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Západočeská univerzita v Plzni

Fakulta filozofická

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**ENGLISH WORDS COMMONLY
MISPRONOUNCED**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

Plzeň, duben 2014

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INTRODUCTION

The English and Czech language belong to different language groups and its pronunciation differs in many ways. Czech is a part of *Slavonic* language, whereas English belongs to the *Western Germanic* language. This classification brings new sounds unknown to Czech speakers that they have to learn and adapt to so they are able to pronounce English words correctly.

In view of the fact that English written and spoken form differs, it is necessary to learn the pronunciation of the words at the same time as their spelling. There are several general rules of how to read vowels and consonants and their combinations; however, they do not apply in all cases, and English has many exceptions. It follows, that it is important to verify the correct pronunciation with a dictionary.

First problem a new learner of English language faces are new sounds, such as [θ] and [ð] that are unknown to Czech speakers. The way to pronounce these two sounds is to put the tip of tongue between our teeth and pronounce “s” (in case of [θ]) and “z” (in case of [ð]). However, when Czech students start with English, their teachers do not demand such pronunciation, and students tend to replace these sounds with Czech sounds “t/f/s” ([θ]) or “d” ([ð]) for many years, and it becomes hard to remove such pronunciation. The English sound “r” is also pronounced differently than in Czech. In English, the “r” is rolled, and does not touch the palate, while in Czech, it vibrates.

Another problem Czech students have with English, are voiced and voiceless consonants¹. In English, [p, t, k, f, θ, s, ʃ, tʃ] do not become voiceless at the end of the word as in Czech, but remain voiced [b, d, g, v, ð, z, ʒ, dʒ]. Another problem students have to cope with, is so called “schwa” ([ə], [ɜ:]), often referred to as a “*hesitation sound*”^[1] and is replaced with “e/o” in speech by Czech students.

¹ While pronouncing voiced consonants, the voice is used, thus, the throat vibrates, whereas while making unvoiced consonants, there is no vibration, just a short explosion of air.

Consonants such as “ŋ” and “w” cause problems, too. The nasal consonant “ŋ” exists in Czech language; however, people pronounce it unconsciously before [k] (banka, Lenka, lanko...) and do not realise it does not sound the same as “n”, whereas in English, it is necessary to distinguish these two sounds. The reason “w” is not pronounced correctly is, that Czech speakers do not know the English sound and at the beginning, they tend to enunciate it as “v” (when pronouncing “w”, the lips start in an O shape and then move outward, whereas in the case of “v”, upper teeth touch the lower lip and let it vibrate). Even after they learn the difference and the correct pronunciation, they often mix these two sounds. Vowels in both languages are also different. For example, Czech language knows only [a, á], while we can find several variants in English.

In the first part of this thesis, I am going to introduce articulators, English system of vowels and consonants as well as brief comparison of Czech and English vowels. The second part is devoted to my personal research that is based on recording of Czech students and subsequent analysis. The aim of this thesis is to see how problematic the sounds mentioned above are for learners of English.

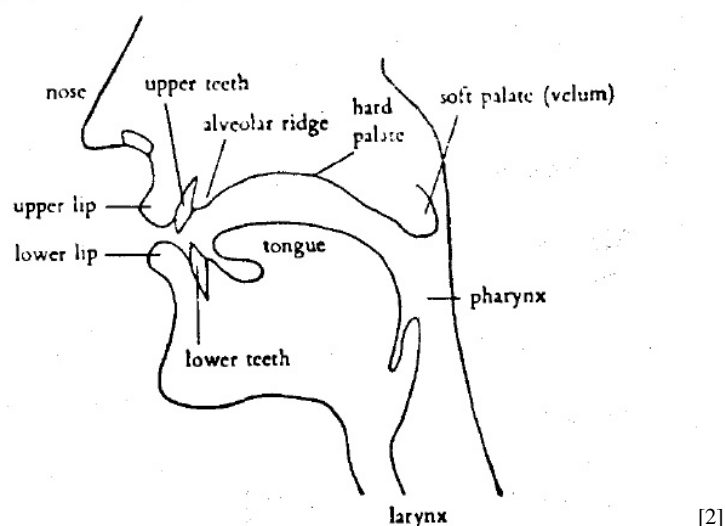
English transcription symbols are based on IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet).

THEORETICAL CHAPTER

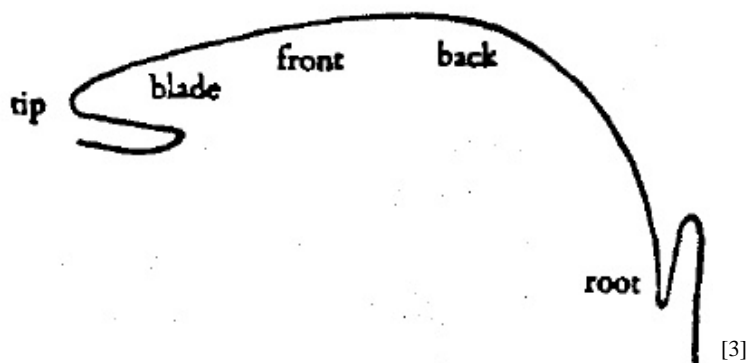
1 The production of speech sounds

1.1. Articulators

The correct manner of speech is important for understanding, and it is necessary to learn to use speech organs properly, because they make sounds. These sounds are produced by expelling air from the lungs and using muscles in the chest. Articulators are divided into *active* (upper and lower lips, lower jaw, tongue, soft palate uvula and vocal cords) and *passive* (hard palate, gums, upper and lower teeth).



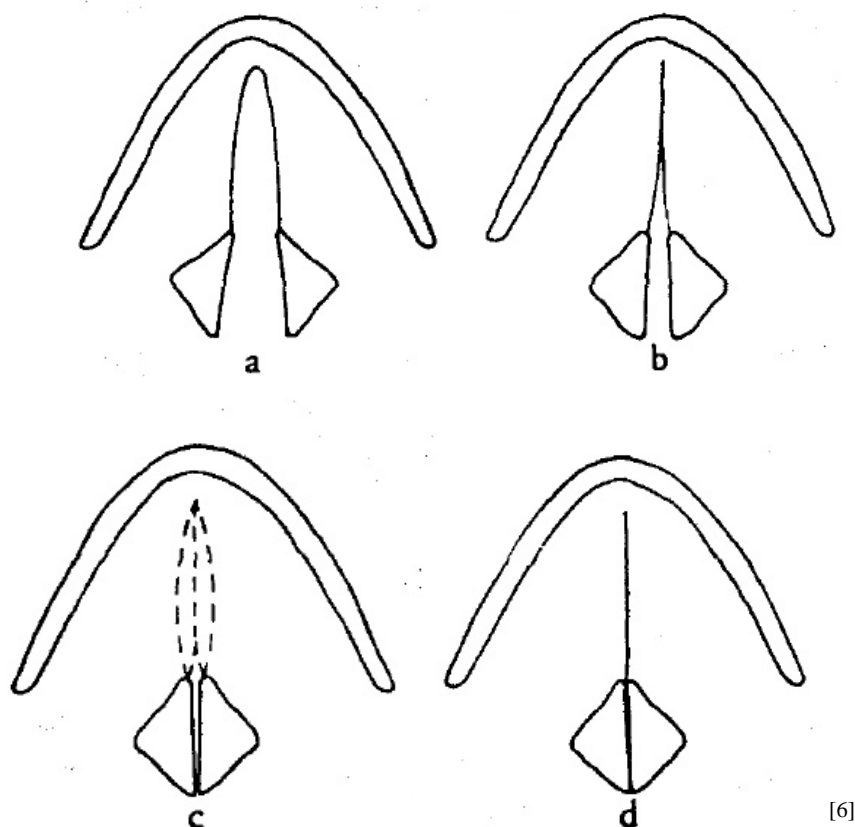
The *lower* and especially *upper teeth*, together with *the tongue*, are responsible for many speech sounds. The tongue is a flexible muscle and creates many sounds, depending on what position it takes in the mouth and what part is used. We distinguish five general parts: tip, blade, front, back and root. *Lips* are also very important and are responsible for making vowels and consonants. They may be in contact with the teeth, pressed together or rounded.



The larynx is in the neck and when we breathe, the air passes through it. The voice is created together with glottis, which is the space between the vocal folds. They can be apart (it means the glottis is open) or pressed together (it means the glottis is closed).^[4]

According to Peter Roach, there are four different states of the glottis^[5]:

- a) **Wide apart** – the vocal folds are in this position for normal breathing and usually during voiceless consonants.
- b) **Narrow glottis** – the air passes through the glottis in this position and a fricative sound is made.
- c) **Position for vocal fold vibration** – the edges of the vocal folds are (nearly) touching each other, and air passing through the glottis opens and closes them rapidly and repeatedly and it causes vibration.
- d) **Vocal folds tightly closed** – when the vocal folds are firmly pressed together, the air cannot pass between them. This situation is called glottal stop or glottal plosive.



1.2. Vowels and consonants

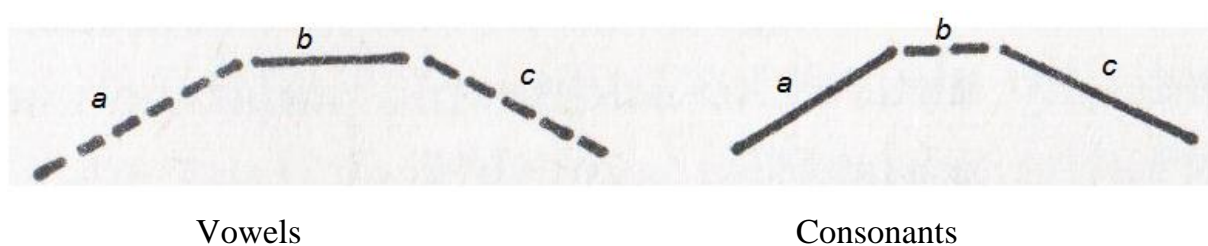
When describing various activities of the speech organs, we talk about two basic categories of sounds: vowels and consonants. A vowel is a sound made when the flow of air passes from the larynx to the lips and no obstacle appears, whereas when pronouncing a consonant, there is an obstacle that keeps the air from passing through the mouth. Vowels are always a part of syllables.

Consonants are also mostly closed and the vocal folds are less tight, while vowels differ on their quality (height, backness and lip position), and the vocal folds are approximate and vibrate fast, when they are pronounced. Some vowels are similar to consonants, and are called semi-vowels.

Alena Skaličková identifies three phases that help us to differentiate vowels and consonants in her book ^[7]:

- a) **Intension** – it is necessary to get the speech organs into the right position before making a particular sound.

- b) **Tension** – the main position in which the sound is produced. It is necessary for the speech organs to stay in this position for some time (this duration is longer in case of vowels and syllabic consonants and shorter in case of non-syllabic consonants). It is the phase that identifies vowels and syllabic consonants. Non-syllabic consonants cannot stay in this position for a long time (due to the motion from the last position to the next one that their pronunciation means).
- c) **Detension** – situation when the speech organs leave the previous position either to prepare for another articulation or off position.



[8]

Consonants seem to be more important than vowels, regarding to the meaning. If all vowels are removed from a concrete word, it is still possible to guess the meaning of the word, for instance, [d.f.nc.] can still be read as *defence*, despite the fact the vowels do not appear in the word. On the other hand, if all consonants are erased from the same word, [.e.e..e], the meaning cannot be identified anymore.

2 English vowels

2.1. Classification of vowels

There are several standards, depending on how the vowels are classified:

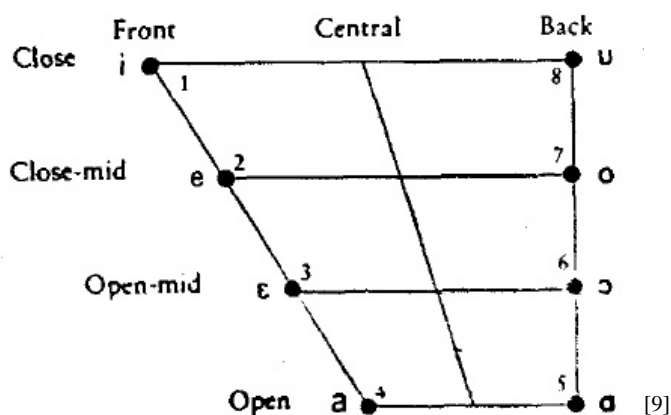
1. *according to the position of the tongue*

- a) **Open or close vowels** - while pronouncing these vowels, the tongue can be placed close to the roof of the mouth or this distance is greater. Thus, open or close vowels can be made by moving the tongue (the lower jaw) up or down. We talk about tongue height.
- b) **Front, central and back vowels** – whether the vowel is front, central or back, depends on the position of the tongue in the mouth while pronouncing it. The tongue can be either at the front, thus very close to the teeth, at a central position of the mouth or at the back, when it almost touches the soft palate. We talk about backness.

2. *according to the position of lips*

- a) **Rounded** – the lips create a small circle and are pushed forwards.
- b) **Spread** – the corners spread to the sides.
- c) **Neutral** – the lips barely move.

Vowels that consist of one sound are called monophthongs, and the English language has twelve of them. According to IPA, English vowels are divided into eight cardinal vowels, as seen on the picture below.



English written and spoken form differs, and it is necessary to verify pronunciation in a dictionary. However, there are several general rules that may indicate how to read particular vowels. Knowing whether the syllable is stressed or unstressed, graphically open (i.e. ends with a vowel) or closed (i.e. ends with a consonant) is very important, as the pronunciation of vowels changes to [ə] or [ɪ] in unstressed syllables and graphically open/closed syllables indicate the pronunciation.

Openness and closeness is important for stressed syllables, because the pronunciation of vowels in *graphically open syllables* is the same as in the alphabet (“long” pronunciation). Thus, written “a, e, i, o, u” will be pronounced as [eɪ, i:, aɪ, əʊ, ju] (Kate, be). The same rule may apply in closed syllables, too, if the word consists of two vowels (*rain, seat*).

In *graphically closed syllables* (“short” pronunciation), the letters “e, i, o” are pronounced “as they are written”, i.e. [e, ɪ, ɔ] (*us, bet*). However, written “a” changes into [æ] and written “u” ends with [ʌ] (*cat, cup*). Common words such as *every, city, body, study...* are pronounced shortly despite the fact that the syllable is open.

Several consonants can also influence the length of the vowel. These are gh, r, l, w (It is necessary to add that these rules are not absolute in all cases).

- a) gh – the pronunciation of *i + gh* is “long” (*sight*)
- b) r – written *ar* is pronounced as [ɑ] (*far*)
 written *or* is pronounced as [ɔ] (*stork*)
 written *ir, er, ur* are pronounced as [ɜ] (*fir, her, fur*)

- c) l – very often changes the pronunciation of *a* into [o] (*all*)
the pronunciation of *o* + *ld* is also “long”. (*cold*)
- d) w – very often changes the pronunciation of *a* into [o] (*water*)
[10]

2.2. Contribution of vowels

Peter Roach, in his book, describes vowels as the following^[11]:

2.2.1. Short vowels

- [ɪ] more open than [i], the lips are slightly spread (*sit*)
- [e] front vowel between [e] and [ɜ], the lips are slightly spread (*pen*)
- [æ] front vowel, but not quite as open as [a], the lips are slightly spread (*cat*)
- [ʌ] central vowel, more open, the lip position is neutral (*but*)
- [ɒ] quite fully back, the lips are slightly rounded (*clock*)
- [ʊ] more open than [u], the lips are slightly rounded (*book*)

2.2.2. Long vowels

Their symbol consists of one vowel symbol and a length mark.

- [i:] similar to [i], but more close and front, the lips are only slightly spread (*sheep*)
- [ɑ:] the lip position is neutral, open vowel (*heart*)
- [ɔ:] the tongue height is between cardinal vowel [ɔ] and [o], almost fully back and has quite strong lip-rounding (*ball*)
- [u:] less back and less close than [u], while the lips are only moderately rounded (*tooth*)
- [ɜ:] the lip position is neutral (*purse*)

2.2.3. Diphthongs

Diphthongs are vowels that consist of two independent ones. Unlike pure vowels, there are not pronounced together, but there is a glide, moving from one vowel to another. The first part of diphthong is longer and stronger, and the sec-

ond part is really short and quieter. English has eight diphthongs divided into three groups, depending on what the glide moves towards.

a) *Centring diphthongs*

The glide moves towards the ə vowel:

[ɪə] the starting point is a little closer than [i] (*dear*)

[eə] this diphthong begins with the same vowel sound as [e] (*chair*)

[ʊə] has a starting point slightly closer than [ʊ] (*tour*)

b) *Closing diphthongs*

They all end with a glide from a relatively more open towards a relatively closer vowel. The second part of the diphthong is weak.

Glide towards [ɪ]:

[aɪ] begins with an open vowel which is between front and back; it is quite similar to the [ʌ] (*my*)

[ɔɪ] the first part of this diphthong has the same quality as [ɔ:] (*boy*)

[eɪ] the starting point is the same as the [e] (*tale*)

Glide towards [ʊ]:

[əʊ] first position is the same as for the „schwa“, the lips may be slightly rounded, there is a noticeable lip-rounding while gliding towards [ʊ]: (*phone* [fəʊn])

[aʊ] begins with a vowel similar to [ɑ:], the end being somewhere between close-mid and open-mid in tongue height. There is only slight lip-rounding (*house*).

2.2.4. Triphthongs

They consist of three independent vowels with a quick glide from one to another and then to the last one without interruption. These days, however, they are considered as diphthongs with “schwa” added behind the second vowel.

[eɪə] *player* ['pleɪə]

[laɪə]	<i>liar</i> ['laɪə]
[ɔɪə]	<i>loyal</i> ['lɔɪə]
[əʊə]	<i>lower</i> ['ləʊə]
[aʊə]	<i>hour</i> [aʊə]

2.3. Comparison of Czech and English vowels

The Czech vowels system is very simple. There are five long [á, é, í/ý, ó, ú] and five short vowels that are in pairs [a, e, i/y, o, u] and three diphthongs [ou, au, eu]. Long vowels are twice as long as short vowels. The main difference in pronunciation of English and Czech vowels is in the position of tongue. In Czech, the tip of the tongue is usually in contact with the mouth cavity, whereas in English, the tongue hardly ever touches these parts.

According to Alena Skaličková, English and Czech vowels may be compared as follows^[12]:

When pronouncing English [i], the tip of the tongue is in the front and does not touch any part of mouth, and the lips are spread. Czech [í/ý] is less back and the tongue leans against lower teeth.

English [ɪ] is more open than Czech [i], position of tongue is the same as described above.

In English, the vowel [e] is pronounced when the tongue is back and its tip is free in the mouth cavity. The lips may also be little shaped. In Czech [e], the lips are not active, and the tongue leans against lower teeth.

English [æ] is widely open and the tongue does not touch the lower teeth. It is considered somewhere between a short and long vowel. It does not have any equivalent in Czech and is often compared to Czech [é].

In English [ʌ], the tongue is placed freely back, while in case of Czech [a], the tongue touches the spot between the lower teeth and gum. Lips are neutral in both cases.

English [ɑ] is more back and the tongue has no contact with the mouth cavity. Czech [á] is more open.

English [ɔ] is more back than Czech [o].

English [o] is very back, lips are rounded more than in Czech.

When pronouncing English [ʊ], the lips move forward more than in Czech [u] and the tongue is free in the mouth.

English [u]: rounding of the lips is even greater than in the case of [ʊ], the tongue has no contact with the mouth cavity. It sounds higher than Czech [ú].

English [ə] (schwa) does not have any equivalent in Czech; however, when a Czech speaker pronounces several letters of the alphabet, such as *b*, *c*, *d* etc., it is possible to hear this schwa sound: [bə, cə, də]. Schwa is described in more detail below.

2.4. Schwa

Schwa is the most common sound in English and appears in almost all weak syllables. Knowing how to pronounce schwa, and when it appears, help foreigners master their English, as well as understand fast speech. It is mid (half way between close and open) or central (half-way between front and back). This sound can occur several times in one word, for instance, in the word *particular* [pətɪkjələ] is schwa pronounced three times.

There are several variations how schwa can be spelled in a word, nevertheless, it is necessary to take into consideration how to pronounce the letter as schwa is possible merely when the syllable is weak:

- a) as 'a': *relative* ['relətɪv], *about* [ə'baʊt]
- b) as 'ar': *spectacular* [spek'tækjʊlə], *binoculars* [bɪ'nɒkjʊləz]
- c) as 'o': *toe* [təʊ], *tomorrow* [tə'mɒrəʊ]
- d) as 'or': *tutor* ['tju:tə], *opportunity* [ˌɒpə'tju:nɪtɪ]
- e) as 'e': *here* [hɪə], *argument* ['ɑ:gjʊmənt]
- f) as 'er': *mother* ['mʌðə], *perhaps* [pə'hæps]
- g) as 'u': *figure* ['fɪgjər], *difficult* ['dɪfɪkəlt]
- h) as 'ou': *marvellous* ['mɑ:vələs], *famous* ['feɪməs]
- i) as 'ate'²: *intimate* ['ɪntɪmət], *accurate* ['ækjərət]

[13]

² There are two possible pronunciations, either [ə] or [ɪ].

3 Consonants

3.1. Classification of consonants

The articulators play an important role in making consonants. The tongue, throat, lips, teeth, hard and soft palate and strength of air all influence the final sound. According to the place of articulation, we distinguish:

Bilabial – these consonants are made when using both lips, which means that the upper and lower lip firmly press each other (p, b, m).

Labiodentals – to pronounce labiodentals consonant, it is necessary to touch lower lip with upper teeth and breathe out (f, v).

(Inter) dentals – the tip of the tongue is placed between upper and lower front teeth (θ, ð).

Alveolar – these consonant sounds are created when the tongue (almost) touches the spot on the roof of the mouth behind upper teeth (s, z). If the tongue moves slightly backward to make a sound, this consonant is called post-alveolar (ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ).

Velar – the back of tongue presses the area between the hard palate and soft palate and a velar sound is created (k, g).

Glottal – this consonant is articulated with glottis (h).

3.2. Contribution of consonants

[p] It is non-aspirated in the medial or final position: *depth*, *airship*, while it is aspirated³ in front position: *pool*, *pill*.

It usually is not pronounced in combinations *ps*, *ph* or *pt*: *psychic* ['saɪkɪk], *pneumonia* [nju:'mæʊniə] etc., and in few other words, for example *jumped*.

³ The sound is pronounced with strong flow of air escaping through the vocal folds and it creates a sound similar to h.

[t] In medial or final position, it is non-aspirated: *metal*. In initial position is usually aspirated: *ten*.

Past participles are pronounced as *t* if the last letter of the infinitive is pronounced as [p, f, s, ʃ, tʃ, k]⁴: *liked*, *washed*. Written *t* remains silent in words such as *ballet* [bæ'leɪ] and combinations *-stle*, *-sten*, *-stn* (*castle*, *listen*).

[d] The ending *-ed* is pronounced as [ɪd] if the last letter in infinitive is pronounced with [t,d]: *wanted*. If the last letter in the word is pronounced voiced, it is said as [d]: *played*.^[14]

There are a few words when the sound [d] is silent, for instance: *Wednesday*, *grandchild*.

[k] In medial or final position, it is non-aspirated: *coke*, *pick*. It is usually aspirated in initial position: *cat*, *kill*. It is not pronounced if it proceeds *n*: *knee*, *knife*.

[f] It is pronounced in words as *philosophy*, *laugh*.

[s] Final *s* in the function of plural is pronounced as [s] if the last letter of the word is unvoiced⁵: *parents*. Written *s* is not pronounced for instance in *island*, *apropos* [ˌæprə'pəʊ].

[z] Written *s* is pronounced as *z* in final position when the word has one unstressed syllable (is [ɪz], as [əz]) and in the function of plural when the last letter in the word is pronounced with voiced consonants (*needs*, *names*). If the words end with the sounds [s, z, ʃ, tʃ, dʒ], then the pronunciation is [ɪz]: *wishes*, *buses*.^[15]

[ʃ] It is pronounced, for instance, in words as *pressure* and *luxury*.

[tʃ] It is pronounced in words as *Czech* or *chicken*.

[dʒ] It is pronounced, for example, in words as *jail* or *suggestion*.

⁴ When words such as *aged*, *blessed*, *crooked*, *learned*, *naked*... are used as adjectives, the ending is pronounced as [ɪd].

⁵ Unvoiced consonants do not create vibration of the throat, when they are pronounced: [p, t, k, f, θ].

- [b] It is pronounced in words as *bombard*, *member*, and it remains silent in several words, such as *debt* [det] or *comb* [kəʊm].
- [g] It is pronounced in words as *get* or *leg*. There are several words where the consonant is silent, as *sign* and *through* [θru:].
- [v] It is pronounced in words as *of* [əv], *love*.
- [θ], [ð] These sounds replace written digraph⁶ th. Words pronounced with the first digraph are, for instance, *with* and *throat*. Words such as *without* and *this* are pronounced with the second one.
- [ʒ] It is pronounced in words as *decision*, *pleasure*.
- [m] It pronounced in words as *mum*, *comfort*. It reminds silent in the word *mnemonic* [nɪ'mɒnɪk].
- [n] It is pronounced in words as *name*, *warn*. This consonant is silent in combination -*mn*, for example *autumn*, *hymn* [hɪm].
- [ŋ] This sound stands for [ng, nk]. It is pronounced in final position of words (*tongue*, *morning*) and in most cases in middle position. If it appears in the middle of a morpheme⁷ or comparative and superlative suffixes -*er* and -*est*, then the pronunciation comprises of [ŋ + g] (*finger*, *longer*).
- [r] This sound is not pronounced when it is placed in front of another consonant and at the end of words (if no vowel follows): *nurse*, *sister* (but *car is* [kɑ:rɪz]).
- [h] This consonant reminds silent usually in words that are derivated from other languages. For instance, *honest*, *messiah* [mɪ'saɪə] and *hour*.
- [l] This sound usually remains silent if it stands between [ɑ, o, əʊ] and [f, v, k, m], as in *talk*, *salmon* ['sæmən] ... and in words such as *should* or *could*.

⁶ It means two consonants written together to represent a single sound.

⁷ One morpheme cannot be divided into two grammatical pieces (hanger).

[j, w] These are called semivowels⁸. The second consonant remains silent in initial position before *r* (*write, wrong*) and in words as *two* and *answer*.

⁸ Sounds that are pronounced as vowels, but their primary function is to be a consonant.

4 American English

The British pronunciation is strictly defined by IPA, nevertheless in American English, there is no official standard. There are few main differences between these variations that should be mentioned, because students often mix features of British and American pronunciation and, most of the time, they do not realise that their English is not “pure”. The main reason why Czech students do not follow one concept of pronunciation may be the school system and globalization.

Although teachers in Czech teach students pronunciation according to IPA at the beginning of the studies, the rules of pronunciation are explained only in general, and students are not motivated to practice correct pronunciation or nobody corrects them. When their knowledge of English increases, they start to be surrounded by spoken English everywhere, thus, on the radio, TV, videos. Very often, the songs or TV shows are in American English. In addition, American English is considered “easier”, and so students copy the pronunciation and start to combine pronunciation they hear from their teacher with the pronunciation they hear externally. Pronunciation of several common words also differs (ant, ask, garage ...)

- a) **Consonant [r]**: In standard British English, the sound „r” is omitted after the vowel (if it is not at the beginning of the syllable). On the other hand, in American English, the sound [r] is clearly heard (*fear*: [fiə]/[fiər]).
- b) **Consonant [t]**: If this consonant appears between two vowels or in an unstressed vowel, and between two unstressed vowels, it can change into the sound [d] in American English (*city*: ['sɪtɪ]/['sɪdɪ]). In American English, the consonant “t” may become silent when preceding “n”: *Internet* ['ɪnə,net].

- c) **Vowel [ɒ]:** It is more open in American English and changes into [ɑ:] (*doctor*: ['dɒktə]/['dɑ:ktər]).
- d) **Vowel [ɑ:]:** In American English, this vowel is pronounced as [æ] before nasal consonants, and if it does not appear at the end of syllable (*aunt*: [ɑ:nt]/[ænt]).
- e) **British group of sounds [nju, dju, tju, sju]** are usually read without the sound [j] in American English (*new*: [nju:]/[nu:]).

PRACTICAL CHAPTER

1 Research

I created an English text of twenty-five sentences that included words I know are problematic for learners of English to pronounce properly. This choice was based on my personal experience. There was not any connection between the sentences and words with similar pronunciation were not placed close to each other for verifying whether students are able to distinguish their pronunciation without knowing they are expected to.

Forty-two students of English were involved in this research and were divided into three groups. The first group, comprised of students who are going to graduate high school this May and English is one of the subjects they have to pass (hereinafter referred to as *Secondary school*). The second group, consisted of students finishing their first semester at the university and recently took the course of English phonetics and phonology (hereinafter referred to as *University*). The third and last group, contained students of English language finishing their last semester at the university, and their major is English (hereinafter referred to as *Undergraduate*). All students have been studying English for at least eight years so far.

Reading of the text took place in a classroom and all students of the same group were presented. One after another were asked to read the text loudly and were recorded on a voice recorder. Students were, in consideration of the length of their studies, expected to be familiar with the vocabulary that appeared in the text.

There were 16 students in the first group, 15 students in the second group and 11 students in the third group.

2 Analysis

2.1. Analyzed words in this research

Think: [θɪŋk]

Secondary school: Only five students pronounced this word properly. Five students replaced the [θ] sound with “f”, thus their pronunciation sounded like [fɪnk], three times the pronunciation was [tɪnk] and [sɪnk] was heard twice. In one case, the spoken word was the same as its written form, and so [θɪŋk].

University: The pronunciation of nine students was correct. Only one student replaced the right sound with incorrect [fɪnk], three students chose [tɪnk] and we can hear [sɪnk] twice among the students.

Undergraduate: All students in this group pronounced this word correctly.

Focused: [ˈfəʊkəst]

Secondary school: The most common pronunciation of this word was [fɒkjʊ:st], which was heard six times. The other possibilities were [fɒkjʊ:s], [fɒkust] (both two times) and [fɒkʊ:s] with [fɒkost] (both once). One student replaced this word with another word (confused). The rest were correct.

University: The pronunciation [fɒkjʊ:st] was heard 3 times, the others were: [fɒ:kʊs] (2 times), [fɒkjust], [fɒkost] and [fɒkəs] (all once). Six students were correct.

Undergraduate: Two students read the word as [fɒkjʊ:st], the rest of them were correct.

Aunt: [ɑ:nt]

Secondary school: The incorrect pronunciation that was heard the most, was [aʊnt] (by five students). One student said [ant] and one said [aun]. Pronunciation of the others was correct.

University: Three students replaced the sound [ɑ] with [o], and so the pronunciation was [o:nt]. Only one student said [aʊnt] and another [e:nt].

Undergraduate: Two incorrect ways of pronunciation appeared: [aunt] (three times) and [ænt]⁹ (once).

Crooked: ['krʊkɪd]

Secondary school: Within this group, only one student pronounced this word correctly. The majority of students mispronounced the ending –id and replaced it with –t, thus said [krukt] or [kru:kt] (ten students). Two students did not pronounce any ending in this word and their pronunciation sounded like [kru:k]. One student said [krakt].

University: The tendency to pronounce this word as [krukt] or [kru:kt] continues (six students did it). Other variations were [krukd] (appeared three times) and [kruk] (two times). Only four students knew the right pronunciation.

Undergraduate: The result in this group was the worst. There were no students who pronounced this word correctly. The most frequent mistake was, again, the pronunciation [krukt] (eight times). Two students said [krukd] and another omitted the ending: [kruk].

Salad: ['sæləd]

Secondary school: Only three students were able to pronounce this word correctly. Many variations appeared, the most often was heard [selet] (by six students), also [salat] (by four students) and [salad] (twice). One student said [seled].

University: Six students did not have any problem pronouncing the word correctly and only three students said [selit] and once [selid] was heard. The variations [sala:t] and [saled] were pronounced each by one student.

Undergraduate: The variations [selet] and [selit] were both pronounced by two students. Three students said [salat], and only four students were correct.

Hotel: [həʊ'tel]

Secondary school: This word seems to be very problematic for students, not at all only within this group. Only three students managed to say it properly. The most frequent pronunciation is [houtl], and was heard ten times. Two students

⁹ The issue is that this pronunciation is typical in American English.

read it the same way as it is written, thus [hotel], and once, it was pronounced as [hotl].

University: Error rate of these students was high, too. Once more, the most common way to pronounce it was [houtl], and eight students chose it as the right pronunciation. Other variation was just like in the previous group, [hotel] (which was heard twice).

Undergraduate: Within this group, four students mispronounced this word and said [houtl] anew, and two students said [hotl]. Five students were correct.

Because: [bi'kɔz]

Secondary school: This word consists of two short vowels and the sound [z] at the end. However, only one student followed these rules and pronounced it correctly, while the majority of the others replaced the English [ɒ] for Czech [o:] and said unvoiced [s]. Thus, the most frequent pronunciation in this group was [biko:s] and it was heard eleven times. Three more students pronounced it as [bikɔs] and the last one as [biko:z].

University: The results in this group were the best, as six students managed the right pronunciation. Six students said [bikɔs] and three remaining students pronounced it as [biko:s].

Undergraduate: In this group, no student followed both rules about pronunciation of his word. The most common way to pronounce it was [bikɔs] (heard eight times) and three students said [biko:s].

Cucumber: ['kju:kʌmbə]

Secondary school: Only one student respected the rule about silent [r], while seven students pronounced this sound and said [kju:kʌmbər]. There also appeared two often repeated pronunciations of this word, that is [kukumbr], pronounced by four students and [kakambr] was said by three of them. The remaining student pronounced it as [kumbera].

University: The number of students who pronounced it as [kju:kʌmbər] increased to nine, while only two students said it properly. The variation [kakambr] occurred in this group as well, twice. One student pronounced it as [kju:kembr] and another one as [kju:kumbr].

Undergraduate: There was nobody who pronounced this word correctly. Nine students pronounced it as [kju:kʌmbər] and the other two said [kəkəmbr].

Staff: [stɑ:f]

Secondary school: In this group, many students pronounced this word as another word, which is *stuff*. It means, the pronunciation sounded like [stʌf] in ten cases. The rest of them said [stef], which shows that students were trying to use the American pronunciation of this word.

University: The situation within this group was very similar to the previous one. Nine students pronounced the word as [stʌf] and the variation [stef] was heard three times. Three students were correct.

Undergraduate: Except two students, who were correct, all pronounced the word as [stʌf] again. No other variations appeared.

Receipt: [rɪ'si:t]

Secondary school: Only two students realised that the sound “p” is silent in this word. The most frequent variation that was heard was [risipt] / [risi:pt] (appeared six times and three times). Two students said [resaipt]. The variations [re-sept], [risaip] and [reseipt] were each pronounced once.

University: Results in this group were better. Only four students made a mistake, however, there was no correspondence in pronunciation of these students, thus each of the following variations was heard once: [risait], [riset], [risi:pt], [reset].

Undergraduate: Six students pronounced the word correctly, and as well as in the previous group, there was no common variation. It was heard: [resepi], [reset], [risipt], [risi:pt] and [risi:p].

Wonder: ['wʌndə]

Secondary school: Three mistakes in the pronunciation of this word appeared within this group. First, all students replaced the sound [ʌ] with [o]. Second, nine students replaced the sound [w] with [v]. Third, except one student, everyone ignored the rule of British English about silent [r] at the end of the word.

University: The results were similar to the previous group. Everyone said [wɒndər], except three students who did not pronounce the [r] sound, and only one student replaced the [w] by [v].

Undergraduate: In this group, there was nobody who respected the silent [r] sound. Eight students said [wɒndr] and one said [vɒndr]. Only two people pronounced the sound [ʌ] correctly.

Father's: ['fɑ:ðəs]

Secondary school: The sound [ð] seemed to be a big issue, because every student replaced it with the sound [d]. In addition, everybody but one student pronounced the [r] sound and ignored its silence. There was the appearance of a short variation [fadrs] (four times) and [fedrs] (ones) in this group.

University: One student pronounced the word correctly, the rest made the same mistakes that appeared in the group above, thus, the sound [d] was heard. The only improvement within this group was that three students respected the rule of British English about silent [r]. There also appeared short variation [fadrs] (twice) and [fadəs] (once).

Undergraduate: Three students were able to pronounce this word correctly, while five students said [fa:drs] (plus one student [fa:dəs]) and one said [fadrs] (plus one student [fadəs]).

Beard: [bɪəd]

Secondary school: There was only one student who pronounced the word correctly, and one person said the word almost properly; however, he did not respect the rule about silent [r], thus said [bɪərd]. The pronunciation of twelve students was similar to how another word sounds, i.e. *bird*, because they said [bɜrd]. Two other variations that occurred were [bred] and [[birt] (each was heard once).

University: The results were almost the same; two students pronounced it as [bɪərd] and eleven students said [bɜrd]. Two remaining students pronounced it as the word *bird*, thus said [bɜ:d].

Undergraduate: The pronunciation [bɜrd] was heard five times in this group and four students did not respect the rule of British English about silent [r]

in this word and said [bɪərd]. Two other variations appeared: [bər] and [bɜrt] (each pronounced once).

Singing: ['sɪŋɪŋ]

Secondary school: Only one student was able to pronounce this word correctly. Six of them ignored the silent [g] in the middle, and in addition, the final sound [ŋ] was pronounced as [ŋk] by them, thus this word sounded like [sɪŋgɪŋk]. Three students said [sɪŋgɪŋ] and the same number of them did not pronounce the [g] in the middle, but pronounced [k] at the end. In addition, they replaced the sound [ŋ] with [n] as well, thus said [sɪnɪŋk]. Other variations were [sainɪŋ] and [sɪŋɪŋg], both pronounced by one student.

University: The results were better within this group, six students pronounced it correctly. The most repeated mistake was to pronounce it as [sɪŋgɪŋ], which was heard by six students. The variation [sɪŋgɪŋk] appeared fewer times in this group than in the previous one, and was pronounced only two times. One student said [sinɪn].

Undergraduate: The results in this group can be compared to the results in the first one, because only one student pronounced this word correctly. The majority of them ignored the silent [g] and said [sɪŋgɪŋ] (seven students), two of them said [sɪŋgɪŋk], and the variation [sinɪŋk], was heard by one person.

Features: ['fi:tʃərs]

Secondary school: More than half of the students mispronounced this word totally and said [fju:tʃrs] (six times), [fju:tʃrs] (one time), [fju:tʃəs] (ones) and another student said [fətʃəris]. The rest of the students knew how to pronounce this word, however, only three students respected the rule of British English about silent [r] and pronounced it correctly, thus the other four students said [fi:tʃərs].

University: The pronunciation [fju:tʃrs] was heard within this group, too, by five students, and eight students said the [r] sound, which means [fi:tʃərs] was heard. The rest of them (three people) pronounced the word correctly.

Undergraduate: In contrast to the previous groups, only one student pronounced this word as [fju:tʃrs]. However, there was nobody who respected the rule about silent [r], thus ten people said [fi:tʃərs].

Bad: [bæd]

Secondary school: Only one student pronounced this word correctly, the rest of the students (fifteen) pronounced it as another word, thus [bet].

University: Little improvement was seen in this group, because three students said the word the way it should be pronounced. The other twelve students said [bet], again.

Undergraduate: The results in this group were the best, and only five people said [bet], while six students' pronunciation of this word was correct.

Honestly: ['ɒnɪstli]

Secondary school: Six students ignored the fact that the [h] sound should be silent, and pronounced the word exactly as it is written, thus [honestli]. Two other variations were [hanɪstli] (heard twice) and [honesli] (pronounced one time). The other six students were correct.

University: In this group, only one student pronounced it as [honestli]. Three students did not pronounce the [t] sound in this word and said [onɪsli] and the eleven remaining students were correct.

Undergraduate: Even in this group were two people who pronounced the word as it is written, [honestli]. The rest (nine students) said it correctly.

Debt: [det]

Secondary school: Only three students realised that the sound [b] needed to be silent in this word. Nine students pronounced the word the same way it is written, [debt] and the remaining four students pronounced the sound [b] instead of the [t] sound, which means they said [deb].

University: The two previous variations appeared in this group, too. Four students said [debt] and the same number of them said [deb]. On the other hand, seven students pronounced the word correctly.

Undergraduate: Even in this group, four students pronounced the word as [debt]. The number of students who pronounced it correctly was high, all seven of them realised that the sound [b] is silent.

Bacteria: [bæk'tɪəriə]

Secondary school: The most common pronunciation of this word was [bakteria], and twelve people said it. Two other students' pronunciation was [bekteria] and only two students said this word correctly.

University: The results within this group were better, because eight students were able to say it right, however, the number of students who mispronounced it as [bakteria] was still high (seven of them).

Undergraduate: Taken into consideration that this group is the most advanced, the results are not the best. Only four students pronounced the word correctly and the remaining seven students pronounced it as [bakteria] again.

Wrist: [rɪst]

Secondary school: Only five students said this word right in this group. The most often repeated pronunciation was [wrɪst], and it was heard from eight students. Other pronounced variations were [vraɪst], [raɪs] and [wraɪst] (each of them was heard once).

University: The results in this group were the best. Only one student pronounced the word as [wrɪst], the rest of the students were correct.

Undergraduate: The situation in this group can be compared to the first one, because the variation [wrɪst] was pronounced seven times, and only four students said it right.

Ankle: ['æŋkəl]

Secondary school: Four students' pronunciation sounded like pronunciation of the word uncle, because they said [ʌŋkl]. One person said [a:ŋkl] and ten students pronounced the word correctly.

University: The situation was very similar to the previous group as three students said [ʌŋkl] again, and another one said [a:ŋkl]. The rest of the students were correct.

Undergraduate: The results in this group were very good, because only one student mispronounced this word and said [ʌŋkl].

Disciplined: [ˈdɪsɪplɪnd]

Secondary school: The pronunciation of this word seems difficult for students within this group, as only one person said the word correctly. The often-repeated mistake was that students pronounced the English “c” as Czech [c], despite the fact that this sound does not exist in English language. The most common pronunciation was [dɪsɪplamɪt], which was heard five times, and [dɪsɪplɪnt] was pronounced four times. Two students said [dɪsɪplɪnd], and two of them pronounced it as [dɪsɪplɪnd] and variations [dɪsɪplamɪt] as well as [dɪsɪplɪnt] were each heard once. Only one student said this word correctly.

University: The result was better in this group, as seven students pronounced it correctly; however, the [c] sound was heard among these students, too. Four of them said [dɪsɪplɪnd] and the three remaining students each pronounced it differently as: [dɪsaɪplɪnd], [dɪsɪplɪn] and [dɪsɪpli:nd].

Undergraduate: The tendency to pronounce the English “c” as Czech [c] continued within this group, and the results may be compared to the first group and only one person said it correctly. The most common pronunciation was [dɪsɪplɪnd] and four students said it, while two students pronounced it as [dɪsɪplamɪd]. The four remaining students each pronounced the word differently, thus: [dɪsɪplɪnamɪd], [dɪsɪplamɪd], [dɪsɪplɪmaɪd] and [dɪsɪplɪn].

Advertisement: [ədˈvɜːtɪsmənt]

Secondary school: Three students pronounced this word correctly in this group. Eleven students pronounced the sound [r], thus said [ədvtɪsmənt], and seven of them pronounced the [s] sound as [z] as well, thus they said [ədvtɪzmənt]. One student respected the rule about silent [r], but pronounced the sound [z] in the word instead; it means [ədʋɜːtɪzmənt] was said. There was also one person who pronounced the word as [ədʋɜːtaɪsmənt].

University: Only two students pronounced this word correctly. The rest of students either pronounced the sound [r], mixed the British and American pronunciation¹⁰, or mispronounced the word completely. Thus, the variations were:

¹⁰ American pronunciation of the word *advertisement* is [ədʋərˈtaɪzmənt].

six students said [ədvrɪsmənt], twice [ədvrtaɪsmənt] was heard, and [əd'vɜ:taɪzmənt], [əd'vɜ:taɪsmənt], [əd'vrtaɪzmən], [əd'vɜ:ntɪsmənt] together with [əd'vaɪzmənt] were heard each once.

Undergraduate: Merely one student said the word properly. Six students pronounced the sound [r], saying [ədvrɪsmənt], two students said [əd'vɜ:taɪsmənt] and the variations [ədvrtaɪsmənt] and [əd'vɜ:ntɪsmənt] appeared each once.

Vase: [vɑ:z]

Secondary school: Several problems occurred while pronouncing this word. First, the majority of students (eleven) pronounced it as [veɪs]¹¹, which is not standard British pronunciation. Three students replaced the sound [z] with [s], saying [va:s] and two others pronounced it as [vas].

University: The same issue with pronunciation appeared within this group, too, as twelve students said [veɪs] and one student said [va:s]. In addition, two other variations appeared in this group, i. e. [feɪs] and [ves].

Undergraduate: It is obvious that the pronunciation [veɪs] is very common among Czech students, because the majority of them (eight) said it again. Two other students pronounced the sound [s], thus saying [va:s] and one person pronounced it as [ve:s].

Haven: ['heɪvən]

Secondary school: Every student in this group confused this word with another one, that is *heaven*, because their pronunciation was [hevn].

University: The results in this group were better, as five students pronounced the word correctly. However, the remaining ten people said [hevn].

Undergraduate: The situation was not any better in this group either. Still, the common pronunciation of this word was [hevn] and nine students said it. Only two people said this word properly.

¹¹ The issue is that it refers to American pronunciation.

Thing: [θɪŋ]

Secondary school: Many variations appeared in this group and students made two mistakes. They either, replaced the sound [θ] with another one, pronounced a [k] sound at the end of the word, or both. Thus, five students pronounced this word as [fɪŋk], while four of them said [tɪŋk] and two others [sɪŋk]. One time a variation [θɪŋk] was heard, too. Two students said [θɪŋk] and the same number of them pronounced this word correctly.

University: The result is slightly better in this group, as three students pronounced this word correctly; however, the same number of variations occurred. The most frequent pronunciation was [θɪŋk], said by five students, and [fɪŋk] that was pronounced three times. The other students said [tɪŋk] (one time), [sɪŋk] (once) and [tɪŋ] (twice).

Undergraduate: In this group, all students pronounced the sound [θ] correctly, but nine of them also pronounced a [k] sound at the end of the word, thus saying [θɪŋk]. No other variations of the pronunciation appeared.

Party: [ˈpɑːtɪ]

Secondary school: There was only one student in this group, who respected the rule that the sound [r] should be silent while pronouncing this word, while twelve students pronounced it as [pɑːrtɪ] and two students pronounced it very shortly, as [partɪ]. Another variation occurred as well, the student replaced the letter [t] with [d], which may refer to American pronunciation, thus, the word was pronounced as [pardɪ].

University: Except one student, all of them pronounced the sound [r]. Thus, twelve people said [pɑːrtɪ], and one student pronounced it as [pardɪ] again. The remaining person mixed the American and British pronunciation, because the sound [r] was silent, while the sound [d] was heard instead of [t], which means it was pronounced as [paːdɪ].

Undergraduate: All the students but one pronounced this word as [pɑːrtɪ], and the remaining student pronounced it in American way, thus [pardɪ].

Vegetable: ['vedʒtəbəl]

Secondary school: Students in general tend to add an extra vowel while pronouncing this word, that is the sound [ɪ], and replace the first “schwa” with the Czech sound [e]. Fourteen students pronounced this word as [vedʒitebəl]. In addition, two students pronounced the second part of this word the same way as in case of the word *table*, they said [vedʒiteɪbəl]. Nobody pronounced it correctly.

University: In this group, only one variation of the pronunciation occurred, and it was [vedʒitebəl], which was said by all the students.

Undergraduate: The results were better in this group than in the previous ones, as two students managed to pronounce it correctly. However, seven students pronounced the extra sound [ɪ] as well as [e] instead of [ə], it means that their pronunciation was [vedʒitebəl]. The remaining student said [vedʒita:bl].

Mouth: [maʊθ]

Secondary school: The number of students who dealt with the sound [θ] was high; nine students were able to say it properly. However, the rest of students replaced the correct sound with another one. Three students said [maʊt], two of them pronounced it as [maʊs] and the pronunciation of the remaining two students was [maɪf] and [mant].

University: The results within this group were very good, only three students mispronounced this word, namely [maʊf] that was said by two students and [maʊt] that was heard once.

Undergraduate: Only two students made a mistake while pronouncing this word. The variation [maʊs] was pronounced in this group as well, but only by one student and another one's pronunciation sounded like [ma:s].

Breath: [breθ]

Secondary school: The pronunciation of this word was harder for these students than the previous one, as only seven students said it properly. The pronunciation of six students sounded similar to the pronunciation of the word *brat*, be-

cause they said [bret]. Other variations were: [breɪf], [bref] and [bres] (each of them was pronounced once).

University: Ten students managed to pronounce it correctly, while two students said [bref], the same number of them said [bret] and the last one student said [bres].

Undergraduate: The results were very good in this group, as only one student mispronounced it and said [bri:θ].

Beautiful: ['bju:tɪfəl]

Secondary school: Students pronounced this word only in two ways, namely either as it should be pronounced in Standard English or as [bjudɪfəl]¹², and the results were equal, thus sixteen students pronounced it correctly and sixteen students said the other variation.

University: The majority of students (it means thirteen of them) chose the pronunciation [bjudɪfəl] again. There were merely two students who pronounced it correctly.

Undergraduate: The results in this group were similar. The pronunciation of six students were Standard English, while five students considered the variation [bjudɪfəl] as correct.

Birthday: ['bɜ:θ,deɪ]

Secondary school: Several problems occurred when students tried to pronounce it. The sound [r] that should be silent in this word was, in all cases except one, pronounced. The sound [θ] was very problematic as well, and only one person was able to say it properly. Thirteen students pronounced this word as [brzdeɪ], one student said [brfdeɪ] and another one [brsdeɪ]. One student managed to pronounce it correctly.

University: The tendency to pronounce the sound [θ] as [z] as well as to disregard that the consonant [r] should be silent appears in this group, too. Thus, the results were following: six students pronounced it as [brzdeɪ], while one person

¹² This pronunciation refers to American pronunciation.

replaced the [θ] with [f] and said [brfdeɪ], and another one said [bædeɪ]. Six students pronounced it correctly.

Undergraduate: There was no student who followed the rule about silent [r], and only one student pronounced the word as [brzdeɪ]. The remaining ten people said [bɜ:rsdeɪ].

In addition, the final diphthong [eɪ] sounds, in most cases, like the students pronounce it as [ej]. However, to say certainly how many students mispronounced this sound is hard. Since Czech students, in general, tend to pronounce English diphthongs as a vowel and a consonant, it may be that they say it as [ej].

Bears: [beəz]

Secondary school: When pronouncing this word, students ignore the rule about silent [r] and tend to replace the final [z] sound with [s]. Thus, the pronunciation [beərs] occurred nine times. Pronunciation of one student sounded like pronunciation of the word *beers*, since they said [bi:rs]. Another student said [bræds], and the last person pronounced it as [be:rs].

University: In this group, almost all the students pronounced the sound [r] and all of them said the consonant [s] as the end of the word. Twelve students said [beərs], two students pronounced it as [beəs] and the remaining one student said [bi:rs].

Undergraduate: Only one variation of pronunciation, said by all students, appeared within this group, and that was [beərs].

Flour: [flaʊə]

Secondary school: Only one student in this group was able to manage the right pronunciation. The most repeated mistake, which was made by nine students, was to pronounce it as [flor]. Another variation was to say it as [flour] (it was heard four times).

University: The results in this group were not better than in the previous one, as only one student pronounced this word correctly, while nine students pronounced the sound [r] and said [flaʊər]. Variations that appeared in this group

were: [flour], [flouə], [flo] (each of them pronounced once) and [flor] (said by two students).

Undergraduate: No student said this word properly. Five students pronounced it as [flor] and other six of them ignored the rule about silent [r] and said it as [flaʊər].

Worry: ['wʌrɪ]

Secondary school: There were two problems with pronunciation of this word. All students replaced the vowel [ʌ] with [o]. In addition, thirteen students also pronounced the sound [w] as [v], thus said [vorɪ].

University: In this group, three students replaced the sound [w] for [v] and said [vorɪ]. Again, the rest of them pronounced this word as [worɪ].

Undergraduate: One student managed to pronounce this word correctly. The rest of them were divided into two groups: four students said [vorɪ] and six students said [worɪ].

Plumber: ['plʌmə]

Secondary school: Only two students respected the rule about silent [b] and merely one of them respected the same rule about the consonant [r] and so pronounced the word correctly. The other students all pronounced the word as [plʌmbr].

University: Five students pronounced this word as [plʌmbr] and one student said [plʌmbə]. The remaining six students respected that the consonant [b] should be silent, however, they pronounced the sound [r] at the end of the word, thus said [plʌmər].

Undergraduate: Surprisingly, eight students pronounced this word as [plʌmbr] in this group and the other three students said [plʌmər].

License: ['laɪsəns]

Secondary school: Merely four students pronounced this word correctly and several variations of how to say it occurred. The most common mistake was [lɪsens] that was heard five times together with [lɪsns] that was pronounced by four students. Two students pronounced, at some point, the Czech consonant [c]

in this word, despite the fact that English has no such sound ([lɪsɛnc] [lɪcɛns]). The remaining student pronounced it as [lɪsɛnsɪ].

University: The results were better in this group than in the previous one, as only two students mispronounced this word. They said [lɪsɪns] and [lɛsɪns].

Undergraduate: Eight students pronounced the word correctly and there were two incorrect variations heard: [lɪsɛns] (once) and [lɛsɪns] (twice).

Live: [lɪv]

Secondary school: Merely two students realised that the final consonant was voiced and sounds like [v]. Thus, the remaining fourteen students pronounced it as [lɪf].

University: The number of students who managed to pronounce it correctly increased, as four students pronounced it correctly and eleven students said [lɪf] as well.

Undergraduate: Four students pronounced it correctly in this group and the rest of them pronounced it as [lɪf].

Lives: [laɪvz]

Secondary school: Every student in this group pronounced the final sound [z] as [s] as well as replaced the [v] sound with [f]. In addition, as the pronunciation of the word *live* is different, students tend to pronounce it similar, thus as [lɪfs], which happened eleven times. The remaining five students' pronunciation sounded like [laɪfs].

University: No student pronounced the word correctly, and there were the same two variations of the pronunciation as in the previous group. Nine students pronounced it as [laɪfs] and six of them said [lɪfs].

Undergraduate: The pronunciation [lɪfs] was said only twice, on the other hand, nine students mispronounced it as [laɪfs]. Nobody in this group pronounced the word correctly.

Naked: ['neɪkɪd]

Secondary school: Four students of this group were able to pronounce this word correctly, while the rest of them had difficulties pronouncing the sound [d]

voiced. Several variations occurred, and the most common one was [neɪkɪt], which was heard six times. Four other students said [neɪkt], another one [neɪk] and the pronunciation of the last student sounded like [neɪkd].

University: Five students said it properly and the most frequent variation, that was pronounced six times, was [neɪkt]. There were two other pronunciations that occurred: [neɪkɪt] and [neɪk] (both pronounced once).

Undergraduate: The results were the best in this group. Only two students out of eleven mispronounced the word as [neɪkɪt].

Says: [sez]

Secondary school: There were three variations of pronunciation and nobody pronounced it correctly. The final consonant [s] should be pronounced as [z], however, ten students said [ses]. The pronunciation of three other students sounded like [se:s] and the same number of them added an extra vowel [ɪ] and said [seɪs].

University: Again, nobody managed to pronounce this word correctly. The most repeated mistake was to say [ses], and it was pronounced by ten students. There were the same two variations as in the previous group, namely [se:s], which was pronounced by four students and [seɪs], which was heard once.

Undergraduate: Two variations occurred in this group: [ses] that was heard seven times and [se:s], which was said by four students. No student pronounced it correctly.

Allowed: [ə'laʊd]

Secondary school: Three students successfully pronounced this word, while ten of them pronounced the final consonant as [t], thus saying [ə'laʊt]. There appeared three more variations in this group: [ə'laʊ], [ə'laʊft] and [ə'loʊf] (each was said once).

University: Eight students pronounced it as [ə'laʊt] and the second most common pronunciation in this group was [ə'laʊf] that was said by four students. The last variation, said by one student, was [ə'laʊ] and two people pronounced it correctly.

Undergraduate: Five students mispronounced it as [ə'laʊf]. Two others said [ə'laʊt] and the last incorrect variation was [ə'laʊ] (it was heard once). Two students managed the right pronunciation.

2.2. Other common mistakes

Besides the mistakes in the words that were mentioned above, there appeared also mistakes that (almost) all students made equally in all three groups. For easier orientation, these words were divided into several groups.

Have: [hæv]

Only one student (from *secondary school*) pronounced the sound [v], while the rest of the students said [hef].

The: [ðə] (preceding a consonant)

Three students (each from one group) managed to pronounce the word correctly, the others replaced the [ð] sound with [d].

His: [hɪz]

One hundred percent of the students pronounced the final consonant as [s].

Legs: [legz]

This word consists of two voiced consonants, namely [g] and [z]. However, all the students pronounced the second one unvoiced, and everyone except two students pronounced the first one unvoiced as well, thus the variations were [leks] and [legs].

Walk: [wɔ:k]

The consonant [l] is silent in this word, but only two students from the *university* group and one student from the *undergraduate* group were aware of it. The rest of them pronounced it, and in addition, five students from *secondary school* and one student from the *university* group pronounced the word as [vɔlk].

There: [ðeə]

Only one student (from the *undergraduate group*) managed to pronounce this word correctly. The others tended to replace the sound [ð] with [d] and (ex-

cept two students from *secondary school* and *university*) ignored the rule about silent [r], thus they said [der]. One student from secondary school said [ther].

Is: [ɪz]

This sound appeared twice in this text. At the first time, one student from *secondary school* and two students from the university group realised that the consonant [s] is voiced. The rest of them pronounced it as [ɪs]. At the second time, nobody pronounced it correctly.

As: [əz]

The pronunciation of this word was problematic for students due to the fact it consists of “schwa” and voiced [z]. Except two students from the *university* group, who managed the correct pronunciation, they pronounced the “schwa” as [e] and [z] sound as [s].

Of: [əv]

One student from *secondary school* and one student from the *university* group were able to pronounce the word correctly. The rest of the students pronounced the word as it is written, and ignored the schwa at the beginning and that the consonant [v] is voiced and should not be pronounced as [f].

Prague: [pra:g]

Two students from the first group, three students from the second group and four students from the third one pronounced the word correctly. Except one student from *secondary school*, who said [prek], all participants pronounced this word as [pra:k].

Has: [hæz]

All students except one (from *secondary school*) pronounced this word as [hæs].

The: [ði:] (preceding a vowel)

The combination of *the* and a *vowel* required changing the schwa for [i:], so students made two mistakes while pronouncing this word. First, all students replaced the [ð] sound with [d]. Three students from *secondary school*, eight stu-

dents from the *university* group and four students from the *undergraduate* group added the [i:] sound, thus saying [di:]. The rest of them pronounced it simply as [d].

Move: [mu:v]

Two students from *secondary school* and one from the *university* group pronounced the consonant [v] correctly, but the rest of them pronounced it unvoiced, thus saying [mu:f].

Close: [kləʊs]

All students replaced the schwa with clear Czech [o]. Thus, forty students said [klous] and two students from *secondary school*, besides the two mistakes above, did not pronounce the sound [u] and said [klo:s].

Flowers: ['flaʊəz]

Thirty-seven students did not respect the rule about silent [r] (only one person from the first and the second group followed this rule) and pronounced the voiced [z] at the end of the word, thus saying [flaʊərs]. There appeared two other variations, namely [flors], said by two students from the *secondary school* and [flours], pronounced by one student from the same group.

Ring: [rɪŋ]

The largest group of people who pronounced this word correctly were from the *university* group (four). Two others, who managed the pronunciation, were a part of the *secondary school* and one of the *undergraduate* group. The rest of the students added an additional consonant [k] at the end of the word, thus pronouncing it as [rɪŋk].

Living x driving x entering x lying: ['lɪvɪŋ] x ['entəɪŋ] x ['draɪvɪŋ] x ['laɪŋ]

These three words are compared together, because they do not contain silent sound [r] and they show that students pronounce the ending variably.

Two students from the *secondary school*, eight from *university* group and three from *undergraduate* group pronounced the word *living* correctly, while

twenty-seven people added the [k] sound after the diphthong [ɪŋ]. Two remaining students (from the secondary group) said [lɪvɪŋ] and [lɑrɪŋk].

The error rate of the word *entering* was the highest, as thirty-five students pronounced it as [ɛntərɪŋk]. Merely the pronunciation of three students from the first group, one from the second one and one from the third one was correct. One student from the *secondary school* mispronounced it as [ɛntərɪŋk] and one person from *undergraduate* group as [ɑntərɪŋk].

In the case of *driving*, it was pronounced as [draɪvɪŋk] thirty-one times, and only two students from the *secondary school*, six from the *university* group and three from the *undergraduate* group managed to say it properly.

The results were the best while pronouncing the word *lying*. Students said the [k] sound at the end of the word; on the other hand, the pronunciation [laɪŋk] occurred fewer times than in the previous cases. Specifically, ten times in the first group, twice in the second one and seven times in the *undergraduate* group. One student from *secondary school* mispronounced it as [leɪŋk].

3 Summary of the practical part

Students often made the same mistakes within all three groups. It was expected that participants from *secondary school* would not achieve as good results as the following groups; however, the error rate in other groups was similar. It shows that it is difficult to eliminate incorrect pronunciation learned at the beginning of English studies. Another factor that influences proper pronunciation is regular contact with native speakers that gives opportunities to be corrected. It is typical of *undergraduate* students, who usually are taught by native speakers and associate with them. On the other hand, students indicated that their pronunciation is not being corrected often/enough, and whenever they are not sure how to pronounce a particular word, they, in most cases, guess it.

All students were introduced to British standard pronunciation; however, almost nobody respected the basic rule about silent [r] in some positions of a word. In addition, students, in most cases, mix the aspects of British and American pronunciation. For example, students did not pronounce [r] in the words where it should be silent, but the word *vase* was pronounced as in American English or vice versa.

Words that end with voiced consonant are in general pronounced as voiced by Czech speakers, however, most of the students were surprised that words as *because, is, says* should be pronounced with [z] and verified this information in a dictionary afterwards.

The structure of the text also showed that students paid attention to their pronunciation at the beginning, but lost it during reading, which showed words ending with *-ing* and the various numbers of students who pronounced it correctly. Also, words containing the digraph *th* caused problems. In this research, it is seen that students in all groups are able to manage the right pronunciation of the sound [θ] at some point, but not in all cases. For example, the same student who pronounced the word *think* correctly said the word *mouth* incorrectly. The interesting thing is that words containing the sound [ð] were incorrect in most

cases and within all groups, despite the fact that the creation is based on similar principle.

Words beginning with the semivowel [w] also showed that students know how to pronounce it; however, they do not say it properly in all cases. Several students from all groups pronounced it correctly at the beginning, but incorrectly at the end of the text.

In the table below, the results of all analysed words are shown, with the number of students who pronounced a particular word correctly and summation of incorrect pronunciation that appeared within all groups.

Word	Correct pronunciation			Incorrect pronunciation
	Secondary school (16 students)	University (15 students)	High school (11 students)	
ankle	11	11	10	10
breath	7	10	10	15
aunt	9	10	6	17
wrist	5	14	4	19
receipt	2	11	6	23
focused	3	6	9	24
lying	5	9	4	24
naked	4	5	9	24
debt	3	7	7	25
honestly	6	8	11	25
license	4	13	8	25
beautiful	8	2	6	26
bacteria	2	8	4	28
living	2	8	3	29
salad	3	6	4	29
mouth	9	12	9	30
driving	2	6	3	31
hotel	3	4	5	31
singing	2	6	1	31
think	5	9	11	31
bad	1	3	6	32
live	2	4	4	32
disciplined	1	7	1	33

Prague	2	3	4	33
allowed	3	2	2	35
because	1	6	0	35
birthday	1	6	0	35
haven	0	5	2	35
thing	2	3	2	35
features	3	3	0	36
ring	1	4	1	36
crooked	1	4	0	37
entering	3	1	1	37
staff	0	3	2	37
advertisement	3	2	1	38
father's	0	1	3	38
cucumber	1	2	0	39
move	2	1	0	39
the (consonant)	1	1	1	39
to walk	0	2	1	39
vegetable	0	0	3	39
as	0	2	0	40
flour	1	1	0	40
of	1	1	0	40
party	1	1	0	40
plumber	1	1	0	40
beard	1	0	0	41
has	1	0	0	41
have	1	0	0	41
there	0	0	1	41
worry	0	0	1	41
bears	0	0	0	42
close	0	0	0	42
flowers	0	0	0	42
his	0	0	0	42
is	0	0	0	42
legs	0	0	0	42
lives	0	0	0	42
says	0	0	0	42
the (vowel)	0	0	0	42
vase	0	0	0	42
wonder	0	0	0	42

CONCLUSION

The aim of my bachelor thesis was to select English words that may be problematic for Czech students and verify to what extent they cause problems. In addition, I wanted to explore how various the results would be within each group, and whether students are able to eliminate mistakes in pronunciation formed at the beginning of their studies. In consideration of the nature of this topic, my bachelor thesis consists of two parts: theoretical and practical. Due to the fact English written and spoken form is different, it was necessary to introduce theoretical aspects of production of English vowels and consonants and their typical features in the first part of this thesis.

The most important resource for obtaining results were Czech students of English, involved in my research. They were selected on the basis of their experience and length of studies and divided into three groups. Their task was to read the presented text that was analysed afterwards. I focused on assimilation, correct pronunciation of the digraph *th* and *ng*, how the students are able to distinguish *v* and *w* and their knowledge of silent letters. Because students in my research mixed aspects of British and American pronunciation, I devoted one chapter to this topic and mentioned the basic differences between them. I also briefly explained the usage of the most common sound in English – schwa.

In the practical part, I presented the results obtained from the recordings, the number of students who pronounced a particular word correctly and mispronounced variations that appeared within all three groups. I expected that the error rate would decrease and undergraduate students would obtain the best results. In practice, it was demonstrated that the most advanced students made the same mistakes as students from secondary school.

At the beginning of this thesis, I stated a hypothesis to how Czech students would cope with problematic English sounds. It was confirmed that the rooted pronunciation lingers, even within students who recently went through a course of phonetics, and it is necessary to be corrected by other people.

The most difficult part of this thesis was the analysis itself. The lack of personal contact during analysis created problems in assessing whether particular sounds were pronounced correctly or not. In this respect, it would be helpful to see the participants' articulators.

In conclusion, it may be said that to master English pronunciation and sound natural to native speakers is a long-term matter, and self-study as well as daily contact with an English "environment" may be an important aspect of it.

ENDNOTES

- [1]: Peter Roach, 2000: p. 20
- [2]: Roach, p. 8
- [3]: Roach, p. 10
- [4]: Roach, p. 27-28
- [5]: Roach, p. 29
- [6]: Roach, p. 30
- [7]: Alena Skaličková, 1987: p. 32-34
- [8]: Skaličková, p. 32
- [9]: Roach, p. 14
- [10]: Skaličková, p. 17-19
- [11]: Roach, p. 15-16, 19-24
- [12]: Skaličková, p. 80-94
- [12]: Roach, p. 22
- [13]: Roach, p. 83
- [14]: <http://www.englishclub.com/pronunciation/-ed.htm>
- [15]:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/flatmates/episode59/languagepoint.shtml>

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 23 Oct. 2013. 7 Apr. 2014 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u53FtUtB4uw>>.

ABSTRACT

The title of my bachelor thesis is *English Words Commonly Mispronounced* and is divided into two parts. The first one is theoretical, and the main aim is to introduce English system of vowels and consonants together with their production. However, the main part of this thesis consists of a practical part, based on my own research from information obtained from recording Czech students. The goal was not only to verify if chosen words cause problems to students of English, but also to find out how much the error rate differs among students with various levels of English knowledge. Subsequent analysis of these recordings and conclusion is included.

SUMMARY

Název mé bakalářské práce je *Nejčastější nesprávně vyslovovaná slova v angličtině* a je rozdělena do dvou částí. První je teoretická a hlavním cílem je představit anglický systém souhlásek a samohlásek jakožto i jejich tvorbu. Hlavní částí této práce je však část praktická, skládající se z vlastního výzkumu, který je založen na poznacích získaných z nahrávek českých studentů. Cílem bylo nejen ověřit, zda zvolené výrazy studentům angličtiny činí problémy, ale i získat povědomí o tom, nakolik se chybovost liší u různě pokročilých studentů. Nedílnou součástí je následná analýza těchto nahrávek a shrnutí.

APPENDIXES

[1] English text

[2] Recordings and analysis (on CD)

[1] ENGLISH TEXT

I think, you have to stay focused on the subject.

His aunt, with crooked legs, decided to walk there on foot.

I probably won't go to the party.

The man refused to eat vegetable salad in the west hotel, because he is allergic to cucumber.

I asked the staff for a cash receipt.

I wonder if the two men live their lives as much as possible.

I just noticed how tiny my father's beard is.

I heard two birds singing this morning.

The film features a Polish actor.

She says your check is bad, so honestly tell me, if you are in debt.

He's wandering in the streets of Prague.

This bacteria is visible to the naked eye.

This competition wasn't very successful. She broke her wrist and her brother broke his ankle.

If the girl wants to win, she has to be disciplined.

Wayne dropped the very expensive vase, on the floor!

I really considered replying to the advertisement I saw in the street.

I found a lot of weird stuff under my bed.

Let's move, I don't want to sit close to the ant pile.

Monaco is a tax haven.

The thing I know for sure is that, you are lying to them.

You have to close your mouth, while holding your breath.

She got a beautiful ring and flowers, for her birthday.

Take your hat off while entering!

I liked the story of three bears.

I forgot to buy flour, but don't worry. I will ask the plumber, living next to us, for some.

You are not allowed to get behind the wheel, without a driving license.