

Abstract and key words

The aim of this thesis is to examine the effects of rhythmic structure on the comprehensibility of Czech English. The focal point of this study is a *pairwise comparison* perception test administered to 40 Czech listeners divided into two groups according to their familiarity with native English (*Anglophones* and *others*). They are presented with pairs of Czech English phrases from which one is manipulated to approximate English rhythmic structure, the other to approximate Czech rhythmic structure, and are asked firstly to select which of the versions is more comprehensible, and secondly which is more foreign-accented. The theoretical background provides brief description of prosody of languages focusing on its significance in Second Language Acquisition; this section then moves to one specific prosodic feature, the rhythm of speech. Rhythm classifies amongst the most significant prosodic features of English due to its key role in an efficient communication; it enables the most important elements in an information structure to be highlighted. The practical part of the thesis contains a thorough description of the methodology employed during the experiment: the selection of material, temporal manipulations, creation of the perception test, respondents, and the analysis of the gathered data. These are followed by a detailed report of the test results and a general discussion. The results show that rhythmic structure which emulates native English rhythm increases the comprehensibility of speech; and simultaneously, that rhythm which emulates Czech rhythm is perceived as more foreign-accented. However, these results were significant only for the *Anglophone* group. The hypotheses have therefore been partially confirmed. This outcome advocates the importance of training focused on the temporal organization of the L2 speech.

Key words: rhythm, prosody, comprehensibility, foreign accent, second language acquisition, Czech English