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**Undegraduate Thesis**

**SOME MISTAKES IN PRONUNCIATION PRODUCED  
BY A CZECH NATIVE SPEAKER**

**Nina Stojković**

**Plzeň 2014**

Tato stránka bude ve svázané práci Váš původní formulář *Zadání bak. práce*  
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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

*V Plzni dne 15.4.2014*

.....  
Nina Stojković

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this undergraduate thesis is to provide some typical mistakes in pronunciation of selected English words by Czech native speakers. The work is divided into 2 main parts – theoretical and practical. The theoretical part briefly describes the terms Phonetics and Phonology, phonemes used in the English Alphabet and their categorization; it concentrates on the concrete differences in sounds of English and Czech, and provides a detailed classification of English vowels and consonants. The chapter finally deals with the term Received Pronunciation, which is crucial for this piece of work due to its focus on this accent. Another aim of the thesis is to find specific words in the pronunciation of which people usually make mistakes. This can be found in the second part of the thesis - Analysis. For the research a specific list of random words that are likely to cause problems has been created.

*Keywords: Phonetics, vowel, consonants, pronunciation, speech, sound*

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## 1. Introduction

This undergraduate thesis deals with pronunciation issues that Czech students have to deal with. English language is an international language spoken all over the world and thus it is important to study it.

I have chosen this topic because I am interested in pronunciation and find it to have the significant role in how one's speech sounds. I think that teachers disregard this area of the English language even though it plays a crucial role in manner of the speech.

These are 4 main parts of the thesis: *Introduction*, *Theoretical background*, *Analysis* and *Conclusion*.

The chapter *Theoretical part* includes a detailed overview of English short and long vowels and consonants. It also involves the summary of the terms that are connected with pronunciation: Phonetics and Phonology, IPA chart, or Received Pronunciation.

The *Analysis* is composed of two sections - information about the respondents and particular mistakes they frequently make. For the purpose of this thesis I have chosen a qualitative survey that does not include any statistics or graphs. The practical part also includes a questionnaire that was given to the respondents to find out whether their teachers had paid attention to pronunciation, whether they had been taught a simplified IPA symbols, or whether they had ever had a native speaker as a teacher. The interviewees were given 3 short texts that included words that I find tricky in a way and wonder how they will pronounce them. The Research examined only segmental aspects of pronunciation (it means pronunciation of individual sounds) and one of the suprasegmental aspects (stress within a word).

The final chapter is *Conclusion* where everything is summed-up and a possible graduate thesis topic is indicated.



## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1 Phonetics and phonology**

There are two points of view from which it is possible to study pronunciation. One of them is named phonetics, another is phonology.

According to Skaličková (1962), phonetics is a linguistic science dealing with acoustics of human speech. The aims of phonetics are speech elements (how they are made, how they are perceived), their evaluation and its modifications in consistent speech. Phonology deals with the function of the speech sounds. (Skaličková 1962, p.81)

Crystal defines phonetics as “study of the way humans make, transmit, and receive speech sounds”. (Crystal 2003, p.236) According to the author, the following are three main branches that are studied within phonetics: articulatory phonetics (study and description of vocal organs), acoustic phonetics (physical properties that are used in the transmission of sounds), and auditory phonetics (perception of speech sounds).

On the other hand, phonology is defined by Crystal as “the study of the sound system of languages, and of the general properties displayed by these systems”. (Crystal 2003, p.236). The author claims that phonetics is concerned with all possible sounds that humans are able to produce, while phonology only deals with those that make differences in particular words. (Crystal 2003, p.236)

Simply said, phonetics deals with the form of a sound while phonology deals with its function.

### **2.2 IPA chart**

IPA chart is a summary of all possible speech sounds that humans are capable to produce and stands for The International Phonetics Alphabet.

It has been developing since 1888, as there have been attempts to have some general representation of all sounds. International Phonetic Alphabet includes symbols that denote every single speech sound. IPA symbols are used not only in English, but also in plenty of other languages. (Dobrovolsky&Katamba)

The IPA cannot provide suprasegmental features (e.g. rhythm and intonation). The only suprasegmental feature that is involved in IPA is a stress. Some of the symbols are converted and some are based on Roman letters. The author also mentions that it is good to study every single symbol of the IPA because it does not always correspond with the ABC. Slashes are used (/) in order to write a speech sound down while if the whole word is normally in square brackets ([]). (Skandera&Burleigh)

These are the IPA symbols in English:

ɪ READ	ɪ SIT	ʊ BOOK	u: TOO	ɪə HERE	eɪ DAY	John & Sarah Free Materials 1996	
e MEN	ə AMERICA	ɜ: WORD	ɔ: SORT	ʊə TOUR	ɔɪ BOY	əʊ GO	
æ CAT	ʌ BUT	ɑ: PART	ɒ NOT	eə WEAR	aɪ MY	aʊ HOW	
p PIG	b BED	t TIME	d DO	tʃ CHURCH	dʒ JUDGE	k KILO	g GO
f FIVE	v VERY	θ THINK	ð THE	s SIX	z ZOO	ʃ SHORT	ʒ CASUAL
m MILK	n NO	ŋ SING	h HELLO	l LIVE	r READ	w WINDOW	j YES

Figure 1: IPA symbols in English (<https://calleteach.wordpress.com/tag/phonetics/>)

### 2.3 Differences in sounds of English and Czech

According to Skaličková (1962) these are the differences between English and Czech in their sounds:

1. Articulation in English is less dynamic – Czech requires more significant movements of lips, etc.
2. Beginning of the utterance – the beginning of the utterance is sharper in Czech.

3. English vocalism is richer – in Czech there are 9 vowels and 1 diphthong. English has 12 vowels, 8 diphthongs and 5 triphthongs.
4. Number of vowels is higher – each Czech short vowel has its opposite long vowel. Whereas there are only 3 English vowels that have its opposite (ɪ – i:, o – ɔ:, ʊ – u:). It is relevant to say that a pair of vowels ʌ – ɑ: represent qualitatively different sounds and that is why they are not found to be opposites of one another.
5. Different articulation of long vowels – when pronouncing a Czech word that contains a long vowel, articulation organs are generally in strong position, whereas in English these vowels are gliding.
6. Articulation of diphthongs is fixed in Czech - it appears that there are 2 sounds put together. In English the articulation of diphthongs is gliding.
7. The quality of voiced and voiceless syllables – in the Czech syllable every single vowel is fully noticeable while only in the English voiced syllable vowels are distinctive.
8. Stress – there are 3 facts that are important to mention when comparing English and Czech stress: Stress in English is more distinctive than in Czech; in Czech stress is always on the first syllable whereas in English stress can be on any syllable of a word; In Czech stress is used only to indicate the beginning of the new word while in English stress functions as distinguishing element – for instance to differentiate noun and verb (ˈconduct (n) X conˈduct (v)).
9. Differences in system of consonants – there are consonants in English that do not have their representation in Czech – for instance /ð/ and /θ/. There is also a difference in assimilation - in Czech assimilation is usually in the middle of the word (*vsunout, prosba, drozd*), while in English assimilation mainly occurs at the end of the word (*heads, wished*).
10. Differences in rhyme, rhythm, or melody – apart from different features in acoustic, there are also some similarities (e.g. pronunciation of /ŋ/) (p.15-17)

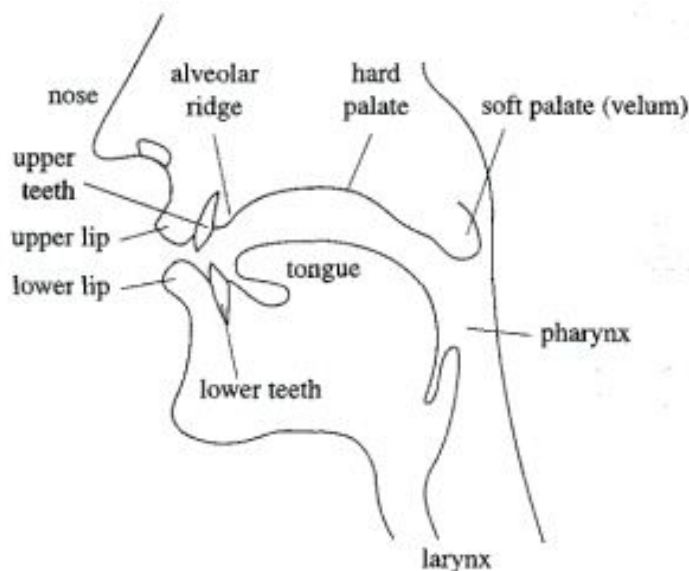


Figure 2: The articulators (Roach 2009, p.8)

## 2.4 English vowels

“Vowels are sounds in which there is no obstruction to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips” (Roach 2009, p.10). When producing a vowel, a friction is avoided and only a pure sound is hearable.

From the phonological point of view, a vowel is a sound that mostly stands in the middle of the word (cat /kæt/) (Melen 2010, p.12).

Altogether there are 20 vowels in English, out of which there are 12 monophthongs (Skaličková 1962, p.20) and 8 diphthongs (Roach 2009, p.17). On the other hand, there are 10 vowels /a/, /á/, /e/, /é/, /i/, /í/, /o/, /ó/, /u/, /ú/ and 1 diphthong /ou/ in Czech (Klimeš 1983, p.24).

### 2.4.1. Short vowels

These are English short vowels: /ɪ/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ɒ/, /ʊ/, /ə/. Even though they are called short, it does not mean that they really are short. They are only relatively short. In some context a short vowel can be pronounced rather long. (Roach 2009, p.13)

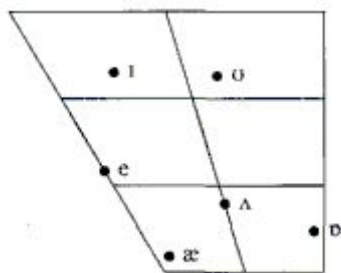


Figure 3: English short vowels (Roach 2009, p.13)

/ɪ/ - according to Skaličková the Czech /i/ is more open and lax. As for spelling, there are *i* (*it*), *y* (*very*), *e* (*become*), *a* (*village*), *ie* (*sieve*), rarely *ai* (*mountain*), *ay* (*Sunday*), *ee* (*Greenwich*), *ei* (*foreign*), *ey* (*money*), *ia* (*carriage*), *u* (*busy*), *ui* (*built*), *o* (*women*), or *oi* (*connoisseur*).

Certain words in Czech and English sound very similar (but not identical), e.g.: *bitch* – *bič*, *nosey* – *nouzi*, *Miss* – *mys*, *slip* – *slib*, *tawny* – *tony*, and since they have absolutely different, unrelated meaning, they can be referred to as inter-language homophones.

/e/ - there are more varieties of /e/ sound in English. Some of them are more open, and some are less open than Czech /e/ sounds (Melen 2010, p.16). As for spelling there are *e* (*end*), *ea* (*head*), rarely *ie* (*friends*), *ai* (*said*), *ei* (*leisure*), *a* (*any*), *ay* (*says*), *ae* (*Aetna*), *ee* (*threepence*), *eo* (*leopard*), or *u* (*burial*) (Skaličková 1982, p.85). Some examples of homophones between Czech and English are: *chest* – *čest*, *yes* – *jez*, *metal* – *metl*, and *necklet* – *neklid*, *yell* – *jel*.

/æ/ - this vowel is found to be front. The sound is more open in comparison with a Czech one. In English, there are /æ/ and /e/ sounds that are different. On the other hand, Czech has only /e/ sound. Especially in the north of England /æ/ is pronounced as /a/. As for spelling, there is *a* (*rat*), rarely *ai* (*plait*), or *ua* (*guarantee*) (Skaličková 1982, p.87). Also here, we can find some homophones: *barrow* – *berou*, *chattel* – *četl*, *match* – *meč*, *saddle* – *sedl*, *tackle* – *tekl*.

/ʌ/ - the sound is pronounced more hind and is more closed. As for spelling, there are *u* (*hut*) and *o* (*come*), less common are *ou* (*trouble*), *oo* (*flood*) and *oe* (*does*).

The inter-language homophones are: *tuck – tak, must – mast, stuff – stav, nut – nad, shut – šat.*

*/ɒ/* - the sound */ɒ/* is considered to be very open. As for spelling, most common are *o* (*hot*) and *a* (*want*), rarely *ou* (*cough*), *ow* (*knowledge*) and *au* (*sausage*). Examples of Czech-English homophonic pairs are: *hot – hod, rock – rok, mock – mok, lock – lok.* (Skaličková 1962, p.24)

*/ʊ/* - English */ʊ/* is pronounced with tongue that is lower and more at the front. In Czech the rounding of lips is more distinct. As for spelling, there are *oo* (*cook*), *u* (*put*), rarely *o* (*woman*) and *ou* (*could*) (Skaličková 1982, p.93). The homophones are, e.g.: *book – buk, put – pud, soot – sud, bullet – built, room – rum.*

*/ə/* - this vowel is called a schwa and is defined as a mixed vowel. According to Crystal's (2003) study of the frequency of vowels, */ə/* occurs in 10.74% in a sample of conversational RP. It is always associated with weak syllables, and occurs to be lax and articulated with not strong energy (Roach 2009, p.65). It is important to mention that */ə/* does not contrast with */ʌ/* (Roach 2009, p.101). There is no Czech equivalent to the schwa. On the chart of English vowels a schwa stands in the middle. From the vertical dimension */ə/* is mid and from the horizontal dimension it is a central vowel. The schwa is relatively short, only at the end of the word it occurs to be longer. As for spelling, there are *a* (*along*), *ar* (*particular*), *ai* (*Britain*), *e* (*silence*), *er* (*offer*), *o* (*condemn*), *or* (*tutor*), *oar* (*cupboard*), *ou* (*famous*), *our* (*colour*), *u* (*difficult*), *ure* (*figure*), *yr* (*martyr*), *i* (*possible*), or *re* (*theatre*). (Skaličková 1982, p.95) This vowel does not have an opposite in Czech and it is not possible to provide any English-Czech pair (Melen 2010, p.20).

#### **2.4.2. Long vowels**

These are English long vowels: */i:/, /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/*. Two dots denote that the vowel is long. English long vowels are demonstrated in the subsequent picture:

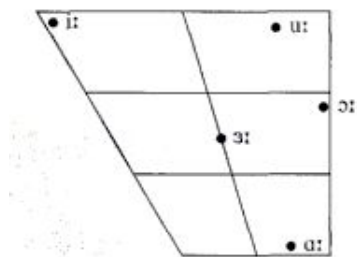


Figure 4: English long vowels (Roach 2009, p.16)

**/i:/** - in the vertical dimension /i:/ is a close vowel and in the horizontal it is a front vowel. As for spelling, there are *ee* (*feed*), *ea* (*eat*), *e* (*eve*), rarely *ie* (*field*), *ei* (*receive*), *i* (*machine*), *eo* (*people*), *ey* (*key*), *ae* (*encyclopaedia*), *uay* (*quay*), or *oe* (*coenobite*). Examples of inter-language homophones are: *clean* – *klín*, *sheep* – *šíp*, *pleat* – *plít*, *See Cora* – *sýkora*, *beak* – *býk*. (Skaličková 1982, p.82)

**/ɑ:/** - this vowel is open and back. As for spelling, there are *a* (*past*), *ar* (*far*), rarely *ear* (*heart*), *er* (*clerk*), *au* (*laugh*), *ua* (*guard*), or *al* (*psalm*) (Skaličková 1982, p.89). Possible homophones are: *past* – *pást*, *Yardam* – *já dám*, *pass* – *pás*, *start* – *stat*, or *bart* – *bát*.

**/ɔ:/** - From the vertical dimension /ɔ:/ is mid and from horizontal dimension it is a back vowel. It is important to mention that it is one of the most frequent vowels in English, while in Czech /ó/ occurs relatively rarely, only in foreign words, or to highlight a short /o/ (for instance in *haló*, *bóže*, etc.). Another difference is that English /ɔ:/ is more round than Czech /ó/. This vowel is spelt in various ways, e.g.: *or* or), *au* (*caught*), *aw* (*law*), *ou* (*brought*), rarely *oa* (*broad*), *a* (*almost*), *oor* (*door*), *our* (*four*), *ore* (*ore*), or *oar* (*oar*). Possible examples of English-Czech pairs of homophones are: *caught* – *kód*, *Paul* – *pól*, *torn* – *tón*, *gall* – *gól*, *tawny* – *tony*. (Skaličková 1982, p.92)

**/u:/** - this vowel is close and f back. Possible spellings are: *oo* (*food*), *o* (*prove*), *u* (*rule*), *ou* (*group*), rarely *oe* (*shoe*), *ue* (*true*), *ui* (*juice*), *ew* (*chew*), or *oeu* (*manoeuvre*). Sometimes before /u:/ vowel there is a consonant /j/ pronounced. For instance in *ew* (*few*), *ue* (*sue*), *u* (*duke*), *iew* (*view*), *ui* (*suit*), *eu* (*neutral*), *eau*

(*beautiful*), or *ueue* (*queue*). Some inter-language homophones are: *pool* – *půl*, *cool* – *kůl*, *stool* – *stůl*, *coolie* – *kůly*, *doom* – *dům*. (Skaličková 1982, p.94)

/ɜ:/ - this mid and central vowel is found to be a long variety of the schwa sound /ə/. In American English /ɜ:/ is pronounced with indication of /r/ sound which is not acceptable for RP. This fact is connected with retroflex articulation that is typical in rhotic accents (for instance in USA, West and North-West of England) (Skaličková 1962, p.28). The spelling can be, e.g. *er* (*her*), *ir* (*fir*), *ur* (*fur*), *yr* (*myrtle*), *ear* (*earth*), *or* (*word*), rarely *our* (*journey*) (Skaličková 1982, p.96). This vowel does not have an equivalent in Czech and it is not possible to provide any English-Czech pair.

### 2.4.3 Diphthongs

According to Roach (2010) and Melen (2010) there are 8 diphthongs in English: /aɪ/, /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aʊ/, /əʊ/, /ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/, while Skaličková (1962) states additional diphthong /ɔə/.

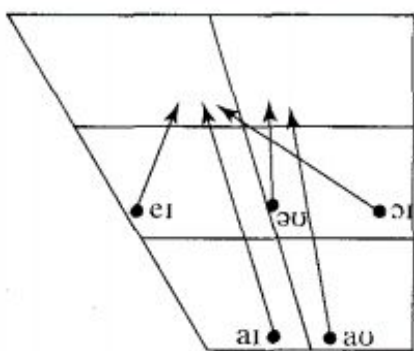


Figure 5: Closing diphthongs  
(Roach 2009, p.18)

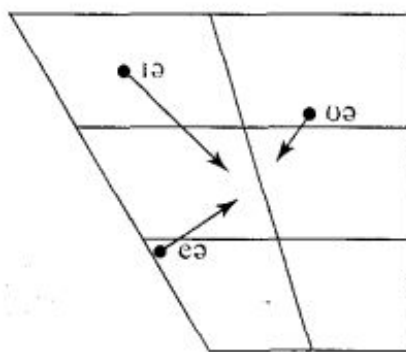


Figure 6: Centring diphthongs  
(Roach 2009, p.18)

Regarding the length of diphthongs it is relevant to say that they have the same length as the long vowels described above. Czech diphthongs are pronounced as a combination of two vowels, they are both identically long. On the other hand in an English diphthong the first vowel is longer than the second one.



**/aɪ/** - in English diphthong /aɪ/ is pronounced with a less distinct movement of tongue and jaws than in Czech. English /aɪ/ corresponds either to /a+j/, or /á+j/ (Melen 2010, p.22). It belongs to closing diphthongs. According to spelling there are *i* (*I*), *y* (*cry*), *ie* (*die*), rarely *ei* (*either*), *ui* (*guide*), *uy* (*buy*), *ai* (*aisle*), *ye* (*dye*), *eye* (*eye*), *igh* (*sigh*), or *eigh* (*height*). (Skaličková 1982, p.100) Certain words in Czech and English sound very similar (but not identical), e.g. *my* – *máj*, *high* – *háj*, *sty* – *stáj*, *sight* – *saj*, and since they have absolutely different, unrelated meaning, they can be referred to as inter-language homophones.

**/eɪ/** - in English diphthong /eɪ/ is more open than the Czech diphthong and is defined as closing. It corresponds to Czech /e+j/ sound (Melen 2010, p.23). It is important to mention that in Cockney (London variety) /eɪ/ is rather pronounced as /æɪ/, or /aɪ/, for instance in *lady* /laɪdɪ/, or *day* /daɪ/ (Skaličková 1962, p.33). As for spelling there are *a* (*ape*), *ai* (*aim*), *ay* (*say*), rarely *ei* (*eight*), *ey* (*obey*), *ea* (*great*), *au* (*gauge*), *ao* (*gaol*), or *ae* (*brae*). (Skaličková 1982, p.102) An example of an English-Czech pair of homophone is *day* – *dej*.

**/ɔɪ/** - the first part of the diphthong is more open than /ɔ:/ as in *ought* (Roach, 2009, p.18). The diphthong corresponds with Czech /o+j/ sound (Melen 2010, p.23) and is defined as a closing diphthong. In spelling there are *oi* (*boil*), *oy* (*joy*), and rarely *uoy* (*buoy*). Again, it is possible to provide some homophone pairs: *convoy* – *konvoj*, *Roy* – *roj*, *coy* – *koj*, *envoy* – *voj*, *boy* – *boj*. (Skaličková 1982, p.103)

**/aʊ/** - this diphthong is similar to /aɪ/ and lips are only slightly round (Roach 2009, p.18). It is defined as a closing diphthong. It may be spelled as *ou* (*round*) and *ow* (*now*). There are some English-Czech pairs of homophones: *out* – *aut*, *owl* – *aul*, *foul* – *faul*. (Skaličková 1982, p.101)

**/əʊ/** - in English the diphthong does not have a linear equivalent in Czech. Diphthong /ou/ in Czech can be defined as an opposite but rather from the graphical point of view. The schwa sound is found to be a mixed vowel that is followed by a slight lip-rounding. English /əʊ/ is more front than Czech /ou/ (Melen 2010, p.24). It is defined as a closing diphthong. In spelling there are *o* (*broke*), *ou* (*soul*), *oa* (*coat*), *ow* (*hollow*), *oe* (*toe*), rarely *oo* (*brooch*), *eau* (*beau*), *ew* (*sew*), *eo* (*yeoman*), or *au*

(*mauve*) (Skaličková 1982, p.104). Possible examples of homophones are: *sowed – soud, sad note – sednout, loach – louč, whoso – husou, say dough – sejdou*.

*/ɪə/* - there are 4 sound combinations of this diphthong – 1. *dear /dɪə/*; 2. *idea /aɪˈdɪə/*, */ɪə/* sound is open and almost two-syllable; 3. *real /rɪəl/*; 4. *India /ɪndɪə/*, */ɪə/* sound in voiceless syllable approaches to */jə/*. There is no equivalent in Czech therefore it occurs to be mispronounced as */ɪʌ/* which appears in Scottish English. (Melen 2010, p.25) It is defined as a centering diphthong. As for spelling there are *ear (hear)*, *ere (here)*, *eir (weird)*, *ier (pier)*, *eer (cheer)*, rarely *ea (idea)*, *ir (fakir)*, *ia (Ian)*, *eu (museum)*, *eo (theory)*, or *e (hero)*. (Skaličková 1982, p.105) This diphthong does not have an opposite in Czech thus it is not possible to provide any English-Czech pair of homophones.

*/eə/* - the */e/* sound is quite open and end with narrowing the jaws. If there is */ɪ/* sound pronounced, schwa vowel blends with its beginning (for instance in *dairy, fairy, Mary*). Sometimes it occurs that */eə/* is pronounced as */æ/* (for instance */əˈpeərənt/* changes into */əˈpærənt/*) (Melen 2010, p. 25). It is defined as a centering diphthong. In spelling there are *are (bare)*, *ar (scarce)*, *air (air)*, *ear (bear)*, *ere (where)*, rarely *eir (heir)*, *ao (aorist)*, *ayor (mayor)*, or *a (vary)* (Skaličková 1982, p.106). This diphthong does not have an opposite in Czech thus it is not possible to provide any English-Czech homophone pairs.

*/ʊə/* - this diphthong is least frequent in English and is also defined as a centering diphthong. In the course of development of English */ʊə/* has been transformed to */ɔ:/* (for instance in *sure /ʃɔ:/*) (Melen 2010, p.25) In spelling there are *ure (sure)*, *oor (moor)*, *ur (curious)*, *our (gourd)*, rarely *oer (Boer)*, or *eu (Europe)* (Skaličková 1982, p.106). This diphthong does not have an opposite in Czech thus it is not possible to provide any English-Czech pair.

#### 2.4.4 Triphthongs

Triphthongs are sounds in which it is possible to observe three different vowels (Crystal 2003, p.237). They are the most difficult and complex clusters of

vowels. Triphthongs are defined as a combination of five closing diphthongs with /ə/ sound (Melen 2009, p.19). According to Skaličková (1962) there are two triphthongs in English (/aɪə/ and aʊə), while Roach (2009) identifies five triphthongs in English:

- eɪ + ə = eɪə (*player, mayonnaise*)
- aɪ + ə = aɪə (*liable, trial*)
- ɔɪ + ə = ɔɪə (*royal, loyal*)
- əʊ + ə = əʊə (*slower, mower*)
- aʊ + ə = aʊə (*tower, sour*)

## 2.5 English consonants

Another group of sounds is called consonants. Consonants are sounds in which there is no obstruction to the flow of air.

“Consonant sounds are made by restricting or blocking the air flow in some physical way, and this restriction, or the release of the restriction, is what gives the consonant its characteristic sound. By contrast, vowels require the vocal tract to be open so that the air stream escapes unobstructed.” (Underhill 2005, p.29)

On the other hand, from the phonological point of view, consonants are beginnings or ends of syllables (*glad*). They occur in groups called consonant clusters. There can be up to 3 consonants at the beginning of a word (*string*), and 4 consonants at the end (*twelfths*). (Melen 2010, p.27)

Generally said, consonants are sounds that are more distinctive than vowels. But there are some consonants that are similar to vowels. For instance /j/ and /w/ sounds are called semi-vowels. It means that /j/ sometimes approximates to /i/ and /w/ to /ʊ/. (Melen 2010, p.27)

There are 24 consonant sounds in English. These are voiced ones (lenis): /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, /ð/, /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /j/ and /w/ and voiceless ones (fortis): /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /h/ and /tʃ/. (Melen 2010, p.28)

In comparison with English there are 26 consonants in Czech.

English does not have sounds /ř/, /ʔ/, /dʔ/, /ň/ and /x/ while Czech has no /θ/, /ð/, /w/ and /ɹ/ (dark /ɹ/ occurs only in American variety). (Melen 2010, p.28)

In case of /ň/ it is important to mention that it is confused with English /n+j/ (e.g. *new* /nju:/, *not* /ňu:/) (Melen 2010, p.36)

English consonants can be divided according to different criteria. The easiest one is to the distinction whether the consonant is voiced or voiceless. This differentiation has been mentioned above. (Underhill 2005, p.30)

Another aspect is the **place of articulation**. According to which it is possible to distinguish 9 groups of vowels:

- Bilabial: /p/, /b/, /m/, /w/
- Labiodental: /f/, /v/
- Dental: /θ/, /ð/
- Alveolar: /t/, /d/, /n/, /l/, /r/, /s/, /z/
- Postalveolar: /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/
- Palatal: /j/
- Velar: /k/, /g/, /ŋ/
- Glottal /h/, /ɦ/, /ʔ/
- Retroflex /ɻ/

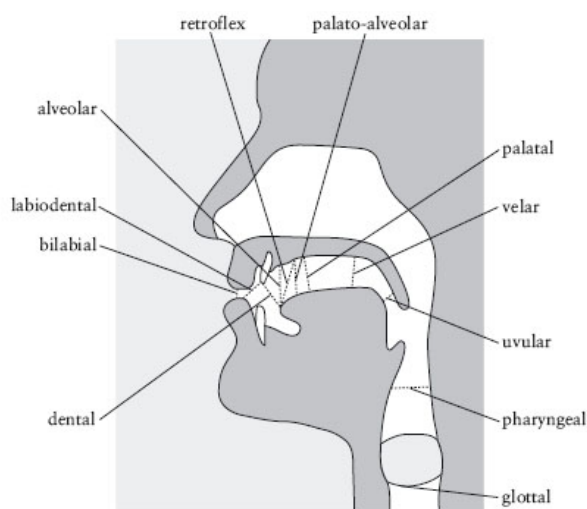


Figure 7: Place of articulation (Hayes 2009)

The last aspect is the **manner of articulation** and is described in a detailed way in the forthcoming part.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
<b>Plosives</b>	p b			t d			k g	
<b>Nasals</b>	m			n			ŋ	
<b>Fricatives</b>		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			
<b>Affricates</b>					tʃ dʒ			
<b>Glottal fricatives</b>								h ɦ
<b>Approximants</b>	w			l	r	j		

Table 1: English consonants \*

### 2.5.1 Stop consonants

“Have a stricture of complete closure in the vocal tract which blocks (i.e. stops) the airstream, hence the term stop. The soft palate is raised so that there’s no escape of air through the nose.” (Collins&Mees 2003, p.42-43) They comprise two groups, plosives and nasals.

#### 2.5.1.1 Plosives p, t, k, b, d, g

“Plosive consonants are formed by completely closing the air passage, then compressing the air and suddenly opening the passage, so that the air escapes making an explosive sound.” (Jones 1922, p.24)

*/p/* - it is not pronounced in words starting with *pt-* (*ptarmigan*), *pn-* (*pneumonia*), or *ps-* (*psychology*). (Skaličková 1962, p.44) These are spelling representations: *p* (*put*), *pp* (*poppy*), rarely *gh* (*hiccough*), or *ph* (*diphthong*). (Skaličková 1982, p.124) Potential inter-language pairs are: *pud – put*, *šíp – šíp*, *půl – pool*, *pil – pill*. (Skaličková 1962, p.44)

*/t/* - in some dialects */t/* in the middle and at the end of the word is omitted and is changed into glottal stop (e.g. *better* - /beʔə/). In words ending with *-astle* (*castle*), or *-sten* (*fasten*) */t/* is not pronounced. (Skaličková 1962, p.45) As for spelling there are *t* (*ten*), *tt* (*potty*), ending *-ed* (*smoked*), rarely *th* (*Thomas*). (Skaličková 1982,

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\* Table 1: English consonants was created for the purpose of the thesis by the author of this work.

p.129) It is possible to provide Czech-English pair of homophones: *tou – toe, med – met, trik – trick, typ – tip*. (Skaličková 1962, p.45)

**/k/** - the voiceless consonant /k/ forms a pair with voiced /g/ and differs from the Czech /k/ in aspiration, which is stronger. In some dialects it can be substituted with a stroke (e.g. *technical* - /'te?nikl/). Spelling varieties could be *k* (*kill*), *ck* (*lick*), *c* (*cat*), *cc* (*account*), *ch* in words of Greek origin (*echo*), rarely *cq* (*acquire*), *qu* (*queen*), or *x* that is either pronounced as /ks/ in voiceless word (*extra*), or /gz/ in voiced word (*exact*). (Skaličková 1982, p.133) Possible Czech-English homophonic pairs are: *kam – come, kiln – clean, kůl – cool, kap – cup*. (Skaličková 1962, p.47)

**/b/** - it is not pronounced in words that begin with *-mb* (*comb*) and *-bt* (*debt*). It is important to mention that there might be an exception, e.g. *iambic, bombastic, or Bombay*. /b/ consonant has only two possible spelling options: *b* (*above*), or *bb* (*hobby*). Inter-language homophones are: *byt – bit, být – beat, boj – boy*. (Skaličková 1962, p.44) Voiceless opponent of /b/ is a consonant /p/.

**/d/** - it is articulated further than its Czech equivalent. Examples of homophonic pairs are *dům – doom, dej – day, dým – deem, Dán – darn* and spelling possibilities are: *d* (*drum*), or *dd* (*add*). Special case is *-ed* ending of verbs (*robbed*). (Skaličková 1962, p.46) Voiceless opposite of /d/ is a consonant /t/.

**/g/** - it ranks among velar consonants and its voiceless opposite is a consonant /k/. In Czech /g/ occurs only in words of foreign origin (e.g. *vagon, guma*) or in assimilation (e.g. *kde, kdy, nikdy*). Sometimes /g/ is omitted in pronunciation: *sign*, or *daughter*. As for spelling there are: *g* (*give*), *gg* (*giggle*), or *gu* (*guilty*). Concerning /g/ it is not possible to provide inter-language homophones. (Skaličková 1962, p.47-48)

### 2.5.1.2 Nasals m, n, ŋ

When pronouncing a nasal, the air goes through the nose. The soft palate is lower while there is no other sound during which the air goes through the nose. (Roach 2009, p.46)

**/m/** - it is altogether similar to a Czech /m/. It is not pronounced in words that start with *mn-* (*mnemonic*). There are two spelling varieties: *m* (*mouse*), *mm* (*stammer*), rarely *mb* (*lamb*), or *mn* (*autumn*). Examples of Czech-English homophonic pairs are: *mít* – *meat*, *melou* – *mellow*, *mou* – *mow*, *myl* – *mill*. (Skaličková 1962, p.49)

**/n/** - according to Crystal (2003) this phoneme is the most common sound in English. (Crystal 2003, p.242) It is not usually pronounced in words ending with – *mn* (*column*, *autumn*). Sometimes people detach /n/ at the beginning of a word when it precedes an indefinite article (e.g. *an adder*). (Skaličková 1962, p.49-50) Possible spelling varieties are: *n* (*near*), *nn* (*sunny*), rarely *kn* (*knight*), *pn* (*pneumonia*), *gn* (*gnaw*), or *mn* (*mnemonic*). (Skaličková 1982, p.158)

**/ŋ/** - it is the one that Czech students have issues with and is often substituted with /n/. According to Melen (2010), the correct pronunciation has a cardinal impact on what is understood (e.g. *singer* /ŋ/ while *sinner* /n/). In Czech /ŋ/ sound can also be found (e.g. *banka*, *tenký*, *hangár*) where /ŋ/ precedes /k/ or /g/. Skaličková (1962) states that in Czech it happens because of the assimilation while in English /ŋ/ is one individual phoneme. In some dialect –*ing* form is pronounced as –*in* (for instance in London dialect). There are only 3 spelling variants: *ng* (*finger*), *n* (*Congress*), and rarely *ngue* (*tongue*). (Skaličková 1962, p.50-52)

## 2.5.2 Fricative consonants

In a fricative consonant a hissing sound is hearable because of the air that goes through a narrow passage. (Roach 2009, p.39)

Jones defines fricative consonant: “Fricative consonants are formed by a narrowing of the air passage at some point so that the air escapes making a kind of hissing sound.” (Jones 1922, p.51)

### 2.5.2.1 Fricatives f, v, θ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ

**/f/** - it is basically the same as its Czech equivalent. It is a voiceless consonant contrasting with a voiced /v/ consonant. In Czech /f/ occurs normally in words of

foreign origin (*film, filigrán*), there are only 3 originally Czech words (*doufat, zoufat, výfuk*). Concerning the assimilation, it pronounced after a /v/ sound (*kravka /krafka/, krev /kref/*). English spelling includes: *f* (*fall*), rarely *ff* (*off*), *gh* (*laugh*), *ph* (*philosophy*). (Skaličková 1982, p.142)

/v/ - it has a voiceless opponent /f/. Spelling involves: *v* (*vet*), *f* (*of*), *ve* (*love*) – in this case /f/ sound is also acceptable, rarely *vv* (*navvy*), *f* (*nephew*), or *ph* (*Stephen*) – it can also be pronounced with a /f/ sound. (Skaličková 1962, p.54) Poslušná (2009) states that /v/ is basically the same as its Czech equivalent, but /w/ is very often pronounced as /v/ by Czech students. According to her when a student has a word with /w/ to pronounce he/she should have lips rounded the same way as in /u/ and than produce a /v/ sound. She states some crucial examples: *vest – west, wet – vet, Wayne – vain*. (Poslušná 2009, p.97)

/θ/ - it is a voiceless consonant that has its voiced contrast /ð/. Czech students of English find this consonant to be difficult to pronounce. It occurs in 4 different cases: 1. at the beginning of a word (*thick*), 2. in the middle of a word in words of non-germanic origin (*method*), 3. at the end of a word (*mouth*), 4. in –ths plurals (*months*). The sound has no Czech equivalent therefore there are no inter-language homophones. (Skaličková 1962, p.56) It is often replaced by /f/, or /t/ by Czech students. (Poslušná 2009, p.100) Spelling options are: *th* (*thumb*), or *tth* (*Matthes*). Sometimes, “th” is not pronounced (e.g. *asthma, isthmus*) (Skaličková 1982, p.146)

/ð/ - this sound can occur in 4 different cases: 1. in pronouns (*this, these, they*), 2. in the middle of a word that have a Germanic origin (*father, mother, brother, northern*), 3. at the end of a word (*bathe, with, smooth*), 4. in plural forms (*births*). The only example of spelling is *th* (*gather*). (Skaličková 1962, p.56) The sound is often pronounced by Czech students as /d/.

/s/ - it has its voiced opponent /z/. Skaličková states there spelling possibilities: *s* (*sin*), *ss* (*lesson*), *c* (*peace*), *x* (*extra*), rarely *sc* (*science*), *sch* (*schism*). These are inter-language homophones: *syn – sin, sám – some, sil – sill*. (Skaličková 1962, p.57) Czech students have problems to distinguish between /s/ and /z/.



**/z/** - the articulation of consonant /z/ is less energetic in comparison with its Czech equivalent, therefore a characteristic “buzzing” sound is not that distinct. The problem is basically the same as with /s/. Czech students do not pay attention to distinguish these two sounds. Spelling variants involve: *z* (*lazy*), *s* (*observe*), rarely *ss* (*possess*), *zz* (*dizzy*), or *x* (*examination*). (Skaličková 1962, p.148)

**/ʃ/** - the English consonant /ʃ/ requires more significant rounding of lips. An opposite consonant is a consonant /ʒ/ that is defined as a voiced sound. Owing to the assimilation, a Czech sound /š/ changes its pronunciation (e.g. *náš hoch* /náž hoch/). In English, spelling comprises *sh* (*shoe*), rarely *ch* (*maschine*), *s* (*sure*), *ss* (*pressure*), *x* (*luxury*), or *sch* (*schedule*). (Skaličková 1982, p.149-150) Skaličková states some inter-language homophones: *šedou* – *shadow*, *šíp* – *sheep*, *šel* – *shell*. (Skaličková 1962, p.59)

**/ʒ/** - spelling variants are: *si* (*decision*), *s* (*pleasure*), *z* (*azure*), or *ge* (*garage*). (Skaličková 1982, p.151) According to Roach the consonant occurs rarely in initial and ending position. It is usually in words of French origin. The most common position of the phoneme is in the middle (*measure*). (Roach 2009, p.42)

### 2.5.2.2 Affricates tʃ, dʒ

Affricates begin as plosive but end as fricative. (Roach 2009, p.39)

**/tʃ/** - it is a voiceless consonant while /dʒ/ is its voiced opposite. Skaličková notifies that it is highly relevant to distinguish /tʃ/ from /t+ʃ/ (e.g. *watch out* – *what shout*; *he chose* – *heat shows*). These are spelling possibilities: *ch* (*chap*), *tch* (*sketch*), rarely *t* (*adventure*), *cz* (*Czech*). (Skaličková 1982, p.137-138) These are inter-language homophones: *čin* – *chin*, *čí* – *cheer*, *čep* – *chap*. (Skaličková 1962, p.53)

**/dʒ/** - this consonant is sometimes pronounced as /d+j+ʒ/ (*individual*, *educate*). In Czech this sound occurs not only in foreign words (*džem*), but also in some words of Czech origin (*džbán*), or in assimilation (*léčba* [lédžba]). Spelling involves: *j* (*jail*), *g* (*ginger*), *dge* (*judge*), rarely *gg* (*suggestion*), *ch* (*sandwich*), *dj* (*adjacent*), *de* (*grandeur*), *di* (*soldier*). (Skaličková 1982, p.138)

### 2.5.2.3 Glottal fricatives h, ħ

**/h/** - basically, it has no voiced equivalent. Only exception is when a /h/ sound is in the middle of a word and is enclosed by voiced sounds (e.g. *behind, boyhood*). In English /h/ is never in the last position. There are only two possible spellings: *h (hat)* and *wh (who)*. Inter-language homophones are: *had – hut, hod – hot, hop – hop*. (Skaličková 1962, p.63-64)

**/ħ/** - it is a voiced opposite of /h/ (*ahead*). It occurs only in the connected speech.

## 2.5.3 Resonant articulations

### 2.5.3.1 Approximants j, w, l, r

Skandera and Burleigh state: “Approximants are generally made with a wider gap between the speech organs than is the case in the production of fricatives. The speech organs approach each other, but they do not touch each other.” (Skandera&Burleigh 2005, p.24)

#### 2.5.3.1.1 Semi-vowels

From the phonetic point of view they function as vowels while from the phonological point of view they function as consonants. (Roach 2009, p.50)

**/j/** - it is the only palatal consonant. In English it is less energetic than in Czech. It is a voiced consonant while in some North-English dialects /j/ approximates to voiceless variant in “hj” group (*human, huge, humour*). In connected speech /j/ has a significant role in changing the pronunciation: e.g. /s/, /z/ change into /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ (*issue*), or /tj/ and /dj/ is changed into /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ (*did you - ˈdɪdʒə*). Examples of spellings are: *y (you)*, rarely *i (onion)*, or *e (hideous)*. It is important to mention that in American English /ju:/ is pronounced only with /u:/ (*New York*). In RP standard there is no equivalent to any Czech sound and therefore it is impracticable to introduce a Czech-English homophonic pair. (Skaličková 1962, p.62-63)

*/w/* - this consonant has no equivalent in Czech and therefore it is not possible to provide Czech-English homophones. The lips are rounded and further part of a tongue is raised in the same way as when */u/* is pronounced. The sound is not always pronounced: 1. at the beginning of a word that precedes */r/* sound (*write*); 2. word ending with *-wick* (*Warwick*), or *-wich* (*Harwich*); 3. other words (*sword, answer, two*). (Skaličková 1962, p.55) These are examples of a spelling: *w* (*wind*), *wh* (*what*), *u* (*language*). Some exceptions are: *one* */wʌn/*, *once* */wʌns/*, *choir* */kwaɪə/*, *suite* */swit/*. (Skaličková 1982, p.141)

#### 2.5.3.1.2 Liquids

*/l/* - there are two kinds of */l/* sound – clear */l/* and dark */ɫ/*. In Czech */l/* is analogous to an English clear */l/* which is pronounced only if it precedes a vowel (*let*). When a word ends with */l/* sound, or precedes a consonant then it is named a dark */ɫ/* (*feel, people*). A letter */l/* is at times absolutely omitted (e.g. *calf, calm, should*). (Melen 2010, p.37-38) Spelling possibilities are as follows: *l* (*listen*), or *ll* (*call*). Skaličková mentions some Czech-English pair of homonyms with no related meanings: *bil – bill, šel – shell, dal – dull, Tyl – till*. (Skaličková 1962, p.62)

*/r/* - in Czech */r/* is characterized by a vibration of the tongue while its English equivalent does not require that. The voiced consonant */r/* is not pronounced in these words: *farm, tower, door, far away*, etc. On the other hand, in a rhotic dialect */r/* sound is pronounced (western part of the United States). (Skaličková 1962, p.59-60) Most of the British dialects are non-rhotic. (Skandera&Burleigh, 2005, p.60) These are spelling possibilities: *r* (*run*), *rr* (*barrow*), rarely *wr* (*write*), *rh* (*rhythm*), and *rrh* (*Pyrrhus*). (Skaličková 1982, p.166) Inter-language homophones are: *ret – rat*, or *rock- rok*. (Skaličková 1962, p.60)

## 2.6 Received Pronunciation

In order to understand the problem with different varieties of English it is important to define two key terms: **dialect** and **accent**. Dialects differ not only in pronunciation, but also in grammar, vocabulary and word order. In Great Britain there are 5 groups of dialects: Northern, Midland, Eastern, Western and Southern. They comprise *Cockney (London)*, *Geordie (Newcastle)*, or *Scouse (Liverpool)*. (Crystal 2003, p.178)

On the other hand, accents are varieties that are different from one other in pronunciation. It basically depends on geographical, or social aspect. The accent that has been recommended for foreign students of English for long time is so called Received Pronunciation - RP (Roach 2009, p.3). RP, also called Standard English, King's English or School English was an accent that was rather connected with the social class of the users more than with their geographical position. The word "received" refers to "socially acceptable". Unfortunately, this accent is nowadays found old-fashioned and has been changed into BBC Pronunciation. (Skaličková 1962, p.12)

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1 General information about the research

The practical part of the research depicts the whole process of the research in a detailed way, and also provides the analysis of the data.

The aim of the work is to demonstrate some mistakes in the pronunciation of Czech native speakers who study English. I have asked 11 people to be participants in my research. They vary in age, occupation, hobbies, social class and level of English. The contributors were 4 women and 7 men. They were given 3 short texts and were recorded while reading them. They have different levels of English, ranging from pre-intermediate to advanced. The youngest participant is 15 while the oldest is 35.

The major research questions are:

1. Which phonemes cause problems?
2. How the participants' teachers have approached pronunciation?
3. What has influenced the participants' pronunciation?

#### 3.2 Tools of the research

The research was carried out in the period from January until February 2014.

Two methods that were picked for the research are: a short interview with each respondent and a crucial part – recordings of the text they were given.

For the purpose of the research, a text containing 3 parts was created. The first part involves pairs of words that can be confused because of their similar spelling (*staff-stuff*), in the second part I have chosen individual words that I think people often mispronounce (*advertisement*) and the third text is the excerpt from my favourite book “The confession of Max Tivoli” by Andrew Sean Greer in which I intended to discover whether pronunciation of words in connected speech differs from the words in isolation. The whole text is placed in *Appendix 1*, while in *Appendix 2* the text is transcribed according to IPA.

The aim was not to investigate suprasegmental aspects of the connected speech but only to analyze the segmental aspects of pronunciation.

Even though the Received Pronunciation is crucial for this thesis I did not evaluate different dialects as mistake because my thesis is not about differences between individual dialects.

The participants were asked to read the texts and were informed about the ongoing recording. Firstly, they were meant to go through the text and when they were ready, the recording started. The majority of them were nervous, as a result of being recorded.

### 3.3 Analysis

The analysis contains a detailed description of every individual respondent concerning the level of English, whether they have ever been to an English speaking country for a longer period of time, whether they have any certificates of English, which variety they prefer, etc. After introducing each interviewee, a list containing every mistake they have made continues.

#### 3.3.1 Respondent A

The first respondent is a 22-year-old woman who studies International Affairs and has reached an advanced level of English. She has obtained both FCE and CAE, and in the future she is going to take CPE. “I think it’s a summary of some kind of an international alphabet” is how she defined the IPA. When she watches the TV she does not need subtitles and has had 2 native speakers until now. An interesting fact is that she has never been to an English speaking country for a longer period of time. She mentions honestly that she uses both varieties of English even though she tries to use only British variety. Her teachers have never taught her simplified transcription.

These are mistakes in pronunciation that she made:

##### TEXT A

- *staff* /stʌf/ this pronunciation is not acceptable in British, nor American English

##### TEXT B

- *panda* /pʌnda/
- *electricity* /elektrɪsəti/ the stress is not marked at all

- *advise* /'ədvaɪz/ read as *advice*

### TEXT C

- The text was read brilliantly read, the only think that could be reproached is the connected speech that was not perfect but is not the aim of the thesis.

### 3.3.2 Respondent B

The second interviewed person is a 24-year-old woman who works as a receptionist in a hotel. I asked her to be a participant of my research because I find her occupation to be related with foreign languages. Her level of English is intermediate and she has been studying English for 10 years. She has not obtained any certificate of English yet and has no idea what the IPA is. When she watches a movie she prefers Czech subtitles and she has never had a native speaker as her teacher. All of her teachers used British English and she personally uses a mixture of American and British English. Movies, music and guests of the hotel she has worked in have influenced her the most.

These are her mistakes:

### TEXT A

- *ant* /a:nt/
- *hole* and *whole* were both pronounced /hol/
- *fool* /fʊl/
- *what's* /wɒtʃ/
- *hat* /hʌt/
- *boil* and *bowl* /bol/
- *staff* /stʌf/

### TEXT B

- *panda* /pʌnda/
- *comfortable* /'kʌmfəteɪbəl/
- *three* /tri:/ with a distinct /r/
- *dangerous* /'deɪndʒərəs/
- *prefer* /'prɪfer/ mistake not only in a stress but also in pronunciation of the last syllable
- *advise* /'ədvaɪz/ read as *advice*

- *author* /autor/ read as its Czech equivalent

### TEXT C

- *disturbed* /di'stərbid/ wrong pronunciation of *-ed* ending
- *facts* /fʌkts/
- *murder* /murdr/
- *things* /finks/
- *three* /fri:/
- *betrayed* /be'trejt/
- *love* /lov/

The biggest problem was that she did not read the texts carefully and has read the last one very fast, not paying attention to aspects of connected speech. On the other hand, I like the way she pronounced *story*, or *body*.

### 3.3.3 Respondent C

The third person is a 15-year-old boy who studies medical high school and has been studying English for 6 years. He has not obtained any certificate of English yet and he is not familiar with the term IPA. When he watches a movie he needs Czech subtitles but partially understands. He has never had a native speaker as a teacher and personally prefers British English. He has been to the USA for three weeks and music has influenced his English the most.

These are the mistakes he made in pronunciation in the given texts:

#### TEXT A

- *ant* /a:nt/
- *whole* /wɔ:l/ read as *wall*
- *full* /fɔ:l/ read as *fall*
- *ball* /bel/ read as *bell*
- *bowl* /bɔ:l/ read as *ball*
- *staff* /stʌf/
- *quit* /kwait/

#### TEXT B

- *three* /tri:/ the /r/ sound is very strong and same as the Czech /r/
- *panda* /pʌnda/



- *electricity* /elektrɪsəti/ the stress is not marked at all
- *comfortable* /'kʌmfəteɪbl/
- *embassy* /embəsi/ again, he omitted the stress of the first syllable
- *author* /autor/ read as its Czech equivalent

#### TEXT C

- *disturbed* /dɪ'stɜːbaɪd/
- *murder* /mɜːdɜː/
- *woman* /wɒmən/

This respondent surprised me with very a nice pronunciation of words containing “th” sound – *throw*, or *three* in the last text. Interesting fact is, that in connected speech it was pronounced brilliantly but in the isolation it caused problems. In my opinion he prefers American variety, for instance in *advertisement* /əd'vɜːtaɪzmənt/ he used American English which is not found to be a mistake and is perfectly all right. Again, the connected speech is something very difficult for him.

#### 3.3.4 Respondent D

Another interviewed person is an 18-year-old man who attends grammar school. He has been studying English for 14 years and has reached an intermediate level of English. He prefers watching movies with Czech subtitles and has never been taught by a native speaker. All of his teachers have used British English and none of them have taught him correct pronunciation. He is aware of mistakes he makes when he communicates with friends while playing online PC games.

He made a few mistakes in pronunciation of the texts:

#### TEXT A

- *hole* and *whole* were both pronounced /hol/
- *staff* /stɪf/

#### TEXT B

- *three* /friː/ read as *free*
- *anniversary* /ˌɪnɪvɜːzəri/ no stress was marked
- *prefer* /prɪfer/
- *author* /əʊtər/
- *advise* /'ədvaɪz/ read as *advice*

**TEXT C**

- *throw* /frɔs/
- *three* /fri:/
- *things* /finks/

I especially appreciate the pronunciation of *advertisement*, *dangerous* and *electricity* that was well done in the second part and *story* in the third part. As a whole, he did not make many mistakes in particular words but the connected speech was very problematic for him. He stammered and skips some words.

**3.3.5 Respondent E**

Respondent E is a 17-year-old man who studies grammar school and has reached an advanced level of English. He has been studying English for 14 years mainly due to his father`s efforts. He has spent almost half of his life abroad. He used to live in Malaysia and Indonesia where he depended on using English every day. He does not know what the IPA is and has difficulties pronouncing /θ/. When he watches movies he does not use subtitles, however he has trouble understanding some British dialects. He is currently taught by a Scottish teacher who has repeatedly suggested that he sit for CAE exam (Certificate in Advanced English). He also mentioned that his teachers have never paid attention to pronunciation.

These are the little mistakes he made:

**TEXT A**

- *aunt* /ɔ:nt/
- *bowl* /bɔl/

**TEXT B**

- *three* /tri:/
- *panda* /pʌnda/
- *advise* /'ədvaɪz/ read as *advice*
- *author* /autər/

**TEXT C**

- *three* /tri:/ the mistake is repeated

This interviewee was not expected to make an extensive number of mistakes and as the research has shown his knowledge is excellent. I acknowledge the

pronunciation of *prefer* /prəfɜː/ which I have not known before and I also appreciate the pronunciation of *advertisement* /əd'vɜːtaɪzmənt/ that is typical for American English and *murder* with distinct /r/ typical for rhotic languages. He relatively keeps to one variety - American English that is the evidence of his great knowledge of English.

### 3.3.6 Respondent F

Another participant of the research is a 23-year-old man who is a professional poker player. He has been studying English for 16 years and has an advanced level. He assumes that the IPA is “a table of different sounds”. When he watches a movie he does not use subtitles and has been taught by British, New Zealand, and American native speakers. He has lived abroad for nearly 10 years and graduated from New Zealand International School in Jakarta where the exclusive language was English. Nevertheless, he has not acquired any certificate of English yet. He finds /θ/ sound to be difficult to pronounce and mentioned that his teachers have never taught him simplified IPA symbols.

His mistakes were as follows:

#### TEXT A

- In this section the interviewee made no mistake.

#### TEXT B

- *three* /triː/
- *anniversary* /æni'vɜːsəri/ he pronounces this word with no distinctive stress
- *advise* /'ədvaɪz/ again, he does not take the stress into account

#### TEXT C

- *throw* /troʊ/
- *three* /triː/

Regarding his advanced level of English, the respondent was not expected to make distinctive mistakes however there were still some minor mistakes. He uses exclusively American variety in all aspects of speech that I appreciate very much. For instance, the pronunciation of *staff* /stæf/ is correct but is used in American variety.

His speech is thus consistent. During the recording he was quite nervous and that caused stumbling and stammering.

### 3.3.7 Respondent G

The respondent G is a 22-year-old man who studies International Relations and has an advanced level of English. He has been studying English for 16 years. He is not aware of what the IPA is, and while watching a movie he prefers subtitles. Some of his teachers have been native speakers who mainly used British variety. He uses a mixture of both varieties of English and capturing the accent causes issues. The mistake he is aware of is the pronunciation of suffix *-ing*.

These are major mistakes in pronunciation:

#### TEXT A

- *aunt* /ɔ:nt/ this variety is not possible in British nor in American English
- *staff* /ste:f/ he uses a sound of long /e/ that is not in IPA

#### TEXT B

- *panda* /pʌnda/
- *electricity* /elektrisəti/ the stress is not that distinct
- *comfortable* /'kɒmfətebl/

#### TEXT C

- *sought for* /sɔ: fɔ:r/

I welcome the pronunciation of *three*, *earth* and *advise* that did not cause him any problem. He ranks among the respondents of the highest level of English which is proven in the recording.

### 3.3.8 Respondent H

Respondent H is a 24-year-old man who studies English in education. He has been studying English for 9 years and has obtained FCE therefore his English is at least upper-intermediate, rather advanced. He watches movies and uses English subtitles in order to improve his English. He has never had a native speaker as a teacher and he admits that he uses a mixture of both - American and British variety. He has never been to an English speaking country for a longer period of time,

however, he has been to London 5 times for a couple of days. He is conscious that he mispronounces “th” sound and makes mistakes in stress. The biggest influences on his English have been movies, friends, radio, TV series, and teachers at school.

These are the mistakes he made:

**TEXT A**

- *aunt* /ɔ:nt/

**TEXT B**

- *panda* /pʌnda/
- *electricity* /elektrisəti:/

**TEXT C**

- *throw* /frɒθ/
- *loved* /lovid/

This respondent was very good at his pronunciation; the only fact that has been confirmed is that he uses a mixture of both – American and British English. Another fact is that he does not take into account aspect of connected speech and ignores the intonation.

### 3.3.9. Respondent I

The respondent I is a 25-year-old woman who studies Theory and Philosophy of Communication at philosophical faculty. She has reached an advanced level of English and prefers American variety. She has been studying English for 16 years; nevertheless she has not obtained any certificate yet. When watching a movie she uses subtitles and all of her high school and university teachers were native speakers. Last summer she has been to USA for 3 months where she spoke English every day, therefore she made some friends who she is in contact with. The difficult words according to her are for instance *path*, or *three*.

He made following mistakes:

**TEXT A**

- *aunt* /ɔ:nt/

**TEXT B**

- *panda* /pʌnda/
- *electricity* /elektrisəti/ the stress is not that distinct

- *prefer* /prɪ'fer/
- *advise* /'ədvaɪz/ pronounced as *advice*

#### TEXT C

- *the facts* /ði: 'fæktz/
- *throw* /frɒθ/
- *three* /fri:/
- *sought* /θɔ:t/
- *betrayed* /be'treɪt/

I like her speech very much. Basically said, she had no difficulties with the first and the second text. It is obvious from the recording that she has been to the USA because her pronunciation is practically based on the American variety. She has struggled with words as the others – *three*, *throw*, or *panda*.

#### 3.3.10 Respondent J

Another respondent involved in the research is a 21-year-old man who studies Psychology and has got an upper-intermediate level of English proven by no certificate. He has been studying English for 7 years and has had an American teacher. He defined the IPA as “some kind of table related to phonology”. He uses both varieties and is conscious that every contact with English enriches him. He finds the following words challenging: *thief*, or *path*. He has never been to an English speaking country but he has spent one semester in Belgium where he spoke English every day.

These are pronunciation mistakes that he made:

#### TEXT A

- *aunt* /ɔ:nt/
- *ant* /ɑ:nt/
- *bowl* /bɑʊl/
- *bull* /bʌl/
- *staff* /stʌf/

#### TEXT B

- *panda* /pʌnda/
- *electricity* /elektrɪsəti/ the stress is not that distinct

- *author* /'aʊtə/
- *advise* /'ədvaɪz/ pronounced as *advice*

#### TEXT C

- From the segmental point of view this part was perfectly pronounced.

I especially like how he pronounced *disturbed*, *murder*, and *embassy*. Concerning the third part, his pronunciation was great. He applies aspect of connected speech and his speech gives a very good impression.

#### 3.3.11 Respondent K

The last participant of the research is a 35-year-old woman who works as an academic staff and she participates in European projects where she uses English every day. She has been studying English for 23 years and has reached an advanced level of English, nevertheless she has only FCE certificate. She does not know what the IPA chart is and mentioned that her teacher at a grammar school did not teach them how to pronounce properly, what was more, she made fun of students. She has had many teachers during her lifetime. She has been to the USA 5 times. She has been doing part-time jobs during summer and once she spent one whole year in Boston. The biggest influence on her English has been working around people with disabilities while working in respite care programs. She said she had problems with pairs of words (e.g. *beer* – *bear*) and also of Czenglish (especially in word order). Her teachers never taught her transcription of new words.

#### TEXT A

- *ant* /ʌnt/
- *bull* /bʌl/
- *stuff* /stʊf/
- *quit* /kwɪt/
- *quite* /kwaɪt/ read as quiet

#### TEXT B

- *anniversary* /ˌɪnɪ'vɜːsəri/
- *panda* /pʌnda/
- *electricity* /ˌelɛktrɪsəti/ the stress is not that distinct
- *comfortable* /kʌmfə'təbl/ she used the stress wrongly

- *embassy* /embəsi/ the stress is not marked
- *earth* /eɜ:θ/

**TEXT C**

- *murder* /mɜ:rdɜ:/
- *three* /sri:/
- *throw* /frɔ:θ/

The last respondent was relatively nervous and that fact was reflected in the recorded speech. If she were not recorded it would possibly have been better. The pronunciation of individual words was fairly correct and it is possible to say that she prefers American English. The recording provides confirmatory evidence that she has been to the USA for a longer period of time.



## 4. Conclusion

The thesis is concerned with the issue of what mistakes Czech native speakers make when speaking English and the main purpose is to demonstrate some typical mistakes. The thesis consists of two major parts – theoretical and practical. The theoretical part includes basic terminology regarding Phonetics and Phonology, differences in sounds of Czech and English, and a thorough synopsis of English short and long vowels and consonants. The theoretical part demonstrates the Analysis of the gathered data.

The data yielded in the Analysis provides convincing evidence that people are hesitant when speaking out loud in English. Basically, all respondents were nervous during recordings. Generally said, it is difficult to produce sounds that are not in one's mother tongue (especially /θ/ and /ð/). On the other hand for the tested speakers pronunciation was not of the utmost importance and they do not try to improve it even if wrong pronunciation can completely change the meaning of the word (e.g. *three – free*). One of the problematic phonemes was /r/ that was often pronounced as Czech /r/. Another interesting result is that the respondents had issues pronouncing words that occur in Czech (e.g. *panda*, or *author*). One of the biggest mistakes I have found is that people do not emphasize the word stress.

Turning now to the second research question concerning attitudes of the respondents' teachers, it can be concluded that the majority of teachers have taught the pronunciation in terms of saying a word in the classroom, but they have rarely included IPA symbols. The most interesting fact is that the teacher of my last respondent made fun of students when they mispronounced words. To sum up, it is possible to say that most teachers do not provide students with correct pronunciation during the class.

Regarding the last question of the research (What has influenced the participants' pronunciation?) the data indicates that the interviewees have mostly been influenced by mass media, including TV shows, music, The Internet, etc. Some of them also mentioned friends from abroad who they communicate via social networks with.

Taking everything into account, the thesis provides comprehensive overview of mistakes in pronunciation that are made by Czech natives. The research was made according to the knowledge gained in the theoretical part and my personal experience.

Further research in the area may include suprasegmental aspects of speech (linking, assimilation, tone, intonation, etc.)

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## APPENDIX 1

### TEXTS

#### PART A

aunt – ant  
hole – whole  
ship – sheep  
full – fool  
boil – bowl  
ball – bull  
watch – what`s  
staff – stuff  
quit – quite  
hot – hat

#### PART B

- advertisement
- three
- anniversary
- panda
- electricity
- comfortable
- dangerous
- embassy
- prefer
- author
- advise
- earth

#### PART C

I wanted to put that down in case I am discovered and unable to complete these pages, in case you become so disturbed by the facts of my confession that you throw it into the fire before I get to tell you of great love and murder. I would not blame you. So many things stand in the way of anyone ever hearing my story. There is a dead body to explain. A woman three times loved. A friend betrayed. And a boy long sought for. So I will get to the end first and tell you we are each the love of someone's life.

[http://www.kcrw.com/etc/programs/bw/bw040520andrew\\_sean\\_greer/excerpt-from-the-confessions-of-max-tivoli](http://www.kcrw.com/etc/programs/bw/bw040520andrew_sean_greer/excerpt-from-the-confessions-of-max-tivoli)

## APPENDIX 2

### TEXT TRANSCRIBED

#### PART A

a:nt – ænt  
 hæʊl - hæʊl  
 ʃɪp - ʃi:p  
 fɔ:l - fu:l  
 bɔ:l - bæʊl  
 bɔ:l - bɔ:l  
 wɒtʃ - wɒts  
 sta:f - stʌf  
 kwɪt - kwait  
 hɒt – hæt

#### PART B

- əd'vɜ:tɪzmənt/əd'vɜ:tɪzmənt
- θri:
- ænɪ'vɜ:səri
- 'pændə
- ɪlek'trɪsəti/elɪk'trɪsəti
- 'kʌmfətəbl
- 'deɪndʒərəs
- 'embəsi
- prɪ'fɜ:
- 'ɔ:θə(r)
- əd'vaɪz
- ɜ:θ

#### PART C

'aɪ 'wɒntɪd tə 'pʊt 'ðæt 'dæʊn 'ɪn 'keɪs 'aɪ əm dɪs'kɒvəd ənd ,ən'eɪbəl tə kəm'pli:t  
 'ði:z 'peɪdʒɪz, 'ɪn 'keɪs 'ju: bɪ'kəm 'sɒs dɪ'stərbd 'baɪ ðə 'fækt əv 'maɪ kən'feʃən  
 'ðæt 'ju: 'θrɒs 'ɪt 'ɪntu: ðə 'fɪr bɪ'fɔr 'aɪ 'get tə 'tel 'ju: əv 'gret 'ləv ənd 'mærdər. 'aɪ  
 wəd 'nat 'bleɪm 'ju: 'sɒs 'meni: 'θɪŋz 'stænd 'ɪn ðə 'weɪ əv 'eni:wən 'evər 'hɪrɪŋ  
 'maɪ 'stɔ:ri:. 'ðer ɪz ə 'ded 'bɑ:di: tə ɪk'spleɪn. ə 'wɒmən 'θri: 'taɪmz 'ləvd. ə 'frend  
 bɪ'treɪd. ənd ə 'bɔɪ 'ləŋ 'sɒt fɔr. 'sɒs 'aɪ wəl 'get tə ði: 'end 'fɜrst ənd 'tel 'ju: 'wi: ər  
 'i:tʃ ðə 'ləv əv 'səm wɒnz 'laɪf.

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\* The transcription is taken from *English Pronouncing Dictionary* by Daniel Jones

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## SHRNUTÍ

Cílem této bakalářské práce je představit některé typické chyby ve výslovnosti angličtiny, kterých se dopouštějí čeští rodilí mluvčí. Práce se skládá ze dvou základních částí – teoretické a praktické části, přičemž teoretická část má 6 podkapitol. První podkapitola osvětluje pojmy fonetika a fonologie. Druhá podkapitola je o všech fonémech, které se v angličtině vyskytují a také o jejich rozdělení. Třetí podkapitola uvádí konkrétní srovnání zvukové stránky češtiny a angličtiny. Čtvrtá a pátá podkapitola rozebírají podrobně anglické krátké a dlouhé samohlásky a souhlásky. Poslední podkapitola vymezuje pojem Received Pronunciation, který je stěžejní pro tuto práci, jakožto dialekt, který byl pro autora této práce směrodatným. Dalším cílem této práce bylo představit konkrétní chyby ve výslovnosti slov, kterých se čeští rodilí mluvčí dopouštějí. To se objevuje v teoretické části bakalářské práce – analýze. Pro účely tohoto výzkumu byl autorem této práce vytvořen seznam náhodných slov, která mohou být považována za problematické. Údaje získané tímto kvalitativním výzkumem jsou dále zpracovány a shrnuty na konci kapitoly. Bakalářská práce poskytuje celkový pohled na problematické segmentální aspekty výslovnosti ať už z teoretického, tak i praktického pohledu.