

Abstract and key words

The main objective of this paper is to discover if children can acquire prosodic features of English after involving prosody-oriented instruction in the curriculum. The theoretical part of the work at first concentrates on description of prosody, its definition and significance for communication. It then introduces two of its main components: intonation and rhythm, which were also the target phenomena of the analysis in the empirical part. Both of these prosodic aspects are introduced not only in terms of their main characteristics but also in terms of their significance for reaching intelligibility and comprehensibility in the discourse. The work further elaborates upon the importance of involving prosody instruction in English lessons and emphasizes particularities of working with young learners. Since most of the research into the effectiveness of prosody instruction done so far has focused on adults, the empirical part presents a study carried out with two groups of primary school children, an experimental and a control group. The methodology part discusses the design of the lessons as well as the makeup of the recording sessions. The recordings were analysed to see if any progress was made with individual speakers in the course of the school year and then the results of both groups are compared to determine if the instruction had any effects on the acquisition of the suprasegmental features of English. With regards to the specific nature of working with children, the research presents rather a case study of individual performances of the young learners. The children from the experimental group usually made progress in one of the following areas: extension of pitch range, melodic suppression of schwa and, rarely, also its temporal reduction. The rhythmical characteristics proved to be comparable with both groups. The possible reasons for this are presented in the Discussion part.

Key words: prosody, intonation, rhythm, language teaching, children