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The Role of Explicit Instruction in Pronunciation Training

(Bakalářská práce)

2013   **Anna Morales**

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V Olomouci dne 27. června 2013   **Anna Morales**

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Abstract

This bachelor study deals with teaching and learning problematic features in English pronunciation that Czech learners of English have to deal with – here the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/. It examines the importance of explicit instruction in second language pronunciation training.

The theoretical part of this thesis concentrates on the description of the dental fricatives /θ/, /ð/ and of their substitutions frequently used by Czech learners of English. This part also deals with early and newer teaching techniques used in pronunciation training.

The practical part is based on a two-month observation of three Czech learners of English. The efficiency of explicit instruction of the pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/ is being tested, with the aim to improve the pronunciation of the participants.

Key words: dental fricatives, pronunciation training, explicit instruction, foreign accent, native speaker, non-native speaker

Shrnutí

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá problematickými jevy v anglické výslovnosti, kterým musí čelit nejen čeští studenti angličtiny, ale i jejich učitelé. Práce je zaměřená na výslovnost a učení výslovnosti dentálních frikativ /θ/, /ð/ a zkoumá efektivnost explicitního vysvětlení při nácviku výslovnosti.

Teoretická část se zabývá popisem anglických dentálních frikativ /θ/, /ð/ a hlásek, kterými čeští mluvčí tyto frikativy běžně nahrazují. Teoretická část také srovnává dřívější a nynější postupy používané při výslovnostním nácviku.

Praktická část je založená na dvouměsíčním pozorování tří českých mluvčí angličtiny. V rámci tohoto pozorování byla testována účinnost explicitní výuky výslovnosti dentálních frikativ, s cílem zlepšit výslovnost těchto tří subjektů.

Klíčová slova: dentální frikativy, nácvik výslovnosti, explicitní vysvětlení, cizí přízvuk, rodilý mluvčí, nerodilý mluvčí

CONTENT

1   INTRODUCTION

This study considers problematic features in English pronunciation that Czech learners of English have to deal with. It also examines whether explicit instruction has any significant impact on pronunciation of the second language (L2) – in our case it is English. It is important to mention that this study focuses only on the segmental part of phonology that deals with segments (consonants and vowels). The suprasegmental phonology, also known as prosodic (involving accent, intonation, and duration) will not be taken into consideration. Specifically, the thesis concentrates on pronunciation of two English phonemes – the dental fricatives /θ/, /ð/ and their substitutions used by Czech learners of English.

In most cases, non-native speakers (NNSs) of English are easily recognized and differentiated from native speakers (NSs) of English. The most common reason is the presence of a foreign accent (FA). The essential parts of a FA are phonemic categories (every language has its own *phonemic system*), phonological processes (i.e. assimilations, final consonant deletion, weak syllable deletion) and prosody that NNSs transfer from their mother tongue (L1) – in our case Czech. FA may have a bad impact on communication which can be either hindered by it or brought to a complete standstill. And in some cases FA may cause misunderstanding or even offence.

FA is brought on due to the differences in structure of L1 and L2, because "each language has its own system of sentence patterns, intonation, stress, consonants and vowels" (Lado, 1964: 14). The differences between Czech and English phonemic systems are the major reason why Czech learners of English have problems with some English phonemes. For example even though both English (Deterding, 2005) and Czech (Havránek and Jedlička, 1970) each have 24 consonant sounds. Yet, in English are phonemes that do not exist in Czech (such as /θ/, /ð/) and vice versa (such as /x/, /ř/, /ň/) or do exist but are differently distributed (such as /ŋ/, which is a phoneme in English and in Czech it is not – in Czech it can occur, but has no meaning-distinguishing value).

Lado explains that even though a phoneme does not have any specific meaning, it is important for its contrasting value, which should not be "dismissed lightly by the language teacher". He specifies that by interchanging one phoneme for another in a word, that word changes its form (very often both phonic and graphic) and eventually its meaning differs from the original one (1964: 14). The next example demonstrates the

problem of substituting one phoneme for another on phonemes /θ/ and /t/. The intended word /θiːm/ *theme* (meaning "the subject of discussion") by interchanging /θ/ for /t/ the new word becomes /tiːm/ *team* (meaning "a group of people co-working together").

Phonetics of a language is of a descriptive nature, it captures how people speak but does not prescribe how they should speak. Phonetics describes the language from the articulatory (how the sounds are produced), auditory (what they sound like) and acoustic (measurements of the sounds) point of view (Halliday et al., 1973: 64-65). The example shown above demonstrates how two languages may differ in phonology. The following two examples demonstrate on the phoneme /d/ how two languages can differ in terms of phonetics − first, in terms of articulation and second, in terms of how the pronunciation phonological rules are realized in L1 and L2. The description of the articulatory gestures may differ within two languages.

In English, /d/ is an alveolar stop articulated by the tip of the tongue against the alveolar ridge (Jones, 1963: 69). When producing this phoneme in Czech, the tip of the tongue is a bit lower, touching the upper teeth rather than the alveolar ridge and it is thus a dental stop in Czech. Jones argues that this pronunciation, used by many foreign people (i.e. French, Hungarians, and Germans), creates a very unnatural effect in English (1964: 145). Second example concerns the final-obstruent devoicing which occurs in Czech but not in English (or it is minimal). Two words like *bad* /bæd/ − *bat* /bæt/ will always be distinguishable in English (by voicing, preceding vowel duration). Whether in Czech, words like *led* /let/ - *let* /let/ will in most cases undergo final-obstruent devoicing. Jones mentions that especially Germans do not voice /d/ properly in English and replace it by its weak version [d̥]. He points out that it sounds incorrect to NSs when voiced sounds precede and follow (Jones, 1964: 145).

The differences stated above are the subject of interest of *contrastive linguistics* and the language teacher should attach considerable importance to them. The phoneticians describe the sounds of L2 and compare it with L1, stating the similarities and differences between L1 and L2. But it is the teacher who decides which features of the pronunciation are important to teach and which are less important (Lado, 1964: 21).

I am convinced that that pronunciation is important and should be taught from the beginning. I have decided to focus on the English dental fricatives because they are not found within the Czech phonemic system and they are therefore one of the most problematic pairs for NN L2 learners. It is difficult for NNSs to acquire a sound they

have never used or heard before within their L1 phonemic system, especially for adult learners because the perception of adults is more limited than that of children or teenagers. I have noticed that even experienced and advanced Czech learners substitute dental fricatives quite frequently. Although some of these NNSs I observed, were able to maintain conversation in L2, their poor pronunciation sometimes had a very disruptive effect.

Substitution of dental fricatives by other sounds which are found in the NNS's phonemic system is not unique to Czech-accented English. German and European-French speakers often replace the voiceless fricative /θ/ with /s/, whereas Dutch and Canadian-French speakers are reported to prefer /t/ (Hanulíková and Weber, 2010). Jones mentions, too, that foreign people tend to replace /θ/ by /f/ or by /s/ and /ð/ by /z/. The author says that /s/ and /z/ are convenient substitutions because their places of articulation are very close to the places of articulation of the dental fricatives (1964: 183-184). Jones (1963: 100,102) as well as Ward (1962: 149) remarked that even NSs in some English dialects replace dental fricatives by other sounds. Both authors mentioned London dialect where /θ/ and /ð/ are replaced by /f/ and /v/ (for example *nothing* [ˈnafiŋk], *father* [ˈfɑːvə]). Another example given by both authors is the pronunciation in Scotland and some parts of northern England. They say that northerners pronounce /θ/ in some words where the South has /ð/ (such as *with* [wɪθ], *though* [θoʊ]). Jones mentions that in careless speech /θ/ is either dropped or replaced by /t/ if it occurs between two consonants in the same word (e.g. *months* [mʌns] or [mʌnts]) (1963: 100). Ward adds that the tendency to drop /θ/ as well as /ð/ in quick speech takes place even among educated NSs in fricative sequences (e.g. *clothes* [kloʊz] instead of /kloʊðz/) (1962: 149). But Jones says that dropping in fricative sequences is rather old-fashioned (1963: 101).

It is thus evident that dental fricatives are predisposed to cause major problems to NNSs but I think that they are not impossible to learn. It seems however, that without highlighting the correct pronunciation, adult NNSs will not get the pronunciation right solely by being exposed to L2. Especially, when the L2 exposure takes place only in classroom environment. In this study I test the efficiency of explicit teaching of the pronunciation of dental fricatives /θ/, /ð/. I am going to observe three Czech learners of English for a two-month period in classroom environment. The teaching methodology and the methodology of my observation are described in detail further in chapter 4.

Chapter 2 will briefly review the English dental fricatives as well as their substitutions. This chapter also deals with the notion of markedness of the phonemes /θ/ and /ð/. Chapter 3 introduces the previous and current methods in teaching and learning L2 as a whole, focusing on teaching and learning L2 pronunciation. Various suggestions how to teach and learn L2 in Czech environment are also being discussed within this section. In chapter 4, I will describe the methodology of a two-month observation, with weekly reports and exercises which were held in the classroom. Chapter 5 reports evidence of any progress detected in the NN participants' L2 speech after the two months. The expectations stated in the theoretical part are compared with the actual results. The last chapter 6 is a conclusion of the study. At the end of this thesis there is a list of references cited throughout the study.

2   ENGLISH DENTAL FRICATIVES

This chapter briefly introduces the main phonological properties of the English dental fricatives /θ/, /ð/ and of their substitutions. To prevent misunderstanding in the used terminology, a saggital slate with the description of the organs of speech (Figure 2.1) follows (reprinted from Cruttenden (2008: 9)).
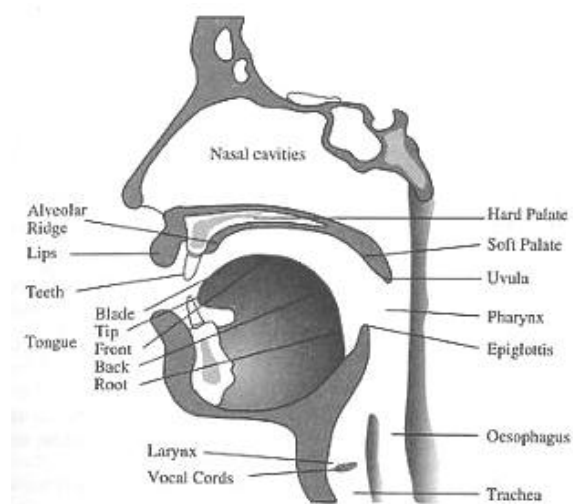

Fig.2.1: Organs of speech.

2.1   The articulation of English dental fricatives

Each pair of English obstruents (stops and fricatives) is composed of a voiceless and a voiced consonant, with the exception of the glottal fricative /h/. Within the pairs, they are articulated in the same way, which means that place and manner of articulation are similar. The crucial difference between a voiceless and a voiced consonant is that when producing a voiced sound, vocal cords are vibrating and breath is substituted for voice. Voiceless consonants are pronounced with a greater force of exhalation than voiced consonants. The friction is louder in the case of voiceless sounds. That is why voiceless consonants are sometimes called *breathed* or *fortis* and voiced consonants are called *lenis* (Ward, 1962: 54-55).

The English phonemes /θ/ – /ð/ are articulated by placing the tip of the tongue against the upper teeth. The body of the tongue rests relatively flat. This creates a very narrow passage for the airflow between the tip of the tongue and the upper teeth. The soft palate is in its raised position otherwise a nasal sound would be produced (Jones,

1964: 182).. When pronouncing /θ/ the vocal cords are not vibrating but when pronouncing /ð/, they are. Therefore /θ/ is fortis and /ð/ is lenis. Figure 2.2, reprinted from Ward (1962: 148), shows the tongue position of both /θ/ and /ð/.

The sounds /θ/, /ð/ are both represented in writing by *th*. The two phonemes themselves are not usually confused or substituted one for another. /θ/ prevails in the word-initial positions. According to Jones's list of examples, it seems that the number of words, where /θ/occurs, is significantly more numerous than those which contain /ð/. The next table 2.1 shows some examples where /θ/ and /ð/ are used in different word positions (Jones, 1964: 182).

/θ/	/ð/
initial-word position	
thin /θɪn/, thanks /θæŋks/, theatre /θɪət:ə/	this /ðɪs/, than /ðæn/, the /ðə/
mid-word position	
method /meθəd/, sympathy /sɪmpəθɪ/	father /fa:ðə/, mother /mʌðə/
final word position	
mouth /maʊθ/, month /mʌnθ/, with /wiθ/	smooth /smu:ð/, with /wið/

Table 2.1: The distribution of dental fricatives according to their word position.

2.2 The articulation of /θ/ and /ð/ substitutions

As I mentioned in the first chapter, there are no dental fricatives found within the Czech phonemic system (see table 2.2). That is why NNSs search for substitutions within their own L1 system. The typical substitutions used by Czech learners are the following:

(a)   /θ/-substitutions: /f/, /s/, [t̪]

(b)   /ð/-substitutions: [d̪], [dz], /z/

	Czech	English
Dental	none	/θ/, /ð/
Labio-dental	/f/, /v/	/f/, /v/
Alveolar	/s/, /z/	/s/, /z/

Palato-alveolar	/ʃ/, /ʒ/	/ʃ/, /ʒ/
Velar	/x/	none
Glottal	/h/	/h/

Table 2.2: The comparison of Czech and English fricatives.

2.2.1 /θ/-substitutions

All three sounds listed above as /θ/-substitutions are voiceless oral consonants, two are fricatives (i.e. /f/, /s/) and one is a stop (plosive) (i.e. [t̪]). Although the place of articulation differs from one phonemic substitution to another, these differences are minimal (within the limits of the upper teeth and the teeth-ridge). Yet, it does not mean that they are insignificant. The manner of articulation of each /θ/-substitution is briefly described in the following paragraphs. Figure 2.2, reprinted from Ward (1962: 130, 148), shows the tongue position of the phonemes discussed.

The most frequent and probable substitution is the labio-dental voiceless fricative consonant /f/. The main difference from the articulation of /θ/ is that the tip of the tongue is replaced by the lower lip pressed against the upper teeth (Jones, 1964: 179).

The English /s/ is articulated by placing the tip of the tongue a bit further behind the teeth in the oral cavity and closer to the alveolar ridge than it is in the case of the original /θ/ (Jones, 1964: 185).

Concerning the last substitution /t/, it is the most likely substitution for Czech learners of English. When pronouncing this sound in English, the tip of the tongue does not get behind the teeth but touches the alveolar ridge, which means that its position is only a bit higher than it would be when pronouncing /θ/ (Jones, 1964: 141). In Czech, /t/ is pronounced with the tip of the tongue a bit lower than in English. The tip of the tongue rather touches the upper teeth than the teeth-ridge and the resulting Czech phoneme is a dental stop [t̪] and not an alveolar one. This is the reason why it seems to be the most frequent /θ/-substitution for a Czech learner. For comparison see figure 2.3, reprinted from Skaličková (1982: 126), showing the tongue positions of English /t/ and Czech [t̪].

/θ/, /ð/

/t/, /d/   /s/, /z/   /f/
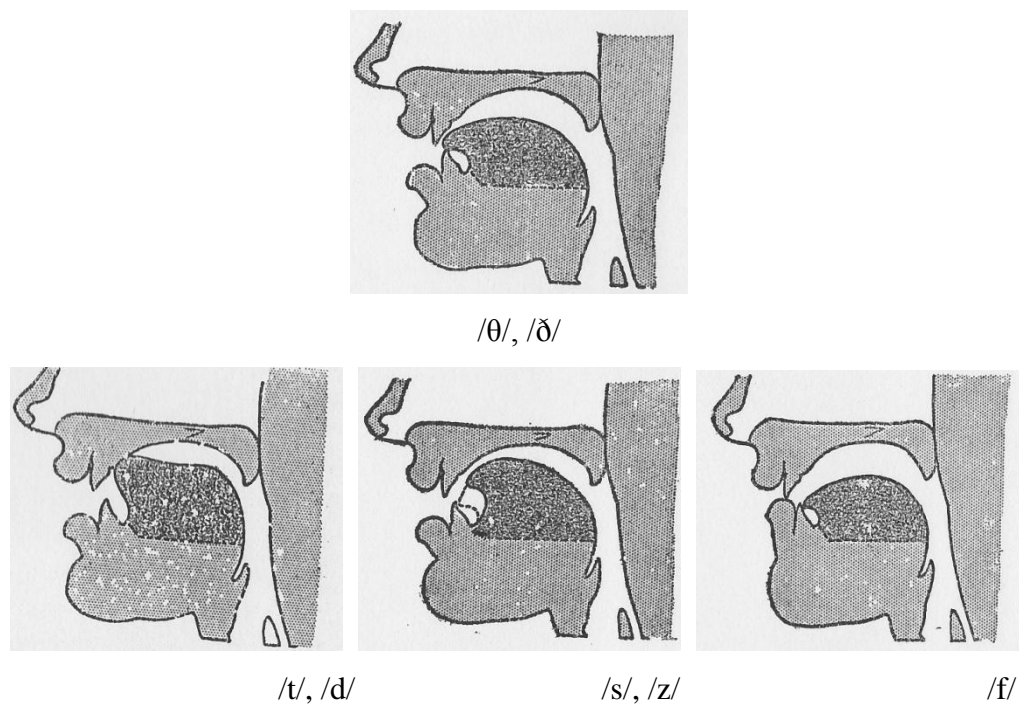
Fig.2.2: Tongue position of /θ/, /t/, /s/ and /f/ and of /ð/, /d/ and /z/.
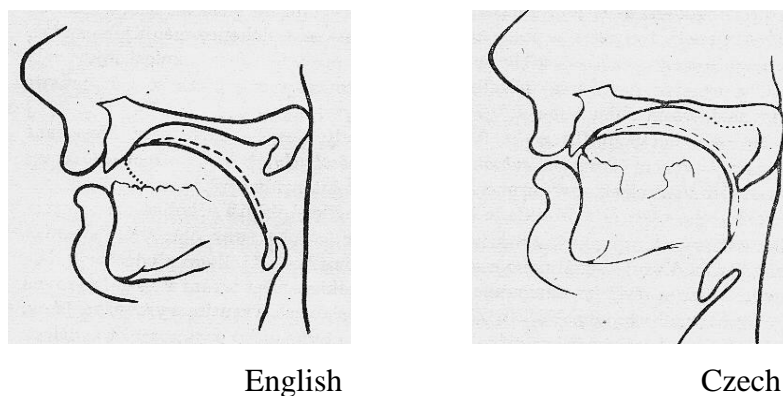
English   Czech

Fig.2.3: Tongue position of English /t/, /d/ and Czech [t̪], [d̪].

2.2.2 /ð/-substitutions

Among Czech learners of English, /ð/ is most frequently replaced by [d̪] or by [dz]. They are voiced oral obstruent consonants and their places of articulation differ within minimal limits (from the upper teeth towards the hard palate). The tongue position of the phonemes /ð/, /d/, and /z/ corresponds to that of their voiceless partners (cf. figure 2.2).

Phoneme [d̪], similarly to its voiceless counterpart, seems to be the best /ð/-substitution for Czech learners of English. English /d/ is articulated in the same way as

/t/, only with the vocal cords vibrating (Jones, 1964: 144). The important fact is that the Czech [d̪] is a dental stop (cf. figure 2.2) and not an alveolar one as in English. This is why it is the most convenient /ð/-substitution for the Czech learners of English.

/dz/ is in some languages ([1]such as Albanian, Arabic, Bulgarian and Irish) a blade-alveolar affricate which is formed by bringing the blade of the tongue towards the alveolar ridge as for /d/ and then removing it rapidly from the alveolar ridge to the position for /z/ (Jones, 1964: 164-165). /dz/ is not a phoneme in standard Czech, but it is rather a sequence of two sounds /d/+/z/. Nevertheless, according to Skaličková, in colloquial Czech the affricate [dz] occurs quite often (1982: 140). Even though it may seem that this sequence is distanced from the original dental fricative, it makes a very similar auditory impression on a NNS. Figure 2.4a, reprinted from Ward (1962: 137), illustrates the starting position for /dz/ (cf. /ð/ in figure 2.2). Figure 2.4b, reprinted from Skaličková (1982: 139), illustrates the tongue position for the Czech [dz].
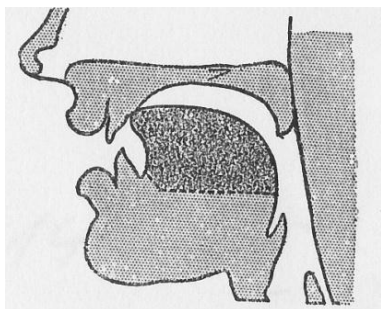
Fig. 2.4a: The starting position of /dz/.
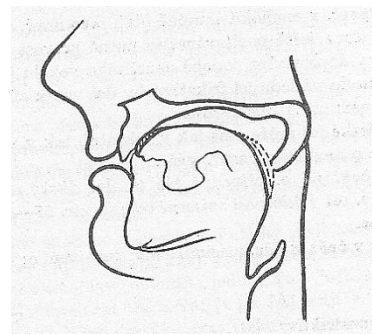
Figure 2.4b: The tongue position of the Czech [dz].

The articulation of English /z/ corresponds to that of /s/, with the difference that the vocal cords are made to vibrate (Jones, 1964: 188). Even though /z/ is sometimes used as a substitution of /ð/, is not that frequent among Czech learners.

2.3   Markedness

The notion of markedness was introduced in the early twentieth century. The idea of markedness is that two mutually exclusive linguistic representations (i.e. voiced

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1 *Found on the internet database compiled by Maddieson and Precoda.*

Accessed May 9, 2013. http://web.phonetik.uni-frankfurt.de/S/S0395.html

vs. voiceless sound, nasal vs. oral sound) are not polar opposites, but rather one of the two members was assumed to be privileged (more frequently used). The unmarked member from the pair is in some way simpler, more natural and probably easier for the NNSs to learn (Eckman, 2008). Eckman's Markedness Differential Hypothesis presumes that if at a particular point *language X* has a marked structure and *language Y* has an unmarked one, then speakers of the former one will acquire the unmarked structure (from language Y) faster than speakers of the latter one, who are about to acquire the marked phenomenon (from language X) (AU, 2011: 140).

The following part discusses the distribution of English dental fricatives and of their substituents. The following sections present the results of four different studies about the occurrence of English phonemes.

2.3.1 Markedness of dental fricatives

Concerning the dental fricatives it seems that the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ is less marked than its voiced counterpart /ð/. This statement is supported by the results of a survey[2] by Maddieson (1984). Maddieson carried out a research about the frequency of 919 different segments in the total of 451 languages. Based on Maddiesons data, the voiceless dental fricative occurs in 42 out of 451 languages. The voiced dental fricative appears in 17 languages out of 451 languages researched. Table 2.3 compares the distribution of /θ/, /ð/ and of their substitutions, based on Maddieson's survey.

Maddieson			
(451 languages)			
/θ/	9.31%	/ð/	3.77%
/f/	39.91%	/v/	21.10%
/s/	43.46%	/z/	13.75%
[t̪]	10.90%	[d̪]	20.20%
/t/	40.13%	/d/	26.61%
		/dz/	25.06%

Table 2.3: The distribution of dental fricatives and their substitutions.

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2 *Found on the internet database compiled by Maddieson and Precoda.*

Accessed April 20, 2013. http://web.phonetik.uni-frankfurt.de/upsid_info.html.

Maddieson (1984) carried out another research, this time focusing on 317 languages. The author came to a conclusion that all 317 languages have stops (317/317 = 100%), but not all have fricatives (296/317 = 93.4%) From Maddieson's study is clear that all languages (of those he studied) that have fricatives must also have stops and thus stops are universally less marked than fricatives (cf. table2.3). That is why fricatives are learned later than stops (Jakobson, 1968: 30).

The following subsections present studies that are concerned with English phonemes only. That is why /dz/ is not included because it is not considered a phoneme in English.

2.3.2 Relative frequency of English dental fricatives

Taylor conducted a study in which he sorted the English phonemes based on their relative frequency. The relative frequency takes into account the number of English words *(types)* in which the given phoneme occurs, ignoring how often each word *(token)* is used. Taylor's data show that the relative frequency of /ð/ is 3.56% (the sixth most frequent consonant) compared to /θ/ whose relative frequency is 0.37% (ranked as the twenty-third) (1993: 74). From Taylor's results, the words that contain either /θ/ or /ð/ are the less frequent than words with their substitutions. It is interesting to highlight that /ð/ is more frequently used in English words than its possible substituent /z/.

A similar study was carried out by Kessler and Treiman[3] who analyzed the distributions of phonemes in 2,001 uninflected English consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. They sorted the words from the Random House Dictionary (Second Edition, 1987) and listed how many times each consonant occurred in the word list (1997). They did not take into account the frequency of usage of each word and, as well as Taylor, they thus analyzed the relative frequency of the phonemes.

The two studies above are compared in table 2.4. It is well seen that nearly all the substituents are less marked than the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/.

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3 *For further information consult the material published online.*

Accessed April 21, 2013. http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~bkessler/SyllStructDistPhon/CVC.html.

	Taylor	Kessler and Treiman
	(not stated)	(2,001 words)
/θ/	0.37%	2.80%
/f/	1.79%	8.00%
/s/	4.81%	12.09%
/t/	6.42%	16.14%
/ð/	3.56%	0.75%
/d/	5.14%	13.39%
/z/	2.46%	3.55%

Table 2.4: The relative frequency of dental fricatives and their substitutions.

3 TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

This chapter deals with teaching and learning English pronunciation. First, I am going to introduce earlier and newer approaches towards L2 teaching and learning. The chapter presents various opinions on the importance and unimportance of teaching English pronunciation and especially of teaching the pronunciation of English dental fricatives. The last part deals with teaching English dental fricatives in the Czech background.

Before dealing with the individual sections, some terminology will be clarified to prevent possible ambiguities.

3.1 Second language acquisition vs. foreign language learning

Foreign language learning (FLL) is learning of another language than L1 in a non-native classroom environment and under the guidance of a teacher, who can be a NNS, too. *Second language acquisition* (SLA) happens unlike FLL in L2 environment, among NSs and without any guidance provided by a teacher. The significant difference between FLL and SLA (demonstrated on L2 pronunciation) is that FLL is a conscious process – the learners know they are learning L2 pronunciation by being taught L2 phonetic rules and being explained how to pronounce L2 phonemes. On the other hand, SLA is a subconscious acceptance of L2. This means that NNSs acquaint L2 pronunciation by simply hearing the NSs' speech and by being in the native environment (Skarnitzl, 2001: 4).

Some linguists consider acquisition much more important than learning. According to Krashen (1982:10), explicit learning is a process during which NNSs gain knowledge about the language by being consciously taught L2 grammar and rules. Krashen does not consider explicit learning as a process contributing to fluency. He is convinced that from the two, it is acquisition or *implicit natural learning* that has the most important influence on the NNSs fluency in L2 (1982: 10).

In my opinion both explicit and implicit learning are very important in the process of developing L2 proficiency. Even though implicit learning is generally considered as more effective because the speakers are constantly exposed to L2 inputs, I do not think it is an advantage for all NNSs, as it is disorganized as well as random.

3.2 Earlier approaches to L2 teaching and learning

It turns out that until the end of the nineteenth century, teaching/learning L2 pronunciation was not the main goal while acquiring L2. NNSs were taught / learnt L2 for purely practical reasons – to understand written language and to be able to express their basic needs or thoughts, giving little importance to the quality of their performance. The most frequent methods applied in L2 teaching/learning were: *grammar-translation* method, *direct* method and *linguistic* method (Lado, 1964: 4).

Grammar-translation method was based on memorizing and reciting L2 grammar rules. Lado says that the students were unable to use L2 properly, because the translation activity is very distant from understanding and speaking L2 (1964: 4).

The direct method had many sub-methods such as *new method* or *oral method*. The direct method ignored translation and grammar recitation. The idea of the direct method was that learning L2 is the same as learning L1. It supposed that only by exposing NNSs directly to L2, they will perfectly accept the new language to their minds(Lado, 1964: 6). Lado also describes *Jepersen's reading selection method* which failed completely in NNSs' performance in L2. These NNSs were able to understand the written text, they were able to read it and associate with the meaning of the text, but their pronunciation was so poor, that they were not capable to communicate in L2 (Lado, 1964: 5).

The third method known as *the linguistic approach* has been developing gradually to this day. Learning was based on imitation and memorization of basic conversations in L2 and the communication was faced directly. Even though the description of intonation, pronunciation and other parts of L2 system were explained to the students, it was not the aim to make them know these features (Lado, 1964: 6).

After WW2 authentic spoken models for oral-aural practice were made available and learning, as well as teaching, became much easier. Between the 1950s and 1960s other variants of English (i.e. American English, Australian English, and Educated Indian English) were made acceptable as a teachable variant of English and to speak strictly like an Englishman was no longer the only possibility to be learnt or taught (Halliday et al., 1973: 203). All this, combined with contrastive studies of L1 and L2, (cf. Introduction) made learning much more efficient than it was before (Lado, 1964: 6).

3.3 Newer approaches towards L2 teaching and learning

Opinions on L2 teaching and learning started to change when English became an international language spread worldwide.

The effectiveness of L2 teaching noticeably improved after the second half of the twentieth century especially due to new technologies (i.e. better audio-visual and Internet technology aids). Haden underlines the contribution of palatograms and X-ray photography brought to pronunciation teaching methods. L2 teachers as well as L2 learners could observe the details of L2 articulation of which they were not aware and were unable to imagine it before (Allen, 1965: 103).

Linguists and teachers started to be more interested in scientific approaches towards L2 teaching and learning. The scientific approach uses scientific facts taken from linguistics, psychology of learning and from a large number of experiments held by linguists all over the world (Lado, 1964: 49). Markwardt affirmed that back in the sixties L2 teaching in a non-native background was not effective because the teachers did not take into account the differences between L2 and NNSs' L1(Allen, 1965: 5-6).

Fries talks about the *New Oral Approach* but many critics disagree that his teaching method is not different from the previous oral methods. According to Fries, the essential distinction is that his technique is not built on one particular method, but it is based on the modern scientific approach towards language. Fries says that the goal is to make NNSs produce L2 orally, in normal NS's speed of speech. The author also highlights that supplementary materials used in L2 teaching must be adapted to the needs of the NNSs according to their L1 linguistic background. Fries' method proceeds from the data given by the modern linguistic researches concerning English and from the contrastive knowledge between L1 and L2 (Allen, 1965:84-86).

3.3.1 Conditions influencing the NNS's learning

There is no doubt that non-language features, such as *age, motivation* or *attitude*, also affect the SLA (Gass and Selinker, 2008: 395).

Different sources agree that *age* has the primary impact on NNSs' learning. Kuhl argues that in adulthood it is more difficult to learn L2 because the linguistic experience from L1influences the learning process. She states that all infants exhibit similar patterns of phonetic perception no matter in which phonetic environment they are born (1992). Various studies proved that NN individuals cannot achieve the

native-like L2 accent if they are not exposed to L2 environment from an early age. However, that does not mean that adult learners cannot acquire L2 phonology on a native-like level. General results show that phonology is faster acquired by adult learners than by children (Gass and Selinker, 2008: 407).

Another feature which has a decisive impact on NNSs success in L2 learning is *motivation.* In general, those NN learners who are motivated will learn more rapidly and effectively. Many studies gave evidence that motivation is a predictor of language-learning success. Even though, there is no doubt that motivation has an important impact on SLA, its exact nature is rather unclear and differs significantly throughout various definitions (Gass and Selinker, 2008: 426).

3.4   Teaching English pronunciation

It is important to say, that the role of L2 teachers differs from that of linguists. Linguists do not tell L2 teachers what should be taught but rather give them a wide range of descriptive material concerning L2 system (Halliday et al., 1973: 166). It is then up to the teacher to set up the limitations and decide what to leave out and what is essential for NNSs' needs (Halliday et al., 1973: 207).

I think that limitations, even though they are inevitable in L2 teaching, should not be exorbitant, as they have a decisive impact on the resultant NN learner's performance and proficiency in L2.

3.4.1 Teaching pronunciation from the point of view of L2 teachers

Lado suggests teaching L2 sound system structurally, which includes listening to a model, imitation and production of the feature. Nevertheless, he underlines that listening to an accurate model is not sufficient because NNSs do not acquire the L2 pronunciation without practice. The individual sounds which may cause problems to NNSs, can be demonstrated on minimal pairs (1964: 51).

Haden emphasizes that L2 teacher must be above all aware of the fact that the NN learners register L2 sound system through their L1 sound system. If the teacher recognizes that the students' mistake is a result of their L1 habits, correction should not cover so much the nature of L2 sound but rather the differences in position and movements of vocal organs should be explained (Allen, 1965: 104).

Cruttenden says that teaching and practicing L2 pronunciation cannot be completely ignored, but he agrees with Lado (1974: 74-75), that teaching L2

pronunciation always brings difficulties. Pronunciation cannot be taught progressively as all the phonological and phonetic features are present from the first moment when NNSs come across L2. Still, the teacher must find an organized system how to pass the L2 pronunciation towards the students (1994: 270).

Teachers have to solve another important question before starting to teach L2 pronunciation and that is which accent within L2 accents is the one they will follow. Nowadays, it is important to realize that NNSs influence today's English at least as much as NSs (Seidlhofer, 2005: 339).

Keys and Walker highlight that today, when English became an international language, many linguists and teachers argue that NSs' pronunciation cannot be longer considered as the only model for NN learners (2002: 299).

Llurda says that it is important to be aware of new perspectives on today's English and that NNS teachers should not strictly follow the traditional framework where the NS is perceived as an ideal model (2004: 319).

Jenkins points out that proper NS's pronunciation may actually be intelligible for the NNSs, due to all the variations the NNSs hear from other NNSs. She suggests that NN learners should be exposed more to another NNS's models than to accurate NS's pronunciation (2002).

3.4.2 The opinions on teaching English dental fricatives

Cruttenden says that the full inventory of consonant phonemes must be described to the NNS (1994: 278). But highlights that L2 teachers should concentrate on features that are not found in the learner's L1 (1994: 274). Among essential rules, he states that the dental fricatives /θ/, /ð/ must be taught as distinct from /s/, /z/ (1994: 279).

Jenkins held a research which analyzed interactions in L2 but between NNSs solely. She then concluded that "all the consonants are important except for *th* sounds as in *thin* and *this*" (2000, 2002). But her conclusion is not appreciated by "the entire linguistic community" and rather perceived as too severe (Llurda, 2004: 316).

Pospíšilová states in her thesis, that it is still necessary to teach the pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/ in the Czech environment because, according to her, Czech learners tend to substitute the English dental fricatives mostly with the sounds /s/ and [dz] which are not included in Jenkins' study (Jenkins considers only /f/, /v/ and /t/, /d/

substitutions) (2011: 13). However, I do not agree with Pospíšilová's argument, because according to my experience, /f/, /t/ and /d/ are the most frequent substitutions for /θ/, /ð/.

3.5 Teaching the pronunciation of English dental fricatives in the Czech environment

Many Czech teachers admitted that they avoid teaching English pronunciation because they do not feel as an accurate model for their students.

When introducing the pronunciation of the English dental fricatives in the Czech environment, teachers should acquaint the students with the fact that there are sounds within the L2 inventory that do not exist in their L1 inventory. I agree with Skarnitzl (2001: 82) and Pospíšilová (2011: 3) when they say that before starting to teach the pronunciation of the dental fricatives, it is important that NNSs hear the sounds. The teacher has to make the NN learners aware of the contrast between the dental fricatives and the sounds used as their substitutions. If NN learners do not perceive the differences between the target sounds and their substitutions in this phase, they will probably have problems with the L2 inventory as a whole and not only with the dental fricatives.

As Skarnitzl mentions, at the beginning the teacher can exaggerate the pronunciation to clearly distinguish the target sounds from their substitutions (2001: 88). In the case of /θ/, the NN learners should become aware of the fact, that the substitution can affect the meaning of minimal pair words. The NN learners may be therefore motivated to work on their pronunciation of the voiceless dental fricative. In the case of /ð/, it is natural, that the NN learners will be less motivated, because the substituting sound does not affect the meaning of words, within their range of vocabulary they know and use.

When the NN learners perceive the differences between the English dental fricatives and their substitutions, the pronunciation training takes place. According to different phoneticians[4], the training should be done on simple phrases, not isolated words. The substituting sounds and the L2 dental fricatives should be presented throughout these phrases (Skarnitzl, 2001: 91) (e.g. *three trees*; *tell them*). The teachers should update the phrases making them more complex as the students get more familiar with the pronunciation of L2 dental fricatives (e.g. *three tall trees with thick trunks*; *tell them to think first about that thing their teacher told them*). The aim of the teaching is to

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4 O'Connor (1967), Tibbits (1963), Volín (2000)

familiarize NNSs with the pronunciation of L2 dental fricatives. The ideal result is that the NNSs apply the pronunciation naturally to their L2 speech.

4 PRACTICAL PART

The practical part of this thesis is based on an observation of three subjects – all Czech beginner learners of English. This chapter describes in detail the teaching methodology applied by me during an English elementary course that these three subjects attended. It also discusses whether the applied instruction had any positive influence on the resulting pronunciation of the dental fricatives of the three participants. The evaluation was based on [5]the recordings made during each session. All three participants were aware of the fact that they were being recorded and they agreed with taking part in my research if their identity will be protected. I will refer to the participants as to "Speaker 1 (S1), Speaker 2 (S2) and Speaker 3 (S3)".

I was aware of the fact that my research must not slow down the continuity of teaching during the course and thus the pronunciation exercises had to be naturally implemented to the program of each session.

4.1 Introduction to the practical part

I work as an English teacher in a language school in Olomouc. I teach mostly general English courses for adults. At the language school where I work, the general English courses follow the *New English File* textbook (Oxford University Press). Each chapter in this textbook covers the language skills (i.e. – listening, reading, speaking and writing). A great benefit of this textbook is the pronunciation practice, included in every chapter. The L2 phonemic inventory is systematically divided throughout the chapters and that is why in some sessions I did not come out with my own ideas, but simply followed the exercises in the textbook.

4.2 The starting point

Even though the observations reported in this thesis were limited to a two-month period, the work, naturally, began far sooner. I chose to focus on the pronunciation of the dental fricatives, because during my teaching I noticed that even more experienced adult learners of English, who have been studying English for more than three years and have already mastered Level B2, still have problems pronouncing /θ/, /ð/. I was thus interested if the poor pronunciation was a result of the fact that they did not dedicate

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5 The sessions were recorded on a digital voice recorder (OLYMPUS WS-100/WS-200S).

enough time to pronunciation training, or if it is actually impossible for Czech learners to learn/be taught sounds that do not appear in their L1 phonemic system. During the first semester I found out that the three subjects knew how to pronounce other new phonemes that were introduced to them throughout the pronunciation exercises in the book (e.g. /ə/, /əʊ/ or /ŋ/) and were able to mimic phonemes that have not been practiced yet (e.g. /ʌ/, or /w/, /r/) with the exception of the dental fricatives. It was thus obvious that the dental fricatives cannot be taught only by exposing the students to L2 without a systematic long-term training. The first impulse after which the students started paying attention to the existence of the dental fricatives was when they were explicitly told that these phonemes exist and when they became aware of the differences between the pronunciation of /θ/, /ð/ and the sounds they used as substituents.

4.2.1 The course and its participants

I have chosen to apply the methods described below in an elementary English course for beginner learners, which took place every Tuesday afternoon in a classroom environment for 90 minutes. I have chosen this particular course for two reasons. First, because I am convinced that it is more effective to start with the pronunciation training from the very beginning (for both the teacher and the learners), as the beginner learners have not built up a strong FA yet. Secondly, because the pronunciation of the dental fricatives was a part of the syllabus designed for this course. Still, not to hinder the rhythm of each lesson and to follow the syllabus of this particular course, my exercises could not be time-consuming to the detriment of other activities. It was important to apply the pronunciation activities concerning in a way that it does not bore or bother the students.

All three participants were beginners with little experience with English environment. The group included one man (S1) and two women (S2 and S3). The females were in their late thirties and the male was in his late fifties, all three native Czechs.

4.2.2 Gathering the data

To be able to analyze the pronunciation of the three speakers I made recordings of each session we had together in the last two months. The English dental fricatives and the sounds applied as substituting sounds are easily distinguished and thus the

recordings themselves were sufficient for the further analysis. I recorded the whole sessions rather than just the parts when the pronunciation training took place – first because the speakers would get nervous if they were concentration on the fact that they are being recorded at that particular moment and second, because I wanted to see whether they focused on their pronunciation of the dental fricatives even when the exercises focused on pronunciation did not take place. Consequently, I could analyze the pronunciation of /θ/, /ð/ in isolated words and in short sentences which were part of the pronunciation exercises, as well as in the students' relatively spontaneous speech. This allowed me to see to what extent the speakers acquired the pronunciation of the dental fricatives.

4.2.3 Before the training

Before the pronunciation training took place and before the dental fricatives were introduced to the students I recorded the session to show that the students really replaced /θ/, /ð/ with other sounds, even though they have been exposed to *th words* for seven months in the course. Table 4.1 shows how each of the speakers pronounced *th words* during the session which took place one week before I started the pronunciation exercises.

speaker	/θ/		/θ/ speaker's pronunciation		/ð/		/ð/ speaker's pronunciation	
	token		speaker's pronunciation		token		speaker's pronunciation	
S1,S3	thin	Three	[fɪn]	[sriː]	the	they	[d̪]	[d̪eɪ]
S2	thin	Three	[fɪn]	[friː]	the	they	[d̪]	[d̪eɪ]

Table 4.1: Speakers' pronunciation of some *th words* one week before the training.

The following sections give information about the seven sessions, held in April and May 2013 during which /θ/, /ð/ were practiced. The technique applied during the training was above all the explicit explanation but it was often combined with the corrective-feedback.

Exercises and activities are described in detail. Tables are given with the number of tokens attempted by the speakers and the type and number of substitutions they made. The number of tokens stated for /ð/ does not include the number of substitutions produced in the definite article *the,* because it was replaced with [d̪] in 100% of cases.

4.3 Week 1: Describing pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/

In this lesson, the pronunciation of the dental fricatives was for the first time introduced to the learners. First, I explained that /θ/ and /ð/ are sounds, which do not occur in Czech, and that is why they may feel uncomfortable while pronouncing them. I mentioned that the sounds are called "the dental fricatives", but only to emphasize the fact that by "dental" is meant that the tongue is touches the upper teeth. Nevertheless, I did not suppose that they will use this term sometimes in the future as they are not familiar with the phonetic terms. For the same reason I did not supply them with pictures of vocal tract, demonstrating the different positions of the articulators when pronouncing /θ/ and /ð/ or the substituting sounds. I found it more effective to demonstrate the tongue position on myself.

I wrote the phonetic symbols on the board and demonstrated each sound several times, so that the learners knew which symbol represents which (if for the voiceless or for the voiced one). I demonstrated the dental fricatives first as isolated sounds and then in words they have already seen and heard. After that I wanted the students to place their tongue to the position behind the upper teeth and according to my instructions try to mimic and produce the dental fricatives – first the voiceless one, then its voiced counterpart. I also wanted them to pronounce the sounds which they mostly use as substitutions. They were supposed to exaggerate the pronunciation of these sounds (such as /ssssss/, /ffffff/ or /zzzzzz/ and /dddddd/) and think about their tongue position to realize how it differs from the position of the target sounds /θ/ and /ð/. I did not make the learners pronounce words or sentences in this lesson, but only isolated sounds /θ/ and /ð/.

The main purpose of the introduction was to make the students motivated and give reasons why they should want to learn the pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/. I explained to the students that /θ/ and /ð/ have a meaning-distinguishing value. I created an exercise showing that substituting the dental fricatives by another sound causes a change of meaning. The aim of this activity was also to make the learners hear and realize the difference between the target sounds and the possible substitutions.

For the voiceless fricative I made a list of minimal pairs and read each word, putting an emphasis on the sounds concerned (see figure 4.1a). The students' task was to circle the sound represented by the letters in bold in each word they heard. To think

up a list of minimal pairs with /θ/ was relatively easy. It was more difficult to think of words with /ð/ which the learners have in their limited vocabulary and to create a minimal pair with it. That is why I finally decided to make a list of single words only (see figure 4.1b), including some minimal pairs.

Even though I did not ask the learners to pronounce the words I read, I noticed that they repeated after me for themselves some of the words they already knew and compared the sounds previously practiced. When asked how /θ/ and /ð/ are represented in written language, they responded readily as they were attentive during the exercises and realized that /θ/ and /ð/ always corresponded to *th* in bold.

At the end of the lesson S2 and S3 claimed that the pronunciation of the voiceless fricative is far easier than the pronunciation of its voiced counterpart which was demonstrated by a minimal progress in their pronunciation of the voiced dental fricative during the following weeks.

/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	both – boat	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	death – deaf	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	faith – face	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	faith – fate	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	fourth – fort	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	mouth – mouse	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	path – pass	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	Ruth – root	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	theme – team	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	theme- seem	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	thick – sick	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	thigh – tie	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	thin – fin	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	thin - sin	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	thin - tin	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	think – sink	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	thread – Fred	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	three - free	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	three - tree	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	thumb - some	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/
/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/	worth – worse	/f/	/s/	/t/	/θ/

Fig. 4.1a: List of minimal pair words with /θ/ and its frequent substituents /f/, /s/ and /t/.

bath**e**	/d/	/z/	/ð/
ba**ys**	/d/	/z/	/ð/
brea**the**	/d/	/z/	/ð/
bree**ze**	/d/	/z/	/ð/
bro**ther**	/d/	/z/	/ð/
clo**thes**	/d/	/z/	/ð/
dare	/d/	/z/	/ð/
fa**ther**	/d/	/z/	/ð/
mo**ther**	/d/	/z/	/ð/
sou**thern**	/d/	/z/	/ð/
su**dd**en	/d/	/z/	/ð/
that	/d/	/z/	/ð/
then	/d/	/z/	/ð/
there	/d/	/z/	/ð/
they	/d/	/z/	/ð/
this	/d/	/z/	/ð/

Fig. 4.1b: List of words with /ð/ and its frequent substituents /d/ and /z/.

4.4   Week 2: Acquiring the pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/

I did not review what the learners remembered about the pronunciation of the dental fricatives immediately at the beginning of this lesson, but let the speakers talk naturally as I wanted to see whether they kept in their minds to be attentive to the pronunciation of /θ/, /ð/ in the words they produced. They did not make any progress in their pronunciation since last meeting and still replaced the dental fricatives by other sounds (see table 4.2) when reading and speaking. Nevertheless, whenever I asked them if the sound they produced is the right one, they corrected themselves. S1 and S3 corrected themselves to the right sound every time I highlighted their mistake. S2 did not express any great willingness to produce the dental fricative by herself, or to repeat it after me, but she knew where she made the mistake and was able to distinguish the sounds/the minimal pair words whenever I asked.

At the end of this lesson I wanted each of the speakers to read a short text (see figure 4.2). There was a noticeable progress in S1's and S3's pronunciation, S2 still replaced the dental fricatives by the substituting sounds and did not feel very comfortable reading the short text and thus she did not finish it. S1 and S3, after a few corrections from me, produced the dental fricatives by themselves, even though it was

obvious that they had to concentrate a lot to do so. However, both of them had problems with pronouncing /θ/ in *Martha* and constantly replaced it by [t̪], but words like *with* or *everything* were no longer an issue for them and the pronunciation of /θ/ started to be a lot easier for the speakers. Unfortunately, this could not be said about /ð/ – which in the case of S3 was always replaced with [d̪] during the exercise. When concentrating, S1 pronounced /ð/ in words like *mother, they, their* or *that* throughout the exercise but in spontaneous speech (before the exercise), he replaced every single voiced fricative with /d/, as did the other two speakers.

	/θ/		/ð/	
	number of mistakes → substitutions		number of mistakes → substitutions	
S1	2/3	→/f/ in *something* (1/3 mistakes) →/s/ in *think* (1/3 mistakes)	3/3	→[d̪] in *this*, in *that*, in *together*
S2	3/3	→/f/ in *something* (1/3 mistakes), in *thirty* (2/3 mistakes)	2/2	→[d̪] in *mother,* in *there*
S3	3/3	→/f/ in *something* (1/3 mistakes), in *three* (2/3 mistakes)	3/3	→[d̪] in *this* (1/3 mistakes), in *together* (2/3 mistakes)

Table 4.2: Number of substitutions the speakers did in spontaneous speech before the exercise on pronunciation of /θ/, /ð/.

Martha lives only with her mother. They live in a nice house but they usually don't see each other till dinner. Martha's mother goes to work quite early when her daughter is still sleeping. Martha's mother has to work very hard and earn a lot of money to give her daughter everything she wants. Martha is thirteen years old, so it's a bit difficult for her mum to satisfy her daughter's needs. As all teenagers Martha likes shopping new clothes and shoes. She goes shopping with her best friend Megan Smith. One day Martha's mother says to Martha that they have to start saving money or they will lose their house.

Fig. 4.2: Text with *th words* that was read by each of the students.

4.5   Week 3: Ordinal numbers and dates

The plan for this class was to practice learners' pronunciation of the voiceless fricative on ordinal numbers and dates. Before introducing the topic, I first observed the students' spontaneous speech. From the beginning of the lesson it was obvious that S1 and S3 produce the voiceless dental fricative on their own in the words they use frequently, such as *thirty, Thursday* or *with*. S1 also pronounced the voiced dental fricative in some words like *their,* but still was uncertain about the fricative in new

words such as *bathing*. Nevertheless, after being explained the pronunciation of the word, he used it another two times correctly. Both S1 and S3 pronounced *they* with a [d̪] but when I drew it to their attention they immediately corrected themselves (without me modelling it first). S2 did not pronounce the voiceless fricatives in the majority of cases, not even after I corrected her several times and repeated the sounds and the words in an exaggerated way. There were three exceptions when S2 tried to produce the voiceless dental fricative after my correction in *month, three* and *fifteenth*. S2 claimed that the voiced dental fricative is too difficult for her to pronounce and whenever she was supposed to try it, she refused. She substituted /ð/ by [d̪] in 100% of cases.

Table 4.3 shows the number of substitutions the speakers made in *th words* before the pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/ was revised. In the table the number of substitutions made in *the* are left out, because all three speakers, who produced it approximately sixteen times, replaced it in 100% by [d̪].

| | /θ/ | | /ð/ | |
	number of mistakes → substitutions		number of mistakes → substitutions	
S1	3/16	→/s/ in *three* (2/3 mistakes) →/f/in *bathing* (1/3 mistakes)	2/6	→[d̪] in *they* (2/2 mistakes)
S2	6/6	→/f/ in *three* (2/6 mistakes), *Thursday* (1/6 mistakes), *fifteenth* (1/6 mistakes) →[t̪] in *months* (2/6 mistakes)	6/6	→[d̪] in *then* (1/6 mistakes), *that* (1/6 mistakes), *there* (2/6 mistakes), *they* (2/6 mistakes)
S3	7/12	→/f/ in *three* (2/7 mistakes), *something* (2/7 mistakes), *anything* (2/7 mistakes) →/s/ in *things* (1/7 mistakes)	4/6	→[d̪] in *they* (2/4 mistakes), *there* (2/4 mistakes)

Table 4.3: *Th words* where the speakers substituted the dental fricatives in spontaneous
        speech.

The important part of this lesson was to explain the importance of /θ/ when using ordinal numbers. For this lesson I did not prepare any special exercise, but used the exercises from the students' textbook and workbook. First, the students were supposed to complete a chart with a list of ordinal numerals (see figure 4.3a, reprinted from the *New English File Elementary Student's Book* (Selixon, Oxenden et al., 2007: 148)). I wanted them to read the numerals aloud, while completing the chart (alternately S1, S2, S3). It was interesting to realize that S2 for the first time pronounced the

voiceless dental fricative several times by herself. I noticed that she had no problem pronouncing /θ/ at the end of the words as in *fourth* but at the beginnings she still replaced it by /f/ as in *thirtieth* or in *twenty-third.* The other two had no severe problem pronouncing the voiceless dental fricative and produced /θ/ correctly seven times out of seven.

After the worm-up, I explained how dates are made in English and I asked the students about their birthdays. Although, they had no trouble pronouncing /θ/ at the end of the ordinal numerals, they struggled with the word *birthday* and replaced the voiceless dental fricative in the middle of the world by /z/.

The last exercise was taken from the student's workbook, reprinted from the *New English File Elementary Workbook* (Selixon, Oxenden et al., 2007: 28). The students were supposed to match the holidays and the corresponding dates (see figure 4.3b). After the previous training, S1 and S3 had no problem with pronunciation of /θ/ at the initial or final-word positions. S2 again replaced /θ/ by /f/ at the beginning of the word *thirty-first*.

c Complete the numbers and words.

1st	first /fɜːst/
2nd	_____ /ˈsekənd/
	third /θɜːd/
4th	_____
	fifth /fɪfθ/
6th	_____
7th	_____
_____	eighth
_____	ninth
10th	_____
11th	_____
	twelfth /twelfθ/
13th	_____
14th	_____
	twentieth /ˈtwentɪəθ/
21st	_____
	twenty-second
23rd	_____
	twenty-fourth
30th	_____ /ˈθɜːtɪəθ/
_____	thirty-first

All other ordinal numbers = number + *th*, e.g. fifteenth, sixteenth.

d Look at the example. What's the date today?
12/3 = **the** twelfth *of March* OR *March* **the** twelfth

Fig. 4.3a: Complete the ordinal numbers.

Complete the chart.

1/1	~~14/2~~	4/7	31/10	25/12

Day	Date	You say…
Valentine's Day	14/2	*the fourteenth of February*
Christmas Day		
US Independence Day		
Halloween		
New Year's Day		

Fig. 4.3b: Find the correct date.

4.6   Week 4: Anchoring the pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/

During this class the learners produced a lot more *th words* than they did in the lessons before. S1and S3 were quite confident when pronouncing the voiceless dental fricative by now, while S2 replaced /θ/ with /f/ in unknown words as well as in the old ones.

In this lesson we did a brief pronunciation task which was part of the revision in the chapter we were doing at that time (see figure 4.4, reprinted from the *New English File Elementary Student's Book* (Selixon, Oxenden et al., 2007: 38)). This activity was based on selecting the "odd one out" of a row of three words. Each row begins with a phoneme (e.g. /θ/). From the following three words, only two comprise the phoneme stated at the beginning of the row. The students' task is to read all three words and decide which one is "the odd one" and thus does not belong to the group. For example for the row with /θ/ where the words are *thirty-tenth-father*, the odd one is *father*, because it is pronounced with /ð/.

During the task, S1 had no great problems with pronouncing the six words, except for the definite article *the.* S2, surprisingly, achieved the right pronunciation of /θ/, but struggled with /ð/ which she replaced in all cases by [d̪] and even though she was able to repeat the right pronunciation after me, she did not apply it on any word after the exercise. S3 reached the same level as S1, she successfully pronounced the voiceless fricative and achieved in pronouncing the voiced one, after being corrected.

All three speakers again, replaced /ð/ in the definite article *the* by [d̪], S1 and S3 were able to pronounce it correctly in isolation, when mimicking after me, but never used it again after the exercise.

After this brief warm-up the learners still kept in mind the pronunciation of the target sounds and their effort to pronounce the dental fricatives in a correct way was noticeable (see table 4.4).

Fig.4.4: Find the odd one.

In the last third of the session I played a game with the students, which I do when students get tired or bored to animate them a little. It is a very simple game, however, the students have to think quickly, think in English and pay attention to the rest of participants. It is a simple counting game where the students take turns in counting, and whenever number *three*, its multiple (6, 9, 12, …) or a number that comprises *three* in itself (13, 23, …) should be said, the student whose turn it is, is supposed to say another word instead. This word is agreed before the game and it is written on the board, so that the students do not forget it. For this task, I chose the word *something* which is frequently used by the students and where they often replace /θ/ with /f/ or /s/. Even though I emphasized the sound several times before starting the game and I joined the game, so the students heard me say the word at least five times, S2 always pronounced /f/ in the middle of *something*. The other two students successfully pronounced /θ/ every time (approximately 5 times each).

	/θ/		/ð/	
	number of mistakes → substitutions		number of mistakes → substitutions	
S1	2/11	→ /f/, /s/ in *think*	6/8	→[d̪]in *that* (2/6 mistakes), *this, then, they, together*
S2	6/8	→ /f/ in *thing, three, thirty, thanks, with, healthy*	2/2	→[d̪] in *this, then*
S3	4/11	→ /f/ in *everything* → /s/ in *thank you* →[t̪] in *with* (2/4 mistakes)	6/8	→[d̪] in *that, then* (2/5 mistakes), *brother, together* (2/5 mistakes)

Table 4.4: *Th words* where the speakers substituted the dental fricatives in spontaneous speech.

4.7 Week 5: Family members, pronouns and the definite article

The aim of this class was to practice learners' pronunciation of the voiced fricative. /ð/ was practiced in mid-word position of *mother, father, brother* and their compounds. In initial-word position /ð/ was practiced on the personal pronoun *they* (and its possible variants), demonstrative pronouns (*this, that*) and on the definite article *the*. S1 sometimes achieved in pronouncing /ð/ before in the mid-word position, but still rather inclined towards replacing it by [d̪] as the two others. He was nevertheless the most successful from the three participants in pronouncing /ð/ in pronouns like *they,*

them or *this* by now. The data evaluated during this lesson, do not come from any organized activity, but rather from reading and speaking tasks which were performed by the learners. The learners were already familiar with words and the exercises were focusing on grammar and vocabulary knowledge, not pronunciation. In figure 4.5a, b are two exercises which the students read during this lesson. Both are reprinted from *The Cambridge English Course* (Swan, 1991: 14, 17 respectively).

During the exercise I noticed an interesting influence that S1' reading had on S2's pronunciation. S1 was reading and four times correctly pronounced /θ/ in the word *both* (see figure 4.5b). Even though S2 never produced /θ/ spontaneously in the word *both* before, after hearing it several times from S1, she, too, produced the fricative in her reading. But she still substituted it with /f/ in *thirty*. When I modelled the numeral several times, she was able to repeat it after me, but then again switched to /f/-subsitution further in the text.

S1 and S3 automatically produced the voiceless dental fricative in new words with /θ/ (such as *tooth-brush/-paste*) but showed a little uncertainty in new words with /ð/, like *clothes*, *southern* or *another*. They said that they are aware of the fact that a fricative should be pronounced, only were not able to produce it without me modelling first. When mimicking several times after me, they pronounced the words right but avoided them afterwards. Unless S1 and S3, S2 automatically pronounced in these words [ḏ] or [dz] (in [kloʊdz]) instead of /ð/. Table 4.5 shows number of substitutions that the learners did in their spontaneous speech during this class.

In this session we also went through an exercise which revised the grammar of articles (definite, indefinite, zero). During the reading, the definite article was produced thirty-seven times in total and in 100% of cases it was replaced by [ḏ]. Several times, I produced the definite article with /ð/ and the students repeated the pronunciation of the definite article with the voiced dental fricative. Even though, they did repeat the pronunciation right at that moment, they never applied it afterwards.

It was interesting that all three speakers agreed that the tongue position for /ð/ is very unnatural for them, even though the tongue position for both /ð/ and /θ/ is in fact the same (cf. chapter 2).

	/θ/		/ð/	
	number of mistakes → substitutions		number of mistakes → substitutions	
S1	4/23	→[ṯ] in *three* (2/4 mistakes), in	14/19	→[ḏ] in *this* (5/12 mistakes),

		both (2/4 mistakes)		in *their* (3/12 mistakes), in *than*, in *there*, in *they*, in *that*, in *mother*, in *father*
S2	8/9	→ /f/ in *three* (3/8 mistakes), in *thin* (1/8 mistakes), *both* (1/8 mistakes), *think* (3/8 mistakes)	21/21	→[d̪] in *they* (3/21 mistakes), in *their* (2/21 mistakes), in *there* (2/21 mistakes), in *then* , in *this* (3/21 mistakes), in *these*, in *mother*, in *father* (2/21 mistakes), in *brother*, in *another*, in *that* (4/21 mistakes)
S3	7/19	→ /f/ in *think* (3/7 mistakes), in *thing* (2/7 mistakes), *three* (2/7 mistakes)	15/20	→[d̪] in *mother* (2/15 mistakes), in *their* (3/15 mistakes), in *they* (4/15 mistakes), in *that* (3/15 mistakes), in *brother* (1/15 mistakes), in *father* (2/15 mistakes)

Table 4.5: Number of substitutions in learners' spontaneous speech.

Fig. 4.5a: /ð/ in mid-word position.

Fig. 4.5b: /ð/, /θ/ reading revision.

4.8   Week 6: Pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/ in mid-word position

The plan for this lesson was to repeat the pronunciation of both phonemes /θ/, /ð/. I explained that we are going to repeat these sounds and I demonstrated them again. The activity, which was done in this class, is shown in figure 4.6.

First, the students were supposed to read the short article describing a family. S1 was again the most successful and had no problems with pronouncing the voiceless fricative. As for the voiced one, he replaced it with [d̠] only in two cases. Alike S1, S3 had no problems with the voiceless dental fricative, but struggled with the voiced one. S3 mostly replaced /ð/ with [dz], but her pronunciation did not cause any disruptive effect. Unless the two previous speakers, S2 replaced every /θ/ with /f/ and /ð/ with [d̠] and she ignored all my interferences. To see the detailed record of each speaker's reading, see table 4.6.

When is their birthday? (When were they born?)

It's 2013:

Mark is three years old. His brother is thirteen years older. His sister is ten years older than his brother. Their mother is fifty and their father is three years older than their mother.

Mark	17th May (1960)
his brother	18th July (1987)
his sister	14th September (1963)
their mother	21st February (2010)
their father	3rd December (1997)

When were you born?   When is your BD?

Fig. 4.6: /θ/, /ð/ in mid-word positions.

After reading the few sentences, the students were supposed to match each member to the corresponding birthday and then compose sentences with the right answers. All three speakers replaced /θ/ in the word *birthday* by /z/ (each speaker made 2/2 mistakes) but they had no problem with /θ/ at the end of the ordinal numbers when saying the dates of birth, not even S2 (each speaker made 0/2 mistakes). The pronunciation of /θ/ in mid-word position was trained afterwards with the learners, but they found it very hard to pronounce /θ/ immediately followed by a stop /d/ and none of them achieved to use it correctly in spontaneous speech afterwards.

S1	Mark is *three* years old. His *brother* is *thirteen* years older. His sister is ten years older *than* his
	[θ] [ð] [θ] [ð]
	brother. Their *mother* is fifty and *their father* is *three* years older *than their mother*.
	[d] [ð] **[d]** [ð] [ð] [θ] [ð] [ð] [ð]
S2	Mark is *three* years old. His *brother* is *thirteen* years older. His sister is ten years older *than* his
	[f] **[d]** **[f]** **[d]**
	brother. Their *mother* is fifty and *their father* is *three* years older *than their mother*.
	[d] **[d]** **[d]** **[d]** **[d]** **[f]** **[d]** **[d]** **[d]**
S3	Mark is *three* years old. His *brother* is *thirteen* years older. His sister is ten years older *than* his
	[θ] **[d]** [θ] [ð]
	brother. **Their *mother*** is fifty and *their **father*** is *three* years older ***than*** their ***mother***.
	[d] **[d]** **[d]** [ð] **[d]** [θ] **[d]** [ð] **[d]**

Table 4.6: Record of the reading in fig.4.6.

The following table 4.7 shows the substitutions that the learners did in spontaneous speech before and after the pronunciation activity.

	/θ/		/ð/	
	number of mistakes → substitutions		number of mistakes → substitutions	
S1	0/9		6/8	→[d̪] in *that* (4/6 mistakes), in *there* (2/6 mistakes)
S2	6/7	→/f/ in *three* (4/6 mistakes) →[t̪] in *with* →/z/ in *birthday*	5/5	→ [d̪] in *this* (3/5 mistakes), in *they*, in *brother*
S3	3/6	→/f/ in *three* (2/6 mistakes) →/z/ in *birthday*	4/5	→[dz] in *than* (2/4 mistakes), →[d̪] *brother* (2/4 mistakes)

Table 4.7: Substitutions made in spontaneously said *th words*.

4.9   Week 7: Final training of pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/

The activity applied in this session had two parts. The first exercise was a worm-up and was relatively short. I wrote on the board the days of the week. The students were supposed to replace the names of the days by the ordinal number according to their succession. For example *Sunday* was replaced by *the first day of the week*, *Thursday* by *the fifth day of the week*. The exercise was not that easy because the students had to think about the right form of the ordinal number and had to think of completing the sentence by their own ideas. The model sentence for this exercise was: On the [corresponding ordinal number] day of the week [student's end of the sentence]. – *On the sixth day of the week I take my dog for a walk.* The speakers' sentences and the number of mistakes they did are stated in table 4.8 below.

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The second exercise was a bit longer and more challenging. I wrote on the board the multiples of five, beginning from ten until sixty and a hundred (10, 15, 20 … 60, 100). The students were supposed to transform the ordinals into the cardinals (10th, 15th, 20th … 100th) and use them in a sentence. The model sentence for this exercise was: For my [corresponding ordinal number] birthday I got/ I want [student's end of the sentence]. – *For my tenth birthday I got a purple bicycle.* / *For my eightieth birthday I want a big birthday cake.* Table 4.9 comprises the speaker's sentences and mistakes they made during their performance.

S1	On the first day of the week I go to the pub.	✓
	On the *fourth* day of the week I go to bed early.	✓
	On the *seventh* day of the week I go to the pub and *then* to the shop.	✓
		[d̪] in *then*
S2	On the second day of the week I ride a bike.	✓
	On the *fifth* day of the week I go to the cinema *with* my children.	[t̪] in *fifth*
		[t̪] in *with*
S3	On the *third* day of the week I go to the gym.	✓
	On the *sixth* day of the week I go swimming.	✓

Table 4.8: First part of the exercise – ordinals one to seven.

S1	For my *twentieth BD* I got a bottle of alcohol.	✓
	For my *thirty-fifth BD* I got *nothing*.	✓, but [z] in *birthday*
	For my *fiftieth BD* I got a home cinema.	✓, but [z] in *birthday*
	For my *hundredth* BD I want to sleep forever.	✓, but [z] in *birthday*
S2	For my *tenth BD* I got a guinea pig.	✓, but [z] in *birthday*
	For my twenty-*fifth BD* I got a purple bicycle.	[t̪] in *fifth,* [z] in *birthday*
	For my *fortieth BD* I got *something* beautiful.	[f] in *fortieth, something*
		[z] in *birthday*
	For my fifty-*fifth BD* I want to be a *grandmother*.	[t̪] in *fifth,* [z] in *birthday*
		[d̪] in *grandmother*
S3	For my *fifteenth BD* I got an umbrella.	✓, but [z] in *birthday*
	For my *thirtieth BD* I got a trip to Tunis.	✓, but [z] in *birthday*
	For my forty-*fifth BD* I want a big dog.	✓, but [z] in *birthday*
	For my *sixtieth BD* I want a trip around the world.	✓, but [z] in *birthday*

Table 4.9: Pronunciation training of /θ/ in mid-word and final-word positions.

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The next table 4.10 shows in the first half the substitutions that the learners made in their spontaneous speech. The second half states the total number of tokens that S1, S2 and S3 produced during the session and the total number of substitutions.

		/θ/		/ð/
	number of mistakes → substitutions		number of mistakes → substitutions	
S1	1/3	→[t̪] in *with*	0/2	
S2	--		1/1	→[dz] in *clothes*
S3	0/2		2/2	→[d̪] in grand-*mother*, in *that*
	total number of substitutions		total number of substitutions	
S1	2/16		1/3	
S2	8/9		1/1	
S3	4/12		2/2	

Table 4.10: The number of substitutions produced during the last session.

5 STUDY OUTCOMES

This chapter is going to evaluate the outcomes of the observation and compare the expectations before the observation with the actual results. There were many obstacles during the instruction, but it turned out that eventually there was some improvement in the learners' performance of *th words*, especially in those comprising the voiceless dental fricative. Figure 5.1 and 5.2 show the development of learners' pronunciation throughout the seven weeks of pronunciation training. The data for each week are based on the results stated in tables from chapter 4 (tables 4.2 – 4.5, 4.7, 4.10).

5.1 Pronunciation of /θ/

The observation confirmed that acquiring the pronunciation of the voiceless fricative was much easier for the learners than acquiring the pronunciation of its voiced counterpart. In the case of S1 and S3 the improvement was not only perceptible, but also durable as the speakers used the voiceless dental fricative automatically even in spontaneous speech.

Producing the voiceless dental fricative in the initial-word position was a great problem only for S2 whose pronunciation remained unchanged before and after the pronunciation training. Although S2 made a very poor improvement in her pronunciation, it was noticeable, that her perception of the dental fricatives improved a lot during the pronunciation training. When ran across a *th word*, S2 knew exactly where she should pronounce the dental fricative and was able to distinguish minimal pairs like *three-free* or *thick-sick*. Unlike S2, the improvement of S1 and S3 was a lot more perceptible, especially in the numerals comprising number *three* and then in words like *think* or *thing*, which they frequently use.

The learners acquired the pronunciation of /θ/ in the final-word position much easily and produced the fricative more naturally in this word-position. S2 produced some well-pronounced tokens, too, even though when compared to S1 and S3, the number was minimal. Complications occurred however, when /θ/ was preceded by a stop or by another fricative, as in *hundredth, fifth* or *sixth*. In these cases all three learners substituted the final /dθ/, /fθ/ and /sθ/ with [d̪], [ft] and [st], if I did not draw it to their attention.

The same problem aroused in *th words* where /θ/ was in the mid-word position. All three speakers had problems with the word *birthday*, constantly pronouncing it as [brzdeɪ]. This was probably caused by the fact that all three pronounced /bɜː(r)θdeɪ/ with [r]. The phoneme /r/ as an alveolar approximant might influence the following fricative, which resulted in replacing the dental fricative /θ/ with a voiced alveolar fricative /z/. In words where /θ/ was preceded by a vowel, S1 and S3 succeeded in pronouncing the voiceless fricative without any great struggle.
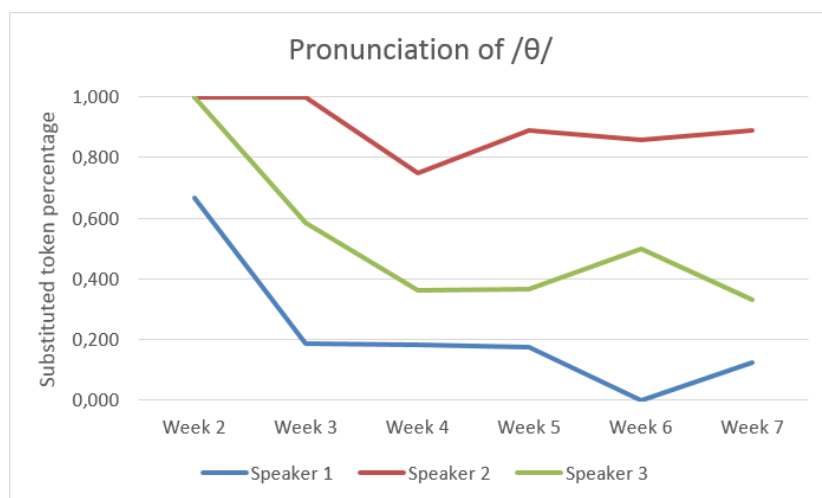

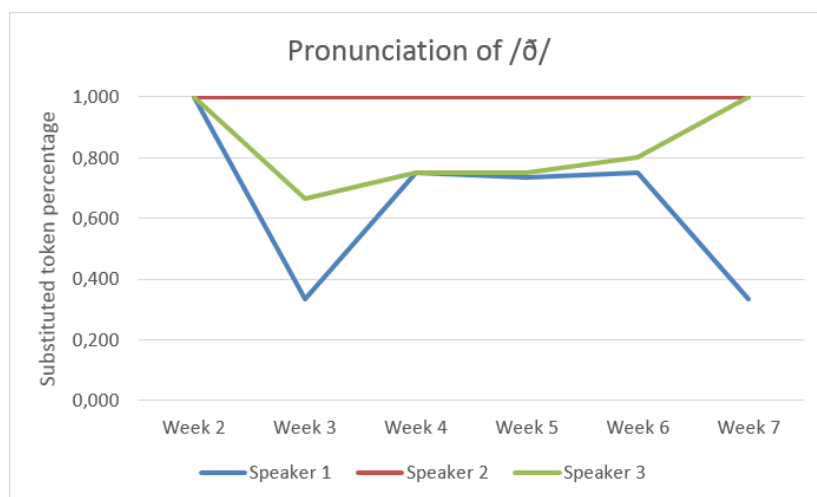Fig. 5.1: Development of learners' pronunciation of /θ/.

Fig. 5.2: Development of learners' pronunciation of /ð/.

5.2   Pronunciation of /ð/

The improvement in learners' pronunciation of /ð/ was a great deal weaker. Primarily, the speakers were not motivated enough, as they realized that the substitution does not cause any misunderstanding in their speech. In S2's pronunciation there was not even a slight improvement and all /ð/ phonemes were replaced with [d̪].

The pronunciation of /ð/ in the initial-word position was acquired by S1 only. In the pronunciation exercises, S1 achieved to pronounce /ð/ correctly or successfully mimicked after me. S3 had problems to get familiar with /ð/ at the beginning of the words. S3 was able to mimic the phoneme after me in isolated *th words*, yet she rarely applied the knowledge in spontaneous speech and mostly replaced /ð/ with [d̪].

Pronunciation of /ð/ in mid-word position was noticeably easier for S1 and S3 who produced the voiced dental fricative a lot more naturally in the middle of the words than they did at the beginning of the words. S1 made a big improvement in words that he frequently used (*brother, father, another*). S3 produced the phoneme with more ease than in the initial-word positions, but again without my intervention, she preferred replacing /ð/ with [d̪].

6   CONCLUSION

This thesis dealt with teaching and learning of the pronunciation of the English dental fricatives /θ/, /ð/. The theoretical part, comprising chapters 2 and 3, briefly presented the phonological properties of /θ/, /ð/ and of their possible substitutions often used by Czech learners of English. It gave an overview of earlier and newer studies and opinions concerned with teaching and learning English pronunciation. The theoretical part also discussed the impact of linguistic and non-language features on NNSs pronunciation.

The practical part, comprising chapters 4 and 5, was based on a long-term observation of three subjects who attended an English elementary course. The group included one man (S1) and two women (S2 and S3). The observation was held in April and May 2013 – once a week, for 90 minutes. The purpose of the observation was to examine the importance of explicit instruction in pronunciation training of /θ/ and /ð/. The aim of the teaching was to improve the learners' pronunciation of the dental fricatives. Every session was recorded on a digital voice recorder and the recordings served for the consequent evaluation of the subjects' pronunciation.

It turned out that explicit instruction had a positive impact on the learners' perception of the phonemes /θ/ and /ð/. Before the instruction, none of the learners pronounced the dental fricatives in their L2 speech. The main reason was that the learners did not perceive the difference between /θ/, /ð/ and their substituents.

Concerning the learners' performance, it was expected that learning the pronunciation of /θ/ would be a lot easier than learning the pronunciation of /ð/. This presumption was eventually confirmed in the results of the observation. The evaluation of the learners' pronunciation was based on their spontaneous speech during the sessions. In the case of /θ/ there was a visible improvement in the learners' pronunciation. In the case of /ð/ the improvement was minimal.

It turned out that the poor improvement in the pronunciation of /ð/ was a result of insufficient motivation. The learners did not find it important to learn and perform the pronunciation of /ð/ because the substituting sound did not change the meaning of *th words* they used.

7   SHRNUTÍ

Ve své bakalářské práci jsem se zaměřila na problematické jevy v anglické výslovnosti, kterým čelí nejen čeští studenti angličtiny, ale i jejich učitelé. Tato práce konkrétně zkoumá výslovnost anglických dentálních frikativ /θ/ a /ð/, které v češtině neexistují. Proto čeští mluvčí často /θ/ a /ð/ nahrazují jinými hláskami, které znají ze svého mateřského jazyka a které jsou jim tudíž „bližší". Cílem práce bylo zjistit, jaký vliv má explicitní výuka na nácvik výslovnosti dentálních frikativ v českém prostředí. Vliv explicitní výuky byl ověřen na základě dlouhodobého pozorování, které popisuji v praktické části své bakalářské práce.

V teoretické části uvádím charakteristiku dentálních frikativ a hlásek, kterými je čeští mluvčí nejčastěji nahrazují. Mezi tyto hlásky patří: /f/, /s/ a /t/, kterými čeští mluvčí nahrazují /θ/ a dále /d/, /dz/ a /z/, které nejčastěji vyslovují namísto /ð/. Teoretická část je založena na srovnání různých studií, které se zabývají výukou anglické výslovnosti a celkově výukou cizího jazyka.

Praktická část je založená na dlouhodobém pozorování, které se uskutečnilo od dubna do května 2013 jako součást výuky v kurzu pro začátečníky. Cílem výuky bylo zlepšit výslovnost dentálních frikativ třech mluvčí angličtiny (jednoho muže a dvou žen), kteří tento kurz navštěvovali. Hodina se konala jednou týdně po dobu 90i minut. Praktická část uvádí detailní záznam ze sedmi týdnů, během nichž probíhal nácvik výslovnosti. Jednotlivé hodiny byly zaznamenány na diktafon, aby bylo později možné posoudit, jak se výslovnost mluvčích vyvíjela.

Výsledky pozorování prokázaly, že explicitní výuka měla při nácviku výslovnosti dentálních frikativ rozhodující vliv. Do té doby než byli mluvčí vystaveni explicitní výuce výslovnosti, všichni tři nahrazovali dentální frikativy jinými hláskami. Výsledky pozorování ukázaly, že všichni tři mluvčí si osvojili výslovnost /θ/ mnohem rychleji než výslovnost /ð/. Zatímco u výslovnosti /θ/ ve spontánním projevu bylo zaznamenáno zlepšení, u výslovnosti /ð/ byl pokrok minimální.

Motivace se ukázala být jedním z hlavních faktorů, který ovlivnil případnou úspěšnost či neúspěšnost výslovnosti jednotlivých subjektů. Sami mluvčí přiznali, že byli více motivovaní k vyslovování /θ/, jehož záměna s jinou hláskou měla vliv na výsledný význam slova. V případě /ð/ byla motivace minimální, protože nijak neohrozila výsledný význam projevu.

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