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**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ENGLISH AND CZECH PRONUNCIATION AND THEIR  
INFLUENCE ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE CZECH STUDENTS OF ENGLISH**

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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## CONTENT

INTRODUCTION .....	5
1 BASIC PHONETIC TERMINOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH AND CZECH LANGUAGE ..	6
2 DEFINITION OF SEGMENTAL FEATURES OF PRONUNCIATION .....	8
2.1 Vowels.....	8
2.1.1 Classification of vowels according to the tongue position .....	9
2.1.2 Diphthongs.....	15
2.1.3 Triphthongs.....	16
2.2 Consonants .....	17
2.2.1 Classification of consonants according to the place of articulation.....	19
3 CONNECTION BETWEEN SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION IN BOTH LANGUAGES .....	23
4 DEFINITION OF SUPRASEGMENTAL FEATURES OF PRONUNCIATION AND THEIR FUNCTION .....	25
4.1 Assimilation and Elision .....	25
4.2 Intonation.....	27
4.3 Stress .....	28
4.4 Rhythm.....	30
4.5 Linking .....	30
5 THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES MADE BY CZECH STUDENTS .....	33
CONCLUSION.....	36
REFERENCE LIST .....	37
ABSTRACT.....	42
APPENDIX.....	43

## INTRODUCTION

Foreign languages are an inseparable part of human lives. From a very early age, children at basic schools are forced to choose at least one foreign language to learn. As English is the most spread language of the world, the majority of Czech students have chosen English to learn. In fact, English is everywhere – in television, advertisements, in IT technologies which have also slowly become a very important means of communication and mediation of information. Thus not only children but also adults learn English in order to be able to communicate with “the rest of the world”. However, not everyone tries to learn the language properly but they learn it only “superficially”. Many people think that it is sufficient just to have a certain amount of vocabulary and to somehow control the grammar. Just after meeting a foreign or native speaker, people often realize that they do not understand.

Pronunciation is often considered to be crucial in the process of learning a foreign language. The aim of this work is to find out, confirm and describe in details the main differences between Czech and English, to compare both languages, thus make the languages more understandable for the Czech learners. Sadly, there are not many publications focusing on the comparison of languages- especially Czech and English, and they can be rather discouraging due to their length.

This thesis focuses on various issues connected with pronunciation. The whole work starts with the introduction of the general terms from the field of pronunciation. To be able the reader to follow the text of this thesis, it was necessary to mention terms such as phonetics, phonology or more importantly phonemes. It was significant also due to the fact that these terms occur repeatedly throughout the whole work so without knowing the meaning of them, it would be rather confusing.

The differences between English and Czech in the segmental level are dealt with in the first chapter. All English vowels and consonants are compared with their Czech equivalents. Then a chapter focusing on the phenomena of the suprasegmental level, such as intonation, rhythm, stress and linking, follows. Finally, there are two more additional chapters. One is dealing with the connection of graphics and pronunciation in both languages because it is helpful for any Czech learner of English who wants to reveal the real nature of the English language. The remaining chapter is a summary of most common mistakes in the speech of Czech students because it is proven that if the mistakes are pointed out and the reasons of their creation are emphasized, people remember them.

# 1 BASIC PHONETIC TERMINOLOGY OF BOTH ENGLISH AND CZECH LANGUAGE

First, it is necessary to define the two most important terms related to pronunciation and that is phonetics and phonology. According to Krčmová (2006, p. 12), phonetics is dealing with the sound side of a certain language from different aspects. Basically, it is a discipline that concerns the speech organs and the nature of sounds, whereas phonology focuses predominantly on the function of various sounds. In addition, phonology is, as well as phonetics, considered to be a linguistics science. In connection with phonology, we should introduce a basic term which is a phoneme (Krčmová, 2006, p. 13). It is a smallest unit of speech (Phonetics Laboratory, 2008). Phoneme is narrowly bound to a phone. The difference between these two terms is necessary to know. Phoneme has got a distinguishing function. That means it changes the meaning of words. It is an abstract title for a phone, which is a concrete speech sound (any sound that can be made) that is represented with phonetic symbols (Roach, 2009, p. 34).

Language on its own is a very complex phenomenon so it is naturally divided into categories to make the language more understandable and clear. Every language (for us Czech and English) has its sound system, which contains two levels and that is the segmental and suprasegmental one. Each of the levels deals with different issues. In the following paragraph the basic differences in these levels will be moderately outlined.

According to Melen, the segmental level focuses on vowels and consonants, so called segments. Each language has its vocal inventory. It is a system of vowel and consonant vocalic phonemes. A vowel is a voiced speech sound that is created without any friction – we hear a clear sound without any interference. Consonant, on the other hand, is predominately based on the barrier to the air that we are breathing out in order to create a sound (Melen, 2010, p. 12). English and Czech differ in many aspects connected with the vocal inventory. First of all, they vary in the number of individual vowels and consonants. As far as the vowels are considered, we distinguish between monophthongs, diphthongs and triphthongs. Melen (2010, p. 26) describes that English has twelve monophthong vowels, eight diphthongs and five triphthongs, whereas standard Czech has ten monophthongs and three diphthongs. As we can see, the number is quite different, as well as the number of consonants. There are twenty English consonants and twenty-seven Czech consonants (Pravopisně, 2012). A more detailed classification and comparison of all of the speech sounds will be covered in the following chapters.

Suprasegmental level of language deals with more complex and difficult phenomena such as intonation, rhythm, stress and so on. The knowledge of the basics of a language is as important as the fluency of speech. This is an immense problem when we compare Czech and English. Czech words are placed next to each other in sentences and are in most cases pronounced separately, whereas English is completely different because it is more melodic and tends to join words together to make the speech smoother. The intonation, rhythm, stress and lastly the linking will be described.

Of course there are more phenomena of English language like assimilation or elision. Assimilation is *“the act or process by which a sound becomes identical with or similar to a neighboring sound in one or more defining characteristics, as place of articulation, voice or voicelessness, or manner of articulation....(Dictionary, 2015).* The word “rapid” should be highlighted. The speed of the language is less important as the accuracy. On one hand, it is highly valuable to be aware of occurrences such as elision or assimilation (see Chapter 4). It will help us extensively to understand to a native speaker. On the other hand, we should rather focus on accurate pronunciation rather than rapidity. That is why the thesis does not deal with these two phenomena in detail.

## 2 DEFINITION OF SEGMENTAL FEATURES OF PRONUNCIATION

Segmental level of pronunciation is a foundation stone of learning and understanding the issues connected with proper pronunciation of every language (Martin Weisser, 2005). It is necessary for the learners to distinguish between various speech sounds, to be able to pronounce them in the way that they are understandable for the hearer. This chapter will focus on a detailed classification of the English vowels and consonants, while comparing them to their closest Czech equivalents, because there are distinctions between speech sounds in these two languages. Determination of the main differences will help the learners to become aware of them, thus making the process of learning a foreign language easier.

### 2.1 Vowels

One of the differences between Czech and English vowels is their number. Both languages distinguish between long and short vowels. Czech has ten evenly distributed vowels- those are five short and five long vowels: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/, /á/, /é/, /í/, /ó/, /ú/, whereas English has twelve vowels- five long vowels: /i:/, /a:/, /ɔ:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/ and seven short vowels: /ɪ/, /ɛ/, /æ/, /ɒ/, /ʊ/, /ʌ/, /æ/, /ʊ/ (Jones, 1963, p. 24). There are other classifications of vowels depending on various elements. As far as the vowel articulation is considered, the main thing and also the element on which the categorization of this thesis is based, is the tongue. The tongue enormously influences the final sound of each vowel by its position in the mouth and also by its movement (Krčmová, 2006, p. 46). That means that vowels are classified according to the horizontal and vertical position of the tongue.

Of course there are other elements affecting pronunciation such as the angle of opening the jaws or simply spreading or rounding our lips. In fact, there are many of them but the classification based on the position of the tongue is sufficient for this thesis since the tongue has been considered to be the most influencing element. The opinion is supported by some authors, such as Melen (2010, p. 22), who claims that there are various types of vowel classifications. Nonetheless they are relative. It will be stated if the vowel is rounded or spread because the position of lips should not be omitted.



### 2.1.1 Classification of vowels according to the tongue position

There are two dimensions for the vowels classification- vertical and horizontal. That means that we distinguish two basic movements of the tongue (Singwise, 2015). The movement from the front to the back creates three different classes of vowels- front, central and back. Each of these classes has a specific placement of the tongue. The second fundamental movement of the tongue is up and down, which also creates three classes: open, mid and close vowels. The tongue draws nearer to the upper and lower hard or soft palate and thus changes completely the speech sound. The tables below are representing the English and Czech vocalic triangles.

open	<i>i:</i> <i>ɪ</i>		<i>u</i> <i>u:</i>
mid	<i>e</i> <i>ə</i>		<i>ɜ:</i> <i>ɔ:</i>
close	<i>æ</i>	<i>ʌ</i> <i>a:</i>	<i>ɒ</i>
	front	central	back

**Fig. 1** English vocalic triangle (Sewanee: The University of South, 2010)

open	<i>i</i> <i>í</i>		<i>u</i> <i>ú</i>
mid	<i>e</i> <i>é</i>		<i>o</i> <i>ó</i>
close		<i>a</i> <i>á</i>	
	front	central	back

**Fig. 2** Czech vocalic triangle (Učení s Chalupou, 2004)

### 2.1.2.1 Front vowels

Front vowels are created by the movement of the tongue in the direction of hard palate. According to the IPA chart, there are four vowels that belong to this class of vowels. Due to the fact that this scheme of front vowels was created for the English language, there are two tables comparing the English front vowels and their closest Czech equivalents- the equivalents are not completely alike as the assigned English phonemes, yet are the most similar ones as far as the sound is considered (Fonetický ústav, 2005).

English front vowels	Czech front vowels
/i:/	/i/
/ɪ/	/i/
/e/	/e/
/æ/	/é/

Tab. 1 English and Czech front vowels (Skaličková, 1982, p. 80-85)

These vowels should be described more precisely because that is where the differences between the Czech and English pronunciation appear.

#### **English /i:/ x Czech /í/**

According to Skaličková (1979, p. 31), these two vowels differ by the position of the tongue. While pronouncing the English /i:/, the tongue approaches the gum behind the upper incisors, whereas the Czech /í/ is accurately pronounced with the tongue pointing somewhere between upper and lower incisors. Also, the sounds are slightly dissimilar. As Melen claims (2010, p. 17), the English one sounds higher. On the other hand, there are some common features: both of them are open and spread vowels (see the placement differences on Fig.1 and 2). By being “spread” it is meant not being labialized, the mouth is spread open while pronouncing. The sound created with the spread lips is called the “smiling sound” (Krčmová, 2006, p. 119).

### **English /ɪ/ x Czech /i/**

English /ɪ/ is lower and placed more back than the Czech one (Melen, 2010, p. 16). As Skaličková states, there is also a slight difference in the position of the tongue. While the tip of the tongue is loosely sticking out towards the front teeth in English, in Czech is leaning against them with no exception (Skaličková, 1979, p. 34). Both vowels are also open and spread (see Fig.1 and Fig 2).

### **English /e/ x Czech /e/**

While pronouncing this vowel in English, most of the tongue is placed at the back of the oral cavity and the tip of the tongue is again sticking out towards the front teeth as in the case of the vowel /ɪ/. The closest Czech equivalent of this vowel is pronounced approximately alike the English one. However, there is a slight difference in the position of the tip of the tongue. On the other hand, both vowels are spread and belong into the mid category of vowels (Skaličková, 1982, p. 84).

### **English /æ/ x Czech /é/**

The last pair of vowels from the front category of vowels is the English vowel /æ/ in comparison with the Czech vowel /é/. The English /æ/ is a mid vowel and the Czech /é/ belongs to the category of close vowels (Skaličková, 1982, p. 86). This English vowel could be a bit confusing for the Czech speaker. According to Melen (2010, p. 17), its tone is much lower than the tone of Czech /é/. The biggest difference is perhaps in the openness. While pronouncing /æ/, the mouth is widely opened and that is quite different in the case of Czech /é/. Also the tip of the tongue is placed in a different way. As with all of the English front vowels, the tongue does not touch any of the front teeth whereas in Czech pronunciation it does. Both vowels are spread (Fig.1 and Fig.2).

### 2.1.2.2 Central vowels

This group of vowels is pronounced with the tongue being positioned somewhere between the front and back of the oral cavity (Midlands Technical College, 2012). Before describing the differences, there is a table of English central vowels and its potential Czech equivalents:

English central vowels	Czech central vowels
/ʌ/	/a/
/ɑː/	/á/
/ə/	-
/ɜː/	-

**Tab. 2** English and Czech central vowels (Skaličková, 1982, p. 87-88)

#### **English /ʌ/ x Czech /a/**

The pronouncing position of /ʌ/ is somewhere in the middle of the mouth- for better understanding, learners imagine it as kind of a mixture between the Czech /a/ and the schwa /ə/ (Melen, 2010, p. 17). This might be confusing, thus it will be compared just with the Czech equivalent and that is the /a/. Once again there is a difference in the position of the tongue. In the case of English /ʌ/, the tip of the tongue is not near the lower incisors as in the Czech pronunciation but it is slightly moved backwards, which also influences the sound. It also means that in Czech the mouth does not have to be open much because the tongue is placed in its natural position. However, we must use force to move the tongue backwards in English, thus open the jaws more than in the Czech pronunciation. So the whole process of creating the sound differs (Skaličková, 1982, p. 88).

#### **English /ɑː/ x Czech /á/**

The phoneme /ɑː/ may be seen as a sound very similar in both language, yet there is a difference. Firstly, the English vowel sounds deeper. As Melen claims (2010, p. 18), the difference is noticeable on the following English-Czech pair of words: past- pást. For the accurate pronunciation of the Czech word, the jaws have to be opened more in order to create sound that is “softer”, thus placed more in the front and slightly higher. Both vowels are spread (Fig.1 and Fig.2).

In fact, these two pairs are not the only central vowels. There are two more English central vowels that do not even have their potential equivalents in Czech. One of them is possibly the most important because it is the most common speech sound in the English language and that is the already mentioned /ə/.

/ə/ is a speech sound that has its own name- a schwa. Interestingly, although it does not have a Czech phoneme equivalent, it is used very often in Czech while pronouncing isolated consonants or more frequently as a “gap filler” (Melen, 2010, p. 20). For example in a situation when you need time to arrange your thoughts while speaking. Generally, people try to avoid silence and unwittingly use the sound /ə/ whenever there is a threat of unwanted silence. Generally, schwa is an English vowel that typically occurs in unstressed syllables (those parts of the word which is pronounced with less emphasis- this will be dealt in more details in Chapter four). However, the schwa is not necessarily used only in unstressed syllables, but for instance it is a part of some of the diphthongs and these diphthongs very commonly occur in stressed syllables (Skaličková, 1982, p. 94).

The phoneme /ɜ:/ is the next speech sound. It is an unrounded, mid central vowel. “...it resembles the short /ə/ by its sound but it is longer...” (Melen, 2010, p. 20). So there is a slight difference between these two vowels. Otherwise they are similar in the position of mouth and tongue, which is completely neutral. The mouth is naturally open and the tongue is pulled down in the back part of the mouth (Skaličková, 1982, p. 94).

### 2.1.2.3 Back vowels

“.....back vowels are those in the formation of which the ‘back’ of the tongue is raised in the direction of the soft palate” (Jones, 1964, p. 38). They are sometimes described as “dark vowels” because the sound of them is lower than any of the front and central vowels (Midlands Technical College, 2012).

English back vowels	Czech back vowels
/ɒ/	/o /
/ɔ:/	/ó /
/ʊ /	/u /
/u: /	/ú /

Tab. 3 English and Czech back vowels (Skaličková, 1982, p. 90-93)

All these phonemes in both languages are also rounded which means that the position of lips changes (The Mind Project, 2004). The following paragraphs will focus on the detailed description of each pair of vowels.

#### **English /ɒ/ x Czech /o/**

Skaličková (1982, p. 90) describes that the main difference is in the placement of the tongue- but in this case it is the vertical placement of the tongue. In the Czech pronunciation, the tongue is lowered in the back of the oral cavity while still being in contact with the base of the mouth- so it can be said that it “rests” on the lower part of mouth. The difference in the English pronunciation is that the tongue does not lie on the lower part of the mouth but it “hangs in the air”. It is noticeable (see Fig.1 and 2) that the English /ɒ/ lies lower in the vocal triangle than the Czech one. So in all probability the Czech /o/ sounds slightly higher. /ɒ/ is a close vowel, whereas /o/ to the category of mid vowels.

#### **English /ɔ:/ x Czech /ó/**

According to Melen (2010, p. 18), the English /ɔ:/ is one of the most back vowels. The pronunciation is almost identical with the Czech /ó/, with a small difference in the sound. The English vowel sounds lower than the Czech one and it is caused, again, by the horizontal position of the tongue. In English, the tongue is more in the back, which makes the sound of the vowel deeper. Interestingly, /ó/ is not a very commonly occurring vowel. Czech people use this vowel mostly for emphasizing (in casual speech). For instance in the expression: “*bóže*”- “Oh my God”.

#### **English /ʊ/ x Czech /u/**

These are the most back, open vowels of both languages. In the pronunciation of these vowels, the lips are creating a tight orifice for the air which creates a specific sound. The sound of the English /ʊ/ is higher due to the vertical position of the tongue. The tongue is sticking loosely forward. In the case of this vowel in the Czech language, the tongue points downwards. However, it does not necessarily touch the base of mouth (Krčmová, 2006, p. 121).

### English /u: / x Czech / ú /

This pair of vowels is placed approximately at the same position while pronouncing, yet the English vowel sounds higher, which is once again caused by the tongue that is placed more in the front than the Czech one. In addition, the lips are more rounded while pronouncing /u:/, which also contributes to the higher sound of it (Melen, 2010, p. 19). Otherwise, there is not a very explicit distinction. Both vowels belong to the category of open vowels.

### 2.1.2 Diphthongs

Diphthongs are a special group of vowels created by two different speech sounds connected together. Diphthong is “.....a gliding monosyllabic speech sound (as the vowel combination at the end of toy) that starts at or near the articulatory position for one vowel and moves to or toward the position of another.....” (Merriam-Webster, 2014). There is a significant difference between the two analysed languages. Once again, the first difference is in the number of diphthongs. As we can see below (see Fig.4), English is much richer in the number of diphthongs - there are eight diphthongs, whereas in Czech, there are only three.

Czech diphthongs	English diphthongs
/au/	/eɪ/
/ou/	/aɪ/
/eu/	/ɔɪ/
	/ɪə/
	/eə/
	/ʊə/
	/əʊ/
	/aʊ/

Fig. 3 Comparison of English and Czech diphthongs (English for Students, 2007)

Also their creation differs. As Hájková states (2008, p. 24), The Czech diphthongs are simply combinations of vowels and the only gliding phoneme /u/. Nevertheless, the only “real” Czech diphthong is just one and that is /ou/. Other diphthongs occur just in borrowed words. As far as the English diphthongs are considered, there is a higher number of them because they are not limited by the phonemes that is joined to the preceding speech sound in one syllable. English

uses three different phonemes at the finishing position. While Czech uses just /u/, English applies /ɪ/, /ə/ and /ʊ/ to create a diphthong.

Subsequent issue connected to diphthongs in both languages is their pronunciation. A diphthong consists of two elements. That means that each element (a phoneme) requires a certain manner of pronunciation. In Czech, both speech sounds are almost the same in length, which means that approximately equal force and breath is used for both elements. Also, all the Czech diphthongs have a falling tone. English, on the contrary, has a completely different method of diphthong pronunciation. The first phoneme is usually longer than the following one. The phoneme on the finishing position often blends with the speech sound of the next word (Melen, 2010, p. 22).

### **2.1.3 Triphthongs**

Triphthongs are a very special group of vowels. Each triphthong is created by three vowels. As Czech language does not have any kind of trinomial combination of vowels, it is confusing for the Czech learners. The triphthongs are connection of a diphthong and schwa (Learning English, 2003). As Melen states (2010, p. 26), the movement of articulation is imperceptible and it often happens that the middle vowel is not being heard so as a result the triphthong can sound like a diphthong. The omission of one of the elements could lead to misunderstandings while talking to someone else.

Here are five existing English triphthongs which are accompanied by an example of the word, in which they occur, for better imagining: /eɪə/- player, conveyer, /aɪə/- fire, liar, /ɔɪə/- royal, loyal, /əʊə/- lower, slower, /aʊə/- hour, flower (Academia, 1998).



## 2.2 Consonants

In comparison with vowels, the consonant articulation is more difficult. There must be a certain obstruction to the air that we are breathing out in order to create these specific phonemes. It can be either lips, teeth or the position of the tongue (ABC FAST Phonics, 2005). The number of English and Czech consonants is bigger than the number of vowels (About education, 2015). According to Ward (1972, p. 127), there are twenty-three English consonants: /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /w/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /ʃ/, /z/, /ʒ/, /j/, /h/, /m/, /n/, /l/ and /r/. In Czech there are even more consonants- exactly twenty-five: /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /k/, /g/, /c/, /č/, /dž/, /f/, /v/, /s/, /š/, /z/, /ž/, /j/, /h/, /m/, /n/, /ň/, /l/, /r/ and /ř/ (About education, 2015). The classification of consonants is also different from the vowel classification. The consonant classification in this thesis is based on the place and manner of articulation (About education, 2015). There are several categories into which all consonants are divided. If the consonant inventory of both languages is compared, certain differences are obvious. Most importantly, in English there are some consonants that do not have their closest Czech equivalents and vice versa.

Place → ↓ Manner	Labial		Labio-dental		Dental		Alveolar, post-alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Glottal
	Occlusive	p	b					t	d			k	g
Semi-occlusive							tʃ	dʒ					
Constrictive		w	f	v	θ	ð	s, ʃ	z, ʒ		j			h
Semi- constrictive		m						n				ŋ	
l- and r-sounds								l, r					

Fig. 4 English consonants (Skaličková, 1982, p. 107)

Place → ↓ Manner	Labial		Labio-dental		Dental		Alveolar, post-alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Glottal
	Occlusive	p	b					t	d	ť	d'	k	g
Semi-occlusive							c, č	dž					
Constrictive			f	v			s, š	z, ž		j			h
Semi- constrictive		m						n		ň			
l- and r-sounds								l, r, ř					

Fig. 5 Czech consonants (Skaličková, 1982, p. 108)

For example, there is no Czech equivalent for English /θ/, /ð/ or /w/ as well as there are no English phonemes that correspond to the Czech /t/, /d/, /š/, /ž/, /ň/. So it can be difficult for Czech students to learn these phonemes if they do not start learning the foreign language in the early age. It is said that children in general do not avoid making sounds such as mumbling and grumbling. Then the adoption of almost any sound is not a problem. Getting older, people tend to be uncomfortable with making sounds that do not belong to their mother tongue. That is why it can be hard to assimilate sounds such as /θ/ or /ð/.

Classification of consonants is more complicated than in the case of vowels. Before describing consonants according to the place of articulation, there is a brief description of each manner. As Skaličková claims (1982, p. 107), there are five categories of consonants as far as the manner of articulation is considered. The first one to mention is the category of occlusive consonants. *“Occlusive consonants (also called plosives) are those which are created by explosively released air that is behind a certain closure”* (Gimson, 1962, p. 30). With exaggeration, the occlusive manner could be compared to spitting - a closure is created and then in order to get through it the force is produced. Of course, the “air explosion” differs in quality with every consonant. Occlusive consonants are: /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/ and /g/. There is an interesting effect connected with occlusives- it is called aspiration. Roach (2009, p. 27) describes that to pronounce plosive consonants /p/, /t/, /k/, there must be a release of a pressure that is created. It happens that as the air escapes through the mouth, a sound like /h/ can be heard (*top- /t<sup>h</sup> dp/*).

Semi-occlusive manner of pronunciation (also called affricate) is described by “quality of affricate hum” (Skaličková, 1982, p. 114). An affricate means: ..... *“a composite speech sound in which a stop consonant is gradually released with audible friction, as the sound “ch” in church or (j) in judge”* (The Free Dictionary, 2003). Semi occlusive consonant in English are: /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. In Czech: /c/, /č/ and /dž/.

The next are constrictive consonants (often called fricatives) which are described as being created by the air flow that meets an incomplete obstruction (Lektsii, 2014). “Incomplete“ means an obstruction that is easy to get over but still is present. English constrictive consonants are: /w/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /ʃ/, /z/, /ʒ/, /j/ and /h/. The Czech ones are: /f/, /v/, /s/, /š/, /z/, /ž/, /j/ and /h/.

Then there is the category of semi-constrictive consonants (also called nasals). Basically, it is almost the same case as the constrictive consonants if the air flow and the construction are considered. However, the consonants are easier to pronounce. English semi-constrictive consonants are: /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/. Czech ones are almost the same: /m/, /n/ and /ň/. In the Czech language, there is not a potential equivalent of the consonant /ŋ/ (Skaličková, 1982, p. 160).

According to Melen (2010, p. 36), in Czech it exists only in combination with the phonemes /k/ and /g/- that is /ŋk/ and /ŋg/. In English it appears in many other combinations in different positions, mainly at the final position of words (*sing, thing, think*).

The last category focuses only on two specific phonemes and that is /l/ and /r/ (also /ř/ in Czech). These phonemes also have their own name- liquid consonants. Liquid consonants consist of lateral and rhotic consonants (CALLE, 2010). Lateral is “*a consonant sound produced by raising the tip of the tongue against the roof of the mouth so that the airstream flows past one or both sides of the tongue*” (Encyclopaedia, 2015). Rhotic phoneme /r/ considerably differs from the pronunciation of the lateral /l/. “*To make the /r/ sound, the tip of the tongue is down while the back/mid part of the tongue raises. The back/mid part of the tongue presses against the insides of the top teeth*” (Rachel’s English, 2008). Czech and English /r/ differs in various aspects. The English one is more back and does not vibrate as much as the Czech one during the pronunciation (Melen, 2010, pg. 38).

### **2.2.1 Classification of consonants according to the place of articulation**

Classification according to the manner of pronunciation has been described and the classification that follows is the one connected with the place of articulation. The classification by Skaličková (1982, p. 107) will be followed. If there is a significant difference between an English consonant and its Czech equivalent, it will be mentioned.

#### **Labial consonants**

Labials are created by lips. Labial consonants are: /p/, /b/, /m/ in both languages, and in English also /w/ (which does not have its equivalent in Czech).

#### **Labio-dental consonants**

The creation of these phonemes is enabled by a combination of lips and teeth. The tongue is leaning against the lower teeth and the upper teeth touch the lower lip. This category is alike in both languages - there are just two consonants: /f/ and /v/.

### **Dental consonants**

The dental consonants occur just in English as Czech does not have any equivalents. This group involves consonants /θ/ and /ð/. Their specific sound is created thanks to the tongue and teeth.

### **Alveolar, post- alveolar consonants**

According to Gimson (1962, p. 181), the alveolar and post- alveolar consonants are created by raising the soft palate, the tongue is slightly touching the alveolar ridge by its tip and blade and the sides of the tongue touch the upper side teeth. The difference between the alveolar and post-alveolar is only the fact that in the case of post-alveolar consonants, the tongue is placed more back on the alveolar ridge. That is why Skaličková (1982, p. 109) puts these two cases into one category. It is a large group of consonants. The English alveolar and post-alveolar consonants are: /t/, /tʃ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /d/, /dʒ/, /z/, /ʒ/, /n/, /l/, /r/ and their potential Czech equivalents: /t/, /c/, /č/, /s/, /š/, /d/, /dz/, /dž/, /z/, /ž/, /n/, /l/ and /r/.

### **Palatal consonants**

In this case, the blade of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate, which is right behind the alveolar ridge (Dictionary, 2015). There is just one phoneme that is shared by both languages and that is /j/. In Czech, there are also phonemes: /tʃ/, /dʒ/ and /ň/.

### **Velar consonants**

Velar consonants are the same in Czech and English: /k/ and /g/. We pronounce them by raising the tongue (blade) towards the soft palate which follows the hard palate in oral cavity (The Free Dictionary, 2003).

### **Glottal consonants**

In this last group, there is only one phoneme in both languages: the phoneme /h/. Gimson describes (1962, p. 186): “*The air is expelled from the lungs with considerable pressure, causing some friction throughout the vocal tract...*” The difference between Czech and English /h/ is that the Czech one is always voiced (Gimson, 1962, p. 186)

In Fig.4 and Fig.5, it is noticeable that the consonants are placed in each group in two columns. It is because we differ between fortis and lenis consonants. The ones in the right column in each category are fortis and the other ones are lenis. “*The fortis-lenis distinction is*

usually thought of as the voiced/voiceless distinction in consonants. It is a distinction between the initial sounds. In English, there are eight fortis-lenis pairs” (Noterdur, 2008).

	Occlusive	Semi-occlusive	Constrictive
Fortis (voiceless)	p,t,k	tʃ	f,θ,s,ʃ
Lenis (voiced)	b,d,g	dʒ	v,ð,z,ʒ

**Fig. 6** Voiced and voiceless consonants (Skaličková, 1982, p. 108)

The only difference between voiced and voiceless consonants is that while pronouncing voiced consonants, the vocal chords vibrate (Saundz, 2014). It is appropriate to mention because of its high influence on the pronunciation in many ways. For example, the pronunciation of the grammatical ending “ed”. It can be pronounced in three different ways- /t/, /d/ and /ɪd/. When the final consonant of a word is voiceless, then the grammatical ending is pronounced with the phoneme /t/ at the end (Grammar, 2003).

Example: talk - /'tɔ:k/ x talked - /'tɔ:kt/

When the final consonant is voiced, the ending is pronounced with a /d/ sound at the end (Grammar, 2003).

Example: open - /'əpən/ x opened - /'əpənd/

Last possible pronunciation of the grammatical ending “ed” is with a sound /ɪd/ in the case, when the last letter of the word is spelled t or d (Grammar, 2003).

Example: want - /'wɒnt/ x wanted- /'wɒntɪd/

Also the pronunciation of the letter “s” at the end of the word differs according to what follows (voiced or voiceless consonant). There are three possible pronouncing variations: /s/, /z/ and /ɪz/. When the final consonant of the word is voiceless, the ending will be pronounced as /s/ (Grammar, 2003).

Example: cup - /kʌp/ x cups - /kʌps/

If the word ends with a voiced consonant, the ending will be pronounced with a /z/ sound (Grammar, 2003).

Example: card - /'kɑ:d/ x cards - /'kɑ:dz/

Lastly, there is a possible /ɹz/ sound, which can sometimes be modified with a schwa to the /əz/ sound. This pronunciation appears when the word ends with a hissing sound, such as /z/, /s/, /c/ and others (Grammar, 2003).

Example: race - /'reɪs/ x races - /'reɪsɹz/

### 3 CONNECTION BETWEEN SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION IN BOTH LANGUAGES

The issue of graphics and pronunciation is often considered to be the most problematic one in English. *“Very often pronunciation teaching has focused on the important sound contrasts and has almost totally ignored the way these sounds are represented in writing and their role in the learners’ pronunciation development”* (Kenworthy, 1987, p. 94)

The Czech language is quite straightforward as far as this issue is considered. In other words, “what you see is what you say” very often. In English it is completely different and it could be the main issue for the Czech learners. According to Kenworthy, many languages have an alphabetic writing system which means that each letter has a corresponding sound. Although belonging to this group of languages, it is not that simple with English. It is a language that has single-valued and multi-valued letters. Basically, the single-valued letters are those that have only one matching sound and the multi-valued have more than one sound value (Kenworthy, 1987, p. 94).

Melen claims (2010, p. 76) that there are important rules which are connected with stressed and unstressed syllables (see the chapter *Stress* for detailed definition). The recognition of the unstressed syllables is useful because their pronunciation differs: some vowels often tend to be reduced to schwa /ə/ - for example in the word “America”, the first syllable is unstressed so the word is pronounced with the schwa at the beginning (/ə'merikə/). In stressed syllables the pronunciation is affected by long and short syllables. Long syllable is that one which ends with a vowel: “be”- /'bi:/. On the other hand, when a word ends with a consonant, the last syllable is short and so is its pronunciation: “bet”- /'bet/ (Melen, 2010, p.76).

Another especially interesting phenomenon is called the silent letters. Many letters in English are not pronounced even though they are present in the spelling. Silent letters can cause problems either for the Czech learners or native speakers because they make the pronunciation different from the spelling (Espresso English, 2014). Here is a table including the most common examples of silent letters:

silent <b>D</b>	silent <b>H</b>	silent <b>K</b>	silent <b>W</b>
Sand <b>d</b> wich - /'sænwtʃ/	ach <b>e</b> - /'eɪk/	<b>k</b> nee - /'ni:/	<b>w</b> rong - /'rɒŋ/
Wed <b>n</b> esday - /'wenzdeɪ/	ch <b>h</b> arisma - /kə'rɪzmə/	<b>k</b> new - /'nju:/	play <b>w</b> right - /'pleɪraɪt/

**Tab. 4** Silent letters (My Words, 2009)

To make this theory of silent letters complete, it should be mentioned that there are not only silent consonants (see Tab.4) but also silent vowels. Kenworthy (1987, p. 95) describes the “silent /e/”, which tells the reader about the pronunciation of the previous vowel. For example, in the word “cage” it indicates that the consonant /g/ will be pronounced as /~~g~~/ but not as /g/ (Kenworthy, 1987, p. 95).

The letter *r* is also an element causing trouble for Czech learners. As Melen describes (2010, p. 77), if there is a letter *r* at the end of a word, it often means that it will not be pronounced. In addition, the pronunciation of the penultimate vowel will be prolonged: “car”- /ka:/, “star”- /'sta:/ (Melen, 2010, p.77). However, this omission applies for the Received Pronunciation and some other dialects, not for the General American. The pronunciation of the phoneme /r/ at the end of the words is very common in American English- it is seldom omitted (Antimoon, 2013).

The last rule to be mentioned is connected with the spelling of the root of a word. “*In the English spelling system, a “root” or “base” is always spelled the same*” (Kenworthy, 1987, p. 94). Unfortunately, it does not mean that the pronunciation will be the same. Actually, it can slightly differ. However, countless words have the same root, which basically means that there is a same sequence of letters. This feature is, as Kenworthy states (1987, p. 94), the visual system. It means that if the reader recognizes the root, than the meaning of the whole word as well as its pronunciation can often be foreseen.

There is a number of the graphic rules indicating pronunciation. Unfortunately, due to the limited extent of this thesis, only some of them were mentioned. “*English spelling is not purely “phonetic” although it is substantially phonetic. “If regularity is defined as a direct and invariable one-to-one correspondence between symbol and sound, then it is not completely regular*” (Kenworthy, 1987, p. 96).



## 4 DEFINITION OF THE SUPRASEGMENTAL FEATURES OF PRONUNCIATION AND THEIR FUNCTION

Firstly, the segmental features, which are the smallest segments of each language, were described. However, the suprasegmental features are important as well. The skill to speak the foreign language fluently is based on being able to apply and connect all of the rules in practical use. The suprasegmental level of language basically deals with phenomena such as intonation, stress, rhythm and linking. Following chapters cover all of these issues because they are often considered to be crucial for being able to learn a language.

### 4.1 Assimilation and elision

According to many phoneticians, pronunciation of some phonemes may be difficult in some words or phrases and it is a “question of effort”. Elision and assimilation occur to facilitate the pronunciation of difficult words, thus make the speech more fluent without slipping (Majmaah University, 2015).

Assimilation and elision are phenomena that produce sound changes. *“Assimilation may be defined as the process of replacing a sound by another sound under the influence of a third sound which is near to it in a word or sentence...”* (Jones, 1964, p. 202). Assimilation commonly occurs in casual speech which is naturally faster than any speech. The important fact for distinguishing between different assimilations is whether the phoneme is influenced by preceding or following phoneme. For this sake, assimilation is divided into two types - progressive and regressive. *“If a phoneme is affected by one that came earlier in the utterance, the assimilation is termed progressive”* (Majmaah University, 2015). This type of assimilation is often seen in the –s, -z and –ed endings. The preceding sound determines if the phoneme will be voice or voiceless. The example below indicates the change (Majmaah University, 2015):

students - /'stju:dnts/	girls - /'gɜ:lz/
-------------------------	------------------

**Tab. 5** Progressive assimilation (Majmaah University, 2015)

It can be seen from the example that the final /s/ in the word “students” did not change (it remained voiceless) because the preceding consonant is voiceless. However, in the word “girls” the final phoneme is pronounced as /z/ because the preceding /l/ is voiced.

Regressive assimilation is the opposite. “*The assimilated sounds are influenced by succeeding sounds*” (Majmaah University, 2015). In general it means that every affix that is joined to a word could possibly change the sound of a certain phoneme.

news - /'nju:z/	newspaper - /'nju:spɛɪpə/
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**Tab. 6** Regressive assimilation (Majmaah University, 2015)

The phoneme /z/ has changed from voiced to voiceless because the following phoneme /p/ in the word “newspaper” is voiceless.

The other very common type of assimilation is connected with de-alveolarization (Majmaah University, 2015). It affects the alveolar consonants /t/, /d/ and /n/, which due to the following consonant (velar, bilabial or dental) change into labial /p/, /b/ and /m/ (Miguel Bengoa elt, 2008).

that boy - /'dæt bɔɪ/	that boy - /'dæp bɔɪ/
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**Tab. 7** De-alveolarization (Miguel Bengoa elt, 2008)

The last subject, which is connected with this type of assimilation, is that also alveolar fricatives /s/ and /z/ change their sound according to the sound that follows. The alveolar fricatives often change into the post-alveolar fricatives /ʃ/ and /ʒ/.

this shoe - /'dɪs fu:/	this shoe - /'dʃ fu:/
------------------------	-----------------------

**Tab. 8** Change of alveolar fricatives (Majmaah University, 2015)

Elision is “...*the omission of a syllable or vowel at the beginning or end of a word, especially when a word ending with a vowel is next to one beginning with a vowel...*” (Dictionary, 2015). Elision is something that people do not necessarily need to learn to be able to communicate with others. However, it may be surprising because native speakers often omit certain phonemes and this leads to certain misunderstandings (Roach, 2009, p.114). Again, it occurs in casual speech as well as assimilation.

The most common type of elision is the omission of phonemes /t/ and /d/ (Majmaah University, 2015). Here is an example:

We stop <b>ped</b> for lunch. - /'wi: 'stɒptfə 'lʌntʃ/	We stop <b>ped</b> for lunch. - /'wi: 'stɒpfə 'lʌntʃ/
--	---

**Tab. 9** Omission of – t and –d sounds (Majmaah University, 2015)

Also schwa in unstressed syllables tends to disappear in fast speech:

I should call the <b>p</b> olice. - /'aɪ fəd 'kɔ:l də pə'li:s/
I should call the <b>p</b> olice. - /'aɪ fəd 'kɔ:l də p'li:s/

**Tab. 10** Omission of the schwa (Majmaah University, 2015)

## 4.2 Intonation

Intonation is a very important feature of any language. Some basic terminology connected with intonation will be introduced. The pitch of the voice plays the most important role. It is described in terms of high and low (Roach, 2009, p. 119). *“The pitch of the voice with which a voiced sound is pronounced is called its intonation. In connected speech the voice-pitch is continually rising and falling. These variations produce intonation which may be described as tones”* (Jones, 1992, p. 149). Melen states two specific types of tones- rising and falling (Melen, 2010, p. 60). Each tone has its typical features. The term “rising” means that the voice is moved from a lower voice level to a higher one. The change in the voice is necessary for the hearer to understand if people ask something or just point out some information (Headlandová Kalischová, 2010, p. 16). In the Czech language it is basically the same. Rising intonation is called anti-cadence (Krčmová, 2006, p. 151). It can express various emotions such as surprise, hesitation, question, doubt or interest (Useful English, 2007).

Falling intonation is the very opposite of the rising intonation, in other words cadence, as Krčmová describes (2006, p. 151). It is based on a falling course of intonation which means that the sentence starts on the highest point and the tone is lowered until the end of the sentence is reached. It is typical for sentences that are not emotionally influenced- so basically in indicative sentences (Krčmová, 2006, p. 151).

To be completely precise, there are two more tones of intonation and those are the fall-rise and rise-fall intonation. The rise-fall intonation is expressing a feeling of a strong agreement, disagreement or surprise. As Melen claims (Melen, 2010, p. 63), it has rather a tangential

meaning whereas the fall- rise intonation is more important for a Czech learner as well as for the native speaker. Fall-rise intonation is a very frequently appearing type of intonation in English used for expressing doubts, requests, threats and many others.

In general, English is much more melodic and “softer” than Czech. *“The intonation of Czech language is stabilized in its general features and it is a part of a standard language, however, it is not codified, yet”* (Krčmová, 2006, p. 152). Czech tends to start its sentences with a stressed syllable in most cases (stress will be described in the following chapter) which means that the rest of the sentence has often a falling tone. English, on the other hand, has very commonly an unstressed element at the beginning position (Skaličková, 1982, p. 177). Intonation is a phenomenon that people deliberately control in order to give a sentence its meaning (Roach, 2009, p. 120).

### 4.3 Stress

Stress is described by Ward (1967, p. 156) as a notification that some syllables stand out from the rest of the word. This “standing out” is named prominence. According to Roach, prominence is something that all stressed syllables have in common and it has to do with the perception of the stress. *“Stressed syllables are recognised as stressed because they are more prominent than unstressed syllables”* (Roach, 2009, p. 73). There are some features that produce prominence: loudness, pitch, quality and length of each syllable (Roach, 2009, p. 74). All of these characteristics are important for indentifying stressed and unstressed parts of a sentence. It is necessary to pay attention to the sound of each phoneme- if it is higher or lower, to the strength which is used to pronounce it. Also any reduction in the strength in the pronunciation should be focused on because it usually indicates the unstressed syllables.

The Czech language does not deal with these issues because each phoneme is predominantly pronounced in its full shape. That means that it is not reduced in any way – it is a consequence of a different rhythm. English for example has practically only vowels /ə/ or /ɪ, u/ in its unstressed syllables (Melen, 2010, p. 41). The ability to recognize what is being stress and what is not is significant. Looking at isolated words and finding stress is instrumental in realizing the placement of stress in minor units, thus understanding the stress in connected speech (Roach, 2009, p. 75). Stress is divided into two basic fields- words stress and sentence stress. Word stress deals with the placement of the stress within one word, whereas sentence stress deals with its placement within the whole sentence (English Club, 20015).

There are three examples of possible word stress placement below:

'PHO to graph	pho 'TO graph er	pho to 'GRAPH er
---------------	------------------	------------------

**Tab. 11** Word stress (English Club, 2015)

The stress has changed with the number of syllables as well as with the change of the word class. Stress is mainly used for distinguishing between word classes (English Club, 2015). Roach (2009, p. 76) came up with a great idea which many phoneticians identify with: *“As is well know, English is not one of those languages where word stress can be decide simply in relation to the syllables of the word, as can be done in French (where the last syllable is usually stressed), Polish (where the syllable before the last – the penultimate syllable – is usually stressed) or Czech (where the first syllable is usually stressed). Many writers have said that English word stress is so difficult to predict that it is best to treat stress placement as a property of the individual word, to be learned when the word itself is learned.*

Then there is a sentence stress. *“Sentence stress is the music of spoken English. Like word stress, sentence stress can help you to understand spoken English, especially when spoken fast”* (English Club, 2015). Every sentence has its patterns where stressed and unstressed syllables alternate and so creates the melody (Hancock, 2003, p. 54). Here are model sentences with marked stress:

'HU rry and 'GIVE it to 'JO nathan.
We 'WANT to 'GO.

**Tab. 12** Sentence stress (Hancock, 2003, p. 54)

*“Stress is a useful way of signaling what is important in a sentence. It gives the listener clues to listen to parts of the sentence which are more important”* (Doctors speak up, 2010).

## 4.4 Rhythm

Rhythm is closely connected with intonation and stress (Melen, 2010, p. 56). The English rhythm differs in many aspects from the Czech rhythm. Such big difference is often the reason why Czech learners make mistakes in the English rhythm. The theory of feet has to be mentioned. The foot is said to be the unit of rhythm which consist of the first stressed syllable and the following unstressed syllables until there is another stressed syllable (Macquarie University, 2007). What the foot is can be seen in the following sentence, which is provided by Roach (2009, p. 108) as an example:

*Walk / 'down the / 'path to the / 'end of the ca / 'nal.*

The foot is indicated by slashes at the place of the stressed syllables- there are five feet in this sentence.

English has a rhythm that is called the stress-timed rhythm, which is a rhythm that is coordinated by feet and each foot lasts approximately the same time. Czech has a syllable-timed rhythm that has a completely different rhythmical structure. From its name it is obvious that the rhythm has to do with the number of syllables and the position of stress is not that important as in the stressed-times rhythm. “.....*all syllables, whether stressed or unstressed, tend to occur at regular time intervals and the time between stressed syllables will be shorter or longer in proportion to the number of unstressed syllables*” (Roach, 2009, p. 107).

It is said that rhythm makes speech more memorable and that rhythm has been present since the early times of human civilization in the form of music and should not be absent in any language (Craig Valentine, 1999).

## 4.5 Linking

Linking is also one of the main differences between the Czech and English language. Melen states (2010, p. 49) that linking is a quite fluent transition from one word to another. There is no possibility of omitting a certain word or an ending of a word in any language. Czech speakers pay attention to pronounce every word correctly so as not to cause any misunderstanding (Melen, 2010, p. 49). English is very much alike, however differs in the accuracy of pronounced words. As it is well known, the English language links words together in several ways.

The basic type of the linking is plain linking. Words that ends with a consonant and starts with vowel are joined together to make the speech more fluent (Pronunciation Tips, 2015).

Example: That's enough - /'ðætʃs ɪ'nʌf/ x That's enough - /'ðætʃs ɪ'nʌf/

There are three linking phonemes and the most common ones were chosen to be described: /r/, /j/ and /w/. According to Roach (2009, p. 115), the linking /r/ is the most common case. “.....the phoneme r does not occur in syllable-final position in the BBC accent, but when the spelling of a word suggests a final r, and a word beginning with a vowel follows, the usual pronunciation is to pronounce with r.”

Example: here - /'hɪə/ x here and there = “here - ren there” (/ 'hɪər ən 'ðeə/)

Linking /j/ and /w/ occur when a word ends with a vowel and the following word begins with vowel, thus create a “glide” between the two words.

We use the /w/ sound when a word ends with close back vowels, such as /u:/, /ʊ/, /eɪ/ or /aʊ/ (English at home, 2015).

Example: No you don't = "No - wyou don't" (/ 'nəʊwɪjʊ dəʊnt/)

Now I know = "No - wI - know" (/ 'naʊwaɪ nəʊ/)

Linking /j/ occurs when I word ends with an /aɪ/ or /eɪ/ sound (English at home, 2015):

Example: I am English = “I - jam English” (/ 'aɪjəm 'ɪŋɡlɪʃ/)

May I go? = “May - jI go?” (/ 'meɪjaɪ 'gəʊ/)

The intrusive /r/ is another phoneme that should be mentioned. People tend to pronounce /r/ in some phrases even though the letter itself is not present.

Example: the law and order= “the law- rand order” (/ðə lɔ: rən 'ɔ:də/) (AUE: The alt. usage, English, 2000)

Lastly, intrusive /j/ and /w/ also occur commonly in English words. They have the same function as the intrusive /r/ (Universidad de Valencia, 2015).

Example: you and I - /'ju: ənd 'aɪ/ x you wand I - /'ju:wəndaɪ/

See or hear - /'si: 'ɔ: 'hɪə/ x see jor hear - /'si:jo:hɪə/

Linking sounds commonly occur in casual speech and they can cause problems with understanding to a native speaker (Learns real English, 2015). It is very natural to link words for the English speakers and the Czech learners than may have problems with identification of the beginning and the end of words.



## 5 THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES MADE BY CZECH STUDENTS

This chapter is a summary of the most frequent pronouncing mistakes that Czech learners struggle with. According to Skaličková (1982, p. 185), pronunciation is divided into four fields:

- mistakes in the pronunciation of vowels
- mistakes in the pronunciation of consonants
- mistakes in rhythm
- mistakes in intonation

Vowel pronunciation will be described as first. The basic mistake is that Czech students substitute phonemes, which is very confusing for their listeners. For example in the word *bat-* the phoneme /æ/ is often substituted with /ʌ/, which changes completely the word into *but* (Skaličková, 1982, p. 186). Diphthongs and triphthongs cause difficulties due to the length of their first elements and the specific glide in the voice that must be done in order to create a specific sound (Melen, 2010, p. 72). This “glide” is often very complicated for the Czech learners. Schwa also causes many troubles, being a phoneme that does not have its Czech equivalent.

As far as the consonant pronunciation is considered, there are some consonants that cause troubles, such as the /θ/, /ð/ or /w/. Czech learners tend to substitute these phonemes with Czech phonemes that sound similar (/f/, /d/ or /v/) because of the conviction that it will be understandable anyway. Unfortunately, it is not true and the substitution sometimes causes misunderstandings and confusion for the foreign speakers.

The consonant /r/ is also a problem for Czech students. The pronunciation of this consonant in Czech is rhotic and it is often pronounced properly anytime it appears in a word because the Czech language is a rhotic language. In comparison, British English is a non-rhotic language so this consonant is often omitted while pronouncing some words and it sounds rather “smooth” (Encyclopaedia, 2015). British English was mentioned because there are many standards of English (Received Pronunciation, General American and many others). The pronunciation of /r/ is not omitted in all varieties. It is very common that the phoneme /r/ is pronounced frequently in General American (Pronuncian, 2011). Some Czechs unknowingly pronounce /r/ in English as in their mother tongue, which does not necessarily confuse a foreign speaker, yet it is a mistake.

Another extensive problem connected with consonant pronunciation is the loss of voicedness. Melen (2010, p. 72) describes that voiced consonants are often confused with the voiceless ones. This wrong substitution can lead to a change of the meaning of a word:

Example: sad = (/ˈsæd/) - if the voiced consonant is replaced by a voiceless one, it changes the meaning- (/ˈsæt/) = sat

Czech learners often substitute the “s” and “z” endings because they find it hard to distinguish between voiced and voiceless phonemes. As it was already mentioned, the choice between the endings depends on the voicedness, so the substitution is a very common mistake (Sandy Millin, 2011).

Example: cats- /ˈkæts/ x /kætz/

A very common mistake that will be mentioned is the substitution of phonemes /v/ and /w/. The substitution of these phonemes does not change the meaning of words in Czech. However, in English it does (Melen, 2010, p. 72).

Example: whale (/weɪl/) – if the initial phoneme is substituted by /v/, it changes the meaning- /veɪl/ - vale

The aspiration also causes troubles. The Czech learners are often aware of the phonemes that tend to be aspirated (/p/, /t/ and /k/). However, they tend to over-aspirate these phonemes. It means, that they sometimes aspirate these phonemes in the final or mid positions instead of the beginning positions of the word or, on the contrary, they completely forget to aspirate (Sandy Millin, 2011).

Taking rhythm into consideration, Czech and English rhythms are completely different. Czech students are often not able to recognize feet in individual English sentences and struggle with the compliance with the length of each foot. They also find it difficult to distinguish between weak and strong forms of some words (mostly prepositions) and they tend to put an equal stress on each word of the sentence (Sandy Millin, 2011)

The next issue is the melody of the intonation. The main trouble is with what is called “the singing speech” (Melen, 2010, p. 72). English is very melodic compared to Czech. Unfortunately, Czech learners often feel embarrassed when forced to make their speech more melodic as they are used to something completely different in their mother tongue. Than it often happens that the pronunciation of a Czech learner may sound “flat” to a foreign speaker (Sandy Millin, 2011).

Stress causes troubles for Czechs because they are often not able to determine the stressed and unstressed syllables. Unfortunately, all phonemes are narrowly bound together so

every mistake in stress affects rhythm, thus intonation and the whole pronunciation (Skaličková, 1982, p. 190).

Lastly, assimilation and elision also makes the learning process more difficult for the Czech students. Czechs are not used to assimilate words because it is not that common in the Czech language as in English (Sandy Millin, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

There are numerous things we have to beware of when learning a foreign language. Most importantly, we must realize that pronunciation is a complex issue which consist of various matters and each of these matters is closely connected with the other ones. This work summarized all issues that are considered to be crucial, being inspired by many phoneticians and linguists. The contribution of this thesis may be in the simplicity of the presentation of the information, thus it may serve well as a study guide for any Czech student.

This work explains various problems that any Czech student of English may encounter during the process of learning. Unfortunately, basic schools do not provide as much time for studying the language, mainly because each subject has a certain number of hours per week and the number of lessons is limited. Teachers have a syllabus that they must follow. Therefore it often happens that phonology is a topic that a Czech learner does not discover until the university. It happens quite often that Czechs underestimate themselves in terms of proper pronunciation or, sadly, do not even want to communicate spontaneously with others in English. On the other hand, most of them are able to write a formal document. If pronunciation is developed, not only will it raise the confidence of the Czech learners of English but also will it help with a better understanding of the language.

In fact, it is a human nature to find out the links, to connect them and get through to the core of a problem. The aims of this thesis were accomplished by the study of various books and articles dealing with these issues. I have find out that there are many books focusing on phonetics and phonology of both languages, but separately. It means that there is a very small number of books comparing two certain languages. That this work might modestly contribute to the English teaching and it will help young children as well as adult learners to get a deeper insight to this language.

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## ABSTRACT

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Michaela Grohmanová
<b>Katedra nebo ústav:</b>	Katedra anglického jazyka
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	Mgr. Jana Kořínková, Ph.D.
<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2015

<b>Název práce:</b>	Rozdíly mezi anglickou a českou výslovností.
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	Differences between English and Czech pronunciation.
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Práce se zabývá analýzou anglické a české výslovnosti na úrovni segmentální a suprasegmentální. Zprostředkovává srovnání těchto dvou jazyků, stručně popisuje nejčastější chyby ve výslovnosti českých studentů a uvádí příčiny.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Česká fonetika, anglická fonetika, fonologie, samohlásky, dvojhlásky, trojhlásky, souhlásky, asimilace, elize, intonace, rytmus, přízvuk, vázání vět
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	This thesis deals with the analysis of the English and Czech pronunciation on the segmental and suprasegmental level. It compares these two languages, briefly mentions the most common mistakes in the pronunciation of the Czech learners and states the causes.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	Czech phonetics, English phonetics, intonation, rhythm, vowels, consonants, stress, linkage of sentences, diphthongs, triphthongs, phonology
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	45 stran
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	Anglický jazyk

# APPENDIX

## LIST OF TABLES

**Table 1:** English and Czech front vowels

(SKALIČKOVÁ, Alena. *Fonetika současné angličtiny*. 1. vyd. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1982, s. 80-85)

**Table 2:** English and Czech central vowels

(SKALIČKOVÁ, Alena. *Fonetika současné angličtiny*. 1. vyd. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1982, s. 87-88)

**Table 3:** English and Czech back vowels

(SKALIČKOVÁ, Alena. *Fonetika současné angličtiny*. 1. vyd. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1982, s. 90-93)

**Table 4:** Silent letters

(Silent Letter Words. *My Words* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2015-04-01]. Dostupné z: [http://mws.ust.hk/sir/silent\\_words.php](http://mws.ust.hk/sir/silent_words.php))

**Table 5:** Progressive assimilation

(Assimilation and Elision. In: *Majmaah University* [online]. 2015 [cit. 2015-04-01]. Dostupné z: [http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1385479070.7215234766cf-cc38-46da-ba2f-612b0de8727e\\_2.pdf](http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1385479070.7215234766cf-cc38-46da-ba2f-612b0de8727e_2.pdf))

**Table 6:** Regressive assimilation

(Assimilation and Elision. In: *Majmaah University* [online]. 2015 [cit. 2015-04-01]. Dostupné z: [http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1385479070.7215234766cf-cc38-46da-ba2f-612b0de8727e\\_2.pdf](http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1385479070.7215234766cf-cc38-46da-ba2f-612b0de8727e_2.pdf))

**Table 7:** De-alveolarization

(Phonology: features of connected speech. *Miguel Bengoa elt: English Language Teaching and Learning* [online]. 2008 [cit. 2015-04-01]. Dostupné z: <http://miguelbengoa.com/elt/?p=714>)

**Table 8:** Change of alveolar fricatives

(Assimilation and Elision. In: *Majmaah University* [online]. 2015 [cit. 2015-04-01]. Dostupné z: [http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1385479070.7215234766cf-cc38-46da-ba2f-612b0de8727e\\_2.pdf](http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1385479070.7215234766cf-cc38-46da-ba2f-612b0de8727e_2.pdf))

**Table 9:** Omission of – t and –d sounds

(Assimilation and Elision. In: *Majmaah University* [online]. 2015 [cit. 2015-04-01]. Dostupné z: [http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1385479070.7215234766cf-cc38-46da-ba2f-612b0de8727e\\_2.pdf](http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1385479070.7215234766cf-cc38-46da-ba2f-612b0de8727e_2.pdf))

**Table 10:** Omission of the schwa

(Assimilation and Elision. In: *Majmaah University* [online]. 2015 [cit. 2015-04-01]. Dostupné z: [http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1385479070.7215234766cf-cc38-46da-ba2f-612b0de8727e\\_2.pdf](http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1385479070.7215234766cf-cc38-46da-ba2f-612b0de8727e_2.pdf))

**Table 11:** Word stress

(What is Word Stress?. *English club* [online]. 2015 [cit. 2015-03-30]. Dostupné z: <https://www.englishclub.com/pronunciation/word-stress-2.htm>)

**Table 12:** Sentence stress

(Sentence Stress. *English club* [online]. 2015 [cit. 2015-03-30]. Dostupné z: <https://www.englishclub.com/pronunciation/sentence-stress.htm>)

## LIST OF FIGURES

**Figure 1:** English vocalic triangle

(English Vowel Triangle. *Sewanee: The University of the South* [online]. 2010 [cit. 2015-03-30]. Dostupné z: <http://static.sewanee.edu/BondsWeb/Bonds/Images/EnglishVowelTriangle.jpg>)

**Figure 2:** Czech vocalic triangle

(Vokální trojúhelník. *Učení s Chalupou* [online]. 2004 [cit. 2015-03-12]. Dostupné z: [http://ucenischalupou.chytrak.cz/cesky\\_jazyk\\_2/soubory/vokalicky\\_trojuhelnik.gif](http://ucenischalupou.chytrak.cz/cesky_jazyk_2/soubory/vokalicky_trojuhelnik.gif))

**Figure 3:** Comparison of English and Czech diphthongs

(English Pronunciation: Diphthongs. *English for Students* [online]. 2007 [cit. 2015-03-12]. Dostupné z: <http://www.english-for-students.com/Diphthongs.html>)

**Figure 4:** English consonants

(SKALIČKOVÁ, Alena. *Fonetika současné angličtiny*. 1. vyd. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1982, 107 s.)

**Figure 5:** Czech consonants

(SKALIČKOVÁ, Alena. *Fonetika současné angličtiny*. 1. vyd. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1982, 108 s.)

**Figure 6:** Voiced and voiceless consonants

(SKALIČKOVÁ, Alena. *Fonetika současné angličtiny*. 1. vyd. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1982, 108 s.)