Why have you chosen this course?
• Yes – 12
• No – it was the 5th time – 1

Why have you chosen to participate in the VC course on:
• Czech people I try to use Czech words – they understand and for me for my job in future.

How would you rate that the participants will help me in my future career?
• Yes – 12
• Yes, but they couldn’t help in my specific career path – 0
• No – it was not useful

What advice would you give to other students thinking about taking part in a videoconferencing course?
• It is a very good opportunity to practice a lot of things. Do it!!!

To conclude, let me quote one of the participants’ advice for his/her fellow students:

The learning curve of videoconferencing how the students see it

This poster introduces a survey into student attitudes towards videoconferencing as a new mode of classroom interaction.

The data was obtained through a series of questionnaires, observations and interviews mapping out what students learnt from the experience of participating in a videoconference and what they felt about using this new means of communication to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds.

All of those interviewed were students at the tertiary level. Two groups were undertaken from Masaryk University, Lillehammer, Norway and Aberystwith in Wales. The former was composed of 13 students from different cultural backgrounds. The latter was a sample of 7 Czech students of Law or Social Sciences from Masaryk University Brno, Czech Republic.

The learning curve of videoconferencing is a very personal experience. It was not the only obstacle the participants had to overcome. They had to acquire a special set of social skills, develop multilingual and multicultural competence, cope with technical difficulties, etc. To quote just a few:

Respondents: 13 international students (Chinese, Japanese, French, Dutch, Ukrainian etc.) from the University of Aberystwith, Wales, UK (yellow) and 7 Czech students of Law or Social Sciences from Masaryk University Brno, Czech Republic (red)

Summary
The results of this study indicate that students see VC as a new, exciting and modern means of communication, and at the same time, a motivating method of learning/teaching a foreign language. They are excited about new opportunities to develop communication skills and learn about different cultures through direct interaction with their VC partners. They appreciate the novelty of this means of communication - in each group, there was only 1 person who had previous experience with VC.

The students feel that participating in VC helps them develop self-confidence – they learn that they are able to communicate through their English, and that of their VC partners, is not perfect. VC encourages the development of interpersonal skills in intercultural communication, placing more emphasis on language fluency than precision. Precision, however, has been found by students to be equally important because it lacks hinders communication – already more restricted than face-to-face interaction in the first place.

Participants practise language skills in general, and communication (speaking and listening) skills in particular, in a real world context. Equally important, they also develop other skills that are crucial for the successful operation of modern professionals, namely the ability to combine social, multicultural, and technical skills in a foreign-language environment. Last but not least, the tasks students engage in prior to and during VCs – presentations on professional topics – significantly promote teamwork and students abilities to constructively contribute to a shared goal. In this way, the practice of videoconferencing for foreign language learners helps prepare students for real-life challenges facing university graduates in the modern world, e.g. their efficient involvement in multinational companies.

To conclude, let me quote one of the participants’ advice for his/her fellow students:

“...It is a very good opportunity to practice a lot of things. Do it!!!”