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**The consistency of teachers' pronunciation in the lower
secondary school**

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Abstract

The theoretical part of this thesis is focused on the effect of native language on learning English, on the two most common pronunciation standards in the world Received Pronunciation and General American. The differences in pronunciation between those two standards are also discussed. In the practical part, research has been conducted, where several secondary class English teachers were inspected during their lessons. The main goal of the research was to analyse the teachers' consistency in pronunciation during their lessons. The research also focused on pronunciation teaching and whether the teachers implement it in their lessons.

Anotace

Teoretická část této práce je zaměřena na vliv rodného jazyka na výuku angličtiny, na dva nejrozšířenější výslovnostní standardy ve světě Received Pronunciation a General American. Diskutovány jsou také rozdíly ve výslovnosti mezi těmito dvěma standardy. V praktické části byl proveden výzkum, kdy bylo během výuky zkontrolováno několik učitelů angličtiny na druhém stupni. Hlavním cílem výzkumu bylo analyzovat konzistentnost výslovnosti učitelů během výuky. Výzkum se také zaměřil na výuku výslovnosti a na to, zda ji učitelé implementují do výuky.

Content

Introduction.....	8
1. Effect of a native language on English pronunciation.....	10
1.1 Czech vs English language	11
2. Teaching English pronunciation	13
2.1 The role of the teacher	13
2.1.1 Helping learners hear.....	14
2.1.2 Helping learners make sounds	14
2.1.3 Providing feedback.....	15
2.1.4 Pointing out what is going out.....	15
2.1.5 Establishing priorities.....	15
2.1.6 Devising activities.....	16
2.1.7 Assessing progress	16
3. Standards of pronunciation	18
3.1 Received Pronunciation	18
3.2 General American	21
4. Dominance of American English.....	23
4.1 Vocabulary.....	23
4.2 Grammar	24
5. Pronunciation differences between RP and GA	25
5.1 Rhoticity	25
5.1.1 Open vowels before /r/	27
5.2 /ɒ/&/ɑ/ – open back rounded vowel/open back unrounded vowel	27
5.3 /ɑ:/&/æ/ – half-open front unrounded vowel/open back unrounded vowel.....	28
5.4 /j/ – palatal approximant	28
5.5 Pronunciation of letter “t”	29
5.5.1 Aspirated sound.....	29

5.5.2	Alveolar flap (tap)	29
5.5.3	Glottal stop	30
5.5.4	Omission of the sound /t/	30
5.6	Stress	30
6.	Procedure of the research.....	33
7.	Pronunciation aspects	34
7.1	Rhoticity	34
7.2	Alveolar flap	34
7.3	Primary stress placement.....	35
8.	First elementary school	37
8.1	Teacher A	37
8.2	Teacher B	38
8.3	Teacher C.....	39
9.	Second elementary school	40
9.1	Teacher D	40
9.2	Teacher E.....	41
9.3	Teacher F.....	42
10.	Third elementary school	43
10.1	Teacher G	43
10.2	Teacher H.....	44
10.3	Teacher I.....	45
11.	Results of the research	46
11.1	Teachers' pronunciation	46
11.2	Correcting students' pronunciation.....	47
11.3	Teaching pronunciation	49
12.	Discussion of the results	51

13. Conclusion.....53

14. Résumé55

15. Sources57

Introduction

When we speak, the way we pronounce words can greatly affect how well we are understood by others. This is especially true for learners of a new language. If a learner is exposed to incorrect pronunciation, they may develop bad habits that are difficult to overcome later on. On the other hand, if they are consistently exposed to accurate pronunciation, they are more likely to develop good habits and sound more natural in their speech.

In language classes, students are exposed to a variety of spoken sources, such as recordings, videos, and native speakers. However, the teacher's speech is often the most influential source of pronunciation for students, as they are able to ask questions and receive feedback from the teacher directly. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to have consistent and accurate pronunciation to ensure that students are developing correct habits.

The theoretical part of this thesis provides a comprehensive overview of the impact of a person's native language on learning English, the importance of teaching pronunciation, and the vital role of the teacher during English lessons as a foreign language. Furthermore, this thesis also explores the two primary pronunciation standards, Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA). Both of these standards differ in their pronunciation of certain sounds and stress patterns. By examining these standards in detail, we can better understand the differences between them and their relevance in teaching English as a foreign language in the 21st century.

The practical part of this thesis is research in the form of several sit ins on lessons of Czech teachers of English in the lower secondary school. During the sit ins the emphasis is given on the standard spoken by the teachers, the consistency of the given standard, the amount of corrections of students' pronunciation during the

lessons. Furthermore, the teachers' attitude to pronunciation teaching is talked about and analysed. The results of this research are individually discussed, and the data collected from the research are shown on a few graphs for easier interpretation.

I. THEORETICAL PART

1. Effect of a native language on English pronunciation

English pronunciation, like other aspects of language learning, can be influenced by various factors, including the amount of exposure to English and the attitude and motivation of the learner. However, these factors can be changed or supported by the collaboration of teachers and learners. On the other hand, there are some factors that cannot be altered by either teachers or learners, such as the learner's native language. Despite the best efforts of teachers and learners, the influence of a learner's native language on their English pronunciation cannot be eliminated entirely. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers and learners to work together to identify and address the unique challenges that arise from the influence of a learner's native language. By working together, they can develop strategies and techniques to help learners overcome these challenges and achieve their language learning goals.

The influence of a learner's native language on their English pronunciation is undeniable, as it affects not only segmental but also suprasegmental features. The greater the differences between the native and target languages, the more challenging it is for the learner to acquire accurate pronunciation. Errors in pronunciation can stem from various sources, such as when a particular sound is absent in the learner's mother tongue. In such cases, learners tend to substitute the missing sound with the nearest equivalent in their native language. For instance, the sound /ð/ may be replaced by /d/ or /z/ as they are the closest equivalents. To overcome such pronunciation difficulties, learners can benefit from focused training and practice with a qualified teacher. By identifying and working on specific areas of weakness, learners can gradually improve their pronunciation and develop greater confidence in their English language skills.

According to Kenworthy (1987:4), there are "more favoured" and "less favoured" languages when it comes to English pronunciation. However, it is essential to avoid oversimplifying the situation and thinking of it in terms of barriers or handicaps to learning. Doing so would ignore the demonstrable fact that people from a variety of language backgrounds can and do achieve near-native pronunciation in English. It is crucial to recognize that other factors, such as motivation, attitude, and exposure to the language, also play a significant role in acquiring accurate English pronunciation. By acknowledging and addressing these factors, learners can improve their language skills and work towards achieving their language learning goals.

1.1 Czech vs English language

Skaličková (1982:185) highlights the differences in pronunciation between the Czech and English languages, specifically the absence of certain phonemes in Czech such as /ð/, /ə/, and /θ/. This can be a challenge for Czech learners of English, who may struggle with the pronunciation of these sounds and substitute them with sounds that are similar in Czech language, such as /d/, /t/, /s/, and /e/. Introducing the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) chart to learners can be both helpful and counterproductive. While knowledge of phonemic symbols can make a teacher's job easier in the long term, it can also be overwhelming for both the teacher and the students. However, the ability to read phonemic symbols can be a valuable tool for learners in their efforts to improve their pronunciation. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to strike a balance between teaching phonemic symbols and using other methods to help learners improve their pronunciation. By understanding the unique challenges that Czech learners of English face, teachers can tailor their approach in their EFL lessons.

The teacher does not necessarily need to use all of the phonemic symbols in their instruction if they are already present in the Czech language. Learners are typically familiar with consonants such as /m/, /n/, /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /s/, /z/, /f/, /v/, /k/, /g/, /h/, /l/, and /j/, as they are pronounced the same in Czech, if we omit aspiration, as they are in the IPA chart. Although the English pronunciation of these phonemes may be slightly different from that of Czech, learners can usually adapt to its pronunciation with relative ease. While there may be some differences between the vowel sounds in Czech and English, there are enough similarities that learners should not encounter major difficulties in mastering them. However, the fact that English is not a phonetic language can pose a challenge for learners and teachers alike. The teacher must make it clear to the students that reading an English text phonetically is not always possible, which can affect both the pronunciation of words and sounds. To help learners navigate these challenges, the teacher can use the IPA chart, or a modified version of it, to demonstrate the various ways that certain sounds can be pronounced. Providing examples of correct pronunciation can also be helpful.

There is a noticeable dissimilarity in word stress between Czech and English. In English, the stress in a word can change position and even influence the sound of vowels. In contrast, Czech has fixed word stress on the initial syllable of each word when considered in isolation. However, in continuous speech, some words may drop the stress, especially shorter words such as pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, particles, and the verb "to be". Consequently, the words are often merged together by emphasizing certain syllables to form a unified phrase. However, the use of secondary stress differs between English and Czech. According to Grepl et al. (1995:44), English frequently uses secondary stress without any clear rules, whereas in Czech, secondary stress is utilized for rhythm when speaking slowly or using compound words. In these instances, the stress is placed on the first syllable of the second component that forms the compound, for example, in the term /'modro,fialová/.

2. Teaching English pronunciation

According to Rogerson-Revell (2013:4), even if teachers do not explicitly teach phonology, students inevitably learn the phonology and pronunciation of the spoken language whenever they study it. However, this does not necessarily mean that explicit pronunciation instruction is unnecessary. The Czech Republic's Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education has established an objective that requires students to read texts with fluent and accurate pronunciation. Given the heterogeneity of learners in a typical elementary English class in the Czech Republic, which can have 15 to 30 students with varying levels of English proficiency, explicit instruction is particularly crucial. There are several factors that can affect a student's ability to acquire English pronunciation, making it essential to provide explicit instruction to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn the pronunciation rules. While some students may be able to learn pronunciation rules inductively, it cannot be assumed that all students will be able to do so without explicit explanation.

2.1 The role of the teacher

In modern-day schools, the teacher plays a vital part in teaching pronunciation. According to Kenworthy (1987:1-2), there are seven crucial elements that define the teacher's role in teaching pronunciation: helping learners hear, helping learners make sounds, providing feedback, pointing out what is going out, establishing priorities, devising activities and assessing progress.

For the teachers, comprehending their responsibility in teaching pronunciation is fundamental to ensure effective instruction. By assisting pupils in both recognizing and articulating the sounds of the target language, teachers can facilitate and enhance the learning experience. Providing feedback on pronunciation errors is also crucial, as it helps students to identify areas for improvement and make necessary corrections. In addition, teachers should be able to point out common pronunciation mistakes made by students and establish priorities for improvement. Finally,

teachers should be able to evaluate students' progress in pronunciation, both formally and informally. By doing so, they can determine the effectiveness of their teaching methods and make necessary adjustments to help students achieve better results. Overall, the teacher's role in teaching pronunciation is essential to the success of language learning. By focusing on these key aspects, teachers can create a supportive and effective learning environment for their students.

2.1.1 Helping learners hear

In the process of teaching pronunciation, the teacher has an important role to play in helping learners perceive sounds. Learners tend to hear English sounds in terms of their native language sounds. If a learner encounters an unfamiliar sound, they will try to compare it with the nearest equivalent sound of their native language. Teachers must ensure that learners hear sounds according to the appropriate categories and help them develop new categories if necessary. Teachers must prioritize their own pronunciation, as it is the most frequently heard language model that students encounter in school. As role models for their students, teachers bear the responsibility of setting an example in terms of pronunciation. Accordingly, their objective should be to achieve mastery in all aspects of pronunciation. According to Rogerson-Revell (2013:10) and Richards (2015:347), utilizing recorded speech samples can be an effective method of enhancing learners' pronunciation abilities. Teachers must provide high-quality examples of pronunciation for their students to follow. However, if the teacher has not attained full mastery of English pronunciation, they should incorporate more non-teacher generated resources into the lesson plan, such as recordings, videos, and electronic materials.

2.1.2 Helping learners make sounds

As English contains some sounds that are not present in other languages (*p.14*), learners may struggle to produce these sounds. While some learners may be able to replicate the sound, others may need guidance from their teacher on how to produce the sound correctly. Therefore, it is important for the teacher to provide hints and techniques to help learners produce new sounds accurately.

2.1.3 Providing feedback

Providing feedback to students is a fundamental aspect of the teacher's responsibility in teaching pronunciation. Although some students may be able to assess their pronunciation accuracy, it is the teacher's obligation to provide them with constructive feedback on their performance. Furthermore, as noted by Richards (2015:679), peer feedback can also be advantageous, especially when certain learners excel in their pronunciation abilities. Furthermore, the teacher does not need to correct every mistake made by learners. Not every minor slip needs to be corrected. On the other hand, the teacher can focus on major errors or those mistakes that are made repeatedly. However, there may be instances where learners overdo something, such as making inaccurate assumptions about English pronunciation based on its written form.

2.1.4 Pointing out what is going out

In order for learners to improve their pronunciation, it is important for them to be aware of what they need to work on. However, as speaking is largely controlled subconsciously, learners may not be aware of all the aspects that affect their pronunciation. For example, learners may not be aware of how stress or intonation can affect the meaning of a sentence. Especially Czech learners of English, who are not used to this concept in their native language can neglect this aspect of English. Therefore, it is important for teachers to help learners become aware of the potential aspects that they need to focus on.

2.1.5 Establishing priorities

In pronunciation learning, learners may notice that something about their pronunciation is different from that of native English speakers, but they may not be able to determine whether it is important or not. They may try to change it automatically, but their efforts may not be effective because the feature is not essential for intelligible speech. Therefore, learners require the guidance of a teacher to establish a plan of action and determine what aspects of pronunciation to focus on. The teacher can help learners understand what aspects of pronunciation

are important for conveying meaning and which ones are refinements that can be addressed later.

2.1.6 Devising activities

Teaching pronunciation is a complex and often sensitive process that requires the teacher to carefully consider the needs and preferences of individual learners in order to create a supportive and engaging learning environment. The chosen activities should provide enough opportunities for practice, experimentation, and exploration. Teachers must also be mindful of the fact that different learners have different learning styles and approaches, and certain activities may be more effective for some learners than others.

2.1.7 Assessing progress

Richards (2015:682) discusses the concept of summative assessment, which is a type of assessment used at the end of a course or learning period. Typically using a variety of assessment procedures such as assignments, end-of-course tests, projects, and portfolios. The main aim of summative assessment is to determine how well students have achieved the learning outcomes or objectives of the course.

There are several advantages to using summative assessment. Firstly, it provides a clear indication of student achievement and progress, allowing students to reflect on the learning process and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, summative assessment can motivate students to work harder and take their learning more seriously, as they know their final grade or mark depends on their performance. Furthermore, summative assessment can also provide valuable feedback for teachers, helping them to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching methods and materials.

However, there are also some potential limitations of summative assessment. One major concern is that it may not provide a complete picture of student learning, as it only measures what students have learnt up to a certain point in time. Another potential issue is that summative assessment may place too much emphasis on

grades and marks, leading to a focus on performance rather than on the learning process itself. Additionally, some students may feel stressed or anxious about the pressure to perform well on summative assessments, which could negatively affect their learning outcomes.

3. Standards of pronunciation

According to Wells (1982:94), languages are constantly evolving and changing. English pronunciations, in particular, have changed unevenly across different geographical locations and social backgrounds. For instance, Roach (2009:4) claims, the pronunciation of English in North America is different from most accents found in Britain. However, it is possible to find accents in parts of Britain that sound American, and conversely, some accents in North America might sound British.

It is important for non-native speakers to be aware of the difference between England and Britain when discussing English accents. While there are many different accents in England, the range becomes even wider when considering the accents of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Within England, the most common distribution is between northern and southern accents. This is a rough division, and there can be endless arguments over where the boundaries lie. However, most people would identify Lancashire, Yorkshire, or other counties further north as having a "Northern" accent (Roach 2009:4).

According to Roach (2009:163), the majority of American English speakers have an accent known as General American (GA). Canadian English speakers also have a very similar accent, to the point where few British people can distinguish between the two. However, accents in America that deviate from GA are mainly found in New England and the deep south. Nevertheless, isolated communities throughout the country tend to maintain different accents.

3.1 Received Pronunciation

In England, the accepted social standard of pronunciation is called Received Pronunciation (RP), the term suggests that it is the result of a social judgement rather than of an official decision as to what is correct or wrong (received = acceptable) (Cruttenden 2008:77).

Hughes claims (2012:3) that the term Received Pronunciation got rather old-fashioned or even negative connotation in British society. Taking into consideration the modern development and the changes in its features, some phoneticians use the term Standard South British English.

Cruttenden (2008:76) explains that the standard pronunciation system for English (RP), was not intentionally set as a targeted aim for English speakers. Instead, the development of the standard pronunciation system likely arose from the growing interest in learning English in countries around the world, along with increased education in primary schools and the subsequent interest in spoken language. Daniel Jones, one of the main phoneticians in England during the first half of the 20th century, coined the term RP to refer to the standard British pronunciation model in three of his publications. However, he also acknowledged the existence of different models of pronunciation and did not intend to establish RP as superior to other accents. Despite this, his works became the standard for English pronunciation and were followed by other books that solidified RP's position as the standard pronunciation.

In the 1920s, RP gained popularity among the general public, mainly due to the establishment of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The BBC's Advisory Committee on Spoken English, which was composed of two phoneticians, aimed to promote the speech of the educated social class, rather than establish a uniform pronunciation model. As a result, RP became the predominant accent used by news presenters during the early years of BBC broadcasting. This was not due to a specific speech policy, but rather because most newsreaders and employees came from the same social class and used a similar pronunciation model, as stated by Cruttenden (2008:76).

The RP standard is still associated with the upper social class today, whether through title, education, profession, or other factors. It is strongly linked to the accent spoken by those who study at British public schools, which are actually private and financially unobtainable for most families in the UK. As previously mentioned, RP is not a regional pronunciation model but rather one that is linked to a social background. Nevertheless, it is believed to have originated in the area of London and its surroundings. Views on RP differ depending on the location where the question is posed. In several countries, RP is generally perceived as a British accent, but in Northern England, it is predominantly regarded as a southern accent, as per Hughes (2012:3).

At the beginning of the 21st century, it was estimated that only a small fraction, roughly between 3 to 5 percent, of the English population spoke RP English. However, it is currently difficult to ascertain whether this percentage has increased or decreased over the years, considering that RP has undergone several changes and the comparative model used in previous estimates may no longer be relevant, as stated by Hughes (2012:4). Despite this, according to Cruttenden (2008:78), RP remains the most suitable model for foreign learners, as even a low proportion such as 3 percent is still higher than any other established model worldwide.

One of the reasons for RP's widespread adoption as a pronunciation model for foreign learners is its prestigious historical position. For many years, it has been regarded as the "most correct" accent, and teachers often focus on teaching it. Furthermore, according to Hughes (2012:4), RP has become the most widely comprehensible accent throughout the UK, largely due to its use in broadcasting on television and radio. Consequently, learners may feel that mastering this pronunciation model provides them with the best opportunity to be understood effectively in any part of the UK.

3.2 General American

General American is the pronunciation used by the general population of the United States and by most US radio and TV announcers. It is also the model accent which is taught in American schools and in parts of the world close to the United States where English is taught as a second language.

The standard division of the United States for pronunciation purposes is into Eastern (New England, New York City), Southern (Virginia, Texas) and General (all the remaining area). General American (GA) can be considered as that form of American which does not have marked regional characteristics and is in this way comparable to RP (Cruttenden 2008:84).

According to Skaličková (1982:196), there is no official pronouncing norm of American English equivalent to RP in British English. In the United States, we can observe many regional dialects. The essential regional standards are Eastern, Southern and General American.

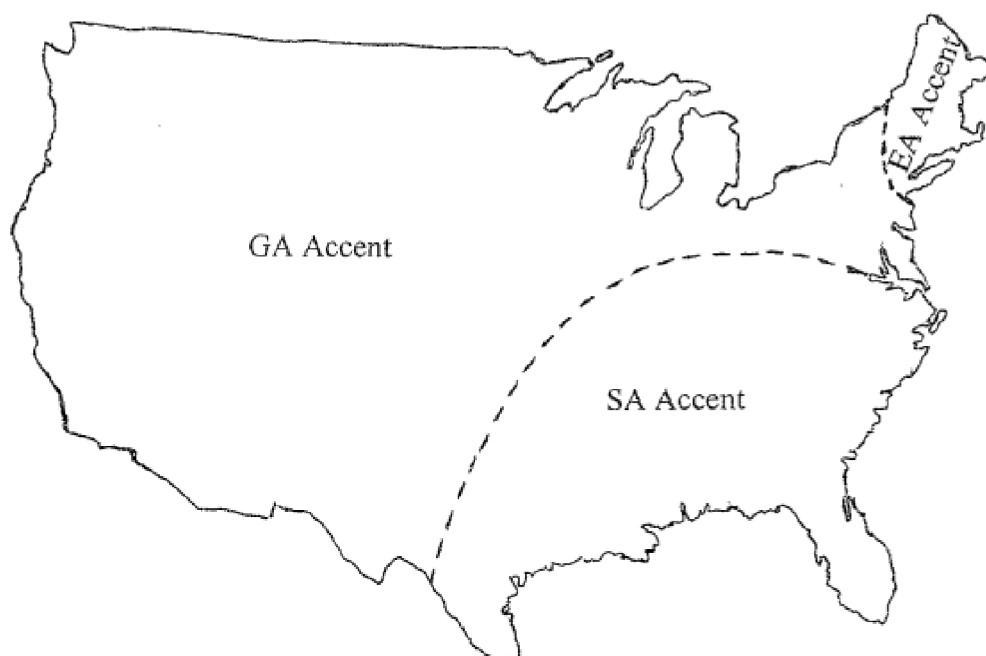


Figure 1: Geographical speech distribution of US (Wells)

Similar to RP, the spread of GA pronunciation was also influenced by historical development. However, GA had a greater opportunity for expansion, supported by both political and economic growth in various parts of the world, particularly after the end of British colonialism, such as in South and Central America. According to Brown (1991:34), it is more suitable for learners to acquire an American accent rather than British RP. The popularity of US TV shows, films, and pop music has played a significant role in the widespread use of the GA accent across the globe, as noted by Brown (1991:34).

GA is often referred to as Network English because it is widely accepted by national television networks in the USA, as stated by Wells (1986:470). With the advancement of technology and media, GA has become a popular pronunciation model accessible to many people worldwide. The popularity of American television shows, films, and pop music has played a significant role in this trend. Moreover, GA is considered a viable alternative to RP due to its easy accessibility and simplicity from the perspective of articulatory phonetics, according to Brown (1991:36).

4. Dominance of American English

The influence of American English in our daily lives is undeniable, and this can largely be attributed to the abundance of American media that we consume. With a population of over 300 million, the United States produces a vast amount of cultural output that is unmatched by the United Kingdom's population of nearly 70 million. As a result, British television and film often feature American content. Popular American TV shows and films can be found on many British channels, including Channel 4, a public-service television network that is the second most watched channel in the UK. This channel airs multiple episodes of *The Simpsons* on a daily basis. *The Graham Norton Show*, a British comedy talk show hosted by Graham Norton since 2007, also regularly features famous American guests. These examples serve to highlight the pervasive influence of American culture in the UK and beyond.

4.1 Vocabulary

According to Lindsey (2019:12), American influence can be mainly observed in the language used, including words, phrases, and idioms. In recent times, British speakers have incorporated American vocabulary, such as "awesome," "cool" (to express something positive), and "movie," which were once considered distinctly American. Idioms originating in the US have also gained popularity in Britain, with examples like "get your act together," "it's not rocket science," "do the math," and "dumbing down." Additionally, the word "multiple" has been adopted in place of "numerous" or "many," and "so" has replaced "well" at the beginning of an answer to a question. These language changes show the increasing influence of American English on British English and how it is shaping the way people communicate in the UK.

Despite the growing influence of American English on British English, some distinctive features of British English continue to be preserved. For instance, the vowel /ɒ/, as well as a lack of /t/-voicing and non-rhoticity, remain prominent in British English. Moreover, some words have become less similar to their American

pronunciation than they were in Received Pronunciation, such as "contribute," "controversy," and "garage" (Lindsey 2019:11). These differences suggest that although Americanization is impacting British English, the language still maintains its own unique characteristics that distinguish it from American English.

4.2 Grammar

According to Lindsey (2019:12), the use of past tense instead of perfective tense with words like "just," "already," or "yet" is a significant sign of Americanization in grammar. For example, the phrase "I have just eaten" is now frequently replaced with "I just ate." Baker (2017:237) proposes that British English is more open to embracing changes from American English, which is typically at the forefront of grammatical advancements, if not setting the trend altogether. This suggests that American English is having a notable impact on the evolution of the English language, particularly in the UK, where it is increasingly influencing the way people communicate.

5. Pronunciation differences between RP and GA

5.1 Rhoticity

A rhotic accent comprises the pronunciation of the sound /r/ in all possible positions, whenever it is present in spelling, for example in a word “car” /kɑ:r/. Rhotic accents can be found in Ireland, Scotland, certain parts of England, most of the USA, Canada and certain parts of the Caribbean (Wells 1982:76). On the other hand, non-rhotic accents involve the loss of the sound /r/ in post-vocalic positions, as in the word “car” /kɑ:/. Therefore, the sound /r/ appears in speech only before vowels, either initially or intervocally (McMahon 2003:232). These accents can be found in England and Wales, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, some eastern and southern parts of the USA and in some parts of the Caribbean (Wells 1982:76).



Figure 2: On the left is the mapping of rhoticity in England in the 1950s. On the right is the mapping of rhoticity in England in late 20th century (Trudgill)

Roach (2009:115) claims that the phoneme /r/ cannot occur in syllable-final position in RP, but when a word's spelling suggests a final /r/, and a word beginning with a vowel follows, the usual pronunciation for RP speakers is to pronounce it with /r/.

- a. "Here" /hɪə/ but "Here are" /hɪər a:/
- b. "Four" /fɔ:/ but "Four eggs" /fɔ:r ɛgz/

In connected speech words are linked together in a number of ways. The most familiar case is called linking /r/ and the example is shown above. Another way we can link words together is with intrusive /r/. In this phenomenon speakers use /r/ in similar way as in linking, to link words ending with a vowel, even when there is no justification from the spelling.

- a. "Formula A" /fɔ:mjələr ɛɪ/
- b. "Media event" /mi:diər ɪvɛnt/

Compared to linking /r/, intrusive /r/ is being considered as incorrect or substandard pronunciation, yet it is undoubtedly widespread. Jones (1962:198) states that even though it is not necessary for foreign people to learn to use intrusive /r/, they should be aware of its existence to avoid misunderstanding when native speakers use it.

The consonant changes throughout history were proved to be much less distinctive than the changes of vowels. The modification in 18th century that brought the partial loss of /r/ could be considered as one of the most important changes, since it gave rise to non-rhotic accents (Cruttenden 2008:83).

Pavlík (2003:242) stated that there are three important variants of the GA phoneme /r/.

1. In the word-initial position, e.g., "rat", "road" etc., intervocalically, e.g., "irritate", "oral" etc., and in the word-final position if preceded by a vowel, e.g., "far", "beer" etc. This sound always functions as a consonant and the phonetic symbol for it is /ɹ/.

2. In the word-medial position if preceded and followed by a consonant, e.g., “permit”, “perfume” etc., and in the word-final positions if preceded by a consonant, e.g., “teacher”, “later” etc. This sound always functions as a vowel and the phonetic symbol for it is /ə/.
3. In all positions in words and it functions as a vowel. It can be found in words such as “urge”, “burn”, “fur” etc. The phonetic symbol for this sound is /ɜː/.

5.1.1 Open vowels before /r/

The alveolar trill /r/ is interesting not only on the basis of actually being pronounced or not, but also from the point of influence on vowels that precede it. However, it is not an easy opposition to demonstrate. It appears most tangibly in a pair such as mirror vs. nearer, which rhyme in GA /mɪrər/ and /nɪrər/ but not in RP, /mɪrər/ and /nɪərə/ (Wells 1982:153).

Similar situation arises in differencing between “marry” and “merry”: where in RP the first is /mæri/ and the second /mɛri/, in some areas of the United States, namely New England and the middle and far west, the prevalent pronunciation of both is /mɛri/ – “marry” and “merry” become homophones (Wells 1982:245).

5.2 /ɒ/&/ɑ/ – open back rounded vowel/open back unrounded vowel

This is a distinctive difference in the word “lot”, where RP usually pronounces the rounded open vowel /lɒt/, GA pronunciation is the unrounded open /lat/. Sometimes, the half-open back rounded vowel /ɔː/ of the word “thought” is mentioned in close connection to these two, because in the midlands and south of the United States /ɔː/ and /ɑ/ are not distinct. Therefore, “John” rhymes with “lawn” (Wells 1982:245).

5.3 /ɑ:/&/æ/ – half-open front unrounded vowel/open back unrounded vowel

In the word “bath” there is one of the most prominent different sounds between British and American accents. Whereas in RP, the pronunciation is /bɑ:θ/, in GA the word is pronounced with the open /bæθ/. Both the vowels occur in both varieties of English, but in words such as “ask”, “dance” or “laugh”, the difference is most noticeable. In some accents in the north of England though, the vowel is shortened and the word “laughter” /lɑ:ftə/ becomes /læftə/ or /laftə/. More precisely /læftər/ or /laftər/, as some northern British accents tend to be rhotic rather than non-rhotic (Wells 1982:353).

VOWELS

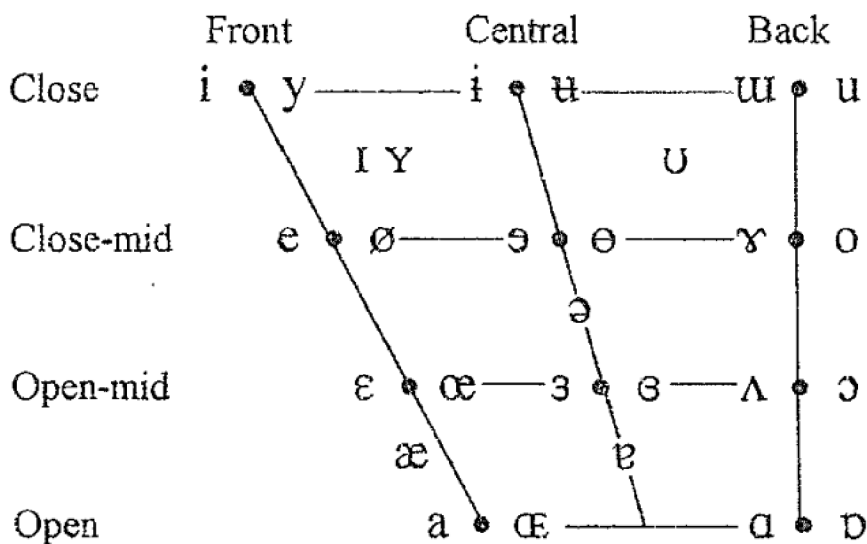


Figure 3: Vowel sounds and mouth positioning

5.4 /j/ – palatal approximant

Almost all English accents, both British and American, have been subjected to the so called Early Yod Dropping, which meant the loss of /ju:/ after palatal consonants and /r/, so that the words “threw” and “through” have become homophones. However, in GA this process went further and resulted in the loss of /j/ after all coronal consonants /t/, /d/, /n/, /e/, /s/, /z/, /l/. The standard RP retains /ju:/ after these consonants, so the word “duty” in RP is pronounced /dju:ti/ and in GA it is pronounced /du:ti/ (Wells 1982:247).

Examples	RP	GA
<i>Student</i>	/stju:dənt/	/stu:dənt/
<i>Reduce</i>	/rɪdju:s/	/rɪdu:s/
<i>News</i>	/nju:z/	/nu:z/

Table 1: Examples of early yod dropping

5.5 Pronunciation of letter “t”

According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996:365) there are some major allophonic variations in the pronunciation of /t/ in GA and RP.

5.5.1 Aspirated sound

Aspirated sound occurs in both RP and GA. This realization of the voiceless plosives /p/, /t/ and /k/ is found in an initial position in a word such as “time” or in a stressed mid-position such as “potentially”. The phonetic symbol for this sound found in the International Phonetic Alphabet is /t^h/. According to Wells (1982:43) the aspiration of fortis plosives most accents show in the environment of a following stressed vowel, as /t^h/ in the word “tap”. Compare the reduced or absent aspiration when the following vowel is unstressed, as in the word “unity”, and the lack of aspiration when /s/ precedes, as in the word “stap”.

5.5.2 Alveolar flap (tap)

Alveolar flap (tap) is never used in the RP. In RP it is always pronounced as a de-aspirated /t/ or as a glottalized /t/. In American English /t/ in an unstressed intervocalic position such as “better”, “but it”, “city”, etc., or preceded by a vowel and followed by /l/, for example “battle”, “cattle”, “rattle”, etc., is generally realized as a voiced flap. This means that pairs such as “writer” and “rider” or “latter” and “ladder” are distinct in RP but tend to share the same pronunciation in GA. For non-American speakers it may sound like the consonant /d/ rather than /t/ and the pair of word “latter” and “ladder” can sound identically. The phonetic symbol for this sound found in the International Phonetic Alphabet is /ɾ/ or /ɽ/ (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:365).

5.5.3 Glottal stop

British speakers tend to produce voiceless alveolar stop except before syllabic /n/ where they tend to produce glottal stop in place of /t/. The phonetic symbol for this sound found in the International Phonetic Alphabet is /ʔ/. For example, the word “button” is pronounced as /baʔn/. Celce-Murcia et al. (1996:365) claim that despite being frowned upon by conservative speakers of RP, glottal stop is used in extremely casual speech of even standard dialect speakers. Postvocalic /t/ is often glottalized which means that both de-aspirated /t/ and glottal stop are produced at the same time. The phonetic symbol for this sound found in the International Phonetic Alphabet is /t̚/. For many British speakers all word-final voiceless stops after stressed vowels tend to be somewhat glottalized as in /hɪp̚/, /bɛt̚/ or /bʌk̚/.

5.5.4 Omission of the sound /t/

In several varieties of American English sound /t/ can be omitted. When a stressed vowel is followed by /nt/, for example in the words such as “winter”, “center” or “twenty” the sound /t/ is sometimes omitted. According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996:365) none of these changes occur in British English.

5.6 Stress

English has been influenced by French in history and has borrowed many loanwords that became part of English vocabulary. These words with French origin are often pronounced differently by speakers of RP and GA regarding word stress: where RP tends to put stress on first syllables, GA stresses the final syllable. For instance, the word “ballet” is pronounced /'bæleɪ/ in British English but /bæ'leɪ/ in American English. On the other hand, GA tends to have stress on the first syllable in many words in which RP has stress on other syllables – the word “adult” is pronounced /'ædʌlt/ in RP but /ə'dʌlt/ in GA. Many polysyllabic words ending in -ory or -ary normally have stress on the first or second syllable in RP, with the penultimate syllable being reduced. In GA there is, in addition, secondary stress on the penultimate syllable. For example, the word “dictionary” is pronounced /'dɪkʃənri/

in RP whereas in GA, the penultimate syllable is stressed /'dɪkʃə,næri/ (Trudgill and Hannah 2008:56-57).

Many words and place names have different rhythmic patterns in GA and RP. One general trend is that there is more syllable reduction in multisyllabic words in British English, meaning that some unstressed syllables are omitted or weakened in pronunciation. In contrast, there is a greater use of secondary stress in American English. Where even unstressed syllables in RP may have a noticeable pitch or emphasis in GA (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:369).

Skaličková (1982:44) claimed that it has so far not been resolved what exactly stress (also called prominence or salience) is. She pointed out that this is not a simple phenomenon, but a complex of several different sound attributes, which interact and are in some relationship with each other.

The production of stress is usually believed to depend on the speaker using more muscular energy than is used for unstressed syllables. Measuring muscular effort is difficult but is possible. Many experiments have been carried out on the perception of stress, and many different sound characteristics are important in making a syllable recognisably stressed (Roach 2009:73).

II. PRACTICAL PART

For the practical part of my thesis, I conducted a research study aimed at analysing the English pronunciation skills of lower secondary school teachers in the Czech Republic. The research was conducted by visiting three different elementary schools and observing English language classes in action. The main objective of the study was to evaluate the consistency of pronunciation among the teachers, and to identify any possible errors that are commonly made by Czech people in English pronunciation.

In addition to assessing the teachers' pronunciation skills, the study also sought to investigate whether the teachers pay attention to the teaching of pronunciation, and if they provide exercises to their students to help improve their pronunciation. To evaluate this, I observed the teachers in the lessons and noted whether they corrected their students' pronunciation during exercises and other classroom activities.

6. Procedure of the research

When embarking on this research, I faced the task of selecting the most suitable schools to visit. To avoid collecting strictly homogeneous data, I carefully selected three schools to be representative of different regions of the Czech Republic. Each school had a unique environment, student population, and teacher experience, which allowed me to compare and contrast the teaching methods and approaches of different teachers in varying contexts. In every school I sat in on three English lessons of three different teachers. In total, I sat in on nine different English lessons taught by nine different teachers.

The goals during the observations were to determine whether the teachers were consistent in their pronunciation, whether they corrected students when they made errors in pronunciation, and whether the teachers conducted exercises with the students to improve their pronunciation. Since the focus of the observations was on pronunciation, the teachers couldn't know the true reason for my presence in their lessons, because it could have impacted their pronunciation. For that reason, teachers were told that I was there to observe their lessons for my teaching practice, and the true purpose of my observations was revealed to them later.

Following each English lesson observation, I conducted a brief interview with the teacher to obtain additional data about their English language background, their perspectives on teaching pronunciation, and their goals for not only enhancing their students' language proficiency, but also their own. These questions aimed to provide further insight into the teaching methods and approaches used by each teacher and allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of English pronunciation teaching in the Czech Republic.

7. Pronunciation aspects

7.1 Rhoticity

Rhoticity was one of the main aspects that I focused on. There are certain words that are known to be either rhotic or non-rhotic and are used at the level of lower secondary class students. The list of words below shows a few examples of such words.

Examples	Non-rhotic	Rhotic
<i>Water</i>	/wɔ:tə/	/wɔ:tər/
<i>Either</i>	/aɪðə/	/i:ðər/
<i>Were</i>	/wə/	/wɜ:r/
<i>Hard</i>	/hɑ:d/	/hɑ:rd/
<i>Chair</i>	/tʃeə/	/tʃeər/
<i>Better</i>	/betə/	/betər/

Table 2: Examples of rhotic and non-rhotic words

Examples above are mere possibilities of pronouncing these words. It is worth noting that there are several ways of pronouncing these words. For example, rhotic version of /aɪðər/ can be heard often as well.

Even though RP is non-rhotic, we can sometimes hear the sound /r/ be pronounced. For example, the word “far”, would be in RP pronounced /fɑ:/, but the phrase far away would be pronounced /fɑ:rə'weɪ/. This phenomenon is called linking /r/ and it is explained briefly in the theoretical part (p.29).

7.2 Alveolar flap

Whether it is at the beginning of a word, in the middle of a word or at the end of a word, in RP the letter “t” is always pronounced as a /t/ sound or sometimes as a glottal stop. On the other hand, in GA when the letter “t” is in the middle position of a word, it sometimes changes to a soft /d/ sound. A phonetic symbol for it in IPA is /ɾ/. This happens, when the letter “t” is between two vowels or when it is between “r” and a vowel. The list of words below shows a few examples of such cases.

Examples	Non-flapped	Flapped
<i>Water</i>	/wɔ:tə/	/wɔ:rə/
<i>Butter</i>	/bʌtə/	/bʌrə/
<i>Bottle</i>	/bɒtl/	/bɒrl/
<i>Little</i>	/lɪtl/	/lɪrl/
<i>Daughter</i>	/dɔ:tə/	/dɔ:rə/
<i>Better</i>	/betə/	/berə/
<i>Pretty</i>	/prɪti/	/prɪri/
<i>Later</i>	/leɪtə/	/leɪrə/

Table 3: Examples of flapped and non-flapped words

7.3 Primary stress placement

The placement of the primary stressed syllable in certain words can differ between RP and GA. This can be important for teachers to understand, as many of these words are likely to come up in English lessons. Consistency and correct pronunciation are key to clear communication. Below are a few examples of words where the primary stressed syllable differs in RP and GA. However, it is worth noting that there can be variations within each dialect, and some speakers may use different pronunciations depending on regional dialects or personal preferences.

Examples	RP	GA
<i>Address</i>	/ə'drɛs/	/'ædrɛs/
<i>Advertisement</i>	/əd'vɜ:tɪsmənt/	/'ædvɜ:taɪzmənt/
<i>Adult</i>	/'ædʌlt/	/ə'dʌlt/
<i>Ballet</i>	/'bæleɪ/	/bæ'leɪ/
<i>Café</i>	/'kæfeɪ/	/kæ'feɪ/
<i>Detail</i>	/'di:teɪl/	/dɪ'teɪl/
<i>Garage</i>	/'gærɑ:ʒ/	/gə'rɑ:ʒ/
<i>Magazine</i>	/mægə'zi:n/	/'mægəzi:n/
<i>Princess</i>	/prɪn'sɛs/	/'prɪn.sɛs/
<i>Vaccine</i>	/'væksi:n/	/væk'si:n/
<i>Weekend</i>	/wi:k'end/	/'wi:kend/

Table 4: Examples of differently stressed words

It is also important to note that while these pronunciation differences may seem small, they can still have a significant impact on communication between speakers of different dialects. Being aware of these differences and striving for clear and

consistent pronunciation can go a long way in facilitating understanding between speakers of different dialects.

8. First elementary school

8.1 Teacher A

Teacher A is a self-taught teacher who lived in London for a few years. When she returned to the Czech Republic, she began teaching and is currently finishing her diploma. When asked about teaching pronunciation, she stated that she corrects students' pronunciation when they clearly mispronounce a word, but she does not conduct specific exercises to improve their pronunciation due to a lack of time.

When asked about her own pronunciation, Teacher A mentioned that she tries to speak with a British accent since the school's educational program mandates it, and the books they use in the school are British. During the lesson, Teacher A corrected the students' pronunciation many times, including instances where they pronounced a certain word in General American English. For example, the word "zebra" was pronounced by a student as /zi:brə/ and was corrected to /zɛbrə/.

Teacher A's pronunciation was mostly in the Received Pronunciation standard, but a few inconsistencies were noticed during the lesson. For instance, the word "bird" was initially pronounced as /bɜ:d/ but later changed to /bɜ:ɹd/. This happened a few times during the lesson on several occasions. In the word "tortoise" the pronunciation changed from /tɔ:təs/ to /tɔ:ɹtəs/. In the word "tiger" the pronunciation changed from /taɪgə/ to /taɪgɜ:ɹ/.

Overall, the most significant inconsistency observed was in the rhoticity, particularly when the teacher thought the students were not understanding properly. This can be attributed to the Czech language's tendency to pronounce every letter in words. Teacher A paid no attention to stress during the lesson, with most words being stressed on the first syllable, much like in the Czech language.

8.2 Teacher B

Teacher B is an older teacher who has been teaching since graduating from university. He finished his English diploma later in life. When asked about teaching pronunciation, Teacher B said that the students have a notebook where they write new vocabulary with the correct pronunciation of the word. During the lesson, Teacher B wrote new vocabulary on the board and next to it the pronunciation, but in Czech, without using IPA. For example, the word "bath" was written to be pronounced as /báf/. This is highly concerning.

Regarding his own pronunciation, Teacher B said that he does not pay much attention to it. He believes that the more important part is to speak grammatically correctly, so the children listen to a good example and pick up good habits. During the lesson, Teacher B had a big problem pronouncing the sounds /θ/ and /ð/, which led to many mispronunciations. For instance, the word "twentieth" was pronounced /twenti:s/, which sounded more like the word "twenties". This could lead to a significant confusion of the students. Other mispronounced phonemes were /ε/ and /æ/, which Teacher B always pronounced only as /ε/. This is a significant issue, especially when it alters the meaning of specific words. For instance, the word "bat" was pronounced /bet/, which is a different word with a completely different meaning. Stress focus was absent.

Despite many mispronunciations, Teacher B managed to be reasonably consistent in his pronunciation, except for times when he needed to look at the pronunciation in the book. During those times, the pronunciation was completely off, most likely due to an ignorance of IPA.

Overall, Teacher B spoke with a strong Czech accent and had several difficulties pronouncing specific phonemes, most of which Czech people struggle with every day. Unfortunately, students can pick up bad habits during his lessons, making it much harder for them to eliminate these habits in the future.

8.3 Teacher C

Teacher C is an English graduate who has been teaching for a few years. When asked about teaching pronunciation, she mentioned correcting students' mistakes, especially when they are critical. She also demonstrated a few exercises, including tongue twisters, that she uses to improve students' pronunciation. Teacher C also mentioned that she tries to do a lot of listening exercises, so the pupils get used to hearing a native speaker talk.

Teacher C pays great attention to her own pronunciation and works hard to improve it. Having spent some time in the UK, she primarily speaks RP, with occasional American words that she picked up from movies and TV shows. She prefers British English over American English and tries to instil this passion in her students.

During the lesson, Teacher C demonstrated her passion for British English by mostly using RP. She pronounced every word with precision, and the stress placement was always correct. For instance, she accurately stressed the first syllable in "adult" /'ædʌlt/, which is also a British pronunciation. Although there were some minor inconsistencies in her pronunciation of /w/, which she sometimes pronounced as /v/, this is a common mistake made by Czech learners of English.

Overall, Teacher C spoke British English with minor inconsistencies in rhoticity. For example, when her students initially did not understand the non-rhotic pronunciations of "butter" and "water," she repeated them with rhoticity /bʌtə/ and /wɔ:tə/. Teacher C strongly believes in RP and teaching pronunciation, as evidenced by her frequent corrections of her students' pronunciation during the lesson. When asked about teaching IPA, she recommended introducing it later in secondary school rather than in primary school.

9. Second elementary school

9.1 Teacher D

Teacher D graduated in economics and is currently substituting for an English teacher who is on maternity leave. She has no formal training in teaching English and primarily uses exercises from books or online resources. When it comes to teaching pronunciation, Teacher D corrects students when they clearly mispronounce a word, but does not distinguish between RP and GA.

During the lesson, Teacher D spoke mostly in Czech, with English used only during exercises and brief conversations. In the limited English spoken during the lesson, Teacher D demonstrated a strong Czech accent and made several pronunciation mistakes. She struggled with the consonants /ð/ and /θ/, as evidenced by her pronunciation of the word "thirty" as /trty/. Additionally, she often substituted the vowel /ɛ/ for the schwa sound. For instance, Teacher D pronounced "again" and "about" with /ɛ/ at the beginning of the words. Teacher D also inconsistently used the flapped "t", as seen in her pronunciation of "party" as both /pa:rdi/ and /pa:rti/.

Overall, Teacher D struggled with pronunciation and had a strong Czech accent. This led to many pronunciation mistakes and made it difficult for her to correct students' pronunciation accurately. During the lesson, she made several incorrect corrections, particularly with the word "Edinburgh", which was sometimes corrected to /ɛdnburg/ and sometimes to /ɛdnberg/. Teacher D mostly stressed the first syllable in every word and seemed to be paying no attention to it whatsoever. Subsequently, no stress corrections were made during the lesson.

9.2 Teacher E

Teacher E is a certified English teacher. He finished his education many years ago and he has been teaching English ever since. Teacher E said that he believes pronunciation teaching is one of the most important aspects of EFL lessons and that it should be implemented more into the Czech education system. Teacher E tries to teach pronunciation in many ways. When asked about teaching IPA, Teacher E said that he believes it should be taught as early as possible, but he is not able to squeeze this aspect into his lessons. Saying there is not enough time.

Speaking about his own pronunciation, Teacher E said that even though he has been studying English for many years he is still improving and that it is a lifelong process. Teacher E stated that he prefers RP over GA, mainly because that was the standard that he was taught from his youth, and it is the standard that he is trying to pass on to his students. During the lesson, Teacher E focused on intonation. Students were given a short text which they read to the teacher who recorded them. Then, the recordings were played to the students and Teacher E pointed out mistakes they have made. The teacher mainly focused on intonation but corrected pronunciation many times. For example, the students seemed to be having problems with consonants /ð/ and /θ/. Teacher E explained the positioning of the tongue during the pronunciation of these consonants and pointed out possible mistakes that Czech speakers make.

Overall, Teacher E seemed to be consistent not only in his own pronunciation but also in corrections of pronunciations. Teacher E also focused on stress placement and corrected students whenever they misplaced the main stress in the word. This moment occurred for example, in the word “moustache” which the students mispronounced and were corrected to /mə'sta:ʃ/. Teachers E sets a good example to his students.

9.3 Teacher F

Teacher F is an educated English teacher. She taught in a language school where she taught mostly adults. For a few years now she is teaching in elementary school. When asked about teaching pronunciation, Teacher F said that she does not pay a lot of attention to it. She says that there are more important aspects of English that we as a EFL teachers should try to pass on to the students, such as, grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, when asked about teaching IPA, Teacher F said that she does not teach that at all.

Teacher F said that she was taught RP her whole life and is following the same standard now in her teaching lessons. After finishing her diploma, she lived in England for a year which, according to her, helped her in her pronunciation and her idea of that aspect. During the lesson Teacher F spoke mostly consistently but a few situations occurred, where Teacher F mispronounced a word repeatedly. For example, the word “negative” was mispronounced several times as /nigativ/. Teacher F had a strong rhotic accent. This was shown many times during the lesson, for example, in the words “bigger” /bigə/, “heart” /hɑ:rt/ or “pair” /pɛr/. The lesson was focusing on comparative forms of nouns which led to many situations where the clear usage of rhoticity was shown. For example, the words “bigger”, “better”, “slower” were all pronounced with /r/ at the end.

Overall, Teacher F was mostly consistent in her pronunciation during the lessons and also corrected students many times, when they mispronounced a word. For example, the word “either” was mispronounced a few times as /ɛdr/ and Teacher F always corrected the pronunciation to /aɪðə/. Attention to stress placement was evident, yet it was not corrected when the students misplaced the main stress in a word. An example occurred during the lesson when the students repeatedly placed the main stress in the first syllable in the word “advertisement”, but no correction was made.

10. Third elementary school

10.1 Teacher G

Teacher G is an experienced teacher who has been teaching English for many years now. In her life, she taught in several elementary schools. When asked about teaching pronunciation Teacher G said that she is not even thinking about that, because they have a strict plan in the school, which she must follow. Also, the books they use, she said, are long and detailed so it takes a lot of time to get through them. Therefore, there is not much time to focus on other aspects of English except of those in the books. Teacher G also said that she believes students should be taught grammar before anything else, because it is much more important that they speak grammatically correctly than that they pronounce every word correctly.

Speaking about her own pronunciation, Teacher G said that she tries to pronounce everything correctly, but she does not pay any attention to accents or dialects. Teacher G said that nowadays everybody in the world has some accent and it is not a big deal. Speaking about pronunciation standard, Teacher G said that she was taught British English her whole life and is teaching others the very same standard. Moreover, it is the standard that the books use. During the lesson, Teacher G turned out to be inconsistent in several occasions. When pronouncing a certain word on its own, the word was always pronounced in RP. For example, the words such as “laugh” /lɑ:f/, “can't” /kɑ:nt/ or “tomato” /təmə:təʊ/. On the other hand, when pronouncing certain words in sentences the pronunciation changed. For example, the words such as “can't” /kænt/ and “aunt” /ænt/. In several cases a flapped t occurred as well. For example, the word “better” was pronounced as /berə/.

Overall, Teacher G seemed to be familiar with the correct pronunciations of words but struggled with them during longer sentences. When teaching a new vocabulary, the teacher demonstrated the correct pronunciation and urged the students to pronounce it correctly as well. Unfortunately, the inconsistency during the lessons could be very misleading to the students.

10.2 Teacher H

Teacher H lived in Scotland for a few years. After she came back to Czech Republic she decided to teach in elementary school whilst she finishes her diploma in English teaching. When asked about teaching pronunciation, Teacher H said that she tries to correct students when they clearly mispronounced a word, especially when she is teaching new vocabulary. Teacher H also said that she is doing a lot of listening exercises for the pupils to get used to hearing a native speaker talking. As far as teaching IPA, she thinks that it would only confuse lower secondary class students and it is better to teach it later.

When talking about her own pronunciation, Teacher H was critical of herself. She said she tries to improve everyday but is still hearing her mistakes daily. According to the teacher, that is why she is doing a lot of listening exercises with her pupils. During the lesson, Teacher H spoke mostly RP, but a strong Czech accent was apparent. Although many phonemes were pronounced correctly, such as /ə/, /θ/, /ð/ and /æ/, a few were clearly mispronounced, such as /t/, /p/, /v/ and /w/. This was evident when pronouncing certain words. For example, the word “very” was pronounced /wɛri/, which is interesting, because Czech people usually mispronounced these consonants other way around. When pronouncing voiceless plosives /p/, /t/ and /k/ no aspiration was used.

Overall, Teacher H was mostly consistent in her pronunciation. Students were corrected several times during the lesson and always rightly. Stress placement was correct in most case. For example, in the words “repeat”, “impossible” and “because”. Unfortunately, students were not corrected in their stress placement.

10.3 Teacher I

Teacher I is an experienced English teacher who has been teaching for many years now. When asked about teaching pronunciation, Teacher I said that whenever he hears a mispronounced word from the students, he immediately corrects them. Whenever a mispronunciation continues in several students, Teacher I said that he tries to explain the correct pronunciation in more detail. When the students are learning new vocabulary, he writes the pronunciation on the board. Yet, the pronunciation is not written in IPA but in Czech.

When talking about his own pronunciation, Teacher I said that he listens to English on a daily basis and is quite certain he pronounces most of the words correctly. Since he is listening to American English mostly, his preference is GA. Teacher I said that he understands that students are supposed to be taught British English but says that it is important to him that the students pronounce the word correctly never mind the accent. Teacher I also stated that he informs the students that there are usually many possibilities in pronunciation of certain words.

During the lesson, Teacher I proved to be inclined to GA. His accent was clearly rhotic. This was shown many times during the lesson on several occasions. For example, in the words such as “are” /ɑ:r/, “word” /wɜ:d/ or “park” /pɑ:rk/. Teacher I also used flapped “t”, which was shown again on several occasions. For example, in the words “better” /bɛtə/, “matter” /mætə/ or “little” /lɪtəl/.

Overall, Teacher I was consistent in his pronunciation. Slight confusion might occur when practising listening, since the speaker was British, and students then talked about the exercises with the teacher who spoke in an American accent. Many pronunciation corrections were made during the lesson and always into correct GA pronunciation. For example, the word “sweater” was mispronounced by a student and corrected into /swetə/. Teacher I's stress focus was also evident, yet it was not corrected when the students misplaced the main stress several times.

11. Results of the research

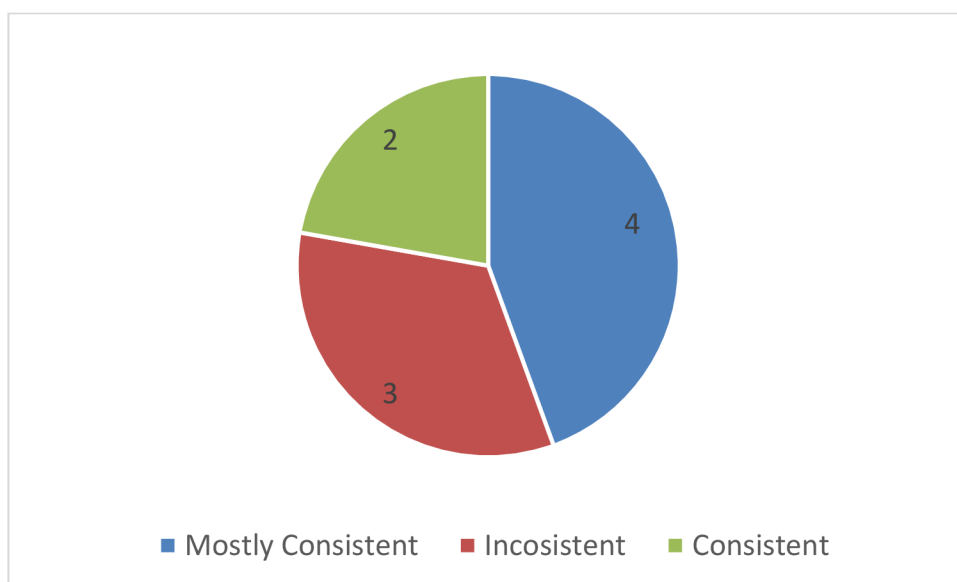
11.1 Teachers' pronunciation

At the first school, the teachers were mostly consistent in their pronunciation, except for Teacher B. A problem often occurred when the students did not seem to understand the teachers, so the teachers repeated themselves a bit differently. One teacher also had a problem with pronouncing the consonants /v/ and /w/. Although the difference between these consonants was apparent to the teacher, inconsistencies occurred while saying longer sentences. A major concern was Teacher B's pronunciation. His Czech accent was very strong, and he mispronounced most of the English words he said. I also noticed that there was a lot of confusion on the students' part. There were times when Teacher B mispronounced a word, causing it to sound like a completely different word, and the students were confused and sometimes did not know what to do.

At the second school, the teachers were mostly consistent in their pronunciation. However, Teacher D turned out to be the most controversial, as she was only a substitute and did not have a formal diploma in English teaching. She struggled a lot with her pronunciation and mispronounced many phonemes. Teacher D was also inconsistent in her pronunciation, as demonstrated on several occasions. At the second school, there was a native English speaker teaching, which seemed to make a big difference in the students' pronunciation and listening skills. The rest of the teachers were mostly consistent. Teacher E seemed to be very aware of his own pronunciation and said he was working on it a lot.

At the third school, the teachers were mostly inconsistent in their pronunciation, except for Teacher I. Teacher G's pronunciation turned out to be inconsistent in longer sentences. Her pronunciation changed from RP to GA many times. When not addressing these differences with students, it can lead to many confusing moments and leave students feeling lost. In contrast, Teacher H had a slight Czech accent, which led to a few mispronounced phonemes during the lesson. An interesting thing

happened when Teacher H mispronounced /v/ and /w/, but in the opposite way of how most Czech speakers would do it. In this case, Teacher H pronounced /w/ where there should have been /v/, not the other way around. At the third school, there was a native English speaker teaching, which could lead to many positive outcomes for students' English learning.



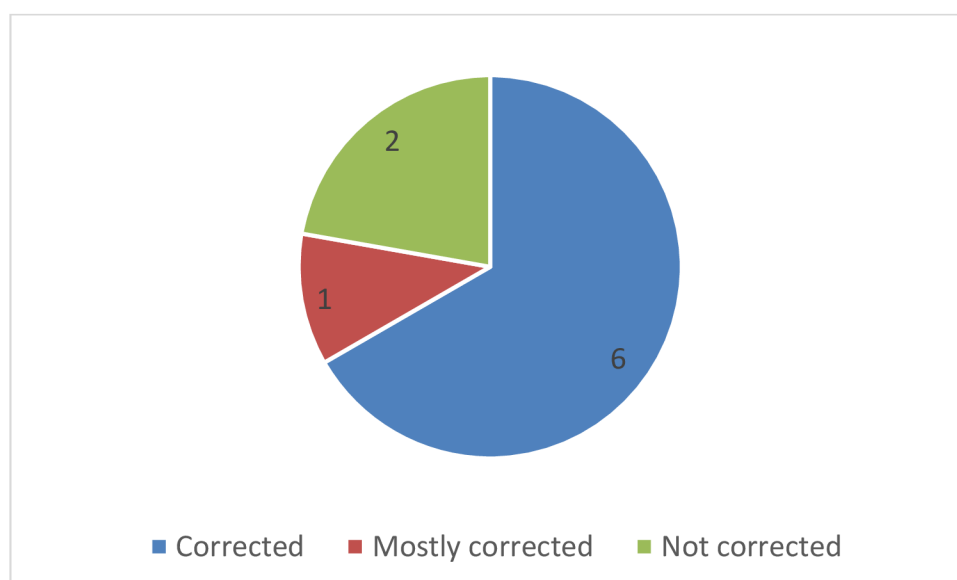
Graph 1: the results of the pronunciation consistency of the teachers

11.2 Correcting students' pronunciation

At the first school, the teachers mostly corrected the students' pronunciation, except for Teacher B. On several occasions during the lessons, students were either taught the correct pronunciation of certain words or were corrected when they mispronounced a word. Teacher A, for instance, was quite strict with students, even correcting a student who pronounced the word “zebra” in General American English to the Received Pronunciation. However, the appropriateness of such corrections is subject to debate, and some may argue that it is more important for students to be able to communicate effectively than to cling strictly to one particular accent or dialect. Unfortunately, Teacher B paid no attention to the students' pronunciation and focused mostly on grammar. While grammar is undoubtedly an important component of language learning, neglecting students' pronunciation can be harmful to their overall language abilities.

At the second school, the teachers mostly corrected the students' pronunciation. Whenever students made a mistake, they were immediately corrected. Unfortunately, in the case of Teacher D, sometimes the correction was another mispronunciation. In other cases, the students were corrected correctly. On many occasions, the teachers even took the time to explain the reasons behind certain pronunciations and even practiced certain phonemes individually. Teacher E focused his lesson on intonation, which led to many corrections not only in the correct pronunciation of certain phonemes but also in intonations and stress placements.

At the third school, the teachers mostly corrected the students' pronunciation, except for Teacher G. Similar to Teacher B at the first school, Teacher G believes that teaching correct grammar is more important than focusing on pronunciation. Therefore, Teacher G did not pay much attention to pronunciation, even though correct pronunciation was demonstrated when introducing new vocabulary to the students. The rest of the teachers corrected the students' pronunciation many times during the lessons and often asked for the attention of the whole class so that everyone could hear the correct pronunciation.



Graph 2: Did the teachers correct students' pronunciation?

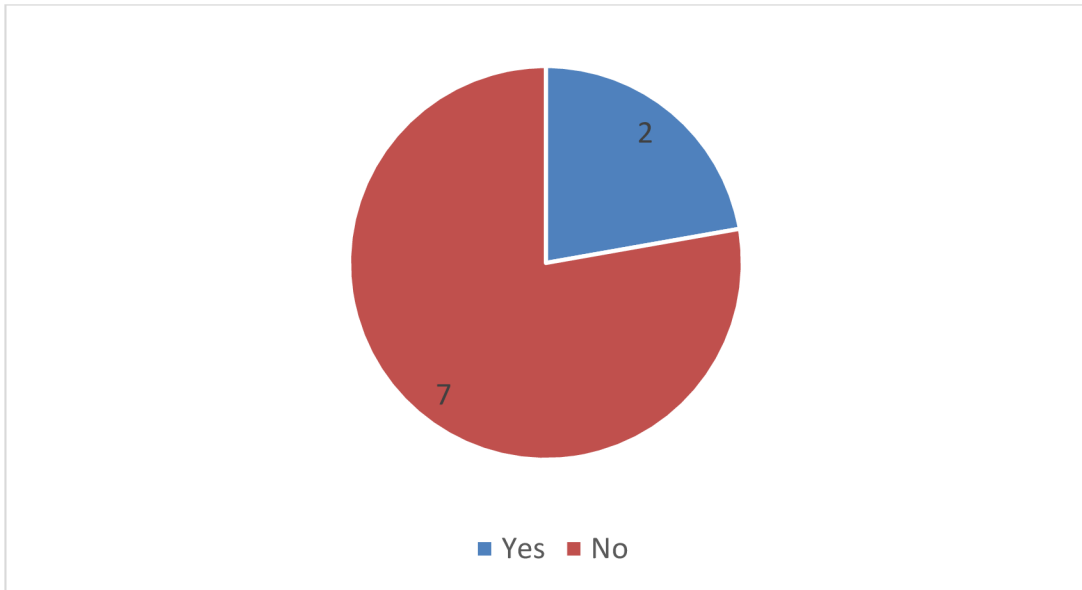
11.3 Teaching pronunciation

At the first school, the teachers mostly do not conduct any specific exercises to improve students' pronunciation, except for Teacher C. Teacher C seems to be very aware of the importance of pronunciation in EFL classes. On one occasion, during a lesson, Teacher B conducted an exercise with the students during which they tried to pronounce several tongue twisters. Apart from that, Teacher C mentioned that she conducts many pronunciation exercises with them on a regular basis. On the other hand, her colleagues seemed to have no interest in teaching pronunciation. Teacher B writes the pronunciation of new vocabulary on the whiteboard, but writes it in Czech. This can lead to several problems with pronunciation because the Czech language has different phonemes than English.

At the second school, the teachers mostly do not do any specific exercises to improve students' pronunciation, except for Teacher E. Teacher E said he believes pronunciation is one of the most important parts of English and that he tries to teach it in many ways. During the observed lesson, Teacher E focused on intonation, which is an important part of pronunciation. However, his colleagues do not focus on teaching pronunciation at all. Teacher F believes that the most important parts of English are grammar and vocabulary, and since the time with students is limited, the focus should be on those areas. He suggests that pronunciation can be taught later in life.

At the third school, the teachers do not conduct specific exercises to improve students' pronunciation, except for Teacher I. Even though Teacher H and Teacher I explain the pronunciation of new vocabulary, they do not provide any exercises to practice it. Teacher I mentioned that he writes the pronunciation on the whiteboard when teaching new vocabulary, but unfortunately, the pronunciation is written in the Czech language. On the other hand, Teacher G said that she does not focus on teaching pronunciation due to the lack of time. She mentioned that the books they use are lengthy and detailed, which consumes a lot of time. Instead, Teacher G

prioritizes teaching grammar as she believes that it is the most important part of English, and it should be taught before anything else.



Graph 3: Teachers focus on teaching pronunciation

12. Discussion of the results

Many teachers reduce pronunciation teaching to responding to the learner's errors during the lesson, in other words, they teach it reactively (Kelly 2004:13). This has been proven in this research many times, as many teachers only react to the students' pronunciation when they make a mistake (*graph 2*). While it is important to address learners' spoken production on the spot, it is also crucial to prepare a focused set of activities or a lesson that addresses pronunciation issues. According to Kelly (2004:13), teachers often prepare lessons based on grammar and vocabulary, but rarely on pronunciation. Once again, this finding has been confirmed in this research, as many teachers believe that the most important parts of EFL lessons are grammar and vocabulary (*graph 3*). This notion is short-sighted, to say the least. Grammar and vocabulary are undoubtedly important aspects of teaching English, but they should not overshadow the receptive skills of the English language. Ultimately, listening is the first aspect of English that learners are exposed to, and it is a critical component of successful language learning.

Kenworthy (1987:1) warns that learners tend to substitute an unknown phoneme of the foreign language with a similar phoneme of their mother tongue, which must be carefully monitored by the teacher. This concept has been supported by this research since some teachers used Czech phonemes as a model for writing down the pronunciation of English words on the whiteboard. This can lead to students being under the impression that the English language contains the same phonemes as the Czech language, resulting in severe Czech accents among Czech learners of English. This can be easily addressed by introducing the International Phonetic Alphabet to the learners. Unfortunately, this concept has been dismissed by most of the teachers who argue that they either do not have enough time to implement it into their lessons or believe that it is a part of English that is too advanced and should be taught later in the students' lives.

According to Harmer (2007:97), it is important for learners to be exposed not only to their teacher's English, but also to the English of other native speakers. This principle is becoming increasingly widespread in the Czech education system, with audio and video materials of various language levels and ages now available to all. As a result, many EFL teachers have been actively incorporating these materials into their lessons. This practice is particularly advantageous when a native English speaker is present in an elementary school and students have at least one lesson per week with them. Regular exposure to native English speakers can greatly benefit students' pronunciation learning and overall language development.

The term correct pronunciation has been used throughout this thesis many times and it is important to assess what exactly a correct pronunciation is. Correct pronunciation refers to the way in which a word is pronounced according to the established rules and norms of the specific language or dialect. It involves producing the sounds, stress patterns, and intonation of words in a manner that is widely accepted and understood by other speakers of the language. In some cases, there may be multiple acceptable pronunciations, particularly in regions where different dialects of a language are spoken. However, there are usually standards, such as Received Pronunciation in British English or General American in American English, that are widely recognized as correct pronunciations in formal contexts. An incorrect pronunciation is something that is usually easier to spot, especially from non-native speakers.

13. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to prove that pronunciation teaching is one of the most important aspects of teaching English and that Czech teachers of English language tend to neglect this significant aspect. The primary goal of the research was to observe and analyse the consistency of teachers' pronunciation, their teaching methods, and their approaches, particularly in relation to pronunciation, and to identify areas for improvement.

The study was conducted in three schools that were selected to represent different regions of the Czech Republic. The schools had unique environments, student populations, and teacher experience, which allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of English pronunciation teaching in the country. In total, nine different English lessons taught by nine different teachers were observed, and a brief interview was conducted with each teacher to obtain additional data. The observations focused on three main areas: the teachers' consistency in pronunciation, their corrections of students' errors in pronunciations, and their use of exercises to improve students' pronunciation skills. The expectations going into this research were not high and the findings matched the expectations. While some teachers are effective in these areas, most of the teachers paid no attention to their pronunciation nor to the pronunciation of the students. Consistency in pronunciation and the use of exercises to improve students' pronunciation skills were found to be areas where most teachers could benefit from additional training and support.

Even though the interviews were not planned at first, they turned out to be very beneficial in the final data processing. The interviews provided valuable insights into their English language background, perspectives on teaching pronunciation, and goals for enhancing their students' language proficiency and their own teaching practices. These insights highlight the importance of ongoing professional

development for English language teachers in the Czech Republic and the need for greater emphasis on pronunciation teaching in Czech education programs.

Moving forward, there is a need for additional research on English pronunciation teaching in the Czech Republic, since three schools in two regions cannot be considered as majority. Future studies could focus on the specific challenges and opportunities for pronunciation teaching and the most effective methods for addressing these challenges.

14. Resumé

Samotný název práce "Konzistentnost výslovnosti učitelů na druhém stupni základní školy" již naznačuje, že se jedná o výzkum zaměřený na výslovnost anglického jazyka. Práce se dále věnuje tomu, jak mateřský jazyk ovlivňuje učení se angličtiny a jaký vliv může mít na výslovnost studentů. Hlavním cílem práce je však analyzovat, do jaké míry jsou učitelé schopni udržet konzistentní výslovnost během výuky angličtiny. Dále se práce věnuje tomu, zda jsou učitelé schopni správně vyslovovat náročné fonetické prvky angličtiny a zda kladou dostatečný důraz na výuku výslovnosti v rámci svých výukových plánů. Výsledky této práce by mohly pomoci při vylepšování výuky anglického jazyka na základních školách v České republice.

Teoretická část se zabývá otázkou, jaký vliv má rodný jazyk na výslovnost a jak může ovlivnit učení se angličtiny. Jsou zde diskutovány různé faktory, jako je například fonetická vzdálenost mezi angličtinou a mateřským jazykem a jaký vliv má tento faktor na výslovnost. Dále se práce zaměřuje na popis základních výslovnostních rozdílů mezi češtinou a angličtinou, které mohou být pro české studenty překážkou při učení se angličtiny. Autor také podrobně popisuje oba hlavní výslovnostní standardy v angličtině, Received Pronunciation a General American, včetně jejich historického vývoje a geografického rozšíření. Autor se nejvíce zaměřuje na výslovnostní rozdíly mezi těmito dvěma standardy a popisuje jejich jednotlivé aspekty.

Praktická část diplomové práce se zabývá výzkumem, který autor sám provedl na třech různých základních školách. V rámci tohoto výzkumu autor provedl několik náslechnů, které v práci detailně popsal. Hlavním cílem výzkumu bylo zjistit míru konzistentnosti výslovnosti jednotlivých učitelů během vyučování anglického jazyka na druhém stupni základní školy a způsoby, jakými učitelé anglického jazyka výslovnost vyučují. Autor také sledoval, zda učitelé opravují výslovnost svých studentů v případě nesprávné výslovnosti a zda využívají nějaká specifická cvičení

zaměřená na výuku výslovnosti. V rámci výzkumu proběhly s jednotlivými učiteli konzultace, během kterých autor získal bližší informace o jejich postoji k učení výslovnosti a o způsobech, jakými výslovnost vyučují. Autor se také snažil zjistit, zda učitelé věnují pozornost své vlastní výslovnosti a jaké metody používají k jejímu vylepšení.

Autor v závěru shrnuje výsledky výzkumu a zjištění, kterých bylo dosaženo během práce. Jsou zde popsány jednotlivé části výzkumu, které byly důležité pro dosažení výsledků. Data z výzkumu jsou prezentována v několika grafech, aby bylo možné snadno a přehledně interpretovat získané informace. Na závěr autor diskutuje o významu výsledků pro výuku anglického jazyka v České republice a nabízí několik doporučení pro učitele anglického jazyka, jak zlepšit výuku výslovnosti a zajistit větší konzistentnost výslovnosti učitelů v praxi.

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