

**Západočeská univerzita v Plzni**

**Fakulta pedagogická**

**Katedra anglického jazyka**

**Bakalářská práce**

**ROZDÍLY MEZI BRITSKOU A AMERICKOU ANGLIČTINOU A  
VÝSKYT TĚCHTO VARIANT V PROMLUVÁCH/TEXTECH  
ČESKÝCH RODILÝCH MLUVČÍCH**

**Tomáš Wopršálek**

**Plzeň 2014**

**University of West Bohemia**  
**Pedagogical faculty**  
**Department of English**

**Undergraduate thesis**

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRITISH AND AMERICAN  
ENGLISH AND THE OCCURRENCE OF THESE VARIANTS IN  
SPEECH/TEXTS PRODUCED BY CZECH NATIVE SPEAKERS**

**Tomáš Wopršálek**

**Plzeň 2014**

Tato stránka bude ve svázané práci Váš původní formulář *Zadáni bak. práce*  
(k vyzvednutí u sekretářky KAN)

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

Plzeň, 15. Dubna 2014

Vlastnoruční podpis .....

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my thanks to my supervisor, PhDr. Naděžda Stašková, PhD., for all the advice and time spent on the inspection of the thesis. Also I would like to thank all the people who willingly participated in the research materials.

**Differences between British and American English and the occurrence of these variants in speech/texts produced by Czech native speakers, Tomáš Wopršálek, PhDr. Naděžda Stašková, Ph.D.**

**ABSTRACT**

The aim of this undergraduate thesis is to present the elementary differences between British and American English alongside with its influence on Czech native speakers when they are using the English language. The differences are described from the grammatical, phonetic and lexicological point of view in order to create a theoretical base for the practical part.

Another aim of this undergraduate thesis is to provide an analysis describing the language habits of Czech native speakers regarding their tendency to either stick to BrE or AmE or use a combination of these two varieties. The analysis focuses on the features covered in the theoretical part using a research of analysed materials such as tests, questionnaires, written materials or recordings. The research has brought the following results: The Czechs have a tendency to stick to British rather than American English regarding grammar and vocabulary, on the other hand majority of them find the American accent less challenging to use. Czech educational system seems to prefer British English in teaching, for both majority of the questionnaire's participants and teachers confirmed this preference in the research. Only a minority of the Czechs have difficulty with listing of the elementary differences between BrE and AmE. Studying British variety at school/university along with encountering American variety in leisure time may cause Czech students' tendency to combine both varieties.

*Keywords: British English, American English, difference, variety, Czech native speakers*

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

**BrE:** British English

**AmE:** American English

**RP:** Received Pronunciation

**GA:** General American

**U.S.:** United States

**UK:** United Kingdom

**OALD:** Oxford's Advanced Learner's Dictionary

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>2. THEORETICAL PART</b> .....	2
<b>2.1 Historical Background</b> .....	2
2.1.1 Colonial settlement .....	2
2.1.2 Development of American English.....	3
2.1.3 Colonial conservatism and innovation.....	4
<b>2.2 Grammar</b> .....	5
2.2.1 Spelling .....	5
2.2.2 Verbs .....	7
2.2.2.1 Compound verbs .....	7
2.2.2.2 Regularization of verb forms.....	8
2.2.2.3 Verb to get.....	8
2.2.2.4 To have vs. to take.....	9
2.2.2.5 Have vs. have got .....	9
2.2.3 Prepositions.....	9
2.2.4 Determiners.....	10
2.2.4.1 Definite article with nouns of time.....	10
2.2.4.2 Definite article with nouns of place .....	10
2.2.4.3 Indefinite article .....	10
<b>2.3 Vocabulary</b> .....	11
2.3.1 Areas of difference in vocabulary.....	12
2.3.1.1 Education.....	12
2.3.1 Food .....	12
2.3.1.3 Transport .....	12
2.3.1.4 Services .....	13
2.3.1.5 Housing .....	13
2.3.2 Phatic language .....	14
<b>2.4 Pronunciation</b> .....	14
2.4.1 Received Pronunciation .....	14



2.4.2 General American .....	15
2.4.3 Rhotic and non-rhotic accents.....	15
2.4.4 Differences in pronunciation between BrE and AmE.....	16
2.4.4.1 Pronunciation of <i>r</i> .....	16
2.4.4.2 Pronunciation of [ɑ:] vs. [æ] .....	17
2.4.4.3 Pronunciation of [ɒ] vs. [ɑ:] .....	17
2.4.4.4 Pronunciation of <i>u</i> .....	17
2.4.4.5 Pronunciation of <i>t</i> .....	18
<b>3. PRACTICAL PART</b> .....	18
<b>3.1 Research</b> .....	18
3.1.1 Introduction.....	18
3.1.2 Questionnaire .....	19
3.1.3 Vocabulary consistency in English meal-menus produced by the Czechs .....	24
3.1.4 Test.....	26
3.1.5 Questionnaire for Czech teachers of English.....	32
3.1.6 Differences in pronunciation.....	36
<b>4. CONCLUSION</b> .....	37
<b>5. REFERENCE LIST</b> .....	39
<b>6. SUMMARY IN CZECH</b> .....	41
<b>7. APPENDIX 1</b> .....	42
<b>8. APPENDIX 2</b> .....	43
<b>9. APPENDIX 3</b> .....	44

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This undergraduate thesis deals with the major differences between British and American English. The differences are described from the grammatical, lexical and phonetic points of view along with the historical background of division of these two varieties of English. Moreover, the thesis comprises the use of American and British English in the Czech Republic, in other words, an investigation of the Czech native speakers' tendencies and preferences regarding English language. The topic of the thesis was chosen for its attractiveness since one can encounter differences between British and American English in everyday life hence the practical part is focused on the Czech native speakers.

The thesis contains two parts, the theoretical and practical. The first, the theoretical part, consists of four chapters. The first chapter covers the historical background of the division of English language into British and American variety in the past. As far as grammar is concerned, both varieties do not differ significantly from one another, though there are several differences to be analysed in the second chapter. The following chapter dealing with vocabulary differences demonstrates larger distinctions between the two varieties since it is estimated that approximately 4,000 words differ in British and American dictionaries. The fourth chapter provides different aspects of American and British phonetics.

Although there are several other varieties of English language such as Australian English, Canadian English or Irish English, the thesis focuses only on the British and American English.

The United States is a country with a considerable influence on the world. They produce a great number of films, music and TV shows well known all around the world. With the development of new technologies such as the Internet, more and more people around the world encounter American English, hence it affects the Czech native speakers as well. On the other hand, British English is often considered an original prestigious variety of English language (King's English) and owing to the fact that Czech Republic and United Kingdom are both located in Europe, Czech educational system seems to tend to prefer the British variety as the books are often of Oxbridge's productions. Czech learners of English are therefore likely to be taught the British variety at school, on the other hand though, they are encountering the American variety in their leisure time more often. This may cause that the Czechs are not sticking to one variety only but rather mixing both since they, for instance, use BrE grammatical rules along with the use of AmE

pronunciation and vocabulary. These issues are examined in the second practical part where the participants were given materials and questions in order to determine their knowledge, preferences and opinions regarding British and American English. The thesis is summed-up with a conclusion.

## **2. THEORETICAL PART**

### **2.1 Historical Background**

#### **2.1.1 Colonial settlement**

The early settlement of today's United States occurred in the early 17th century and the first settlers to come to America were of British origin. Since the colonist had no verbal contact with the English on the other side of Atlantic Ocean the language commenced to divide. Many other Europeans decided to settle down in America as well which led to the language influence. There were German, Dutch and French colonies and therefore each of these languages affected American English to some extent. Yet, English language kept the position of the dominant language in the U.S. not changing considerably until the 19th century since majority of the books was coming from England. (Davies 1998, 1-2)

In 1789 an American lexicographer Noah Webster claimed that the isolation of America from Britain would eventually create two different languages as different as Dutch, Danish and Swedish from one another, however in 1828 Webster reconsidered his thoughts on this topic since he realized that matching of AmE and BrE was important. Having known the linguistic history, he expected English to follow Latin that had divided into French, Italian, Spanish etc. (Marckwardt and Quirk 1965, 1, 46)

According to Marckwardt - Quirk (1965) the language situation when the colonist arrived in America was likely to follow one of the three following standards. Firstly, the settlers were to keep their usage of certain words and phrases whereas the British changed their versions. Secondly, the colonists were to change certain expressions and words while the people on the other side of the

Atlantic still defended their habits. Finally, both the Americans and the British would alter the language they used. (Marckwardt and Quirk 1965, 34-35).

Regarding the origin of the British settlers the 17th century colonists came from southern England bringing their pronunciation which neglects the *r* sound at the end of a word (so called Received Pronunciation) such words are for example *water* ['wɔ:tə(r) (BrE)/ 'wɔ:tər (AmE)] or *there* [ðeə(r)(BrE)/ ðer(AmE)]. Nonetheless, the colonists from the southern England were consequently followed by their northern neighbours from Scotland and Ireland where the *r* sound is pronounced very similarly to the one in American English therefore it is very likely that the settlers from the northern parts such as Scotland or Ireland brought this sound to America which is significant for contemporary American English pronunciation. (Darragh 2000, 5)

### **2.1.2 Development of American English**

According to Kövecses (2000) there are three stages in the development of AmE: the first, second and third period. The first, 17th century colonial period, is considered by some scholars the most significant period regarding linguistics owing to the fact the settlement of the original thirteen colonies occurred by that time as well as the fact that the first English speaking colonists encountered many other languages that left their mark on AmE. The War of Independence is the closure of the first colonial period of the development of AmE and the beginning of the second national period which was noteworthy for English, which became the national language of the new country also thanks to Noah Webster. The third period significant for considerable rise of immigration dates to the late 19th century and has continued to the present day. (Kövecses 2000, 19-22)

Subsequently after the American Revolution, Americans desired to make their linguistics as independent as their politics. The future president of the United States John Adams actually suggested in 1780 establishment of an American Academy for refining, improving and ascertaining the English language. However, this plan did not implement eventually. In addition, more and more patriots were requesting civilization independent on Britain. Following this attitude, Noah Webster wrote the *American Spelling Book*, which became a bestseller among the immigrants who were learning English at that time. Webster's writings influenced AmE considerably in terms of spelling and pronunciation (Darragh 2000, 7).

Until the revolution of 1776, Americans were unable to change their standards of language since London was in charge of these matters. Furthermore, many Britons were considering the American variety of English barbarous and conversely, Americans were finding the British variety a language of educated people which had prestige yet, after the Revolution of Independence there were ideas of being completely independent on Britain by having an entirely separate language. Hebrew and Greek were among suggestions for they were old and prestigious. Rather a controversial proposal was that the British should learn their own new language. Though, none of these suggestions were implemented. For decades, mutual antipathy dominated between Britain and America along with a desire for separation. Moreover, Americans were not keen on tolerating any superiority from the other side of the Atlantic. (Marckwardt and Quirk 1965, 38, 44)

Industrial Revolution in 18th and 19th century brought in both varieties a necessity for a considerable amount of new words that were needed for naming of the new creations. Either country named the same or similar products differently which led to a great division between British and American vocabulary. These terms were barely printed hence there were no written standards to follow. Owing to the mutual antipathy between Britain and America no big endeavour was made to unify these terms even though many well-educated people were aware of the difference in terminology. (Davies 2000, 3).

The long distance between British and American coasts also helped both groups of new terms to remain unchanged and the language differences to develop due to poor transatlantic communication. According to Marckwardt – Quirk (1965) if America became independent 100 years later both countries would have shared the Industrial revolution and along with new technologies such as telephone or steamship the linguistic separation would not be so significant. (Marckwardt and Quirk 1965, 44)

### **2.1.3 Colonial conservatism and innovation**

In 19th century there were remarks on American English being more conservative than British English in terms of pronunciation. It was thought that the language of the emigrants remained for a long time unchanged since the occurrence of the emigration altered at a slow pace unlike the mother tongue which was also in a different direction. On the other hand, there were

observations that AmE was both conservative and innovative in contrast to BrE. Albert H. Marckwardt was the creator of the term 'colonial lag' that stands for the concept of colonial conservatism and innovation. According to Rohndenburg – Schlüter (2009) the terms 'colonial lag' and 'colonial innovation' are suitable for the synchronic description of early colonization when AmE was labelled by both conservative and innovative disposition, however, they urge caution against using of the term 'colonial lag' in reference to apparently conservative dispositions in current AmE. (Rohndenburg and Schlüter 2009, 34)

## 2.2 GRAMMAR

There are neither major nor numerous differences between the grammatical systems of BrE and AmE hence American English is not considered an independent language (Peprník 1982, 13), yet there are few producing confusion and majority of them are unstable owing to the fact that both varieties are influencing one another especially owing to the Internet. (Algeo 2006, 2)

### 2.2.1 Spelling

The American lexicographer Noah Webster is responsible for a big deal of distinctions in American spelling in contrast to the British one for his American Dictionary influenced its standards. Moreover, he intended to make the spelling considerably more different by using phonetic spelling; however, his plans were not realized eventually. Not only the American spelling changed over the time, the British one was reformed in 19th century as well.

Based on the Webster's Dictionary (U.S.) and the Oxford English Dictionary (UK) what follows are the standard ways of spelling of certain words introduced by Davies (1998) and Darragh (2000):

#### ***-or/-our***

Majority of words ending in *-or* in AmE are represented in BrE by words that end in *-our*. Such words are for example *color - colour; favor - favour; neighbor - neighbour* or *rumor - rumour*.

***-ise/-ize***

The suffixes *-ise* and *-ize* are placed in both American and British dictionaries, nevertheless majority of the British tend to use the suffix *-ise* more unlike the Americans who prefer the latter. On the other hand regardless of the country, some words can end only with the *-ize* suffix: *seize*, *capsize* and there are words in which the *-ise* suffix is possible only as well: *advise*, *advertise*, *surprise*. *Analyze*, *paralyze* and *cozy* are the only words spelled differently in both American and British dictionaries.

***-l/-ll***

Dissyllabic verbs stressed on the second syllable are spelled in BrE with only a single *-l* whereas in AmE these verbs are written with *-ll* having an effect on the spelling of derivatives. Adding suffixes *-ing*, *-ed* or *-er* in American spelling has a condition of doubling the final consonant provided the stress is on the second syllable of the root word thus the verb *to patrol* having the stress on the second syllable would be after adding these suffixes spelled as *patrolling* and *patrolled*. The verb *travel* on the other hand has the stress on the first syllable hence it is spelled as *traveling* and *traveled* in AmE but *travelling* and *travelled* in BrE.

***-oe,ae /-e***

Another 'spelling group' comprises the words of Greek origin having *-oe* in words such as *oedema*, *oestrogen* or *-ae* in *caesarean*, *anaemic* in BrE while AmE spelling omits the letters *o* and *a* thus the spelling of these words is *edema*, *estrogen*, *cesarean* and *anemic*. This also applies to a group where only one letter in a word is different or there is an additional one. The following words demonstrate this feature. The former word represents the American version and the latter the British: *specialty/speciality*, *aluminum/ aluminium* or *mom/mum*. The pronunciation is affected as well. (Davies 1997, 83-84; Darragh 2000, 2-7)

In Peprník (1982) one can also find few more differences:

***-er/-re***

*Center* (AmE) / *centre* (BrE), *fiber* (AmE) / *fibres* (BrE), *theater* (AmE) / *theatre* (BrE)

**-se/-ce**

Such difference occurs only with few nouns such as *defense* (AmE)/ *defence* (BrE) or *offense* (AmE)/ *offence* (BrE)

**-dg/-dge**

Omitting the letter *e* in AmE usually occurs when the word ends with the suffix *-ment* e.g. *judgment* (AmE) / *judgement* (BrE). However it is very scarce in BrE. (Peprník 1982, 31)

**2.2.2 Verbs****2.2.2.1 Compound verbs**

Compound verbs are to be found in all varieties of English and each has its own typical national one i.e. *to necklace* in South African English or *to first-foot* in Scottish English. However, in reference to AmE and BrE differences, Rohndenburg and Schlüter (2009) claim that compound verbs are more common in AmE after doing a research on comparison of American and British dictionaries (58).

Regarding the spelling of compound verbs there are three forms: compound verbs written as one-word (*to earmark*), two-word (*to ski jump*) and hyphenation (*to name-drop*). The two-word forms are highly scarce though. Their research of the dictionaries also observed that AmE tends to avoid hyphenated forms whereas in BrE hyphenation is preferred. (40) The following words demonstrate the difference: *to handpick* (AmE)/*to hand-pick* (BrE), *to shadowbox* (AmE)/ *to shadow-box* (BrE), *to shortchange* (AmE)/ *to short-change* (BrE).

Nonetheless, there are exceptions in hyphenation to be found in both varieties such as *to babysit/to baby-sit* (AmE,BrE), *to poor-mouth/to poormouth*(AmE), *to key-punch/ to keypunch* (BrE)



### 2.2.2.2 Regularization of verb forms

Converting irregular verbs into regular ones is typical for AmE thus the *-ed* form for preterits and past participles replaces the irregular forms (e.g. *burn – burned*), moreover AmE has only one form unlike BrE that has two forms for the past tense and past participle being able to function as either forms of the verbs (i.e. *burn – burnt – burned*). (Kövecsec 2000, 190).

The following examples made by Algeo (2006) demonstrate the difference:

*burn/ burnt (BrE)/ burned (AmE)* – both varieties prefer the regular form nevertheless the American tendency towards it is considerably higher (95% to 5% AmE vs. 56% to 44% BrE)

*dream/ dreamt / dreamed* – the regular form is preferred once again on both sides of the Atlantic ocean though the tendency is weaker on the British Isles.

*hang / hung / hanged* – either forms are used in both varieties. Yet when it comes to news reports the British media prefer the regular form *hanged* while the American media favour the irregular form *hung*.

*spell / spelled / spelt* – the irregular form *spelt* is uncommon in AmE (Algeo 2006, 13-18)

The verbs *fit*, *quit* and *wet* are exceptional since they are regular in BrE and irregular in AmE (Darragh 2000, 16)

### 2.2.2.3 Verb to get

According to Marckwardt – Quirk (1965) the past participle *gotten* which is significant for AmE is used only when the meaning is *to acquire* or *to obtain* giving an example 'We've gotten a new car since you were here last'. On the other hand if the verb *to get* is used to mean *to possess* or *to be obliged to* the rules are of the same forms as in BrE e.g. 'I've got a pen in my pocket'; 'I've got to write a letter'. (Marckwardt and Quirk 1965, 15). Algeo (2006) alleges that in AmE *gotten* is more frequent in spoken language. (Algeo 2006, 14)

#### 2.2.2.4 To have vs. to take

“In British English, the verb *have* frequently functions as what is technically referred to as a delexical verb, i.e. it is used in context where it has very little meaning in itself but occurs with an object noun which describes an action”. (*I would like to have a bath*). In AmE, the verb *to take* is used more in such contexts (*I would like to take a bath; Why don't you take a rest now?*) (Clandfield and Maxwell 2010, [www.onestopenglish.com](http://www.onestopenglish.com))

#### 2.2.2.5 Have vs. have got

According to Doubravová (1999), in BrE, the common form for the verb *to have* is *have got* which can be found in AmE as well, however, this form is almost always in the U.S. shortened to *'ve got*. The negative form *I don't have* is in AmE possible only while BrE also uses *I haven't got* or *I haven't* (Doubravová 1999, 5).

#### 2.2.3 Prepositions

As Darragh (2000) claims, the use of prepositions differs in both varieties particularly in adverbial expressions, however Algeo (2006) explains that: “Dieter Mundst and Christel Weber (1989) concluded from a comparative study of prepositions in the Brown and LOB corpora that 99,9 percent of all prepositional tokens are forms used in both British and American and that the six most common prepositions (of, in, to, for, with, on) have the same rank order in both varieties and account for nearly three quarters of the occurrence of prepositions in the two corpora” (Algeo 2006, 159)

The following list of prepositions made by Darragh (2000) and Algeo (2006) demonstrates the difference:

*It's twenty of twelve* (AmE) / *It's twenty to twelve* (BrE)

*In the course* (AmE) / *on the course* (BrE)

*On the weekend* (AmE) / *at the weekend* (BrE)

*On the street* (AmE) / *in the street* (BrE)

*Talk with you* (AmE) / *talk to you* (BrE)

*In school or college* (AmE) / *at school or college* (BrE)

*On the sea* (AmE) / *by the sea* (BrE)

## **2.2.4 Determiners**

### **2.2.4.1 Definite article with nouns of time**

The definite article is used in BrE in certain expressions of time unlike AmE which omits it.

The following list demonstrates the difference:

*All the evening* (BrE) / *All evening* (AmE)

*All the year* (BrE) / *All year* (AmE)

### **2.2.4.2 Definite article with nouns of place**

Both BrE/AmE used to have the definite article forms (the Congo, the Ukraine), however omitting the definite article has become common for either variety. Nonetheless, there were several differences e.g. (the Argentine (BrE) / Argentina (AmE)) (Algeo 2006, 53)

### **2.2.4.3 Indefinite article**

There are differences in the set expressions consisting of “half”. AmE prefers the article at the beginning of the expression whereas in BrE the article is before the noun e.g. *a half hour* (AmE) / *half an hour* (BrE), *a half mile* (AmE) / *half a mile* (BrE) (Peprník 1982, 13)

## 2.3 VOCABULARY

The difference in vocabulary ranks among the biggest distinctions between BrE and AmE. According to Kövecsec's (2000) analysis of Webster's *New world Dictionary* there are approximately 11,000 English words originating in America out of which the majority are new American 'coinages' (products of certain word-formation processes) and the rest are already existing English words which have obtained new meaning in AmE.

Nouns are the largest class regarding the grammatical category of all the new words followed by verbs and adjectives. Among the most productive word-formation processes rank compounding, prefixation /suffixation and shifting (change of a grammatical category). (Kövecses 2000, 139)

Since American history faced an immense immigration many new American words are borrowings - words borrowed from different languages such as Spanish, French, Dutch, Native Indian languages etc. As Marckwardt – Quirk (1965) claim:

“A good many words for example, were adopted from the American Indian languages – *hickory*, a kind of a tree, *squash*, a vegetable, *moccasin*, a kind of footwear. We got *caribou* and *prairie* from the early French settlers. The Spanish gave us *canyon* and *bronco*.” (26).

In addition, Davies (1998) also demonstrates borrowings from languages claiming the words *coleslaw*, *cookie*, and *waffle* are of Dutch origin and *bummer*, *check* or *docent* of German origin. (5)

There are words different in standard British and American English but common in British regional dialects. Thus the word *tap* in BrE is represented by the word *faucet* in AmE however *faucet* can be also found in few British dialects. Similarly, the word *homely* means in BrE something pleasant but something not very good-looking in AmE. The latter meaning is rather old-fashioned in Britain but speakers of some British dialects still use this word. (Marckwardt and Quirk 1965, 36)

## 2.3.1 Areas of difference in vocabulary

### 2.3.1.1 Education

The word *school* has slightly different interpretation in both varieties. Whereas in the US it covers tertiary education, in the UK it only represents elementary and secondary education (Starvik and Leech 2006, 161) as it is visited by children up to the age of 18 (Marckwardt and Quirk 1965, 29)

In Britain and the US, the children firstly attend *kindergarten* also known in the UK as *nursery school*. Elementary school can be also called *Primary school* (BrE) or *grammar school* (AmE). Yet *grammar school* is a type of secondary school in the UK. The private schools are known in BrE as the *public schools* and *academies* in AmE. Going to *college* means in the US going to *university* in Britain. (Davies 1998, 36).

### 2.3.1 Food

When following a recipe that is of other English variety origin one can find few differences regarding vocabulary. Americans use different words for vegetables (*eggplant/ aubergine; zucchini/ courgette; chickory/ endive*) cuts or preparations of meat (*chop/ cutlet; sirloin/ rumpsteak; ground meat/ minced meat*), seafood (*shrimp/ prawn; crawfish/ crayfish*), fried food (*chips/ crisps; French fries/ chips*) or sweet treats (*candy/ sweets; cookies/ biscuits*) (AmE/BrE).

The term *restaurant* is used in both varieties, yet there are several unique terms in AmE such as *diner* or *coffee shop*. In addition, during the payment the American customer requires a *check* while in the UK the customer acquires a *bill*. (Stempleski, Macmillan magazine 2004)

### 2.3.1.3 Transport

As mentioned in the first part, due to the Industrial revolution in 19<sup>th</sup> century many new terms were invented on both sides of the Atlantic independently on one another. One of the areas of difference is of *transportation* (AmE)/ *transport* (BrE) which was developed in this century. There are specific terms for the *railroad* (AmE)/ *railway* (BrE) such as *conductor/ guard, freight/ goods or one-way ticket/ single ticket* (AmE/BrE) as well as for road travelling: *highway, interstate/*

*motorway, hood/ bonnet, truck/ lorry* (AmE/BrE). The metro system is known in the US as *subway* and as *underground* (or *tube* in London) in the UK (Starvik and Leech 2006, 161) however in Scottish Glasgow the local metro system is called *subway* as well.<sup>1</sup>

The term *pavement* is common in BrE for a path for pedestrians: 'Don't ride your bike on the pavement', moreover this term represents in AmE the surface of the road: 'Two cars skidded on the icy pavement'. The former meaning is represented in AmE as *sidewalk*.<sup>2</sup>

#### 2.3.1.4 Services

The postal system used for sending and delivering letters, packages etc. is known in BrE as *post* whereas in AmE as *mail*. The name of the person delivering is derived from these terms: *postman* (BrE)/ *mailman* (AmE). (17) *Shopping centres* are known in the United States as *malls* where one can use help of a *shop assistant* (BrE)/ *salesperson* (AmE). (29) Provided the payment is in cash the American customer pays with *bills* and the British with *notes*. (19) (Davies 1998)

#### 2.3.1.5 Housing

There are several different words in the American and British dictionaries regarding housing. *Flat* (BrE) is known in the U.S. as an *apartment*. In order to reach upper floor from the *ground floor* (BrE) / *first floor* one can use a *lift* (BrE) / *elevator* (AmE). Among the items which are to be found in household rank *wardrobe / closet, cooker / stove, Hoover / vacuum* or *wash basin / bathroom sink* (BrE / AmE). (Doubravová 1999, 40)

---

<sup>1</sup> Spt.co.uk

<sup>2</sup> OALD

### 2.3.2 Phatic language

According to Algeo (2006) “Phatic language consists of expressions used as a basic for social intercommunication. Phatic expressions are not intended to be and, when correctly perceived, are not taken to be literal statements, but are merely conventional formulas of etiquette”. Agreement responses differ in both varieties variably. *Sure* is favoured in AmE and *will do* in BrE. Either variety uses *right* as an option and even though it is considered rather American it is almost two times more common in Britain. Request for repetition or explanation of something also varies in both BrE/AmE and thus British versions would be (*I beg your*) *pardon*, *Sorry?* Whereas the American one would be *Excuse me?* or *Pardon me?*. In order to apologise, a British speaker would use *excuse me* (advance apology) and *sorry* (retroactive apology) whilst *excuse me* would be used in AmE for both kinds of an apology. (Algeo 2006, 308)

## 2.4 PRONUNCIATION

First of all, it is necessary to distinguish the difference between an accent and dialect. An accent is a different language pronunciation of people who live in different geographical places or are of different social classes or ages, whereas a dialect differs not only in pronunciation but in vocabulary, grammar and word order as well. The two major standard accents of English language are so called Received Pronunciation (RP), also called the BBC English, and General American (GA). (Roach 2009, 3)

### 2.4.1 Received Pronunciation

According to Starvik – Leech (2006), RP dates to the nineteenth century when “a particular English accent became the predominant prestige accent among the ruling classes of Britain and even of the British Empire. It was a class accent rather than a regional accent”. Beside RP, this accent is also called an Oxbridge, Queen’s or the BBC English. Only a minority of the British speaks with this accent, however, it is of a high importance regarding description of divergence in English to non-native speakers (125). On the other hand, they mention that the British linguist John Sinclair claims that RP is not a very useful model of pronunciation, for there is no connection to the

spelling system and moreover it has complex features such as diphthongs. (Starvik and Leech 2006, 126)

Melen (2010) mentions that RP used to also be called Public school pronunciation since many children from the upper classes were educated in public boarding schools. The accent area comprises London and so called “Home counties” such as Essex, Kent, Surrey etc. The RP accent was considered the most understandable for the whole country and thereby it was taken as a standard in broadcasting. (Melen 2010, 12)

Starvik – Leech (2006) divide RP into three types:

**General RP:** used by teachers or in dictionaries

**Refined RP:** an affected accent usually spoken by the upper class

**Near RP:** standard RP with addition of regional accents (Starvik and Leech 2006, 127)

#### 2.4.2 General American

Standard American English is a major accent of the United States. The restriction of this accent is not limited to the U.S. only. GA contrasts in the States with the Southern AmE and North-eastern accents. As the RP is used in the UK in broadcasting, the GA is the major standard in American television and radio as well.<sup>3</sup>

#### 2.4.3 Rhotic and non-rhotic accents

Rhotic accents comprise the pronunciation of *r* sound after vowels unlike the non-rhotic accents which are not pronounced in such cases. In the UK, such an accent is considered non-prestigious in contrast to the U.S., where the non-rhotic accent loses prestige. (Starvik and Leech 2006, 164).

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Standard+American+English>



## 2.4.4 Differences in pronunciation between BrE and AmE

### 2.4.4.1 Pronunciation of *r*

Speakers of AmE pronounce the letter *r* in all positions e.g. *heard* [hɜ:rd]. This type of *r* is called retroflex *r*, which Starvik – Leech (2006) describe as “the tongue curls and bunches somewhat upward and backward in the mouth rather than a trilled or tapped *r* such as found in Scottish English” (163). Darragh (2000) alleges that the *r* sound before vowels has disappeared in RP and it is voiced provided it is followed by a consonant or is placed at the end of the word, however, as long as the next word begins with a vowel then there is an aspect of connected speech (linking) and the *r* is heard i.e. in *Poor Asia* the word *poor* would be normally pronounced in BrE as [pɔ:], nevertheless the word *Asia* begins with a vowel, therefore the whole phrase is pronounced together as [pɔ:r'eɪzə]. Not all the British people speak without rhoticity though. Non-rhotic accent is to be found in Southern England, however, the northern parts, southwest and especially Scotland, have significant rhotic accents. Regarding the rhotic aspects, AmE does not stick to one model of rhoticity/non-rhoticity either as the New England’s accent in the eastern United States uses a sort of non-rhotic speech since this area was one of the first to be settled by the colonists from Southern England, as mentioned in the first chapter. (Darragh 2000, 9)

The following transcribed words demonstrate the difference (OALD):

	<b>BrE</b>	<b>AmE</b>
<i>car</i>	kɑ:(r)	kɑ:r
<i>hear</i>	hɪə(r)	hɪr
<i>water</i>	'wɔ:tə(r)	'wɔ:tər / 'wɑ:tər
<i>more</i>	mɔ:(r)	mɔ:r
<i>better</i>	'betə(r)	'betər

#### 2.4.4.2 Pronunciation of [ɑ:] vs. [æ]

In AmE the vowel *a* is pronounced shortly whereas in BrE it is long and firm e.g. in words such as *laugh* [lɑ:f (BrE)/ læf (AmE)], *dance* [dɑ:ns (BrE)/ dəns (AmE)] or *can't* [kɑ:nt (BrE)/ kənt (AmE)]. The GA sounds the *a letter* as [æ] whereas RP uses [ɑ:] (Starvik and Leech 2006, 163).

Marckwardt – Quirk (1964) claim that the [ɑ:] pronunciation as in the word *dance* is not so widely used in the UK as it arises usually among educated people and inhabitants of Southern England. The northern parts of the country tend to use short [ʌ] [dʌns]. In addition, they state that there are approximately six hundred words with the [æ] sound, one fourth of which contain a distinction between [æ:] and [ɑ:] (AmE/BrE). The rest of the words comprise those with the [æ] sound in both varieties as in *sand* [sænd] etc. (Marckwardt and Quirk 1964, 18)

#### 2.4.4.3 Pronunciation of [ɒ] vs. [ɑ:]

Speakers of British English pronounce the [ɒ] sound with lips rounded and the tongue at the back of the mouth, while American speakers do not round their lips anymore since they pronounce their *o* more as [ɑ:] in quality such as shorter [ɑ:] in the word *rather*. As Darragh (2000) claims, “This illustrates a general tendency in American speech towards neutralisation of vowel sound. Non-essentials are dropped so that words like *Don* and *dawn* are pronounced identically. In England vowels tend to retain their sharpness.” (10) Additionally, Peprník (1982) states that the change of [ɒ] into [ɑ:] in AmE is especially significant in words with more syllables such as in *comedy*, *doctor* etc. (Peprník 1982, 11)

#### 2.4.4.4 Pronunciation of *u*

After consonants *t-*, *d-*, *n-*, the British pronunciation uses the vowel *u* as [ju:] sound whereas the Americans, except for the people from New England, say [u:] (Peprník 11). This feature is called yod-dropping and despite it being a common feature of AmE, it is to be found in BrE as well i.e. in East Anglia (Starvik and Leech 2006, 164). Such words are for instance *duty* [ˈdju:ti (BrE)/ ˈdu:ti (AmE)] or *tube* [tju:b (BrE)/ tu:b (AmE)]. As Darragh (2000) states, the words

*assume* or *suits* are nowadays exceptional in terms of yod-dropping of BrE for they are usually pronounced in Britain as [su:ts] and [ə'su:m]. (Darragh 2000, 11)

#### **2.4.4.5 Pronunciation of *t***

The consonant *t* in the position between a consonant and a voiced sound becomes in AmE a [d] sound in quality e.g. *city* ['sɪti (BrE) / 'sɪdi (AmE)] or *butter* ['bʌtə(r) (BrE) / 'bʌdər (AmE)]. Darragh (2000) describes the British *t* as clearly pronounced, on the other hand, it can disappear completely which occurs in AmE as well when *t* disappears after nasal sounds (m,n,ng), therefore words such as *dentist* or *interesting* are pronounced as ['denɪst] and ['ɪnərestɪŋ] . For few British accents the glottal stop replacing *t* is significant (Cockney) (Darragh 2000, 11)

To sum up, the theoretical part demonstrated that the number of differences between American and British English is not so significant. Even though there are several differences in pronunciation and vocabulary, the grammatical rules are rather similar therefore the American variety is not a separated language. As mentioned in the first chapter which dealt with the historical background, the vocabulary difference would be less significant provided the separation of the U.S. would take place a hundred years later.

### **3. PRACTICAL PART**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH**

##### **3.1.1 Introduction**

In order to determine the situation in the Czech Republic regarding the differences between British and American English, the following research was created. It consists of five parts. The first part is an online questionnaire comprising eleven questions regarding attitudes, knowledge, preferences and experience of the Czech. The second part contains a questionnaire for Czech teachers of English and English studies attempting to evaluate their preferences in teaching and experience with their students. The following third part deals with the vocabulary consistency in English meal-menus in Czech restaurants. The fourth part is a test based on the features covered in the practical part for Czech students analysing their knowledge of BrE/AmE differences. The last part of the research is a transcription of English sentences produced by Czech native speakers in

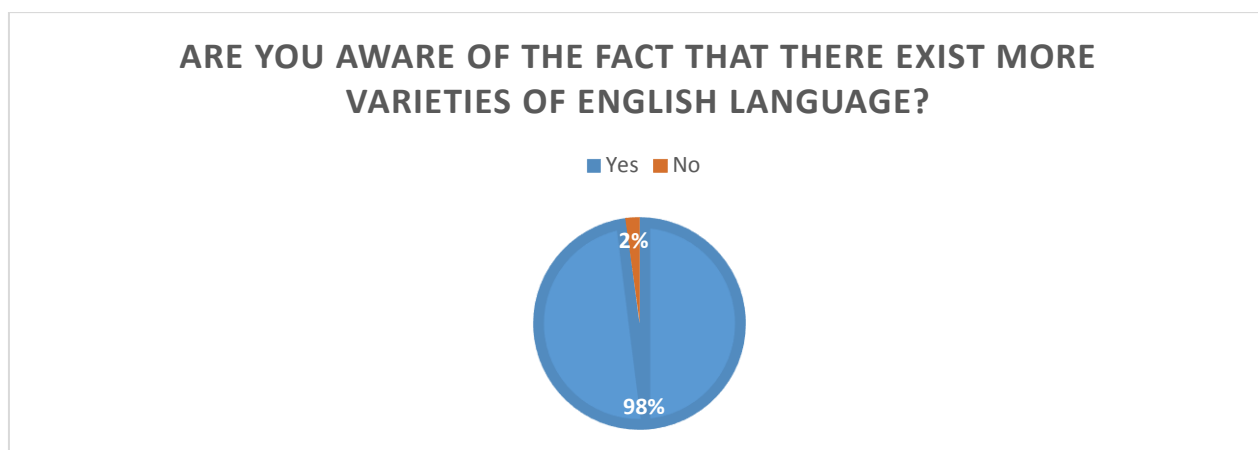
order to demonstrate their pronunciation preferences. The research is provided with graphs and tables.

### 3.1.2 Questionnaire

The first questionnaire attempts to determine people's awareness of the differences in English and their experience from education as well as their opinion on the question whether Czech native speakers stick to one variety of English or combine more varieties. The questionnaire was answered by 60 respondents who had different levels of English competence ranking from A2 up to C1 (Common European framework of reference for languages). The range of the respondents' age was from 19 up to 27. Each participant had at least a secondary school education. The questionnaire contained eleven questions four of which were yes/no questions. The rest of the questions had to be filled in with full sentences. The results of these questions are transferred into percentage and provided with seven graphs.

#### 1. Are you aware of the fact that there exist more varieties of English language?

Vast majority (98%) of the participants were aware of the existence of more varieties of English. There was only one respondent not aware of this fact.

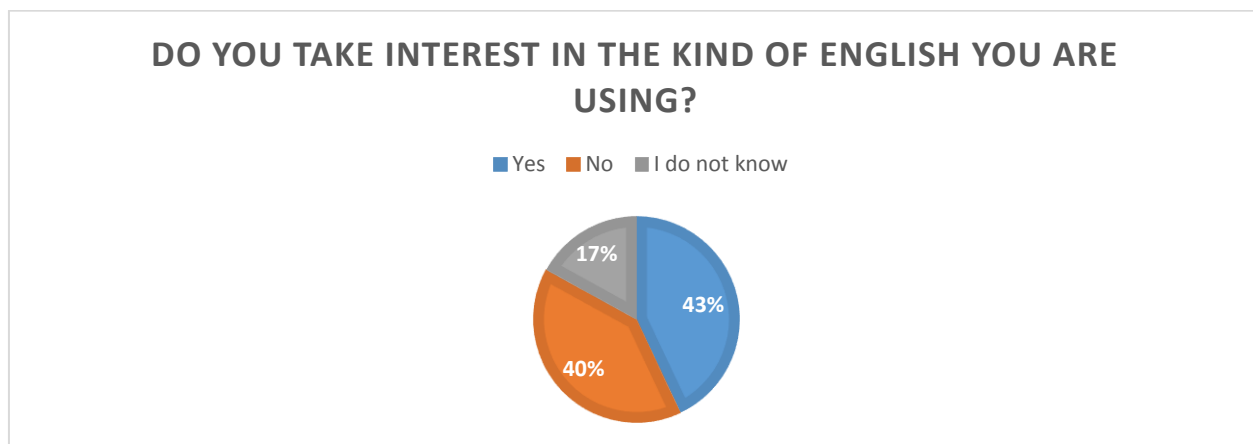


## 2. What varieties of English do you know?

More than 58% of the participants answered they were aware of only the British and American variety. 100% of the answers comprised the pair BrE/AmE out of which more than 36% included the Australian variety and 13% the Canadian variety. Several contributors alleged they also knew Cockney (5), New Zealander variety (3), Scottish (5), Irish (4) and South African variety (2). From the results of this question it is clear that the Czechs have tendency to pay attention to the two major varieties of English (BrE/AmE) with the awareness of Australian English.

## 3. Do you take interest in the kind of English you are using?

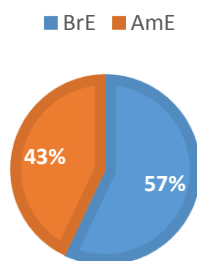
The third question attempted to detect the respondents' interest in their use of particular English. About 43% of answers were in favour of the interest hence the answer was "yes". 40% of the participants claimed they are not interested. More than 16% of answers consisted of "I do not know" answer.



## 4. What variety of English do you prefer when using the language?

The results revealed that almost 57% of the participants prefer the British variety in comparison to the American one (43%). No respondent claimed he or she would prefer other variety than BrE/AmE.

### WHAT VARIETY DO YOU PREFER?

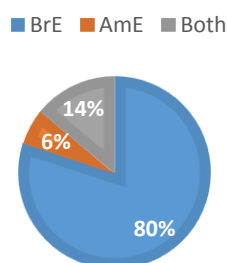


#### 5. What variety of English were you/have you been taught at school/ university?

The vast majority of the contributors (80%) claimed they had been taught British English whereas only 6% answered that AmE was the variety they had been taught at school.

However, there were participants who alleged they used to be taught BrE at the Primary school/Secondary school but AmE at the university and conversely (14%). The results reveal the fact that the Czech educational system tends to stick to British variety.

### WHAT VARIETY OF ENGLISH WERE YOU/HAVE YOU BEEN TAUGHT AT SCHOOL/ UNIVERSITY?

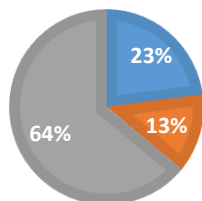


#### 6. Do you think the Czechs prefer AmE to BrE or a combination of these two?

More than 63% of the answers were in favour of the combination of the two varieties. Surprisingly, only 13% of the participants would agree the Czechs prefer AmE. Approximately 23% of the respondents considered BrE more preferred by the Czechs.

## DO YOU THINK THE CZECHS PREFER AME TO BRE OR A COMBINATION OF THESE TWO?

■ BrE ■ AmE ■ Combination



### 7. Do you think American accent is easier for Czech speakers? If so, why?

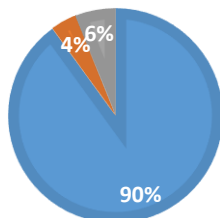
First of all, the majority of the contributors (65%) considered American accent easier to understand/speak. In contrast, only 16% of the participants answered American accent was not easier; however, they did not mention the British accent to be less hard either. The rest of the answers comprised “I do not know”. Second of all, the respondents were asked to uphold their statements. Many of those who stated that the American accent was easier for the Czechs made many similar points. The following were the most common responses: “The Czechs watch many films and television series of American production and thereby they are used to American accent”; “the rhoticity is similar to the Czech language”; “AmE is less challenging in terms of pronunciation”; “British accent is harder to imitate or pronounce due to specific articulation features”. The answers that were in favour of the BrE were barely vindicated and the most common response was a mere “no”.

### 8. Do you agree that Czech students are rather taught BrE at school?

The vast majority (90%) of the contributors agreed that BrE is the leading variety of English taught at Czech schools/universities. Only approximately 3% of the answers denied this fact. The rest of the respondents (6%) were not sure.

### DO YOU AGREE THAT CZECH STUDENTS ARE RATHER TAUGHT BRE AT SCHOOL?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure



#### 9. Try to think of the most differences between BrE/AmE that you are aware of.

Most of the participants were aware of many differences between these two varieties. Among the most common answers ranked spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, voiced/voiceless vibrant *r*, accent, shortening, simplification of the grammar (AmE) or present perfect vs. past simple. The responses consisted of a considerable amount of differences in vocabulary: pavement/sidewalk, subway/underground, pants/trousers, apartment/flat, crisps/chips etc.

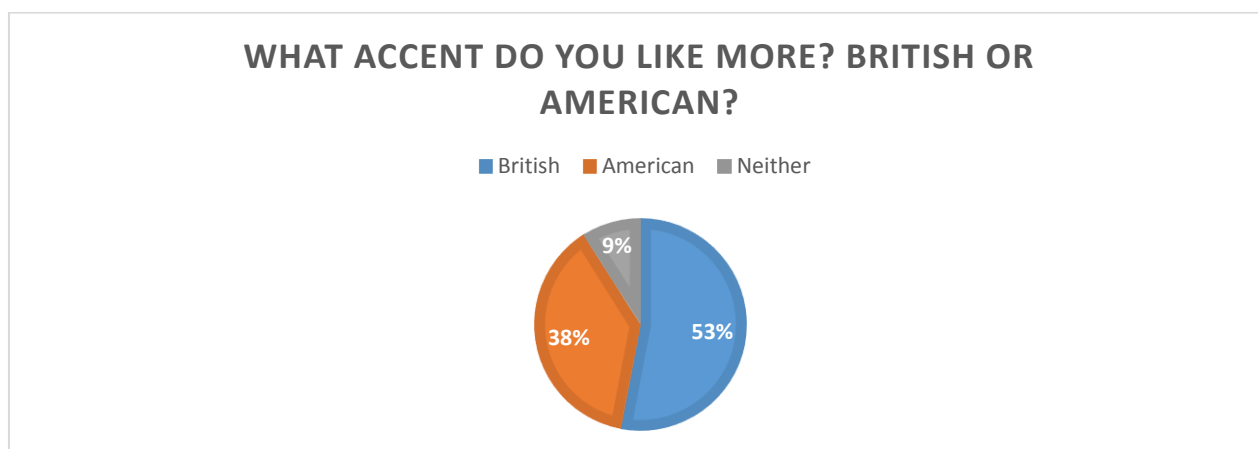
#### 10. In your opinion, what is the reason for the rising influence of AmE?

According to the vast majority of the respondents, the media, television series, films or music interprets have affected the rising influence of AmE since many young people have favoured watching these films/series in English with subtitles. Americanism was also one of frequently mentioned reasons.



## 11. What accent do you like more? American or British?

More than half of the participants (53%) stated that they favour the British accent. Approximately 38% of the answers showed preference to the American accent. In addition, there were several contributors (9%) who claimed that they neither mind both accents nor prefer certain accents of the U.S. or the UK.



In conclusion, the questionnaire revealed many interesting facts about the Czechs' awareness of the differences between AmE and BrE, their experience at schools/universities, preferences, interests and opinions. First of all, almost each of the respondents was aware of the two major varieties of English language (BrE/AmE). Second, the majority of them agreed that the Czech educational system had a tendency to prefer the British variety. Last but not least, there were many contributors being able to list a few differences in vocabulary, spelling, grammar etc.

### 3.1.3 Vocabulary consistency in English meal-menus produced by the Czechs

The aim of this research was to detect whether the menus written in English in Czech restaurants are of one variety of English only or if they are combined. The analysis comprised 11 restaurants located in Prague, Brno and Plzeň which were rather expensive since English menus

occur in finer restaurants more often. The research revealed an interesting fact that many Czech restaurants are unaware of the differences between AmE/BrE regarding vocabulary.

Restaurant 1 ranked among the one with the largest combination of British and American vocabulary. The menu included *eggplant, zucchini, Romaine lettuce, shrimp* (AmE) along with *minced meet* and *beetroot* (BrE). Restaurant 2 used British variety using words such as *beetroot, prawns, courgette* and *aubergine*. Restaurant 3, on the other hand, followed AmE owing to words *zucchini, shrimp, and French fries*. This also applied to the restaurant 4. Restaurant 5 perhaps desired their menu to be understandable for speakers of both varieties as their side dish “hranolky” was translated as *French fries* (AmE) along with the British equivalent *Chips* in the brackets. The restaurant 6 and 7 used British English. The menu of the former consisted of the words of British origin (*prawn, chicory, beetroot, rumpsteak*) and the menu of the latter comprised British words such as *chips* and *courgette*, yet there occurred one American word – *eggplant*. The rest of the analysed restaurants stuck to one variety with a minor divergence in the word “předkrm” which was translated either as *appetizer* (AmE) or *starter* (BrE).

To sum up, Czech restaurants covered in the research have tendency to combine American and British English in their menus, nevertheless, few restaurants proved the ability to stick to one variety only.

**Table 1.** Czech terms translated into British and American English

<b>Czech term</b>	<b>British translation</b>	<b>American translation</b>
Lilek, Baklažán	Aubergine	Eggplant
Cuketa	Courgette	Zucchini
Bramborové hranolky	Chips	French fries
Řepa	Beetroot	Beet
Mleté maso	Minced meat	Ground meat
Římský salát	Cos lettuce	Romaine lettuce
Krevety	Prawns	Shrimps
Rumpsteak	Rump steak	Sirloin
Čekanka	Chicory	Endive
Předkrm	Starter	Appetizer

### 3.1.4 Test

In order to determine the Czechs' knowledge, preferences and awareness of differences of English, the following test was created. It was filled in by 50 respondents who were students of university (University of West Bohemia - 20), secondary school (SPŠD Plzeň - 20) and primary school (Primary school of Martin Luther, Plzeň - 10). The range of the respondents' age was from 14 up to 25. Firstly, the aim was to detect how the students would translate Czech terms that have different spelling in both varieties thus the test demonstrates students' preferences to either British or American spelling. The students were also tested on the use of prepositions and regularity/irregularity of verbs in past participles. Furthermore, the test attempted to determine the students' knowledge of certain vocabulary as they were asked to match the words with the variety they belong to as well as to give the opposite equivalents in the fifth exercise. The private school covered in the research is a public school focused on American variety in its lessons of English, therefore the results proved the pupils' considerable preference to stick to American English. The test contains 6 exercises and its results are provided with graphs and tables.

#### 1. Translate the following words into English (without a dictionary if possible)

*Barva (Colour / Color):*

Majority of the participants translated the Czech word "barva" as *colour* (62%), therefore the British spelling was preferred. 38% of the contributors' translations were of American spelling (*color*). The BrE form was favoured by the students of secondary school (70%) and university students (70%), however, the pupils of the primary school preferred the American form (70%).

*Cestování (Travelling / Traveling):*

British form of spelling in the translation of the Czech word "cestování" was chosen by 66% of the participants, thus they used *-ll-* form. On the other hand, 75% of the primary school students chose the American form *traveling* (37,5% secondary school, 15% university).

*Specialita (Speciality / Specialty):*

91% of the correct answers consisted of the British form *speciality*; in contrast, only 9% of the responses comprised the AmE form *specialty*. The British spelling was in this case favoured among the university students (95%), secondary school students (100%) as well as among the primary school pupils (66%).

*Divadlo (Theatre / Theater):*

When translating the Czech word “divadlo”, the differences between the choices of one variety were not so significant. 60% of the respondents’ translations contained the British form *theatre* while the American form *theater* was chosen by 40% of the participants. The only group of students to prefer the American spelling was the primary school group (70%). Both university (75%) and secondary school students (65%) preferred the British form.

*Soused (Neighbour / Neighbor):*

Majority of the correct answers were in favour of the British form *neighbour* (74%). The AmE form *neighbor* was therefore less common (26%). It is interesting that none of the secondary school students chose the American form whilst the majority of the primary school pupils decided for *neighbor* (70%). Nevertheless, the university students again favoured the British form (80%).

*Kritizovat (Criticise / Criticize):*

Even though the suffixes *-ise/-ize* are accepted in both varieties of English, the suffix *-ise* is more common in BrE. Nonetheless, 78% of the students translated the Czech word “kritizovat” as *criticize*. The question is whether the number would be so high, provided the students of secondary school have used the correct translation (85% of them used incorrect translation since the word *critic* ranked among the most common answers). 77% of the primary school pupils preferred the *-ize* form as well as their university colleagues (75%).

*Centrum (Centre / Center):*

Majority of the respondents (65%) translated the Czech word “centrum” as *centre* (BrE). The American form *center* was chosen by 35% of the contributors. In addition, three students’ translations contained the American equivalent *downtown*. The British form was preferred by the university students (70%) and secondary school students (73%). The primary school pupils chose the AmE form (71%) though.

To conclude, Czech students seem to tend to prefer the British spelling, nevertheless there were many of them who spelt half of the words with British spelling and the other with American spelling. The graph below demonstrates the overall percentage of spelling preferences.

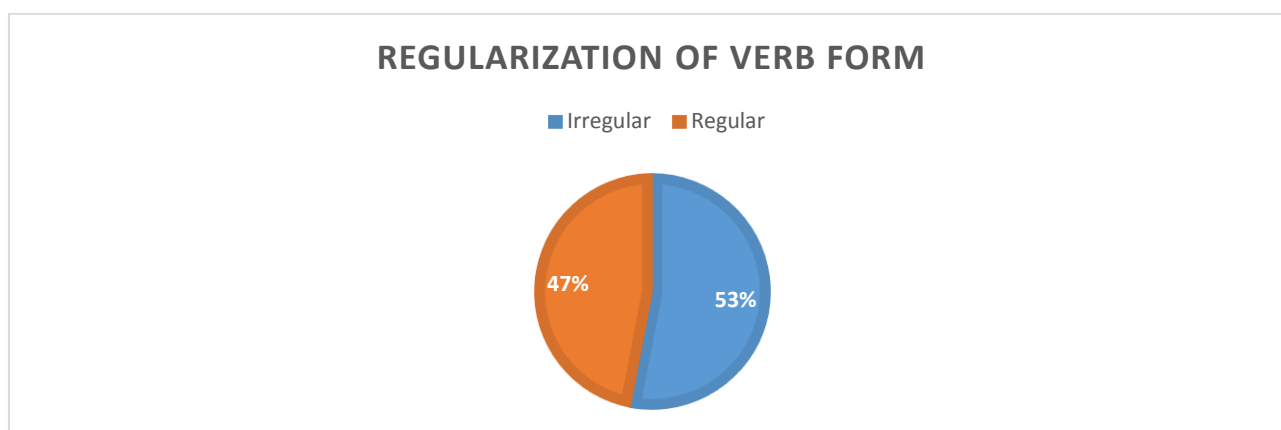


## 2. Transfer the following verbs to perfect and preterit (e.g. take – took – taken)

### a) Regularization of verb forms:

The students were asked to list the past forms of verbs *burn*, *dream* and *spell*. The results revealed that the Czech students do not prefer either variety but rather mix them together. The word *burn* spelt *burned* (AmE) and *burnt* (BrE) was in 61% cases spelt *burnt*. The word *dream* was spelt *dreamed* in 53% of the answers and *dreamt* in 47%. The word *spell* was spelt as *spelt* (BrE, 52%) and *spelled* (AmE, 48%).

Regarding the preferences in different sorts of schools, the students of the primary school preferred the regular (AmE) forms, whereas the students of university and secondary school the irregular forms (BrE).



**b) The verb *to get*:**

The British form *get – got – got* was chosen by the majority of the students (70%). However, 70% of the primary school pupils chose the American form *get – got – gotten*.

**3. Translate the following expressions**

*O víkend* (*at the weekend / on the weekend*):

More than 69% of the respondents translated the Czech phrase “o víkend” as *at the weekend* (BrE). *On the weekend* (AmE) was favoured at the primary school (87%) though less preferred at the university (15%) and secondary school (23%)

*Na ulici (in the street / on the street):*

On the contrary to the large preference of the British preposition in the previous phrase, the majority of the contributors (80%) translated the Czech phrase “na ulici” as *on the street* which is an American equivalent to the British form *in the street* (20%). Perhaps, it is due to literal translation since in Czech, the preposition “na” is often translated *on* while the English preposition *in* is rather translated “v”. Thereby the results may be rather influenced by the “czechism” than the choice of BrE/AmE.

*Ve škole (at school / in school):*

The British expression *at school* was chosen by 57% of the respondents. 43% of the students translated “ve škole” as *in school* (AmE). All the pupils from the primary school (100%) preferred the American form; however the students of university (75%) and secondary school (60%) chose the British form.

#### **4. In the following pairs of words identify the variety (BrE/AmE)**

The students were asked to correctly identify the varieties of English in the following pairs: *College / University; Chips / Crisps; Bills / Notes; Eggplant / Aubergine; French fries / Chips; Truck / Lorry; Pavement / Sidewalk.*

Among the most well identified pairs ranked *Truck / Lorry* (76% of correct answers), *Pavement / Sidewalk* (73%) and *Chips / Crisps* (68%). On the other hand, the students struggled to identify the correct variety in the pair *Bills / Notes* (30% of correct answers). The results revealed that the university students ranked among the most successful respondents (67% of correct answers) followed by the primary school students (66%). However, the secondary school students were less successful regarding identifying the correct varieties (51%).

**Table 2.** The percentage of correctness of the variety identification

Pairs	University	Secondary school	Primary school	Results
College / University	45%	65%	60%	56%
Chips / Crisps	70%	55%	80%	68%
Bills / Notes	50%	40%	0%	30%
Eggplant / Aubergine	70%	40%	80%	63%
French fries / Chips	75%	50%	60%	61%
Truck / Lorry	85%	65%	80%	76%
Pavement / Sidewalk	75%	45%	100%	73%
Results	67%	51%	66%	-

### 5. Write down an American equivalent to the following British words

In order to determine students' knowledge of American equivalents of British words, the following exercise was created. The following are the words tested: *shopping centre*, *biscuit*, *autumn*, *post*, *sweets*. The students were supposed to fill in the following equivalents: *mall*, *cookie*, *fall*, *mail*, *candy*. The results revealed that the students are mostly aware of the American equivalent to the British words *biscuit* (67%) and *shopping centre* (63%). The university students proved to be the most successful again (71% of correct answers). The table below demonstrates the correctness of the answers



**Table 3.** The percentage of correct matches

British word	University	Secondary school	Primary school	Results (words)
Shopping centre	65%	45%	80%	63%
Biscuit	90%	40%	70%	67%
Autumn	75%	35%	60%	57%
Post (noun)	60%	90%	30%	60%
Sweets	65%	40%	70%	58%
Results	71%	50%	62%	

## 6. How would you react? More answers possible

Finally, the students were tested on their preferences in terms of phatic language. Since the phatic language may contain more possibilities the students were allowed to choose more phrases they use.

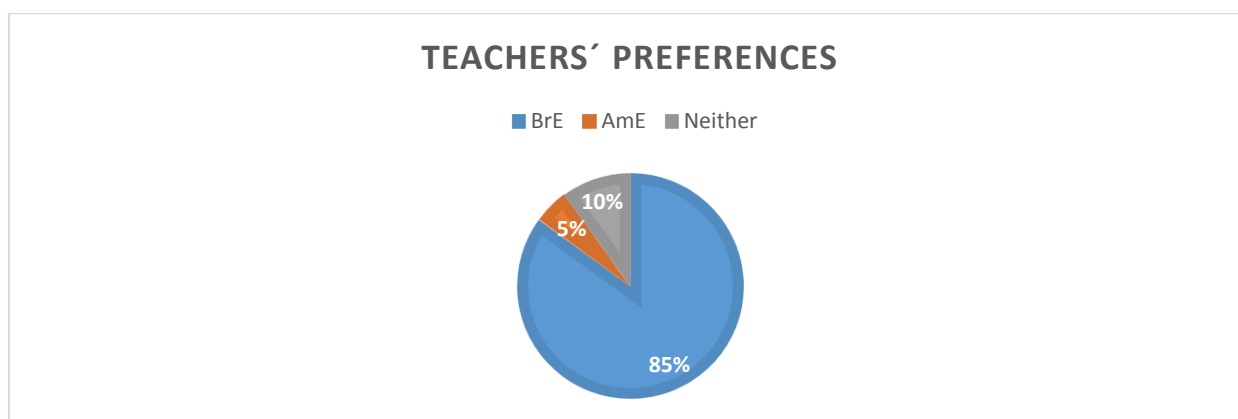
*Agreement (sure/will do/ right):* According to Algeo (2006, 308), the answer indicating an agreement *sure* is preferred in AmE, the results revealed that 78% of the students prefer such answers. On the other hand, the British possibility *will do* was chosen by only 6% of the participants. The answer *right* which is more common in BrE but not uncommon in AmE was contained in 44% of the responses.

### 3.1.5 Questionnaire for Czech teachers of English

The aim of this questionnaire was to determine Czech teachers' preferences in teaching regarding British and American English. Moreover, the questions attempted to receive teachers' opinion on the preferences of their students and the problematic of combining British and American variety in the Czech Republic. The questionnaire was answered by 20 teachers from two different schools and one university (SPŠD, Plzeň; KCVJŠ, Plzeň; University of West Bohemia (FPE/KAN, FF/KAJ), Plzeň). The results contain five graphs.

## 1. What variety of English do you prefer in teaching and why?

The results revealed that the vast majority of the teachers (85%) prefer the British variety. 10% of the teachers claimed that they did not prefer either variety. The preference of AmE was chosen by only one teacher (5%). The teachers were also asked to uphold their choices. The following are the most common answers: “The books used for teaching English in the Czech Republic are of the British variety” (30%), “I have a special relation for BrE” (30%), “British English is the standard and original variety of English language” (20%), “I used to study in the UK” (10%), “The school leaving examination follows the British rules” (5%), “AmE is less challenging” (5%).

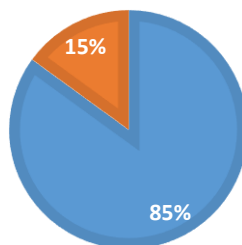


## 2. Do you think it is important for students to know the major differences between British and American English? If so, why?

85% of the teachers considered students' awareness of the major differences between BrE and AmE important. To vindicate their statements, the teachers alleged that the students should be aware of the basic vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and spelling differences. In addition, 25% of the teachers stated that knowing the basic differences rank among the elementary knowledge of English language.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF BRE/AME DIFFERENCES

■ Important ■ Unimportant

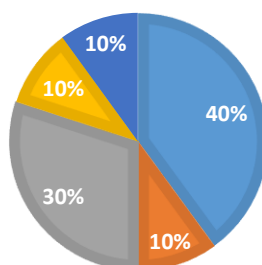


### 3. What variety of English do Czech students prefer in your opinion?

40% of the teachers considered AmE more preferred by the Czech students. 30% stated that it depended on the surrounding, primary school teachers or watching films or television series. 10% were in favour of BrE, 10% for combination of BrE and AmE and 10% of the teachers claimed that the students did not use either variety.

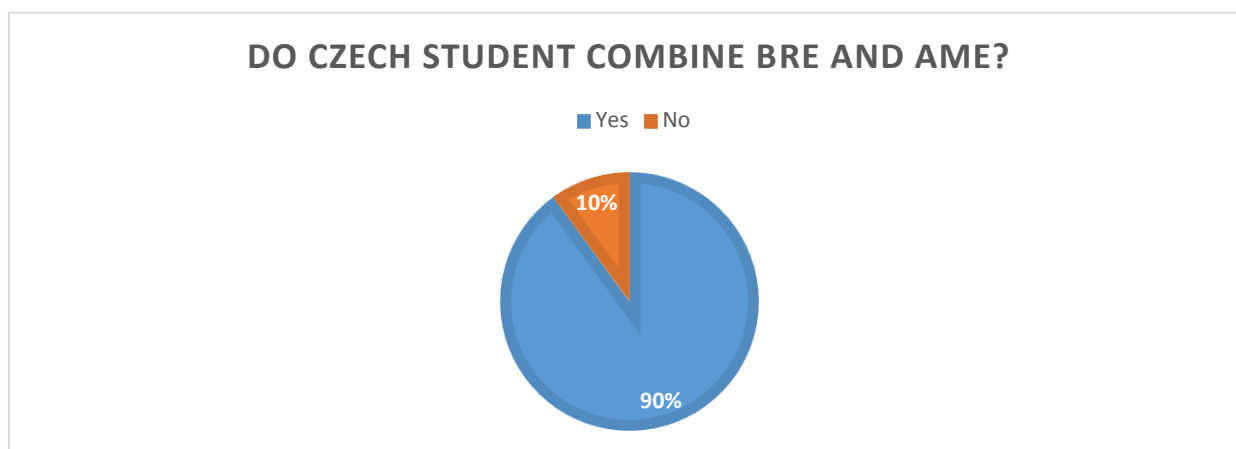
### CZECH STUDENTS' PREFERENCES

■ AmE ■ BrE ■ It depends ■ Combination ■ Neither



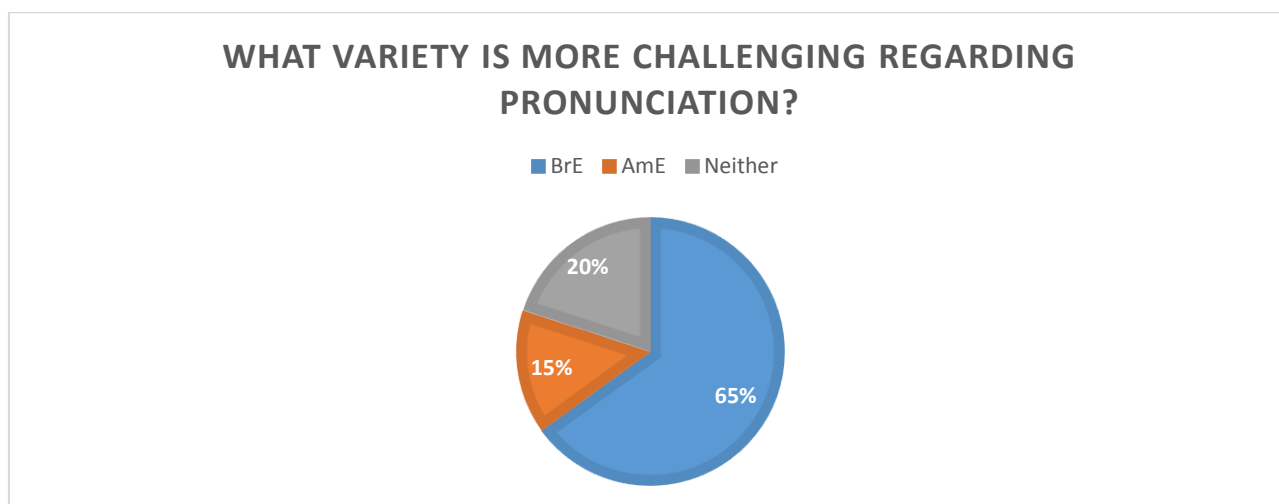
**4. Do you agree that studying British variety at schools/ universities along with the influence of American variety from films, television series etc. in the leisure time has caused the Czech students combine both varieties?**

The vast majority of teachers (90%) agreed (or did not deny) that Czech students have tendency to combine the two varieties of English owing to these reasons.



**5. What variety of English do you find more challenging in terms of pronunciation?**

Majority of the teachers (65%) considered BrE more challenging regarding pronunciation (“younger generation tend to AmE”; “British regional accents”; “AmE is more “free””). 20% of the teachers alleged that neither variety is more challenging than the other.



### 3.1.6 Differences in pronunciation

In order to demonstrate clear sticking to one variety regarding pronunciation, the following excerpts were chosen from videos on the internet. The excerpts are transcriptions of spoken English produced by Czech native speakers. Speaker 1 is a Czech singer who obviously prefers the British variety. Speaker 2 is a Czech top model who lives in the U.S. The focus of the analysis was on the phonetic features covered in the first theoretical part of the thesis.

#### Speaker 1

“Definetely, I think we are gonna play some more songs that you have never heard before (..)”<sup>4</sup>

[“defɪnətli, aɪ θɪŋk wi ə 'gʌnə pleɪ səm mɔː sɒŋz ðæt ju hæv 'nevə hæv hɜːd bɪ'fɔː (..)“]

The first speaker was clearly using the British pronunciation since he was not using rhoticity in words *are, more, never, heard, before*.

#### Speaker 2

“I didn’t think I was beautiful, because growing up, I had these super long legs, super long arms, always wore pants, never wore dress like that before, I was like sporty (...)”<sup>5</sup>

[“aɪ 'dɪdnt θɪŋk aɪ wəz 'bjuːtɪfl, bɪ'kɒz 'grəʊɪŋ ʌp, aɪ həd ðiːz 'suːpə lɔːŋ legz, 'suːpə lɔːŋ ɑːrms, 'ɔːlweɪz wɔːr pænts, 'nevə wɔːr dres laɪk ðæt bɪ'fɔːr, aɪ wəz laɪk 'spɔːrɪdi (...)“]

The second speaker clearly used the American pronunciation for she used rhoticity in words *super, arms, wore, never, before, sporty*. Another aspect of American English was found in the pronunciation of words *beautiful* and *sporty* where the speaker used the *d* sound in the letter *t*. Even though these examples are analysed from the phonetic point of view, the speaker 2 also used a word of American vocabulary – *pants*.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3\\_k4WtR9oo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3_k4WtR9oo) (2:23-2:28)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoQmodstvXE> (1:55-2:04)

#### 4. CONCLUSION

One of the major purposes of this thesis was to present an overall look at the elementary differences between British and American English from the historical, grammatical, phonetic and lexicological point of view along with the influence on Czech native speakers.

It is necessary to highlight that British English and American English are only varieties of English, not two separated languages. There are several differences in grammar (*at the weekend* (BrE) / *on the weekend* (AmE)), pronunciation (*dance* [da:ns (BrE)/ dæns (AmE)]) and vocabulary (*underground* (BrE) / *subway* (AmE)), however, neither variety is considerably different from the other that it would cause a complete misunderstanding of either British English or American English speaker.

Since English is a global language which is widely used in the Czech Republic as well, the thesis attempted to determine the situation in this country in terms of the use of the British and American varieties among the Czech native speakers. In order to detect their attitude and knowledge of British and American English differences, the research contained two questionnaires, a test, an analysis of vocabulary consistency and an analysis of the Czechs' spoken English. From the results of the research it is evident that many Czechs have a tendency to combine both varieties. It is perhaps caused by the fact that the Czech educational system uses rather the British variety and that the American variety is encountered in films or media more often than its British equivalent. The vast majority of the teachers (85%) who participated in the research confirmed that they stuck to the British variety and also, the majority of the questionnaire's respondents (80%) stated that their teachers preferred such variety. The thesis provided the elementary differences between both varieties in the theoretical part which were consequently used in the test in the practical part. The test was filled in three different sorts of schools (private primary school, secondary school, university) and the results revealed that the competence of the students in the test greatly depended on their teachers, quality of the school and their willingness to learn new features of English language.

The thesis provided only the elementary differences between British and American English. Further investigations, which would considerably extend the given research, would be perhaps suitable for the diploma thesis. Regarding the research, one could for example observe the

use of British and American English at Czech schools/universities in a larger detail and in more locations of the Czech Republic or the use of BrE and AmE worldwide.

## 5. REFERENCE LIST

- Algeo, J. (2006). *British or American English? A Handbook of Word and Grammar Patterns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available from <http://uloz.to/x4KGBZ8/britishoramericanelish-pdf>
- Clandfield and Maxwell (2010), Differences in American and British grammar. *One Stop English*. (<http://www.onestopenglish.com/grammar/grammar-reference/american-english-vs-british-english/differences-in-american-and-british-english-grammar-article/152820.article>, 20. 3. 2014)
- Darragh, G. (2000). *A to Zed, A to Zee. A Guide to the Differences between British and American English*. Editorial Stanley. Available from <http://uloz.to/xvCB4wP/darragh-a-to-zed-a-to-zee-differences-between-british-and-american-english-stanley-2000-pdf>
- Davies, C. (1997). *Divided by a Common Language*. Sarasota, Florida: Mayflower Press. First Edition.
- Doubravová, I. (1999). *Přehledná gramatika. Rozdíly britské a americké angličtiny*. Dubicko: agentura INFOA. Print
- Kövecses, Z. (2000). *American English, an Introduction*. Broadview Press.
- Marckwardt, A. H., & Quirk, R. (1965). *A Common Language, British and American English*. Washington, D.C. English Teaching Division Information Center Service.
- Melen D. (2010). *Výslovnost angličtiny na pozadí češtiny*. Praha: Big Ben Bookshop Prague.
- Peprník, J. (1982). *Slovník amerikanismů*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.
- Roach, P. (2009). *English Phonetics and Phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rohdenburg, G., & Schlüter, J. (2009). *One Language, Two Grammars? Differences between British and American English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Starvik, J., & Leech, G. (2006). *English: One Tongue, Many Voices*. Houndmills, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. Available from <http://uloz.to/xJNJf34M/svartvik-leech-english-one-tongue-many-voices-pdf>



Stempleski, S. (2004). Food and Cooking in American and British English. *MED Magazine*. 16.2. 2004.  
(<http://www.macmillandictionaries.com/MED-Magazine/February2004/16-feature-food.htm>, 19.2. 2014)

## 6. SUMMARY IN CZECH

Cílem této bakalářské práce bylo nastínit elementární rozdíly mezi britskou a americkou angličtinou. Rozdíly byly zpracovány z hlediska gramatiky, fonetiky a slovní zásoby. Práce se také zaměřila na historii divize anglického jazyka. Dalším cílem práce bylo zanalyzovat výskyt těchto variant v Česku, tedy, zjistit, zda-li čeští rodilý mluvčí, kteří používají angličtinu spíše preferují britskou či americkou variantu. Z výsledků analýzy je zřejmé, že Češi spíše než preferují jednu variantu, kombinují obě dvě, a to také pravděpodobně kvůli studiu britské angličtiny ve školách a přicházení s americkou variantou do styku ve volném čase. Dalším cílem analýzy bylo zjistit preference českých učitelů angličtiny a jejich zkušenosti s českými studenty. Výzkum prokázal, že 80% dotázaných učitelů preferuje britskou variantu. Preference a znalosti rozdílů AmE a BrE mezi českými studenty byli zjištěny skrze rozsáhlý test.

## 7. APPENDIX 1

### Test for students

Věk:

1. Přeložte následující slova do AJ (pokud možno bez slovníku)

*Barva:*

*Soused:*

*Cestování:*

*Kritizovat:*

*Specialita:*

*Centrum:*

*Divadlo:*

2. Dejte následující slovesa do perfekta a préterita (např. take – took- taken)

*Burn:*

*Get:*

*Dream:*

*Spell:*

3. Přelož následující fráze

*O víkendu:*

*Ve škole:*

*Na ulici:*

4. Identifikuj v následujících dvojicích slov do jaké varianty (BrE/AmE) patří (za druhé slovo stačí napsat buď A. či B (např. film/ movie A.)

*College/ university*

*eggplant/ aubergine*

*Chips/ crisps*

*french fries/ chips*

*truck/ lorry*

*pavement / sidewalk*

*Bills/ notes*

5. K následujícím britským výrazům přidejte americký ekvivalent

*Shopping centre:*

*Post:*

*Biscuit:*

*Sweets:*

*Autumn :*

6. Jak byste reagoval/a při: (lze více)

- Souhlasu: *sure/ will do/ right*

## **8. APPENDIX 2**

### **Questionnaire for teachers**

1. Jakou variantu anglického jazyka preferujete ve výuce a proč?
2. Myslíte si, že je důležité, aby studenti znali základní rozdíly britské a americké angličtiny? Pokud ano, proč?
3. Jakou variantu AJ podle Vás čeští studenti preferují?
4. Myslíte si, že studium britské angličtiny na českých školách a vliv americké angličtiny ve volném čase (filmy, seriály, média atd.) mají za následek, že čeští studenti tyto dvě varianty kombinují?
5. Jakou variantu AJ shledáváte obtížnější z hlediska výslovnosti?

## 9. APPENDIX 3

### Questionnaire

Věk:

Maximální dosažené vzdělání:

1. Jste si vědom/a, že existuje více variant anglického jazyka?
2. Jaké varianty anglického jazyka znáte?
3. Záleží Vám na tom, jakou AJ používáte?
4. Jakou variantu AJ preferujete při používání tohoto jazyka?
5. Jakou variantou AJ jste byl/a vyučován/a ve škole?
6. Myslíte si, že Češi spíše preferují americkou angličtinu před britskou, či tyto dvě varianty kombinují?
7. Myslíte si, že je pro Čechy snazší napodobit americký než britský přízvuk? Pokud ano, tak proč?
8. Souhlasíte s tím, že se na českých školách spíše vyučuje britská angličtina?
9. Zkuste napsat co nejvíce rozdílů mezi britskou a americkou angličtinou, které Vás napadnou
10. Z jakého důvodu si myslíte, že má v současné době americká angličtina narůstající vliv?
11. Máte raději britský či americký přízvuk?