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English intonation patterns expressing  
politeness and their cross-language perception

(Bakalářská práce)

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Basic terminology

The title of the present thesis bears the term *intonation* (specifically *intonation pattern*), which is in the main focus of my study. Different authors, however, who have written about the subject of my paper, use the basic terms (*intonation, prosody* etc.) to refer to slightly different phenomena. The terms *intonation, prosody, tones of voice, speech melody, suprasegmentals (nonsegmental features), pitch, tone* etc. may describe more or less the same phonetic reality. But as I will not be treating most of these terms synonymously (in fact, they cannot be synonyms, or rather absolute synonyms, because all of these terms seem to be necessary), their usage in the present thesis must be clarified.<sup>1</sup>

I will use the term *intonation (speech melody)* in the narrow sense of the word, that is as “the variations in the pitch of the voice” (Ladefoged 2006: 23). *Intonation* and *intonation pattern (contour or tune)* are very closely related, if not synonyms: Ladefoged (2006) on p. 293 gives the following definition of *intonation*: “the pattern of pitch changes that occur during an [intonational] phrase”. Different levels of *pitch* and directions of pitch changes are called *tones* (Crystal 2006: 74); some languages (tone languages<sup>2</sup>, e.g. Chinese) use *tones* lexically (see the section 2.2). *Prosody* I will treat as a hyperonym to *intonation*; Johns-Lewis (1986), when speaking about concrete measurements, describes the three *prosodic* parameters as “fundamental frequency

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed description of the overlap (or the difference), especially between prosody and intonation, see the introduction to *Intonation in discourse* by Johns-Lewis, C. (Ed.) (1986).

<sup>2</sup> By a tone language I mean a language, in which *tones* affect the meaning of a word (Ladefoged 2006: 248), and not a language, which uses *tones* for intonation (such as English).

(perceived as *pitch*), intensity (perceived as loudness) and duration (perceived as length)<sup>3</sup>” (p. xix), also including some non-speech features, such as the duration and distribution of silence etc. (p. xx). *Suprasegmentals, nonsegmental features* and *tones of voice* (a rather non-technical term) will be used synonymously with *prosody* (Johns-Lewis [1986: xix], Crystal [2006: 73]). And finally, I will save *pitch* for the perception of fundamental frequency (F0).<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 The goal and the outline of the thesis

The primary aim of the present thesis is to explore the use of intonation in English as a politeness marker. In other words, I will address the question of how, or to what extent, intonation contributes to the general perception of politeness. First, I will review the literature about linguistic politeness (section 2.1.1), the utilization of intonation for demonstrating politeness in English (section 2.2.1) and in Czech (section 2.2.2) and will try to compare the intonational means of expressing politeness in these two languages (section 2.2.3).

The second major focus of this work is on cross-language perception of intonation (section 2.3). I will attempt to find out if we can predict how learners of English as a foreign language (e.g. Czechs) will perceive the manifestation of politeness in English intonation. I will base my presumptions on the cross-language similarities and differences between the uses of intonation (the universality of intonation, section 2.3.1).

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<sup>3</sup> Here, the terms *speed*, *tempo* and *speech rate* may be included as the inverse to duration (Wells 2006: 3). Pitch, loudness and speed (or tempo) combine to make up the expression of *rhythm* (Wells 2006: 3, Crystal 2006: 75).

<sup>4</sup> Generally, *pitch of voice* refers to a percept (i.e. a subjective experience) of the fundamental frequency (F0) in a speech signal. F0 is subject to physical objective measurements. Although there is a strong correlation between F0 and intonation, we should never equal a F0 track with an intonation pattern (Volín 2009).

Next, I will describe the methodology for testing my research question empirically, that is how intonation alone produces different levels of perceived politeness. A preliminary pilot experiment is described in an appendix (section 5.).



## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Means of expressing politeness<sup>5</sup>

It is generally understood that in order to behave in a socially appropriate way, people make use of both verbal and non-verbal strategies. This goes far beyond being used to say *thank you* and *please* or not talking with your mouth full. Here we can make use of Válková's (2004: 54) example: it may be rather confusing when being introduced to someone new to say the conventionally polite *Nice to meet you!* but at the same time to wear a bored expression and to roll your eyes away. Válková (2004) tries to explain the complexity of communicative strategies when talking about silence as a means of communication (a verbal or non-verbal one?) by remarking that it is dependent on the social context (being silent in the theatre, for instance, vs. being silent when expected to answer a question<sup>6</sup>). This is because, as she points out, politeness in general is a context-sensitive phenomenon.

As the present thesis is predominantly concerned with linguistic behaviour of people, I will not treat the sphere of social etiquette and will focus on the linguistic means of expressing politeness.

#### 2.1.1 Linguistic politeness and its cross-language (in)consistency

When trying to explain how languages exploit their linguistic means to express politeness, I will consult the study of Geoffrey N. Leech

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<sup>5</sup> According to Lakoff's theory, there are three principles of politeness that ensure the acceptability and pragmatic correctness of an utterance. These are "do not impose", "give options" and "make the addressee feel good - be friendly" (Hirschová 2006: 171).

<sup>6</sup> For a brief remark on cross-cultural appropriateness of silence, see Crystal's (2006) example in section 2.1.1. He observes that in some cultures it is polite to stay silent when enjoying food, while in others it is not (p. 276).

(2004) *Meaning and the English Verb*, David Crystal's (2006) *How Language Works*, Silvie Válková's (2004) *Politeness as a communicative strategy and language manifestation (a cross-cultural perspective)*, and *Practical English Usage* by Michael Swan (1991).

Crystal (2006) deals with the issue of politeness in his chapter on pragmatics (p. 275 – 281). He states that “pragmatic distinctions of politeness ... are spread throughout the grammatical, lexical, and phonological systems, ultimately reflecting matters of social class, status, and role” (p. 275). Leaving aside the phonological part (which will be dealt with separately and in detail in 2.1.2 and 2.2), politeness strategies penetrate both the grammatical level (or, morphological, see below for Leech [2004], Swan [1991] and Válková [2004]) and the lexical level of a language (the correct use of markers of politeness – e.g. saying *pardon?* and not *what?* [Crystal 2006: 478], using words in their proper context, and so on).

Leech (2004) looks into how the choice of correct verbal tense and modal auxiliaries contributes to achieve (among other things) the effect of politeness. The use of the past tense, for instance, to refer to the present makes the request “indirect, and therefore more polite”<sup>7</sup> (p. 15: *Did you want me? – Yes, I hoped you would give me a hand with the painting*); another example of choosing an appropriate verbal tense for a polite interaction is “a special polite use of the Progressive” (which is more tentative: *You are forgetting the moral arguments*, p. 29). Besides the semantic part, modal verbs are believed to have a pragmatic element (p. 72). Some of the polite uses of modals can be

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<sup>7</sup> Leech associates indirectness with politeness. However, Blum-Kulka (1987) examined the link between politeness and indirectness in requests and concluded that in English, politeness is perceived differently from indirectness (p. 136). It may be partially explained by how Blum-Kulka defines politeness – “an interactional balance achieved between two needs: The need for pragmatic clarity and the need to avoid coerciveness” (p. 131). Simplistically put, the former requires directness, while the latter indirectness.

summarized as follows: *may* is generally considered more polite than *can* (p. 76), the common usage of the “tag of politeness” *if I may* (p. 92), *could* and *might* being more polite alternatives to *can* and *may* (*Could I see your driving license?* p. 129), a politer substitute *Will you...?* for an imperative (p. 88).

Other ways to mitigate an imperative (that is to soften it and turn more polite) are discussed by Swan (1991), Válková (2004) and Bolinger (1989). Swan (1991) describes the use of question tags after imperatives (*Give me a hand, will you?*, *Shut up, can't you?* etc.) and explains that “these are not real questions (they mean something like *please*), but they often have a rising intonation” (§515). Válková (2004) mentions a grammatical phenomenon *whimperatives* (indirect questions e.g. *Would you pass me the salt?* vs. *Pass me the salt, please*). *Whimperatives* are not only considered more polite, but also have wider semantic scope (indirect questions leave more space for the other party, that is, they open the possibility for denial or disagreement). *Would you...?* *Won't you...?* and *Will you please...?* are regarded more polite than a mere *Will you...?* (Leech 2004: 88). Bolinger (1989) suggests the use of a discourse-initial *oh* to blunt the force of a command: *Oh stop bothering me!* *Oh go away, will you!*, and this strategy works also with directives: *Oh that's too much!* “With *oh*, these reprimands can actually be smiling and playful” (p. 276).

Cross-language similarities and differences in politeness are explicitly discussed in Válková's (2004) chapter on the universality of politeness. She argues that even one “society as a whole is not believed to be uniform in its politeness perception and manifestation” (p. 48) and stresses how complicated it is to be interculturally polite and tactful since politeness is a “universal linguistic variable” (p. 45). Moreover, Válková comes to an

interesting conclusion that Czechs tend to be more straightforward and straightforwardness may be perceived (by Czechs) as a possible expression of politeness in situations, in which the English choose to be polite through indirectness (e.g. *whimperatives*, see above *tentative meanings of modals*, e.g. *could, might*, etc.). “Thus, while *Posad'te se!* – when supported by an inviting gesture and/or supportive intonation, sounds appropriate in Czech, in English, the usage of a mere imperative would be far from appropriate...” (p. 52).

Crystal (2006) also stresses that languages differ greatly in expressions of politeness, in the frequency of the usage of politeness markers and in their meaning. “Many European languages do not use their word for *please* as frequently as English does; and the function and force of *thank you* may also alter. For example, following the question *Would you like some more cake?*, English *thank you* means ‘yes’, whereas French *merci* would mean ‘no’” (pp. 275 – 276). He adds another example of how conventions vary across languages (and cultures): “In some countries it is polite to remark to a host that we are enjoying the food; in others it is polite to stay silent” (p. 276).

Válková's (2004) study has the strong message that politeness is a dynamic socio-linguistic phenomenon that requires, among other things, social awareness and cross-cultural knowledge (if you wish to apply a suitable politeness strategy when interacting with foreigners). Therefore it is important to remember that the present paper, investigating only one aspect of linguistic politeness, i.e. politeness achieved by different intonation patterns, has to resort to relatively gross simplifications of the linguistic reality.

## 2.1.2 Prosody - its functions and means of expressing politeness

*"It ain't what you say, but the way that you say it"* is the opening sentence of Crystal's (2006) chapter on prosody. Prosody cannot be considered a secondary or merely an additional aspect of speech, even though it has not always been given an adequate amount of attention unlike the segmental level of a language (Volín, 2009). Vlčková-Mejvaldová (2006) explains that the semantic contents of lexical units can be enriched, modified or completely changed by the prosodic realization of a particular utterance. She also believes that there are situations where prosody turns into the only conveyor of the meaning of lexical units, especially in acoustically unfavourable conditions, when speaking from a greater distance etc.

Other similar situations include interacting with a foreigner with whom we do not share the knowledge of a language code (and thus, facing the unintelligibility of words, we go for the prosody), or when a mother communicates with her infant (prosody is the "main auditory channel", Bolinger 1989: 11).<sup>8</sup> Consequently, we indeed cannot think of prosody as a mere decoration of what we say.

Prosodic functions is a topic that has been described by numerous linguists and phoneticians; in the present thesis I refer to Crystal (2006), Bolinger (1989), Vlčková-Mejvaldová (2006), further on (when discussing the uses of intonation) to Wells (2006), Ladefoged (2006), Gimson (1970 and 2001) and others. Vlčková-Mejvaldová (2006) divides prosodic functions into two basic ones: linguistic and extralinguistic (phonostylistic) functions. Linguistic uses include for

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<sup>8</sup> It is also generally known that when training a dog, the animal relies mostly on prosody and accompanying gestures rather than on the exact words of his master. What is more, there is an English story, called *Ladle Rat Rotten Hut*, which is supposed to show that intonation "is almost as important to the meaning as the words themselves" ("*Ladle Rat Rotten Hut*," 2010).

instance, as Crystal (2006) mentions, organizing (structuring) grammar (making pauses that coincide with boundaries of grammatical constituents/phrases, contrasting between questions and statements [p. 76] - specifically, using falling intonation for declarative sentences, imperatives and wh-questions, saving rising intonation for Yes/No questions [Vlčková-Mejvaldová 2006]).

Extralinguistic functions (Crystal 2006: 76 - 78, 282 - 287; Bolinger 1989; Vlčková-Mejvaldová 2006) include identification or indexical use, by which is meant that prosody is used as a marker of the speaker's age, gender, social background, to show personal or group identity (individuals tend to display characteristic prosodic features and also people belonging to different occupations - such as preachers, street vendors, and army sergeants - can be identified through prosodic features among other things) etc. Speakers also use prosody to convey the attributes of their emotion and attitude, such as excitement, boredom, friendliness (Crystal 2006: 76). Other extralinguistic functions of prosody embody characterizing a type of discourse (a distinctive melodic and rhythmical shape is assigned to paragraphs in radio news-reading, for example, Crystal 2006: 77), and discourse management function (for instance, gradual rising melody indicates that the speaker has no intention of giving up his turn to speak [Vlčková-Mejvaldová 2006]). In all cases, the situational context is crucial for the correct identification of a particular prosodic function (Vlčková-Mejvaldová 2006).

Although prosody as such has recently become a fairly well studied aspect of the phonetic and phonological components of natural languages, only relatively little is said in the literature about how specifically prosody assists in communicating features of civility. The

present paper tries to collect and summarize information available about the role of prosody in signalling politeness.

LaPlante and Ambady (2003) examine how nonverbal cues affect politeness and say explicitly that “tone of voice [i.e. prosody as such] is highly informative as a politeness cue” (p. 434). In this empirical study, two actresses were given two sets of sentences, one with a positive message (such as *Would you like to get ice-cream?*) and the other with a negative one (*Would you leave me alone?*), and performed these utterances with a “positive tone” and “negative tone” (by a “tone”, LaPlante and Ambady seem to think prosody in general, and not an intonation pattern). Unfortunately, they failed to mention the acoustic representation of their stimuli, which makes the results of their experiment much less interpretable.

LaPlante and Ambady (2003) observed how the “positive tone” or “negative tone” influenced the perception of politeness. They report that for questions, “positive tone” shifted perceptions toward greater politeness and “negative tone” shifted perception toward lesser politeness for both positive and negative messages. Despite these results<sup>9</sup>, LaPlante and Ambady (2003) are careful not to assign to prosody too much of an importance: “No matter how hard we try to soften to blow of a negative statement, nonverbal cues may not be able to compensate enough to result in a polite message overall” (p. 438). Nevertheless, because LaPlante and Ambady did not describe their stimuli in a satisfactory way, we can hardly draw any conclusion from their results, except that prosody is a fairly important device for expressing politeness.

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<sup>9</sup> The generalization of their findings is still limited, because of the role of gender; only females were taking part in the experiment.

I will now give a brief summary of prosodic features that are believed to be important for expressing politeness. Because the special focus of this paper is on intonation, one of the components of prosody, the few explicit findings about how politeness manifests itself intonationally will be reviewed in a separate section (2.2) devoted to functions of intonation.

The style of articulation (as a suprasegmental feature) has been found to play a role in signalling politeness. In literature, careful (or precise) articulation is described as a tool speakers actively use for showing politeness and listeners for recognizing it (Válková 2004, Ofuka *et al.* 2000: 203).<sup>10</sup>

Temporal variables (among others) were examined in Ofuka *et al.*'s (2000) study and were concluded to be significant cues for politeness. Ofuka *et al.* carried out an experiment, in which native speakers of Japanese were asked to produce two sentences (a request, and a greeting with addressing) in a polite and casual way, and were given the situational context (both the speakers and then the subjects participating in a listening experiment). When being polite (that is, addressing a respectable gentleman), all speakers adopted slower speech rate, thus resulting in a longer utterance in total (p. 204). Therefore, speech rate may be considered another prosodic device for conveying politeness. I will return to Ofuka *et al.*'s study once again in 2.2, where I will refer to their findings about intonation and its connection to politeness.

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<sup>10</sup> Even though Ofuka *et al.*'s (2000) experiment (Prosodic cues for rated politeness in Japanese speech) is concerned with Japanese, I am reproducing some of their results in my paper as it directly concerns my research question, even if for a different language.



On the other hand, there are prosodic devices used to manifest impoliteness, such as the “raising of voice” (raised pitch and loudness), mentioned by Culpeper *et al.* (2003), through which the speaker invades the space of the interlocutor (p. 1572).

## 2.2 Intonation and its uses

Intonation is only one part of the study of prosody (or phonetics in broader terms; prosodic functions have been summarized in 2.1.2). Bolinger (1989) (in *Intonation and Its Uses*) describes intonation as a “nonarbitrary, sound-symbolic system with intimate ties to facial expression and bodily gesture, and conveying, underneath it all, emotions and attitudes” (p. 1). As Bolinger (1986) in his similar study *Intonation and Its Parts* warns us, we must be aware that although these functions of pitch in a language such as English are the most common ones, there are other languages, tone languages (Chinese, for example), which use changes in pitch to indicate the differences in the meanings of words; the distinctive pitch levels are known as (phonemic) *tones* or *tonemes* (Crystal 2006: 77, Ladefoged 2006: 248).<sup>11</sup> Using intonation for other purposes in tone languages (such as expressing emotion, contrasting declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences etc.) is not excluded, but is considerably complicated.<sup>12</sup>

The present paper, however, looks into one particular use of intonation, and that is intonation as a politeness marker in English (and in Czech). Ofuka *et al.*'s (2000) experiment on Japanese

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<sup>11</sup> Chinese, a tone language, makes use of four tones to change the meaning of words: high-level tone, high-rising tone, low-falling-rising tone and a high-falling tone (Crystal, 2006: 77).

<sup>12</sup> Švarný and Uher (1997) explain what happens in such situations (expressing the speaker's mood, distinguishing between types of sentences etc.), that is “melodická křivka věty [se může] pouze modifikovat ... nemůže se však podstatně měnit [the melodic contour of a sentence can be only modified, but not considerably changed]” (p. 59). For details, see Švarný and Uher (1997: 59 – 65).

(described above in 2.1.2) showed that the tone pattern at the end of a sentence<sup>13</sup> had a great impact on politeness judgments in Japanese. For requests, a majority of listeners rated a final rise version as more polite than a final fall version (p. 209). Ofuka *et al.* suggest that the final rise preference in relation to politeness may be related to the unmarkedness of the sentence intonation contour, because the sentence used was a direct Yes/No question whose universally unmarked intonation is a rising tone (p. 209).

Let us now have a closer look at what meaning intonation carries in both English (section 2.2.1) and Czech (2.2.2) and how it helps speakers to convey politeness.

## **2.2.1 Intonation in English (and its contribution to perceived politeness)**

This section reviews information about politeness marking by intonation found in various textbooks on English phonetics as well as in journal articles.

### **2.2.1.1 *Intonation patterns***

First, I will roughly summarize intonation patterns occurring in English and their pragmatic and grammatical utilization relying on Gimson's "classic" *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English* (1970 and 2001)<sup>14</sup> and on Wells' *English intonation: an introduction* (2006). Gimson divides intonation patterns into four groups, which are as follows:

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<sup>13</sup> The focus on the pitch contour of the last syllable is given by the nature of Japanese language, for details on Japanese see Ofuka *et al.*'s study (2000: 203).

<sup>14</sup> I will be using two different editions of this textbook, the sixth (2001) edition, and the second (1970) edition, which contains more references to politeness (than the fifth or sixth edition I have consulted). On the other hand, the fact that most of the politeness-related comments were left out in the updated versions slightly undermines their validity.

- a) *The falling tone/nucleus (high-fall and low-fall)*. To mark it, I will use this symbol [ \ ]<sup>15</sup> and will place it before the tonic syllable.<sup>16</sup> This tone pattern in speech marks matter-of-fact statements, wh-questions; it displays an assertive character (the speaker's opinions, intentions, wishes etc. are expressed firmly and confidently through the falling tone), and it implies finality.
- b) *The rising tone/nucleus (high-rise and low-rise)*, which is in the main focus of the present study. This intonation is marked with this symbol [ / ], again put in front of the tonic syllable. Speakers use it for Yes/No questions, to indicate unfinished and continuative utterances, showing overtones of politeness, encouragement, pleading etc.
- c) *The fall-rise tone/ falling-rising nucleus*, combination of the dominant effect of the fall with any of the emotional or meaningful attitudes associated with the rise. A fall-rise expresses non-finality, the speaker's tentativeness about what he says, and a speaker also uses the fall-rise when he or she "makes a statement but at the same time implies something more" (Wells 2006: 30). This is called implicational fall-rise. For its tentativeness, a fall-rise is used for polite corrections.<sup>17</sup> This symbol [ \ / ] will be used to mark the fall-rise tone.
- d) *The rise-fall tone/ rising reinforcement of a fall*. An infrequent intonation pattern with a limited usage; the speaker using a rise-fall may be impressed, he may disapprove of something that has been said or done etc.

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<sup>15</sup> The notation of intonation is adopted from Wichmann's (2004) study (The intonation of *Please-requests*: a corpus based study).

<sup>16</sup> The tonic syllable is defined as the syllable, (often the last stressed syllable in the intonational phrase) that carries the major pitch change (Ladefoged 2006: 113).

<sup>17</sup> For example *She's coming on Wednesday*. - *On \Thursday*. Using a fall in this situation would make the speaker sound abrupt and rude (Wells 2006: 30 - 31).

We can also come across *the level tone (mid level tone)*, but it is not usually “used as an independent nuclear tone” (Wells 2006: 224). This tone signals non-finality.

### 2.2.1.2 *Default tones and (un)markedness*

A default tone is an unmarked, neutral tone for a particular type of a sentence (Wells 2006: 15). A very rough overview of default tones and their neutral occurrence with examples follows (taken from Wells 2006: 91 and Bolinger 1989: 40).

#### 1. Rise

Yes/No questions	<i>Are you /coming?</i>
Complementary questions	<i>Your /name? Your place of /birth?</i>
Reprise (echo) questions <sup>18</sup>	<i>What was that you just /said?</i> <i>Am I /coming?</i> (all Bolinger: 40)

#### 2. Fall

Statements	<i>He's from \ Spain.</i>
Commands	<i>Go a \ way!</i>
Exclamations (interjections)	<i>\ Sure. (Wells: 64) Look \ out!</i> (OALD 2000: 434)
Wh-questions	<i>Who \ called? (Bolinger: 40)</i>
Alternative questions	<i>Is she coming or \ going?</i> (Bolinger: 40)

A fall-rise is not usually discussed as a default tone for any particular sentence type, even though Wells (2006) assigns it an implicational

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<sup>18</sup> According to Wang (2003), there are two types of echo questions – those, that doubt the correctness of what has been said (or the speaker is surprised and requires a confirmation) and those, where the speaker did not hear, understand or he has simply forgotten what has been said. Both cases should receive a rising tone, e.g. *He went to Gallipoli – Where did he /go?* (p. 28).

statement and demand (p. 91), for example *So you both live in /London?*  
*\I do (but Mary lives in \York)* (p. 31).

The idea of a default tone is, however, often questioned. As Wells (2006) admits, default tones may not be statistically the most frequent ones and it is impossible to say that “there is such a thing as a default tone for any sentence type” (p. 91). Has the concept of default tones got any validity then? It has been suggested that it has, particularly because default tones are considered unmarked. The unmarkedness of an intonation contour, as shown in the next paragraph, is likely to be related to the resulting impression of politeness.

Markedness concerns both lexicon (words can be more or less marked) and grammar: the form following a rule is unmarked, the exception to a rule is marked (Bolinger 1989: 425). In the above-described Ofuka *et al.*'s (2000) experiment it was concluded that the preference to manifest politeness by a final rise in requests (i.e. Yes/No questions) might have been related to the unmarkedness of the rising tone for Yes/No questions (p. 209). Scherer *et al.*'s (1984) experiment (on German) revealed that unmarked intonation (that is, a rise for Yes/No questions and a fall for wh-questions) relatively consistently received high scores (when judged on the polite, friendly, understanding etc. scales), while marked intonation received low scores (sounding reproachful, aggressive etc.) We may therefore tentatively infer that unmarked tones themselves (used in their appropriate sentence type, of course) display some degree of politeness.

### 2.2.1.3 *Intonational meaning and context*

It seems it would be a gross oversimplification to assume that intonation patterns on their own have specific and constant

meanings. We must keep in mind that intonation co-varies with the types of utterances, situational context etc. (Bolinger 1989: 425). The importance, or rather, interference, of context is also discussed by Pakosz (1983). On page 313, he makes the following point: "Recognition of emotive meaning as expressed by prosodic features is likely to remain inaccurate in so far as part of this meaning is specified by cognitive and contextual factors", and further on, he ties in: "Talking about contour meanings in a principled way would mean to divorce the meaning of intonation patterns from context" (p. 323). The importance of context is even supported by the fact that politeness, which is the attitude this paper holds a focus on, is a context-sensitive phenomenon as Válková (2004) points out.

Gimson's (2001) approach is in accord with this attitude – in some example sentences, he gives a bracketed setting to each sentence, because "it should be remembered that the attitudinal meaning of an utterance must always be interpreted within a context, both of the situation and also of the speaker's personality. It may well happen that an intonation which is polite in one set of circumstances might, for instance, be offensive or patronizing when used by another person or in other circumstances" (p. 268).

Pakosz (1983) seems generally pessimistic about identifying correspondences between intonation and attitude ("few categories have unique tonal representation", p. 312) since such generalizations depend on many pragmatic factors (facial expressions, expectations of the hearer etc., p. 323). Culpeper *et al.* (2003) believes that the attitudinal function is "the most elusive function of intonation" (p. 1568). Scherer *et al.* (1984) hold the position that "intonational contours do not have meanings of their own but only through configurational relationships with other variables" (cited in Bolinger

1989, p. 425). Bolinger's (1989) view is slightly different – he believes that intonation patterns have meaning, but on a somewhat primitive level (say a contrast labelled e.g. aroused-subdued) and when interacting with other variables, the primitive class can add a secondary dimension (“subdued” can develop into a negative impression – such as “bored”, or on the other hand, it can be rather positive – “reserved”, for instance; “aroused” can be either “angry” or “enthusiastic”, pp. 425 – 426).

Despite the scepticism (expressed by e.g. Pakosz 1983) about the possibility of discovering systematic connections between intonation patterns and intended connotative meaning, everyday experience implies that listeners do derive cues for politeness (or other attitudinal characteristics) from intonation. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to study strategies for expressing and extracting attitudinal cues. Several findings concerning the manifestation of politeness through intonation patterns have been found in the literature. I will now give various types of utterances that the literature discusses most often (Yes/No questions, question tags, imperatives etc.) and will show how the choice of a particular tone pattern affects the percept of politeness.

#### **2.2.1.4 *Yes/No questions – requests and offers***

This section summarizes findings about how different tones influence the meaning of Yes/No questions and how to achieve the effect of politeness in Yes/No questions, particularly in requests and offers. From the summary of intonation patterns (section 2.2.1.1 above) it is clear that the neutral intonation contour for Yes/No questions is a rising tone. Gimson (2001) however admits even a falling tone is possible but warns that a falling tone on a Yes/No-interrogative marks it as brusque and demanding (p. 270). Brazil's

(1994) perspective is, nevertheless, slightly different. According to him, a rise and a fall-rise are “referring” tones used when we already have some knowledge about what we ask or we think what the answer is going to be, and we only want to make sure; a fall is a “proclaiming” tone, which we use when we want to find out some information, because we do not possess any advance knowledge or we do not imply any predicted answer (unit 4, pp. 41 – 53).

A referring tone (i.e. a rise or a fall-rise) is preferred for social reasons (Brazil 1994: 53), that is, in situations where we intend to behave in a socially appropriate way, hence to be polite. To make it clearer, Brazil gives the following example: a proclaiming tone on *Are you the new \secretary?* suggests you do not know the person and so it is less suitable (i.e. less polite) than a referring tone *Are you the new \secretary?* which “means something like ‘Am I right in thinking you are the new secretary (the person I’ve heard so much about)?’” (p. 44). In unit 6 (pp. 66 – 75), Brazil explains that a rising tone is believed to be dominant, a fall-rise is less straightforward. To put it in practice, when we offer help to someone, we can comfortably adopt the dominant role: *Can I /help you?* but when we make requests, such as *Can you help me?*, it is much less advisable to take charge of the situation as we may sound impolite – a fall-rise would be much more appropriate: *Can you \help me?* (pp. 68 – 69). Swan (2005) also favours a fall-rise for requests: “a fall-rise makes questions sound more interested and friendly. It is common in polite requests and invitations” (§555).

How a rise affects the meaning of a request is discussed by Aijmer (1996; quoted in Culpeper *et al.* 2003), Culpeper *et al.* (2003) and Pell (2007). Aijmer (1996; quoted in Culpeper *et al.* 2003: 1572) comments that “a final rise on a request can operate as a mitigating device for



more direct requests (*Can you close the door?*) while if the request is very indirectly expressed<sup>19</sup> (i.e. already mitigated), a falling nucleus appears to be acceptable (as in *I wonder if you could possibly close the door.*” Wichmann (2004), Bolinger (1989) and Culpeper *et al.* (2003) relate the choice between a rise and a fall to “openness” and “closure”. A request which is prosodically open (realized with a rise) may offer the addressee a chance to reply (i.e. it can be interpreted as polite), but in case it is prosodically closed (using a fall), no further negotiation is expected (i.e. it can be interpreted as impolite; Culpeper *et al.* 2003: 1572).

Pell (2007) conducted a listening experiment<sup>20</sup> based on the premise that “in the prosodic channel, politeness is communicated in large part through conventionalized choices in intonational phrasing; utterances with high/rising pitch tend to be perceived as more polite than those with a terminal falling contour” (p. 70, Pell refers to studies by Culpeper *et al.* 2003, Loveday 1981 and Wichmann 2002). The stimuli in Pell’s (2007) experiments were commands and requests, produced with two prosodic modes (naturally, by two actors): “with a high/rising tone which tends to attenuate the imposition of a request (i.e., be interpreted as polite) and a falling tone which tends to boost the negativity of a request (i.e., less polite)” (p. 70). The pilot task with 8 healthy listeners indicated that rising-tone sentence intended as polite was always perceived as significantly more polite than falling-tone sentence not intended as polite (p. 71).

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<sup>19</sup> For the correlation between indirectness and politeness, see Leech (2004) and Blum-Kulka (1987) in section 2.1.1. Even though Leech associates indirectness with politeness, Blum-Kulka’s experiments showed that politeness is perceived differently from indirectness.

<sup>20</sup> Pell’s (2007) experiment focused on individuals with brain damage but included healthy listeners for comparison. Only findings about healthy listeners are considered here.

With offers, a rising tone is socially adequate: *Can I /help you?* (Brazil 1994, see above). Wells (2006: 224) demonstrates that the choice of a low rise for *Would you like some /tea?* signals polite interest, at least in British English (also see 2.2.1.11 herein). Wells indicates that the connection between politeness and the low rise imposed on this offer may be due to its formality (in contrast with the high rise, which sounds casual and airy, and thus conveys informality). If the speaker adopts the wide rise, he expresses a surprise (p. 224).

A rising contour is also favoured in terms of politeness on questions such as *Is it so sur/prising?* (Bolinger 1989: 47). Bolinger labels it as “more polite”; it expresses “personal involvement” and “courteous elicitation” (p. 47). Bolinger (1986), on pages 31 - 32, focuses on short utterances such as *She did?*, *It is?*, *Really?* and *Oh, yeah?*, all of these pronounced with the same tone (rising). Here, he does not make any distinction in politeness between different intonation patterns, but merely between the intervals.<sup>21</sup> Despite his admitting that using a narrow interval would not cause any offense, he reasons that such expressions “are also open to wider intervals, which suggest more interest, hence more politeness<sup>22</sup>” (p. 31) and recommends an *Oh, yeah?* speaker to restrict the range of his rise if he wants to jeer at someone (that is, to be impolite) and thus demonstrate an ironic

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<sup>21</sup> The term interval is used more in musical terminology, and according to OALD (2000) it means the difference in pitch between two notes (for example, the interval between 100Hz and 200Hz is an octave). In phonetics, we use “range” (i.e. range of fundamental frequencies) to characterize, for example, a speaker’s voice (high-pitched voice, low-pitched voice, monotonous voice etc., Hewlett and Beck 2006: 120, 124). In my reading and understanding Bolinger’s terminology, the words “interval” and “range” (the term I would prefer to use) are interchangeable.

<sup>22</sup> According to Vaissière (2005), “the pitch range is proportional to the degree of involvement” (p. 252), that is, an attitude of boredom or fear, for example, is realized through small pitch variations (lower degree of the involvement of the speaker); on the other hand activity, pleasantness etc. are accompanied by large pitch variation (higher degree of the speaker involvement).

pseudo-interest.<sup>23</sup> Bolinger, as well as Gimson, associates politeness with the state of being interested.

#### 2.2.1.5 *Question tags*

Gimson (2001) comments that both the falling and rising tone in question tags express an expectance of agreement, the fall demanding it, and the rise leaving open the possibility of disagreement (p. 271). That would mean that a rising tone is more polite than a falling tone in question tags. How the meaning of a question tag changes with the intonation is also explained by Swan (1991). “If it is said with a falling intonation, it makes the sentence sound more like a statement. With a rising intonation, the sentence is more like a real question” (p. 515). This applies primarily to the use of a question tag after affirmative and negative statements.

Bolinger (1989) also suggests that there is a connection between a rising contour imposed on a question tag and politeness. He remarks that the rising terminal of a specific contour of a question tag is deferential – “the matter is courteously left open for denial even though confirmation is expected” (p. 117). Again, it is the rising tone that is believed to convey some politeness as opposed to a fall.

#### 2.2.1.6 *Commands/Imperatives*

The pragmatic distinction between commands and requests (discussed in 2.2.1.4 above) is not very clear. One may argue that *Help me!*, *Will you help me?*, *Can you help me?*, *Could you please help me?* etc. are all effectively (however mitigated and thus polite) commands (or imperatives, Leech 2004). In this section, I discuss how intonation affects direct imperatives and *Will you...?* commands/requests in

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<sup>23</sup> Bolinger uses terms such as “major third” and “major second”, again based on musical terminology, to describe the range of the tone change. For simplicity these were not reproduced here.

relation to (im)politeness (*Can you...?* and similar requests have been dealt with in 2.2.1.4 above).

Imperatives with a falling tone, according to Gimson (2001), are abrupt. “Polite imperatives, which are at least suggesting that the listener has a right to refuse, are said with a rising tone (most frequently low rise and sometimes fall-rise) ... The use of a rising tone rather than a falling tone softens the imperative” (p. 271). Some of Gimson’s examples are *Don’t be /angry about it* and *Give me another /chance*. Jones (1956) (cited in Bolinger 1989) distinguishes between a command *Come \on* with a fall, which is a normal way of addressing a dog, and *Come /on*, which is more suitable for a person (p. 32).

Leech (2004) analyzes the function of *Will you...?* He explains: “when spoken with falling intonation, *will you...* can sound positively impolite: *Will you be quiet!*” (p. 88). Leech (2004) does not give the neutral tone for the *Will you...?* command, but we can suggest a fall-rise (or a rise; that is any non-fall with a rising terminal).

A similar point is made by Culpeper *et al.* (2003). On page 1571, they discuss how a command *Will you please leave the room*<sup>24</sup>, which gives an overall impolite impression, is realized intonationally. For the first time it is uttered by the speaker (an officer), it carries high onset and a markedly low fall, known as a “downstepped fall”<sup>25</sup> (which means the pitch drops below the speaker’s usual range), and this fall increases the sense of finality.<sup>26</sup> However, when the addressee is

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<sup>24</sup> Culpeper *et al.*’s experiment was based on real sentences (taken from the BBC’s documentary television series *The Clampers*).

<sup>25</sup> Besides the “downstepped fall”, Culpeper *et al.*, when analyzing a longer utterance (p. 1570), encountered another factor that contributes to impoliteness: the successive repetition of a pitch contour (so-called intonational parallelism).

<sup>26</sup> We can infer that finality is an impoliteness strategy, as it does not give the interlocutor any option to object, react or change the situation; it simply must be

unwilling to comply and the speaker is forced to repeat his command, the intonation changes – it ends in a very slight rise. In this particular situation, given that the command is repeated for the second time, it can hardly be interpreted as a politeness strategy, though. Culpeper *et al.* propose an explanation, that it is “mock politeness”, or even “insincerely veiled threat” (p. 1572). Another possible interpretation is that a rise implies the speaker’s intention to continue (Gimson 1970), and therefore the meaning of the officer’s second command may be *Will you please leave the room or otherwise...* (p. 1572).

#### 2.2.1.7 *Social formulae*

In this part, I focus on the intonational realization of social formulae and its relation to politeness, even though “it is difficult to give rules for the intonation of social formulae because it is an area where native speakers of English often have idiosyncratic habits. It is, however, generally true that falling tones show sincerity, whereas rising tones are used in situations where a formulaic pleasantry is appropriate” (Gimson 2001: 271).

Greetings as such belong to the sphere of social formulae and their intonational renditions have been given considerable attention, specifically by Gimson. According to Gimson (2001), “*Good morning* with a high fall is sincere ... while a low fall is brusque, and with a low rise is polite” (p. 271). Rather confusing, but still interesting, is the distinction shown on the same greeting described by Gimson (1970) on pages 255 – 257. When pronounced with a rise, it is described as a “polite but perfunctory greeting”, when realized with a high-fall and with an accent on *good*, its comment says “hearty greeting”, a high-fall, but with *morning* accented, evokes “a bright,

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accepted. It therefore goes against Lakoff’s theory of politeness (“do not impose”, “give options” and “be friendly”; Lakoff in Hirschová 2006: 171).

cheerful greeting” and when performed with a rising-falling nucleus, it expresses “portentous, ironical greeting”. This description obviously lacks situational context (facial expressions, accompanying gestures and other things that naturally belong to greeting someone).

Wells (2006) briefly discusses the intonation contour of the conventional phrase *Excuse me*. In a situation where a person wants to ask politely another person to move so that he can get past, Wells recommends to use the fall-rise: *ex \cuse me* – “a fall would sound like a command that must be obeyed” (p. 219).

#### 2.2.1.8 *Please-utterances*

Wichmann (2004) investigates how *please*-utterances are realized intonationally. I mention her study now, since “the word *please* in contemporary usage is undeniably associated very closely with being polite” (p. 1524). On page 1522, she states that intonation “has the power to render a polite utterance both more and less polite.” In the experiment she conducted, she used *please* in all types of sentences (interrogatives, declaratives, imperatives, elliptical sentences, as well as in formulaic *Yes please* and *Please do*, and even *please* alone), and in all positions (initial, medial, final). In the initial position in *please*-requests, *please* is generally realized with a high level tone followed by a falling contour (p. 1537). In the final position, *please* can be accented or unaccented. If accented, it usually carries a rise; if a final *please* is unaccented, it is usually a part of a falling contour. An isolated *please*, in a mock request, expressing a scorn or disapproval, is realized as a loud, high fall (p. 1540).

How the intonation contours of *please*-utterances relate to their situational context is discussed on page 1542: private speech favours a final rising contour (it signals “openness” or “non-finality”, and is

thus open for negotiation or non-compliance, p. 1545), while public speech favours a final falling contour (“the intonation signals a closure of a complete text”, and assumes compliance, p. 1545). As for the formulaic responses (*Yes please*), Wichmann sums up that “a rise, or a fall-rise, is a hearer-oriented gesture ... a level tone sounds a little indifferent, while a contour falling to low would sound rather discourteous except in a service situation” (p. 1546).

#### 2.2.1.9 *Another study of how intonation influences the perception of politeness*

Uldall (1960) conducted a listening experiment to measure listeners’ attitude to a variety of intonation contours used on four sentences (*He expects to be here on Friday, Did all of them come in the morning?, What time did they leave for Boston?, Turn right at the next corner*). The listeners were asked to rate “each sentence-plus-intonation as to whether it conveyed the impression that the speaker was bored or interested, rude or polite, agreeable or disagreeable, deferential or arrogant” (p. 224) etc. (there were ten such paired opposites). An attitude-measuring technique was used. Sixteen intonation contours were synthetically imposed in turn upon the four sentences<sup>27</sup>, displaying four kinds of difference – the range, direction of intonation at the end, the shape (unidirectional and with a change of direction) and the treatment of weak syllables, which were either on the same level as the strong syllables, above or below them (p. 226).

Twelve subjects took part in Uldall’s (1960) experiment, seven men and five women (all of them were Americans). Even though she admits that twelve participants may not seem a sufficient number, she believes the results “have some validity” (partly due to the fact

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<sup>27</sup> The sentences were recorded as spoken (by a male speaker) with a “steadily falling intonation of rather narrow range” (p. 224), then the resynthesis was applied.

that the subjects gave fairly satisfactory ratings, p. 227). As for the results, she tends to evaluate them in terms of pleasantness/unpleasantness, which serves as an umbrella for all the ten scales. The narrow-range fall was the most disliked and the most unpleasant, along with the low narrow-range fall. Narrow range in general was disliked, and “smooth” contours (proceeding particularly downwards) were less pleasant than the “broken” contours (with a change of direction, p. 230). The questions and the command contours with the final rise tended to be the “pleasant” ones (as opposed to those with the final fall, p. 231). Uldall (1960) also points out that range is often more important for the meaning conveyed rather than a final rise or fall (p. 232). Nevertheless, the method implemented by the author may give rise to some objections (using crude intonation contours etc.)

#### ***2.2.1.10 Universal use of high/rising F0 for politeness***

Ohala's (1984) paper *“An Ethological Perspective on Common Cross-Language Utilization of F0 of Voice”* is also relevant for the present paper, in which Ohala is looking for universals in the utilization of F0. Ohala argues that universally, “‘social’ messages as deference, politeness, submission, lack of confidence are signalled by high and/or rising F0” (p. 2). He admits, though, the lack of evidence for this, and warns that “the experimental literature reveals some conflict on this point” (p. 2).<sup>28</sup> In addition, he points out that other factors need to be taken into consideration – namely the steepness of falling/rising tone. Ohala claims that steep rising/falling indicates some degree of dominance (p. 4). This is directly linked to the length of the utterance (the shorter time it takes, the less space for respect or tact to be conveyed).

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<sup>28</sup> Since the conflict concerns the discrepancy in perceiving confidence in particular, I decided not to discuss it in greater detail.



Ohala (1984) proposes a link between high/rising F0 and politeness. He observes that in questions, the speaker is relying on the receiver for information and his cooperation and therefore politeness and respect is highly advisable. Ohala also makes an interesting note about the sound-symbolic use of tone: high F0 being used for words expressing something small, diminutive and low F0 to be associated with the notion of large etc (p. 4). Pell (2007) on page 73 makes a similar point, namely that a rising tone may be recognized as the speaker's attempt to appear small or less dominant than the listener, and therefore this prosodic category is more polite. Culpeper *et al.* (2003) similarly suggest that the fact that "overall high or low pitch are physiologically associated with small vs. large ... may account for some contextually determined effects of high and low pitch, such as associating high pitch with deference (behaving in a 'small' way), and low pitch with assertiveness (behaving in a 'big' way)" (p. 1569). Similarly, Bolinger (1989: 3) says that "a bigger thing produces a bigger feeling."

To sum up, appearing 'small' and using high F0 is therefore a behaviour one may adopt to show subordination, hence deference and even politeness (in the animal world, a dog submissively lowers its head, ears and tail, whines or yelps; Ohala 1984: 4). Appearing 'large' and using low F0 gives the impression of dominance and aggressiveness (an example may be a dog's intimidating growl and raising its ears and hair, birds erecting their wings and feathers, or there is even a permanent sign of size and dominance - the mane of the male lion etc.; Ohala 1984: 4 - 5).

### 2.2.1.11 *Intonational differences between British and American English*

Even though one may assume that English is English (a bit of an overstatement), variations in the use of intonation occur between its dialects (Gimson 2001: 255). The question of differences in intonation between British and American speakers has been addressed by Bolinger (1989: 28 – 32).<sup>29</sup> After analyzing a set of different sentences (Yes/No questions, declaratives etc.), Bolinger concludes that British pronunciation gives the American the impression of “greater involvement (higher initial pitches, wider intervals [i.e. range]) and deference (more rising terminals), to the point of exaggeration and affectation” (p. 32). Another example of the distinction between British and American choice of intonation follows on page 46, where Bolinger describes “the British tendency to maintain high pitches with abrupt falls, where American English uses a more or less gradual descent” (*I can't be\lieve it!*).

We can also repeat Wells's (2006) example *Would you like some / tea?* realized with a low rise, which gives a British speaker the impression of “polite interest”, while an American “may perceive it as patronizing” (p. 224). In Uldall's (1960) experiment only Americans took place, and at the end of her paper she predicts that RP speakers might be expected to respond differently (p. 232). Therefore, the differences between intonation and its uses in British and American English is another factor that cannot be overlooked when evaluating a particular choice of intonation pattern, when we conduct a listening experiment, etc.

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<sup>29</sup> Besides the comparison between British and American English, Bolinger (1989) analyzes the intonational variations even in other English dialects – Scottish, Anglo-Irish and Southern American English.

### 2.2.1.12 Summary

Having consulted several textbooks and empirical studies about how intonation in English helps speakers convey (and listeners perceive) politeness, we can draw several conclusions. As for prosody in general, careful articulation and slower speech rate are considered cues for signalling politeness (2.1.2). First and foremost, it is essential to remember that intonation only in relation to context, facial expression, sentence type, and other variables (e.g. loudness, speech rate, etc.) can enable us to produce some kind of evaluation of an attitudinal meaning of a particular intonation pattern (2.2.1.3). Nevertheless, in a simplified way, we can summarize intonation patterns which are believed to function as politeness markers as follows:

- a) unmarked intonation contours (particularly a rise for Yes/No question and a fall for wh-question; 2.2.1.2), as opposed to marked intonation contours
- b) a rising tone for offers, a rise and a fall-rise for requests, as opposed to a fall (both discussed in 2.2.1.4)
- c) a fall-rise for corrections, as opposed to a fall (2.2.1.1)
- d) a rising terminal for question tags, as opposed to a falling terminal (2.2.1.5)
- e) a rising tone for an imperative/command, as opposed to a falling tone (2.2.1.6)
- f) a low-rise for a greeting, as opposed to a fall (2.2.1.7)
- g) a final rising contour (or a fall-rise) for *please*-utterances (e.g. *Yes please*), as opposed to a final falling contour or a level tone (2.2.1.8)
- h) universally, high/rising F0 of voice (due to its association with appearing 'small'), as opposed to low/falling F0 of voice (2.2.1.10)

On the other hand, impoliteness is prosodically realized through the "raising of voice" (i.e. raised loudness; 2.1.2), by using a "downstepped" fall in commands (2.2.1.6), and with a longer

utterance, by intonational parallelism (the successive repetition of a pitch contour (2.2.1.6). From this summary, it can be inferred that rise and fall-rise are most often used for signalling politeness.

Besides the overall tone pattern, we have found out that the perception of politeness is also affected by the range in a rise (the “wider” range the more interested, thus more polite) and the steepness of a fall/rise – the “sharper” the tone is, the less polite. The last thing to include in this summary is that differences between the uses of intonation as politeness markers in different varieties of English should be taken into consideration.

## **2.2.2 Intonation in Czech (and its contribution to perceived politeness)**

Comparatively little is known about the effects of intonation on perceived politeness (or other attitudinal characteristics in general) in Czech. Intonation patterns occurring in the Czech language have been discussed by Palková (1997) who describes three basic patterns (plus their variants):

- a) *The falling tone*, typical for declarative sentences, imperatives and wh-questions. It is the most frequent intonation pattern.
- b) *The rising tone*. Czech uses this pattern in Yes/No questions to distinguish these from declarative sentences whose grammatical structure is identical.<sup>30</sup> It is characterised by a relatively steep rise of F0.
- c) *The continuation tone*, implying a continuation of the utterance (used either at the end of sentences or independent sentence

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<sup>30</sup> The word order in Czech is freer than in English: the subject-verb inversion can take place in declarative sentences and what is more, the subject can be omitted. Thus, a declarative *Byl \tady* [*He was \here*] has an identical structure to the Yes/No question *Byl /tady?* [*Was he /here?*]. The rising tone is therefore phonologically functional, because it is the only means to distinguish Yes/No questions from declaratives (Palková 1997: 308).

members). Acoustically, this tone is, according to Palková (1997), the most indefinite from all the intonation patterns (p. 308); the intonation pattern of the continuation tone can be both rising and falling (pp. 313 – 314).

Only very little can, however, be found in the literature about particular uses of these tones for expressing a speaker's attitude. Palková (1997) merely mentions that the marked variants of the three basic intonation patterns are used to convey a speaker's emotions and attitudes (p. 317). Palková (1997) also stresses the importance of context. A rising tone, for example, imposed on a *wh*-question can imply a repeated question, a rhetorical question, or it signals that the speaker expresses his personal attitude towards what he says (e.g. irony, astonishment; p. 315). The little what is known about the connection between intonation and politeness is summarized in the following paragraph.

Some analysis of Czech intonation relevant for the present topic was done by Jančák (1957; discussed in Vlčková-Mejvaldová 2006). Jančák, as well as Gimson, analyzes the diversity of intonation patterns occurring in greetings. He says that the variability of prosodical realizations of greetings is mainly caused by the speaker's effort to update the meaning of the greeting since its lexical form is unchangeable. A similar point is made by Hirschová (2006). In Hirschová's chapter on politeness in greetings (p. 176 – 177), she states that “protože běžné neutrální pozdravy jsou sémanticky téměř vyprázdněné, mají u nich důležitou roli zvukové charakteristiky – hlasitost, zabarvení hlasu, intonace, a (rovněž standardizovaná) gesta [since the common neutral greetings are semantically almost empty, an important role is played by speech characteristics – loudness, timbre of voice, intonation, and gestures (including standardized

gestures)]". On page 86, Vlčková-Mejvaldová (2006) refers to Jančák's theory of Czech greeting, who defines the intonation pattern that shows maximum politeness strategy as that with a distinctive melodic emphasis on the first syllable followed by falling intonation (and slight reduction of tempo). Negative expressivity (that is, the speaker expressing a negative attitude - indifference, boredom, tiredness and anger), on the other hand, is "best achieved" by a low, level intonation with a small melodic range and casual articulation (p. 86).

### **2.2.3 Differences between English and Czech intonation (in assisting the production of politeness)**

As it has been pointed out, Gimson defines four basic intonation patterns whereas Palková only three (Czech being short of the fall-rise and the rise-fall tone, but adding the continuation tone). However, this, in my opinion, is more a question of taxonomy since the rise-fall is present in Czech too, but it is grouped with the rising tone (Palková 1997: 312). The continuation tone, on the other hand, is evidently used in English as well (e.g. Ladefoged 2006: 117). More importantly, Gimson admits the possibility of using a rising intonation for wh-questions as well as using a falling intonation for Yes/No questions whereas Palková mentions only the first case.

The great imbalance between what is known about the uses of intonation as a politeness marker in English and in Czech does not really allow us to make a comparison between these two languages in this respect. The summary of how the choice of a particular intonation pattern affects perceived politeness in English was given in 2.2.1.12. In Czech, however, we have merely found out that a speaker's attitude is expressed through marked variants of the three basic intonation contours. The only connection between intonation

and politeness has been observed on a Czech greeting (the most polite intonation pattern is described as a tone with distinctive melodic emphasis on the first syllable followed by falling intonation).

### **2.3 Intonation and politeness: a cross-language perspective**

Another major focus of the present paper is on cross (or second) language perception<sup>31</sup> and production of intonation, particularly its attitudinal function. The aim of this section is to try to find out if it is possible to predict how learners of English as a foreign language (EFL learners, e.g. Czechs<sup>32</sup>) will perceive the intonational expressions of politeness in English. These predictions will be based on cross-language similarities and differences in the uses of intonation.

The questions are as follows: (1) Do speakers succeed in communicating the correct information when they transfer the L1 (first language, e.g. Czech) intonation strategy into L2 (foreign language<sup>33</sup>, e.g. English)? (2) Do listeners succeed in extracting the correct information from heard speech when they transfer the L1 (first language, e.g. Czech) perceptual strategy into L2 (foreign language, e.g. English)? The answer to both is probably yes and no. The communication is successful providing the meaning conveyed

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<sup>31</sup> Sebastián-Gallés (2005) describes cross-language speech perception as the “field that studies what happens when listeners of a particular language perceive another language differing in some aspects from their own and the perceptual consequences of the mismatch between the properties of the maternal language and the foreign one” (p. 547).

<sup>32</sup> I will discuss mainly foreign language learning (FLL), because the participants of the proposed study (see section 3. Methodology) will be Czech learners of English, whose majority of knowledge of English is mainly based on institutional (classroom) learning and who may have some limited “natural settings” experience from an English-speaking country.

<sup>33</sup> Wells (2006) abbreviates the term “foreign language” as L2, even though we really should save L2 for “second language” (natural learning, i.e. acquiring) and FL for “foreign language” (classroom and other institutional learning).

by intonation is uniformly expressed in both languages (L1 and L2, i.e. the speaker enjoys the advantage of “positive transfer”, see e.g. Wells 2006), but the speaker’s message may as well be misinterpreted (“negative transfer”, i.e. where the L1 and L2 intonation strategies differ, see e.g. Wells 2006).

### **2.3.1 Universality of intonation**

#### **2.3.1.1 Positive transfer**

First, I will have a look at the positive transfer strategy - I will explore how universal intonation is believed to be, that is to what extent speakers of different languages (or even within one single language) consistently use acoustic properties to communicate their inner states.

Intonation, or prosody in general, conveys the speaker’s emotions and attitudes, as has been said in section 2.2. Such expressions must be conventionalized to an extent, because clearly, people do not communicate feelings in the same way everywhere (Bolinger 1989: 1). On the other hand, as Bolinger (1989: 1) explains, the “interlanguage resemblances of sound and meaning are so far-reaching and so persistent” that there must be a common fund for the expressions of intonation shared by all languages (Bolinger 1989: 1). Wells (2006: 3) supports this supposition by giving examples and situations where prosodic features are probably used uniformly by all languages - we tend to speed up our speech when we are impatient or excited, we slow down when we are “thoughtful or weighty” (p. 3), we lower our voice (we reduce the intensity of voice) in order to avoid being overheard etc.



Even though Bolinger (1989) admits that cross-language comparisons of intonation are insufficient to allow making universal generalizations (pp. 38 – 39), there has been an attempt to create a universal code of intonation – an idea represented by Ohala’s “universal frequency code”.<sup>34</sup> It seems to be generally accepted that intonation is fairly universal in expressing linguistic information<sup>35</sup> (e.g. Vlčková-Mejvaldová 2006, Ladefoged 2006). On the basis of experiments involving 269 languages Bolinger (1989) concluded that “the average pitch in questions is higher than in non-questions” (though admittedly, this conclusion is rather vague, p. 39). Similarly, Ohala (1984) observes the universal “tendency for languages to use high and/or rising F0 to mark questions – especially yes-no questions – and low and/or falling F0 to mark statements” (p. 2).<sup>36</sup>

Besides the linguistic part, Ohala’s theory of “universal frequency code” involves even communicating non-linguistic information. High (and/or rising) pitch is associated with smallness, defenselessness, submission, politeness etc., while low (and/or falling) pitch signals such attitudes as dominance, confidence, aggression and finality (section 2.2.1.10; Bolinger 1989: 1, Vaissière 2005: 252). Vaissière points out the general tendency to accept this theory, despite the fact that there is “no firm evidence for it” (p. 252). Ohala (1984) concludes that intonation is an aspect of speech which shows cross-language consistency. Ladefoged (2006) is more careful about the idea of universality of intonation in terms of conveying non-linguistic information, however he says that “it is apparent that

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<sup>34</sup> The term “universal frequency code”, designed by Ohala, was quoted in Bolinger (1989:1).

<sup>35</sup> By “linguistic information” I mean using intonation for organizing (structuring) grammar (for the functions of prosody, see section 2.1.1 above).

<sup>36</sup> Both Bolinger (1989) and Ohala (1984) refer to a series of studies conducted by Hermann (1942), Ultan (1969) and Bolinger (1964, 1978).

speakers of many different languages have similar inflections<sup>37</sup> when conveying similar emotional information” (p. 247).

### 2.3.1.2 *Negative transfer*

Nevertheless, it is also believed that intonation (or prosody) as a device of expressing attitudes and emotions is not universally (or even intraculturally) reliable. Ladefoged (2006) presumes that nobody knows if the non-linguistic information (e.g. the speaker’s emotional state) conveyed by intonation is universal (p. 247).<sup>38</sup> Cosmides (1983) warns that “there is no a priori theoretical reason why the acoustic expression of emotion must manifest cross-culturally universal or even culturally shared patterns” (p. 864). Vlčková-Mejvaldová (2006) claims that prosodic expressions of specific attitudes and emotions are not universally shared (p. 30).

It has been implied that simply transferring the intonation strategy from L1 to L2 does not guarantee the speaker at all a correct interpretation of his ideas (negative transfer). This failure – misunderstanding or foreign-accentedness – may be partly due to a fact suggested by Wells (2006), that “English makes more elaborate use of intonation to signal meaning than other languages” (p. 11). Gimson (2001) similarly states that “while the variation in intonation between languages [and between dialects of English, see 2.2.1.11 herein] is not as great as that involved in segments<sup>39</sup>, it is nonetheless sufficient to cause a strong foreign accent and in some cases lead to misunderstanding” (p. 255). Brown and Levinson (1987) in their chapter on Second language learning warn that “even minor

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<sup>37</sup> By “inflection” I mean changes in the pitch of voice.

<sup>38</sup> Considering that expressing emotions, attitudes etc. is at least partly culture-related (e.g. Bolinger 1989), we can hardly expect absolute universality of intonation in terms of conveying non-linguistic information.

<sup>39</sup> Podlipský (2009), referring to e.g. Pennington and Richards (1986), nevertheless implies that prosodic inaccuracies may be more likely to give the foreign impression than segmental errors (p. 11).

differences in interpretive strategies carried over from a first to a second language (e.g. whether an upgliding or downgliding intonation pattern conveys a polite offer) can lead to misunderstandings..." (p. 36).

Vlčková-Mejvaldová (2006) believes that the filter preventing the correct cross-language interpretation of expressive prosody is of a cultural and social nature and reminds us not to neglect prosodical habits of individual speakers (p. 90). "Culture has been found to play an enormous role in the use of verbal and non-verbal politeness strategies" (LaPlante and Ambady 2003: 439). This reminds us of some of the conclusions about the universality of politeness (from section 2.1.1 above), that even politeness as such is a "universal linguistic variable" (Válková 2004: 45) and "society as a whole is not believed to be uniform in its politeness perception and manifestation" (Válková 2004: 48).

### **2.3.2 Foreign language learning (FLL) of intonation and politeness**

The previous section suggests that in order to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation caused by implementing an incorrect intonation strategy (negative transfer from L1), it is advisable to pay attention to learning the intonation of our target language (i.e. English).

First language acquisition (FLA) of intonation is relatively well described in the literature – unlike the FLL of intonation (see the next paragraph). "Infants are sensitive to rhythmic properties of language, and they learn to recognize the prosodic properties of their L1 before

5 months of age. Thus, the perception of the rhythmic<sup>40</sup> features of speech is attuned to L1 earlier than that of sound segments” (Ylinen *et al.* 2006: 181). Bolinger (1989) makes a similar point: “infants are programmed to interact with their mothers in a communicative scheme that precedes language ... intonation is the main auditory channel at this stage ... the contours are magnified, sharply delineated, repeated...” (p. 11). Vlčková-Mejvaldová (2006: 13 – 14) similarly explains that when a child learns her mother tongue, she imitates the melody and rhythm before she actually begins to produce the first words. Meanings associated with different prosodic patterns may thus be among the first meanings the child understands. In other words, prosody of maternal speech is prelexical and pregrammatical (p. 14).

Information available about FLL of intonation is, however, insufficient to make any reasonable predictions about cross-language perception of intonation and its expression of politeness.<sup>41</sup> Wells (2006) admits that teaching (and therefore learning) intonation is mostly neglected (p. 2), even though it is true that intonation can be erroneous and therefore cannot be overlooked. In many EFL textbooks, teaching “intonation is either completely missing, or is dealt with in a rather haphazard way” (Thompson 1995 quoted in Wang 2003: 20). LaPlante and Ambady (2003) believe that EFL learners are somewhat limited in mastering prosodic functions: “because nonverbal dominance has been found to be extremely attenuated among non-native speakers for the English language, this effect is likely to be enhanced for individuals speaking a second

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<sup>40</sup> Nazzi and Ramus’s paper (2003), to which Ylinen *et al.* refer to, is focused mostly on metrical properties of language, with few mentions of intonation. Thus, I will not elaborate on their study.

<sup>41</sup> Vaissière (2005) stresses how difficult the study of the perception of intonation is, partially because of the limited generalization of results obtained in one prosodic context.

language” (p. 439); LaPlante and Ambady add that “the role of culture in the perceptions of verbal and non-verbal [i.e. prosodic, for instance] politeness strategies was not explored” (p. 439).

The question of FLL of intonation as a politeness marker was explored by Hong (1992, cited in Ofuka *et al.* 2000). Hong conducted an experiment which revealed that learners of Japanese were fairly unsuccessful in communicating politeness through intonation (polite sentences spoken by the learners were perceived as polite in less than 50% of cases by native listeners, while polite utterances produced by native speakers were appropriately identified by more than 80% of native listeners), such results were “probably due to the incorrect prosody imposed on the utterances by the learners” (p. 200).

Válková (2004) briefly addresses the issue of second language acquisition<sup>42</sup> of politeness. She describes some of the methods for teaching politeness strategies at school, which are to be found in textbooks currently used for teaching English in the Czech Republic and observes that some textbooks display a “lack of socio-cultural awareness” (p. 154). Válková makes no mention of intonation as a topic<sup>43</sup>, and even though the chapter *Politeness in second language acquisition* is labelled “an outline” (and thus does not go into details), intonation should not be overlooked as it has been found to be a fairly important politeness marker (see e.g. sections 2.1.2 and 2.2.1 herein).

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<sup>42</sup> Since Válková deals with classroom English teaching in this chapter (*Politeness in second language acquisition*), I suppose she means foreign language learning (FLL). (She may treat the terms SLA and FLL as synonyms.)

<sup>43</sup> Even though intonation as such is not explicitly discussed, Válková analyzes an exercise where the students are supposed to listen to a conversation, where the speakers make complaints and apologize. Some of the speakers were meant to sound aggressive and the students are encouraged to say why and propose how the aggressive speaker may be more polite (p. 155). Intonation in this particular exercise is likely to play a role, even if subconsciously.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this section is to suggest possible methods for answering the research questions of the present paper.

#### 3.1 The questions

The primary question of this thesis is to find out whether intonation alone (imposed on a specific sentence type) produces different levels of perceived politeness. To test it, I propose to conduct a listening experiment with stimuli based on the literature review. The summary of tones which reportedly serve as politeness markers in a specific sentence type is given in section 2.2.1.12; then it is to be decided which sentence types should be reproduced in the experiment. It would be advisable to choose conventional phrases (e.g. *Can I help you?*, *Good morning*), which are semantically almost empty and so that the listener should pay more attention to the non-verbal aspects of utterances and thus focus on intonation (this is e.g. Ofuka *et al.*'s 2000 strategy). The selected sentences will be recorded (when being spoken by both native speakers of English) and different intonation patterns will be imposed on them synthetically using the PSOLA technique ("Pitch-Synchronous-Overlap-and-Add" method) in Praat (Boersma and Weenink 2008).

The present thesis is focused both on native and non-native listening – the same set of stimuli will be submitted to a homogeneous group of native speakers of English (preferably of one dialect) and to a homogeneous group of Czechs who learn English as a foreign language (they should have a similar command of English as well as similar natural-settings experience etc.). The listeners (native, i.e. English, and non-native, i.e. Czech) will then judge the amount of

politeness the different intonation patterns imposed on the selected sentences convey to them. The 1 (the most polite) – 7 (the least polite) scale is recommended. The perceptual experiment will be prepared and run in Praat (Boersma and Weenink 2008).

When compiling the experiment (whichever method we choose), we should also keep in mind the role of gender: “women are more likely to actually engage in politeness strategies and have repeatedly been found to be superior encoders of nonverbal cues” (LaPlante and Ambady 2003: 439). Therefore, we should have homogeneous groups in terms of gender (both the subjects to be recorded and the listeners to participate in the listening experiment), or optionally, the experiment can include groups of both males and females for comparison so that we can test if gender plays a role in perceiving (or producing, should we have a male and a female for the recording process) politeness.

### **3.2 Resynthesis**

As Uldall (1960) explains, the resynthesis of stimuli is absolutely necessary to make sure that all the variables except intonation remain constant while intonation is manipulated freely. “A human speaker making such an array of intonations on the same sentence would at the same time make changes in length, stress, and tempo” (p. 224). Because it has been found that apart from intonation itself, there are other features that affect the perception of politeness i.e. articulation, speech rate, the range and the steepness of an intonation contour, it is essential to factor out variations in them to allow making stronger conclusions.

There are, however, some dangers of the manipulated speech. Ofuka *et al.* (2000) warn that listeners seem to be sensitive to unnaturalness

(p. 215) and it is hard to say to what extent resynthesized speech remains natural and realistic, since it would be “rare that only one or two variables are changed while the others are kept constant in real speech” (p. 206). One solution is to pretest the stimuli for naturalness with native speakers and exclude unnatural sounding sentences. Another drawback of this method is the absence of context, which is crucial for the correct interpretation of politeness strategy (Válková 2004), because most of our real utterances are said within a context (Hawkins 2003: 379).

### 3.3 Alternative methods

There are other ways to test how intonation patterns in English result in different degrees of perceived politeness:

- 1) The speakers, when producing a given set of sentences, can be asked to be polite. What intonation pattern will they adopt and will it be communicated in the end? That is, will the polite sentences be perceived as polite in the listening experiment? Ofuka *et al.* (2000) referring to Cosmides (1983), however, discourage us from using this method by saying that “asking subjects to speak text passages in a polite or angry way, e.g. often induces theatrical exaggeration” (p. 200).
- 2) An alternative to the previous method is a role-played method, used by Ofuka *et al.* (2000, see pp. 200 - 201). It means that the target sentences will be embedded in such contexts that will elicit different overtones of politeness even without informing speakers about the real purpose of the recording, e.g. the subjects will be given a specific situation and a type of addressee. (One of Ofuka *et al.*'s scenarios was a situation at the airport when a customs officer asks three different kinds of passengers - a respectable gentleman, a young student and a drunkard - *Is this all the luggage*



*you have?* Ofuka *et al.* expected that the subjects will be most polite when addressing a respectable gentleman etc.)<sup>44</sup>

- 3) Because the verbal context is a very strong politeness marker, there are some ways to prevent its interference: we can either use meaningless context (citing the letters of alphabet, counting numbers, using nonsense syllables, words or even sentences), or we can record meaningful speech that will be low-pass filtered (i.e. only frequencies within the F0 range will be kept) before being presented to listeners (this technique has been suggested e.g. by Pakosz 1983, and Ofuka *et al.*).
- 4) However, “since politeness is usually closely associated with appropriateness in a specific situation, it is difficult to separate it from verbal content and therefore the content would be an indispensable part of the judgement” (Ofuka *et al.*: 201). The best choice thus seems to be semantically neutral sentences (conventional phrases).
- 5) We can also synthetically impose a flat F0 trajectory upon the stimuli and see how the listeners evaluate these. Then we can monitor how any deviation from this level (a rising tone or a falling tone) affect the perception of politeness. The danger of this method is that utterances with a completely flat F0 trajectory are not really possible in reality and may sound unnatural. Also, utterances with a flat F0 trajectory should not be automatically thought of as neutral in terms of their attitudinal meaning. This is because, as was mentioned above (section 2.2.1.4), polite interest is usually signalled by a tone with a large range and the absence of pitch changes may seem uninterested, indifferent and therefore impolite.

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<sup>44</sup> With this role-played method, it would be interesting to record not only native English speakers, but even Czechs, i.e. non-native speakers, and observe how native speakers respond to politeness strategies in intonation used by non-native speakers of English.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This thesis had primarily two goals. The first objective was to explore the literature and gather information about how intonation helps speakers convey and perceive politeness in English and in Czech.

As for English, besides prosodic features that assist in communicating polite behaviour (articulation and temporal variables, e.g. Ofuka *et al.* 2000, Válková 2004), it has been found that the intonation pattern is able to render a particular utterance more or less polite (e.g. Wichmann 2004); I have inferred that the rise and fall-rise are most often used for employing politeness strategy. At the same time we should not disregard the range and steepness of the tone since these can also affect the amount of perceived politeness (Ohala 1984, Bolinger 1986). Last but not least, the importance of context should be taken into consideration when judging a particular tone pattern imposed on a sentence, first because we can hardly separate the meaning of a sentence from its context (Pakosz 1983) and second, because politeness itself is context-sensitive (Válková 2004).

The question how intonation in the Czech language conveys politeness, or any attitudinal or emotional characteristics in fact, has not been apparently well explored. I have merely found out, that in order to express attitudes and emotions, speakers use marked variants of the three basic intonation patterns occurring in Czech (Palková 1997). The only connection between intonation and politeness has been made by Jančák (1957) in Vlčková-Mejvaldová (2006). Jančák compiled a theory of Czech greeting, which defines the intonation pattern that shows maximum politeness strategy as the

one with a distinctive melodic emphasis on the first syllable followed by falling intonation (and slight reduction of tempo).

The second major objective of the present paper was to try to make presumptions about the cross-language perception and production of intonation and its manifestations of politeness. Such an attempt was based on the issue of universality of intonation. I intended to find out to what extent speakers of different languages (and of different cultures) use intonation consistently to express their attitudes (I have also tried to compare English and Czech in terms of the impact intonation has on perceived politeness in section 2.2.3, though, admittedly, the relatively insufficient knowledge of the Czech language in this respect does not really allow any reliable comparisons). Although it has been generally accepted that intonation is fairly uniform in conveying linguistic information (e.g. Ohala 1983, Bolinger 1989), the question of how consistent intonation is in demonstrating attitudes or emotions has not been yet agreed upon (e.g. Ohala 1984 vs. Cosmides 1983, Vlčková-Mejvaldová 2006). Therefore, any predictions about the cross-language perception of intonational demonstration of politeness by EFL learners would be too daring and only an empirical study on this subject may shed some light upon it.

The thesis is imperfect in many ways, obviously. Correcting these imperfections (at least partially), which arose as the result of my own work, and conducting the empirical study to test the theoretical findings of this paper are some of the tasks for my Master's studies.

## 5. APPENDIX

### A preliminary pilot experiment

At the beginning of my work on this thesis, before the majority of relevant literature was reviewed, a small-scale pilot study had been carried out. The main objectives of this preliminary experiment were to gain practical experience in the field of the study of intonation (including the recording procedure, working with the Praat speech analysis programme [Boersma and Weenink 2008], etc.), to gain methodological experience, and last but not least, to get some inspiration for my future research.

The experiment consisted of several parts:

- 1) the stimuli selection (three types of utterances were chosen – Yes/No questions, e.g. *Do you mind if I smoke?*, imperatives with downtoners, e.g. *Shut the door, will you?* and a greeting *Good morning*)
- 2) the recording (three male native speakers of English took part in the recording process, they were presented with a set of sentences and were recorded producing each sentence with a rising and a falling intonation)
- 3) the listening experiment in Praat (twelve native speakers of British English and eleven Czech EFL students participated in the listening part, they were supposed to evaluate every sentence they heard on a 1 – 7 politeness scale)
- 4) the data analysis

Unfortunately, due to many factors, which probably resulted from choosing an inappropriate method, the performance of the subjects taking part in the listening procedure was disturbingly uneven and

so unreliable that it made the results of my experiment not interpretable. This experiment, however, provided me with much valuable experience and ideas, which I can make use of when compiling the real empirical study on the subject of perception of attitudinal meaning in intonation.

## 6. SHRNU TÍ

Ve své bakalářské práci jsem se zaměřila na intonační prostředky k vyjádření zdvořilosti v angličtině a češtině a na to, zda je možné předvídat, jak užití intonace k projevům postojů v angličtině vnímají cizinci – např. Češi, kteří se učí angličtinu jako cizí jazyk.

Nejdříve jsem uvedla jazykové prostředky, které mluvčí běžně využívají ve zdvořilé konverzaci v angličtině; k tomu mi posloužily práce S. Válkové (2004), G. N. Leeche (2004), D. Crystala (2006) a M. Swana (1991). Zásady slušného vyjadřování se opírají jak o gramatickou část jazyka (užití modálních sloves apod.), tak i lexikální část (výběr vhodných slov pro danou situaci). V této sekci jsem dále došla k závěru, že prostředky k vyjádření zdvořilosti nejsou obecně společné pro různé světové jazyky, respektive kultury či společnosti. V neposlední řadě je si třeba uvědomit, že zdvořilostní strategii můžeme správně interpretovat jako vhodné jednání pouze v daném kontextu (Válková 2004).

V další části své práce jsem se věnovala prozodii. Uvedla jsem, jaké má prozodie funkce a jak přispívá k vyjadřování a vnímání zdvořilosti. Na základě experimentu provedeným LaPlante a Ambady (2003) bylo vyvozeno, že prozodie je prvek, který ovlivňuje jak produkci tak i percepci zdvořilosti. Podle Válkové (2004) a Ofuky *et al.* (2000) je jedním z prozodických rysů ovlivňujících zdvořilost pečlivá artikulace, a relativně pomalejší tempo řeči (Ofuka *et al.*).

Hlavní část této práce je věnována intonaci a jejímu užití pro vyjádření postojů mluvčího, a to výhradně zdvořilostnímu postoji. Relevantní literatura, která se zabývá tímto tématem pro anglický jazyk, je nerovnoměrně mnohem rozsáhlejší než literatura zkoumající

intonaci v češtině, a to i přesto, že téma „intonace a zdvořilost“ je i v angličtině poměrně zanedbáno. U angličtiny (kapitola 2.2.1) jsem začala s popisem čtyř základních intonačních vzorců, které v angličtině existují (klesavý, stoupavý, klesavo-stoupavý a stoupavo-klesavý); k tomu jsem využila práce A. C. Gimsona (1970 a 2001) a J. C. Wellse (2006). Pro informace ohledně užití intonace k projevům zdvořilostní strategie v angličtině jsem konzultovala odborné články či učebnice intonace. Kromě již zmíněných publikací odkazují ke studiím např. D. Bolingera (1986 a 1989), J. J. Ohaly (1984), D. Brazila (1994), A. Wichmann (2004), M. D. Pella (2007), E. Uldall (1960) a dalších.

Postupně popisují různé typy vět (např. zjišťovací otázky - nabídky a žádosti, dále rozkazy, pozdravy, dovětky) a jaké intonační vzorce jim přidávají na zdvořilosti, respektive je činí méně zdvořilé. Ze shrnutí vyplývá, že stoupavý nebo klesavo-stoupavý intonační vzorec - na rozdíl od klesavého tónu - je nejčastěji využíván pro vyjádření zdvořilostního postoje (v různých typech vět). Tento jev se dá vysvětlit tím, že promluva zakončená stoupavou intonací je prosodicky otevřená - adresát má možnost reagovat („dej možnost volby“ je jedním ze tří zásad zdvořilosti podle teorie R. Lakoffové, viz Hirschová 2006: 171) na rozdíl od prosodicky zavřeného klesavého tónu (např. Wichmann 2004, Bolinger 1989, Culpeper *et al.* 2003). Pakosz (1983) nicméně zdůrazňuje, že by bylo chybné hodnotit intonační významy bez znalosti kontextu. V neposlední řadě je třeba mít na paměti rozdíly mezi užitím a vnímáním různých intonačních vzorců v britské a americké angličtině.

Jak už jsem zmínila, literatura zabývající se problematikou intonace v češtině (kapitola 2.2.2) v zásadě nepopisuje užití intonace k vyjadřování konkrétních postojů a pocitů mluvčích. Na základě

učebnice Z. Palkové (1997) *Fonetika a fonologie češtiny* jsem popsala hlavní tři melodémy: melodém ukončující klesavý, melodém ukončující stoupavý a melodém neukončující. V emocionálně zabarvených větách se nejvíce používají příznakové varianty těchto melodémů a jejich kadencí. Jedinou souvislost mezi intonací a zdvořilostní strategií jsem vypátrala v práci J. Vlčkové-Mejvaldové (2006), která zmiňuje Jančákovu (1957) teorii českého pozdravu. Podle této teorie je pozitivní expresivita (kam Jančák řadí zdvořilost) nejlépe dosažena užitím intonačního vzorce s distinktivním melodickým důrazem na první slabice, následován klesavou intonací a mírným zpomalením tempa.

Bakalářská práce si dále kladla za cíl zjistit, zda lze předvídat, jak anglickou intonaci a její významy vnímají cizinci, kteří se angličtinu učí jako cizí jazyk (např. čeští studenti). Proto jsem se zaměřila na univerzální podobnosti a odlišnosti v užití (a percepci) intonace. Otázka „univerzality intonace“ ale není jasně zodpovězena. Zatímco na tom, zda se lingvistická funkce intonace univerzálně projevuje alespoň na základní úrovni (vysoká/stoupavá intonace pro otázky a nízká/klesavá intonace pro oznamovací věty), se mnozí lingvisté shodují (např. Bolinger 1989, Ohala 1984, Ladefoged 2006), tak univerzální intonační projevy postojů a emocí zůstávají předmětem debaty.

Ohala (1984) vypracoval teorii „univerzálního frekvenčního kódu“ (“universal frequency code”), která říká, že intonace prokazuje vysokou univerzální shodu i v oblasti nejazykové (vysoký/stoupavý tón nasadíme tehdy, když chceme vypadat „malí“, a vyjadřujeme postoje jako podřízenost, zdvořilost apod., naopak nízký/klesavý tón je výrazem např. dominance a agresivity, když chceme vzbudit dojem „velikosti“; tuto tendenci lze pozorovat i na



chování zvířat). Naopak např. Cosmides (1983) upozorňuje, že neexistuje důvod se domnívat, proč by prozodické projevy emocí měly následovat – jak v rámci jedné kultury, tak i mezikulturně – nějaký univerzální model. Z tohoto důvodu by bylo příliš troufalé pokusit se předvídat, jak budou čeští studenti angličtiny vnímat intonační projevy zdvořilostní strategie v angličtině, a jediným možným způsobem, jak zodpovědět otázku nerodilého vnímání intonace, je provést experimentální studii. Podoba tohoto budoucího experimentu byla navržena v kapitole 3.1.

## 7. ANNOTATION

- *Author:* Miriam Delongová
- *Faculty and department:* Philosophical Faculty, Department of English and American Studies
- *Title:* English intonation patterns expressing politeness and their cross-language perception
- *Supervisor:* Mgr. Václav Jonáš Podlipský, Ph.D.
- *Number of characters:* 93 117
- *Number of appendices:* 1
- *Number of references:* 40
- *Keywords:* intonation, politeness, foreign language perception, universality of intonation
- *Description:* The aim of my thesis was to look into the use of intonation in English as a politeness marker. First, I explored relevant literature and saw how intonation produces different levels of perceived politeness in English and in Czech. Second, on the basis of universal similarities and differences in the uses of intonation, I attempted to find out if it is possible to make predictions about the cross-language perception of intonation by EFL students. Finally, I proposed a method for answering the research questions of this thesis.

### **Anotace**

- *Autor:* Miriam Delongová
- *Název fakulty a katedry:* Filozofická fakulta, Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
- *Název práce:* Anglické intonační vzorce vyjadřující zdvořilost a jejich vnímání cizinci

- *Vedoucí práce:* Mgr. Václav Jonáš Podlipský, Ph.D.
- *Počet znaků:* 93 117
- *Počet příloh:* 1
- *Počet titulů použité literatury:* 40
- *Klíčová slova:* intonace, zdvořilost, percepce cizí řeči, univerzalita intonace
- *Charakteristika:* Tato práce měla za cíl prozkoumat užití intonace v angličtině k projevům zdvořilostní strategie. Nejdříve jsem zkonzultovala relevantní literaturu a snažila zjistit, jak intonace přispívá k všeobecnému vnímání zdvořilostního postoje, jak v angličtině, tak v češtině. Zadruhé, na základě univerzálních podobností a odlišností v užití intonace jsem se pokusila vypátrat, jestli je možné předvídat vnímání anglické intonace studenty, kteří se učí angličtinu jako cizí jazyk. Nakonec jsem navrhla empirickou metodu, kterou lze zodpovědět teoretické otázky, které si práce klade.

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