Diplomová práce

Analysis of the accent production of TUL students specialised in English teaching

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Analysis of the accent production of TUL students specialised in English teaching

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Anotace:

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá různými faktory, které ovlivňují jedincův postoj k akcentům anglického jazyka a jejich získávání studenty. Účelem je vytvoření povědomí o hlavních vlivech, jenž se podílí na akvizici přízvuku studenty a také zjištění, který z těchto přízvuků je v jejich projevu slyšet nejvíce. Nejprve je v práci vysvětlen pojem přízvuk, přičemž je oddělen od slova dialekt. Následně je zde představen přehled různých fakotrů, které se podílí na získání přízvuku anglického jazyka, a to jak u rodilých mluvčích, tak i u studentů. Dále jsou zde vyjmenovány zásadní rozdíly mezi dvěma sledovanými přízvuky anglického jazyka, které jsou přítomny v médiích sledovanými studenty. Zásadní součástí této práce je pak část praktická, ve které je představen výzkum, který se zaobýval otázkou do jaké míry právě média ovlivňují akvizici přízvuku, a pro jejíž zodpovězení byly použity tři metody výzkumu. První byl kvantitativní dotazník, jenž se zajímal o celkový objem médií dvou zemí, které studenti sledují. Jeho hlavním smyslem bylo vybrat několik studentů pro druhou fázi výzkumu podle přízvuku, který se objevoval v jimi preferovanými médii. Tou byla analýza jejich mluveného projevu při čtení předem připraveného textu, a která proběhla za účasti dvou studentů s jazykovou úrovní C2 a znalostmi anglické fonologie a rodilého mluvčího z Velké Británie, který je učitelem. V této analýze byly sledovány výslovnosti vybraných slov, které měly indikovat možnou inklinaci k jednomu či druhému přízvuku. Poslední metodou využitou v této práci byl kvalitativní dotazník, který se zaobýval dalšími možnými faktory přítomnými v akvizici přízvuků angličtiny, jmenovitě studentově motivaci, interakci s rodilými mluvčími, či instrukcemi ve vzdělávání. Výsledky obou dotazníků pak byly porovnány se zvukovou analýzou a na základě tohoto porovnání bylo vyvozeno, že média výrazně ovlivňují přízvuk, který studenti prokazují ve svém přednesu, jelikož s větším podílem amerických médií, které studenti sledovali, se zvětšoval i podíl slov vyslovených s americkým přízvukem v jejich projevu. Zjištění všech tří metod a jejich syntézy jsou k vidění v poslední části práce.

Klíčová slova:

Fonologie, akcent, přízvuk, americký, britský, RP, Standard British, General American, Standard American, rozmanitost, jazykověda, analýza, jazyk, charakteristika, výslovnost, TUL, anglofonní média

Annotation:

The following diploma thesis concerns the topic of factors which play a part in students' accent acquisition. Its aim is to establish how an accent is acquired, in other words, what key factors influence the whole process, and to figure out which features of the two accents, namely the British and the American, are more evident within the student's utterances. Firstly, the term accent is defined and compared to the term dialect. Then, several factors influencing both native speakers' and learners' accent acquisition are presented. Finally, the overview of differences between two accents which are most present in media consumed by students is presented, those being the British and the American accent. The crucial part of the thesis is the research, which aims to answer the question of how important is media, a large influence in one's daily life, in the development of an English accent. A total of three methods were used. Firstly, a questionnaire which inquired about the amount of media of the two countries followed by the students, is presented. Its main aim was to choose several students for the second part of the research based on their preferred media and its accent. Secondly, an auditory analysis was conducted, for which these students were tasked with reading a prepared text and sending back a recording. These were then analysed in cooperation with two non-native students with a C2 level of English and basic training in Phonology, and a native teacher from Great Britain, who acted as annotators. The analysis traced the pronunciation of certain features found within words included in the text, which were labelled as pronounced with a British or an American accent. The last method used for the purposes of the research was a survey. This inquired on additional factors which might have affected students' accent acquisition, namely their motivation, native speaker interaction and instructions in education. The results of both questionnaires were then compared with the auditory analysis, the result of which was the conclusion that media has a tangible influence on a learner's accent despite the strong influence of other factors, as those who have watched more American media on a regular basis have shown more features pronounced with an American accent. The conclusions made in all three methods can be seen in the last part of the thesis.

Keywords:

Phonology, accent, American, British, RP,Standard British, General American, Standard American, variety, linguistics, distinguishing, language, feature, pronunciation, TUL, Anglophone media

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List of Symbols and Abbreviations Used

BrE – British English

GenAm – General American accent

RP – Received Pronunciation

StAmE – Standard American English

StBrE – Standard British English

TUL – Technical University of Liberec

Introduction

This diploma thesis mainly concerns itself with the topic of two major English accents, those being the American and British variety, and their relation to students attending the Technical University of Liberec. The principal aims of the thesis are to: familiarize the reader with factors influencing one's accent production throughout their life, and, through auditory analysis and its comparison to the data provided by students in a series of questionnaries, to ascertain which of these factors might have played a significant role in their accent development with special care being given to Anglophone media.

The rationale behind this thesis is, besides my honest interest in the topic, the need for accent and variety research to be conducted in the educational process, specifically assessing the accents of the future teachers of the English language. Although the accent production of students had been studied before, the main influencing factors have been given little thought. For that reason, the research made in the latter part focuses specifically on those factors which might affect students, who are to become future English teachers on primary and secondary schools. The hypothesis, which creates the basis for the research, is that despite the students' closeness to the British accent, either geographical, cultural or even in individual preference, as suggested by Jakšič and Šturm (2017), some features of the American accent will be present the utterances of the students, due to the presence of American audio-visual culture, such as TV shows, films or internet personalities. For that reason, the thesis will try to answer several research questions, such as what factors may have played a role in accent production, what the overall accent produced by the students is and how do the features produced change based on the media consumed by the student. Ideally, understanding the origins of one's accent choice or acquisition may help students, teachers and tutors alike to understand how they may help develop their own as well as their pupils' accents through other means besides lectures.

In order to answer the questions set for the research, the thesis is divided into three parts. The first one encompasses a theoretical framework and functions as an introduction for the reader to orient themselves in the terms and concepts used within the thesis. Firstly, it defines the terms needed to understand the topic of accents as a whole. Here, the reader is introduced to the terms dialect, accent and idiolect, which have historically caused a great deal of confusion among laypersons and linguists alike. Afterwards, it focuses on probably the most important part of the literary research needed for the thesis, as it delves into the problematic

of factors which contribute to the creation and change of one's accent. Here, the reader is presented with the main influences a speaker may encounter, which can change his way of speaking. Moreover, it ponders whether there are any additional influences for non-native speakers, whose accents are ultimately the focal point of the research conducted in the latter part of the thesis. Lastly, it introduces the main segmental and suprasegmental phonetic differences, with which one can analyse and differentiate between two of the most influential accents for the students, and which will be helpful in the following auditory analysis. The overarching aim of the literary research was to provide the reader with enough information to understand the topics presented in the latter part of the thesis, which is the practical analysis.

The practical research focuses mainly on the students attending the Technical University of Liberec. It consists of three main data collection methods, whose results are the main outcomes of this thesis. The first one is a plain questionnaire, which focuses on media consumed by the students and which all students were able to attend. Then, it presents an auditory analysis of accent production of selected students, who were chosen based on their preferences. These recordings were then compared with the results of the questionnaire to see if and to what extent only media could have influenced the students. Lastly, the section introduces the final part of the research conducted for the purposes of this thesis, which was a post-recording survey. In it, only the recorded students were asked to participate and it focused on other factors which might have influenced the accent which they ultimately produce, such as their educational background or own motivation for learning an accent. Finally, the conclusions based on the research conducted are presented and discussed, with further suggestions being presented.

1 Theoretical Section

Before analysing the students' utterances, it is important to establish an informational background regarding the topic of language variations with the main focus being placed on the English language. In this part of the thesis, the reader will be firstly introduced to the definitions of the terms used to describe variations within the English language and which might cause confusion. These are the terms *accent*, *dialect* and *idiolect*. Afterwards, factors which influence one's way of speaking are introduced and subjected to further analysis via literary research. Lastly, the phonological features, both segmental and suprasegmental, of the British and American accent. Those characteristics play an important role in the later research, since they are used as a basis for analysis.

1.1 Definition of linguistic terms concerning variety

Before delving into the matter of analysing one's spoken accent, we must first distinguish several terms, which will be used throughout the thesis and offer a better understanding of the topic. For that, it is necessary to begin with the term *dialect*, which, according to Matthews' definition used in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (2007: 215), is 'Any distinct variety of a language, especially one spoken in a specific part of a country or other geographical area.' Matthews further distinguishes the term from 'language' based on the criterion of mutual intelligibility commonly found between dialects, but not languages. Such distinction does bring into question the need for other terms denoting certain varieties, and it is therefore needed to explore further distinctions found within the field.

When combined with the definition provided by Crystal (2008: 142), one can specify the definition of dialect as a 'variety of language, identified by a particular set of words and grammatical structures'. Here, the distinction between vocabulary and grammar is crucial in order to distinguish the main terms, as *accent* denotes a part of dialect, as will be discussed shortly. For some linguists, namely those of North American origin, the terms *accent* and *dialect* are interchangeable, which further emphasises the need for the distinction of the two terms. (Hughes, Trudgill and Watt 2013)

The first definition one can find within linguistic dictionaries states that an accent is 'A variety of speech differing phonetically from other varieties.' Under this definition, one might imagine pronunciation varieties found within the English language, which include, but are not limited to, the Scottish, Irish or Southern accents, and which are to be considered

a part of the dialect found within said region. Accents themselves usually differ in quality of voice, pronunciation and distinction of certain vowels and consonants, stress and prosody (Crystal, 2008: 3) and may coincide with several factors, such as the locality, the socioeconomic status, the ethnicity, mother tongue or social class of its speakers. (Lippi-Green, 2012: 51)

While there is another definition of the term accent, which coincides with emphasis being put on individual parts of sentences or words, otherwise known as *phrasal* or *word stress* (Matthews, 2007: 31), the thesis will adhere to the aforementioned sociolinguistic definition. Therefore, the term accent will be used to describe a variation of language which differs in pronunciation features, such as particular consonant or vowel sounds and some intonational, rhythmic and other prosodic features. It is also necessary to understand that dialect, although also expressing a certain variety within language, includes further linguistic features, namely vocabulary and grammar. These are, however, not the subject of the analysis, and therefore the term accent is best suited for the purposes of the thesis.

1.2 Factors contributing to a speaker's accent

As was mentioned previously, every person who speaks a given language has a certain way of pronouncing words within their language. Such variety within language is called accent. In this chapter, the question of how a speaker acquires an accent is examined, as several factors which contribute to acquiring one are thought to occur during their life.

The main factor which perpetuates change is believed to be communication density, which can be defined as the frequency at which a person linguistically interacts with others. It is also important as to who exactly is talking to whom. More precisely, it is the number of carrier sensible events per unit of time and road. (Bloomfield, 1973: 345) Such premise implies that the accent of a person's close relatives and people within their surroundings, or rather the interaction with them, play a vital role when acquiring an accent, which is usually determined by the place of birth of an individual. One's country is not the only variable, however, as regional accents also vary and become ever more different with increasing distance from one another, even within one country. Ultimately, this means that a person born in one part of a city might speak differently to a person living in another part of the very same metropolitan area. For that reason, social interaction is considered to be one of, if not the most influential factor inducing language change. (Heheaton, 2018: 10)

According to some, language distinction can be traced back to infancy and even the prenatal period of our lives. Research done by Zhao and Kuhl shows that babies react to outside noises even during pregnancy, therefore, it might be when they start to take on their parents' way of speaking. Since the foetus is developing its internal, independent neural system, it takes on large amounts of data, which it then processes, internalises and ultimately learns. (Zhao, Kuhl, 2022) The study further suggests the so-called 'sensitive period' for phonetic learning, which occurs at around 6-12 months of age, and which presents the theoretical earliest milestone of language acquisition, during which infants become specialised in processing speech sounds in their native language. (Zhao, Kuhl, 2022)

A person's way of speaking is also inevitably influenced by their physical attributes. As Wells suggests in his works, the age of the speaker, their gender and possible speech impediments each significantly affect the speaker's accent. While male speakers tend to speak at a slower tempo while having a smaller intonation range, female speakers are thought to have a wider pitch range and speak more tentatively. Similarly, with age the overall construction of one's vocal cords changes as well as their facial features, which ultimately influence a person's way of speaking. Age might also play a further, sociolinguistic role when determining a speaker's accent, as the time period in which one was brought up also significantly affects them. (Wells 1982: 21)

Another key determinant which arbitrates a speaker's accent is their socio-economic status, as it often times reflects the social classes represented within their surroundings. This means that not only the region in which a speaker is born is to be concerned, since their social surroundings and groups within which they find themselves heavily determine the accent they might use throughout their life. An example of a 'sociolect', an accent associated with a certain social class, is Received Pronunciation. It is not bound to a certain region as its speakers can be found throughout the United Kingdom, and is connected with high prestige throughout the world. (Hughes, Trudgill and Watt 2012: 4)

Finally, once we take the Parasocial Contact Theory coined by Horton and Wohl into consideration, the influence of *parasocial* interaction engaged through media may be considered a factor in language and in turn accent change in speakers. The theory is based on the premise that such interaction, although not interpersonal, can create responses similar to those one might see in usual, face-to-face interactions (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes 2005). Furthermore, such contact can elicit similar emotional responses and even affect a person, exactly as an actual intergroup contact would. When considering these possible relations a

person might create when watching media, Heheaton suggests that just as social interaction influences a person's language, so too can media impose the same effect. While these interactions may not be as strong as to 'rewire' a native speaker's accent, they might have such an effect on the non-native ones, especially if such interaction constitutes a majority of their exposure to the language or, more specifically, accent. (Heheaton, 2018: 11) Therefore, a native speaker may be influenced by the media they consume, although such influence is better observed on a group covered in the following chapter.

The influence of media personalities and the relationships the viewer might have through the connection with media is further shown by a study conducted by Goode and Robinson (2013), who have shown that fans commenting on blog posts written by what appeared to be show characters used very similar linguistic features as the authors of the blog itself. With these findings, the researchers argued that parasocial interaction is not only something that *resembles* interpersonal interaction, but rather that it *is* an interpersonal interaction. (Goode and Robinson, 2013: 463) It may therefore be possible that, via these parasocial interactions and relationships created while watching and connecting with fictional characters, one's way of speaking can also be influenced, not only in their preferred grammatical structures, but also in the pronunciation aspect.

Factors influencing a native speaker's accent
Communication density and locality
Media
Physiological features (Age, Gender, Vocal cord construction)
Socio-economic status

Table 1 – Factors influencing a native speaker's accent

1.3 Factors contributing to a learner's accent

Since the research focuses on the accents produced by students who learn English as a foreign language, it is imperative to determine subsequent factors which may not play a role in a non-native speaker's acquisition of the language. This is because the students have not been exposed to English since birth, rather they began learning it at a specific age, some time after they had internalised their own mother tongue. Similarly, they have been encountering different factors which might have helped or hindered a successful acquisition of a native-like accent.

The influence of communication density on non-native speakers can best be seen through research conducted by Harrington et al. He suggests that a colony in Antarctica has developed their own unique accent of the English language. This is because the analysis showed phonetic changes among the group due to spending time together in a highly secluded geographical location. More importantly, the study points to a German scientist, i.e. a person whose mother tongue is not English, who has shown significant pronunciation changes throughout the 11-month research period. Therefore, it may be concluded that close contact with native speakers with which one communicates frequently would be a significant factor in one's accent formation. This further proves that communication density is an essential factor in creating an accent. (Harrington et al., 2019)

Similarly to native speakers, the exposure to media is to be considered when examining the learner's accent, as through the connections and implied para-social interaction, the viewer may be influenced. Moreover, while communication density through social interaction comes rather easily to those living in countries where English is the main language, it might be difficult for those outside these countries to come across it via interaction with another speaker. On the other hand, for students in countries where English is not the mother tongue and its native speakers are a rather rare occurrence, the influence of English-speaking media should be taken into account. As Kristiansen (2014) suggests in his work, media lacks the interactive element of what one might call immediate language, as the viewer cannot speak to the character they see on screen and therefore receive a real-time response. For this reason, the role of media is often overlooked or even dismissed by linguists. As has been mentioned previously, the relationship created between a character and its interpreter can and often does cross the border of interpersonal interaction, and can influence one's language. Although its role is not yet clear, some studies, such as that conducted by Stuart-Smith, Price, Timmins, & Gunter (2013) point to the acceleration in the uptake of linguistic forms not native to a speaker's dialect. This particular research concluded that TH-fronting and L-vocalisation, features attributed to the Cockney accent, started appearing in the Glaswegian accent during the 1990s. The uptake might be due to the combination of several linguistic and social practices, which included contact with Londoners and psychological engagement with *Eastenders*, a program taking place in London. (Heheaton, 2018: 11)

A crucial factor when assessing accent acquisition in learners is the age of onset, i.e. the age at which the learner started to learn the language. Such importance is reflected in the critical period hypothesis, which claims that language learning becomes increasingly challenging

after a certain age, due to the ever-increasing loss of neural plasticity (MacKay et al., 2006). Such claims have been supported by research conducted on the age of onset and the varying degree of accent found within both adult and child learners (Jesney, 2004). The only exception had been proven by highly proficient learners with a rather late age of onset. (Moyer, 1999). With these and other linguistic studies, the age of onset is to be considered a reliable predictor of second language accent acquisition.

The critical period hypothesis, presented in the previous paragraph, deserves a thorough explanation as it correlates with the acquisition of language in general, a highly significant topic in English as a second language education. The hypothesis claims that there is an ideal time period, during which the acquisition of certain skills, namely language, is accelerated and ideal, if provided with a linguistically rich environment. After such a period, learning the language and its features becomes much more difficult and requires more effort from the learner. The hypothesis is supported by many studies, such as that done by Johnson (1989, 1992) claiming that older students achieve native fluency in second languages at significantly lower levels when compared to their younger counterparts. (Ramscar, 2007)

Another influence may be found in the length of residence within the target language country. However, studies on this effect had shown both results. While Major (1986) found that those who had spent at least a year living in the country had higher accent scores, Derwing and Munro's (2013) study showed no significant relationship between accent proficiency and the length of the stay. Moyer (2013: 73) notes on the topic that it is not the length of residence, but rather its quality that matters, pointing towards high L2 input as the deciding factor. This may be proven by Purcell and Suter's (1980) research, which claimed that length of residence could only be considered a significant factor in accent acquisition when combined with residing with native speakers. It may therefore be considered a rather unreliable, yet still a very influential factor in a learner's accent proficiency.

Another notable factor, which we must involve when speaking of both language and accent acquisition, is motivation. As Moyes (2016: 21) notes 'there is no question that attitudes drive language acquisition and are especially influential for L2 pronunciation'. Another motivational factor is the concern for pronunciation accuracy. Studies conducted by Suter (1976) and later Purcell and Suter (1980) concluded that the strength of concern for pronunciation was a considerable variable affecting the degree of foreign accent. Ultimately, motivation and overall attitude towards the target language and the selected accent are considered to play some role when determining the strength of a speaker's foreign accent

and the acquisition of said pronunciation variety. However, as Freeborn and Rogers (2019: 79) note, the factor of motivation needs more studies to establish just how important of a factor it truly is.

Similarly, the learner's natural ability or aptitude plays a significant role in L2 accent degree. For example, Piske et al. (2001: 202) concluded that the 'ability to imitate unfamiliar speech sounds [...] had been repeatedly identified as a significant and independent predictor of the degree of L2 foreign accent'. Such mimical ability has been linked to musical ability, as both language and music include suprasegmentals such as intonation, rhythm, pitch and stress (Zybert and Stepien, 2009). It is therefore not surprising that a positive relationship between musical ability and L2 phonological ability has been established by studies conducted by Zybert and Stepien (2009). Furthermore, Bowles et al. (2016) found that participants' musicality and pitch perception ability better foreshadowed the learning of L2 tones as opposed to general cognitive ability and aptitude.

Since the overall topic of the thesis concerns students who wish to become teachers, it is integral to investigate their role in teaching native accents or, as Moyer (2013) calls it in her studies, the factor of phonological instruction. Although she acknowledges the importance and potential of good instructions, she believes they are generally ineffective. While it might help some in acquiring certain features and eradicate possible errors or points of confusion, it will not help everyone in all circumstances. Furthermore, she is of the opinion that instruction alone is not sufficient in high-level attainment, however, she admits that it can set learners on the path of noticing or emulating certain qualities connected with native speech. In her research, Moyer comes to the conclusion that a holistic approach is presumed most effective and she recommends learner-centered, self-paced and individualised techniques to be most effective. Here, the consistency of such practices is of paramount importance, as brief, episodic training is far less effective and does not seem to last (Moyer: 2013, 167-168). The primary reason for the possible ineffectiveness of teaching an authentic-sounding accent, as given by Moyer, is a matter of time and focus, since foreign language classes tend to be short on time and should include a plethora of other topics, such as grammar and vocabulary, while phonology is understandably of lower priority and concludes that instruction closely related to immersion in the accent is the overall most effective way of achieving a closer-to-native accent. (Moyer: 2013, 169) This means that instruction has significant potential in being a major factor when achieving native-like

pronunciation falls when it is not carried out regularly, consistently and adequately prepared by the instructor.

Finally, the research conducted in the latter part of the thesis focuses solely on English language learners, whose accent is influenced not only by previously mentioned factors, but also by their mother tongue. It poses a substantial factor when considering the accent they might have in English as the grammatical and mainly phonetic rules of their native tongue have been 'programmed' into their way of speech. Ultimately, however, the other factors might overpower it, especially since the respondents analysed in this study have been subjected to a rather profound influence of the English language through their education and their own voluntary actions. In this case, the Czech language has completely different segmental and suprasegmental features of the language, which may in turn affect the speaker's performance in English, a foreign language.

When considering all the factors introduced in the chapter, one is able to conclude that there are a plethora of factors which may in one way or another aid the learner in achieving the acquisition of a native-like accent. These come from different sources and with varying degrees of overall influence as some are inherent to learners (musical skills, motivation), while others act from the outside (instruction, interaction with native speakers). Based on the findings, several factors are to be considered for the thesis, namely instruction, as the topic concerns university students and future teachers, motivation and possible stay within the target language country, alongside the consumption of Anglophone media. Other factors, such as musical skill and overall aptitude, would otherwise be difficult to measure, while the age of onset would either be similar or perhaps overshadowed by the expertise gained while attending university.

Factor's influencing a learner's accent
Age of onset
Communication density
Educational instruction
Media
Learner's motivation
Musical aptitude

Physiological features (Age, Gender, Vocal cord construction)
Residence within target language country

Table 2 – Factors influencing a learner's accent

1.4 Comparing the distinctive features of the British and American accent

As the research focuses on the accents found within American and British media, a representative for each accent whose features were to be put forward and compared to those found within the speech recorded by the students was needed. These shall be found within what one might call British or English English and American English. Interestingly, when considering the level of educated speech and writing, there are relatively few differences in grammar between the varieties. (Trudgill, Hannah, 2017: 59) Where these two varieties examined in this thesis differ greatly, however, are their pronunciation features. For that purpose, the distinctive elements with which one can differentiate between them need to be presented on both the segmental and suprasegmental level. Therefore, in the following chapters, the features concerning vowel and consonant production, as well as word stress, intonation and rhythm differences will be presented.

1.4.1 Segmental Differences between the accents

Firstly, the more noticeable and better-known segmental features are to be considered. These concern the segments of language, which are defined as 'any linguistic unit in a sequence which may be isolated from the rest of the sequence, at any level of representation, which is described as forming sequences with others'. (Richards and Schmidt, 2002) In the context of the thesis, phonemes, which are the smallest distinct sound units in a given language are to be considered. Hence, segmental phonology deals with such segments. In this chapter, several differences between the pronunciations of specific consonants will be presented starting with the vowel pronunciation differences, after which the differences when pronouncing consonants will be shown.

1.4.1.1 Differences in vowel pronunciation

When comparing the vowel systems of the two accents, which can be seen in figure (1), one might realise that most vowels found within RP and British accents are different from those found within American English. Mainly, the three RP vowels /ɒ/, /æ/ and /ɑː/ correspond to

only two vowels in NAmEng /ɑ/ and /æ/. (Wells 1982: 119, 120) Due to this reduction and other differences, further contrasts arise, which will be displayed in this chapter.

Figure 1 – Vowel systems of RP and GenAm (Wells 1982: 119, 120)

The first difference concerns the vowel /ʌ/, which is generally closer in American English, meaning it sounds more like RP's /ə/ when it comes before /r/. Moreover, in most cases where /ʌ/ appears in British accents like RP, General American uses /ɜ:/, thus changing the pronunciation of worry *from* /ˈwʌri/ to /ˈwɜːri/ bringing it closer to the vowel used when pronouncing the terms *bird* /bɜːd/ or *word* /bɜːd/. (Collins & Mees 2003: 305)

Another distinctive feature of both accents can be heard in the pronunciation of the words such as *lot*, or *pot*. That is because the American accent utilises an unrounded vowel [ɑ] rather than British English rounded [ɒ]. Wells refers to such development as 'LOT unrounding'. A particularly striking example of this phenomenon presented by Wells is the fact that American pronunciation of the words *bother* and *father* make for a minimal pair and a rhyme, whereas for a speaker of a British accent the words include completely different vowels (/ˈbɑðɚ/ and /ˈfɑðɚ/ × /ˈbɒðə/ and /ˈfɑːðə/). (Wells 1982: 246)

While a speaker of a British accent might utilise the vowel /ɑ:/ in words such as *half* /hɑːf/ or *bath* /bɑːθ/, those who speak with an American accent tend to pronounce these words using the vowel /æ/, thus pronouncing the selected words as /hæf/ or /bæθ/ respectively. (Collins, Mees, 2003: 304)

1.4.1.2 Differences in consonant pronunciation

Although one may find several differences between the vowel systems of the two accents, the consonant systems are actually rather similar, as can be seen in figure (2). Not only do the two varieties show no discernable differences, but most English varieties also differ very little in the consonant systems. This does not mean that the consonant use and pronunciation is the same, however, as will be presented in the following paragraphs. (Trudgill and Hannah 2017: 9)

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Approximant	(w)				r	j	w	
Lateral approximant				l				

Figure 2 – RP consonants (Roach 2009: 242)

Perhaps the most notable difference for listeners when considering consonants is the difference in rhoticity of both accents, meaning the pronunciation of the consonant /r/. In the British accent, which is non-rhotic, the consonant remains pronounced when it is in front of a pause or a consonant, whereas for the speakers of the American accent, it is pronounced in all positions regardless of its surroundings. An example of the difference can be seen in the word *sailor* /ˈseɪ.lə, ˈseɪ.lɚ/. (Collins & Mees 2003: 304) As can be seen from the transcription, British speakers do not pronounce the /r/ and this applies to most occurrences of the consonant, unless it appears word-internally, such as in the word *drawing*, or under other specific conditions, which will be presented next (Trudgill and Hannah 2017: 19).

It is important to note that in some cases, the consonant /r/ can be pronounced by British speakers even in word-final positions. Firstly, it is pronounced when the following word begins with a vowel. Such occurrence in non-rhotic accents is called the *linking /r/* and can be seen when comparing the sentences *She lives there.* /ʃiː lɪvz ðeə/ and *There is a tree.* /ðeə**r** ɪz ə triː/. This means that all words with word-final *r* have two different pronunciations depending on the following phoneme. Another position where */r/* may occur is between two words, where the previous one ends and the following one begins with a vowel. Such pronunciation of the consonant is called *intrusive r* and may be seen in sentences, such as *The idea is…* /ðiː aɪˈdɪə-**r**-ɪz/ (Trudgill and Hannah 2017: 19).

The following feature is also considered to be a major one, in fact, Wells considers it to be one of the most defining characteristics of American pronunciation, adding that it is especially striking to the ears of a non-American. The feature he is talking about is the intervocalic consonant in words such as *bottom*, *noted* or *later*. In all these words, British speakers would pronounce the consonant as /t/ /ˈbɒtəm, ˈnəʊ.tɪd, ˈleɪ.tə/ but American pronunciation of the phoneme is usually a vocalic flap and sounds closer to what British speakers might pronounce as /d/ and is usually transcribed with a symbol /ɾ/. Due to the specific pronunciation used by American speakers, words such as *latter* and *ladder* are

homophones and are pronounced as /ˈlæt̬.ɚ/, meaning they sound exactly the same and can be discerned only based on the context in which they appear. (Wells 1982, 248-249).

Last highly discernable feature which distinguishes both accents is the pronunciation of words such as *assume*, *nuke* or *new*. While speakers of Standard British English and similar accents might pronounce these words with an audible /j/ sound before /u/, the speakers of General American have foregone the consonant in such environments. Such pronunciation can be heard specifically after consonants /t/, /d/, /n/, /s/, /z/, /l/, /θ/ and American speakers would only say /u/, although it does not apply to all, as Wells informs us that some speakers, mainly of the eastern and southern accents found in the United States, do still produce the /ju/ sound, or the diphthong /ɪu/ in these words. This means that the aforementioned words would be pronounced as /əˈsjuːm, njuːk, njuː/ in BrE and /əˈsuːm, nuːk, nuː/ in the American accent. (Wells 1982, 247)

1.4.2 Suprasegmental Differences between the accents

The differences between the accents do not, however, end with the segmental features of language, as the individual properties of syllables and other, larger units of speech, which extend more than one successive minimal element, are to be concerned. These elements within language are known as suprasegmentals and include several linguistic functions, which are to be introduced in the following chapters, alongside their differences when considering the two selected English accents. These include stress, intonation, rhythm, pitch, tone or pace of speech. (Jones 2006, 388) Although the accents vary in these elements as well, the individual features might be lesser known and perhaps even less audible for listeners.

1.4.2.1 Stress patterns within the accent

Firstly, the stress patterns of the accents are to be introduced, as these vary within the varieties. In this case, stress is to be considered a suprasegmental feature, whose domain is a syllable, rather an individual consonant or a vowel within it. As Hannah and Trudgill (2008) present, the Standard American Accent tends to preserve secondary stress in words, and thus having more fully-realised vowels, an example of which can be seen in the words *secretary* as in British accent, it tends to be pronounced /ˈsek.rə.tr.i/ with only one syllable stressed, as opposed to the American pronunciation of the word /ˈsek.rəˌter.i/, which includes secondary stress in the penultimate syllable. This creates a characteristically different rhythm for American pronunciation when compared to the British and other

varieties of the English language. Similarly, they conclude that a general American tendency towards strong initial stress may be the main influencing factor behind vowel alterations between the use of stressed and unstressed vowel forms in the weakly-stressed initial syllables, such as in the word *retain* /rəˈteɪn, rɪˈteɪn/ (Hannah & Trudgill, 2008, 56)

Some words in their respective accents have a different syllable stressed altogether. When analysing the British and American variety, several groups of these words are to be considered. The first group with varying stressed syllables are French loanwords, however, these can be divided into two categories. First are two-syllable words, in which case the British accent stresses the first syllable, while the speakers of the American accent put stress on the ultimate syllable, examples of which can be seen in the words *adult* /ˈæd.ʌlt, əˈdʌlt/, *café* /ˈkæf.eɪ, ˌkæfˈeɪ/, *debris* /ˈdeb.riː, dəˈbriː/, *garage* /ˈgær.ɑːʒ or gær.ɪdʒ, gəˈrɑːʒ/, or *vaccine* /ˈvæksiːn, vækˈsiːn/. Interestingly, there are some words, such as *moustache* /məˈstɑːʃ, ˈmʌs.tæʃ/ or *address* /əˈdres, ˈæd.res/, where the exact opposite, i.e. Americans putting stress on the first syllable, occurs. The second group concerns mostly 3-syllable, (although some 2-syllable, such as *address* fall within this category) words where British speakers emphasise the first syllable, whereas American ones put stress on the last one. These include *negligée* /ˈneg.lɪ.ʒeɪ, ˌneg.lɪˈʒeɪ/, *nonchalant* /ˈnɒn.ʃəl.ənt, ˌnɑːn.ʃəˈlɑːnt/ or *cigarette* /ˈsɪgəˌret, ˌsɪgərˈet/ (Hannah & Trudgill, 2008, 57).

Furthermore, several polysyllabic words ending in suffixes –ory or –ary normally have stress on the first or second syllable within British English, whilst the penultimate syllable is reduced. This is not always the case, as some BrE speakers do not reduce the syllable, although in which case it is never stressed. In American English, however, these words retain a secondary stress on the penultimate syllable. Examples of such pronunciation can be seen in the words *auditory* /ˈɔː.dɪ.t(ə)r.i, ˈɑː.dəˌtɔːr.i/, *commentary* /ˈkɒm.ən.t(ə)r.i, ˈkɑː.mənˌter.i/, or *lavatory* /ˈlæv.ə.t(ə)r.i, ˈlæv.əˌtɔːr.i/. In some cases, the primary stress is also moved. These include 4-syllable words, where a speaker of British English might emphasise the second syllable, while reducing the penultimate one whereas an American would emphasise both, with secondary stress placed at the latter. Here, words such as *laboratory* /ləˈbɒr.ə.t(ə)r.i, ˈlæb.rəˌtɔːr.i//, *capillary* /kəˈpɪl.ər.i, ˈkæp.əˌler.i/ and *ancillary* /ænˈsɪl.(ə)r.i, ˈæn.səˌler.i/, can be presented as examples. The same difference can be observed in words ending with the suffix –mony (Hannah & Trudgill, 2008: 57).

1.4.2.2 Isochrony of the two accents

Another suprasegmental feature which may be different in certain English accents is isochrony, which is defined by Wells (2006) as the presumed rhythmic division of time into equal portions by a language. Matthews (2007) further distinguishes two main categories of rhythm within linguistics, which are syllable-timed and stress-timed rhythm. Firstly, syllable-timed languages or accents are those, whose syllables take up approximately the same amount of time within speech. Examples of languages utilising the syllable-timed rhythm are Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Italian or Korean. On the other hand, within stress-timed languages or varieties, syllables may last different amounts of time, although there is thought to be a constant amount of time between consecutive stressed syllables, while examples of languages in the stress-timed rhythm category include Russian, Swedish, Dutch or Catalan. (Wells, 2002: 3)

Generally speaking, the English language and a majority of its accents fall within the category of stress-timed rhythm, including the two varieties analysed in this thesis, those being the American and British accents. There are, however, some English dialects which show features of syllable-timed rhythm, which include Jamaican English, Chicano English, African American Vernacular English or Indian English. It is important to note that these accents have been influenced by other languages found within the country or area in which it is spoken and often create difficulties in comprehension on the part of speakers of other English varieties (Hannah & Trudgill, 2006: 133). When focusing on the two accents, there are some differences to consider, as Collins and Mees (2003) present, American English tends to lengthen stressed vowels and has a generally slower rate of delivery, which to a British speaker's ear might sound as 'drawled'. On the other hand, British English, with its tendency to reduce or eliminate weakly stressed vowels lends itself to a somewhat more rapid rate of delivery and might strike an American listener as 'clipped'. (Collins, Mees, 2003: 310)

1.4.2.3 Intonation and pitch

Lastly, it is important to present the role of intonation in the English language and its differences in the accents. The term intonation denotes a variation in pitch, which is defined as lower or higher sounds allocated to phonemes within a language. Its function may be to denote the speaker's attitude or emotions, but its more relevant linguistic purpose is to add additional meaning to what has been conveyed by segmental phonemes. Furthermore, in some languages, it is possible to use pitch differences to distinguish the dictionary meaning

of words. Languages, where such function of pitch is present, are known as tone languages and include Mandarin or Ewe, a three-tone language spoken in Ghana and Togo. Languages such as English, French or German do not, however, use pitch to indicate dictionary meaning. Therefore, pitch variations take the form of intonation, while intonation tunes operate over complete clauses or sentences, as opposed to singular words. Intonation can also provide extra grammatical information not conveyed by the bare text, or it can help organise the structure of conversations, as it may convey a speaker has finished or that there is more to come. (Collins, Mees, 2010: 246-247)

Most features ascribed to intonation in British English can be linked to General American as well. However, there is one distinct difference when considering the intonation of both accents. That is that the American accent tends to have fewer rapid pitch changes characteristic of RP, and rises and falls in pitch are more spread out over the whole tune. Due to the difference, a British speaker may describe the American accent as monotonous, whereas the British accent might seem exaggerated to Americans. (Collins, Mees, 2010: 309)

1.5 The Transatlantic Accent

Despite the aforementioned differences between the accents that have evolved over the isolated use of the two language varieties, there is an accent that, in a way, connects the two. That is because it carries marks of both a British accent, namely Received Pronunciation, and the American accent, hence its geographical name, alluding to a place somewhere between the two countries. However, it differs from these as it is synthetic, rather than being naturally evolved as the majority of other accents. (Queen 2015, 241) Due to its blending of both the American and the British pronunciation variety, it poses an interesting phenomenon for the student's accent to compare to, as they are also influenced by both accents which have ultimately given birth to the Transatlantic variety. This, paired with the hypothesis of students portraying both features, might indicate towards a Transatlantic-like accent being spoken by the students.

The Transatlantic, nowadays also known as the mid-Atlantic accent, traces its origins into the mid-19th century, when upper-class communities, usually located on the East coast of the United States opted to use features found within Received Pronunciation, which was seen as an accent of the high society in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the accent is thought to have its creator, an Australian linguist William Tilly, who proposed a speech pattern, which

combined features found within New England at the time and RP. As it was called at the time, World English was clearly intended as a class-accent corresponding to being used by those who are *educated*, *cultivated*, or even *cultured*. (Knight 1997, 160) Interestingly, the differentiation between accents adopted in public and private schools can be seen, or rather heard, in the utterances of some prominent figures of American history. (Labov, Ash & Boeberg 2006, 47) For instance, Thomas Edison, an attendee of a public school and later on a highly regarded inventor, showed features of a rhotic accent. Contrastingly, William McKinley, the 25th president of the United States of America and a former pupil of highly regarded private schools, clearly spoke with a non-rhotic and overall Mid-Atlantic quality when speaking. Both of these personalities were born and raised in Ohio. (Metcalf 2004, 144-148)

The use of the Transatlantic accent was particularly prevalent from the 1930s through the late 1950s, namely in the film industry, where it can be heard in movies such as *Penny Serenade* (1941) or *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and where it gained its current status. The accent did, however, ultimately fell out of favour as the film industry moved away from studio control of actors, directors and writers. (Queen 2015, 241) As Labov (2006, 47) mentions, such accent was employed as a model of correct, international English by schools of speech and acting up until the end of World War II. Afterwards, the accent, inevitably connected with higher society, all but disappeared even among those who have spoken it the most. This is because Americans have ultimately disassociated themselves from the way of speech of the presumed elite. (McColl 2012, 26) Nowadays, such features are often subject to ridicule, as can be seen on the example of former Democratic presidential candidate Marianne Williamson, who has been described to have a unique accent, closely related to that of the Mid-Atlantic. An article found in the periodical *The Guardian* has described Williamson as having a '*beguiling mid-Atlantic accent that makes her sound as if she has walked straight off the set of a Cary Grant movie.*' (Mahdawi 2016)

1.5.1 Pronunciation features of the Transatlantic accent

In the next two sections, some of the defining features of the Transatlantic accent are to be presented, beginning with vowel sounds and continuing with the consonant pronunciation found within speakers of the accent. As it is a now rarely used accent, the thesis will adhere to the handbook created by the American vocal coach and acting teacher Edith Skinner, who created it for actors to use usually on stage when recreating historical characters.

1.5.1.1 Distinctive vowel features of the Transatlantic accent

The vowel /i/ at the end of words such as *happy* or *sherry* is not tensed and is therefore pronounced as /ɪ/ found within words such as KIT, as opposed to /iː/ found within SEAT. This also extends to –i, –y, and sometimes –e, –ie, and –ee in other positions in words, for example *cities* /cɪtɪs/ or *remark* /rɪmaːk/. (Skinner, Monich & Mansell 1990, 247)

Within the Mid-Atlantic accent, the so-called TRAP-BATH split can be found, which can also be observed when comparing the British and American varieties. Here, however, while some words such as *bath* have undergone such change, meaning they are pronounced as /bath/, others have kept their RP pronunciation, for example *father* /ˈfɑː.ðə/. The pronunciation of the former corresponds to neither of the accents presented in the previous part of the thesis, as American speakers would pronounce it as /bæθ/. (Skinner, Monich & Mansell 1990, 101)

When pronouncing the words *thought* and *force* a speaker using the Transatlantic accent would pronounce the vowels found within the words differently, namely as / ɔː/ and /ɔə/. This is also true for speakers of the General American and other rhotic accents, while it does not correspond to the pronunciation described within RP. (Skinner, Monich & Mansell 1990, 182)

Further feature ascribed to the Transatlantic accent, is the distinction made by the speakers when pronouncing the words *palm* and start, as the two vowels within the words are distinguished. As mentioned by Skinner, (1990, 182) the former of the two words is realised as /ɑː/, while the latter as /ɑə/. Due to the difference, words such as *spa* and *alms* are pronounced as /spɑː/ and /ɑːmz/, while words *spar* and *arms* are pronounced as /spɑə/ and /ɑəmz/, respectively.

A similar variation can be observed in the pronunciation of the words *father* and *bother*, in which the 'a' in *father* is unrounded, whereas 'o' in *brother* is, and which rhyme in American English /ˈfɑːðɚ, ˈbɑːðɚ/, but do not in neither RP nor in the Transatlantic variety /ˈfɑː.ðə, ˈbɒðə/. (Skinner, Monich & Mansell 1990, 100)

1.5.1.2 Distinctive consonant features of the Transatlantic accent

As was mentioned above, the accent combines some features of both the British and the American accent. When considering the features established as crucial for those two accents, it is important to note that the most distinct feature of the Transatlantic accent is its non-rhoticity, meaning its speakers do not pronounce the consonant *r*, unless found under specific

conditions. *Linking r* is also used, as in the British accent, although *intrusive r* was seen as an unwanted feature (Skinner, Monich & Mansell 1990, 100).

Another way in which the Transatlantic accent mimics Received Pronunciation and other British accents, is the pronunciation of the consonant /t/. This is in direct opposition to the way an American speaker would pronounce it, as they would opt for the pronunciation closer to /d/. Furthermore, when surrounded why vowels, such as in the word *winter*, an American speaker would utilise a so-called flapped /t/, bringing the pronunciation closer to that of *winner* /ˈwɪnə/. This is not a feature taught to those wishing to speak in the Transatlantic accent, as they would be presented with a "lightly aspirated" /t/ in its place. (Skinner, Monich & Mansell, 1990, pp. 194, 202, 250)

Finally, the accent resists what is by linguists called yod-dropping, i.e. the omission of /j/ after certain consonants. This is once again a feature taken over from Received Pronunciation, where the consonant /j/ occurs after words such as *duke*, or *tissue*. (Skinner, Monich & Mansell 1990, 308)

Ultimately, the accent shares majority of its features with the sociolect found in the United Kingdom known as Received Pronunciation, while also including some features of the American accent. This connection can be linked to the creators of the accent, who were inspired by the 'proper' sounding British variety attributed to the high society of its country. This combination of the two accents which may influence the students analysed in the survey the most lends itself to a possible comparison made between the features of the accent listed here and the respondents' utterances.

2 Methodology of research

The practical section comprises the actual research done for the thesis. Here, several crucial points are to be presented. These include the aims of the analysis, its hypothesis and ultimately the participants and methods chosen for the analysis alongside its findings.

2.1 Research background

Although my colleagues and I have undergone a thorough linguistic education, our accents were never properly determined, despite the fact that the topic of language varieties had been discussed several times. Furthermore, although one might think they speak with a certain accent, the reality might be different, as there are many factors which have shaped any particular speaker's way of pronunciation. The research conducted for the purposes of the thesis aims to shed light on what might influence a person's accent. In the theoretical part, the topic of accent and language variety had been presented, alongside the main influences for both native speakers and learners of English as a second language. In the following chapters, the progress made by the research is to be introduced alongside its methods, aims and hypothesis. Ultimately, aiding learners and teachers in better understanding accent acquisition is the ultimate hope for the thesis.

2.2 Aims of the Analysis

The particular aim of the research conducted for the thesis was twofold. First was to ascertain whether media is to be considered as a major factor which might influence an accent of students attending the Technical University of Liberec when compared with other aspects of accent acquisition. The second was to analyse what features of the accents presented were found most within their speech. This meant researching the particular sources of media, analysing the students' accents found within their speech and comparing the findings to other influences they had stated to have been present in their educational process and outside it.

Ultimately, several research aims were set out which summarise the analysis done and which can be seen below:

1. Which country's media takes precedence in students' consumption, when considering TV shows, YouTube videos and news channels?
2. Will these preferences coincide with the features found when analysing the speech analysis?

3. Can English-speaking media be considered a significant factor in students' accent acquisition?

4. What features will be pronounced in the two accents the most?

5. Can the production of some students be labelled as that of the Transantlantic accent?

2.3 Participants

In this chapter, the selected participants for the research conducted in the thesis are to be presented. The initial questionnaire reached 44 students from the English teaching Bachelor's and Master's programs at the Technical University in Liberec. Of these, 8 were selected for the further part of the research, as the answers they had provided in the questionnaire shown which accent dominates the media they consume, or they had regularly consumed the media assumed to have the accents observed. Another 4 respondents were chosen based on no bias shown within their answers, thus being perfect candidates for the 'mixed' group. The ultimate composition of the groups consisted of 4 speakers per group, whose utterances were analysed and who have participated in the post-recording survey.

2.4 Methods of Data Collection

The data required for the investigation of set aims and the hypothesis were obtained by means of three main research methods – two questionnaires and a voice recording, all of which were done by the students of the university. Firstly, *a quantitative questionnaire* had been created, in which the students were tasked to answer several questions regarding the English-speaking media they followed and the time dedicated to these forms of media.

Based on their preferences, three main groups of students were selected for further analysis, conducted by means of an *auditory analysis*. These selected students were sent a prepared text with a set of instructions, according to which they were supposed to read, record and send back the recording for analysis. To ensure better accuracy when analysing the students' utterances, two other students with relative knowledge of English Phonology and a C2 level of English alongside a native English speaker from Britain, who is a teacher at an elementary school were introduced as annotators to substantiate the findings. Such a method of annotation by non-native speakers had been utilised by Potapova and Potapov (2018, 496) and found to be 80-86% accurate. To achieve this, the text contained several words with features, which should be pronounced differently in the two accents presented for analysis. Therefore, the accent features produced by the speakers could be assessed.

Finally, the 12 students analysed in the previous step received a second questionnaire, which in order not to confuse the two, shall be named the *post-recording survey*. In it, the students were met with several more questions concerning other possible factors contributing to accent acquisition. These include their motivation and own effort towards a selected accent, interaction with native speakers and instructions by teachers and tutors encountered throughout their educational process.

The results of both questionnaires were then compared with the analysed accent production provided by the students and conclusions were drawn based on the answers received.

2.4.1 Questionnaire

The first part of the practical analysis is a questionnaire, in which students were asked to answer questions regarding their English-speaking media consumption, as it can be seen as one of the main ways students' accent can be influenced. Through the analysis of the answers, several students were selected, and later on subjected to further analysis, which will be presented in the later parts of the thesis. The media covered by the questionnaire was selected based on its repeated, consistent exposure, meaning that those sources which the students daily, weekly or overall episodically took precedence. For that reason, TV shows originating in the two countries and thus bearing the marks of the two accents, alongside YouTube personalities and news outlets were identified as focal points for the research. All questions encountered by the students can be seen in the appendix of the thesis.

The presumption upon which the questionnaire and overall hypothesis stand, is that media is to be considered a factor when acquiring an accent, especially considering the research showing people may create emotional connections with the characters they see on screen, thus creating a specific kind of interpersonal interaction. Therefore it is presumed that those who watch more media from a certain country might acquire said accent, especially if they do so on a regular basis.

In the first part, the respondents were asked about TV series seen with original audio alongside the approximate amount of weekly episodes. They were presented with two lists, in which they were to choose which of the presented TV shows they had seen with original audio. Among the first list were ten very popular British TV series, and among the second list were television series produced in the United States. After each list, the respondents were tasked with selecting approximately how many episodes of said shows they had watched per

week to assess their long-term exposure to them, ranging from zero episodes to more than 10 episodes.

Second part of the questionnaire focused on students' own choices when watching YouTube, as the respondents were asked to name up to three English speaking YouTubers they watch the most, while the following question inquired how much time they allocate to these channels per week, ranging from no time at all to more than 5 hours per week.

The last media source chosen for the thesis was news outlets and channels. For this, 4 companies focusing on media coverage were listed and the students were asked to select which of these they prefer, or at least would prefer, as their main source of English news coverage. The respondents were able to select from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), a well-established and renowned British news source, Cable News Network (CNN), a familiar American news company, their competitor in FOX News, and Vox, another American news media chosen for its YouTube presence. Naturally, the students were able to answer that they preferred none of the options mentioned in the question. Similarly to the previous parts, the students then had to choose how much time per week they would dedicate to watching news in English from their selected outlets.

2.4.2 Analysis of students' recorded speech

The second and central part of the thesis focused on analysing the spoken utterances of selected students based on their responses to the previous questionnaire. These students were divided into three groups, based on the main influence of the media they consumed and are as follows: the British-influenced group, the American-influenced group, and the Mixed group. The conditions under which these students were selected are explained in the previous chapter, alongside the results of the questionnaire. These were then sent an e-mail with instructions and a text for them to read and record. In the instructions, the students were asked to read the text included in the e-mail naturally whilst recording themselves and to send back the result.

The text selected for the students was inspired by a paragraph which can be found on a website called *The speech accent archive*. This website includes hundreds of recordings of different speakers reading a predetermined text, which attempts to include the majority of sounds found within the English language. However, the accent analysis conducted by the thesis focused on several specific differences between the two varieties and therefore, the

text had to be altered and ultimately made anew. Finally, the text sent to the students to record is as follows:

*"Hi, **Peter**! I **heard** you've been to **France** and **assume** you enjoyed it. I am **getting better** after the accident, but I need a few **favours** from you, don't **worry**, they **aren't hard**. Please go to the **store** and buy a **lot of butter**, **four bananas**, some **water**, **salt**, **coffee**, a pack of <u>cigarettes</u> and **perhaps** a snack **for yourself**. **Your brother** is waiting **there already** with some **curry**. **Lastly**, please **park** the **car** in the <u>garage</u> and write that **letter** to **Bob**, don't **forget** he has a **new** <u>address,</u> **far** away from his previous one."*

Within the text there are several words which should be pronounced differently based on the accent of the reader, which can be seen in **bold**. Furthermore, those words with different suprasegmental features are <u>underlined</u>. Each segmental differing feature found within the text has been included at least twice, so as to exclude the possibility of mismarking one's pronunciation based on one occurrence.

Importantly, the students were not informed that the recording focused on their accent so as to eliminate any possible bias they might have had before speaking, and with which they could have ultimately skewed the data. This means that if the students had known their accent production was analysed, they would alter their speech so as to speak in a taught, rather than their natural way.

The chart below (3) illustrates all the features of contrasting pronunciations by the two accents present in the text. Each feature within the text is shown with an example alongside its phonetic transcription and the number of times it appears in the paragraph. Further along, a similar chart will be displayed, only with the results of individual speakers being shown as well.

Segmental features expected of a British speaker			Segmental features expected of an American speaker		
Different vowels	Example /Pronunciation/	Count	Different vowels	Example /Pronunciation/	Count
ɒ	Lot /lɒt/	4	ɑː	Lot /lɑːt/	4
ɑː	France /frɑːns/	4	æ	France /fræns/	4
ʌ	Worry /ˈwʌri/	2	ɝ	Worry /ˈwɝːi/	2
ɔː	Water /ˈwɔːtər/	2	ɑ	Water /ˈwɑːt̬ɚ/	2
Different consonants			Different consonants		
non-rhotic accent	Forget /fəˈget/	22	rhotic accent	Forget /fɚˈget/	22
juː	New /njuː/	2	uː	New /nuː/	2
t	Getting /ˈgetɪŋ/	6	t̬	Getting /ˈget̬ɪŋ/	6
Suprasegmental features			Suprasegmental features		
Different stress in words	Cigarette /ˌsɪg.ərˈet/	3	Different stress in words	Cigarette /ˈsɪg.ə.ret/	3

Table 3 – Overview of the pronunciation features found within the text

Upon receiving the students' recordings, their utterances and enunciations of the marked words were analysed and compared to the accented pronunciations set previously alongside the pronunciations of native speakers found on YouTube. Each respondent's pronunciation of a word was established as showing signs of either British, American or other accent and accounted for in the chart. Ultimately, the overall performance of the speaker was analysed to determine which marks of which accent they produce more. As has been established in the hypothesis created for the research, it is assumed that most speakers will show marks of both of the accents presented, despite a possible preference for the media they consume.

2.4.3 Post-recording Survey

Once the students have sent in their recorded speech, they were asked to participate in a second online survey which aimed to further investigate all the factors which could have influenced the accents produced by them. The survey consisted of several open-ended questions, to which the respondents could have answered in their own words based on their own experience, and some multiple choice questions, where students were made to choose

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from a number of options, usually including *I don't know*, *Neither*, or *Other*, after which they were able to write the answer themselves. The entire survey can be seen in the appendix of the thesis, while the individual responses will be presented in a later chapter.

Even though the students may be aware of their accent, it was important not to ask what accent they have, rather what accent they think they have. This is because, in spite of some students being conscious of the way they speak and study English, it is not guaranteed that the students are able to correctly recognise a given accent when they hear one. Therefore, for the questions to be of more analytical value, they had to be focused more on terms well understood and known by the students.

Firstly, the survey focused on a very important factor of a non-native student's accent production, which is the respondent's own attitude towards an accent and their overall consciousness of it. The students were, therefore, asked several further questions which might shed light on the possible motivation behind their accent production. The first question asked what accent they believe to have, while the second inquired if it is the accent they would like to have and whether they have intentionally influenced their accent. The final question of the questionnaire introduced several criteria, based on which the respondents were asked to rate the accents, so as to see their overall attitude towards the accents.

Afterwards, the students were asked about their own interaction with native speakers and a possible stay in an English speaking country, as these factors are thought to be significant based on the literary research. The questions included in this section concerned the place of origin of native speakers with which they might have interacted during education, their possible stay in a foreign country and the average time of these interactions and stays.

Last section of the questionnaire concerned the instructional influence, which coincides with pronunciation teaching experienced during education. The questions included in the section focused on whether the respondents were taught any accent during their educational process, how often the teacher dedicated any amount of time on teaching pronunciation and the amount of time in those lessons itself.

3 Results and analysis

In the following several chapters, the results of each of the methods presented and utilised within the thesis are to be presented. Their findings are shown alongside an analysis, while the recording analysis is presented with individual and average results.

3.1 Questionnaire results

Ultimately, the questionnaire garnered 44 responses from students of the Technical University of Liberec of different classes. Of these, 12 were selected to partake in the further parts of the study, in which their speech would be recorded for an analysis and the post-recording survey would be conducted. Here, further factors which might have influenced their accent were investigated. They were chosen based on their answers, as they were either leaning heavily towards US production, or the British one.

To further distinguish the findings of the analysis, 4 students were chosen for the so-called mixed group. Respondents whose answers indicate some interest in English-speaking media, but do not view one as their first preference, were selected for this part of the survey. These conditions should secure that their accent had not been affected in one specific way, as opposed to the aforementioned groups. Their role in the research was to pose as a control group, with which the first and second groups' recordings were compared. Furthermore, they could highlight the patterns and features the other two groups would manifest and perhaps bolster the claim that media has an influence on a speaker by not having one definite way of pronunciation.

The first question concerned solely those TV series, which were British-based. Due to the nature of the third question, which included American-based TV series, these two questions will be joined together for clarity. As can be seen from the results in figures (3 & 4), the overall numbers are rather similar as, on average, each British TV show had been seen by 10,8 students, while each American show had been seen by 10,1. The most viewed option turned out to be *Game of Thrones*, watched by 21 respondents, and *Stranger Things*, which was named by the same amount of people. These were closely followed by the American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*, with 17 responses. Interestingly, 11 students have mentioned that they had seen none of the British TV series. In contrast only 9 respondents have chosen the 'None of the above' option for the American list.
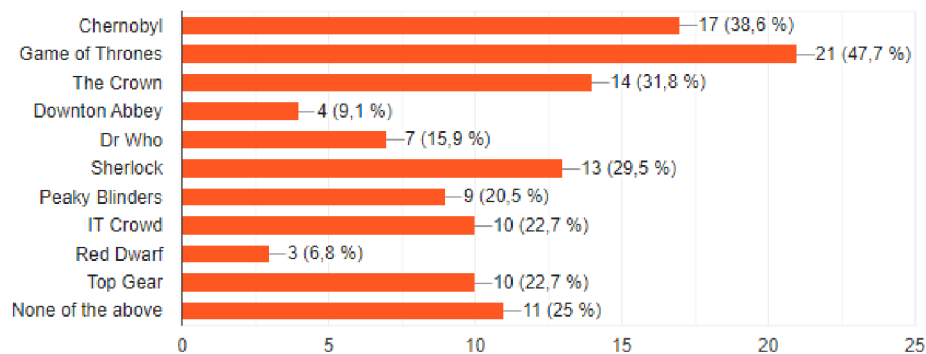
Figure 3 – Overall answers for Q1
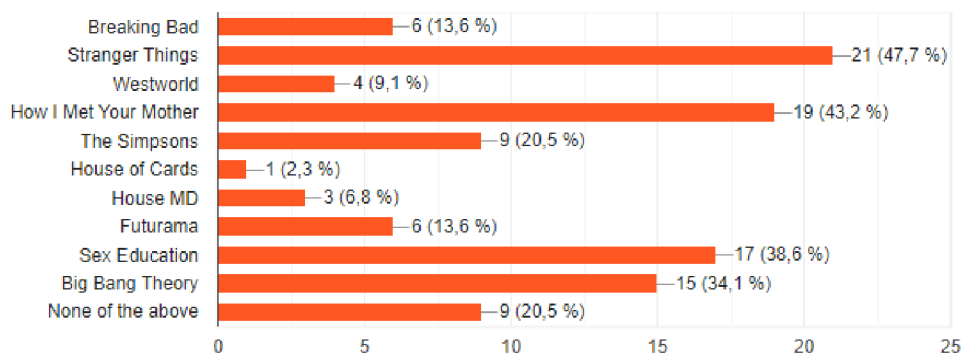
Figure 4 – Overall answers for Q3

The second and fourth questions asked the students how much time they allocate towards watching the previously mentioned British and American TV series respectively. Again, for the sake of clarity and comparability, the results of both of these questions will be grouped together. As can be inferred from the results shown in figures (5 & 6), the British programs, while slightly more popular overall, had a smaller amount of total episodes watched, as 47,7% of students had allocated solely 1-3 episodes per week to them and 25% had viewed none of the options presented. Conversely, the American TV shows, while perhaps less popular overall, were viewed more on a weekly basis, as 54,5% of respondents (about 24 students) said they watched three or more episodes weekly, as opposed to 27,3% of the corresponding metric for the British shows (around 12).

How many episodes of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched per week?

Kopirovat

44 odpovědí

- 1-3 episodes
- 3-5 episodes
- 5-10 episodes
- More than 10 episodes
- I don't watch these shows

11,4% 25% 13,6% 47,7%
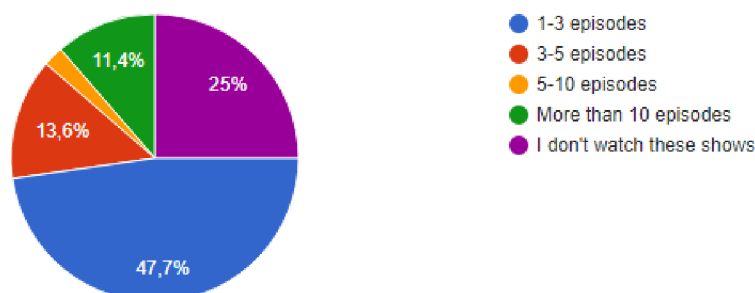
Figure 5 – Overall results of Q3

How many episodes of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched per week?

Kopirovat

44 odpovědí

- 1-3 episodes
- 3-5 episodes
- 5-10 episodes
- More than 10 episodes
- I don't watch these shows

13,6% 20,5% 18,2% 22,7% 25%
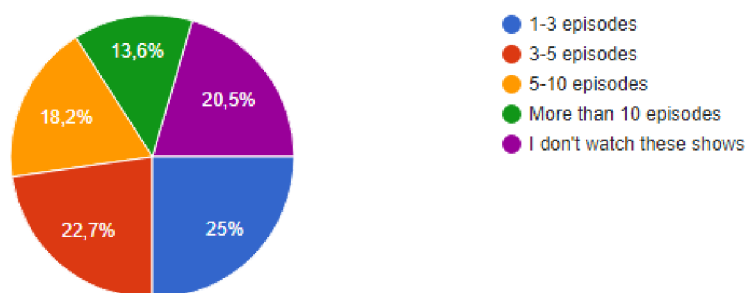
Figure 6 – Overall results of Q4

Following two questions focused on a purely internet-based media, which is YouTube and personalities operating on it, so-called YouTubers. The answers given by the students were analysed and divided into three categories. Either the YouTuber was from the United States of America and therefore deemed to speak with an American accent and labelled as 'US', or they had a British accent, in which case they were labelled as 'UK'. Some YouTubers mentioned were from a different English-speaking country, such as Australia or Ireland, or they were non-native English speakers, in which case they were labelled as 'Other'. For this question, two data outputs are to be considered. Firstly, the overall results, which can be seen in figure (7), showing the total preference of individual respondents. Secondly, the nationalities of all YouTubers are presented for the research. As can be seen from the results, if the students had a preference for only one nation, it would be the American YouTubers,

who consisted of most, if not all followed YouTube channels for 39,5% of respondents. On the other hand, mostly or purely British creators are watched by only 9,4% of students.
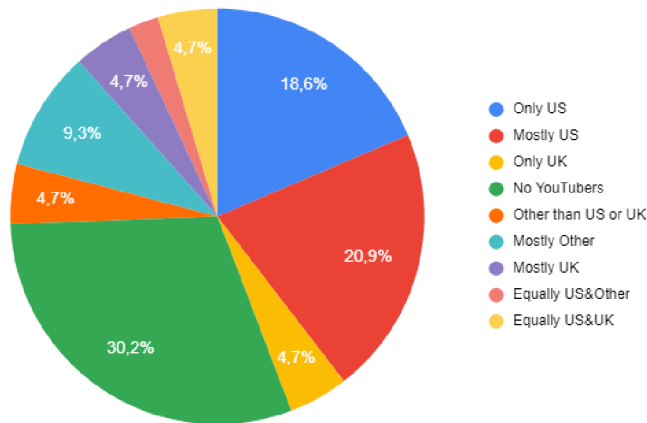
Figure 7 – Overall YouTuber preferences of individual students

All in all, 72 YouTubers were listed in total. The largest portion of them, consisting of 35 YouTube channels mentioned, a full 48,6%, were based in the United States and marked as the main source of YouTube creators followed by the students. Meanwhile, 19 (26,4%) of the channels mentioned were run by a person from the United Kingdom, placing second with almost half the amount of American creators. Finally, 18 channels, (25%) of the creators mentioned were from countries other than the United States or the United Kingdom, these include people from Australia, and New Zealand, but also Sweden, Finland and the Czech Republic. Although in some cases, the accents presented by non-native YouTubers approached a native-like level, their influence would be negligible when compared with the two countries, as individual nationalities made up a small amount, while presenting too many various accents to be taken into account.
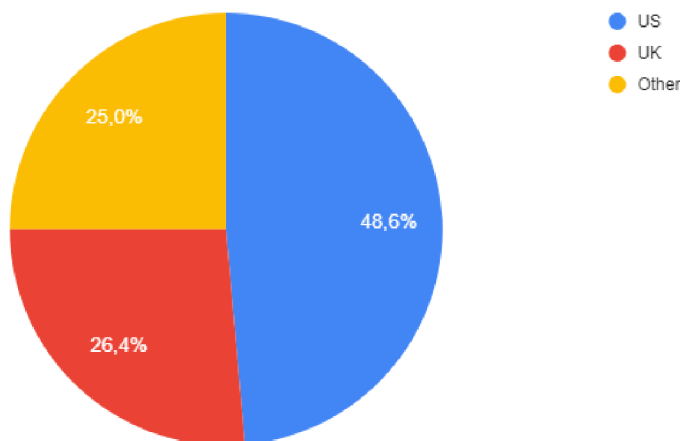
Figure 8 – Nationalities of the YouTubers mentioned by the students

After naming three of their most viewed YouTubers, the students were asked to answer how much time per week they spend watching the personalities they had listed. The students were able to choose from 5 options ranging from not watching any English YouTube channels at all, to more than 5 hours a week. Of the 44 respondents, only 2 (4,5%) have admitted to watching more than 5 hours a week, which translates to about an hour a day, a rather considerable amount of time allocated to one media source. On the other hand, the most selected answer with 14 respondents (31,8%) was 1-3 hours of weekly YouTube entertainment. Close second were two equally selected responses with 25%, which consisted of those who selected no YouTubers at all or committed less than one hour per week to their preferred channels. Lastly, 6 (13,6%) respondents claimed they allocate 3-5 hours a week to the YouTubers mentioned.
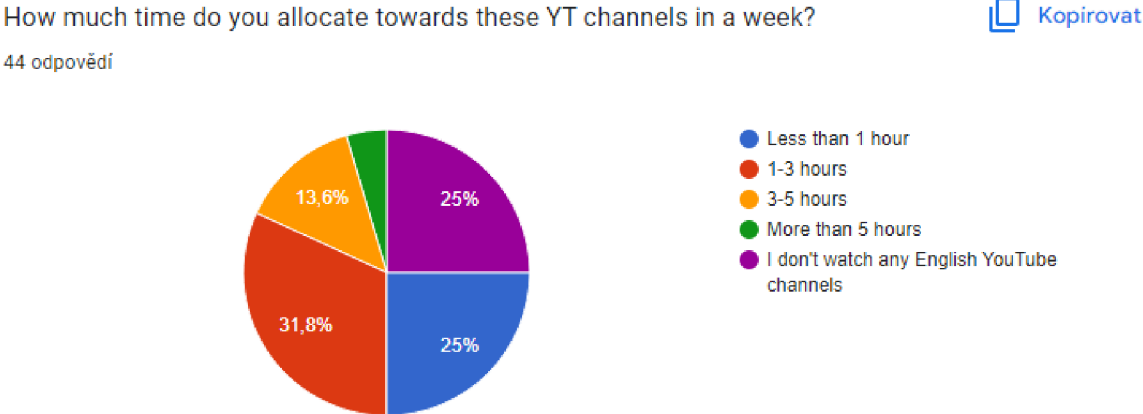
Figure 9 – Amount of time allocated to the mentioned YouTubers per week

The last section of the questionnaire focused on news media sources which would be preferred by the students. For these, the news outlets thought to be best known by the students were selected, with the final list consisting of British-based BBC, American CNN, FOX News and Vox news outlets. Of those, the most viewed by respondents was the British Broadcast Company, which garnered a major amount of responses with 30, which translates to 68,2% of all respondents. A second choice preferred, as per the responses in the questionnaire, was CNN with 11 votes. Further results can be seen in Figure (10) below.
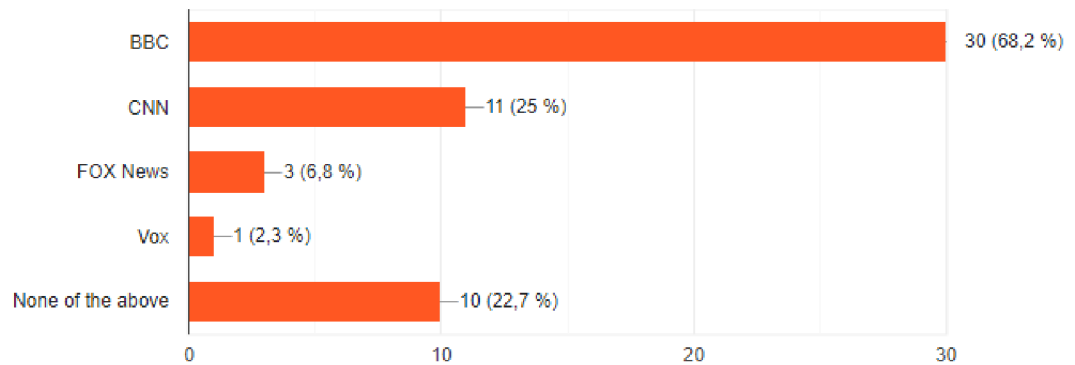
Figure 10 – List of media outlets preferred by the students

Ultimately, the students were asked to estimate how much time they allocate towards watching news in English per day. They were given options ranging from not watching English news at all, through 15 or 60 minutes a day or a couple of hours. The results are as follows. The most selected answer, with 28 of the 44 responses, accounting for 63,6%, was 'Less than 15 minutes'. Meanwhile, 13 students (29,5%) revealed they watch no English media at all. Finally, 3 respondents (6,8%) mentioned they watch English news for about an hour a day, which would pose a rather significant influence. No students have selected the option of watching 'A couple of hours' of news sources per day.
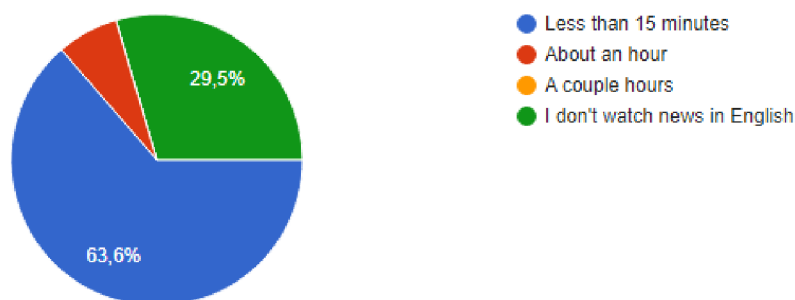
Figure 11 – Amount of time per day assigned to English media by the students

The overall results of the questionnaire show that the majority of students have no discernable preference for one nation's media as the individual answers given by the students regularly included both countries' media sources. This is supported by the fact that every show had been seen on average by a similar amount of students, although the number of

episodes watched differed in favour of the American shows. If, however, a distinction must be made, it seems that American-based media is viewed more by the students, as it accounts for almost half of the YouTubers mentioned, while maintaining the same amount of TV series selected. Although the news media source most preferred by the students was the British Broadcast Channel, its viewtime allocated by the students is rather low, as most had selected either not watching any English news sources at all, or only 15 minutes on a weekly basis.

This could mean that American media is preferred by the students, but one must take into account the rather small focus the questionnaire had opted for, as only a selected amount of content for each accent was chosen based on their popularity, while there are hundreds of other TV series, movies, artists, YouTubers or other media sources the students might have seen or followed, yet were not mentioned in the questionnaire.

In order to find the individuals suitable for the recording stage, each answer sheet had been analysed independently and certain 'outliers' were sought after. To qualify for the respective category a respondent had to overwhelmingly prefer one set of the presented TV shows over the other or mentioned several YouTubers of one nationality. Ideally, the respondents' answers had mentioned more series overall and weekly episodes watched, while mentioning little to no other sources of opposite-based sources, although some had expressed watching both, while allocating more time towards one. Those who were selected as a representative of the 'mixed' category, showed no real bias, stating a similar amount of episodes and series watched. An example of a person who was put into each group can be seen in the appendix.

3.2 Analysis results

As has been established, the respondents were divided into three groups based on the answers they had given in the questionnaire, and so the individual results of their utterances shall be presented in the context of respective groups. Firstly, the group which stated their preference for British media will be presented, followed by the American group and lastly, the mixed group is to be considered. For each of their recordings, a chart is presented with all the features listed and the count of each pronunciation as provided by the respondent.

3.2.1 Individual results of the British-leaning group

The analysis begins with the utterances of those who had been allocated to the British group when mentioning their preference in media in the initial questionnaire. Their results will be seen in tables presented after the analysis of their speech.

The first speaker in the British-leaning group manifested an overwhelming influence of the British accent in their speech, as only 7,14% of the features pronounced within their recording could be declared to have been pronounced with an American accent, thus achieving the least amount of words pronounced with American features. Nevertheless, there were some occasions where the speaker did say a word with an American accent, most notably the word *curry*, which was pronounced as the American /cɜri/, as opposed to the British /ˈkʌri/. Then, in the words with varying stress the emphasis was placed on the syllables that would be usually emphasised by a British speaker as well, except for the word *garage*, which was pronounced as /ɡəˈrɑːʒ/ with the emphasis on the second syllable, observed within American speakers. Finally, the speaker utilised *linking r* when pronouncing *…your brother is….*, although its use is not represented in the chart, as the rhotic pronunciation concerns the words *heard* and *perhaps*.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	4	0	0
ɑː	æ	4	0	0
ʌ	ɝ	1	1	0
ɔː	ɑː	2	0	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	20	2	0
juː	uː	2	0	0
t	ṱ	6	0	0
Total		92,86%	7,14%	0%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		2	1	0
Total		66,66%	33,33%	0%

Table 4 – Pronunciation features of the first speaker in the British group

The results of the second representative of the group who have alleged to follow British media more than that originating in the United States can be seen in table (5) below. As can be inferred from the results, this speaker manifested a rather equal split amont the pronunciations, as only 47,62% of their utterance was in the accent closer to their preferred media. Interestingly, the student almost always, except for the word *water* utilised the consonant /t̬/ in her speech, which may be considered a highly – feature of the American accent. The utilisation of American word stress in words *cigarettes* and *garage* only further underline the overall slight inclination towards the American accent, which may have been acquired from different media, not mentioned within the questionnaire, or other sources altogether.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	4	0	0
ɑː	æ	2	2	0
ʌ	ɝ	1	1	0
ɔː	ɑː	2	0	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	9	13	0
juː	uː	1	1	0
t	t̬	1	5	0
Total		47,62%	52,38%	0%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		1	2	0
Total		33,33%	66,66%	0%

Table 5 – Pronunciation features of the second speaker in the British group

The penultimate speaker had also shown rather mixed results in their speech when concerning their accent, although based off their results, which can be seen in table (6) below, an inclination towards the British accent can be observed. Ultimately, the speaker had shown pronounced over 64% of all the features found within the text with a British accent, most notably in words such as *lot* or *Bob*, where the vowel /ɒ/ is used by British speakers. However, the biggest sway towards the American accent can be seen in the pronunciation of the consonant /r/ within the words, as without it, the overall performance would be 95% British. The speaker did, however, pronounce the consonant even in words such as *letter*, which was pronounced as /ˈletɚ/. Note the use of the British pronunciation of the consonant /t/ in the transcription. Furthermore, the stress patterns observed in the respondent's speech correspond to those found within the British accent, with the exception of the word *garage*.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	4	0	0
ɑː	æ	4	0	0
ʌ	ɚ	1	1	0
ɔː	ɑː	2	0	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	8	14	0
juː	uː	2	0	0
t	ṱ	6	0	0
Total		64,29%	35,71%	0%
				Word stress
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		2	1	0
Total		66,66%	33,33%	0%

Table 6 – Pronunciation features of the third speaker in the British group

Last student, who was placed within the group with preference for British media, had shown results listed in table (7) below. Once again, the main feature of the American accent found within their speech was the pronunciation of the consonant /r/, although their pronunciation of the words *bananas* /bəˈnæn.əz/ and *worry* /ˈwɝː.i/ had also shown marks of an American

accent. Interestingly, the speaker had emphasised all the syllables of the varying words as a British person would, thus bringing their suprasegmental accuracy to 100% of the British variety.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	4	0	0
ɑː	æ	3	1	0
ʌ	ɝ	1	1	0
ɔː	ɑː	2	0	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	5	17	0
juː	uː	2	0	0
t	ţ	6	0	0
Total		54,76%	45,24%	0%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		3	0	0
Total		100%	0%	0%

Table 7 – Pronunciation features of the fourth speaker in the British group

3.2.2 Individual results of the American-leaning group

Next, the group whose respondents have favoured American media in most or all the sources covered in the questionnaire is to be considered. Their results will be shown in charts alongside the analysis of their utterance.

First candidate of the American-leaning group showed features which are outlayed in chart (8). As can be seen, the speaker's major accent used within speech was the American accent, as almost 93% of all segmental features found within the text were delivered with an American pronunciation. In addition, the stress allocation in all words that have different stress patterns based on varieties indicated the American pronunciation of the word. The words pronounced in the British manner were *assume* /əˈsjuːm/, *after* /ˈɑːf.tɚ/, and *lastly* /ˈlɑːst.li/, although, when looking at the transcriptions, one can deduce that in some cases the speaker pronounced one feature with a British accent and another with an American one. An example of such mixing could be heard in the word *after*, where they utilised the British vowel /ɑː/, yet chose to pronounce the word-final /r/. The near flawless American accuracy continued when analysing the syllables with word stress within their speech.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	0	4	0
ɑː	æ	2	2	0
ʌ	ɝ	0	2	0
ɔː	ɑː	0	2	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	0	22	0
juː	uː	1	1	0
t	ţ	0	6	0
Total		7,14%	92,86%	0%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		0	3	0
Total		0%	100%	0%

Table 8 – Pronunciation features of the first speaker in the US group

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Next comes the analysis of the utterance spoken by the second speaker who favoured American-based media. Overall the respondent, although also utilising the American accent in the majority of the words marked for the analysis, has leaned towards the British accent significantly more than the previous one, as almost one fifth (16,67%) of all the segmental features present were read with a British accent. Just as before, some words had a combined pronunciation in some of their features, for example the words *better* and *letter*, where the respondent pronounced the letter t as /t/ - a British feature, while also pronouncing the /r/ at the end – an American feature. Words which were pronounced entirely in the British accent include *France*, *new* or *salt*. Finally, only one of the three words with varying stress was delivered with a British one, namely *address*, where the second syllable was emphasised, as corresponds with BrE.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	0	4	0
ɑː	æ	2	2	0
ʌ	ɝ	0	2	0
ɔː	ɑː	0	2	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	0	22	0
juː	uː	2	0	0
t	ṭ	3	3	0
Total		16,67%	83,33%	0%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		1	2	0
Total		33,33%	66,66%	0%

Table 9 – Pronunciation features of the second speaker in the US group

The third speaker who had recorded themselves reading the sample text had mentioned preferring American media in the first questionnaire, though their performance leaned heavily towards the British accent with 61,9% of segmental features being pronounced as such, although there still was a significant amount of words pronounced in an American accent. Surprisingly, this speaker's utterance was the most mixed of the group as they were rather inconsistent in the pronunciation of certain features, for example choosing to pronounce *France* as /frɑːns/ while later on saying *bananas* in an American accent /bəˈnænəz/. Further combining can be seen in chart (10) below. Concerning the words with different stress placement, only one word had been emphasised the way a British speaker would, namely *garage* /ˈgær.ɪdʒ/, while other words utilised the American stress allocation.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	3	1	0
ɑː	æ	3	1	0
ʌ	ɝ	1	1	0
ɔː	ɑː	1	1	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	13	9	0
juː	uː	2	0	0
t	ṭ	3	3	0
Total		61,90%	38,10%	0%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		1	2	0
Total		33,33%	66,66%	0%

Table 10 – Pronunciation features of the third speaker in the US group

The analysed utterance of the last speaker allocated to the group preferring US media can be seen in chart (11) below. Overall, their utterance was consistently American, as 83,33% of all features pronounced by them had been marked as being spoken with an American accent. Several features found within their speech had been pronounced with a British accent as well, namely the words *assume* and *new*, where the consonant /j/ can be heard. Furthermore, the speaker did pronounce *France* with the vowel /ɑː/, but chose to pronounce *after*, *lastly* and *bananas* with /æ/, where a British speaker would use the former. Their stress allocation is also to be considered as being spoken with an American accent, thus having 100% accuracy when suprasegmental features are concerned.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	2	2	0
ɑː	æ	1	3	0
ʌ	ɝ	0	2	0
ɔː	ɑː	2	0	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	0	22	0
juː	uː	2	0	0
t	ţ	0	6	0
Total		16,67%	83,33%	0%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		1	2	0
Total		33,33%	66,66%	0%

Table 11 – Pronunciation features of the fourth speaker in the US group

3.2.3 Individual results of the group with no preference in media

The last group presented in the thesis consisted of 4 speakers who have declared rather mixed preference in the media sources examined by the questionnaire. This means that they allocated a similar amount of time to a similar amount of TV shows, YouTubers and news sources originating in the two countries.

First speaker who had sent in their recorded speech within this group had pronounced the text with features which can be seen in chart (12) below. Interestingly, two counts of pronunciation which could not be allocated towards either of the accents had been found, namely the pronunciation of the word *France* /frʌns/ and *curry* /ˈkeri/. In the case of the whole recording and these two words specifically, a strong rather Czech accent, had been observed by the native speaker during analysis. Otherwise, their speech could be labelled as having more features of the British accent, although once again the pronunciation of the majority of the words where the /r/ pronunciation was observed, the speaker had pronounced it. As far as the suprasegmental features were concerned, their utterance bore signs of the American accent, for instance they pronounced the word address as /ˈæd.res/, the same way an American speaker would.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	4	0	0
ɑː	æ	3	0	1
ʌ	ɝ	0	1	1
ɔː	ɑː	2	0	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	13	9	0
juː	uː	1	1	0
t	ţ	6	0	0
Total		69,05%	26,19%	4,76%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		0	3	0
Total		0,00%	100,00%	0%

Table 12 – Pronunciation features of the first speaker in the Mixed group

The second speaker had shown a very mixed set of pronunciation features, where the American accent took precedens largely due to the rhoticity found within their speech. Besides it, the American features included words such as *France /fræns/*, *already* /ɑːlˈred.i/ or *letter* /ˈleṭ.ɚ/, although the pronunciation of those features had been varied throughout the speech, as can be seen on the /t/ versus /ˈṭ/ usage. Finally, the stress within the observed words corresponded to those found in American speakers.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	4	0	0
ɑː	æ	2	2	0
ʌ	ɚ	1	1	0
ɔː	ɑː	1	1	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	2	20	0
juː	uː	2	0	0
t	ṭ	5	1	0
Total		40,48%	59,52%	0,00%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		0	3	0
Total		0,00%	100,00%	0,00%

Table 13 – Pronunciation features of the second speaker in the Mixed group

The penultimate speaker allocated to the group had shown overall inclination towards the American accent, mainly because of all the r's which would not have been pronounced by a British speaker. Similarly, the realisation of the consonant /t/ shown by them had been marked as the American /ɾ/ in all cases found within their utterance. Despite this, the speaker had opted for the non-American pronunciation in the majority of other examined differences, such as the vowel /ɒ/ found within the British accent in words such as *lot* or *coffee*, thus bringing their overall pronunciation of the features with the British accent to a little over a quarter of all features presented (26,19%). Contrastingly, in two out of three cases, the speaker had emphasised syllables preferred by those within the British accent.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	4	0	0
ɑː	æ	3	1	0
ʌ	ɝ	1	1	0
ɔː	ɑː	1	1	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	0	22	0
juː	uː	2	0	0
t	ɾ	0	6	0
Total		26,19%	73,81%	0,00%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		2	1	0
Total		66,67%	33,33%	0%

Table 14 – Pronunciation features of the third speaker in the Mixed group

The last speaker of the mixed group had, as can be seen from the results, inclined towards the British accent, namely in the vowel and consonant pronunciation, as 61,9% of all the features observed in the analysis had been pronounced with the British accent. Interestingly,

the speaker had recorded one feature, which could not have been attributed to any of the accents. This concerns the word *worry*, where they opted to pronounce it as neither /ˈwʌr.i/ nor /ˈwɜː.i/, rather as /ˈwɒr.i/, which would coincide more with the Czech pronunciation of the vowel. The overall influence of Czech pronunciation within the whole utterance had been labelled as strong, similarly to the first speaker, although with the specific words concerned, they mostly cocrresponded with the two observed accents.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	4	0	0
ɑː	æ	4	0	0
ʌ	ɝ	1	0	1
ɔː	ɑː	1	1	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	8	14	0
juː	uː	2	0	0
t	ʈ	6	0	0
Total		61,90%	35,71%	2,38%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		0	3	0
Total		0,00%	100,00%	0%

Table 15 – Pronunciation features of the fourth speaker in the Mixed group

3.2.4 Average results of each group

Finally, the average results of each of the groups are to be presented, as they show the overall inclination observed in them. The order in which they are presented is the same as that established before. Additionally, the overall results of all speakers regardless of the group are presented and pondered upon.

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Firstly, when looking at the British group's results, one can see that their production had indeed inclined towards the British accent, although in several cases, the split between the two varieties approached 50%. This can be seen namely in the rhoticity of the speakers, i.e. the pronunciation of the consonant /r/ found within words such as *perhaps* or *heard*, where a British speaker would not pronounce it. Perhaps a bigger surprise, though, is the assumed inclination towards ɝ in words such as *worry* or *curry*, alongside the heightened number of occurences where t was pronounced as the American /ʈ/ rather than /t/. Contrastingly, all students had pronounced words such as *lot* or *coffee* with the vowel /ɒ/, which does correspond to the pronunciation shown by British speakers, just as the vowel /ɔ:/ in *water* or *already*. Finally, the suprasegmental features covered by the text had been pronounced with an American accent in 50% of the cases.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	4	0	0
ɑː	æ	3,25	0,75	0
ʌ	ɝ	1	1	0
ɔː	ɑː	2	0	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	10,5	11,5	0
juː	uː	1,75	0,25	0
t	ʈ	4,75	1,25	0
Total		64,88%	35,12%	0,00%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		1,5	1,5	0
Total		50,00%	50,00%	0,00%

Table 16 – Average results of the speakers within the British group

Following the British group, the overall outcome of the American leaning group is presented. As one can see from table (17) with the results, in almost 75% of all cases, the speakers of this group had pronounced the words and their given features with an American accent. Interestingly, no feature recorded as being pronounced with a single accent 100% of the

time, whilst only one feature recorded an equal split in pronunciation, namely the British vowel /ɑː/ versus the American /æ/, which can be found within *France*, *after, bananas* and *lastly* and one recorded a considerable inclination towards the British, that being the /juː/ in *assume* and *new*. Otherwise, a majority of the features recorded a varying degree of inclination towards the American accent. Ultimately, the emphasis allocation in words with different stress also recorded a supposed tendency towards the American variety, as in 75% of cases, the words were pronounced with that accent.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	1,25	2,75	0
ɑː	æ	2	2	0
ʌ	ɚ	0,25	1,75	0
ɔː	ɑː	0,75	1,25	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	3,25	18,75	0
juː	uː	1,75	0,25	0
t	t̬	1,5	4,5	0
Total		25,60%	74,40%	0,00%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		0,75	2,25	0
Total		25,00%	75,00%	0,00%

Table 17 – Average results of the speakers within the American group

Finally, the average results of the group with no supposed inclination towards any media of the given country are to be discussed. Here, as one can see from chart (18), the speakers had shown an almost equal split when concerning the pronunciation features within their utterance. Although, when looking at some features, the speakers had inclined heavily towards the British pronunciation, although only one feature had always been pronounced with it. That is the vowel /ɒ/ found within the British pronunciation of the words *lot*, *salt, coffee* and *Bob*. It is also interesting to note that this is the only group, where a pronunciation

labelled as 'other' had been recorded, namely in the words *worry* and *France*, whose vowel corresponded with neither of the two pronunciations.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	4	0	0
ɑː	æ	3	0,75	0,25
ʌ	ɝ	0,75	0,75	0,5
ɔː	ɑː	1,25	0,75	0
non-rhotic	rhotic	5,75	16,25	0
juː	uː	1,75	0,25	0
t	ṱ	4,25	1,75	0
Total		49,40%	48,81%	1,79%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		0,5	2,5	0
Total		16,67%	83,33%	0,00%

Table 18 – Average results of the speakers within the Mixed group

Finally, the results of all speakers of all groups combined are to be presented. From these, one can observe the overall tendency towards rhoticity in students' accent, as when it is accounted for, the speakers are thought to pronounce the words in an American accent in 52,78% of the cases. Once it is taken out of the equation, however, the overall tendency shifts towards the British accent, as now the speakers prefer the variety in 65 % of all cases. Besides rhoticity, only one other factor is pronounced more in the American accent than in the British one, which is the tendency towards the vowel /ɝ/ in words such as *worry* or *curry*. The second strongest representative of the StAmE can be found in the students' tendency to pronounce t's as ṱ, such as in *better* or *letter*. When analysing the suprasegmental production of the students in the English language, one can see that they lean towards the stress patterns found within the American pronunciation of certain, differing words.

Segment pronunciation		Speaker's production		
British pronunciation	American pronunciation	British	American	Other
ɒ	ɑː	3,08	0,92	0,00
ɑː	æ	2,75	1,17	0,08
ʌ	ɝ	0,67	1,17	0,17
ɔː	ɑː	1,33	0,67	0,00
non-rhotic	rhotic	6,50	15,50	0,00
juː	uː	1,75	0,25	0,00
t	ṭ	3,50	2,50	0,00
Total		46,63%	52,78%	0,60%
Word stress				
Pronunciation		British	American	Other
Count		0,92	2,08	0,00
Total		30,56%	69,44%	0,00%

Table 19 – Average results of all the speakers participating in the analysis.

3.3 Results of the survey

The final part of the research conducted for the thesis consists of a second questionnaire, which covered further factors in one's accent acquisition. These were chosen to be the student's own motivation, communication density with native speakers in and out of education and instruction which they may have received during their educational process. The answers to each question given by individual students will be shown in the context of the groups to which the respondents were designated, with the overall results being shown at the end of the chapter.

3.3.1 Answers presented by those in the British-leaning group

Two of the four 'British influenced' speakers expressed their belief of having a British accent, and these were content with their accent. One speaker answered they believe to have a mixed accent, while wanting to sound British and the last speaker answered that they have a "Czenglish" accent, while wanting to speak English with an American one. The majority

of the speakers had stated they worked on their accent, either by speaking with native speakers (Scottish accent), by intentional learning or by watching TV series or films.

Speaker	Thought accent	Desired accent	Worked on accent
UK Speaker 1	British	British	Yes, Scottish
UK Speaker 2	Mixture of British and American	British	Yes, British
UK Speaker 3	British	British	No
UK Speaker 4	"Czenglish"	American	Yes, American

Table 20 – Post-recording survey Part 1, British group

The overall attitude towards accent shown by the group was that the American accent is more legible, easier to learn and to pronounce, although the British accent is the 'proper accent'. No consensus was reached on what accent is overall preferable, though the American accent seems to be more present around them, rather than the British one. Interestingly, the third speaker noted that neither of the two accents is more present around them, as perhaps both the accents are heard equally.

Speaker	More legible	Sounding 'proper'	Easier to learn	Easier to pronounce	Overall preferable	More present around me
UK Speaker 1	British accent	British accent	American accent	American accent	British accent	British accent
UK Speaker 2	American accent	British accent	American accent	American accent	American accent	American accent
UK Speaker 3	American accent	British accent	American accent	American accent	British accent	None of the two
UK Speaker 4	American accent	British accent	American accent	American accent	American accent	American accent

Table 21 – Post-recording survey Part 2, British group

Further questions concerned a possible stay in an English speaking country. Three out of four respondents in the group had in fact been to the United Kingdom, although their length of stay differed significantly. Those who had been there had spoken to native speakers for at least fifteen minutes, while the first speaker had interacted with them for more than an hour on a daily basis.

Speaker	Stay in an English speaking country	Amount of daily interaction
UK Speaker 1	England, 3y, Jamaica, 7m	Every day for more than an hour
UK Speaker 2	UK, less than a week	15 minutes a day
UK Speaker 3	UK, 3m	Every day for more than 30 minutes
UK Speaker 4	No	Never been

Table 22 – Post-recording survey Part 3, British group

Ultimately, the accents which may have influenced the speakers in the educational process were concerned, the students were asked to list native speking mentors or teachers they have encountered during the learning process, the amount of contact per week and the amount of accent teaching conducted on a weekly basis. All speakers have mentioned two British native tutors they have encountered while at university, while the first speaker mentioned one American speaker and one person from New Zealand. Interestingly, the amount of contact the students have mentioned varied from no contact at all to twice per week, which could be attributed to the interpretation of the question, as some might have thought a lengthier conversation was questioned, while others meant the amount of lessons.

Overall, the accent taught while at school was presumed to be either British or none in particular. The amount of lessons where pronunciation was concerned was rather low, and the overall time dedicated towards learning an accent rather short, with only one answer mentioning 20 minutes.

Speaker	Native speakers in school	Contact per week	Taught accent	How often	How much time per said lesson
UK Speaker 1	One US, One CAN, Two British	Twice per week	None	Every few lessons (3rd - 5th)	About 10 minutes
UK Speaker 2	Two British	Approx. 1,5-3 hours a week.	British	At university, there was a course focused on pronunciation, so every lesson was about it. In primary and high school, pronunciation was taught very rarely.	At university it was 90 minutes, in primary and high school it was about 5 minutes or less.
UK Speaker 3	Two British	None	None	Every few lessons (3rd - 5th)	Half the lesson (20 minutes)
UK Speaker 4	Two British, One NZ	Once per week	British	Every lesson	Less than 5 minutes (perhaps a few remarks)

Table 23 – Post-recording survey Part 4, British group

Overall, the majority of the students in this group believe to have a British accent, while some of them have voluntarily learned it in their free time. Interestingly, the American accent was mentioned as the preferable accent in two cases, and as an easier to learn or pronounce in all. Most of the respondents have been to an English speaking country, while the United Kingdom was the most given answer. The overall length of stay and the amount of interaction varied between the students, although some daily contact was noted by all except one. Finally, the respondents have mentioned at least two British native speakers in their educational process, those being two tutors at the university. Otherwise, one Canadian and American, and one New Zaelander were mentioned by the first and fourth student respectively. Furthermore, two respondents mentioned that they had not been taught any particular accent, although some time had been allocated by their teachers towards

pronunciation, the overall lessons where it was taught were rather sparse or very little time was allocated towards it.

3.3.2 Answers presented by those in the American-leaning group

Secondly, the results of the group where the American accent had been deemed as a deciding one in media consumption are to be examined, starting with the respondent's attitude towards the two presented accents. In three of the four students, the American accent was named as the accent they believe to have, as one had stated they feel they are closer to a British one. Furthermore, all of the students are happy with the variety they produce, as neither of the four has worked on the produced pronunciation outside school and have stated that their current accent is their desired one, or that they do not mind it.

Speaker	Thought accent	Desired accent	Worked on
US Speaker 1	American	American	No
US Speaker 2	American	American	No
US Speaker 3	Rather British	British	No
US Speaker 4	Mostly American	American	No

Table 24 – Post-recording survey Part 1, American group

Interestingly, all respondents within the group had labelled the British accent as the 'proper' sounding one, alongside every other respondent in other groups. Other than that, they had not reached a consensus, although in most cases, at least three have chosen the American accent as better fitting the criteria established by the survey. Intriguingly, two respondents had stated that they believe the British accent to be present more around them, thus becoming the only group where the American variety had been stated only once in said category.

Speaker	More legible	Sounding 'proper'	Easier to learn	Easier to pronounce	Overall preferable	More present around me
US Speaker 1	American accent	British accent	American accent	American accent	British accent	American accent
US Speaker 2	American accent	British accent	British accent	British accent	American accent	None of the two
US Speaker 3	British accent	British accent	American accent	American accent	American accent	British accent
US Speaker 4	American accent	British accent	American accent	American accent	American accent	British accent

Table 25 – Post-recording survey Part 2, American group

Afterwards, the respondents' possible stay abroad had been examined, where those in the American-leaning group had shown rather interesting results. As can be seen from table (26) below, the first American-leaning respondent had been in the United States for a month, becoming the only person included in the whole research to have been there. Other than that, the second person had been to London twice, while the other two had never been to any English speaking country, or had spent a very short amount of time there.

Speaker	Stay in an English speaking country	Amount of daily interaction
US Speaker 1	US, 1m	Every day for more than an hour
US Speaker 2	2x UK, 1w each	Every day for more than 15 minutes
US Speaker 3	Less than a week-long stay in the UK	Not for more than one week.
US Speaker 4	No	I have never been to an English speaking country

Table 26 – Post-recording survey Part 3, American group

In the last part of the questionnaire, the students had expressed their experience with accents in school. The first respondent, who had shown a strong inclination towards the American accent in the vocal analysis, had mentioned attending an international American private school, where there were at least ten different native speakers from countries such as Canada, the US, the UK and Ireland. Furthermore, they had been in contact with them intensely

throughout the week, stating approximately 10 – 20 hours per week. Despite this, they mention never being taught a specific accent abroad, however once coming into the Czech Republic, the British accent became the variety taught in the respondent's education, rather regularly at that. Other respondents have mentioned at least two British native speakers, while one mentioned five, all spread throughout different educational levels. Other than that, the respondents had been taught the selected pronunciation rather infrequently, except for the third speaker, who mentioned a little time dedicated towards it in every lesson.

Speaker	Native speakers in school	Contact per week	Taught accent	How often	How much time per said lesson
US Speaker 1	At least 10 from Canada, the US, South Africa, the UK and Ireland.	Approx. 10 to 20 hours a week	None in international school British in Czech school	Abroad: rarely ever. In the Czech Republic: every few lessons.	Half the lesson (20 minutes)
US Speaker 2	2 British	2 hours per week at max for 3 years	British	Rarely ever	Less than 5 minutes (perhaps a few remarks)
US Speaker 3	5 British	Elementary school - 1 High school - 1 University - 4-6?	British	Every lesson	Less than 5 minutes (perhaps a few remarks)
US Speaker 4	2 British	Approx. 5-6 hours per week.	British	Every few lessons (3rd - 5th)	Less than 5 minutes (perhaps a few remarks)

Table 27 – Post-recording survey Part 4, American group

With the inclusion of a student who had attended an international school, the last group of the survey had brought rather interesting results, as the person with the strongest recorded accent had been influenced not only by media consumed, but also by a very long-lasting influence in education, which changed drastically after coming to the Czech Republic, as previously the accent had been more acquired, rather than taught. Other respondents had expressed the presence of the British accent in their educational experience, though overall

inclination towards the American variety, while one preferred the British accent despite their supposed preference for American media.

3.3.3 Answers presented by those in the mixed group

Finally, the results provided by the mixed group are to be analysed, starting with the overall attitude towards given accents by the students. While one student expressed their belief of speaking with a British variety, two had mentioned having a more of a mixture of the two observed accents. Interestingly, all the students wish to speak with a clear British accent and all have been attempting to approach it, either by mimicking native speakers, interacting with them in their free time or focusing on British pronunciation found in an online dictionary.

Speaker	Thought accent	Desired accent	Worked on accent
Mixed Speaker 1	British	British	Yes, British
Mixed Speaker 2	Mostly British, slightly American	British	Yes, British
Mixed Speaker 3	Mixture of British and American	British	Yes, British
Mixed Speaker 4	British, though strongly slavic	British	Yes, British

Table 28 – Post-recording survey Part 1, Mixed group

Next, the students' attitude towards both accents was covered, while those in the mixed group had given more varied answers than the previous group, which can be seen in table (29) below. Interestingly, three of the students have expressed that the American accent is more present around them. The group of four had reached a consensus only once labelling the British accent as the 'proper' sounding one out of the two.

Speaker	More legible	Sounding 'proper'	Easier to learn	Easier to pronounce	Overall preferable	More present around me
Mixed Speaker 1	British accent	British accent	None of the two	None of the two	American accent	British accent
Mixed Speaker 2	None of the two	British accent	None of the two	None of the two	American accent	American accent
Mixed Speaker 3	American accent	British accent	American accent	American accent	British accent	American accent
Mixed Speaker 4	British accent	British accent	American accent	None of the two	British accent	American accent

Table 29 – Post-recording survey Part 2, Mixed group

As can be seen from chart (30) below, two of the four students in the mixed group have stated that they were in an English-speaking country, while the United Kingdom was mentioned twice, although one respondent had been to Scotland and one in England. Interestingly, one student took the question as an opportunity to state they talk with natives, which may prove interesting for the research overall. When the interaction with the native speakers is concerned, three out of four have stated they have interacted or interact with them for over half an hour per day.

Speaker	Stay in an English speaking country	Amount of daily interaction
Mixed Speaker 1	England, approx. 1m	Every day for more than an hour
Mixed Speaker 2	No	I have never been to an English speaking country
Mixed Speaker 3	Scotland, 2w	Every day for more than 30 minutes
Mixed Speaker 4	While I haven't been abroad, I do spend time speaking english with my foreign friends	Every day for more than 30 minutes

Table 30 – Post-recording survey Part 3, Mixed group

Finally, the factor of instruction at school was researched, as students answered several questions regarding native speakers and the accent taught during their education. Every respondent mentioned at least one native speaker from Bitan, while the first included an

American speaker as well. All had been in contact with them at least once per week during their classes. As far as the overall accent the students had been taught, two have expressed they had received training on Received Pronunciation specifically, one mentioned a British accent while one stated no particular accent was taught. Interestingly, two of the respondents have mentioned that they have received training every lesson, while stating the whole lesson or half of it, respectively. The other two have mentioned rare occasions where one form of pronunciation has been taught.

Speaker	Native speakers in school	Contact per week	Taught accent	How often	How much time per said lesson
Mixed Speaker 1	1 US, 1 British	Approx. once per week	None	Never	Less than 5 minutes (perhaps a few remarks)
Mixed Speaker 2	1 British	Ónce per week	British	Every lesson	The whole lesson (45 minutes)
Mixed Speaker 3	2 British	I believe at least one lesson (1,5 h) each week for most semesters	Received Pronunciation	Every few lessons (3rd - 5th)	About 10 minutes
Mixed Speaker 4	2 British	High school - once per week Uni - once or twice a week	RP	Every lesson	Half the lesson (20 minutes)

Table 31 – Post-recording survey Part 4, Mixed group

Ultimately the speakers of the mixed group have been similarly influenced by the British accent as the previous group, with the exception that they all have tried acquiring the British accent outside school through various methods, either by repeating spoken utterances, searching for correct pronunciation online or by speaking with native speakers and mimicking them. Half of the respondents in the group have also been abroad, namely in the United Kingdom where they had interacted with speakers on a daily basis for a considerable amount of time, while one does interact with them. Finally, the British accent, and in some

cases RP specifically, had been given as the correct way of pronunciation at school and in two cases in every lesson.

4 Conclusion

In the final part of the thesis, the findings of the literary research in combination with the concluding points discovered in the research are presented and discussed, while possible improvements and expansions done in the field shall be listed at the end.

4.1 Discussion

Before conducting the research presented in the previous part of the thesis, several aims and questions were set out in order to analyse the accent production of students attending the Technical University of Liberec. These focused on the overall preference towards the varieties of the English language and on factors that might have influenced them in that direction. In this chapter, the answers to these questions are presented and discussed based on the research and the analysis of the methods used.

First, the research sought to discover which of the two media-dominant accents is to be considered prevalent in Anglophone media preferred by the students. In order to do so, a questionnaire, which had been attended by 44 students specialised in English teaching at the university, had been created and its findings have shown that American media is, in fact, preferred by students in both the internet and TV environment. When regarding TV programes, the numbers were rather similar at first, as approximately the same number of students stated to have watched the series included in the list, although the number of episodes viewed weekly had ended in favour of the American-produced ones, as fewer respondents had stated to watch no episodes of the American shows, while a significantly larger portion of them had seen more than 3 episodes per week of those found within the American list. The exact numbers are shown in Figures (5 & 6), located within chapter 3.1 and indicate that American TV shows are to be considered as overall preferred or at least watched more by the students. A further difference can be seen when looking at the students' preference for YouTubers from these countries, where those internet personalities native to the United States of America compose a majority of those named by the students. Namely, almost half (48,6%) of those named were American. Furthermore, when considering the average composition of YouTubers presented by the students, the students have inclined towards American YouTubers in 39,5% of all cases, as opposed to 9,4% of those mentioning mostly UK ones. At least half of the students have also mentioned following these personalities for at least one hour weekly. Lastly, Anglophone news media was included in

the questionnaire, and based on the results it seems that British news media are a preferred source of English reporting, although the majority have expressed watching these for less than 15 minutes daily, thus lowering the impact they might have.

Afterwards, the aim of the auditory analysis was to find out if the accent heard in media is actually acquired by the students. Based on the results of all students participating in the analysis, it seems that this presumption is true. This is because almost everyone has shown at least some features attributed to American speakers. Furthermore, with the rising amount of American media watched, so did the features found within individual students' utterances, as when comparing the results of all the groups, the percentage of American features had increased significantly. Moreover, when paired with the findings of the survey conducted immediately afterwards, one can deduce that these features have found their way into the students' utterances despite the apparent and significant influence of the British accent on the respondents, either via native speakers, their own motivation or instruction received at varying degrees of education. For that reason, one can conclude that media consumption in general, not only that of American origin, can be considered an undeniable factor in students' accent choice and acquisition.

The majority of the features analysed in the analysis were pronounced with a British accent, with only one jarring exception, which is the pronunciation of the consonant /r/ in certain positions within the word. Its pronunciation, or rather lack thereof, is a significant, perhaps defining characteristic of the British accent. Since the words where rhoticity was concerned appeared most times within the text, the overall total production is slightly more American. Nevertheless, in most cases, the students tended to pronounce words with varying word stress with an American accent.

Finally, the question of whether or not the speakers' production may be denoted as that of the Transatlantic variety is to be answered. Based on the results of the analysis the mixture of features within one utterance does not correspond to that found within speakers of said accent and can therefore not be considered as that of the Transatlantic accent. As can be seen from individual efforts, most had combined two different pronunciations of one feature over the whole text, for example in the words *France* and *lastly*. Because of these deviations and lack of consistency, no accent, including the Transatlantic, may be conclusively labelled as the sole accent found within the student's speech.

4.2 Key takeaways

As has been stated in the introduction, the aim of the thesis is to shed light on factors influencing a learner's accent and the effect they might have on a student's pronunciation. The research conducted shows that although the majority of students have experienced the British accent throughout their learning experience, they do produce features found within the speakers of the American accent. Thus the role of media in pronunciation teaching is to be considered by teachers and mentors. Furthermore, the students do seem to follow a considerable amount of all kinds of Anglophone media already, therefore, understanding its impact on their accent and, moreover, the resource it provides in pronunciation learning and acquisition is not to be overlooked.

To fully analyse and enumerate the influence of media on a speaker's utterance, the results of the two questionnaires were compared with the utterance recorded and presented by the student. After doing so, one is able to conclude that media may be considered as a significant factor in one's accent acquisition, especially when concerning the students of the Technical University of Liberec. When looking at the groups into which the students were divided based on the questionnaire they had filled in, one can see that with the higher amount of American media preferred, the production of American accent within students' speech also inclined. When looking at the results of individual groups, the share of what may be considered as American pronunciation of certain features rose from 34,52% expressed by the British-leaning group, through 48,81% pronounced by the Mixed group to a staggering 75% produced by the American-leaning group. The complete results can be seen in tables (16–18) found in chapter 3.2.4. Furthermore, when analysing the overall results of all students who have taken part in the analysis, seen in figure (19), one can observe that almost half of all the utterances included in the text corresponded to that of the American accent. However, it is important to mention that the analysis concluded did not, in fact, determine a person's overall accent, but rather their tendencies in pronunciation of certain words and features which may be attributed to one. To properly assess one's accent, a further study with perhaps a longer text or a conversation, during which the natural mannerisms and further pronunciation features of the speaker may be better analysed, would be needed in order to conclusively and accurately determine an accent of a speaker.

Another key point is that the majority of respondents have selected the British accent as the one variety they wish to achieve, while also believing that is the accent they have. See charts

(20–31) with answers provided by the students. Interestingly, they were predisposed to show its features the most, as in the other areas examined by the post-recording survey, most students had mentioned a stay in the United Kingdom, speaking with speakers from Britain and receiving instructions on it. Interestingly, the two best-performing, those being the first British and American speakers, had mentioned a lengthy stay in the countries where the accent must have been heard and interacted with.

Since the research conducted by the thesis aims to help in understanding the acquisition of a native-like accent, several remarks are to be provided for learners and teachers alike. Firstly, media does influence the accent a person may or may not produce. Therefore, it might help students to receive recommendations on what to watch in their free time, especially in accordance with the desired accent. Since the majority had expressed the wish to reach a native-like level of the British variety, several sources of entertainment (YouTubers, movies, TV shows) where the accent is evident may be recommended. Similarly, the students who wish to achieve such goal should focus on features such as the rhoticity or the pronunciation of the consonant /t/, as these were pronounced the most with an American accent on average. Finally, simple awareness and overall knowledge of the accent features and their own production should help students in order to understand what they should work on and possibly change.

4.3 Suggestion for Further Research

Despite the attempts made in the research conducted for the purposes of the thesis, there are several questions, which might have occurred to some readers, yet remained unanswered. Several of these are to be considered in this very last chapter of the thesis. As an example, it is expected that not all of the media sources the students are exposed to were included in the research, as videogames, films, music, sports programming, podcasts, and other forms of English-speaking media may have had further influence on the way they speak, although they did not have the option to make their preferences known. However, due to the sheer volume of English media in current discourse, those sources which might have continually and regularly influenced the majority of the respondents were included as ultimately, TV shows, news and YouTube videos are expected to be consumed by most respondents several times a week.

Despite the efforts of the research when creating a text that could ultimately determine features found within a speaker's accent, there are some which may not have been covered

by the recording and could in turn be subject to a further investigation conducted in the future. The topic of other suprasegmental features besides word stress is surely an interesting one, which may be examined through further analyses of students' utterances, preferably in more of a natural environment, such as a conversation. It would therefore be beneficial to overcome the limitations of the analysis in the future, part of which could be including several native speakers with phonetic training as additional annotators. With these improvements, further conclusions could be drawn in the field of students' accent choice and production.

Similarly, other factors mentioned during literary research may be included in a different auditory analysis. These aspects may be the students' musical aptitude, overall language proficiency or the age of onset, as these factors were also marked as highly influential by linguists who have studied their presence in speakers. Also, the influence of the student's mother tongue may be considered in a further analysis, since it had not been taken into account here.

Lastly, the issue of why some of the features presented are acquired by the students, while others are not makes for an interesting research question, which could be answered by research conducted in the future. Furthermore, the overall attitude and usage of the dialect as a whole, which includes grammar and vocabulary, is yet another point of research that could be covered in a future study.

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List of appendices

Appendix A: The initial questionnaire

Influence of English media on TUL students

Thank you for participating in my questionnaire. Its results will be used in my diploma thesis, which focuses on TUL students, particularly on how they are being influenced by the English media.
Please make sure to use your TUL e-mail when filling in the questionnaire.

jan.strigl@tul.cz Přepnout účet

Při odeslání formuláře bude zaznamenán váš e-mail

*Povinné pole

Which of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched regularly with original *
audio?

- [ ] Chernobyl
- [ ] Game of Thrones
- [ ] The Crown
- [ ] Downton Abbey
- [ ] Dr Who
- [ ] Sherlock
- [ ] Peaky Blinders
- [ ] IT Crowd
- [ ] Red Dwarf
- [ ] Top Gear
- [ ] None of the above

How many episodes of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched per *
week?

- ( ) 1-3 episodes
- ( ) 3-5 episodes
- ( ) 5-10 episodes
- ( ) More than 10 episodes
- ( ) I don't watch these shows

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Which of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched regularly with original *
audio?

☐ Breaking Bad

☐ Stranger Things

☐ Westworld

☐ How I Met Your Mother

☐ The Simpsons

☐ House of Cards

☐ House MD

☐ Futurama

☐ Sex Education

☐ Big Bang Theory

☐ None of the above

How many episodes of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched per *
week?

◯ 1-3 episodes

◯ 3-5 episodes

◯ 5-10 episodes

◯ More than 10 episodes

◯ I don't watch these shows

Name up to 3 English speaking YouTubers you watch on a regular basis. *

Vaše odpověď

How much time do you allocate towards these YT channels in a week? *

◯ Less than 1 hour

◯ 1-3 hours

◯ 3-5 hours

◯ More than 5 hours

◯ I don't watch any English YouTube channels

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Which of these news outlets would you prefer? *

☐ BBC

☐ CNN

☐ FOX News

☐ Vox

☐ None of the above

How much time do you allocate to watching news in English per day? *

○ Less than 15 minutes

○ About an hour

○ A couple hours

○ I don't watch news in English

Appendix B: Example of a British-leaning respondent

Which of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched regularly with original audio? *

- ☑ Chernobyl
- ☑ Game of Thrones
- ☑ The Crown
- ☐ Downton Abbey
- ☐ Dr Who
- ☑ Sherlock
- ☐ Peaky Blinders
- ☐ IT Crowd
- ☐ Red Dwarf
- ☑ Top Gear
- ☐ None of the above

How many episodes of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched per week? *

- ◯ 1-3 episodes
- ◯ 3-5 episodes
- ◯ 5-10 episodes
- ◉ More than 10 episodes
- ◯ I don't watch these shows

Which of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched regularly with original audio? *

- [ ] Breaking Bad
- [ ] Stranger Things
- [ ] Westworld
- [ ] How I Met Your Mother
- [ ] The Simpsons
- [ ] House of Cards
- [ ] House MD
- [ ] Futurama
- [ ] Sex Education
- [ ] Big Bang Theory
- [x] None of the above

How many episodes of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched per week? *

- ( ) 1-3 episodes
- ( ) 3-5 episodes
- ( ) 5-10 episodes
- ( ) More than 10 episodes
- (•) I don't watch these shows

Name up to 3 English speaking YouTubers you watch on a regular basis. *

0

How much time do you allocate towards these YT channels in a week? *

○ Less than 1 hour

◉ 1-3 hours

○ 3-5 hours

○ More than 5 hours

○ I don't watch any English YouTube channels

Which of these news outlets would you prefer? *

☑ BBC

☑ CNN

☐ FOX News

☐ Vox

☐ None of the above

How much time do you allocate to watching news in English per day? *

◉ Less than 15 minutes

○ About an hour

○ A couple hours

○ I don't watch news in English

Appendix C: Example of a US-leaning respondent

Which of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched regularly with original audio? *

- ☐ Chernobyl
- ☐ Game of Thrones
- ☐ The Crown
- ☐ Downton Abbey
- ☐ Dr Who
- ☐ Sherlock
- ☐ Peaky Blinders
- ☐ IT Crowd
- ☐ Red Dwarf
- ☐ Top Gear
- ☑ None of the above

How many episodes of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched per week? *

- ○ 1-3 episodes
- ○ 3-5 episodes
- ○ 5-10 episodes
- ○ More than 10 episodes
- ◉ I don't watch these shows

Which of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched regularly with original audio? *

- [ ] Breaking Bad
- [ ] Stranger Things
- [ ] Westworld
- [ ] How I Met Your Mother
- [x] The Simpsons
- [ ] House of Cards
- [ ] House MD
- [ ] Futurama
- [ ] Sex Education
- [ ] Big Bang Theory
- [ ] None of the above

How many episodes of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched per week? *

- ( ) 1-3 episodes
- (•) 3-5 episodes
- ( ) 5-10 episodes
- ( ) More than 10 episodes
- ( ) I don't watch these shows

Name up to 3 English speaking YouTubers you watch on a regular basis. *

Eleanor Neale, Travel with Luke Damant

How much time do you allocate towards these YT channels in a week? *

- ◯ Less than 1 hour
- ◯ 1-3 hours
- ◉ 3-5 hours
- ◯ More than 5 hours
- ◯ I don't watch any English YouTube channels

Which of these news outlets would you prefer? *

- ☐ BBC
- ☐ CNN
- ☐ FOX News
- ☐ Vox
- ☑ None of the above

How much time do you allocate to watching news in English per day? *

- ◉ Less than 15 minutes
- ◯ About an hour
- ◯ A couple hours
- ◯ I don't watch news in English

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Appendix D: Example of a mixed respondent

Which of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched regularly with original audio? *

- ☑ Chernobyl
- ☑ Game of Thrones
- ☐ The Crown
- ☐ Downton Abbey
- ☑ Dr Who
- ☐ Sherlock
- ☐ Peaky Blinders
- ☑ IT Crowd
- ☐ Red Dwarf
- ☐ Top Gear
- ☐ None of the above

How many episodes of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched per week? *

- ⦿ 1-3 episodes
- ◯ 3-5 episodes
- ◯ 5-10 episodes
- ◯ More than 10 episodes
- ◯ I don't watch these shows

Which of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched regularly with original audio? *

- ☑ Breaking Bad
- ☑ Stranger Things
- ☑ Westworld
- ☑ How I Met Your Mother
- ☐ The Simpsons
- ☐ House of Cards
- ☐ House MD
- ☑ Futurama
- ☑ Sex Education
- ☐ Big Bang Theory
- ☐ None of the above

How many episodes of these TV shows do you watch/have you watched per week? *

- ○ 1-3 episodes
- ◉ 3-5 episodes
- ○ 5-10 episodes
- ○ More than 10 episodes
- ○ I don't watch these shows

Name up to 3 English speaking YouTubers you watch on a regular basis. *

Aperture, RealLifeLore, Manley Reviews

How much time do you allocate towards these YT channels in a week? *

○ Less than 1 hour

◉ 1-3 hours

○ 3-5 hours

○ More than 5 hours

○ I don't watch any English YouTube channels

Which of these news outlets would you prefer? *

☑ BBC

☐ CNN

☐ FOX News

☑ Vox

☐ None of the above

How much time do you allocate to watching news in English per day? *

◉ Less than 15 minutes

○ About an hour

○ A couple hours

○ I don't watch news in English

Appendix E: The post-recording survey

Post-recording survey

Thank you for participating in the research needed for my thesis. I only ask of you now to answer these few questions, which are aimed to investigate what factors might have influenced your accent besides media forms seen in the first questionnaire.

To start, questions about your own attitude towards accent will be asked, as the first section focuses on how you perceive your own accent and your overall motivation. It's also centered on whether you actively work (or have worked) on it.

Tento formulář automaticky shromažďuje e-maily uživatelů domény Technická univerzita v Liberci. Změnit nastavení

What English accent do you believe to have? *

Text stručné odpovědi

Is that the accent you **want** to have? If no, which accent do you wish to have when speaking *
English?

Text stručné odpovědi

Have you ever worked on your own accent outside school? If so, which accent did you actively *
learn and how did you train it?

Text dlouhé odpovědi

Fill in the table based on which accent you feel better fits the description. *

	British accent	American accent	None of the two
More legible	○	○	○
Sounding 'proper'	○	○	○
Easier to learn	○	○	○
Easier to pronounce	○	○	○
Overall preferable	○	○	○
More present around me	○	○	○

Native speakers

This section of the survey focuses on your exposure to native speakers.

Have you ever spent a prolonged time (more than a week) in an English speaking country? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

If you have answered '**yes**' to the previous question, could you elaborate on how much time per *
week you have been in contact with each of the people mentioned?

Text dlouhé odpovědi

If you have answered '**yes**' to the previous question, could you elaborate on **where** you have *
been and **for how long**?

Text dlouhé odpovědi

How often did you have to **talk** (not just listen) to a native speaker in said foreign country? *

◯ Every day for more than an hour

◯ Every day for more than 30 minutes

◯ Every day for more than 15 minutes

◯ I have never been to an English speaking country

◯ Jiná...

Have you encountered any native speakers as teachers or mentors in school? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

If you have answered '**yes**' to the previous question, could you elaborate on how many and where they were from?

Text dlouhé odpovědi

Instructional influence

In the last section, I would like to analyse what impact your teachers might have had on your accent through instruction.

Have your English teachers ever taught you a specific way of speaking? If yes, which accent did they teach you? *

Text stručné odpovědi

How often did your teachers focus on teaching accurate pronunciation? *

◯ Every lesson

◯ Every second lesson

◯ Every few lessons (3rd - 5th)

◯ Very rarely

◯ Never

◯ Jiná...

How much time did they dedicate towards teaching pronunciation in those lessons? *

◯ The whole lesson (45 minutes)

◯ Half the lesson (20 minutes)

◯ About 10 minutes

◯ Less than 5 minutes (perhaps a few remarks)

◯ Jiná...

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