

Abstract and key words

This thesis aims at comparing and investigating the effect of segmental and prosodic manipulations on speaker's accentedness and comprehensibility; experimental research is the chosen mode of investigation. The manipulations consist of the deletion of mistakes typically found in the speech of Czech speakers of English and of the theoretical improvement of their utterance. The theoretical part of this thesis introduces the three dimensions which are used for describing foreign-accented speech. The following section focuses on the social aspects of communicating in a non-native language with a foreign accent and on the discriminatory behavior that foreign speakers often face. The next section of the theoretical part presents a description of the most salient segmental and suprasegmental features of English, along with the role these features play in the acquisition of a foreign language. Characterization of Czech English is also introduced in this section. The empirical part of this thesis describes the methodology employed in this research; explanation of selection of material, its segmental and prosodic manipulations, the preparation of the perception test and the testing itself, and the description of the statistical analysis of the responses are all included in this section. The following chapter then presents the results and their interpretation. The data, obtained from 68 respondents, show that manipulations indeed mostly affect the evaluation of accentedness and comprehensibility, but to different degrees. Accentedness is significantly influenced by segmental manipulations and only marginally influenced by prosodic manipulations; this is to be expected, since accent and segmentals are correlates. Comprehensibility scores, however, behave less predictably: the evaluations of this parameter become worse as a result of both segmental and prosodic manipulations.

Key words: English, Czech speaker, accentedness, comprehensibility, pronunciation, prosody, evaluation