal and contains a lot of aspects of connected speech, so it may be challenging to understand the details, such as individual words or sentences.

In order to observe the main criteria, a careful analysis of the aspects of connected speech of the whole recording was performed. Thirteen sentences were then extracted from it for the purposes of the dictation cloze test. In every sentence, five to seven words were removed. It was imperative that these missing parts feature the examined phenomena: in total it contained 58 instances of aspects of connected speech. As may be seen from *Table 7* below and from the analysis provided in *Appendix 5*, where all the phenomena are highlighted in the transcript, weak forms (typically of pronouns and auxiliary verbs) and linking (typically consonant-to-vowel linking) are represented the most – 22 and 23 cases respectively. There are also 7 instances of elision and contractions and 5 instances of assimilation. In several cases, the aspects of connected speech co-occur; most frequently, it is the linking and the elision or the weak forms that overlap.

Aspect of connected speech	No. of instances
Weak forms	22
Pronouns	9
Auxiliary verbs	5
Other (prepositions, conjunctions, articles...)	7
Linking	23
Consonant-to-vowel linking	14
Vowel-to-vowel linking	2

Aspect of connected speech	No. of instances
Geminate consonants	2
Inaudible release	5
Elision and contractions	7
Elision	4
Contractions and “gonna”	3
Assimilation	5
Progressive and regressive assimilation	2
Coalescent assimilation	3
In total	57

Table 7 Aspects of connected speech observed in the dictation cloze test

Other common features of authentic informal speech, such as hesitations, overlapping speech, fast speech delivery rate or even background noises, were also represented in the selected samples. They were not taken into account although they may have had an impact on the students’ performance.

The sentences were extracted from the video using the *Adobe After Effects CC* programme and saved into one file. Every sentence was pasted twice and a 25-second pause was inserted between the sentences. As some of the individual excerpts were as short as only 5 seconds, a beep sound was inserted before every sentence to ensure that the students increased their focus on the given task. The file was then compressed using the *Adobe Media Encoder CC* programme.

7.2.2 Pilotage

Once the first version of the whole pretest was created, it was given to four people, one advanced-level adult and three fifteen to sixteen-year-old students of intermediate level. Based on the feedback from the pilotage, the following changes were made:

1. The time lag between playing the whole recording and the dictation cloze test was shortened. The students were first asked to fill in the questionnaire about their experience of English and only then did they watch the whole story. Subsequently, they proceeded to fill in the information regarding their familiarity with the TV series they had just watched, and this was immediately followed by the dictation cloze test.

2. A trial run was added to the test. The students were requested to fill in the missing words of two additional sentences before taking the actual dictation cloze test to become acquainted with the task type. In addition, the students had an opportunity to comment on the player settings (e.g. low volume etc.).
3. The order of the sentences was slightly altered to prevent students from becoming frustrated. Sentence 1 and 5 were interchanged so that the dictation cloze test started with an easier excerpt containing words spoken at a slower pace, and thus not as reduced as in the other sentence.
4. The system of automatic timing was abandoned; the file collating all excerpts used in the dictation cloze test was divided into individual recordings. The examiner switched on the recordings manually. She observed the students and gave them as much time as they needed to write down the missing parts of the sentences, and yet not so much time to allow the analysis of the co-text in great detail.
5. The students were warned of a rather fast tempo and were advised not to linger on a sentence that they had failed to understand, but rather to focus on the excerpt that followed.
6. An additional final question was included in the test. The students were asked to rate their perception of the difficulty of the test on a scale ranging from “*very easy*” to “*very difficult*”.
7. The pretest was collected as soon as the students were finished so that they would not have time to analyse the co-text and retroactively edit their answers.

7.3 Students’ feedback and posttest

At the beginning of April, when the students from the experimental group had received the instruction and training, they were given a questionnaire to provide feedback (see *Appendix 6*). The questionnaire consisted of three statements with a 6-point Likert scale ranging from *1 I strongly agree* to *6 I strongly disagree*. It aimed to provide data to be able to verify or reject hypotheses 2 and 3 (see chapter 6), namely it sought to find out whether the students believe learning about aspects of connected speech is useful to them and whether they found the use of a TV series enjoyable. Moreover, it asked whether the students feel their listening skills have improved. The students were encouraged to briefly justify their opinions and they were also given an opportunity to comment on the lessons in general. The

questionnaires were anonymous and students were allowed to write in Czech, should they prefer to do so.

To find out whether the students' decoding skills have actually improved after the instruction and training, the students once again took the dictation cloze test. The items remained the same as in the pretest, however, their order was slightly altered (the following pairs were interchanged: 3 and 13; 5 and 9; 7 and 11). The administration of the posttest was also similar to the pretest. The students first watched the whole scene again, then they were asked to answer how often they had watched the TV series in English in the past month. Afterwards, the trial run was played to make sure that the students understand the task and to have an opportunity to adjust the setting if need be. Individual excerpts were then played twice with sufficient pauses to let students write their answers. Finally, students were asked to mark how easy/difficult the task was for them. The posttest was distributed after the feedback form so that the students' opinions of statement 2 – their listening skills improvement – would not be affected by the dictation cloze test. The posttest is provided in *Appendix 7*, the recordings are available in *Appendix 4*.

The same posttest was also given to the control group. There was a month-long interval between the pretest and the posttest during which the group had regular English lessons. Teacher B stated that they had not watched or listened to any authentic materials. However, the class did a 10-minute activity focused on weak forms: students were asked to count the number of words they heard in a listening task. Apart from this, no instruction and training in aspects of connected speech was given to the students in the control group.

Due to organisational restraints, equal laboratory conditions could not have been provided to the students. The dictation cloze tests were taken in different classrooms and using different technology (loudspeakers, amplifier, interactive whiteboard), thus the acoustics may have varied. These factors may have influenced the validity of the results. On the other hand, the students have regular English lessons in the classrooms, so they are accustomed to engaging in listening exercises there. Moreover, the sound quality/setting was always checked with the students during the trial run.

8 Instruction and training in aspects of connected speech

The content of the instruction and training in aspects of connected speech which the experimental group received after the pretest was designed so that it corresponded to the aims of the programme. The overall aims of the lessons were:

- a) to raise awareness of the selected aspects of connected speech and to practise them receptively as well as productively in order to improve the learners' bottom-up listening skills while watching authentic TV series;
- b) to do so in an engaging, enjoyable way.

Since the instruction and training sought to enhance learners' understanding of fast informal speech used in authentic TV series, excerpts from the TV series became the main source of input for the lessons. The majority of tasks were then based on the excerpts. First and foremost, it was essential to identify suitable TV series. Appropriate passages from the TV series had been selected before the instruction started. The activities were then designed in part before and in part during the training – the author continued to tailor the materials according to the learners' needs. The instruction and training consisted of twelve 45-minute lessons and it was designed for pre-intermediate to intermediate learners.

When designing individual activities, the author was predominantly inspired by pronunciation textbooks and well-established ELT course books, especially the aforementioned *Real Lives*, *Real Listening* series (Thorn, 2013) and *Keynote Intermediate Students' Book* (Dummet, P. et al., 2016). Both of these series work with authentic audio/video materials and focus on pronunciation issues as well as the development of listening skills, and are therefore highly relevant to this work. Other sources of valuable ideas and suggestions include the knowledge of current research and trends in ELT methodology, listening and pronunciation teaching (see chapters 3 and 4, and the author's and her colleagues' experience.⁷

In subsequent chapters, the characteristics of the TV series and the excerpts, as well as their selection criteria, are first presented. This is followed by the introduction of specific activities: full lesson plans are introduced and analysed. The author also provides brief

⁷ Specific sources are always listed at the end of a worksheet in the respective appendix.

reflections on the lessons, commenting on the actual courses of action and potentially offering justified modifications.

8.1 TV series selection and characteristics

Since the materials aspired to be engaging for the learners, it was necessary to choose those TV series that were relevant to the students: they liked them and/or the topics were somehow related to their lives. To find out which TV series were popular among teenagers, a short questionnaire was given to the experimental group (please see *Appendix 8*). It provided a list of seven TV series and the students were asked to express their attitude towards every item by ticking one of the options: “*I know it and I like it,*” “*I know it and I don’t like it,*” “*I don’t know it (well enough)*”. The TV series options included shows that the author of this thesis knows very well herself so that she could more easily identify appropriate passages for further use in the lessons. There was one exception, *Sherlock*, which the author does not watch, but several of her students repeatedly expressed an immense level of enthusiasm for it. Despite a rather limited range, the author tried to provide a balanced choice of American and British accents. Four listed TV series were American (*The Big Bang Theory*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *Modern Family*, and *The Simpsons*) and three were British (*Miranda*, *The IT Crowd*, and *Sherlock*). In the event that the participants would not find a sufficient number of the offered TV series appealing, they were also given an opportunity to write down two additional TV shows that they prefer.

A total of 13 students completed the survey.⁸ As may be seen from *Figure 4*, the majority of students liked *Sherlock*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *How I Met Your Mother* TV series (12, 11 and 10 students respectively). *The Simpsons* saw mixed reactions: seven participants liked it, five did not like it. *The IT Crowd* and *Modern Family* received the same score: the majority of the participants did not know them (10). As for *Miranda*, the students did not know the TV show at all. In the open-ended question, the students suggested a wide range of TV series. However, only three of them appeared more than once: *Vikings* (3 times), *Gossip Girl* (2 times), and *How to Get Away with Murder* (2 times).

⁸ Completed questionnaires are available with the author.

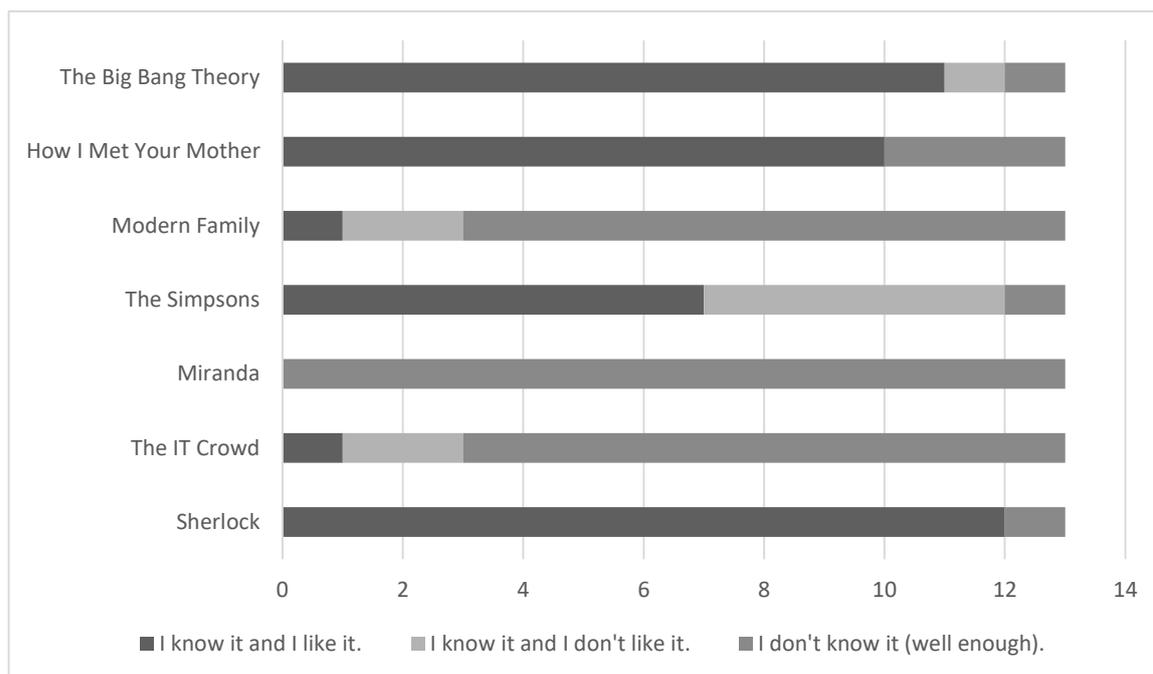


Figure 4 Participants' TV series popularity rates

Based on the data, it was decided that *The Big Bang Theory* and *How I Met Your Mother* TV series would be worked with the most intensively during the training. Moreover, one excerpt from the *Sherlock* TV series would be used since it was so popular with the students and one excerpt from *Modern Family* would be included as the author considered the TV series funny and highly relevant to the students, given the age of some of the main protagonists.⁹

The Big Bang Theory is an American situation comedy primarily focused on humorous interactions between four highly intelligent scientists who lack basic social skills and Penny who is not as academically talented but has good common sense. Its first episode was released in 2007 and the show is still running. Ten seasons with the total number of 226 twenty-two-minute episodes have been shot so far (The Big Bang Theory [database record]).

⁹ Since, as opposed to the students, the author of the thesis is fairly knowledgeable about the TV series *Modern Family*, another excerpt of it was used in the dictation cloze test (see chapter 7.2). However, the author chose a part featuring different speakers so that the results of the posttest would not be affected by the students getting used to the characters' discourse.

How I Met Your Mother is an American situation comedy following the lives of five friends in their late twenties. It was broadcasted from 2005 to 2014. The series consists of 9 seasons with the total number of 208 twenty-two-minute episodes. The frame story revolves around Ted Mosby, one of the main characters, who from the future in 2030 narrates to his children how he met his wife, his children's mother (How I Met Your Mother [database record]).

Modern Family is an American mockumentary situation comedy. It narrates often comical life events of three related families. The show started in 2009 and new episodes are still being shot. Eight seasons with the total number of 184 twenty-two-minute episodes have been released so far (Modern Family [database record]).

Sherlock is a British crime drama, a modernised version of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novels. It describes how Sherlock Holmes, together with his friend John Watson, solves various crimes mainly due to careful observation and logical deduction. The TV series premiered in 2010 and is still running. Four seasons with the total number of fifteen 88-minute episodes have been shot so far (Sherlock [database record]).

8.2 Clips selection and characteristics

When selecting a specific scene from the TV series, it was necessary to meet various criteria so that the video-based lessons were effective. Stempleski (1992) and Jay-Myoung (2002) believe that teachers should select a sequence that is:¹⁰

1. ***appropriate to the purpose***: in this case it means choosing a clip from an authentic TV series containing various aspects of connected speech;
2. ***appropriate for the learners regarding their age and interests***: the TV series should be personally significant or meaningful to the students so that they become truly engaged in the lessons and realise the connection between classwork and its use outside the classroom;
3. ***complete*** in terms of the scene or story;
4. ***appropriate for the learners regarding their language level***: initial lessons should present easier input which may be achieved by choosing a video sequence that features slower speech delivery, lower density of language, simpler language content (i.e. linguistic items), and higher degree of visual support; and
5. ***approximately three- to six-minute-long*** since that is enough to provide study material for one lesson (Stempleski, 1992, Jay-Myoung, 2002).

¹⁰ Since authentic TV series clips were planned to be used in the lessons, it was also necessary to confirm whether this is in compliance with copyright law. Article 31 paragraph 1 of the Copyright Act states that:

“Copyright is not infringed by anybody who:

...

- c) Uses the work while teaching for illustration purposes or during scientific research, without seeking to achieve direct or indirect economic or commercial advantage and without exceeding the extent adequate to the given purpose;

however, if possible, the name of the author, unless the work is an anonymous work, or the name of the person under whose name the work is being introduced in public and the title of the work and source, shall always be indicated” (Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic).

Provided that bibliographical data is cited, the use of TV series clips for educational purposes is not further limited by the law.

Finding suitable clips proved to be extremely time-consuming as there were a lot of criteria to satisfy. Probably the most challenging element was to find a short sequence that would present a complete story and simultaneously be interesting, for example humorous or connected to the students' lives. Nevertheless, the sitcoms *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *Modern Family* provided a considerable number of opportunities since their episodes are around 25 minutes long and they usually feature several shorter funny stories to follow the lives of all the main characters. Alternatively, longer stories were available which were easily divided into two parts. It was much harder to find the appropriate scenes in *Sherlock* as every episode lasts around 88 minutes and concerns one criminal case.

Furthermore, the language used in the clips had to be carefully analysed. Once again, sitcoms appeared to be more relevant: the narratives portrayed primarily everyday situations and they focused on relationship issues, so the vocabulary and grammar were not too advanced. In addition, the dialogues were often accompanied by expressive gestures or other contextual clues. Since the speech was mostly informal and often very rapid, various aspects of connected speech were almost always heavily represented.

Table 8 below briefly describes all the scenes eventually selected for use during the instruction and training.

Specification	Plot
<i>The Big Bang Theory</i> The Panty Piñata Polarization S02E07 “Shenny 1” 05:04	Sheldon banishes Penny from his flat because she does not respect his rules. Penny does not give in but instead retaliates against him when she refuses to serve him in a restaurant where she works. Sheldon complains to the restaurant manager.
<i>The Big Bang Theory</i> The Panty Piñata Polarization S02E07 “Shenny 2” 06:10	Sheldon and Penny’s argument continues. Penny deliberately washes her laundry at the very same time that Sheldon always does. Sheldon hangs out Penny’s laundry on a telephone wire. Penny unsuccessfully tries to reach a compromise. Leonard steps in, giving Penny Sheldon’s mum’s telephone number. Sheldon is told off and apologises to Penny.
<i>How I Met Your Mother</i>	Ted is excited to introduce his new girlfriend, Cathy, to his friends. However, they aren’t nearly as enthusiastic about her

Specification	Plot
Spoiler Alert S03E08 “Blinded by Love” 04:33	as Ted is. Having urged his friends, Ted is told that Cathy is very talkative. Only then he realises he has been blinded by love.
<i>How I Met Your Mother</i> Spoiler Alert S03E08 “Lost Password” 03:22	Marshall is about to find out if he has passed an important exam so that he can become a lawyer. He panics as he tries to log into the system to see his result and can’t remember his password.
<i>How I Met Your Mother</i> Spoiler Alert S03E08 “Bad Habits” 03:53	The friends become aware of each other’s bad habits and start complaining about them. They stop arguing when Marshall accidentally finds out his lost password, to celebrate with him that he passed the bar exam.
<i>Modern Family</i> Tree House S03E07 “Obstacle” 03:10	Haley is frustrated because she cannot think of a good idea to write her college essay, “The biggest obstacle I’ve ever had to overcome”. She blames her mum Claire for being too protective, keeping her safe from all obstacles. Under the pretence of revealing a great secret, Claire drives Haley out of town and leaves her there. Haley eventually gets home, furious at her mum while Claire tells her that she finally has a topic to write about.
<i>Sherlock</i> A Study in Pink S01E01 “Sherlock and John’s first meeting” 02:26	John comes to see Sherlock for the first time to ask him about flat sharing. Without being told so, Sherlock deduces the reason of his visit together with a lot of information about John’s life and identity. John is amazed.

Table 8 Scenes description

To create the short story video recordings, a number of different scenes usually had to be cut throughout the episode and then collated together. This was done using the *Adobe After Effects CC* programme. The resulting file was then compressed via the *Adobe Media Encoder CC* programme. The same procedure was adopted when individual phrases or sentences were extracted for the purposes of various exercises. In these cases, a beep sound

was usually added to the recording to make students more focused as the clip lasted only a few seconds.

8.3 Individual lessons and their reflection

8.3.1 Lesson 1: Sentence stress

Main aim: Students will know which words tend to be stressed in a sentence. Students will develop their ability to perceive stressed words.

Materials: worksheet (see *Appendix 9*),¹¹ recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings (TV/projector)

Procedure:

1. Lead-in (6-8 minutes; T-Ss, S-S¹²)

The teacher introduces the lesson by telling students that they are going to watch a part of an episode of their favourite TV series. Then he/she distributes the worksheets and directs the students' attention to the short description of the clip and to the picture by asking, *Who are the people in the photo? What are they doing? What is the relationship between them?* The teacher asks students to discuss the questions in ex. 1 in pairs. He/she monitors the discussion and provides help if needed. Finally, the teacher concludes the task with the whole class, asking some of the students to answer the questions.

The objective of this activity is to arouse interest in the students, as well as to set the scene: introduce the context, activate the schemata.

2. Key words (4-5 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher asks students to do ex. 2 in the worksheet as it introduces new words that will appear in the recording. He/she reminds students to guess the meaning of the words from the context first and only then to match them with the provided definitions. Students may work individually or in pairs. The teacher gets the video ready while students work on

¹¹ The answers to the exercises and the sources are also provided in *Appendix 9*. The transcript of the whole video excerpt is provided in *Appendix 10*.

¹² The abbreviations in the brackets refer to the types of interaction: SI = students work individually, T-Ss = lockstep, S-S = pair work, S-Ss/Ss-Ss = group work.

the task. The answers are checked. The teacher emphasises the preposition *on* used with the word *choke* in sentence 4 as this is different in Czech. If the teacher believes that some students are still uncertain about the meaning of the words, he/she asks individual students to provide Czech translations. The teacher may also ask additional questions to personalise the vocabulary (e.g. *Have you ever volunteered? What did you do?*).

This exercise aims to pre-teach new vocabulary used in the video. New words are presented in context. This allows learners to work out the meaning of the words rather than simply guess it. Moreover, they see how the words are used in a sentence (e.g. what the common collocations are).

3. Listening (watching) for gist (5 minutes; SI)

The teacher sets the task in ex. 3 in the worksheet. He/she plays the video and the students watch. The answer is checked.

For some students, this may be the very first situation in which they are asked to watch and understand authentic TV series without subtitles. In order to prevent them from getting frustrated, the task is rather trivial, being easily inferred from the contextual clues. Students practise listening for gist, but more importantly, they get motivated. Furthermore, the recording is introduced and students have an opportunity to get used to the voices.

4. Listening (watching) for specific information (12-14 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher sets the next task, ex. 4 in the worksheet. Students are given enough time to read the options before they watch the video again. While they are watching the video for the second time, the teacher draws pictures of a greenhouse, a garden and a jungle on the board. Having watched the video, students are encouraged to compare their answers in pairs. Then the answers are checked with the whole class. It is expected that not all students would have understood enough to correctly complete the whole task. If there are students who know the answers, the teacher lets them disclose the information to the rest of the class, but he/she does not provide the other students with the reasons for the answers (by replaying the relevant parts or reading the script). The answers will be clarified in the next exercise. Instead, the teacher refers to Cauldwell's metaphor of the greenhouse, the garden and the jungle to explain to the students the difference between careful speech they hear in class and

fast informal speech they encounter in the real world (2013)¹³. The teacher especially emphasises that it is perfectly normal to experience difficulties understanding authentic recordings since the speech there manifests substantial changes of which the students are not aware, expecting to hear careful speech that they are used to hearing in their lessons. The teacher states that it is the aim of this and the following lessons to learn about these modifications and thus improve the students' understanding of authentic speech which they hear in TV series.

The students practise listening for specific information, but the main objective of the activity is to show them how useful it is to know aspects of connected speech. That is also the reason why it is not important (at this point) to provide the transcript and/or replay the relevant parts to clarify the answers. However, these passages will be worked with in the following exercise. The students may find the listening task itself rather demanding, so they may get frustrated. Therefore, students are allowed to compare their answers in pairs first. In addition, it is essential that the teacher highlight that it is the nature of the speech that makes it difficult to understand, not the students' lack of abilities. By pointing out the fact that there are rules that can be learned and their comprehension may thus be considerably enhanced, students may become more motivated to study the aspects of connected speech.

5. Sentence stress (14-16 minutes; T-Ss, SI)

The teacher explains that in his/her utterances the speaker stresses some words more than others. He/she asks students the following questions: *What happens when the words are stressed? How are they pronounced? Which words do you think get stressed and why?* Together they deduce that stressed words are more prominent, they are louder and pronounced more clearly; and that the speaker emphasises the words based on the meaning that he/she wants to express. The teacher directs the students' attention to ex. 5 in their worksheet. He/she points out that the sentences discussed in this task also provide answers to ex. 4. Students are then encouraged to read the sentences and predict the stressed words.

¹³ Cauldwell distinguishes three forms of speech, explaining them by using metaphors of the greenhouse, the garden and the jungle. First, there are carefully and slowly pronounced words, the citation forms known from dictionaries (i.e. individual plants grown in the greenhouse). Then, there are words orderly joined together based on connected speech rules and patterns (i.e. flowerbeds in the garden). And finally, one may also encounter messy spontaneous speech where rules may not be observed at all (i.e. the jungle) (2013).

The excerpts are played and the answers are checked. Once again, students may compare their answers in pairs first, should the teacher feel they are uncertain. If needed, the recordings are replayed several times so that students perceive the stressed words. Eventually, the recordings are played again and students imitate the speakers' pronunciation. Then, learners are assigned to do ex. 6. Once the answers are checked, the teacher asks about the stressed pronoun "I" in ex. 5c – *Why is a pronoun stressed in this sentence?* Based on the example, the whole class conclude that even though it is generally the content words that are stressed, grammatical words may be stressed as well, depending on the meaning that the speaker wishes to convey.

In this activity, students should realise which words tend to be stressed in a sentence. It is preferred that the knowledge is not simply presented to the students, but students are encouraged to discover the rules themselves. The teacher either elicits the information by asking students suitable questions or provides the necessary context so that students may deduce the rules on their own.

Reflection:

The lesson went rather well. Students showed interest in the TV series excerpt as well as in improving their authentic listening skills; they actively participated in the activities. In ex. 1 some pairs did not know what "*Love is blind*" means and the teacher had to assist them so that they could continue discussing the topic. Only a few students managed to successfully complete ex. 4, which only showed the need to work on listening skills and learn about the aspects of connected speech. The metaphor of the greenhouse, the garden and the jungle proved to be very illustrative and comprehensible and it was decided that it would also be referred to in the future. The majority of learners were able to answer eliciting questions and they had no problems perceiving stressed words.

8.3.2 Lesson 2: Weak forms

Main aim: Students will know that some unstressed grammatical words are pronounced in their weak forms in connected speech. They will identify how their pronunciation changes to that of the strong forms. They will develop their ability to perceive weak forms in a sentence.

Materials: worksheet (see *Appendix 11*),¹⁴ recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings (TV/projector)

Procedure:

1. Warm-up (4-6 minutes; S-S, SI)

Students are first divided into pairs and are assigned to remind each other of the information they discovered last lesson regarding sentence stress. The teacher distributes the worksheets and prepares the audio recording while they discuss. Then he/she asks a few students to summarise the information to the class. Based on this, the students do ex. 1 – they predict stressed words in a sentence taken from the video excerpt. The recording is played and the answers are checked.

The objective of this exercise is to revise the sentence stress rules that the students deduced in the previous lesson.

2. Raising awareness of weak forms (6-8 minutes; SI, T-Ss)

Students listen to the recording from ex. 1 again and are asked to focus on the pronunciation of unstressed words. The teacher elicits how the unstressed words are pronounced. If needed, the sentence is replayed several times so that students are able to answer the question. The teacher then illustrates the changes by providing phonemic transcriptions of both the familiar strong and the new/unknown weak forms on the board. He/she may also refer to them as the *greenhouse* and *jungle* versions respectively, using the metaphor from the first lesson. Based on the example, students are then asked to complete the rules concerning weak forms in ex. 2. The answers are checked.

In this activity, students should become familiar with weak forms: which word classes tend to be pronounced in weak forms and how the pronunciation of such words changes. Once again, it is encouraged that the students elicit or deduce the information by themselves.

3. Gap fill / cloze listening exercise (12-14 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

¹⁴ The answers to the exercises and the sources are also provided in *Appendix 11*. The transcript of the whole video excerpt is provided in *Appendix 10*.

Once students discover weak forms rules, they are asked to do ex. 3. The teacher gives instructions requesting students not to predict the missing words, but solely rely on the recordings. The teacher plays individual recordings repeatedly so that students are given enough opportunities to hear the missing words. Students first compare the results in pairs. Then the teacher requests feedback from the whole class; together they discuss how pronunciation changes when the words are spoken in isolation and in fast informal speech. To illustrate these changes, the teacher draws three columns titled *written form*, *greenhouse* and *jungle* on the board and writes the words as well as the phonemic transcriptions of their strong and weak forms. Finally, the teacher directs the students' attention to the words *gonna* and *wanna* in 3c and 3g respectively. He/she asks students, *What do these words mean? Which words do they come from? Why are they spelled in this way?* Together, they infer that the spelling of these words reflects the processes of reduction and linking. The teacher warns students not to use these words in formal contexts.

This activity aims to practise students' decoding skills and further enhance their awareness of the differences between weak forms and strong forms. Since the activity may be rather demanding, students are allowed to discuss the results in pairs before sharing them with the rest of the class. The use of phonemic transcriptions provides extra support, especially to visual learners.

4. Drilling pronunciation (7-9 minutes; T-Ss, S-S)

The teacher asks students, *Should your pronunciation be the same when you talk to native as well as to non-native speakers? How should you adapt your pronunciation in each case?* Together the teacher and the class conclude that it may not be desirable to use aspects of connected speech while communicating with non-native speakers whereas native interlocutors are likely to consider speech featuring aspects of connected speech more advanced and more comprehensible. The teacher then stresses that the class will practise weak forms, but students are encouraged to use them productively especially when interacting with native speakers or advanced non-native interlocutors. The teacher plays individual recordings and the class repeat the sentences. Then the students work in pairs, taking turns to read the sentences. The teacher monitors the students and provides instant feedback.

This activity trains students' productive skills. The ultimate aim is not necessarily to produce weak forms, but mainly to improve students' perception of weak forms and thus to

enhance their decoding skills. First, the whole class repeat the sentences together so that a somewhat anonymous environment is provided in order to reduce unpleasant feelings such as shyness or stress. Once confidence is gained, students practise the pronunciation in pairs so that greater focus and diligence is achieved: they are no longer hidden in a crowd, while still not having to perform in front of the whole class.

5. Personal response (10 minutes; SI, Ss-Ss)

Students watch the whole video recording again and are encouraged to pay attention to stressed words and weak forms. Once the viewing is finished, they are divided into groups of three and are asked to share their opinions on the main theme of the clip.

This activity concludes the two lessons, giving students an opportunity to perceive the mentioned aspects of connected speech in real context and also to discuss their own views on the topic of the clip.

Reflection:

This lesson was fairly strenuous for the students. The author felt the first exercise did not provide enough examples for the students to be able to generalise from them. In addition, ex. 3 was perceived as too long and tedious for the students. Based on this experience, the author suggests several changes. The first three utterances from ex. 3 should be used to provide more context before making students draw any conclusions, and only then should the rules be deduced. The gap fill exercise would thus be considerably shortened, and the lesson would become more varied and dynamic as a result. The altered worksheet is provided in *Appendix 11*.

On the other hand, students were able to deduce and verbalise what speech modifications they should make when talking to native and non-native speakers respectively. They showed interest in the issue, sharing their own life experiences.

8.3.3 Lesson 3: Rhythm

Main aim: Students will develop their ability to perceive and produce stressed words.
Students will develop their ability to produce weak forms.

Materials: worksheet (see *Appendix 12*)¹⁵ – the teacher may need to practise reading the limericks in advance, optionally a *PowerPoint* presentation with the correct answers and a projector (see *Appendix 4*)

Procedure:

1. Lead-in (7-10 minutes; T-Ss, S-S)

The teacher distributes the worksheets and directs students' attention to the quotation and the picture at the top of the page by asking, *What happens on 21st March? Why do you think UNESCO declared World Poetry Day? Do you agree with the director-general's quotation? Why / why not?* The teacher tells students to discuss questions in ex. 1 in pairs. The teacher prepares the *PowerPoint* presentation he/she will need for the following activity. The teacher monitors the discussion and provides help if needed. Finally, the teacher concludes the task with the whole class by making a survey on students' attitudes and/or asking some of the students to answer the questions.

The main objective of this activity is to introduce the topic and arouse interest in students.

2. Limericks and rhythm (25 minutes; T-Ss, SI, S-S)

The teacher tells students that they are going to look at one form of poetry, a limerick, which narrates funny and often nonsensical stories. He/she may also briefly comment on the origins of limericks.¹⁶ Students are then asked to read the instructions in ex. 2. The teacher recites the limericks and the students follow the text in their worksheets. The teacher asks for students' feedback, *Which poem do you find more amusing? Why?* The teacher may then elicit there being a significant rhythm pattern (*Do you find anything special about the way the poems were recited? How did it sound to you?*) or simply tells / lets students read the text in ex. 3. The teacher recites the first limerick again, clapping or tapping the rhythm so

¹⁵ The answers to the exercises and the sources are also provided in *Appendix 12*.

¹⁶ "Limericks were invented by soldiers from Limerick, Ireland, in the 1700s. During long marches they took turns making up verses about unusual folks from various places in Ireland. Soon, people were making up limericks all over the country. An artist Edward Lear made limericks even more popular when he published a book of them in England in 1846. People from all over still enjoy reading, writing, and performing limericks." (Lear, 2012, p. 3)

that it is more prominent. Afterwards, the whole class recites the poem together twice, accompanied by clapping/tapping at first. The teacher emphasises that all limericks have a rhythm pattern similar to this one. He/she then asks students to mark the stressed words in the limerick in ex. 4 while he/she recites it. If needed, the teacher may recite it again, this time clapping/tapping out the rhythm. Students compare their answers in pairs before the answers are checked with the whole class. The teacher may use a *PowerPoint* presentation to quickly provide a graphic representation of the stressed words. The whole class then practise reciting the poem. Students work in pairs and take turns reciting the limerick to each other. Students are then encouraged to deduce the rhythm pattern by analysing the two limericks and answering the questions in ex. 5. They may work in pairs. The answers are checked; the teacher may again quickly provide a graphic representation of the rhythm pattern by using a *PowerPoint* presentation. Afterwards, students are asked to predict the rhythm pattern of a new limerick in ex. 6. Once they compare their answers in pairs, the teacher asks a confident student to recite the poem with the correct rhythm pattern. Students provide feedback, the teacher may illustrate the rhythm pattern on a presentation slide. Students practise reciting the poem in pairs.

The aim of this activity is to provide further practice in identifying stressed words as well as producing weak forms, and thus ultimately develop students' receptive skills. Limericks were deliberately chosen for this purpose as the author believes that they present a playful way of achieving the lesson's aim. Moreover, poetry adds variety to otherwise primarily video-based training. The limericks are accompanied by pictures so that students understand its meaning despite some unknown words. The illustration of stressed words and rhythm patterns provides extra support which is especially helpful to visual learners. Its presentation using a *PowerPoint* programme saves class time considerably.

3. Writing limericks (15-18 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher sets the next task, ex. 7 in the worksheet. By analysing the provided limericks, students correct three mistakes in a diagram presenting the features of a limerick. The answers are checked. The teacher encourages students to write their own limericks reminding them to follow all the rules. Students may use one of the opening lines provided in ex. 8 in the worksheet with which to start their limerick. The teacher monitors the students' work and provides help if needed. When finished, students recite their limericks to their

partners and exchange feedback. The teacher asks volunteers to recite their limericks to the whole class.

This exercise predominantly aims to foster students' creativity, but it also allows for writing practice, actively applying the rules and evaluating other people's work.

Reflection:

The author believes that it was necessary to introduce different activities to the students, as another video-based lesson in a row would be too monotonous for them. The majority of students showed interest in limericks and found their rhythm intriguing. They actively practised reciting the poems and imitating the rhythm. They had no problems completing the tasks, whether it was identifying stressed words, deducing rhythm patterns or correcting statements about the features of limericks.

However, writing the poems was met with mixed reactions. Some students were happy to be assigned a rather unusual and creative activity, others were clearly frustrated by the task, having difficulties coming up with ideas, and in some cases giving up completely. Interestingly, two weaker students, usually struggling to keep up with the rest of the class, wrote a very original and funny limerick with ease. The author is convinced that this is one of the main reasons why activities should be diverse – so that everyone can show their strengths and experience success.

8.3.4 Lesson 4: Word segmentation and weak forms practice

Main aim: Students will develop their ability to perceive weak forms and to recognise individual words in a stream of speech.

Materials: worksheet (see *Appendix 13*),¹⁷ recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings (TV/projector)

Procedure:

1. Lead-in (4-6 minutes; T-Ss, S-S)

The teacher introduces the lesson by telling students that they are going to watch another clip from the TV series *How I Met Your Mother* to practise their listening skills.

¹⁷ The answers to the exercises and the sources are also provided in *Appendix 13*. The transcript of the whole video excerpt is provided in *Appendix 14*.

Then he/she distributes the worksheets and directs the students' attention to the short description of the clip and to the picture. The teacher asks students to discuss the questions in ex. 1 in pairs. He/she monitors the discussion and offers help if needed. Finally, the teacher concludes the task with the whole class, letting the students vote for their favourite character, briefly justifying their choices.

The objective of this activity is to arouse interest in the students, as well as to set the scene: to help remind students of the main characters.

2. Key words (4-5 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher asks students to do ex. 2 in the worksheet as it introduces new words that will appear in the recording. He/she reminds students to guess the meaning of the words from the context first and only then to match them with the provided definitions. Students may work individually or in pairs. The teacher gets the video ready while students work on the task. The answers are checked. The teacher may add that the British counterpart of the American word *poop* from sentence 1 is the word *poo*. If the teacher believes that some students are still uncertain about the meaning of the words, he/she asks individual students to provide Czech translations. The teacher may also ask additional questions to personalise the vocabulary (e.g. *What is a real drag for you?*).

This exercise aims to pre-teach new vocabulary used in the video. New words are presented in context. This allows learners to work out the meaning of the words rather than simply guess it. Moreover, they see how the words are used in a sentence (e.g. what the common collocations are).

3. Listening (watching) for gist (5-6 minutes; SI)

The teacher sets the task, ex. 3 in the worksheet. Students attempt to guess the plot of the clip. The teacher plays the video and the students watch. The answer is checked. The teacher asks who guessed the answer correctly.

The exercise activates the students' schemata and encourages them to predict content. Students develop their top-down strategies and practise listening for gist. Moreover, they get familiar with the story which prepares them for the next exercises.

4. Listening (watching) for specific information (10-12 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher sets the following task: ex. 4 in the worksheets. Students are given enough time to read the options before they watch the video for the second time. Having watched the video, students are encouraged to compare their answers in pairs. Then the answers are checked with the whole class. Even though some students may have problems completing 4c, the teacher does not provide justifications (repeating/replaying the passage or providing the transcript), but tells students that the answer will be discussed in more detail in ex. 5. The teacher also asks students to give him/her feedback on the task itself, *Which question was easy/difficult to answer? Why? What helped you getting the information?* Together, the whole class discuss the impact that the speakers' emotions and speech rate have on intelligibility. The teacher elicits the information that taking various paralinguistic and extralinguistic features (e.g. gestures, facial expressions, tone, etc.) into account helps listeners to understand the message. However, it is highlighted that not everything may be deduced from contextual clues and it is thus necessary to concentrate on the words spoken as well.

The aim of this exercise is to practise listening for specific information and make students aware of top-down strategies. However, the task also shows that top-down strategies need to be combined with decoding skills. The first two questions are easier, since the answers are pronounced more clearly. It is supposed that students will be able to get the information without great problems. On the other hand, in the third answer the speaker talks more rapidly and sounds highly agitated; his speech contains several aspects of connected speech, so some students may not understand. Contextual clues in this case do not provide enough information. Therefore, the relevant passage is central to the subsequent exercises focused on bottom-up listening skills.

5. Word segmentation and weak forms (10-15 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher tells the students they are going to do a dictation exercise in order to find out the exact words that Marshall said and thus be able to answer the question in 4c. The students read the instructions in ex. 5. The teacher plays individual recordings several times. Students first work in pairs, trying to write the number of words they hear. The teacher writes their guesses on the board. Then they fill in the missing phrases. The teacher asks students what they hear and he/she writes all the possibilities on the board. The whole class then discuss the options and the excerpts are replayed. Depending on the students' needs, the

recording may be played in slow motion¹⁸ or the transcript may be repeated by the teacher so that the students perceive the individual words. The teacher elicits which pronunciation changes (e.g. specific reductions) make the phrases less comprehensible. If needed, phonemic transcriptions are provided by the teacher. Then the teacher directs the students' attention to the number of words. The students' guesses are compared with the actual number of words.¹⁹ The teacher asks, *Why didn't you hear all the words?* He/she elicits that due to the pronunciation changes that take place in connected speech, non-native speakers tend to mishear several words or perceive them merged – as one long word – because they are not used to these modifications. The teacher tells students that they are going to study the merging of the words in further detail in the next lesson. Finally, the teacher drills the pronunciation of the phrases with the students. The recordings are played and the whole class repeat after the speaker. Then students work in pairs, taking turns to read the sentences.

The objective of this exercise is to train students' bottom-up listening skills. Students are asked to count the words first so that they develop their ability to recognise word boundaries. Afterwards, they write the words down in order to practise identifying individual words in a stream of speech. The excerpts are carefully chosen to feature weak forms. Therefore, students practise what they learned in the previous lessons. The whole activity is done in pairs to make it less daunting. The whole-class discussion presents the key part of the lesson. It is essential that it do not veer to a mere repetition of answers. The students should comment on the changes that the words undergo in connected speech. It is also extremely useful to work with incorrect answers, analysing why students heard these words in particular. Since it may become rather tedious if the exercise is too long, the task includes only two sentences.

6. Personal response (5 minutes; S-S, T-Ss)

To conclude the lesson, students are divided into pairs and are asked to exchange their opinions on the main theme of the clip. The teacher monitors the discussion and offers help if needed. Then he/she lets some of the students answer the questions in front of the whole class.

¹⁸ A slow motion option is provided for example in *VLC Media Player*.

¹⁹ It is expected that (especially weaker) students will hear a considerably smaller number of words.

The aim of the activity is to let students share their views on the topic.

Reflection:

The students seemed excited to watch another TV series excerpt; however, several of them immediately asked whether it was possible to watch the whole episode uninterrupted. The author explained to them that – despite the (passive) watching of TV series in their original version being beneficial to them – it is more effective to watch a short excerpt and actively work with it. The answer unfortunately left some students disappointed or even irritated.

While designing the activities, it was assumed that all students were at least faintly familiar with the TV series. However, there were a few learners who had not watched it before the training. Therefore, in order to do ex. 1, it is helpful to divide students into pairs wherein one student knows the TV series so that they can remind their partner of the characters. Overall, the students enjoyed watching the excerpt and became interested in it, asking whether Marshall actually passes the test or not, as this was not mentioned in the clip. The author promised to show the students the ending of the story in the following lesson.

With regard to listening practice, as predicted, students did not have problems with tasks 4a or 4b, they however appreciated that 4c was dealt with in detail. The dictation was rather difficult for several students and they willingly worked in pairs discussing the task. It was confirmed that especially the weaker students underestimated the number of words pronounced by the speaker considerably. Unfortunately, in retrospect, the author realises that she did not sufficiently encourage weaker students to share their incorrect answers, which she may have done by pointing out that it is extremely helpful to analyse their misunderstandings. On the contrary, she avoided calling them out in order not to expose them to unpleasant feelings experienced when having to admit they did not catch the whole phrase. Therefore, it was predominantly the more advanced students who provided the answers, and as a result, there were considerably fewer misunderstandings to analyse.

8.3.5 Lesson 5: Consonant-to-vowel linking and geminate consonants

Main aim: Students will know that words tend to be linked together in connected speech. Students will identify where linking appears in selected sentences. They will develop their perception of linked words. Students will realise how important it is to be able to distinguish individual words to get the message.

Materials: worksheet (see *Appendix 15*),²⁰ recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings (TV/projector), optionally a *PowerPoint* presentation with the correct answers and a projector (see *Appendix 4*)

Procedure:

1. Lead-in (3-4 minutes; S-S)

Students are first divided into pairs and are assigned to talk about the plot of the video that they watched in the previous lesson. The teacher distributes the worksheets while they discuss.

This activity aims to remind students of the content of the clip used in the previous lesson as the next exercises are based on the same excerpt. Moreover, the ending of the story is to be watched later in the lesson.

2. Linking (15 minutes; T-Ss, SI)

The teacher reminds students how difficult it was for them to distinguish individual words when they did the dictation exercise in the previous lesson. He/she tells them that they will learn linking rules today to help them overcome the problem. The teacher asks students to read the explanation of consonant-to-vowel linking in their worksheets. While students are reading, he/she writes *runs_into* and its resyllabified consonants in a phonemic transcription /rʌn.zɪn.tu/ on the board. Then he/she prepares the audio recordings. Once students finish reading, the teacher calls out one learner to explain linking using the example on the board. Students are asked to do ex. 1 – mark where they expect linking. The teacher plays the recording and the answers are checked. The teacher may use a *PowerPoint* presentation to quickly provide a graphic representation of linking and possibly also of resyllabified consonants in phonemic transcriptions. Afterwards, the teacher drills the pronunciation of the phrases with the students. The recordings are played and the whole class repeat after the speaker. Eventually, the teacher asks students to read the instructions in ex. 2. The teacher plays the recording and checks the answers, eliciting the rule of geminate-consonant linking. Students practise saying the sentences.

²⁰ The answers to the exercises and the sources are also provided in *Appendix 15*. The transcripts of the whole video excerpts are provided in *Appendix 14* and *Appendix 16*.

The main objective of this exercise is to raise students' awareness of and their ability to perceive consonant-to-vowel and geminate-consonant linking. Mainly in the interest of time management, the rules are simply presented to students in this case. This is because the author wishes to give students an opportunity to watch the ending of the story (as they desired) and to provide further practice in linking and weak forms in the following activities.

3. Listening (watching) for specific information (12-14 minutes; SI, T-Ss)

The teacher tells students that they are going to watch the ending of Marshall's story. He/she sets the task, ex. 3 in the worksheet, and gives students enough time to read the questions. The video is played and the answers are checked. The teacher asks students to read ex. 4 in their worksheet. Depending on their level of understanding, students may either do the task first and consequently check their answers by watching the clip again, or they watch the video and only then do the task. The answers are checked.

These exercises aim to practise listening for specific information. The questions are rather easy as a lot of contextual clues are provided in the clip. If the students encounter problems with the activity and the teacher does not have enough time, it is not necessary to justify the answers (by replaying the recording / reading the transcript) as the important passages of the transcript will be presented to the students in the following exercise.

4. Decoding skills (10-13 minutes; SI, T-Ss)

The teacher asks students to read the instructions in ex. 5 in the worksheet. They need to find out the words that were misheard and therefore written down incorrectly. The teacher does the first example with the class to demonstrate the task. He/she may use a *PowerPoint* presentation to quickly provide a graphic representation of the answer. Students are encouraged to work in pairs. The teacher monitors and offers help when needed. The answers are checked. Once again, the teacher may show the answers on the slides.

The activity aims to make students realise how important it is to be able to distinguish individual words to understand the meaning. The incorrect words are chosen carefully so that their pronunciation is similar to the pronunciation of the actual words spoken in connected speech. Therefore, students need to apply their knowledge of the changes that words undergo in connected speech (especially weak forms and linking) to solve the task. Pair work is recommended since the exercise may be rather demanding.

5. Optional follow-up, also suitable as HW (10-15 minutes; SI)

To conclude the topic, students are asked to write 80-100 words commenting on their personal experience of the issue discussed in the video.

This exercise provides an opportunity to practise writing, as well as to reflect the main theme of the clip and personalise it.

Reflection:

Predicting and identifying linking in ex. 1 was rather easy for the students, since they had already been faintly familiar with linking. Visual support in the form of resyllabified consonants in phonemic transcriptions provided in the *PowerPoint* presentation helped students, especially when they repeated the sentences.

The students appreciated being allowed to watch the ending of the story. Both listening comprehension tasks were uncomplicated mainly due to the high occurrence of contextual clues. The majority of the students were even able to do ex. 4 without having to watch the video again as they were absolutely sure of the answers after the first viewing.

The dictation computer proved to be a fairly challenging activity. As the task type was new to the students, it was essential to solve the first sentence together to demonstrate the instructions and provide a suitable strategy to find the mistakes. Even so, some students needed the author's assistance and encouragement throughout the activity. Overall, the students would welcome to have more time to do this task. This could be achieved by replaying the clip once in ex. 3 (without replaying it in ex. 4) and thus gaining additional 5 minutes for this task.

Provided that students are weaker and thus do need to watch the clip twice and/or are not familiar with linking prior to the instruction, it is recommended for the lesson to be divided into two. In the first lesson the teacher should allow more time to do ex. 1 and 2 (approximately 20-25 minutes) and then only ex. 3 and 4 should follow. In the second lesson the teacher is advised to do the computer dictation activity, once again allowing more time for it (approximately 20 minutes). Afterwards, students may do ex. 6 in class, alternatively changing it into a speaking activity, should the teacher wish to do so (approximately 7 minutes). In the remaining time, students may already start working on the dramatization of the excerpts (see the following lesson).

8.3.6 Lesson 6: Dramatization

Main aim: Students will develop their ability to produce aspects of connected speech (especially weak forms and linking) and thus will ultimately improve their decoding skills.

Materials: transcripts (see *Appendix 10*, *Appendix 14* and *Appendix 16*), recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings in groups (tablets/TV/projector)

Procedure:

1. Drama (45 minutes; T-Ss, S-Ss, Ss-Ss)

Students are divided into groups of four or five. They are asked to choose one of the clips they saw in the previous lessons to rehearse it for the rest of the class. The teacher elicits the steps and the order in which these should be taken to successfully complete the task, writing them on the board. The teacher asks students to pay particular attention to pronunciation and emotions. The groups are given their transcripts of the clips and tablets with the videos so that they can watch the recordings again if they wish. The teacher may monitor the groups, providing help if needed. Students take turns to perform the clips for the rest of the class, with the remaining students and the teacher providing feedback.

The main aim of the activity is to develop students' ability to produce aspects of connected speech and thus ultimately improve their decoding skills.

Reflection:

As with the limericks, this activity was met with mixed reactions. Some students actively participated and enjoyed the acting. Others felt clearly uncomfortable, shy, and/or weary. To create a more relaxed atmosphere, the teacher chose not to monitor the students during the rehearsals and pretended to work on her own. She also did not force the groups to perform; however, all of them eventually decided to do so. Surprisingly, three fairly quiet students, usually overshadowed by more talkative classmates during speaking activities, volunteered for the main roles. The author was then only more convinced of the great importance of diversity of activities in class.

Some students excelled in their roles, accurately imitating the pronunciation. However, the task itself proved to be rather challenging for weaker students, especially for

those who played the main roles. They did not manage to read / remember the text, focus on the pronunciation and act at the same time. This could be prevented by assigning two people to represent one main character and asking them to swap in the middle of the excerpt. Longer practice would then enable the students to perform their roles more faithfully. In that case, the teacher's continuous feedback may prove useful.

8.3.7 Lesson 7: Coalescent assimilation

Main aim: Students will develop their ability to recognise individual words in a stream of speech. Students will become aware of coalescent assimilation.

Materials: worksheet (see *Appendix 17*),²¹ recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings (TV/projector)

Procedure:

1. Lead-in (4-6 minutes; T-Ss, S-S)

The teacher introduces the lesson by telling students that they are going to watch a part of an episode of a popular American TV series. Then he/she distributes the worksheets and directs the students' attention to the short description of the clip and to the picture asking, *Who are the people in the photo? What are they doing? How is Haley feeling?* The teacher asks students to discuss the questions in ex. 1 in pairs. He/she monitors the discussion and offers help if needed. Finally, the teacher concludes the task with the whole class, asking some of the students to answer the questions.

The objective of this activity is to arouse interest in the students, as well as to set the scene: introduce the context, activate the schemata.

2. Key words (4-5 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher asks students to do ex. 2 in the worksheet as it introduces new words that will appear in the recording. He/she reminds students to guess the meaning of the words from the context first and only then to match them with the provided definitions. The students may work individually or in pairs. The teacher gets the video ready while students work on the task. The answers are checked. The teacher emphasises the preposition *to* used with the

²¹ The answers to the exercises and the sources are also provided in *Appendix 17*. The transcript of the whole video excerpt is provided in *Appendix 18*.

word *obstacle* in sentence 1 as this is different in Czech. If the teacher believes that some students are still uncertain about the meaning of the words, he/she asks individual students to provide Czech translations. The teacher may also ask additional questions to personalise the vocabulary (e.g. *Is there anyone who is lactose-intolerant? What happens if you eat milk products? When was the last time you got stuck?*).

This exercise aims to pre-teach new vocabulary used in the video. New words are presented in context. This allows learners to work out the meaning of the words rather than simply guess it. Moreover, they see how the words are used in a sentence (e.g. what the common collocations are).

3. Listening (watching) for specific information (10-12 minutes; SI, T-Ss)

The teacher sets the task, ex. 3 in the worksheet. Students are given enough time to read the questions before they watch the video. The teacher plays the first part of the video (up to 01:13) and the students watch. If needed, the excerpt is replayed or even played in slow motion so that students hear the answers. The answers are checked. Then the teacher plays the clip again, this time stopping it at 02:21. Students are asked to guess the ending of the video. They watch the remaining part. Afterwards, the teacher asks the class, *How effective was Claire's help?*

Due to the rather unexpected and fun ending of the clip, students do not watch the whole excerpt at first. As they watch the first part, they practise listening for specific information. The answers are pronounced clearly in the video, but as it is the students' first listening, they may have problems catching the answers. There is also some irrelevant information which may confuse the learners. Therefore, some students may need to watch the video several times. The teacher should reflect this and provide enough support so that students are able to hear the answers. In ex. 4, students practise predicting content in order to fully exploit the fun potential of the clip ending and thus make the lesson more enjoyable. Eventually, the teacher asks for the students' personal response to the video.

4. Word segmentation (10-12 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher tells students that they are going to watch the video again in order that they hear one more joke from the clip. Students read the instructions in ex. 5. The teacher plays the recording several times. Students write down their answers and then compare them in pairs. The teacher asks students what they hear and he/she writes all the possibilities on

the board. The whole class then discuss the options and the excerpts are replayed. Depending on the students' needs, the recording may be played in slow motion or the transcript may be repeated by the teacher so that students distinguish individual words. The teacher elicits which pronunciation changes (e.g. specific reductions) make the phrases less comprehensible. If needed, phonemic transcriptions are provided by the teacher. Eventually, the teacher asks students to explain the joke.

The aim of this exercise is to train students' bottom-up listening skills. To motivate students to participate in the activity, they are provided with an excerpt that presents a joke. In addition, the removed phrases are deliberately chosen so that they feature weak forms as well as examples of consonant-to-vowel linking and geminate consonants. Consequently, students train their perception of the aspects they learned about in the previous lessons.

5. Coalescent assimilation (10-12 minutes; SI, T-Ss, S-S)

Students are asked to read the instructions in ex. 6. They listen to the excerpts and are asked to find out how pronunciation changes in the underlined passages. The answers are checked: the teacher asks which two sounds blended together and what sound was created; he/she also provides the phonemic transcription on the board. Students listen again and imitate the pronunciation. The teacher may ask whether students noticed these pronunciation changes before this lesson. Students use information from ex. 6 to do ex. 7 – guess the pronunciation changes of the underlined passages. They listen to the recording and check. Finally, they practise reading the sentences from ex. 6 and 7 in pairs.

In this activity, students should become aware of possibly the most noticeable type of assimilation, coalescent assimilation. Students are encouraged to work out the changes themselves.

6. Optional follow-up, also suitable as HW (30-45 minutes; SI, S-S)

The teacher asks students to discuss the greatest obstacle in their life in pairs. Then the whole class together go through the instructions in ex 9. The teacher may add that this essay is often assigned to students in the USA as a part of their college entrance examination process. The teacher emphasises that the most important part of the essay is the description of the solution, not of the obstacle itself. He/she elicits language that is suitable for the task (style, vocabulary, grammar structures). Students write the essay.

The aim of this activity is to practise writing.

Reflection:

Overall, the lesson went well. Some students, especially from group 2, initially appeared to be weary of yet another lesson focused on pronunciation where they were allowed to watch only a short part of an episode. However, the clip was very appealing to the students as the story was highly relevant to them. The majority of them enjoyed watching as well as discussing the clip. Weaker students had problems answering the questions in ex. 3 after only one viewing. Therefore, the clip was replayed two more times. Reflecting her experience from lesson 4, the author positively encouraged students to share their misunderstandings²² when discussing answers in ex. 5, and their mistakes were then further analysed (i.e. it was explored why the students heard those words). The students did not fully understand the joke, so the author had to provide an additional explanation herself. As for assibilation, the students recognised newly created sounds with ease. Almost all of them were already familiar with the example in 6b (*did you*). They also effortlessly predicted instances of coalescent assimilation in ex. 7 and readily imitated the pronunciation.

8.3.8 Lesson 8: Decoding skills practice²³

Main aim: Students will develop their ability to produce assibilation and thus will ultimately improve their decoding skills. Students will develop their ability to distinguish individual words in a stream of speech.

Materials: speaking cards, picture of Sherlock and John (main characters of the TV series *Sherlock*), worksheet (see *Appendix 19*),²⁴ recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings (TV/projector)

Procedure:

1. (Warm-up) Assibilation (10-15 minutes; T-Ss, S-Ss)

²² For example, some students heard “*put it away*” instead of “*put it that way*”.

²³ Group 2 did not take this lesson as they attended a school ski trip and thus missed two English classes.

²⁴ The answers to the exercises and the sources are also provided in *Appendix 19*. The transcript of the whole video excerpt is provided in *Appendix 20*.

The teacher writes *What did you do last night?* on the board underlining the final *d* of *did* and the initial *y* of *you*. He/she asks students to think about how the underlined passage would be pronounced in connected speech, especially in fast informal English. Then he/she calls out one student to read the sentence out loud (the student should say /dʒ/ in *did you*) and let another student answer the question. Students are divided into groups of three. The teacher tells them to take turns and ask each other questions written on the speaking cards. He/she emphasises to practise the /dʒ/ sound, trying to speak fast informal English. The teacher distributes the speaking cards to the groups and monitors the students. At the end of the activity, the teacher provides delayed feedback.

The activity productively practises coalescent assimilation, but its aim is not necessarily to be able to produce assimilation, but rather to enhance students' awareness of the aspect, thus improving their receptive skills. For added variety, students work in groups of three instead of pair work.

2. Lead-in (3-4 minutes; T-Ss)

The teacher shows students a picture of Sherlock and John, the main characters of the TV series *Sherlock*, and asks, *Which TV series are these characters from?* He/she then conducts a quick survey among the students, asking who watches the TV series. Several students are then requested to briefly comment on why they (do not) watch it. The teacher tells students that they are going to watch an excerpt from the very first episode of the TV series in which Sherlock and his future friend John meet.

The objective of this activity is to arouse interest in the students, as well as to set the scene: introduce the context, activate the schemata.

3. Key words (4-5 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher distributes the worksheets and asks students to do ex. 2 as it introduces new words that will appear in the recording. He/she reminds students to guess the meaning of the words from the context first and only then to match them with the provided definitions. Students may work individually or in pairs. The teacher gets the video ready while students work on the task. The answers are checked. The teacher emphasises the preposition *of* used with the word *approve* in sentence 1 as this is different in Czech. If the teacher believes that some students are still uncertain about the meaning of the words, the teacher asks individual students to provide Czech translations. The teacher may also ask additional questions to

personalise the vocabulary (e.g. *Is there anyone who has got a landline at home? Can you afford everything you want with your pocket money? What would you buy if you could?*).

This exercise aims to pre-teach new vocabulary used in the video. New words are presented in context. This allows learners to work out the meaning of the words rather than simply guess it. Moreover, they see how the words are used in a sentence (e.g. what the common collocations are).

4. Listening (watching) for gist (8 minutes; SI, S-S)

The teacher sets the following task: ex. 2 in the worksheet. Before playing the video, he/she warns students that the main character's speech is very difficult to understand since he talks extremely quickly. He/she then plays the whole excerpt and the students watch. The first part of the clip (up to 01:50) is then replayed several times. If needed, a slow motion mode is used. The answer is checked.

The aim of this exercise is to practise listening for gist, as well as to get students used to the voices. The answer to the comprehension question is repeated several times throughout the clip, yet it is very demanding to complete the task since the excerpt is extremely difficult. The main character, Sherlock, talks exceptionally fast, he does not articulate very clearly and his intonation is rather flat. Moreover, there are very few contextual clues. To reduce students' feelings of frustration, it is necessary to inform them in advance of the clip's difficulty and to highlight the fact that it is perfectly normal to be unable to hear the answer for the first (second, third) time.

5. Listening (watching) for specific information (5 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher gives instructions for the next activity, ex. 3 in the worksheet. Students are given enough time to read the statements. The teacher points out that students are not expected to understand everything. The recording is played two times at a normal speed and then once in a slow motion mode. Students are encouraged to compare their answers in pairs, then they share the results with the whole class, but the correct answers are not provided as yet.

The exercise practises listening for specific information. As the excerpt is extremely difficult, it is not assumed that students will complete the whole task. Therefore, the passage is central to following exercise focused on bottom-up listening skills so that the students may analyse it in greater detail.

6. Gap fill / cloze listening exercise (8-10 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The students' attention is directed to ex. 4. They are going to watch/listen to the same excerpt again and are to fill in the missing words in the provided transcript. The teacher plays the whole recording uninterrupted, then he/she stops it following each gap so that students have enough time to fill in the words. If needed, the recording is replayed and/or a slow motion mode is used. Students write down their answers and then compare them in pairs. The teacher asks students what they hear and he/she writes all the possibilities on the board. The whole class then discuss the options and the excerpts are replayed. Finally, the teacher asks students to check their answers from ex. 3 based on the transcript in ex. 4.

The objective of this exercise is to train students' bottom-up listening skills. They practise distinguishing individual words in a stream of speech. The removed words are carefully selected so that they feature instances of weak forms and assimilation. Therefore, students train their perception of the aspects of connected speech that they learned about in the previous lessons. The activity is very challenging so students are encouraged to compare their answers in pairs before sharing them with the rest of the class.

7. Personal response (5 minutes; S-S, T-Ss)

Students are asked to discuss the questions in ex. 5 in pairs. The teacher monitors the discussion and provides help if needed. Finally, the teacher concludes the task with the whole class, asking some of the students to answer the questions.

This activity concludes the lesson; its aim is to let students share their views on the topic.

Reflection:

The first activity went very well. The students produced assimilation naturally when reading the questions, their partners understood them and together they willingly discussed the provided topics.

Even though some students were enthusiastic about watching *Sherlock*, the excerpt selected proved to be highly unsuitable for the instruction. The author of the thesis had been well aware that the clip is more challenging than the others used in the training, yet she wanted to please the students since it was one of their most favoured TV series (based on the author's knowledge of the students and the results from the distributed questionnaire,

please see chapter 8.1). She tried to moderate its difficulty by selecting less demanding exercises (e.g. gap-fill instead of dictation). Nevertheless, the excerpt was simply too arduous for the students, especially the second part of the recording which was dealt with in ex. 3 and 4. Not only did the speaker talk extremely fast, without sufficient articulation and intonation (he mumbled), but the background music was also very distracting. This was not so evident when the author watched the excerpt on her personal computer at home, but once playing it on an interactive board in the classroom, the music became far more prominent. That, together with Sherlock's rather quiet, flat voice, made the passage nearly incomprehensible. The students were not able to do ex. 3 at all and they managed to fill in the missing words in ex. 4 only with substantial support (the recording was played several times in an extremely slow motion mode). Given that a lot of time was spent on ex. 3 and 4, the students did not have an opportunity to discuss questions in ex. 5.

Having considered the experience, the author decided not to continue working with the recording in the following lessons (she had originally planned to demonstrate the process of elision on the excerpt) and she does not recommend to use this clip in class. If the TV series *Sherlock* is to be used in class, the excerpt ideally needs to feature interaction, plenty of contextual clues and very few background noises since the main character's speech is hard to comprehend. However, due to the nature of the TV series (crime drama) and the author being unfamiliar with it, it would be extremely time-consuming to find a more suitable scene.

8.3.9 Lesson 9: Speculation

Main aim: Students will develop their ability to speculate.

Materials: one object clearly associated with one group of people (e.g. a senior's mobile phone), clue cards, picture of Sheldon and Penny, worksheet (see *Appendix 21*),²⁵ recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings (TV/projector)

Procedure:

1. Lead-in: speculation (25-30 minutes; T-Ss, S-Ss, Ss-Ss)

²⁵ The answers to the exercises and the sources are also provided in *Appendix 21*. The transcript of the whole video excerpt is provided in *Appendix 22*.

The teacher refers back to the previous lesson, asking students, *How did Sherlock find out the information about John?* (by observation and deduction). He/she says that students are going to act like Sherlock today and deduce some information about two people by investigating objects that were found in the people's homes. The teacher provides an example, showing them one object (e.g. a senior's mobile phone) and eliciting its possible owner as well as some useful phrases for speculation (*He might/may be..., It seems that..., probably..., etc.*). He/she writes the phrases on the board. The teacher also elicits what kind of information the students may discover and once again writes it on the board (age, sex, job, education, hobbies, appearance, character, etc.). Students are divided into groups of four to six and each group is given one set of clue cards. The teacher sets a time limit (13 minutes) for groups to speculate about the objects and prepare a short presentation about their mysterious person in which every member of the group has to talk (e.g. present at least one clue card and the deduction). The teacher monitors the students and provides help if needed. He/she also prepares a picture of Sheldon and Penny, the main characters from the TV series *The Big Bang Theory*. Once students are ready, individual groups are asked to present their person by showing the clue cards and justifying their deductions. The teacher provides delayed feedback. Finally, the teacher reveals that the objects are actually connected to two characters from a popular TV series. He/she encourages students to guess the characters, dropping hints if needed. When students guess the characters, the teacher shows them the pictures of Sheldon and Penny and together the class explains how all the clue cards connect to the characters.

There are several reasons why this activity was introduced to the students. Primarily, it serves as fluency-focused speaking practice and thus adds more variety to an intensive listening-based training. In addition, it provides a smooth transition between the two TV series *Sherlock* and *The Big Bang Theory*. By introducing the characters, it sets the scene for the current and the following lessons, while simultaneously arousing interest in the students.

2. Key words (4-5 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher tells students that they are going to watch an excerpt from the TV series *The Big Bang Theory* in which Sheldon and Penny have an argument. He/she distributes the worksheets and asks students to do ex. 1 therein as it introduces new words that will appear in the recording. He/she reminds students to guess the meaning of the words from the context first and only then to match them with the provided definitions. Students may work

individually or in pairs. The teacher gets the video ready while students work on the task. The answers are checked. The teacher drills the pronunciation and emphasises the preposition *with* used with the word *lenient* in sentence 1 as this is different in Czech. If the teacher believes that some students are still uncertain about the meaning of the words, he/she asks individual students to provide Czech translations. The teacher may also ask additional questions to personalise the vocabulary (e.g. *Who is more lenient with you – mum or dad? Which types of emails do you forward to your friends?*).

This exercise aims to pre-teach new vocabulary used in the video. New words are presented in context. This allows learners to work out the meaning of the words rather than simply guess it. Moreover, they see how the words are used in a sentence (e.g. what the common collocations are).

3. Listening (watching) for gist, predicting (10 minutes; SI, T-Ss)

The teacher sets the task in ex. 2 in the worksheet. Students are given enough time to read the options. The teacher plays the video and the students watch. The answer is checked and the teacher asks the students who guessed the correct option. He/she may put additional questions (*What things that Penny did made Sheldon angry? How did he react?*). To conclude the lesson, the teacher invites students to comment on the new information about Sheldon and Penny that they learned from the clip.

This task encourages students to predict content and thus use their top-down listening strategies. Moreover, students practise listening for gist. Even though the incorrect options may be confusing, it is expected for the task to be completed without significant problems.

Reflection:

The lesson seemed to be very entertaining for the students. They all spoke about their mysterious characters animatedly and evidently enjoyed the investigation process. Unfortunately, three students from group 2, keen fans of *The Big Bang Theory* TV series, immediately guessed that their mysterious person was Sheldon. In the case that there are students who watch the TV series regularly, it is recommended that the teacher remove the clue card with the T-shirt as this gives the information away instantly and spoils the fun.

The students managed to express their speculations without difficulty, which may at least in part be due to the revision of the speculation phrases at the beginning of the lesson. However, some students did not know the words for certain objects in their clue cards (*wipes*,

script, apron, tray, wing mirror), so it is suggested that the teacher elicit or alternatively present the new vocabulary while distributing the clue cards. During the presentations the students listened to each other since the groups presented different people, and everyone was thus curious about the other team's person and deductions. Once the author revealed that the clues were actually connected to famous TV series characters, the students easily inferred their identities and were also able to explain the connection in respect of the majority of the clue cards. As regards listening comprehension, the students had no problems understanding the clip's core meaning and even managed to answer additional questions. They found the excerpt highly amusing.

8.3.10 Lesson 10: Elision²⁶

Main aim: Students will develop their ability to recognise individual words in a stream of speech. Students will know that some final consonants, especially the endings *-t* and *-d*, tend to be dropped in connected speech.

Materials: worksheet (see *Appendix 23*),²⁷ recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings (TV/projector)

Procedure:

1. Lead-in (3-4 minutes; S-S, T-Ss)

Students are first divided into pairs and are assigned to remind each other of the clip that they watched in the previous lesson. The teacher distributes the worksheets and prepares the video recording while they discuss. The teacher concludes the discussion with the whole class, optionally asking some of the students to briefly describe the story and its main characters.

The main objective of this activity is to revise the information that students gained in the previous lesson and thus activate the schemata and prepare them for the following listening comprehension exercise.

²⁶ Group 2 did only some activities from lesson 10 and lesson 11. They had only 45 minutes to do the tasks since they had attended a school ski trip and thus had missed two English classes.

²⁷ The answers to the exercises and the sources are also provided in *Appendix 23*. The transcript of the whole excerpt is provided in *Appendix 22*.

2. Listening (watching) for specific information (8 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher sets the task, ex. 1 in the worksheet. Students are given enough time to read the questions before they watch the video. Having watched the video, students are encouraged to compare their answers in pairs. Then the answers are shared with the whole class, but the teacher does not provide justifications (repeating/replaying the passage or providing the transcripts), nor does he/she confirm if they are correct, since the passages will be dealt with in greater detail in the following exercise.

The aim of this exercise is to practise listening for specific information. It is expected that students will be able to answer every question at least partially as there are lots of contextual clues and the answers are pronounced clearly and/or repeated several times throughout the clip. Still, students will most likely miss some details. Therefore, the relevant passages are central to the following exercises focused on bottom-up listening skills.

3. Word segmentation (15 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher tells students they are going to do a dictation exercise in order to find out the exact words spoken by the speakers and thus will be able to check their answers to ex. 1. Students read the instructions in ex. 2. The teacher plays individual recordings several times. Students first work in pairs, trying to write the number of words they hear. Then they fill in the missing phrases. The teacher asks students what they hear and he/she writes all the possibilities on the board. The whole class then discuss the options and the excerpts are replayed. Depending on the students' needs, the recording may be played in slow motion or the transcript may be repeated by the teacher so that students hear the individual words. The teacher elicits those pronunciation changes (e.g. specific reductions) that make the phrases less comprehensible. If needed, phonemic transcriptions are provided by the teacher. Finally, the teacher drills the pronunciation of the phrases with the students. The recordings are played and the whole class repeat after the speaker. Then the students work in pairs, taking turns to read the sentences.

The objective of this exercise is to train the students' bottom-up listening skills. Students are asked to count the words first so that they develop their ability to recognise word boundaries. Afterwards, they write the words down in order to practise identifying individual words in a stream of speech. The whole activity is done in pairs to make it less daunting. The class discussion represents the key part of the lesson. It is essential that it do

not veer to a mere repetition of answers. Students should comment on the changes that the words undergo in connected speech. It is also extremely useful to work with the incorrect answers, analysing why students heard these words in particular. Since it may become rather tedious if the exercise is too long, the task includes only three sentences.

4. Raising awareness of elision (12 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

Students are asked to do ex. 3 in the worksheet – fill in the provided words into other parts of the extract. Once they finish, they watch/listen to the recordings and check their answers. The teacher explains the term *lolcats*, referring to the picture in the worksheet.²⁸ He/she elicits the meaning of those words and phrases that may be problematic (*betray the trust; the buses don't go where you live; to take a stand*). The teacher then directs the students' attention to pronunciation. Students are asked to listen to the recordings again and identify the specific pronunciation changes of the completed words as opposed to their sound in isolation. Students listen. The teacher elicits the answers and together the class deduce the rules of elision.

In this activity, students should become familiar with the process of elision. The exercise provides students with several examples of elision and students are encouraged to deduce the process on their own.

Reflection:

The students actively participated in the exercises, nevertheless they gradually grew tired of the tasks (especially group 2); the training was simply too intensive. As predicted, they were able to partly answer questions in ex. 1. However, some details passed unnoticed. Therefore, the second exercise was very useful. The students became familiar with the task type (dictation) and it seemed they had gained some confidence in their listening abilities as they willingly shared their answers. The author believes that they have learned to anticipate more words blended together and needing to be distinguished, rather than settling on having heard one long incomprehensible word.

²⁸ Lolcats are humorous cat pictures accompanied by misspelled captions. They were popularised by the same cat picture that Penny is said to have sent to Sheldon in the excerpt. The picture was created by Eric Nakagawa in 2007 and it started a trend of sharing various funny captioned pictures and videos on the Internet, especially on social networks (Wortham, 2008; Wortham, 2010).

The students completed the words into the transcript in ex. 3 with ease. It is recommended that the teacher play a video rather than an audio file when checking the exercise since the visual clues may help students to deduce the meaning of the new phrases (especially *I'm taking a stand. Metaphorically.*). With regard to the examples of elision, the students needed the author's additional hints to be able to identify the changes that the words underwent. It is therefore suggested for the teacher to alert students in advance to the fact that all the words in question undergo the same change.

8.3.11 Lesson 11: Decoding skills practice²⁹

Main aim: Students will develop their ability to distinguish individual words in a stream of speech.

Materials: worksheet (see *Appendix 24*),³⁰ recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings (TV/projector)

Procedure:

1. Lead-in (8 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher tells students that they are going to watch the second part of Sheldon and Penny's argument. He/she distributes worksheets and asks students to first think about their own behaviour in arguments (ex. 1). Students then discuss their thoughts, the teacher monitors the class and offers help if needed. Afterwards, he/she concludes the task with the whole class, asking some of the students to answer the questions.

The objective of this activity is to arouse interest in the students, as well as to set the scene: introduce the context, activate the schemata.

2. Key words (4-5 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

The teacher asks students to do ex. 2. He/she reminds students to guess the meaning of the words from the context first and only then to match them with the provided definitions. Students may work individually or in pairs. The teacher gets the video ready while students

²⁹ Group 2 did only some activities from lesson 10 and lesson 11. They had only 45 minutes to do the tasks since they had attended a school ski trip and thus had missed two English classes.

³⁰ The answers to the exercises and the sources are also provided in *Appendix 24*. The transcript of the whole video excerpt is provided in *Appendix 25*.

work on the task. The answers are checked. The teacher drills pronunciation. He/she may explain the origins of the word *electrocute* and introduce the word-formation process of blending, possibly providing more examples (*brunch, smog, Brangelina, Merkozy*). If the teacher believes that some students are still uncertain about the meaning of the words, he/she asks individual students to provide Czech translations.

This exercise aims to pre-teach new vocabulary used in the video. New words are presented in context. This allows learners to work out the meaning of the words rather than simply guess it. Moreover, they see how the words are used in a sentence (e.g. what the common collocations are).

3. Listening (watching) for gist (8 minutes; SI, T-Ss)

The teacher sets the task, ex. 3 in the worksheet. He/she plays the video and the students watch. The answer is checked.

The aim of this activity is to practise listening for gist. In addition, students become familiar with the recording in order that they are able to do the following more difficult exercises.

4. Listening (watching) for specific information (8 minutes; SI, T-Ss)

The teacher asks students to read the instructions in ex. 4. He/she gives them enough time to read the events. The teacher makes sure that students understand the options (e.g. *make it up with somebody, be told off*). Students order the events. The teacher writes *woman you are playing with forces beyond your ken* and *Sheldon's kryptonite* on the board as the students watch the clip for the second time. The answers are checked. The teacher elicits the meaning of the phrases on the board and asks additional questions (e.g. *What was Sheldon's kryptonite?*).

The exercise practises listening for specific information. The video contains lots of contextual clues, hence the students practise top-down strategies and the task is rather easy. The more challenging passages are dealt with in greater detail in the following exercise.

5. Gap fill / cloze listening exercise (10 minutes; SI, S-S, T-Ss)

Students' attention is directed to ex. 5. They are going to listen to selected excerpts from the recording again and are to fill in the missing words. The teacher plays the individual sentences. If needed, the recordings are replayed and/or a slow motion mode is used.

Students write down their answers and then compare them in pairs. The teacher asks students what they hear and he/she writes all the possibilities on the board. The whole class then discuss the options and the excerpts are replayed.

The objective of this exercise is to train students' decoding skills. They practise distinguishing individual words in a stream of speech. The removed words are carefully selected so that they feature instances of various aspects of connected speech. Therefore, the students train their perception of the aspects of connected speech that they learned about in the previous lessons. The activity might be challenging so the students are encouraged to compare their answers in pairs before sharing them with the rest of the class.

6. Personal response (6 minutes; SI, T-Ss)

Students are asked to do ex. 6 in their worksheet. Students do the task and the answers are checked. The teacher asks students if they agree or disagree with the fans and why.

This activity concludes the lesson; its aim is to let students share their views on the topic.

Reflection:

The students engaged in a lively discussion in relation to the questions from ex. 1 and they also enjoyed watching the clip, finding it very funny. The students had no problems doing the comprehension exercises. They appreciated listening to each excerpt in ex. 5 twice, but they managed to complete it. Nevertheless, both the author and the students appeared to grow rather tired of the task type.

8.3.12 Lesson 12: Dubbing

Main aim: Students will develop their ability to produce aspects of connected speech and thus will ultimately improve their decoding skills.

Materials: transcripts (see *Appendix 18*, *Appendix 20*, *Appendix 22* and *Appendix 25*), recordings (see *Appendix 4*), technology to play video and audio recordings in groups (tablets/TV/projector)

Procedure:

1. Lead-in (4-6 minutes; T-Ss, S-S)

Students are divided into groups of two to four and asked to choose a clip from one of the previous lessons to dub. The teacher elicits the steps and the order in which these should be taken to successfully complete the task, writing them on the board. The teacher asks students to pay particular attention to pronunciation when dubbing. The groups are given the transcripts of their chosen clips and tablets containing the videos so that they can practise the dubbing. The teacher may monitor the groups, providing help if needed. Students take turns and dub muted clips (played on a TV or a projector) in front of the rest of the class, while the other students and the teacher provide feedback.

The main aim of the activity is to develop students' ability to produce aspects of connected speech and thus ultimately improve their decoding skills.

Reflection:

Considering how challenging it was for the students to rehearse the clips in lesson 6, the author divided the clips into shorter excerpts (approximately 1 minute 30 seconds) so that the students could manage to rehearse them properly in the allotted time. This strategy proved to be successful; the students learned their lines by heart and could thus concentrate on the pronunciation and timing. Once again, to create a more relaxed atmosphere, the teacher chose not to monitor the students during the rehearsals and pretended to work on her own.

All the students actively participated in the activity and clearly enjoyed it. They enthusiastically dubbed in front of the class and thus motivated each other to improve their performance. They asked to do the activity in the following lesson as well so that they had the opportunity to work on it at home.

With the students' permission, the author recorded the students' voices using a simple voice recording application. She then replaced the original sound of the clip with the voice recording at home using the *Adobe After Effects CC* programme and then compressed the file using the *Adobe Media Encoder CC* programme. Editing the videos was certainly worth the work. When the students had the opportunity to see tangible results of their work, they felt great satisfaction and were very proud of their performance. They also requested to have their recordings sent to their emails.

9 Results and discussion

This part of the thesis presents and interprets the data obtained from the research. First, it focuses on the author's reflection on the instruction and training, after which the students' feedback is presented. Finally, the results of the dictation cloze tests are analysed. Due to the extent of the thesis, only the data most relevant to the research are presented.³¹

9.1 Author's overall reflection on the instruction and training

The instruction and training seemed to have been too intensive and long, and therefore rather wearisome. Despite the effort to make it diverse, certain activities repeated and the lessons may have been perceived as monotonous at times. But for one of the video excerpts (*Sherlock and John's first meeting*), the clips proved to be suitable and enjoyable. In the author's opinion, the majority of students welcomed the use of TV series, however some of them were most likely disappointed by being allowed to watch only short scenes. Moreover, due to the intensity of the training, the students may have become satiated with the video clips as the time progressed.

What is perceived as wholly positive is the introduction of completely new, refreshing and creative activities into language lessons, such as writing poetry, acting or dubbing. As one of the outcomes, otherwise passive students also engaged in the tasks and were given an opportunity to experience success.

In terms of students' improvement, the author believes that the students are now well aware of the studied aspects of connected speech, but to achieve significant development in the students' decoding skills, a longer, consistent training (but not necessarily more intensive) is assumed to be needed. This needs to be verified by the analysis of the dictation cloze test results.

Overall, the author feels that the lessons should be spread over a longer period of time so that the instruction and training is less exhaustive, but still regular and consistent. Moreover, the author suggests to integrate the subject matter into other activities, for

³¹ The obtained data also provide an opportunity to examine additional questions, for example a possible correlation between a student's frequency of watching TV series and his/her pretest scores.

example pointing out studied phenomena during course book listening or when reading out loud, to consolidate the students' knowledge and skills.

9.2 Students' feedback

A total of fifteen students completed the feedback forms: eight from group 1 and seven³² from group 2. Their handwritten answers were manually copied into a *Microsoft Excel* spreadsheet and further processed electronically.³³ **Table 9** shows the average degree of (dis)agreement that the students were asked to express about three statements using the Likert scale. The scale ranged from *1 I strongly agree* to *6 I strongly disagree* with no neutral option provided.

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
It is useful to me to study pronunciation changes in connected speech (<i>the garden</i> and <i>the jungle</i>).	2.1	0.9
I enjoyed learning about pronunciation changes in connected speech using TV series.	1.8	0.8
My listening skills have improved after the training.	2.8	1

Table 9 Respondents' responses from the feedback form expressed on the Likert scale

³² The dictation cloze test answers of two students from group 2 were not included in the analysis of the results since they had not been present for the pretests. However, as they received the instruction and training, they were naturally allowed to evaluate it via feedback forms.

³³ Completed feedback forms are available with the author.

Interestingly, the results of group 1 and group 2 differed noticeably, see *Table 10*.

Statement	Group 1		Group 2	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
It is useful to me to study pronunciation changes in connected speech (<i>the garden</i> and <i>the jungle</i>).	1.9	1.1	2.3	0.7
I enjoyed learning about pronunciation changes in connected speech using TV series.	1.25	0.4	2.5	0.6
My listening skills have improved after the training.	2.7	0.6	3.1.	1.2

Table 10 Group 1 vs group 2: respondent’s responses from the feedback form expressed on the Likert scale

Even though the students were invited to elaborate on their responses and provide other comments freely, they usually did not do so. Therefore, the following interpretation of the results is based primarily on the students’ notes when possible, but also on the author’s subjective feelings and assumptions derived from her observations of the students’ behaviour.

9.2.1 Usefulness

On average, students do agree with the statement that learning about aspects of connected speech is useful to them. Out of the few who justified their opinion, two learners wrote, “*I think it is important to integrate this part of language into the syllabus (it will be useful in real life)*” [translated by the author of this thesis] and “*...it was great to show what real English looks like...*” The author believes that the students appreciated that they were studying everyday language. When the aspects of connected speech were introduced, the students showed great interest and asked a lot of additional questions. They found the TV series highly relevant to their lives.

However, as the training progressed, most likely due to its intensity and repetitiveness, several students lost some of their enthusiasm, like the second student cited

above who added, “...but on the other hand, still doing the same stuff and discussing every small detail.” There was also one participant who disagreed with the statement completely, “I think that I understand spoken English without studying pronunciation changes. I personally think that the exercise with the jungle and the garden was rather unnecessary.”

The author feels that especially those students who have more confidence in their language skills sometimes found the programme too thorough. Such students, for the most part, already understand the main message conveyed in authentic video clips and do not find it indispensable to understand every single word. They may feel that the results are not worth all the hard work. Unfortunately, the author is doubtful of the success achieved in showing these students how much information (and potential jokes, in the case of TV series) they actually mishear. The fact that group 2 is generally the more confident class may be the reason for the differences seen in the Likert scale ratings and their overall somewhat lower motivation expressed during the training.

9.2.2 Enjoyment

Students generally welcomed the use of TV series and they liked the selected scenes. Some responses were entirely positive, such as, “Sometimes we must do it again. It was more fun than working with books. I really enjoyed it,” or “Yes, I can’t think of any other way we could learn that in class. And also I like the TV series we watched.”

Nevertheless, a few participants complained about the intensity and monotony of the lessons, as may be seen in, “of course I enjoyed watching TV series but watching it 5 times (one short scene) – because we will not watch a normal film or series episode 5 times;” “I think it’s good to practise it using fun content but it gets repetitive after a few times;” “...maybe I was a bit annoyed when we did similar activities for the fifth time...” [translated by the author of this thesis]. The author understands these feelings and she thinks that they could be prevented by not introducing all lessons at once. Instead, it is suggested that the programme be spread over a longer period of time, for example six months (i.e. two lessons per month).

Finally, a lot of students expressed their desire to watch the whole episode rather than short scenes, for example in, “I enjoyed watching the TV series, but I think that it might be more useful to us (and by that I also mean more enjoyable) to watch the whole episode and only then do the exercises;” [translated by the author of this thesis]; “I think we could do

more exercises like that. But maybe I would enjoy it more if we could watch one episode and then do a class (45 min) related to that. That would be fun;” “*I would like to watch the whole scenes and then discuss them for me it would be better than to have the papers with duties to fill some exercises...*” The author repeatedly informed the students of the advantages of the applied approach; however, some students (especially from group 2) did not seem persuaded by them. Keene warns of precisely this type of obstacle (see chapter 5). Students are used to engaging in passive watching in their free time and may feel disappointed when they are not allowed to watch the whole episode and/or are asked to actively work with the excerpt.

Once again, it was group 2 who agreed with the statement to a lesser extent and thus claimed to have enjoyed the use of TV series less than group 1. A possible explanation remains the same: students from group 2 are used to watching TV series in English, they understand the main message, and therefore do not feel that they need the training as much. They may believe that passive watching is sufficient and thus feel frustrated when forced to do something less entertaining – to actively watch only excerpts of the TV series.

Students also commented on their favourite activities. Most of the students mentioned dubbing, “*I really like the dubbing, I think it was very useful for us to try to speak ‘jungle English’;*” “*I think that the last lesson was one of the coolest ones. We were dubbing the TV show parts and I find it really useful because when we were reading out scripts (faster and faster) it helped a lot. I think I improved my pronunciation,*” but some other activities were pointed out, too, “*My favourite activity was playing the scene and trying to say the sentence like the person from the TV series. I must say it was sometimes very hard to say it as fast as they did,*” “*I enjoyed listening to the record and writing/guessing the text and learning new words – keywords,*” “*I also really enjoyed the ‘detective training’.*”

9.2.3 Improvement

On average, the participants somewhat agreed that their listening skills had improved. Only three students wholeheartedly identified with that statement, one of them added, “*After this whole activity with the TV series I know much better what I should concentrate on when I am watching a movie or TV series in English and thanks to this I can understand it better.*” The majority of the students were less enthusiastic, they felt their progress was not that significant and/or they expressed some doubts, such as, “*Yes, I got used to the jungle a bit;*” “*It is difficult to say because the practical change comes after*

watching series not just one scene and commenting on it;” “*I am not sure. I didn’t notice any big change, but I think I can understand more words that aren’t stressed;*” “*When we just listened and we didn’t see the video I had problems understanding and I still don’t understand them.*” Three students disagreed with the statement, believing that they had made no progress, “*It really didn’t...I’m sorry, but I feel I am on the same level.*”

Having analysed the results of the dictation cloze tests (see chapter 9.3), it may be stated that the students’ answers confirm that the changes are gradual and rather subtle. The students’ feelings are therefore understandable and not necessarily negative, unless the students had had excessive expectations and then became disappointed and/or started to believe that the training was actually ineffective. This may be triggered by the fact that, while working with graded recordings, students may be used to understanding (nearly) everything, whereas when listening to or watching authentic materials, students are likely to misunderstand/mishear a lot of the words even after the training.

Subjective feelings of improvement are important as they may have affected students’ views also as regards the first two statements. If a student feels he/she is making little progress, he/she may then deem learning about aspects of connected speech less useful. In addition, it seems quite demanding to watch short TV series excerpts accompanied by a lot of exercises if the student is uncertain whether this is leading to any improvement (when contrasted with the more comfortable passive exposure to whole episodes). In the end, students may even lose their motivation and stop working in class.

It is therefore the role of the teacher to convince the students that the training is effective while simultaneously informing them of the level of progress that may be anticipated. The teacher should also provide opportunities for students to become aware of the development in their listening skills (although this seems rather challenging considering the long-term nature of the development process) and praise them for their success. Given the students’ feedback, the author may not have done this sufficiently.

9.2.4 Discussion

Hypotheses 2 and 3 (see chapter 6) were confirmed. The students considered learning about aspects of connected speech useful and they enjoyed doing so using TV series. The findings are in line with other studies and up-to-date observations (e.g. Boțîrcă, 2007; Carreira, 2008; and Kelly, 2000). However, the participants expressed several reservations

and objections with which the author mostly agrees and which, if taken into account, could improve the lessons considerably. The perceived repetitiveness and monotony could be prevented by dividing the training into smaller units to be integrated into the syllabus throughout the whole year. This would hopefully make the materials more attractive and feasible to teachers, since they can rarely abandon their year plans and devote one whole month to pronunciation teaching. The perception of usefulness may be enhanced by emphasising the amount of missed authentic content to the students and by clearly showing them their progress resulting from participating in the training. Once the students feel that they are improving and the exercises are effective, they may be more willing to accept active watching, i.e. working with short excerpts intensely, rather than demand passive watching of full episodes. Optionally, in the case of more advanced and confident students, the teacher may opt to play the whole episode first and only then work on the selected excerpts in detail.

9.3 Dictation cloze test

Answers from the dictation cloze tests were analysed in great detail. Since the questionnaires were handwritten, the data first had to be manually copied into the *Microsoft Excel* spreadsheet programme and further processed electronically.³⁴ A table was created containing all the words that were supposed to be filled in by the students and that featured at least one aspect of connected speech.³⁵ All tests were then scored. Students were awarded one point per correct word, with 65 points being the maximum score possible. A missing word was marked by “0”, an incorrect answer was assigned an “X”.

9.3.1 Instruction and training efficacy analysis

Table 11 and *Table 12* show students’ final pretest as well as posttest scores achieved in the experimental and control group respectively. Average scores are rounded to one decimal place. Despite the effort to provide similar groups in terms of English level, it was found out that the control group’s average pretest score of 28.8 was noticeably lower than that of the experimental group, averaging 37.6 points.

³⁴ Completed questionnaires are available with the author.

³⁵ For a detailed analysis of the aspects of connected speech in the dictation cloze test, see *Appendix*

Student no.	Pretest score	Posttest score	Difference in scores
14	52	59	+7
15	29	36	+7
16	50	57	+7
17	30	38	+8
18	55	59	+4
19	41	51	+10
20	29	36	+7
21	21	24	+3
22	41	50	+9
23	35	46	+11
24	20	30	+10
25	38	46	+8
26	48	44	+4
Mean	37.6	44.3	+6,7
Standard deviation	11.1	10.6	

Table 11 Experimental group dictation cloze test scores

Student no.	Pretest score	Posttest score	Difference in scores
1	25	23	-2
2	28	24	-4
3	28	29	+1
4	16	17	+1
5	45	52	+7
6	13	18	+5
7	12	16	+4
8	21	27	+6
9	19	20	+1
10	36	46	+10
11	58	58	0
12	54	59	+5
13	19	24	+5
Mean	28.8	31.8	+3
Standard deviation	14.6	15.4	

Table 12 Control group dictation cloze test scores

Therefore, it was decided to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the two samples (control and experimental groups) prior to the instruction and training based on the pretest scores. A *two-sample T test* was selected for this purpose. The hypotheses were stated as follows:

Null hypothesis (H₀) = There will be no statistically significant difference between the two samples prior to the explicit instruction and training in aspects of connected speech, i.e. the control and experimental groups are equal.

Alternative hypothesis (H_A) = There will be a statistically significant difference between the two samples prior to the explicit instruction and training in aspects of connected speech, i.e. the control and experimental groups are not equal.

To run the *T test*, it was necessary to verify the homogeneity of variances of the samples. The variances were compared using an *F test*; the calculations were made in the *Microsoft Excel* programme. The *p* value provided in **Table 13** exceeded 0.05 and thus confirmed that the variances were equal.

	Control group	Experimental group
Mean	28,76923	37,61538
Variance	230,5256	132,7564
Observations	13	13
df	12	12
F	1,736456	
P(F<=f) (1)	0.176075	
F Critical (1)	2.686637	

Table 13 Two-sample F test for variances: pretest

Consequently, a *two-sample T test assuming equal variances* was applied to the pretest scores; the calculations were made in the *Microsoft Excel* programme. The results are presented in **Table 14**. Since the hypothesis was tested in both directions (the scores of the control group may have been significantly higher or lower), the test needed to be two-tailed. The key value was thus *p* (2), which was greater than the conventional 0.05. This means that the probability of any differences between the groups occurring solely by chance is higher than 5 %, and is thus not deemed acceptable. The null hypothesis was therefore confirmed: the difference between the samples before the instruction and training was not statistically significant; the samples may be regarded as equal.

	Control group	Experimental group
Mean	28.76923	37.61538
Variance	230.5256	132.7564
Observations	13	13
Pearson Correlation	181.641	
Hypothesized Mean	0	
df	24	
t Stat	-1.67342	
P(T<=t) (1)	0.053616	
t Critical (1)	1.710882	
P(T<=t) (2)	0.107231	
t Critical (2)	2.063899	

Table 14 Two-sample T test assuming equal variances: pretest

The same tests were applied to the posttest scores to see whether the instruction and training may have caused any significant differences. The hypotheses were stated as follows:

Null hypothesis (H_0) = There will be no statistically significant difference between the two samples after the explicit instruction and training in aspects of connected speech, i.e. the control and the experimental groups are equal.

Alternative hypothesis (H_A) = There will be a statistically significant difference between the two samples after the explicit instruction and training in aspects of connected speech, i.e. the control and experimental groups are not equal.

The procedure remained the same. Once again an *F test* was conducted to verify the homogeneity of variances of the samples prior to the *T test*. The calculations were made in the *Microsoft Excel* programme. The *p* value provided in **Table 15** exceeds 0.05 and thus confirms that the variances are equal.

	Control group	Experimental group
Mean	31.76923	44.30769
Variance	255.359	122.5641
Observations	13	13
df	12	12
F	2.083473	
P(F<=f) (1)	0.108988	
F Critical (1)	2.686637	

Table 15 Two-sample F test for variances: posttest

Consequently, a *two-sample T test assuming equal variances* was applied to the posttest scores; the calculations were made in the *Microsoft Excel* programme. The results are presented in *Table 14*.

	Control group	Experimental group
Mean	31.76923	44.30769
Variance	255.359	122.5641
Observations	13	13
Pearson Correlation	188.9615	
Hypothesized Mean	0	
df	24	
t Stat	-2.32549	
P(T<=t) (1)	0.014411	
t Critical (1)	1.710882	
P(T<=t) (2)	0.028822	
t Critical (2)	2.063899	

Table 16 Two-sample T test assuming equal variances: posttest

The test was two-tailed because the hypothesis needed to be tested in both directions (the scores of the control group may have been significantly higher or lower). Once again, the decisive value was *p* (2). This time, however, it did not exceed the conventional 0.05 threshold. A figure of 0.028822 indicates that the probability that the samples differ due to

chance is less than 3 %, which is deemed acceptable. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The difference between the samples after the instruction and training was statistically significant.

Having conducted the two-sample T tests, it was clear that one of the groups made significantly more progress than the other group. As both groups improved at least somewhat, a *paired T test* was applied to compare whose progress was (more) significant. The hypotheses were stated as follows:

Null hypothesis (H_0) = The increase of the scores in the dictation cloze test will be the same or similar in both the control and the experimental groups.

Alternative hypothesis (H_A) = The increase of the scores in the dictation cloze test of the experimental group will be statistically (more) significant.

A *paired T test* measures statistical significance between two sets of data obtained from the same subject (i.e. repeated-measures design) and was thus conducted twice – on the control as well as the experimental group scores. The calculations were made in the *Microsoft Excel* programme. The *p* values of the paired T tests presented in **Table 17** show that the progress of both groups was statistically significant. This means that the probability that the students' increase in scores occurred solely by chance is smaller than 5 % and is thus considered acceptable. The statistical significance of the result of the control group was even regarded as high, as the *p* value did not exceed 0.001. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The experimental group made more statistically significant progress than the control group.

	Control group		Experimental group	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Mean	28.76923	31.76923	37.61538	44,30769
Variance	230.5256	255.359	132.7564	122.5641
Observations	13	13	13	13
Pearson Correlation	0.970053		0.940443	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0		0	
df	12		12	
t Stat	-2.77746		-6.14927	
P(T<=t) (1)	0.008364		0.0000248	
t Critical (1)	1.782288		1.782288	
P(T<=t) (2)	0.016729		0.0000495	
t Critical (2)	2.178813		2.178813	

Table 17 Paired T tests

Expressed as a percentage, the control group score was on average increased by 10.7 % whereas the results of the experimental group were increased by 17.8 % (see *Table 11* and *Table 12*). This progress is illustrated in *Figure 5*. In comparison to the control group, the progress of the experimental group was greater by 58 %. The percentage was rounded to one decimal place.

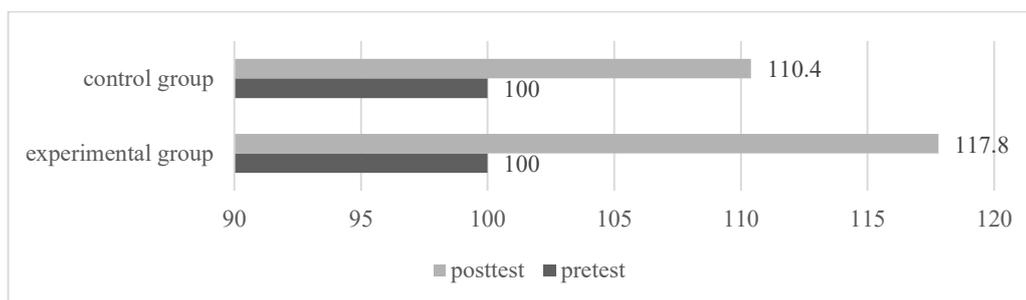


Figure 5 Progress of both the experimental and the control group expressed as a percentage

9.3.2 Item analysis

A detailed analysis of the students' answers aimed to further examine the nature of the experimental group's progress. The table provided in *Appendix 26* shows mean scores

for all the words from the pretest and posttest and the difference between the two tests for the control and experimental groups.

The greatest change in score occurred with the word *might* (sentence no. 4) in which the *t* was inaudibly released (being followed by the word *be*). The unsuccessful students either did not catch the word at all or mistook it for *may* in the pretest. As opposed to the control group where no progress was made, seven students from the experimental group corrected their answers in the posttest. The author has no explanation for the rate of improvement in this case. Overall, the increase in scores within the experimental group was fairly evenly distributed (mostly ranging from -1 to +4) and no striking tendency with regards to progress in a particular aspect of connected speech was observed.

9.3.3 Discussion

The statistical analysis of the results indicates that the explicit instruction and training in aspects of connected speech significantly improved the students' dictation cloze test results, both as regards change over time as well as when compared with the control group. This suggests that working on pronunciation features systematically may distinctly accelerate understanding of authentic speech. Such results further support the outcomes of other studies claiming that aspects of connected speech are teachable and improve students' perception (e.g. Brown, & Hilferty, 1986; or Crawford, 2006 as cited in Alameen, 2014).

The results emphasise the importance of the control group's role. Carreira (2008) conducted a similar study in which pop songs were used to teach 19 international students in a university preparatory course. The efficacy of the 90-minute weekly training was verified using the TOEIC listening section and a dictation cloze test. Since no control group was available, paired T tests were selected for the scores analysis. They confirmed significant differences over time in the scores of the dictation test. However, in view of the presented research, such procedure may be regarded as insufficient because even the group that receives no training may eventually achieve statistically significant results.

The significant progress of the control group confirmed in this thesis was likely caused by the students' increased familiarity with the recordings (the same audio/video files were used for both pretests and posttests) and/or by the effects of having received teaching. However, with students becoming increasingly exposed to authentic audio and video recordings in their free time, there arises yet another possible influential factor. The extent

to which free-time exposure affects the development of students' bottom-up listening skills should be examined. Such a question exceeds the scope of this thesis and is therefore suggested for further research.

The question remains whether the experimental group's progress was accelerated solely by the received explicit instruction and training in aspects of connected speech, or whether there may have been other variables interacting and if so, to what extent this occurred.

As such, the students' results may have been directly influenced by watching the TV series on which the dictation cloze test was based in the interval between the tests. Therefore, prior to taking the posttest, the students were asked to write down the number of episodes of the *Modern Family* TV series that they had watched (in English) in the past month. **Table 18** summarising their responses indicates that a mere two students from the experimental group watched the TV series. Therefore, no substantial influence on the results is assumed. Paradoxically, the only student from the experimental group (student no. 26) who stated he had watched more than 20 episodes was incidentally also the only person from the sample receiving instruction and training whose posttest score saw a decline.

No. of episodes	No. of students	
	Control group	Experimental group
0 episodes	7	10
1-5 episodes	5	2
6-15 episodes	0	0
16+ episodes	1	1

Table 18 Watching *Modern Family* between tests

However, the study has several other limitations. First, as the dictation cloze test was based on authentic recordings, it is not possible to rule out additional features of informal speech, such as overlapping speech or a fast rate of delivery, which may have influenced the students' performance. Moreover, laboratory conditions during testing could not have been ensured. Finally, the sample was quite small, consisting of only 13 participants.

Therefore, despite its rather favourable statistical implications, any generalisations stemming from this research should be made with caution. Nevertheless, the research

certainly contributes to the debate concerning the effectiveness of knowledge of reduced forms.

10 Conclusion

The theoretical part of this thesis introduced aspects of connected speech and analysed current perspectives on the reasons why these should (not) be taught. It was concluded that Czech secondary students should productively focus mainly on accentuation patterns, weak forms and linking, but they should be aware of all aspects receptively. In the subsequent chapter, the interdependence of aspects of connected speech and decoding skills was discussed. Effective exercises aimed at the development of bottom-up processes and training in aspects of connected speech were introduced. Moreover, selected currently available teaching materials devoted to the subject were briefly described, and the advantages and disadvantages of video use were eventually presented.

The practical part researched the effects of explicit instruction and training in selected aspects of connected speech on students' bottom-up listening skills. The experimental group received twelve 45-minute lessons. Prior to the lessons, the experimental and the control groups had taken dictation cloze tests to monitor their progress. The analysis of the results suggests that both samples improved significantly over time; the control group by 10.4 %, while the experimental group progressed by 17.8 %. The development of the experimental group was statistically more significant, being accelerated by 58 % in comparison to the control group. The results thus indicate that the instruction and training may have advanced the students' ability to understand authentic speech, although other variables cannot be completely ruled out.

For the purposes of the research, a set of lessons was designed to introduce and practise selected aspects of connected speech. The materials are rather unique as they use authentic TV series popular with teenagers today as the main source of input. The research participants found the lessons enjoyable and useful. All presented activities were piloted and, based on the author's observations and the students' feedback, several changes were recommended.

The author is hopeful that the presented research will inspire other teachers to devote greater time to the instruction and training in aspects of connected speech so that students improve their bottom-up listening skills, enhance their understanding of authentic English and potentially become more motivated to watch or listen to real English in their free time. Teachers are invited to integrate the presented activities into their English classes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 List of weak forms

The most frequently cited examples of weak forms are provided in the table below (Kelly, 2000, p. 74).

Grammatical category	Word	Full form	Weak form	Example of weak form
Verbs	am	æm	m	That's what I'm trying to say.
	are	ɑ:	ə	Where are you from?
	is	ɪz	əz/z/s	Where's he from? / Where is he from?
	was	wɒz	wəz	That's where he was born.
	were	wɜ:	wə	That's where my children were born.
	do	du:	də	Where do you live?
	does	dʌz	dəz	Where does he live?
	have	hæv	əv/v	He will have left by now. / They've gone.
	has	hæz	həz/əz/z/s	The baby has swallowed a stone. / He's gone.
	had	hæd	həd/əd/d	He had already gone. / He'd already gone.
	can	kæn	kən	I'm not sure if I can lend it to you.
	could	kʊd	kəd	Well, what could I say?
	would	wʊd	wəd/əd	Well, what would you have done?
should	ʃʊd	ʃəd/ʃd	Well, what should I have said?	
Personal pronouns	you	ju:	jə	How do you do?
	your	jɔ:	jə	What does your boss think?
	he	hi:	hɪ/ɪ	Where does he work?
	him	hɪm	ɪm	I'll give it to him later.
	she	ʃi:	ʃɪ	She's leaving tomorrow.
	her	hɜ:	hə/ə	I'll give it to her later.
	us	ʌs	əs	They'll give it to us later.
	them	ðem	ðəm	I'll give it to them later.
Prepositions	to	tu:	tə	He's already gone to work.
	at	æt	ət	He's at work, I think.
	of	ɒv	əv	That's the last of the wine!
	for	fɔ:	fə	He's away for two weeks.
	from	fɹɒm	fɹəm	She comes from Scotland.
Conjunctions	and	ænd	ən/ənd	She's tall and fair.

Grammatical category	Word	Full form	Weak form	Example of weak form
	but	bʌt	bət	She's here, but Juan isn't.
	than	ðæn	ðən	She's older than you.
Articles	a	eɪ	ə	He's a doctor.
	an	æn	ən	She's an architect.
	the	ði:	ðə	She's the person I told you about.
Indefinite adjectives	any	eni:	əni:/ni:	Have you got any biscuits?
	some	sʌm	səm	There's some tea in the teapot.
	such	sʌtʃ	sətʃ	It's not such a big deal, really.

Kelly, G. (2000). *How to Teach Pronunciation*. J. Harmer (Ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Appendix 2 Teacher's questionnaire

TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1. Age: _____ years

- 2. Sex: male female

- 3. How long have you been teaching this class? _____ years

- 4. How often do the students have English classes this year? _____ per week

- 5. What is the level of English of this class? _____

- 6. What course book do you use? _____

Is it prescribed by the school? yes no

- 7. Do you use authentic audio/video materials in class?
 yes no

If yes, please specify (what materials, how often, what for...)

- 8. Do you teach aspects of connected speech (elision, linking, assimilation, weak forms)?
 yes no

If yes, please specify (which and why, how, how often, what materials...):

Appendix 3 Pretest

Dear students,

As a part of my diploma thesis, I am carrying out research trying to find out how well students can understand authentic TV series. I kindly ask you to take part in the research.

Firstly, you will fill in a questionnaire about your experience of learning English. Then you will watch a set of scenes from a TV series. Finally, you will be given a worksheet. You will listen to short excerpts (phrases, sentences) of the scenes from the TV series and fill in the missing words in the worksheet.

The research is anonymous; I only need your name to pair your tests. Once I pair the tests, your name will be deleted.

Many thanks for participating in the research.

Kateřina Benková

Name: _____

1. Age: 14 15 16 17 **Code:**

2. Sex: male female

3. How long have you been studying English? _____ years

4. How often do you talk to native speakers?

never 1x – 11x per year 1x – 3x per month

1x – 3x per week 4x and more per week

5. How often do you watch TV series in English?

never 1x – 11x per year 1x – 3x per month

1x – 3x per week 4x and more per week

6. Do you watch the TV series (in English):

mostly with Czech subtitles mostly with English subtitles

mostly without subtitles

7. What TV series have you been watching in the past 2 months?

Watch the TV series.

8. Do you recognise the TV series you have just watched? yes no

If yes, please answer questions 9-11.

9. What is the name of the TV series? _____

10. How many episodes have you seen so far (in English)? _____ episodes

11. When was the last time you watched the TV series? _____

TRIAL RUN

Listen to the sentences and fill in the missing words. You will hear each phrase / sentence twice.

T1. Don't worry, Lily. I'm

_____ show on time.

T2. Oh no, please. I know it's killing you

_____ in the middle of that.

Listen to the excerpts from the TV series. Fill in the missing words. You will hear each excerpt twice. A beep sound will signal the beginning of each excerpt.

1. We can't help you _____.
2. How _____ turn your _____
like that?
3. I'm sure dad is _____
encouraging word to the gardener...
4. Okay, _____ mention to you that the
marionettes are not kind to latecomers.
5. I just _____ a glass of water and
sit down for a minute, like any kind person would.
6. I don't know _____, he's like Batman but
straight.
7. It's like you're incapable of hearing _____
_____ your job to fix it.
8. This man _____ in a cable car
accident.
9. I think _____ with the
gardener.
10. Hi. - _____ ?

11. No, you know _____ enjoy the show

_____ so.

12. Great, great, _____ wedding day and he

was just a little nervous.

13. _____ there's no need to apologise to

me.

- No, I need to _____ very selfish.

How easy / difficult was the task for you? Underline one of the options.

very easy easy quite easy OK quite difficult difficult very difficult

Appendix 4 Recordings and PowerPoint presentations

The recordings and PowerPoint presentations are available on the enclosed USB flash drive.³⁶

³⁶ Due to size limitations of the attached files, only a sample of the recordings from *Appendix 4* is attached to the electronic version of the thesis. It includes pretest recordings and Lesson 1 recordings. All recordings are available with the printed copy of the thesis or with the author of the thesis.

Appendix 5 Analysis of the phenomena in the dictation cloze test

Legend for the highlighted phenomena:

- weak forms
- linking
- elision and contractions
- regressive or progressive assimilation
- coalescent assimilation

If linking co-occurs with yet another phenomenon, the part is underlined, but has the colour of the second aspect.

No.	Excerpt with highlighted phenomena	Transcription of the missing parts
1	We can't help you <i>if you won't <u>come out</u></i> .	/əf ju wɔ:n kʌmaʊt/
2	How <i>can you just</i> turn your <i><u>back on a friend</u></i> like that?	/kən ju dʒəst/ /bækɒnə frend/
3	I'm sure dad is <i>just gonna <u>go out</u> and <u>give an</u></i> encouraging word to the gardener...	/dʒəst gənə ɡoʊˈau ən ɡɪvən/
4	Okay, <i>this might <u>be a good time to</u></i> mention to you that the marionettes are not kind to latecomers.	/ðɪs maɪ biːʒə ɡʊd˚taɪm tə/
5	I just <i><u>asked him if he wanted to have a</u></i> glass of water and sit down for a minute, like any kind person would.	/ɑːskɪmɪfhi wɒntəhævə/
6	I don't know <i>he comes <u>when we need him</u></i> he's like Batman but straight.	/ˈi kʌmz wən wi niːdɪm/
7	It's like you're incapable of hearing <i>anyone's <u>sad story without making it</u></i> your job to fix it.	/enɪwʌnsæd stɔrɪ wɪðəʊm meɪkɪŋɪ/
8	This man <i><u>could have lost his</u></i> brother in a cable car accident.	/kʊdəv lɔːstˈhɪz brʌðər/
9	I think <i>this <u>has something to do</u></i> with the gardener.	/ðɪs hæsmθɪŋ tə duː/
10	Hi. – <i>Did you forget <u>the</u></i> tickets?	/dɪdʒu fəget˚ðə tɪkɪts/
11	No, you know <i>I <u>was never gonna</u></i> enjoy the show <i><u>without you</u></i> so.	/wəz nevər ɡɒnə/ /wɪðəʊtʃuː/
12	Great, great, <i><u>turned out it was his</u></i> wedding day and he was just a little nervous.	/tɜːrndaʊtɪt wəzɪz/
13	<i><u>But you know what</u></i> there's no need to apologise to me. - No, I need to <i><u>I've been</u></i> very selfish.	/bʌtʃuː noʊ wɒt/ /aɪˈv biːn/

Appendix 6 Students' feedback

STUDENTS' FEEDBACK

Write a mark (1-6) next to each statement.

1 = I strongly agree

2 = I agree

3 = I somewhat agree

4 = I somewhat disagree

5 = I disagree

6 = I strongly disagree

Please briefly **explain your opinion**.

STATEMENT	MARK
It is useful to me to study pronunciation changes in connected speech (<i>the garden</i> and <i>the jungle</i>).	
My listening skills have improved after the training.	
I enjoyed learning about pronunciation changes in connected speech using TV series.	

Please feel free to write any other comments you might have. (*What was your most/least favourite activity? Why? What would you like to continue doing / change?*)

Appendix 7 Posttest

Dear students,

As a part of my diploma thesis, I am carrying out research trying to find out how well students can understand authentic TV series. I kindly ask you to take part in the second part of the research.

Firstly you will watch a set of scenes from a TV series. Then, you will fill in a questionnaire about the TV series. Finally, you will be given a worksheet. You will listen to short excerpts (phrases, sentences) of the scenes from the TV series and fill in the missing words in the worksheet.

The research is anonymous; I only need your name to pair your tests. Once I pair the tests, your name will be deleted.

Many thanks for participating in the research.

Kateřina Benková

Name: _____

Watch the TV series.

1. How many episodes of this TV series have you seen in the past month (in English)?

_____ episodes

2. When was the last time you watched the TV series?

TRIAL RUN

Listen to the sentences and fill in the missing words. You will hear each phrase / sentence twice.

T1. Don't worry, Lilly. I'm _____

_____ show on time.

T2. Oh no, please. I know it's killing you

_____ in the middle of that.

Listen to the excerpts from the TV series. Fill in the missing words. You will hear each excerpt twice. A beep sound will signal the beginning of each excerpt.

1. We can't help you _____.

2. How _____ turn your _____
like that?

3. _____ there's no need to apologise to
me. - No, I need to _____ very selfish.

4. Okay, _____ mention to you that the
marionettes are not kind to latecomers.

5. I think _____ with the
gardener.

6. I don't know _____, he's like Batman but
straight.

7. No, you know _____ enjoy the show
_____ so.

8. This man _____ in a cable car

accident.

9. I just _____ a glass of water and

sit down for a minute, like any kind person would.

10. Hi. - _____ ?

11. It's like you're incapable of hearing _____

_____ your job to fix it.

12. Great, great, _____ wedding day he

was just a little nervous.

13. I'm sure dad is _____

encouraging word to the gardener...

How easy / difficult was the task for you? Underline one of the options.

very easy easy quite easy OK quite difficult difficult very
difficult

Appendix 8 Popular TV series questionnaire

MY FAVOURITE TV SERIES

Dear students,

Please fill in this short questionnaire, it will help me create interesting lessons for you.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. The Big Bang Theory | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I don't like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know it (well enough). |
| 2. How I Met Your Mother | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I don't like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know it (well enough). |
| 3. Modern Family | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I don't like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know it (well enough). |
| 4. The Simpsons | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I don't like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know it (well enough). |
| 5. IT Crowd | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I don't like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know it (well enough). |
| 6. Miranda | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I don't like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know it (well enough). |
| 7. Sherlock | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I know it and I don't like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know it (well enough). |

Write at maximum two other English-speaking TV series that you like.

Appendix 9 Lesson 1: Sentence stress

This appendix includes a worksheet, answers to the exercises and a list of sources used while designing the lesson.

HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER – SPOILER ALERT (S03E08)

You are going to watch the How I Met Your Mother TV series. In this episode, Ted is excited to introduce his new girlfriend, Cathy, to his friends. However, they aren't nearly as enthusiastic about her as Ted is...



1 Work in pairs. Discuss the following questions:

- a What does the saying *Love is blind* mean?
- b Do you agree with the saying?
- c Have you or your friends ever been blinded by love? What happened?

KEY WORDS

2 Read the sentences (1-5). The underlined words are used in the excerpt. First guess the meaning of the words. Then match the words with their definitions (a-e).

- 1 Parachuting will give you the rush of a lifetime! It's great. You should definitely try it.
- 2 Her experience of divorce shattered her illusions about love.
- 3 If we have a dog, we get one at the pound.
- 4 She choked to death on a fish bone.
- 5 During the emergency many people volunteered to work through the weekend.

- a stop breathing because something (e.g. food) is blocking your throat
- b to offer to do something that you do not have to do, often without getting paid for it
- c destroy something completely, especially somebody's feelings, hopes or beliefs
- d a sudden feeling of extreme pleasure or excitement
- e a place where pets that are lost or not wanted are kept

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

3 Watch the excerpt from the TV series. *Why don't Ted's friends like Cathy?*

4 Ted doesn't know what is so unpleasant about Cathy. What are his possible explanations? Watch the excerpt again and decide whether the following statements are true or false.

- | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|-----|
| a | Cathy doesn't believe in UFOs. | T/F |
| b | Cathy is too attractive. | T/F |
| c | Cathy used to be a man. | T/F |
| d | Cathy had sex with her teacher. | T/F |
| e | Cathy enjoys killing dogs. | T/F |
| f | Cathy doesn't cook very well. | T/F |

LISTENING SKILLS

5 Stressed words are the most important in spoken English because they carry the most meaning. Each speaker stresses the words he, or she, feels are necessary to get his, or her, message across.

Which words do you think Cathy stresses in the following excerpts? Underline them.

- a** One time, in the tenth grade, as a joke, I told everyone that my English teacher had sex with me. He's still in jail.
- b** So I volunteer at the pound. You can't imagine the rush you get from killing an unwanted puppy. I make bracelets out of the collars.
- c** I bet he's going to the urinal. Yeah. I remember when I had a penis.

Listen and check your answers.

Listen again and repeat the sentences after the speaker, imitating the speakers' pronunciation.

6 Choose the correct alternative to complete the advice.

AUTHENTIC LISTENING SKILLS: SENTENCE STRESS

When you listen to authentic speech, you may not hear and understand every word. Generally, you hear the important or *content* (*main verbs, adverbs, nouns, adjectives*) / *grammatical* (*auxiliary verbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, articles*) words more clearly because they are stressed. Try to construct the meaning from these words.

ANSWERS

1: students' own answers

2: 1d 2c 3e 4a 5b

3: Cathy is too talkative.

4: aF bF cT dF (Cathy only joked about it.) eT fF

5: **a** *One time, in the tenth grade, as a joke, I told everyone that my English teacher had sex with me. He's still in jail.*

b *So I volunteer at the pound. You can't imagine the rush you get from killing an unwanted puppy. I make bracelets out of the collars.*

c *I bet he's going to the urinal. Yeah. I remember when I had a penis.*

6: content (main verbs, adverbs, noun, adjectives)

SOURCES

- The photo and the recordings were extracted from the episode “Spoiler Alert” (S03E08), *How I Met Your Mother* TV series.
(Bays, C., Kelly, J., Lloyd, S., Thomas, C. (writers), & Fryman, P. (director). (2007). Spoiler Alert. [Television series episode]. In 20th Century Fox Television, Bays Thomas Productions (producers), *How I Met Your Mother*.)
- The example sentences and definitions in ex. 2 were taken from Oxford and Cambridge online dictionaries.
(<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>;
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/essential-british-english/>)
- The task type, the rules and the instructions in ex. 5 are adapted from the *Real Lives, Real Listening Advanced* course book.
(Thorn, S. (2013). *Real Lives, Real Listening: Advanced B2-C1* (pp. 23). London: HarperCollins Publishers.)
- The advice in ex. 6 is copied from *Keynote Intermediate Students' Book*.
(Dummet, P., Stephenson, H., & Lansford, L. (2016). *Keynote Intermediate with DVD-ROM* (pp. 17). UK: National Geographic Learning.)

Appendix 10 Lesson 1 and 2: Video transcript

TRANSCRIPT

Narrator Kids, the early bloom of a romance is a wonderful thing. You meet someone, you have a connection, and that person becomes sheer perfection in your eyes. You just can't find anything wrong with them. And you can't wait to tell the world about it.

Barney She convinced you to go jogging? Wow, you really want to get in this girl's pants.

Ted I'm telling you, you guys are *gonna* love her. Lily, she knows all about art. Marshall, she's open to the existence of UFOs. Barney, she's hot. Robin, she's not hotter than you.

Barney Like her already.

Robin How not hotter?

Narrator So we all went out to dinner, and I couldn't wait to see if my friends were as crazy about Cathy as I was.

Ted So, what's everyone getting?

Cathy Well, I can't decide. Which sounds better, chicken or lasagna?

Robin Lasagna! Just get the lasagna!

Cathy Oh. You guys just got a new place. How many bedrooms is it?

Lily Two! It's two bedrooms!

Ted Okay! Let's hear it. What's wrong with Cathy?

Barney Are you kidding me, Ted? She's got a

Lily Wait! You don't notice it?

Ted Notice what?

Lily Oh, he doesn't see it. If we point it out, we're *gonna* ruin her for him. As his friends, we'll just keep him in the dark.

Barney You're right. She's great, man.

Robin She's a keeper. Just keep her somewhere else.

Ted So, I just got off the phone with Cathy. God, you guys are so right. I totally hear it now. See it now? Smell it? What is it?! I left the table for two minutes. What could she've possibly done in that time that was so horrible? Was it ...
I'll be back in one second.

Cathy One time, in the tenth grade, as a joke, I told everyone that my English teacher had sex with me. He's still in jail.

Ted Or maybe... I'll be back in a second.

Cathy So I volunteer at the pound.

Lily Oh, isn't that nice?

Cathy Yeah. You can't imagine the rush you get from killing an unwanted puppy. I make bracelets out of the collars.

Ted Or I'll be back in one second.

Cathy I bet he's going to the urinal. Yeah. I remember when I had a penis.

Robin It wasn't anything she did while you were in the bathroom. It's just the way she is.

Ted I don't get it. If it's so obvious and you guys all see it, how come I don't?

Lily '*Cause* we're not trying to have sex with her.

Marshall Brother, you're driving the "I *wanna* have sex with her" truck, and it's got a huge blind spot.

Ted That's ridiculous.
Just tell me what the hell is wrong with her already.

Marshall Okay. You *wanna* to know?

Ted Yes.

Marshall You *wanna* shatter this beautiful illusion you've created for yourself?

Ted Fine.

Marshall Here it is. Cathy talks a lot.

Ted Oh, come on. That's not true.

Robin Ted. Really, really think about that dinner we all just had together.

Ted And I did. ...So, what's everyone getting?

Cathy Well, I can't decide. Which sounds better, chicken or lasagna? I like chicken. I like lasagna. I like them both, but I really like pork. A lot of people don't eat pork, and maybe it's because of that movie Babe or something. ... But that was funny. He was a talking pig and he was like "Bah, Ram, Ewe!" What-what if there was a sorority, "Bah, Ram, Ewe?" I'd totally rush it.... And so I named him Dr. Seuss! - Lorax is a funny word.

Robin Lasagna! Just get the lasagna!

Cathy Oh, you guys just got a new place. How many bedrooms is it? I would love to have an extra bedroom, because I would put a Stairmaster in there. But you guys should get a convertible sofa. Or a futon. Futons are great. Or what about one of those Murphy beds? Who invented the Murphy bed? Was it a guy named Murphy? Oh, my God. Do you guys remember that show Murphy Brown? That was a funny show. She had a new assistant every episode... and it was like half an hour before I realized he wasn't even on the phone anymore! Isn't that hysterical?

Lily Two! It's two bedrooms!

Cathy Hey, do you guys like cannolis? Because I know this place and it's in the South Bronx and you wouldn't expect it, but they have the best cannolis in town.

Narrator And just like that, the illusion was shattered.

Ted She just never shuts up, does she?

Robin She didn't stop to swallow her food. I was scared for her. I didn't want her to choke. At first.

The transcript was adapted from:

How I Met Your Mother Episode Script: Spoiler Alert [Database record]. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/view_episode_scripts.php?tv-show=how-i-met-your-mother&episode=s03e08

Appendix 11 Lesson 2: Weak forms

This appendix includes an original and an altered worksheet, answers to the exercises and a list of sources used while designing the lesson.

(original worksheet)

- 1 Look at the following sentence. Which words do you think the speaker stresses? Underline them.

Marshall, she's open to the existence of UFOs.

Listen and check.

Listen again. What happens to the unstressed words?

- 2 Choose the correct alternatives to complete the rules.

AUTHENTIC LISTENING SKILLS: WEAK FORMS

When you listen to authentic speech, the important words that carry the meaning are stressed. The other words are unstressed. Generally, the unstressed words are the *content* / *grammatical* words which hold the *content* / *grammatical* words together.

A lot of *content* / *grammatical* words, when they are unstressed, are pronounced in their weak forms. The most common weak forms are prepositions (to, of, from); auxiliary verbs (are, was); conjunctions (and, but); and articles (a, the). In connected speech these words sound very different than their dictionary form. Most of them are pronounced using the schwa sound /ə/. In some cases, initial or final sounds may be dropped completely (e.g. "h" in "her" /ər/, or "d" in "and" /ən/).

- 3 Listen to these excerpts and fill in the missing grammatical/function words. Because this is a listening training exercise, don't try to predict the answers before you listen.

- a You just can't find anything wrong _____ .
- b Robin, she's not hotter _____ you.
- c I'm telling you, you guys _____ gonna love _____.
- d So we all went out to dinner, _____ I couldn't wait to see if my friends _____ crazy about Cathy as I was.
- e As his friends, we'll just keep _____ in the dark.
- f What could she've possibly done in that time _____ so horrible.
- g You wanna shatter this beautiful illusion you've created _____ yourself?
- h I was scared for her. I didn't want _____ choke.

Listen again. How has the pronunciation of these words changed from how they sound in isolation?

Now listen again and repeat the sentences after the speaker, imitating the speaker's pronunciation.

4 Watch the whole story again. Notice stressed words and weak forms.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

5 Discuss in groups of four.

Should friends point out to you the negative traits of your new love? Why / why not?

(altered worksheet)

- 1 Look at the following sentence. Which words do you think the speaker stresses? Underline them.

Marshall, she's open to the existence of UFOs.

Listen and check.

Listen again. What happens to the unstressed words?

- 2 Listen to these sentences. Some unstressed words are underlined. Focus on the pronunciation of these examples. How has the pronunciation of these words changed from how they sound in isolation?

a You just can't find anything wrong with them.

b Robin, she's not hotter than you.

c I'm telling you, you guys are gonna love her.

- 3 Choose the correct alternatives to complete the rules.

AUTHENTIC LISTENING SKILLS: WEAK FORMS

When you listen to authentic speech, the important words that carry the meaning are stressed. The other words are unstressed. Generally, the unstressed words are the *content / grammatical* words which hold the *content / grammatical* words together.

A lot of *content / grammatical* words, when they are unstressed, are pronounced in their weak forms. The most common weak forms are prepositions (to, of, from); auxiliary verbs (are, was); conjunctions (and, but); and articles (a, the). In connected speech these words sound very different than their dictionary form. Most of them are pronounced using the schwa sound /ə/. In some cases, initial or final sounds may be dropped completely (e.g. "h" in "her" /ər/, or "d" in "and" /ən/).

- 4 Listen to these excerpts and fill in the missing grammatical/function words. Because this is a listening training exercise, don't try to predict the answers before you listen.

a So we all went out to dinner, _____ I couldn't wait to see if my friends _____
crazy about Cathy as I was.

b As his friends, we'll just keep _____ in the dark.

c What could she've possibly done in that time _____ so horrible.

d You *wanna* shatter this beautiful illusion you've created _____ yourself?

e I was scared for her. I didn't want _____ choke.

Now listen again and repeat the sentences after the speaker, imitating the speaker's pronunciation.

5 Watch the whole story again. Notice stressed words and weak forms.

6 Discuss in groups of four.

Should friends point out to you the negative traits of your new love? Why / why not?

ANSWERS (to the altered worksheet)

1: Marshall, she's open to the existence of UFOs.

The unstressed words are pronounced faster and their vowel quality is reduced: *she's* /ʃɪz/, *to* /tə/, *the* /ðɪ/, and *of* /əv/.

2: **a** *them* is in isolation pronounced as /ðem/, in this sentence the initial /ð/ sound is linked with the final sound /ð/ of the previous word *with* and its full vowel /e/ is reduced to schwa /ə/ so that the two words *with them* are pronounced as /wɪðəm/

b *than* is in isolation pronounced as /ðæn/, in this sentence its full vowel is reduced to schwa /ə/ so that the word is pronounced as /ðən/

c *are* is in isolation pronounced as /ɑ:r/ (in American English), in this sentence its full vowel is reduced to schwa /ə/ so that the word is pronounced /ər/

her is in isolation pronounced as /hɜ:r/ (in American English), in this sentence its initial sound /h/ is dropped and its full vowel is reduced to schwa /ə/ so that the word is pronounced as /ər/

3: grammatical, content, grammatical

4: **a** and /ən/, were /wɛr/, as /əz/

b him /ɪm/

c that /ðə/, was /wɛz/

d for /fɔr/

e her /hɛr/, to /tə/

6: students' own answers

SOURCES

- The recordings were extracted from the episode “Spoiler Alert” (S03E08), *How I Met Your Mother* TV series.
(Bays, C., Kelly, J., Lloyd, S., Thomas, C. (writers), & Fryman, P. (director). (2007). Spoiler Alert. [Television series episode]. In 20th Century Fox Television, Bays Thomas Productions (producers), *How I Met Your Mother*.)
- The text in ex. 2 is adapted from *Keynote Intermediate Students’ Book*.
Dummet, P., Stephenson, H., & Lansford, L. (2016). *Keynote Intermediate with DVD-ROM* (pp. 19, 75). UK: National Geographic Learning.)
- The task type and the instructions in ex. 4 are adapted from the *Real Lives, Real Listening Advanced* course book.
(Thorn, S. (2013). *Real Lives, Real Listening: Advanced B2-C1* (pp. 21). London: HarperCollins Publishers.)

Appendix 12 Lesson 3: Rhythm

This appendix includes a worksheet, answers to the exercises and a list of sources used while designing the lesson.

“Poetry is unique in its ability to speak across time, space and culture, to reach directly the hearts of people everywhere.” (Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General)



WORLD POETRY DAY

21st March

World Poetry Day was adopted as 21 March by UNESCO in 1999.

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the following questions.

- a What do you like and dislike about poetry?
- b When was the last time you read a poem? What was it about? Did you like it? Why (not)?
- c Who is your favourite poet? Why?
- d Have you ever written a poem? What was difficult/easy about it?

LIMERICKS

- 2 A limerick is a short, funny rhyming poem that tells a story. People write limericks, or read them out loud, to make others laugh.

Listen to and read the following limericks. They were written in the 19th century by Edward Lear, a famous limerick writer. Which one do you find more amusing? Why?

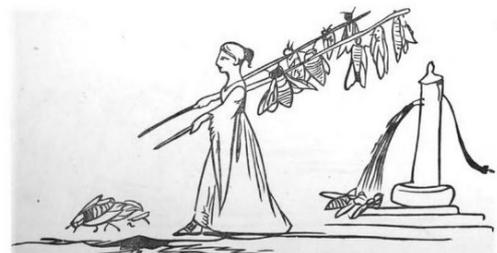
a)

There was an Old Man, who said “Well!
will *nobody* answer this bell?
I have pulled day and night,
till my hair has grown white,
But nobody answers this bell!”



b)

There was a Young Lady of Troy,
whom several large flies did annoy;
Some she killed with a thump,
some she drowned at the pump,
And some she took with her to Troy.



LIMERICKS AND RHYTHM

- 3 A limerick is well known for its rhythm pattern. It means that stressed and unstressed syllables take turns at regular intervals. When pronounced correctly, a limerick then sounds almost like a song.

Listen to the first limerick again. Notice the rhythm. The stressed syllables are those in CAPITAL letters.

a)

There **WAS** an Old **MAN**, who said “**WELL!**
will **NO***body* **AN**swer this **BELL?**
I have **PULLED** day and **NIGHT**,
till my **HAIR** has grown **WHITE**,
But **NO**body **AN**swers this **BELL!**”

Now practise reading the limerick. Don't forget to stress the correct words.

- 4 **Listen to the second limerick again. Underline the stressed words.**

b)

There was a Young Lady of Troy,
whom several large flies did annoy;
Some she killed with a thump,
some she drowned at the pump,
And some she took with her to Troy.

Practise reading the limerick. Don't forget to stress the correct words.

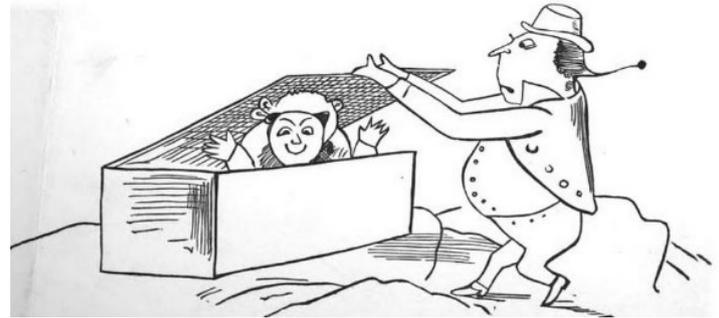
- 5 **Now study the two limericks and answer the following questions:**

- a How many syllables are there in lines 1, 2 and 5? How many of them are stressed?
- b How many syllables are there in lines 3 and 4? How many of them are stressed?
- c How many unstressed syllables are between the stressed syllables? How are they pronounced?

6 Read limerick c). Predict what the stressed syllables are. Listen and check.

c

There was an Old Man on some rocks,
who shut his wife up in a box,
When she said “Let me out,”
he exclaimed “Without doubt,
You will pass all your life in that box.”



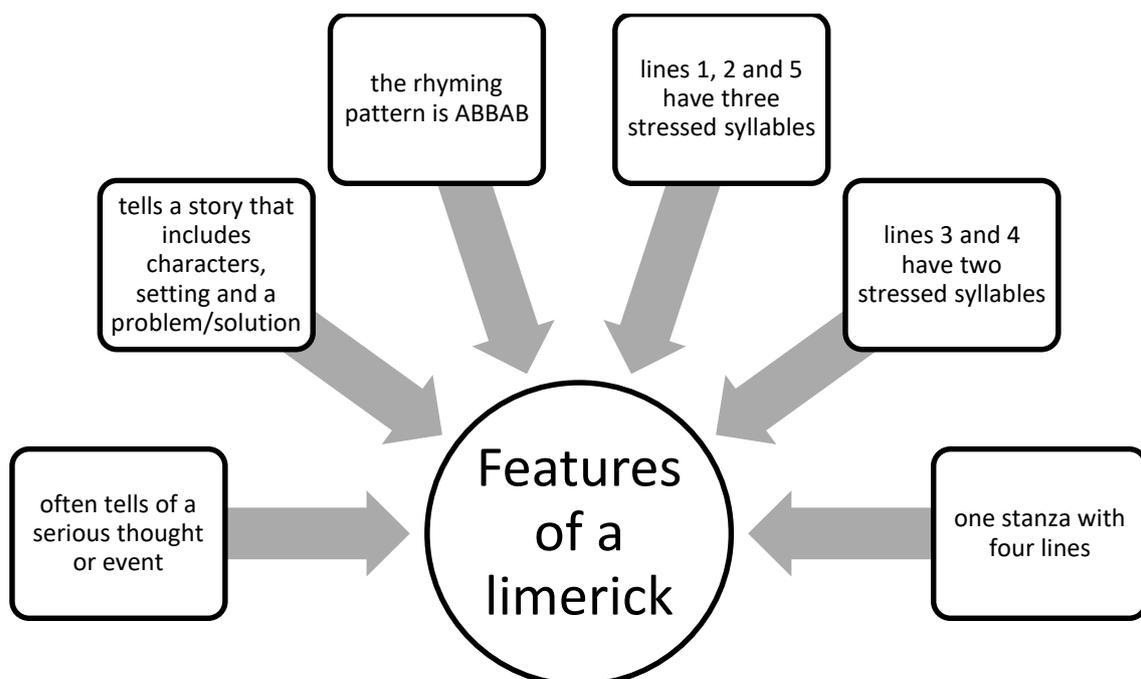
Practise reading the limerick in pairs. Don't forget to stress the correct words.

REMEMBER

Rhythm is not so regular in ordinary English. However, stressed and unstressed words do take turns. Unstressed words are then often dramatically reduced.

FEATURES OF A LIMERICK

7 Look at the figure below presenting key features of a limerick. Which features are incorrect? Find three mistakes and correct them.



ANSWERS

1: students' own answers

2: students' own answers

4: *There **WAS** a Young **LADy** of **TROY**,
whom **SE**veral large **FLIES** did a**NNOY**;
Some she **KILLED** with a **THUMP**,
some she **DROWNED** at the **PUMP**,
And **SOME** she took **WITH** her to **TROY**.*

5: a 8 syllables in total, 3 syllables are stressed

b 6 syllables total, 2 syllables are stressed

c 1-2 unstressed syllables; the syllables may be reduced: the sounds may be shortened, the vowel quality may be reduced to schwa /ə/, some sounds may be dropped completely (especially final consonants)

6: *There **WAS** an Old **MAN** on some **ROCKS**,
who **SHUT** his wife **UP** in a **BOX**,
When she **SAID** "Let me **OUT**,"
he ex**CLAIMED** "Without **DOUBT**,
You will **PASS** all your **LIFE** in that **BOX**."*

7: a often tells of a *serious* funny thought or event

b the rhyming pattern is ~~ABBAB~~ AABBA

c one stanza with ~~four~~ five lines

8: students' own answers

9: students' own answers

SOURCES

- The quotation was taken from the *United Nations* website.
(Bokova, I. (n.d.). UNESCO Director-General's Message. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/events/poetryday/sgmessage.shtml>)
- The opening picture was taken from the *Moat Community College* website.
(World Poetry Day 21st March [News article]. (n.d.). Retrieved March, 3, 2017 from <http://moat.leicester.sch.uk/world-poetry-day-21st-march/>)
- The limericks and their illustrations were taken from *A Book of Nonsense*
(Lear, E. (2002). *A Book of Nonsense* (2nd ed.). NY: Routledge.)
- The features of a limerick were taken from *Limericks*.
(Lear, E. (2012). *Limericks*. Fuerst, J. B. (Ed.). NY: Benchmark Education Company.)

Appendix 13 Lesson 4: Word segmentation and weak forms

This appendix includes a worksheet, answers to the exercises and a list of sources used while designing the lesson.

HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER – SPOILER ALERT (S03E08)

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the following questions:

- a Do you recognise the people in the photo? Describe them.
- b Who is your favourite and least favourite character? Why?



KEY WORDS

2 Read the sentences (1-5). The underlined words are used in the excerpt. First guess the meaning of the words. Then match the words with their definitions (a-e).

- 1 Your puppy's just pooped right outside my front door!
- 2 A lot of lawyers say that taking the Bar was one of the worst experiences in their life.
- 3 It's a real drag that we can't use our mobile phones at school!
- 4 The mail carrier left this package with me because you were out.
- 5 What time is the next bus due?

- a expected to happen, arrive, etc. at a particular time
- b (US informal) to pass solid waste from the body
- c a person whose job is to collect and deliver letters, etc. that are sent by post
- d an exam which a law school graduate must take to be able to practice law
- e (informal) something that is annoying

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

3 You are going to watch another part of the How I Met Your Mother TV series. In this episode, Marshall is about to find out if he passed an important exam so that he can become a lawyer.

What do you think will happen in the excerpt?

- a Ted accidentally mistakes Marshall's password for a grocery list and throws it away.
- b Marshall can't get his results because he lost his password.
- c The password is not delivered to Marshall because he offended the mail carrier.
- d Marshall passed the exam, but Barney plays a joke on him making Marshall think he actually failed.

Watch the excerpt and check if your guess is correct.

4 Watch the excerpt again and answer the following questions.

- a How successful are people when taking the Bar?

- b Why is Marshall annoyed with Barney?

- c How will Marshall eventually get his results?

LISTENING SKILLS

5 Work with a partner. First listen to the excerpts from the episode and write down how many words there are missing in each item.

Then listen again and write down the words you hear.

a (____ words) _____
till the results come in the regular mail that could be weeks from now if ever.

b (____ words) Our mail carrier hates me ever since ... _____

Now listen again and repeat the sentences after the speaker, imitating the speaker's pronunciation.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

6 Work in pairs. Discuss the following questions.

- a How do you behave when you are waiting for your exam results?
- b Have you ever lost an important password? How did you solve the situation?

ANSWERS

1: students' own answers

2: 1b 2d 3e 4c 5a

3: b

4: a half the people pass

b Barney wants to use a computer to show Marshall a funny video while Marshall needs the computer to get the results of an important exam.

c Marshall has to wait for the results to come in the regular mail.

5: a six words; *"I'm gonna have to wait..."*

b eight words; *"...I asked her when the baby was due."*

6: students' own answers

SOURCES

- The photo and the recordings were extracted from the episode “Spoiler Alert” (S03E08), *How I Met Your Mother* TV series.
(Bays, C., Kelly, J., Lloyd, S., Thomas, C. (writers), & Fryman, P. (director). (2007). Spoiler Alert. [Television series episode]. In 20th Century Fox Television, Bays Thomas Productions (producers), *How I Met Your Mother*.)
- The example sentences and definitions in ex. 2 were taken from Oxford and Cambridge online dictionaries.
(<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>;
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/essential-british-english/>)
- The task type, and the instructions in ex. 5 were adapted from the *Real Lives, Real Listening Advanced* course book.
(Thorn, S. (2013). *Real Lives, Real Listening: Advanced B2-C1* (pp. 19). London: HarperCollins Publishers.)

Appendix 14 Lesson 4 and 5: Video transcript

TRANSCRIPT

Ted Marshall, what is everyone's problem with Cathy?

Marshall Oh, she's a total nightmare, Ted, but can we talk about this later? I'm a minute away from finding out if I'm *gonna* be a lawyer or not.

Narrator You see, kids, during the summer, Marshall had taken the New York Bar exam. His years of school, his countless hours of study, had finally culminated in this gruelling two-day ordeal.

Proctor: And begin.

Narrator: The pressure of it was enormous. Every year, people taking the bar simply cracked... But Marshall had made it through.

Proctor: And time.
Time's up.

Marshall: Right.

Proctor: Time... Sir.

Marshall: I know.

Proctor: Your time is...

Marshall: I know it is.

Proctor: Give me...

Narrator: Now, months later, the results of that exam were scheduled to post online at 10:00, and it was 9:59.

Marshall. Damn, they're not up yet.

Lily: Oh, don't worry, baby. I'm sure you rocked it.

Robin: I mean, how many people fail the bar?

Marshall: Half.

Robin: Oh my God, half? Only half the people pass?
I mean, half the people pass. That's fantastic. Go, Marshall!

Barney: Oh, hey, can I jump on there? I want to show you something awesome.

Marshall: What? No, no. Bar results. My future.

Barney: Trust me. You need to see this.

Marshall: What is so important that I need to see it right now?

Barney: It's a video of a dog, pooping on a baby.

Marshall: How do I need to see that? Why would I want to see that? In what possible way could subjecting my eyes and my brain to something that disgusting enrich my life?

Barney: It's a dog pooping on a baby!

Marshall: Get away from my computer.

Barney: Okay, just do a quick Google search for "caca spaniel."

Marshall: The results are in.

Lily: Whoo. What's it say?

Marshall: "Input password."

Everyone: Input the password.

Marshall: Okay, they assigned it to me when I took the test. It's *gotta* be around here somewhere. Here. Here-here-here-here. Jelly beans, fluffernutter, Gummi Bears, gingersnap.... This is a grocery list.

Robin: For who? A witch building a house in the forest?

Marshall: Sugar helps me study.

Barney: This is like the shopping a ten-year-old does when his parents leave him alone for the weekend.

Lily: What parent leaves a ten-year-old alone for the weekend?

Barney: And your mum was perfect!

Marshall: I can't find my password!

Ted: Okay, just can't you let them know that you lost it and they'll email it to you or something?

Marshall: No! They won't let me do that. I'm *gonna* have to wait till the results come in the regular mail. That could be weeks from now, if ever! Our mail carrier hates me ever since I asked her when the baby was due.

Robin: She wasn't pregnant?

Ted: No, he was not.

Robin: Okay, well, that's a drag, but the results will come eventually. Just try

to keep it off your mind until then.

Marshall: Hey, Brad. Oh, congratulations, man. I'm, uh, I'm not sure yet. I lost my password.

That's great, Cara. I don't know yet. I lost my password.

I don't know how I lost it! This stuff happens. Oh, oh, you're one to talk. You misplace stuff all the time! I'm sorry, I'm sure the nurses are stealing your medicine, grandma...

The transcript was adapted from:

How I Met Your Mother Episode Script: Spoiler Alert [Database record]. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/view_episode_scripts.php?tv-show=how-i-met-your-mother&episode=s03e08

Appendix 15 Lesson 5: Consonant-to-vowel linking

This appendix includes a worksheet, answers to the exercises and a list of sources used while designing the lesson.

HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER – SPOILER ALERT (S03E08)



CONSONANT TO VOWEL LINKING

Linking occurs when the consonant at the end of one word runs into the vowel at the start of the next word. It is very common in informal spoken English, but less so in more formal English, such as speeches or lectures.

1 Mark where you expect linking to occur in these excerpts from the interview. Then listen and check your answers.

- a It's a video of a dog pooping on a baby.
- b The results are in.
- c What parent leaves a ten-year-old alone for the weekend?
- d Just try to keep it off your mind until then.

Now repeat the speaker, imitating the speaker's pronunciation.

2 Listen to the following excerpt. What happens to the pronunciation of the underlined parts?

I don't know how I lost it! This stuff happens! Oh..oh! You're one to talk! You misplace stuff all the time... I'm sorry, I'm sure the nurses are stealing your medicine, grandma.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

3 Watch the ending of the story and answer the following questions.

- c Why are the friends arguing?

- d How did Marshall eventually get his password?

- e Did Marshall pass the bar? How did the results influence the group of friends?

4 Match the annoying habits to the people. One person may have more bad habits. Watch the video again and check your answers.

- | | |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Barney | a eating too loudly |
| 2 Lily | b speaking in a high-pitched voice |
| 3 Marshall | c singing instead of talking |
| 4 Robin | d overusing one word |
| 5 Ted | e correcting people |
| | f repeating weak (not funny/cool) sentences |
| | g not taking notice of what is happening around him/her |

LISTENING SKILLS

- 5 A dictation computer was used to get the script of the clip. The dictation computer writes down exactly what it hears. Sometimes, however, there is more than one possibility and the computer makes a mistake and distinguishes the words incorrectly.

Work in pairs. Find the mistakes in the underlined passages. If you have difficulty finding the mistakes, use the context to help you.

- | | |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ted | Hey. |
| Robin | Hi. |
| Ted | You guys <i>wanna</i> a drink? |
| Robin | I'll just have a water. |
| Ted | Mm, technically, water is a drink. |
| Robin | Really, professor? You drink it? Is that how water works? Because I was just <i>gonna smear</i> it on my skin and hope I absorbed it. |

Barney Or you could, you know, pour it over your shirt.

Ted What's with you?

Robin ^a **You're always score acting people.**

Barney You totally do that!

Marshall That's absolutely right.

Robin Right? I never noticed it before, and now it's literally driving me crazy.

Ted Figuratively. Ok, maybe so, but it's no worse than you using the word "literally" in every other sentence.

Barney Don't they teach vocabulary in Canada?

Marshall They literally don't. They literally don't.

Robin Shut up, Marshall. ^b **That's nothing can paired to your thing of singing what you do all the time.**

Marshall What?
(Marshall singing)

Barney Those lines are so sloppy.

Marshall Oh, come on! What about you, Barney? Okay, you...always

Barney Interesting, interesting, everyone has annoying habits but me.

Marshall Oh, got it. Okay, you sometimes talk in a weird high-pitched voice.

Robin And you're constantly using **lame** catchphrases.

Ted ^c **And sometimes you space out and don't even pay it tension to what we're talking about.**

Barney I'm sorry. What? Oh, see? You can't think of anything 'cause I'm awesome!

Robin All three, right there.

Ted Well, technically, "awesome" wouldn't be a catchphrase. If anything, it's more of a catchword.

Robin I literally *wanna* rip your head off.

Ted You mean "figuratively"!

Robin No, I literally mean "literally". Literally, literally, literally.

Lily Oh, my God, Lily, what are you eating – **gravel**?

Marshall Oh, I know, right? It sounds like **cufflinks** going up a vacuum cleaner.

Lily ^d **Well, why don't you Sinbad it?**

Marshall ^e **Because I don't Sinbad everything I do.**

Robin No, no, sometimes you just sing nonsense sentences like a **stroke victim**, and what's worse, they're catchy. Apple, orchard, banana...

Everyone ...cat, dance, 8663.

Robin See? We know that one because once you sang that for like three hours.
What the hell is that?

Marshall That's my password. AOBCD8663.
...

Marshall I'm a lawyer.

Narrator **f Unjust like that we stopped fighting and celebrated Marshall's success.** You see, when someone's bad habits are pointed out to you, it's hard to ignore them.

Marshall I'm a lawyer now 'cause I passed the bar, I'm imposing Marshall law on this champagne.

Robin Oh, my God, are you literally **on cloud nine** right now?

Lily **g Baby, you never have to take the bargain!**

Ted Actually, if he practices law in another state, he will have to, but New York, man! It's a great state to practice law in!

Barney Law suit up!

Narrator But if you love them enough, those bad habits are easy to forget.

Glossary	
cufflinks	small decorative buttons used to fasten shirt cuffs
gravel	small stones, often used to make the surface of paths or roads
lame	(informal) not interesting, exciting, or fashionable
on cloud nine	(informal) extremely happy
smear	to spread a liquid or a thick substance over a surface
stroke victim	a person who suffered a sudden serious illness when a blood tube in the brain is blocked

PERSONAL RESPONSE

6 Write 80-100 words answering the following questions:

- a Think about your friends or family. Which of their bad habits do you find annoying?
- b What bad habits do you have that might be annoying?

ANSWERS

1: **a** *It's a video of a dog pooping on a baby.*

b *The results are in.*

c *What parent leaves a ten-year-old alone for the weekend?*

d *Just try to keep it off your mind until then.*

2: the two identical sounds are pronounced as one lengthened sound

This stuff... /ðɪstʌf/

...misplace stuff... /mɪspleɪstʌf/

3: **a** They realised each other's bad habits and how these annoy them.

b Robin reminded him of it when she complained about Marshall once singing a nonsensical set of words and numbers.

c Yes, he did. The friends then stopped arguing to celebrate Marshall's success.

4: 1b, f, and g; 2a; 3c; 4d; 5e

5: **a** *You're always ~~score~~ **acting** **correcting** people.*

b *That's nothing ~~can paired~~ **compared** to your thing of singing what you do all the time.*

c *And sometimes you space out and don't even pay ~~it tension~~ **attention** to what we're talking about.*

d *Well, why don't you ~~Sinbad~~ **sing about** it?*

e *Because I don't ~~Sinbad~~ **sing about** everything I do.*

f *~~Unjust~~ **And just** like that we stopped fighting and celebrated Marshall's success.*

g *Baby, you never have to take the ~~bargain~~ **bar** again!*

6: students' own answers

SOURCES

- The photo and the recordings were extracted from the episode “Spoiler Alert” (S03E08), *How I Met Your Mother* TV series.
(Bays, C., Kelly, J., Lloyd, S., Thomas, C. (writers), & Fryman, P. (director). (2007). Spoiler Alert. [Television series episode]. In 20th Century Fox Television, Bays Thomas Productions (producers), *How I Met Your Mother*.)
- The task type, the rules and the instructions in ex. 1 are adopted from the *Real Lives, Real Listening Advanced* course book.
(Thorn, S. (2013). *Real Lives, Real Listening: Advanced B2-C1* (pp. 21). London: HarperCollins Publishers.)
- The task type in ex. 5 was adapted from *Pronunciation Games*
(Hancock, M. (1996). *Pronunciation Games* (pp. 78-81). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

Appendix 16 Lesson 5: Video transcript

TRANSCRIPT

Ted Hey.

Robin Hi.

Ted You guys *wanna* a drink?

Robin I'll just have a water.

Ted Mm, technically, water is a drink.

Robin Really, professor? You drink it? Is that how water works? Because I was just *gonna* smear it on my skin and hope I absorbed it.

Barney Or you could, you know, pour it over your shirt.

Ted What's with you?

Robin You're always correcting people.

Barney You totally do that!

Marshall That's absolutely right.

Robin Right? I never noticed it before, and now it's literally driving me crazy.

Ted Figuratively. Ok, maybe so, but it's no worse than you using the word "literally" in every other sentence.

Barney Don't they teach vocabulary in Canada?

Marshall They literally don't. They literally don't.

Robin Shut up, Marshall. That's nothing compared to your thing of singing what you do all the time.

Marshall What?
Paying my bills using return address labels from a charity that I haven't given money to... Writing a check *'cause* now I feel guilty The Salvation Army does not fight fair.
Heading down to the basement today with my laundry and a roll of quarters.... But I'm back too soon *'cause* I left the detergent and the fabric softener.

Barney Those lines are so sloppy.

Marshall Oh, come on! What about you, Barney? Okay, you...always

Barney Interesting, interesting, everyone has annoying habits but me.

Marshall Oh, got it. Okay, you sometimes talk in a weird high-pitched voice.

Robin And you're constantly using lame catchphrases.

Ted And sometimes you space out and don't even pay attention to what we're talking about.

Barney I'm sorry. What? Oh, see? You can't think of anything 'cause I'm awesome!

Robin All three, right there.

Ted Well, technically, "awesome" wouldn't be a catchphrase. If anything, it's more of a catchword.

Robin I literally *wanna* rip your head off.

Ted You mean "figuratively"!

Robin No, I literally mean "literally". Literally, literally, literally.

Lily Oh, my God, Lily, what are you eating – gravel?

Marshall Oh, I know, right? It sounds like cufflinks going up a vacuum cleaner.

Lily Well, why don't you sing about it?

Marshall Because I don't sing about everything I do.

Robin No, no, sometimes you just sing nonsense sentences like a stroke victim, and what's worse, they're catchy. Apple, orchard, banana...

Everyone ...cat, dance, 8663.

Robin See? We know that one because once you sang that for like three hours. What the hell is that?

Marshall That's my password. AOB CD8663.

Lily Oh, Marshall.

Ted Awesome.

Barney There's another one. It's called "Golden Reliever," where this dog...

Lily Yeah, we can guess.

Marshall All right, guys, guys, guys, guys.
I'm a lawyer.

Narrator And just like that we stopped fighting and celebrated Marshall's success. You see, when someone's bad habits are pointed out to you, it's hard to ignore them.

Marshall I'm a lawyer now 'cause I passed the bar, I'm imposing Marshall law on this champagne.

Robin Oh, my God, are you literally on cloud nine right now?

Lily Baby, you never have to take the bar again!

Ted Actually, if he practices law in another state, he will have to, but New York, man! It's a great state to practice law in!

Barney Law suit up!

Narrator But if you love them enough, those bad habits are easy to forget.

The transcript was adapted from:

How I Met Your Mother Episode Script: Spoiler Alert [Database record]. (n.d). Retrieved from http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/view_episode_scripts.php?tv-show=how-i-met-your-mother&episode=s03e08

Appendix 17 Lesson 7: Coalescent assimilation

This appendix includes a worksheet, answers to the exercises and a list of sources used while designing the lesson.

MODERN FAMILY – TREEHOUSE (S03E07)

You are going to watch an excerpt from a popular American TV series *Modern Family*. In this episode Claire helps her daughter Haley with the homework.



1 Work in pairs. Discuss the following questions:

- a How often do your parents help you with homework?
- b When was the last time they helped you? What did they do? How useful was it?

KEY WORDS

2 Read the sentences (1-5). The underlined words are used in the excerpt and might be new for you. First guess the meaning of the words. Then match the words with their definitions (a-e).

- 1 Not speaking a foreign language was a major obstacle to her career.
- 2 A: Would you like some cheesecake? B: No, thanks. I'm lactose-intolerant.
- 3 I'm a terrible hoarder of junk. I hate throwing things away.
- 4 I got stuck – do you have any idea how to answer these questions?
- 5 Helen shielded her eyes from the bright light with her hand.

- a being unable to process substance in milk
- b to protect something or somebody from danger or damage
- c a situation, an event, etc. that makes it difficult for you to do or achieve something
- d to become unable to answer a question or understand something because it is too difficult
- e a person who collects and keeps large amounts of food, money, objects, etc., especially secretly

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

3 Watch the first part of the excerpt from the TV series. Answer the questions:

- a What is Haley's homework?

- b Why does Haley have problems with it?

- c Whom does Haley blame for having the problems? Why?

4 *What do you think will happen next?* Watch the next part of the video to check your guess.

LISTENING SKILLS

5 Listen to the beginning of the video again and fill in the missing words.

H: Hey mom! ^a _____ college essay question – and I really don't even know where to start.

C: OK, what's the question? Tell me.

H: "What's the biggest obstacle you ever had to overcome?" Didn't my 3rd grade teacher say I had like ADD or something?

C: Oh, no honey. She said you couldn't A-D-D ^b _____
_____ because she also knew you couldn't S-P-E-L-L.

H: Wait, slow down. Oh...

Compare your answers in pairs.

6 In connected speech, when two sounds meet they sometimes blend together and create a new sound. This also happens in the following excerpts. What sound is created in the underlined passages?

- a You're blaming me because I keptyou from getting hurt?
- b But did you ever consider there's a reason?
- c There's s your obstacle!

Now listen again and repeat the sentences after the speaker, imitating the speaker's pronunciation.

7 Here are two more examples. What will the pronunciation of the underlined passages be?

- a Wouldyou just tell me what's going on?
- b Hello, Haley. How was your day?

Listen and check.

ANSWERS

1: students' own answers

2: 1c 2a 3e 4d 5f

3: **a** Haley needs to write an essay "What's the biggest obstacle you've ever had to overcome?"

b Haley believes she's never had any obstacles to overcome.

c Haley blames her mom for shielding her from everything interesting and dangerous.

4: students' own answers

5: **a** *I'm trying to write this stupid...*

b *...and she put it that way...*

6: **a** *keptyou*: /t/ + /j/ = /tʃ/

b *didyou*: /d/ + /j/ = /dʒ/

c *there's your*: /s/ + /j/ = /ʃ/

7: **a** *wouldyou*: /d/ + /j/ = /dʒ/

b *wasyour*: /s/ + /j/ = /ʃ/

8: students' own answers

9: students' own answers

SOURCES

- The photo and the recordings are extracted from the episode “Treehouse” (S03E07), *Modern Family* TV series
(Levitan, S., Lloyd C. (writers), & Winer, J. (director). (2011). Treehouse. [Television series episode]. In 20th Century Fox Television, Levitan / Lloyd, Steven Levitan Productions (producers), *Modern Family*.)
- The example sentences and definitions in ex. 2 were taken from Oxford and Cambridge online dictionaries.
(<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>;
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/essential-british-english/>)

Appendix 18 Lesson 7: Video transcript

TRANSCRIPT

Claire Honey! What is all this?

Phil Hey!

Haley Hey mom! I'm trying to write this stupid college essay question – and I really don't even know where to start.

Claire OK, what's the question? Tell me.

Haley “What's the biggest obstacle you ever had to overcome?” Didn't my 3rd grade teacher say I had like ADD or something?

Claire Oh, no honey. She said you couldn't A-D-D and she put it that way because she also knew you couldn't S-P-E-L-L.

Haley Wait, slow down...oh!

Haley I can't do this.

Claire Why are you so frustrated?

Haley Because I've never had any obstacles to overcome.

Claire Oh, honey. That's not true.

Haley Really? Name one.

Claire Well...you're lactose-intolerant!

Haley Oh, “Dear college, Cheese makes me gassy. See you in September.”

Claire “Sweetie, you're not really starting your essays “Dear college,” are you?

Haley What difference does it make? I've lived a boring, sheltered pathetic life.

Claire I am sorry we have made things too easy and comfortable for you.

Haley Oh, you should be! It is all your fault. You have shielded me from everything interesting and dangerous!

Claire You are blaming me because I kept you from getting hurt?

Haley Gaby's mom's a hoarder. That essay practically writes itself.

Claire Maybe that's our fault. But did you ever consider there's a reason?

Haley What are you talking about?

Claire There's a reason why we were so easy on you.

Haley I don't understand.

Claire Oh, honey, you're old enough now.

Haley Old enough for what?

Claire The truth. Okay, come on. *Gotta* show you something. We're *gonna* go for a ride.

Haley Mom, just tell me. You are my mom, right?

Claire This is it.

Haley This is what?

Claire This. I – I can't do this. I can't get out of the car. I'm sorry. I'm too embarrassed.

Haley Would you just tell me what's going on?

Claire Okay. I – I – I want you to go read what's carved on that tree.

Haley Mom, you're freaking me out.

Claire Just do it. Do it, Haley!

Have fun getting home! There's your obstacle!

Haley What?! Are you kidding me?!

Haley What was that?

Claire Hello, Haley. How was your day?

Haley I had no money, no cell phone.

Claire You're welcome.

Haley What?!

Claire I listened to you. I stopped coddling you and look – you overcame an obstacle.

Haley Oh! Yeah! I did! I grew up normal despite my crazy mom!

Claire Well, that sounds like the beginning of a great essay. "Dear college..."

Oh, honey, if you get stuck, let me know, and I'll make you sleep out in the yard.

Haley You're psychotic!

Claire Use spell check!

The transcript was adapted from:

Modern Family Episode Script: Treehouse [Database record]. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/view_episode_scripts.php?tv-show=modern-family&episode=s03e07

Appendix 19 Lesson 8: Decoding skills practice

This appendix includes speaking cards, a picture of Sherlock and John, a worksheet, answers to the exercises and a list of sources used while designing the lesson.

What did you do at the weekend?	Would you rather live in a house or in a flat? Why?	Where did you go on holiday last summer?
What would you do if you won 3 million dollars?	When did you last go to the cinema? What did you see?	How did you learn to swim?
Would you rather play computer games or watch TV? Why?	Which famous person would you like to meet? Why?	your question _____ _____



SHERLOCK – A STUDY IN PINK (S01E01)

KEY WORDS

1. Read the sentences (1-5). The underlined words are used in the excerpt and might be new for you. First guess the meaning of the words. Then match the words with their definitions (a-e).

- 1 My dad doesn't approve of me leaving school this year.
- 2 I'll call you later on the landline. Be at home!
- 3 How could they walk out on their kids? Who's going to look after them now?!
- 4 The family kept telling her it's only in her head, but the test showed that her problems were more than merely psychosomatic.
- 5 The accident had left him with a slight limp.
- 6 We've already spent a fortune on our holiday to Italy. We can't afford another trip abroad this year.

- a a phone that is connected to the phone system by wires
- b to think that somebody/something is good, acceptable or suitable
- c to suddenly leave someone that you are having a relationship with and that you have a responsibility for
- d to be able to buy or do something because you have enough money or time
- e a way of walking slowly and with difficulty because of having an injured or painful leg or foot
- f (of an illness) caused by mental problems, such as stress and worry, rather than physical problems like infection or injury

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

2. Watch the video recording and answer the question *Why is John meeting Sherlock?*
3. Watch the second part of the video again. *What does Sherlock know about John?* Decide if the statements are true (T) or false (F).
- a John's job is to treat ill or injured soldiers.
 - b John was shot in Afghanistan.
 - c John's sister is lesbian.
 - d John has got a married brother.

LISTENING SKILLS

4. Listen to the second part of the recording and fill in the missing words in the transcript.

I know you're an Army doctor and ^a _____ _____ invalidated home from Afghanistan. I know you've got a brother who's worried about you, but you won't go ^b _____ _____ _____ help because you don't approve of him, possibly because he's an alcoholic, more likely because he recently walked out on his wife. And I know ^c _____ _____ therapist thinks your limp's psychosomatic, quite correctly, I'm afraid. That's enough to be going on with, ^d _____ _____ think? The name's Sherlock Holmes and the address is 221B Baker Street.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

5. Discuss the following questions in pairs:

- a What is John's first impression of Sherlock? Why?
- b What is your first impression of Sherlock? Why?

ANSWERS

1: 1b 2a 3c 4f 5e 6d

2: John meets Sherlock to see if they can become flatmates.

3: **a** T (John's an army doctor.)

b F (John was injured in Iraq.)

c F (Sherlock doesn't mention John's sister at all.)

d T (Sherlock states John's brother recently walked out on his wife.)

4: **a** *you've been*

b *to him for*

c *that your*

d *don't you*

5: students' own answers

SOURCES

- The photo was taken from the *SheKnows* website.
(Kaye, D. (2013). Sherlock Season 3 teaser is here! [Entertainment article]. Retrieved from <http://www.sheknows.com/entertainment/articles/1008755/sherlock-season-3-teaser-is-here>)
- The recordings were extracted from the episode “A Study In Pink” (S01E01), *Sherlock* TV series.
(Doyle, C. A. Sir, Gattis, M., Moffat, S. (writers), & McGuigan, P. (director). (2010). A Study in Pink. In BBC Wales, Hartwood Films, Masterpiece Theatre (producers), *Sherlock*.)
- The example sentences and definitions in ex. 2 were taken from Oxford and Cambridge online dictionaries.
(<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>;
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/essential-british-english/>)

Appendix 20 Lesson 8: Video transcript

TRANSCRIPT

John Bit different from my day.

Mike You've no idea!

Sherlock Mike, can I borrow your phone? There's no signal on mine.

Mike And what's wrong with the landline?

Sherlock I prefer to text.

Mike Sorry, it's in my coat.

John Er, here, use mine.

Sherlock Oh, thank you.

Mike This is an old friend of mine, John Watson.

Sherlock Afghanistan or Iraq?

John Sorry?

Sherlock Which was it, Afghanistan or Iraq?

John Afghanistan. Sorry, how did you?

Sherlock Ah, Molly, coffee, thank you. What happened to the lipstick?

Molly It wasn't working for me.

Sherlock Really? I thought it was a big improvement. Your mouth's too small now.

Molly OK.

Sherlock How do you feel about the violin?

John I'm sorry, what?

Sherlock I play the violin when I'm thinking and sometimes I don't talk for days on end. Would that bother you? Potential flatmates should know the worst about each other.

John You – you told him about me?

Mike Not a word.

John Then who said anything about flatmates?

Sherlock I did. Told Mike this morning that I must be a difficult man to find a flatmate for. Now here he is, just after lunch, with an old friend clearly just home from military service in Afghanistan. Wasn't

a difficult leap.

John How did you know about Afghanistan?

Sherlock Got my eye on a nice little place in central London. Together we ought to be able to afford it. We'll meet there tomorrow evening, seven o'clock. Sorry, got to dash. I think I left my riding crop in the mortuary.

John Is that it?

Sherlock Is that what?

John We've only just met and we're going to go and look at a flat?

Sherlock Problem?

John We don't know a thing about each other. I don't know where we're meeting. I don't even know your name.

Sherlock I know you're an army doctor and you've been invalided home from Afghanistan. I know you've got a brother who's worried about you, but you won't go to him for help because you don't approve of him, possibly because he's an alcoholic, more likely because he recently walked out on his wife. And I know that your therapist thinks your limp's psychosomatic, quite correctly, I'm afraid. That's enough to be going on with, don't you think? The name's Sherlock Holmes and the address is 221B Baker street.

The transcript was adapted from:

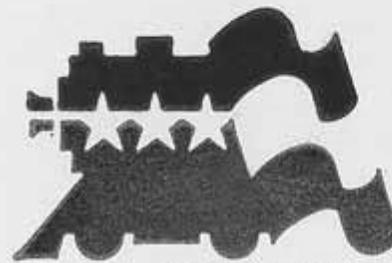
Sherlock Episode Script: A Study in Pink [Database record]. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/view_episode_scripts.php?tv-show=sherlock&episode=s01e01

Appendix 21 Lesson 9: Speculation

This appendix includes clue cards and explanatory notes, a worksheet, answers to the exercises and a list of the sources used while designing the lesson.



GOOD FOR ONE TRIP ABOARD



**AMERICAN
FREEDOM
TRAINSM**

POMONA, CALIFORNIA
POMONA FAIRGROUNDS

This ticket admits
one person only.

TUESDAY 30
DEC.

001087



ACT ONE

1.1.

A room. Evening.

KATH enters followed by SLOANE

KATH: This is my lounge.

SLOANE: Would I be able to use this room ?

KATH: You like it ?

SLOANE: Is it included ?

KATH: Oh, yes.

(Pause)

~~I never dreamed you were coming today. You~~
mustn't imagine it's always like this. ~~You come~~
too early. You ought to have rung up or something.
And then I'd've been prepared.

SLOANE: The bedroom was perfect.

KATH: I never showed you the toilet.

SLOANE: I'm sure it will be satisfactory.

(He walks around the room examining
the furniture. Stops by the window.)

KATH: I should change them curtains. Those are our
~~summer~~ ones. The ~~winter~~ ones are more of a
~~plush~~. (Laughs) The walls need re-doing.
The Dadda has trouble with his eyes. I can't
ask him to do any work involving ladders. It
stands to reason.







EXPLANATORY NOTES:

1. Sheldon's objects

- **wipes:** Sheldon is obsessed with hygiene
- **T-shirt with a robot:** Sheldon wears T-shirts featuring superheroes, he also admires robots
- **Chinese takeaway:** Sheldon often eats Chinese takeaway meals
- **train ticket from California for one person:** Sheldon is fascinated by trains, the TV series takes place in California, Sheldon does not have very good social skills
- **calculator in the form of a gaming controller:** Sheldon is a physicist and is frequently shown in the TV series solving equations on the board, he is also a keen console gamer
- **contract:** Sheldon follows strict rules in social interactions with his friends, demanding them to do the same (e.g. he signs a contract specifying flatmates' behaviour including such details as the TV programme)

2. Penny's objects

- **script:** Penny wished to be an actress, but she was unsuccessful
- **tray and apron:** in the initial seasons, Penny works as a waitress
- **wine:** Penny drinks a lot of wine
- **wing mirror:** Penny is known for being a very bad driver, she once even tore her wing mirror off while driving
- **empty wallet:** Especially in the first seasons, Penny does not have enough money, letting Leonard pay for a lot of her things (film tickets, meals, Wi-Fi connection, etc.)
- **fashion magazine, make-up:** Penny is very attractive

SOURCES

- (More) information about Sheldon's and Penny's characters are available on *The Big Bang Theory Wiki* website.
(Main characters [Online article]. (n.d.). Retrieved March, 5, 2017 from http://bigbangtheory.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Characters)

THE BIG BANG THEORY – THE PANTY PIÑATA POLARIZATION (S02E07)



KEY WORDS

1 Read the sentences (1-5). The underlined words are used in the excerpt. First guess the meaning of the words. Then match the words with their definitions (a-e).

- 1 It was his first crime so the judge was lenient with him.
 - 2 They were banished from the USA because they had worked there illegally.
 - 3 I'll forward you the email he sent me yesterday if you are interested.
 - 4 I'm willing to make a compromise, but I won't knuckle under her!
 - 5 Can you jump off that wall? Go on, I dare you!
 - 6 No smoking was the company policy.
-
- a to send an email that you have received on to someone else
 - b not as strict as expected when punishing someone or when making sure that rules are obeyed
 - c to persuade someone to do something dangerous, difficult, or embarrassing so that they can show that they are not afraid
 - d a plan of action agreed or chosen by a political party, a business, etc.
 - e to order someone to leave a place, especially a country, as a punishment
 - f (informal) to accept someone else's authority

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

2 You are going to watch The Big Bang Theory TV series. In this episode, Sheldon has a heated argument with Penny which changes into an open war...

What do you think the argument will be about?

- a Penny mistakes Sheldon's takeaway order and brings him a different meal.
- b Penny doesn't want to obey Sheldon's friendship rules.
- c Penny uses Sheldon and Leonard's Wi-Fi to send her emails and refuses to pay for it.

Watch the excerpt and check if your guess is correct.

ANSWERS

1: 1b 2e 3a 4f 5c 6d

2: b

SOURCES

- The photo and the recording were extracted from the episode “The Panty Piñata Polarization” (S02E07), *The Big Bang Theory* TV series.
(Doyle, T., Glickman, J., Lorre, C., Molaro, S., Prady, B. (writers), & Cendrowski, M. (director). (2008). The Panty Piñata Polarization. [Television series episode]. In Chuck Lorre Productions & Warner Bros. Television (producers), *The Big Bang Theory*.)
- The example sentences and definitions in ex. 2 were taken from Oxford and Cambridge online dictionaries.
(<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>;
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/essential-british-english/>)

Appendix 22 Lesson 9 and 10: Video transcript

TRANSCRIPT

Penny Giselle's not getting kicked off. It's totally *gonna* be Summer.

Penny What?

Leonard Sheldon's onion ring. Just put it back.

Penny It's one onion ring.

Howard Just put it back before he comes.

Leonard No, no, no I don't think that's where it was.

Howard Okay, here he comes. Deny, deny, deny, people. Wall of silence!

Sheldon Who touched my...

Howard Penny. Penny did it.

Sheldon Why would you do that?

Penny I don't know. I was hungry? What's the big deal?

Sheldon The big deal is that nobody touches food on my plate.

Penny All right. Look, I didn't know. I'm sorry.

Sheldon Well, I'm sorry, but that is your second strike.

Penny What?

Sheldon You have two strikes. Three strikes and you're out. It's a sports metaphor.

Penny A sports metaphor?

Sheldon Yes, baseball.

Penny All right, yeah, I – I'll play along. What was my first strike?

Sheldon March 18th. You violated my rule about forwarding e-mail humour.

Penny I did?

Sheldon The photo of the cat who wants to "has cheezburger?"

Penny Oh, come on, everybody loves lolcats. They're cute and they can't spell... 'cause they're cats.

Sheldon I trusted you with my e-mail address and you betrayed that trust by sending me Internet banality. Strike one. Touching my food, strike two.

Leonard Don't worry, they only stay on your record for a year.
You can get them removed early but you have to take his class.

Penny Oh, come on, I touched one onion ring.

Sheldon And then you put it back! Compromising the integrity of all the other onion rings.

Penny Oh, honey, the buses don't go where you live, do they?

Sheldon Look, Penny, I wish I could be more lenient with you, but since you've become a permanent member of our social group, I have to hold you to the same standards as everybody else.

Leonard Congratulations, you're officially one of us.

Howard One of us, one of us.

Penny Well, what a thrill.

Sheldon You're sitting in my spot.

Penny Oh, gee..you've *gotta* be kidding me.

Sheldon Leonard, she's in my spot!

Leonard Yeah, yeah. See, here's the thing: after you leave, I still have to live with him.

Penny I don't care. I'm taking a stand. Metaphorically.

Sheldon All right. That's it. Strike three.

Penny Whoo, strike three.

Penny I'm banished?! What the hell kind of crap is that?

Leonard Listen, don't worry, I'll talk to him.

Penny Yeah, you do that!

Leonard Just so I know, would you be open to taking his class?
You can do it online!

Penny Okay, let me guess. Quesadilla with soy cheese for lactose-intolerant Leonard.

Leonard Thank you.

Penny Shrimp Caesar salad with no almonds for the highly allergic kosher-only-on-the-High-Holidays Howard. And for suddenly-back-on-the-Hindu-wagon Raj meat lover's pizza, no meat. Coming right up.

Sheldon Wait. Excuse me. You forgot my barbecue bacon cheeseburger, barbecue sauce, bacon and cheese on the side.

Penny Oh, I didn't tell you? You're banished from the Cheesecake Factory.

Sheldon Why?

Penny Well, you have three strikes. One coming in. Two sitting down. And three, I don't like your attitude.

Sheldon You can't do that. Not only is it a violation of California State Law, it flies directly in the face of Cheesecake Factory policy.

Penny Yeah, no, there's a new policy: no shoes, no shirt, no Sheldon.

Howard I bet we could sell that sign all over Pasadena.

Leonard Penny, can I talk to you for a minute?

Hi.

Penny Hi.

Leonard Look, here's the thing. I talked to Sheldon and he feels terrible. And he agrees that he was unreasonable and out of line.

Penny Really? Well, that's great.

Leonard Yeah. So, just apologise to him, okay?

Penny What? I'm not *gonna* apologise to that nutcase!

Leonard Oh, come on! It's easy. He'll even tell you what to say.

Penny Leonard, don't you get it? If you guys keep going along with his insanity, you're just encouraging him.

Leonard We're not encouraging. It's more like knuckling under.

Penny Look, I like hanging out with you guys, but I'm not *gonna* apologise for something I didn't do.

Leonard Well, actually, technically you did do it.

Penny That's strike one, Leonard.

Penny Here you go. Quesadilla. Salad. Here's your pizza. And thanks to Sheldon's heated discussion with my manager one barbecue bacon cheeseburger, barbecue sauce, bacon and cheese on the side.

Sheldon Thank you.

Penny Go ahead. Eat it.

I dare you!

The transcript was adapted from:

Big Bang Theory Episode Script: The Panty Piñata Polarization [Database record].
(n.d.). Retrieved from
http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/view_episode_scripts.php?tv-show=big-bang-theory&episode=s02e07

Appendix 23 Lesson 10: Elision

This appendix includes a worksheet, answers to the exercises and a list of the sources used while designing the lesson.

THE BIG BANG THEORY – THE PANTY PIÑATA POLARIZATION (S02E07)

LISTENING SKILLS

1 Watch the excerpt again and answer the following questions.

- a How can Penny get rid of her strikes?

- b Why did Leonard get his first strike from Penny?

- c What did Sheldon do to get his cheeseburger?

2 Work with a partner. First listen to the excerpts from the episode and write down how many words there are missing in each item.

Then listen again and write down the words you hear.

a (____ words) *Don't worry...* _____

b (____ words) *Look, I like hanging out with you guys, but...* _____

Leonard: *Well actually, technically you did do it.*

c (____ words) _____
...one barbecue bacon cheeseburger, barbecue sauce, bacon and cheese on the side.

Now listen again and repeat the sentences after the speaker, imitating the speaker's pronunciation.

3 Complete the transcript with the following words:

betrayed	don't	don't
kind	lenient	permanent

a	
Sheldon	March 18 th . You violated my rule about forwarding email humour.
Penny	I did?
Sheldon	The photo of the cat who wants to “Has Cheezburger?”
Penny	Oh, come on, everybody loves lolcats. They're cute and they can't spell. <i>'Cause they're cats.</i>
Sheldon	I trusted you with my e-mail address and you _____ that trust by sending me Internet banality. Strike one. Touching my food, strike two.
b	
Penny	Oh, honey, the buses _____ go where you live, do they?
Sheldon	Look, Penny, I wish I could be more _____ with you. But since you've become a _____ member of our social group I have to hold you to the same standards as everybody else.
c	
Penny	I _____ care. I'm taking a stand. Metaphorically.
Sheldon	All right, that's it. Strike three.
Penny	Whoo, strike three. I'm banished? What the hell _____ of crap is that?

Listen and check.

Listen again. How has the pronunciation of these words changed from how they sound in isolation?



ANSWERS

1: a Penny can take Sheldon's class or she can wait until the strikes will be removed from her record (1 year).

b Leonard reminded Penny that she had actually done the things Sheldon gave her the strikes for.

c Sheldon had a heated discussion with Penny's manager.

2: a 9 words: *...they only stay on your record for a year.*

b 11 words: *...I'm not gonna apologise for something I didn't do.*

c 9 words: *And thanks to Sheldon's heated discussion with my manager...*

3: a 1 betrayed /bɪtreɪ/

b 2 don't /dɒn/ **3** lenient /liːniənt/ **4** permanent /pɜːrmənənt/

c 5 don't /dɒn/ **6** kind /kaɪn/

SOURCES

- The recordings were extracted from the episode “The Panty Piñata Polarization” (S02E07), *The Big Bang Theory* TV series.
(Doyle, T., Glickman, J., Lorre, C., Molaro, S., Prady, B. (writers), & Cendrowski, M. (director). (2008). The Panty Piñata Polarization. [Television series episode]. In Chuck Lorre Productions & Warner Bros. Television (producers), *The Big Bang Theory*.)
- The task type, and the instructions in ex. 2 were adapted from the *Real Lives, Real Listening Advanced* course book.
(Thorn, S. (2013). *Real Lives, Real Listening: Advanced B2-C1* (pp. 19). London: HarperCollins Publishers.)
- The photo of the cat was taken from *The New York Times* website.
(Wortham, J. (2010). Once Just a Site with Funny Cat Pictures, and Now a Web Empire [Online article.]. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/14/technology/internet/14burger.html>)

Appendix 24 Lesson 11: Decoding skills practice

This appendix includes a worksheet, answers to the exercises and a list of the sources used while designing the lesson.

THE BIG BANG THEORY – THE PANTY PIÑATA

POLARIZATION (S02E07)

- 1 You are going to watch the second part of the episode in which Sheldon and Penny have a heated argument.

How do you behave in arguments? Tick the options that are true for you.

- a If I'm sure that I'm right, I do everything to win the argument.
- b I often need to have the last word (even if I'm wrong).
- c I believe the best thing is to look for a compromise so that no one gets upset.
- d I hate arguing so I mostly give in very quickly.
- e _____

Discuss your choices in pairs.

KEY WORDS

- 2 Read the sentences (1-5). The underlined words are used in the excerpt. First guess the meaning of the words. Then match the words with their definitions (a-e).

- 6 She finally conceded that the problem was mostly her fault.
- 7 The policy of charging air travellers for vegetarian meals proved unpopular and has already been rescinded.
- 8 We anticipate moving to our new flat by the end of this year.
- 9 He implied that he wasn't happy at work.
- 10 The boy was electrocuted when he wandered onto a railroad track.

- a to suggest or show something without saying it directly
- b to kill somebody with electricity that goes through the body
- c to admit that something is true although you do not want to
- d to officially state that a law, contract, decision, etc. is no longer valid
- e to expect something

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

- 3 How do Sheldon and Penny behave in the argument? Choose from the options in ex. 1.

4 Order the events. There is one event that did not happen. Watch again and check your answers.

- a Penny wants to make up with Sheldon.
- b Sheldon hangs out Penny's bras on a telephone wire.
- c Sheldon apologises.
- d Penny washes her clothes on a day when Sheldon usually does.
- e Sheldon refuses to admit that they both made a mistake.
- f Leonard helps Penny.
- g Penny takes her laundry down.
- h Sheldon is told off by his parent.

LISTENING SKILLS

5 Listen to these excerpts and fill in the missing words. Because this is a listening training exercise, don't try to predict the answers before you listen.

- a _____ my clothes?
- b Yes, I _____ the washers and when I went down to get them they were gone.
- c How the hell _____ up on that telephone wire?
- d This has gotten _____ hand.
- e Hold on a second _____.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

6 Read the following article from The Big Bang Theory fansite. Answer the questions:

- a What is Shenny?
- b Why do the fans believe Shenny could work?

Shenny is the relationship between Sheldon and Penny. Although a romantic/sexual relationship between the two characters doesn't actually exist and has never been hinted at, many fans still ponder over the possibility if one day there may actually be something happening between these two polar opposites. There are fans rooting for Sheldon and Penny.

The main reason for the interest in Sheldon and Penny is the chemistry between them and the comedic interaction this creates. The fans like to think of a world where they might develop a relationship, despite the direction the show has chosen to pursue.

The Panty Piñata Polarization shows these two are evenly matched and also incredibly funny. Penny refuses to back down when Sheldon imposes a ban from their apartment.

7 *Do you agree with the fans? Why / why not?*

ANSWERS

1: students' own answers

2: 1c, 2d, 3e, 4a, 5b

3: Penny firstly a (she is persuaded she is right and does everything to win the argument), then c (she wants to reach a compromise), Sheldon a

4: 1d, 2b, 3a, 4e, 5f, 6h, 7c; g is extra

5: **a** *Where are*

b *left them in*

c *did you get them*

d *way out of*

e *I'll get him*

6: **a** Shenny is the relationship between Sheldon and Penny. Some fans hope a romantic/sexual relationship could develop.

b Fans believe that Sheldon and Penny could have a romantic/sexual relationship because there is chemistry between them, they have comedic interactions and they are evenly matched.

7: students' own answers

SOURCES

- The recordings were extracted from the episode “The Panty Piñata Polarization” (S02E07), *The Big Bang Theory* TV series.
(Doyle, T., Glickman, J., Lorre, C., Molaro, S., Prady, B. (writers), & Cendrowski, M. (director). (2008). The Panty Piñata Polarization. [Television series episode]. In Chuck Lorre Productions & Warner Bros. Television (producers), *The Big Bang Theory*.)
- The example sentences and definitions in ex. 2 were taken from Oxford and Cambridge online dictionaries.
(<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>;
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/essential-british-english/>)
- The task type, and the instructions in ex. 2 were adapted from the *Real Lives, Real Listening Advanced* course book.
(Thorn, S. (2013). *Real Lives, Real Listening: Advanced B2-C1* (pp. 19). London: HarperCollins Publishers.)
- The article in ex. 6 was taken from *The Big Bang Theory Wiki* website.
(Shenny (Sheldon and Penny) [Database record]. (n.d.). Retrieved March, 10, 2017 from [http://bigbangtheory.wikia.com/wiki/Shenny_\(Sheldon_and_Penny\)](http://bigbangtheory.wikia.com/wiki/Shenny_(Sheldon_and_Penny)))

Appendix 25 Lesson 11: Video transcript

TRANSCRIPT

Sheldon Oh! Hello.

Penny Time to do your laundry, huh?

Sheldon Saturday night. Saturday night is laundry night.

Penny I know. Every Saturday at 8:15. Easy to anticipate.

Sheldon What are you implying?

Penny I'm implying that you're a creature of habit. And if something were to prevent you from doing your laundry on Saturday at 8:15 you might find it...unpleasant.

Knuckle under my ass.

Penny Oh, no. Are all the machines taken? What are you *gonna* do?

Sheldon No problem. I'll just do my laundry another night.

Penny Another night? Well, I guess you can try, but deep inside your heart you'll know that laundry night is always Saturday night.

Sheldon Woman, you're playing with forces beyond your ken.

Penny Yeah, well, your Ken can kiss my Barbie.

Penny Sheldon?! Sheldon?! Sheldon?

Sheldon Yes?

Penny Where are my clothes?

Sheldon Your clothes?

Penny Yes. I left them in the washers and when I went down to get them, they were gone!

Sheldon Really? Despite the sign that says: "Do not leave laundry unattended?"

Penny Sheldon, where are my clothes?

Sheldon You know, I do recall seeing some female undergarments. Where was that? Oh, yes. Earlier this evening I happened to gaze out the window and a brassiere caught my eye.

Do those look familiar?

Penny How the hell did you get them up on that telephone wire?

Sheldon When you understand the laws of physics, Penny, anything is possible.
And may I add: mua-ha-ha.

Penny Get them down.

Sheldon Apologize.

Penny Never.

Sheldon Then may I suggest you get a very long stick and play panty piñata.

Penny Wait, Sheldon. This has gotten way out of hand, okay. I've done some stupid things, you've done some stupid things. How about just call it even and move on with our lives?

Sheldon I've done no stupid things.

Penny Look, you've *gotta* meet me halfway here.

Sheldon I am meeting you halfway. I'm willing to concede that you've done some stupid things.

Leonard Hey, you guys are talking again. Good!
What happened?

Penny Leonard, remember when I said it was on? Well, now it's junior rodeo on.

Leonard Oh, not junior rodeo... What did you do?

Sheldon I had no choice, Leonard. She ruined laundry night... mua-ha-ha.

Penny Telephone wires can't electrocute you, can they?

Leonard No. Look, this has to stop.

Penny Oh, no, no, no. It is just beginning.

Leonard All right. I really didn't *wanna* do this but...here.

Penny What's this?

Leonard Sheldon's kryptonite.

Penny Oh, my God.

Leonard He can never know that I gave that to you.

Penny Look, I said I wanted to hurt him, but...but this?

Leonard It will shorten the war by five years and save millions of lives!

Leonard Hello? Oh, hi. Yeah, hold on a second, I'll get him.

Sheldon, it's for you.

Sheldon Who is it?

Leonard Your mother.

Sheldon Oh, good.

Hi, mom. How are you? But, mom! She keeps sitting in my spot! And she touched my food! Okay, yes, I took her clothes, but she started it! No, that's not fair! Why should I have to apologize? I really don't think this is the kind of thing Jesus concerns himself with. No, you're right. I don't really know what Jesus thinks about. All right! Goodbye. Did you tell on me?

Leonard Are you kidding me? I already have two strikes.

Sheldon Penny. Penny. Penny. I am very very sorry for what I have done. Here's your laundry. I rescind your strikes and you are no longer banished.

Penny Can I sit wherever I want? No, no, no. Never mind. Never mind. That's – that's not important. Sheldon, that was big of you. Thank you I really appreciate it.

Sheldon Thank you.

Penny Good night, Sheldon.

Sheldon Penny?

Penny Yes?

Sheldon Well played.

Penny Thank you.

Sheldon Just remember: with great power comes great responsibility.

Penny Understood.

The transcript was adapted from:

Big Bang Theory Episode Script: The Panty Piñata Polarization [Database record].
(n.d.). Retrieved from
http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/view_episode_scripts.php?tv-show=big-bang-theory&episode=s02e07

Appendix 26 Item analysis

The table below shows mean scores for all the words from the pretest and posttest and the difference between the two tests for the control and experimental groups.

(sentence no.) Item	Control group			Experimental group		
	Pretest	Posttest	Difference	Pretest	Posttest	Difference
(1)						
if	9	8	-1	11	13	+2
you	9	9	0	11	12	+1
won't	5	6	+1	5	8	+3
come	13	13	0	10	11	+1
out	13	13	0	12	13	+1
(2)						
can	13	12	-1	12	13	+1
you	12	10	-2	13	13	0
just	13	12	-1	13	13	0
back	8	9	+1	13	12	-1
on	8	10	+2	11	12	+1
a	4	3	-1	3	5	+2
(3)						
just	3	4	+1	7	9	+2
<i>gonna</i>	4	6	+2	10	12	+2
go	7	9	+2	10	12	+2
out	13	13	0	13	13	0
and	2	4	+2	6	9	+3

give	2	3	+1	9	8	-1
an	0	2	+2	3	7	+4
(4)						
might	3	3	0	4	11	+7
be	3	3	0	7	11	+4
a	1	2	+1	3	4	+1
good	1	2	+1	3	2	-1
time	2	2	0	3	7	+4
to	2	3	+1	4	7	+3
(5)						
asked	6	9	+3	7	7	0
him	6	9	+3	10	13	+2
if	8	11	+3	13	13	0
he	6	10	+4	12	13	+1
wanted	0	0	0	1	2	+1
to	2	2	0	2	5	+3
have	4	4	0	7	6	-1
(6)						
he	7	7	0	7	9	+2
when	2	2	0	2	4	+2
we	2	3	+1	2	3	+1
need	4	4	0	2	3	+1
him	2	2	0	2	2	0

(7)						
anyone's	4	2	-2	8	6	-2
sad	8	9	+1	12	12	0
without	5	5	0	10	11	+1
making	2	4	+2	4	5	+1
it	3	3	0	3	4	+1
(8)						
could	10	12	+2	11	12	+1
have	3	4	+1	8	8	0
lost	12	11	-1	12	12	0
his	11	11	0	12	12	0
(9)						
has	3	4	+1	5	8	+3
somethin g	13	12	-1	10	11	+1
to	4	4	0	6	10	+4
(10)						
did	7	9	+2	10	12	+2
you	12	13	+1	11	12	+1
forget	8	7	-1	13	12	-1
the	7	7	0	10	11	+1
(11)						
was	2	5	+3	4	6	+2
<i>gonna</i>	4	5	+1	8	8	0

without	12	11	-1	12	11	-1
you	13	9	-4	12	11	-1
(12)						
turned	3	3	0	4	7	+3
out	5	6	+1	5	9	+4
it	3	3	0	5	4	-1
was	3	4	+1	3	5	+2
his	5	6	+1	6	10	+4
(13)						
but	0	5	+5	4	5	+1
you	7	7	0	11	9	-2
've	3	4	+1	3	8	+5
been	3	4	+1	4	8	+4