

Charles University  
Faculty of Education  
Department of English Language and Literature

BACHELOR THESIS

The impact of watching films on English pronunciation of Czech  
lower-secondary school pupils

Vliv sledování anglických filmů na výslovnost českých žáků základní  
školy

Michaela Tužilová

Supervisor: Mgr. Kristýna Červinková Poesová, Ph.D.

Study programme: Specialization in Education

Branch of study: Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání

Německý jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání (B AJ-NJ)

I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis “The impact of watching films on English pronunciation of Czech lower-secondary school pupils” is my original work and no other sources than those listed on the Works cited page were used in its compilation. I also declare that this thesis was not used to obtain another or the same university degree.

Prague, 19 April 2021

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Michaela Tužilová

Foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the supervisor of my thesis, Mgr. Kristýna Červinková Poesová, Ph.D., for providing me valuable advice and being patient with me. A special thanks belongs to the leaders of the Language Club and the teachers who helped me with the pronunciation analysis. Lastly, I am grateful to the pupils who participated in this research and managed to record themselves during the difficult situation caused by the coronavirus.

## **ABSTRACT**

The bachelor thesis deals with the influence of foreign media on the pronunciation of lower-secondary school pupils. The aim is to ascertain whether the pupils' pronunciation improves provided that they are exposed to regular input of native English speech in the form of British and American films and TV series in their original version alongside their English lessons. The theoretical part discusses the factors influencing pronunciation learning with special emphasis on exposure to the target language. At the same time, the differences between British and American accents and often mispronounced sounds are mentioned. In the practical part, fluency, intelligibility, accuracy in pronouncing specific sounds and the accent that prevails in the pupils' speech are verified through analysis of the recorded speech of the pupils who attended an optional language course based on group viewing of films and TV series.

## **KEYWORDS**

pronunciation, accents, accentedness, fluency, comprehensibility, films, TV series

## **ABSTRAKT**

Bakalářská práce se zabývá vlivem zahraničních médií na výslovnost žáků 2. stupně základní školy. Cílem je zjistit, zda dojde ke zlepšení výslovnosti žáků za předpokladu pravidelného obklopení se angličtinou v podobě sledování britských a amerických filmů a televizních seriálů v původním znění mimo klasické hodiny anglického jazyka. V teoretické části jsou diskutovány faktory ovlivňující učení se výslovnosti se zvláštním důrazem na vystavení se cílovému jazyku. Zároveň jsou zde zmíněny rozdíly mezi britskými a americkými akcenty a často nesprávně vyslovované zvuky. V praktické je prostřednictvím nahrávek výslovnosti žáků, kteří se účastnili volitelného jazykového kurzu založeného na skupinovém sledování filmů a seriálů, ověřována plynulost, srozumitelnost, přesnost při vyslovování konkrétních hlásek a přízvuk, který v jejich řeči převládá.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

výslovnost, přízvuky, cizinecký přízvuk, plynulé vyjadřování, srozumitelnost, filmy, seriály

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Foreign language pronunciation of an individual might be influenced by many factors, such as age, motivation or the exposure to the target language, the last being the main focus of the practical part of this thesis. Thanks to the widespread use of media in the contemporary world, it has become considerably easy to get access to various recordings of native speakers outside the school context.

Most people in the Czech Republic come to contact with English pronunciation daily, whether it is by listening to English songs on the radio or their portable devices, watching various videos in the English language on the Internet, playing videogames, which are dubbed in English or watching movies and TV series on diverse platforms, either with or completely without subtitles.

This bachelor thesis deals primarily with the impact of watching films and TV series in the original language, which in this case is English, both British and American, on the pronunciation of lower-secondary school children, who attended a language club in the primary school J. A. Komenského in Louny during the school year 2019/2020. The main research question focuses on their overall pronunciation, particularly if it improves by the end of the course or not.

All the factors that influence one's pronunciation of foreign languages as well as studies on the topic of using media as a teaching source and their influence on the pronunciation of non-native speakers are discussed in the theoretical part. Moreover, as the target accent<sup>1</sup> employed in Czech primary and lower-secondary schools tends to be General British and the majority of movies and TV series (or foreign media in general) that the Czech pupils are exposed to originates from America, another question arises and that is whether the children's pronunciation will incline more to the British or the American accent. Therefore, the differences between both accents are presented, together with some problematic sounds that often cause problems to Czech students.

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<sup>1</sup> Accent - "something that is noticed by listeners"; it ties together groups of people from the same regional areas, social classes or ethnic backgrounds (Derwing and Munro 3-8)

The practical part is aimed at the analysis of the recordings of the pupils' speech, which were amassed at the beginning and the end of the language course. Lastly, the result outcomes of the recordings analysis are presented and with them, the hypothesis should be confirmed or disproved.

## 2 THEORETICAL PART

### 2.1 English as a foreign language

In the Czech Republic, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). Czech learners do not need to know the target language for their basic needs but rather for cultural and self-evolving purposes. Additionally, it is more difficult for them to be surrounded by English outside of the classroom. On the other hand, foreigners who live in an English-speaking country learn English as a second language (Celce-Murcia et al. 277-278).

While language learning is a completely conscious process which requires deliberate effort, one can also perceive languages subconsciously, irrespective of its grammatical rules and syntax. This process is called language acquisition (Hussain 5). Krashen describes the two ways in which these actions are used for language production:

Normally, acquisition “initiates” our utterances in a second language and is responsible for our fluency<sup>2</sup>. Learning has only one function, and that is as a Monitor<sup>3</sup>, or editor. Learning comes into play only to make changes in the form of our utterance, after it has been “produced” by the acquired system. This can happen before we speak or write, or after (self-correction). (*Principles and Practice* 15)

In *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*, Krashen agrees that people acquire languages subconsciously, which leads to “knowing” the language, whereas in order to “know about” the language, they have to learn deliberately (1). As opposed to learning English in the classroom, language acquisition occurs for example while watching films, which will be discussed further.

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<sup>2</sup> Fluency – “the degree to which speech flows easily without pauses and other dysfluency markers” (Derwing and Munro 4-5)

<sup>3</sup> The Monitor – an editor of the acquired language. While people acquire language subconsciously, they tend to incline to learning in a form of the Monitor (or editor) to make suitable corrections. The knowledge of grammatical rules and how the language functions is necessary. (Krashen, *The Input Hypothesis* 1-2)

## **2.2 Pronunciation teaching today**

Pronunciation is a general term which comprises the use of articulatory apparatus to create speech (Derwing and Munro 2). In *Pronunciation Fundamentals*, pronunciation is defined as “all aspects of the oral production of language including segments, prosody, voice quality and rate” (Derwing and Munro 5), segments being the speech sounds (individual vowels and consonants) and prosody the suprasegmental (stress, intonation, rhythm, juncture and tone) (Derwing and Munro 3).

According to Kelly, pronunciation teaching is often neglected at schools, even though both the learner and their teacher might be interested in focusing their attention on pronunciation training. This paradox may occur because of the lack of the pronunciation theory knowledge and because of the fact that the teachers do not know how to provide the information (13). He also states that teaching pronunciation is highly important for communication as many mispronounced words can lead to misunderstanding and confusion (11).

### **2.2.1 Reference accents**

The model preferred nowadays by English teachers to be the most suitable for teaching foreigners is called the General British (GB; formerly referred to as Received Pronunciation - RP), which will be described further in more detail. The goal of pronunciation teaching is not, nonetheless, to reach perfect pronunciation set by the GB model, but to attain a satisfactory intelligibility and fluency so the non-native speaker is understood clearly when they need it (Plavka 10). Plavka makes the following statement:

... RP continues to be recommended as the best form of teaching foreigners. This does not mean, however, that they must try to speak perfect RP. The model chosen is RP, but the goal is intelligibility with a general fluency of speech-flow so that the native listener may gain an overall good impression.

People learn a foreign language to use it primarily as an instrument of communication. To be able to communicate effectively they must not only have an adequate vocabulary and acquire basic items of grammar but also reasonably handle the sounds, rhythm and melody of speech. (10)

General British is considered to be the common accent spoken in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, only a minority of people in the UK speak the GB as there exist many different accents and dialects connected with all the regions of the United Kingdom. General British is not associated with any particular locality, it is, however, the accent that foreigners are usually taught in schools. In the past years, GB used to be characteristic for upper and upper-middle classes and until the 70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was an obligatory accent to use while broadcasting in the BBC, therefore also the term “BBC English” might be encountered in some sources. Another term for this accent is “Standard English” (Wells 117).

The stereotypical accent in the USA is known as General American (GA). This term is primarily associated with the majority of Americans who do not have any local accent, such as people from the east coast of the United States or the inhabitants of the southern states. Similarly to GB, this type of accent is taught in some schools to foreign learners (Wells 118).

In *How to teach pronunciation*, Kelly suggests that there is no correct model to teach in the classroom, it depends on the accent of the teacher and the target accent of the learners based on their extra-curricular activities and the people they are associating with. This may also lead to a situation where students preferring General American sit next to students who favour General British (15). According to Kelly, the teacher should have awareness of the different accents used around the world and be able to explain the differences to their students, but it is natural that in the classroom they use the model that is the closest to them in their personal life (15).

Melen also proposes the reason why many textbook authors and scientists opt for General British as the main pronunciation model in their works. According to his words, the so-called “BBC English” or “Royal English” is used as a model for foreign learners because it also functions as the standard model used in linguistic researches. Therefore, a higher number of people speak General British all over the world than in the UK; the British usually use a modified version of GB according to their social and regional background (9).

### **2.3 Differences between GB and GA**

General British and General American, in terms of pronunciation, differ in 3 major areas: vowels, consonants and the placement of stress.

### 2.3.1 Vowels

As opposed to GA, an open back vowel in words such as *ask* or *dance* can be found in GB. The Americans pronounce these words with a front open vowel quality as in the word *man* (Crystal B. and Crystal D. 159).

One of the most distinctive vowel changes in GA and GB is the difference between /ɒ/ and /ɑ/. When pronouncing words like *shop* or *God*, in the UK people pronounce the back open and rounded vowel /ɒ/, whereas the Americans lack the lip rounding. (Hudson) Crystal and Crystal affirm this claim by stating that the American version of the vowel /ɒ/ is not as rounded as it is when pronounced by a British person (159).

Darragh suggests that the Americans tend to neutralize their vowel sounds by eliminating the ones considered to be unnecessary, leading for instance to the indistinguishable pronunciation of the words *don* and *dawn*. On the contrary, he claims that “In England, vowels tend to retain their sharpness” (10).

Another difference in the vocalic inventory affects the diphthongs /əʊ/ and /oʊ/. The dissimilarity between these two diphthongs lies in the place of articulation. The British diphthong /əʊ/ starts in the middle of the mouth with the mid-central schwa and glides towards /ʊ/, bringing the tongue up, closer to the roof of the oral cavity (Roach 18). Contrarily, the American /oʊ/ starts with the back vowel /o/. The distinction can be heard in words such as *no* or *go* (Hudson).

What GA lacks are centring diphthongs. These diphthongs /ɪə/, /eə/, /ɔə/, /ʊə/ glide towards the mid-central schwa and only appear in GB. Americans would pronounce an r-coloured vowel instead. The difference can be heard for example in the word *fear* (Wells 124).

GA is a rhotic accent and for that reason it features two extra vowels, r-coloured /ɝ/ and /ɜr/ (*after*, *firm*) (Wells 120-121). American rhoticity will be discussed more in the next subchapter. The above-mentioned differences are illustrated in table 1.

|       | GENERAL BRITISH | GENERAL AMERICAN |
|-------|-----------------|------------------|
| ask   | /ɑ:sk/          | /æsk/            |
| God   | /gɒd/           | /gɑ:d/           |
| dawn  | /dɔ:n/          | /dɑ:n/           |
| Don   | /dɒn/           | /dɑ:n/           |
| go    | /gəʊ/           | /goʊ/            |
| fear  | /fiə/           | /fir/            |
| after | /'ɑ:ftə/        | /'æftə/          |
| firm  | /fɜ:m/          | /fɜ:m/           |

**Table 1** Words illustrating the main vocalic differences between GB and GA.

### 2.3.2 Consonants

The most notable difference concerning consonants is the fact that American English, as opposed to British English, is rhotic. Rhotic accents are those, in which speakers pronounce /r/ in the final position of a syllable or before a consonant. Contrarily, /r/ is pronounced only before vowels in non-rhotic accents (Roach 50). The British do not pronounce the consonant /r/ after vowels and in the coda of the syllable. An exception is made when the following word starts with a vowel. Subsequently, a linking /r/ is pronounced (Darragh 9). Therefore, words such as *car* and *hard* or *door* and *port* would be pronounced differently in both accents because they contain the /r/ sound at the end of the word (*car, door*) and before a consonant (*hard, port*) in GA but not in GB. Conversely, words like *sorry* and *train* would be both pronounced with the /r/ sound because it appears before a vowel.

Another consonant pronounced differently is /t/ in words such as *butter* or *pretty*. In Britain people pronounce this consonant as a clear /t/ sound. (Crystal and Crystal 159) After a stressed vowel and before a weak vowel, /t/ would be pronounced by only tapping the alveolar ridge, therefore it is called the alveolar tap; making it sound as a fast /d/ in GA (Hudson).

The last significant discrepancy is called yod dropping. Yod dropping leads to omitting the /j/ sound after the consonants /t, d, n, l, s, z/ in GA; in GB it is pronounced. Words like *new* and *Tuesday* are therefore pronounced with /ju:/ in British English and /u:/ in American English (Hudson). Examples of the above-mentioned words are given in table 2.

|         | GENERAL BRITISH | GENERAL AMERICAN |
|---------|-----------------|------------------|
| car     | /kɑː/           | /kɑːr/           |
| hard    | /hɑːd/          | /hɑːrd/          |
| door    | /dɔː/           | /dɔːr/           |
| port    | /pɔːt/          | /pɔːrt/          |
| sorry   | /'sɒri/         | /'sɔːri/         |
| train   | /treɪn/         | /treɪn/          |
| pretty  | /'prɪti/        | /'prɪti/         |
| butter  | /'bʌtə/         | /'bʌtə/          |
| new     | /njuː/          | /nuː/            |
| Tuesday | /'tʃuːzdeɪ/     | /'tuːzdeɪ/       |

**Table 2** Words illustrating the main differences in consonants between GB and GA.

### 2.3.3 Placement of stress

Crystal and Crystal list words in which the primary stress is carried by the first syllable in GA, but by the second syllable in GB (*address, weekend*) and vice versa, words that the American speakers stress on the second syllable and British speakers on the first (*café, ballet, garage*). They add words such as *laboratory* and *secretary*, which are not stressed at the end in GB, but are stressed in GA (159). This is described by Darragh as an American tendency to pronounce every syllable leading to putting secondary stress on one of the unstressed syllables in a longer word. He also adds that this American effort might be connected to the fact that Americans speak more slowly and their intonation is not as variable as the intonation of a Briton (14).

Additionally, Crystal and Crystal delineate several words, which are pronounced differently in both accents but do not follow any special rule (eg. *vase, clerk, lieutenant*) (159-160). Examples of the above-mentioned words are given in table 3.

|            | GENERAL BRITISH        | GENERAL AMERICAN |
|------------|------------------------|------------------|
| address    | /ə'dres/               | /'ædres/         |
| weekend    | /,wi:k'end/            | /'wi:kend/       |
| café       | /'kæfeɪ/               | /kæf'eɪ/         |
| ballet     | /'bæleɪ/               | /bæl'eɪ/         |
| garage     | /'gærɑ:ʒ/ or /'gærɪdʒ/ | /gə'rɑ:ʒ/        |
| laboratory | /lə'bɒrət'ɔ:ri/        | /'læbrətɔ:ri/    |
| secretary  | /'sekrətəri/           | /'sekrəteri/     |
| vase       | /vɑ:z/                 | /veɪs/           |
| clerk      | /kla:k/                | /klɜ:k/          |
| lieutenant | /lef'tenənt/           | /lu:'tenənt/     |

**Table 3** Words illustrating differences in word stress and other individual differences between GB and GA.

## 2.4 Factors affecting pronunciation learning

The foreign language speech acquisition is affected by various factors, some of which cannot be influenced by the learner (Derwing and Munro 29). These factors put the learner into the centre of attraction and involve their age, to what extent they are exposed to the target language, what second language pronunciation instruction they have formerly received and their aptitude, attitude towards the foreign language and motivation to learn and achieve intelligibility<sup>4</sup> (Celce-Murcia et al. 15). Given all the factors, Gilakjani argues in his study that if the learners and their teacher, who is “acting as ‘speech coach’ rather than a mere checker of pronunciation”, participate in the learning process together and set individual targets, any student can master the pronunciation of another language (127). Individual factors, namely age, exposure to the target language, prior pronunciation instruction, aptitude, attitude and motivation and the influence of the learner’s mother tongue will be explored in the following subchapters and their impact on pronunciation learning will be clarified.

### 2.4.1 Age

In accordance with general belief, foreign language speech acquisition is influenced by the age of learners. Younger children are thought to achieve more native-like pronunciation<sup>5</sup> than adults, whose speech is often impaired by a strong first language accent. The experts

<sup>4</sup> Intelligibility – one’s speech is considered intelligible, when the intended message of one’s utterance is clearly understood (Derwing and Munro 1)

<sup>5</sup> Native-like pronunciation – pronunciation on a level similar to a native speaker

are, however, to this day not certain at what age do people lose “the ability” to acquire accurate pronunciation (Derwing and Munro 32). According to Derwing and Munro, scientists still argue over the correctness of the statement that younger learners are at an advantage; numerous experts are in favour of this fact, whereas others argue that age does not correspond with the ability to speak properly (32).

With the age of learning increases the strength of a foreign accent in second language acquisition. Despite this, it cannot be claimed that all children automatically acquire an “accent-free” speech (Derwing and Munro 37). It does not depend only on the length of exposure to the target language but also on the quality of the input, on the extent of use of their mother tongue and whether the child has diverse opportunities to use the target language actively (Celce-Murcia et al. 16).

A theory formulated by Penfield and Roberts in 1959 and later by Lenneberg explains brain lateralization – certain functions being assigned to the left and right hemisphere as the child develops (Celce-Murcia et al. 16). Almost 300 brain operations were reviewed and consequently, Penfield and Roberts made connections between speech and both halves of the human brain (5). The stage in which children have maximal conditions for language acquisition is called the critical period. After the process of lateralization is completed, the human brain loses its “plasticity” and the chances of achieving a native-like pronunciation are notably decreased (Celce Murcia et al. 16).

Nevertheless, even though children might excel in pronunciation, they may fall slightly behind adults in other areas of the second language learning. This phenomenon was described in the online book *Becoming a pronunciation teacher* by Červinková Poesová and Uličná:

If a child does not start the second language education before the end of the critical period, there is almost no chance that they might reach the level of a native speaker, and their production will bear traces of a foreign accent. While adults might surpass younger learners in terms of, for instance, L2 syntax and vocabulary, their pronunciation learning might be compromised as a consequence of maturational

constraints, in other words their brain loses flexibility, and the functionality and coordination of fine motor skills deteriorate. (2.1)

The commonly believed proposition that children acquire the second language faster than adults is disproved by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell in *The Natural Approach*. Instead, they suggest that children are “better with respect to ultimate attainment”, meaning that eventually they attain a higher level of competence due to the fact that they started at a younger age. Conversely, during a shorter period of time, adults tend to learn faster in terms of proficiency (45).

They presented a hypothesis that it is during puberty when the affective filter (which is described more in the subchapter Attitude and Motivation) of a learner strengthens, therefore the language acquisition becomes more difficult: “While affective variables do have an effect on second language acquisition before puberty, they do not seem to be strong enough to limit ultimate attainment in children, given sufficient exposure, most children reach native-like levels of competence in second languages” (Krashen and Terrell 46-47).

Nonetheless, the inner changes that happen during puberty are connected with learners’ emotions, not with the process of language acquisition, which stays approximately the same during life. “The ability to acquire does not disappear at puberty nor is it seriously damaged; rather the necessary input is often blocked and therefore is less available for acquisition” (Krashen and Terrell 47).

Despite everything that has been stated so far, adults are also able to reach native-like pronunciation when they are exposed to a sufficient amount of comprehensible input combined with a lower affective filter, although their chances are considerably lower (Krashen and Terrell 47).

#### **2.4.2 Exposure to the target language**

According to many theories, language acquisition comes merely from the input that the learners receive. They should be exposed to a great amount of comprehensible input before they are obligated to speak themselves. In consonance with these theories,

the learner's exposure to the target language has a tremendous impact on the development of one's comprehensible speech<sup>6</sup> (Celce-Murcia et al. 18).

Krashen adds that the comprehensible input represents a fundamental part of foreign language acquisition. According to him, all the other factors only complement the input in connection with a low affective filter. (*The Input Hypothesis* 4).

Many learners of foreign languages are, however, not able to be exposed to everyday speech for the reason that they do not live in a country where the target language is spoken. In this case, their teachers should attempt to maximise the exposure in class and explain to the students how important it is to be exposed to the target language outside of the school environment, whether it is by visiting a foreign country or on the Internet, which is accessible to the majority of the population in the contemporary world and the possibilities there are limitless (Červinková Poesová and Uličná 2.5).

An example of the exposure to native speakers in a non-native environment is watching movies or TV series in the target language, listening to songs, or viewing videos on YouTube, which are made by native speakers of the particular language. With the opportunity of accessing free content on Youtube or monthly subscriptions to certain movie portals, one can view works of various genres in the target language with no effort. Listening to the dialogues of movie characters might substitute real-life exposure to native speakers. Not only do the learners hear the correct pronunciation similarly to listening activities in the classroom, but they can also observe the actors' mouth movements as though they were standing in front of them.

To this day, several researches have been conducted regarding the effect of films and YouTube videos on one's pronunciation. Alkathiri implies that YouTube is an appropriate source of native input as the learners hear the correct pronunciation of particular words and are later able to apply this knowledge into practice, which also helps with their motivation to speak English as they are not afraid of speaking in front of other students. Additionally, the videos also entertain them, therefore they do not feel disinterested during the lecture

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<sup>6</sup> Comprehensibility – the “amount of effort that must be put in to understanding speech” (Derwing and Munro 3)

(12-13). Alkathiri supports these claims with findings of other researchers (13). Worth mentioning are for example Watkins and Wilkins who emphasize the availability of numerous different clips on YouTube that are suitable for teaching in the EFL classroom. They also describe the possibility of students to watch videos at home, depending on their interests, which contributes to the overall development of their English (113-115).

Moreover, Yiping suggests that “English movies are conducive to correct learners’ wrong tone and intonation” (49). He also supports the claim that “accurate pronunciation” can be heard in films and as a result of watching them, the learners are able to learn the correct forms by listening and later incorporate them in their own speech. Additionally, he acknowledges the fact that people are likely to improve their English through watching films because of the pleasing music and rich images contained in them (Yiping 50).

#### **2.4.2.1 The use of video as a tool in a language class**

Using video in the English language classroom may bring plenty of advantages and serve as a substantial way of learning the language. Several researches have been brought out regarding using movies as an audio-visual technique in foreign language classrooms, therefore the proposition may be implied that watching films should be a beneficial source of learning the target language, including the improvement of one’s pronunciation, which is supported for example by Canning-Wilson.

This practice has been described in various books, such as Lonergan’s *Video in Language Teaching*, *Video in Action* by Stempleski and Tomalin or in the bachelor thesis of Navrátilová, *Aspects of Pronunciation Teaching: The Influence of American media on Pronunciation of Czech Students*.

Lonergan describes the superior benefit of displaying videos in the language class and that is the ability of films “to present complete communicative situations.” Students do not only hear the language (as they would by listening to a recording) but they can also notice the background and the context of the communication, therefore they learn how the intonation of a speaker changes when talking to different people (relatives, friends, enemies, boss, ...) in various situations (formal/informal/neutral). Furthermore, they can see the speaker’s social and regional background, which is connected to their accent (4-5).

Harmer supports this claim by stating that learners get a more complex understanding of what is happening on the screen thanks to the visual aids, such as the expressions of the actors (282).

Another advantage is that learners do not necessarily think that they are learning, it is amusing for them to watch a video as this activity is often associated with free time and leisure activities. As Loneragan suggests, “[t]he learner will want to watch, even if the comprehension is limited” (5). The videos used in language classes as one of the language learning activities should, as opposed to watching a film at home, be motivating and require interaction – a follow up activity (Loneragan 4-5). Harmer adds that the motivation to learn a language may also be increased by these activities (282).

Similar views are described by Stempleski and Tomalin in *Video in action*. They distinguish between four aspects through which the student learns with the help of video in the class: motivation, communication, non-verbal aspects and cross-cultural comparison. The authors comment on the fact that the language in videos is portrayed realistically and should be very comprehensible (3-4). They state that “using a video sequence in class is the next best thing to experiencing the sequence in real-life” (Stempleski and Tomalin 3-4).

Video in the language class also encourages communication as it can be more interactive than using other media. As stated before, videos show not only the spoken part of the language but also the non-verbal aspects – the body language can be observed and the situations, in which the characters find themselves, are portrayed, contributing to spoken language of the learners (Stempleski and Tomalin 3-4). The visual image might also help the learners not to get lost in the plot given the fact that they might not understand every single word (Krashen and Terrel 153). Additionally, in their article “The Role of Video Materials in EFL Classrooms”, the authors Bjarmi and Ismaili state that as opposed to only listening activities, the visual aids help keep the learners’ attention. They also point out that videos can be used as a learning material outside of the school when the learners want to improve on their own (503-504).

Canning-Wilson also argues that one can only benefit from using videos in the class and emphasises the importance of the visual aspects, which makes the pupils more concentrated

and motivated, contrary to purely focusing on listening. The visual part also helps the learners understand the context more as they can see what is happening simultaneously to the sounds they hear. Regarding pronunciation, Canning-Wilson states:

It can be argued that language found in videos could help nonnative speakers understand stress patterns. Videos allow the learner to see body rhythm and speech rhythm in second language discourse through the use of authentic language and speed of speech in various situations. (Canning-Wilson)

She specifies second language discourse, but it might also be applicable to learning English as a foreign language, which is taught to children in the Czech Republic (Canning-Wilson).

There are, however, some limitations to using videos in the EFL classroom. Watkins and Wilkins mention that teachers should be aware of the copyright restrictions, meaning that not every film or clip can be found online and watched legally, as well as the content of some videos as it might be inappropriate to use in the class (118). Regarding YouTube, they comment on the vast selection of various clips possibly leading to getting lost in the YouTube library, therefore it might be essential for the teacher to help the learners with their choices (Watkins and Wilkins 118).

Harmer emphasises problems with the video itself, especially its quality as it may influence the students' interest; it might be rather irritating when the video is blurred or not running smoothly (283). Lack of interest may also be caused by inadequate viewing conditions in the classroom, whether it is the audio volume or the screen visibility (Harmer 283). Another aspect to take into consideration is the length of the videos. Harmer recommends using shorter videos accompanied by various activities to keep the students motivated. Lengthy videos fill a significant section of the lesson and no space may be left for other class work (283).

To conclude, using video as a tool for language teaching in EFL classroom may be very effective. It enhances the learners' motivation to learn, can be used to enliven the lesson and is beneficial for language learning. Students receive information about other countries and their cultures through the videos, they gain new vocabulary and can even improve their English skills, including pronunciation as the natural speech of native speakers is contained

in the films. On the contrary, some considerations should be given before using a video in the classroom, including the suitability of the material for the English level of the learners, sufficient quality of the video, functionality of the technology and preparation of follow-up activities. Nevertheless, the advantages prevail, therefore the use of a video as an education tool is becoming more common in teaching not only foreign languages.

#### **2.4.2.2 Access to British and American media**

With the development of technology in recent years, it has become relatively easy to access various types of media, including films, TV series, Youtube videos, video games or music tracks. The Internet abounds with various streaming platforms that are either free of charge (e.g. YouTube) or paid monthly with a fee (Netflix, HBO GO).

The influential media surround us everywhere, people resort to watching a film or a TV series while relaxing, songs in English are being played on nearly every radio station, YouTube has become extremely popular in the past few years, and even video games, which are favoured by younger generations, often have cut scenes in the English language.

The available streaming platforms offer numerous genres mainly from America, as they have the biggest film production in the world. According to the ranking list by The Numbers, eight out of the ten largest production companies (evaluated according to the number of films produced over the years) come from the USA, one originates from France and one from the United Kingdom: BBC Films. To the largest companies belong Universal Pictures, Warner Bros. and Columbia Pictures, all of which have produced around 250 movies by this time (“Movie Production Companies”).

It might be therefore stated that General American is much more common to hear while watching films than General British. However, Navrátilová states in her thesis that it is much more complicated because British actors might star in films from American productions and vice versa. Despite that, American born actors still outbalance the British ones in US movies (Navrátilová 20).

With regard to the production of TV series, according to the list of the 250 top rated TV series in the world determined by the ratings of viewers in the IMDb Charts, five out of the ten topmost shows were produced in the US, four originate from the UK and one is

a collaboration of the two countries (“IMDb Charts: Top Rated TV Shows”). To the most popular TV series among Czech people belong The Simpsons, The Big Bang Theory, Friends, Game of Thrones and How I Met Your Mother, all of which include mainly General American (“ŽEBŘÍČKY: Nejoblíbenější seriály”).

The present-day youth are intensely familiar with watching foreign YouTubers in their spare time, which also serves as a form of entertainment. As opposed to films, watching YouTubers talk about their day or discuss various topics might bring even more real life-like experience as they talk to their followers as though they were friends, without scripted lines.

In summary, General American is overall more likely to be heard while watching films, TV series or listening to music, due to the immense number of production companies. Conversely, many works come also from British productions and it depends on the viewer what they choose and prefer.

### **2.4.3 Aptitude**

Aptitude, or the inherent ability to acquire an almost native-like pronunciation, depends on four criteria: the ability to code foreign sounds, grammatical sensitivity to the language (the ability to understand rules), the ability to obtain language skills when being exposed to the target language and the learner’s memory. Some students possess an adequate balance between all these four traits, others have their strengths and weaknesses in each of them. For instance, learners whose ability to code foreign sounds is weaker tend to have greater problems to acquire intelligible foreign pronunciation than those who are able to code the sounds with ease (Celce-Murcia et al. 20). It is believed that some people possess a special aptitude for the study of languages, which means that they are able to learn that target language easier than other individuals who were born without this aptitude (Krashen and Terrell 39). During a lecture, the pupils’ aptitude cannot be affected by the teacher due to the fact that it is an innate trait but the talent of the smarter students and the use of suitable instructions for the less gifted students should be on the teachers mind at all times (Červinková Poesová and Uličná 2.2).

#### 2.4.4 Attitude and motivation

To the factors that influence one's foreign pronunciation acquisition belong also their attitude towards the target language and their motivation to learn. In general, it is arguable that people with high motivation<sup>7</sup> to learn achieve better results. In terms of pronunciation learning, they might even be able to reach the almost native-like pronunciation, even though they are past the critical period. Nonetheless, motivation on its own is not sufficient, it must be accompanied by the learner's talent and the circumstances of their learning (Červinková Poesová and Uličná 2.3).

Harmer divides motivation into two groups: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from the learner and usually represents the inner desire to learn and progress. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is influenced by outside sources, such as the environment and society in which the individual lives or the influence of their beloved people (51-52). Dörnyei adds that "intrinsic motivation is potentially a central motivator of the educational process" ("Motivation and Motivating" 275).

Motivation may concurrently be divided into two other types, integrative and instrumental (Brown 162). The first type of motivation is called integrative because the people by whom it predominates want to acquire the language in order to integrate into the target language community (Gardner 143). Contrarily, instrumental motivation is "associated with the pragmatic, utilitarian benefits of language proficiency," which includes finding a job or getting promotion (Dörnyei, "Conceptualizing Motivation" 46).

The difference between these motivation types can be clarified with the words of Krashen: "For the integratively motivated performer, interaction for its own sake will be valued. For the instrumentally motivated performer, interaction always has some practical purpose" (*Second language acquisition* 22).

Krashen also describes attitudinal factors that "produce two effects: they encourage useful input for language acquisition, and they allow the acquirer to be "open" to this input so it can be utilized for acquisition" (*Second Language Acquisition* 5). In connection with this

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<sup>7</sup> Motivation – „the various purposes that are part of the goals to learn a second language“ (Carrió-Pastor and Mestre 240)

claim, he mentions Dulay and Burt, who proposed the term “socio-affective filter” in 1977 and describes the filter as follows:

Performers with high or strong filters will acquire less of the language directed at them, as less input is “allowed in” to the language-acquisition device. The presence of such a filter, according to Dulay and Burt, may explain which of alternative models the acquirer will internalize (e.g. why children acquire the dialect of their peers rather than that of their elders), why acquisition prematurely ceases in some cases, and often what parts of language are acquired first. Thus, attitudinal factors relating to language acquisition will be those that contribute to a *low affective filter*. (Krashen, *Second Language Acquisition* 22)

Carrió-Pastor and Mestre add that integrative motivation is more common and is considered to be more important in a formal learning environment (243-244). Nonetheless, the majority of learners tend to combine both types of motivation when they learn a foreign language. They have a specific goal that they want to achieve but simultaneously desire to become part of the community (Carrió-Pastor and Mestre 243-244).

#### **2.4.5 The native language of the learner**

Before we begin to teach pronunciation of a foreign language, it is also important to inquire about the learner’s first language as it may influence the learning process. It should be determined whether the processes of acquiring the sound systems of the first and second language are similar or completely different, to what extent do the pronunciation patterns of one language influence the process of second language phonological acquisition and whether the acquisition of phonology includes some language universals that would help the learner obtain necessary knowledge of the target language (Celce-Murcia et al. 22).

One’s first language might influence not only the ability to pronounce particular sounds but also how their utterances are perceived in terms of mood or tone (Kelly 11-12). Native English speakers use much broader range of intonation<sup>8</sup> than speakers from other countries, therefore many foreigners may sound bored or impolite unintentionally. Wrongly used intonation might lead to confusion because it can completely change the meaning of an

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<sup>8</sup> Intonation – “the use of the pitch of the voice to convey meaning” (Roach 3)

utterance (Kelly 11-12). Kelly uses the sentence “Why don’t you come to my party?” as an example of this proposition. When the first syllable of the word *party* is stressed, the sentence is understood as an invitation. However, a foreigner might stress the first word of the sentence (*why*) without deliberately sounding upset; this, however, implies that the invitation was already declined and the speaker wants to know the reason (12).

The first language of the speaker is not the preeminent cause of language errors, nevertheless, it certainly influences their second language production, not only in terms of pronunciation but also sentence structures and morphology (Krashen, *Second Language Acquisition* 64-67). The pronunciation mistakes that are common for Czech learners and are likely to be made by the tested children will be discussed in the following subchapter.

#### **2.4.5.1 Pronunciation mistakes often made by Czech students**

The research conducted in the practical part of this thesis is based on a comparison of recordings made at the beginning and at the end of an optional language course, in which possible improvements in pupils’ pronunciation are identified. Apart from fluency, intelligibility and accentedness, the improvement of problematic sounds contained in the text which is read by the children is also examined. Therefore, the sounds that appear in the text and are often problematic for Czech students will be described here.

In his doctoral dissertation, Ondráček addresses the dissimilarities between Czech and English in terms of pronunciation and states that the “differences come in part from the different articulatory settings in the mouth used by each language” (30). As a result of that, the two languages differ in various phonemes; some only exist in one language, some in the other.

There can be found several English phonemes that do not exist in the Czech language, which occur in the researched text; the mistakes are expected to arise namely in pronouncing /ə/, /æ/, /ŋ/, /θ/, /ð/, /r/ and /w/ (Ondráček 32-33, 37).

Concerning vowels, schwa is one of the phonemes that is difficult for Czech learners, mainly because there is no reduction in Czech, all syllables are pronounced in the full quality (Millin). Czech speakers often substitute schwa with a vowel which they know /a, e, i, o, u/, depending on the word; for example, the word *surprise* would be read with /u/ instead of /ə/

because of the implication of the full vowel quality (Poesová 33). As a result of this, the fluency of the speech may not be so smooth due to the fact that /ə/ occurs even in weak forms of grammatical words (Poesová 33). The second problematic vowel is the open front /æ/, which is often mispronounced as “a closer (mid to open-mid) vowel, [ɛ]” (Skarnitzl and Rumlová 111). Czech learners often distinguish the sounds /æ/ and /e/ only by duration, thus mispronouncing the words *bed* [bɛd] and *bad* [bɛ:d] (Skarnitzl and Rumlová 111).

More mistakes are expected to be made in consonants, for example the voiced /ð/ and unvoiced /θ/, which are pronounced in words with the combination of letters <th> (such as *that* or *thank*). Czech speakers tend to replace the sounds with something that they already know such as consonants [d] or [dz] and [f] or [s] (Millin). Skarnitzl and Rumlová add that these dental fricatives may occasionally be mispronounced as [t] and [d͡z] (112). In the book *Nejčastější chyby v angličtině a jak se jich zbavit*, Poslušná mentions another consonant which Czech learners often mispronounce, the approximant /w/. They tend to replace it with the fricative [v], which they know from their mother tongue (97). Contrarily, they might sometimes pronounce [w] instead of the English /v/ (Skarnitzl and Rumlová 112). The velar nasal /ŋ/ appears in both languages, “but only appears in the context of place assimilation in Czech (e.g., *banka* [baŋka]). For that reason, Czech speakers of English often pronounce [ŋ] with a following plosive sound”, such as *singing* [sɪŋŋɪŋk] (Skarnitzl and Rumlová 112). Furthermore, Czech users of English often pronounce the Czech alveolar [r], which is more rolled than the English post-alveolar approximant /r/ (Skaličková 163-165).

Also the ending *-ed* in past forms, which occur in the examined text, may be frequently mispronounced. Non-native speakers sometimes insert a vowel in between, when the base form of the verb ends with a consonant; this instance is known as epenthesis (Delatorre and Baptista 58).

Another mistake often produced by Czech students is that they stress all words on the first syllable as they are used from their mother tongue. English stress, however, is very variable (Roach 73-81). Also the differences between spelling and English pronunciation may cause some troubles, namely pronouncing silent letters and the fact that not all patterns that are spelled in the same way are pronounced identically (Millin). Therefore, students sometimes

mispronounce words based on their previous knowledge of similarly written words (Poslušná 100).

What might also be difficult for Czech students is acquiring intonation<sup>9</sup>. English intonation is endowed with a higher range of pitches<sup>10</sup> than Czech (Plavka 60). Consequently, compared to native English intonation, Czech intonation sounds very flat (Millin). That is why Czech learners often sound bored or not interested, they are just not used to alternating between rising and falling intonation (Poslušná 105). Moreover, the anxiety of the speakers may also contribute to narrower pitch range (Skarnitzl and Rumlová 114).

#### **2.4.6 Prior pronunciation instruction**

If the learner was previously exposed to the target language, they might have already come to contact with pronunciation teaching, whether it was in the form of repetition drills or other. Conversely, they might not have come across pronunciation learning at all and might not be aware of their mistakes. It is therefore extremely important for a teacher to determine the prior pronunciation experience of the learner before they start teaching them (Celce-Murcia et al. 19).

Additionally, there is a difference between formal instruction and instruction from the informal environment. Formal instruction is crucial for beginners for whom it might be difficult to understand the language used informally. On the other hand, the input from the real world is crucial for those who already have some language experience (Krashen, *The Input Hypothesis* 13-14). As already mentioned, real-world input can also be achieved by film watching, which should lead to better language acquisition.

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<sup>9</sup> Intonation – “the way the voice goes up and down in pitch when we are speaking” (Kelly 86)

<sup>10</sup> Pitch – how high or low the voice of the speaker is (Roach 74)

### **3 PRACTICAL PART**

The purpose of this thesis is to detect whether the children who attended a language club in the school year 2019/2020 improved their spoken language after the end of the course, in which they watched movies and TV series together in the classroom as an afterschool activity. From the facts stated in the theoretical part arises the following hypothesis:

Young children, all around the ages 11-14, attending lower-secondary education should be able to improve their pronunciation, primarily the fluency and intelligibility of their speech as well as correct some of their pronunciation mistakes, provided that they are regularly exposed to comprehensible input involving the pronunciation of English native speakers, either of British or American origin, in the form of foreign media.

The pupils from the primary school J. A. Komenského, who are all approximately at an A1 - A2 level, attended a language movie club, where they watched different TV series and films both from American and British production. Their speech was recorded at the beginning and at the end of the course and the recordings were used to analyse the anticipated improvement. After the school year of the exposure to native speakers, their English pronunciation should become more intelligible and fluent as opposed to the beginning of the year, being cognizant of the frequently made mistakes.

Another aim of the research was to determine whether the children incline more to American or British accent. After the analysis of the recordings it should be apparent, which accent the children prefer. Second hypothesis was formulated based on the information given in the theoretical part:

Since the American film production is larger and more works are produced featuring actors who speak General American, GA should be the prevailing accent at the end of the course.

#### **3.1 Data collection**

To find out the pupils' experience with English and all the factors that influence their English pronunciation, a survey was set up and is attached in Appendix 1; it was given to the children

at their second meeting. The pupils were asked about the amount of time that they had already spent studying English, whether they only learnt in school, which would suggest being exposed mainly to the British accent from the teacher, or if they hear English or use the language actively somewhere else, for example by watching films, TV series or English speaking YouTubers in their free time, whether they listen to music or play online video games.

In order to determine whether the pupils' pronunciation improved during the year, two sets of recordings were made, one at the beginning of the course (R1) and the second one after the completion of the voluntary course (R2). The children were recorded reading the same text in both recordings, which was prepared in advance. The text that was used for the testing was chosen with respect to the age and approximate English level of the participants, therefore it could not be too difficult for the children language-wise and only a few sentences were selected so as the pupils would be willing to participate. For that reason, the beginning of the children's story *Rapunzel* was chosen, written by the German authors, brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Due to the fact that this story was written for children, the language should not be too complicated.

The following text was given to the pupils to read out loud:

There were once a man and a woman who had long in vain wished for a child. At length the woman hoped that God was about to grant her desire. These people had a little window at the back of their house from which a splendid garden could be seen, which was full of the most beautiful flowers and herbs. It was, however, surrounded by a high wall, and no one dared to go into it because it belonged to an enchantress [(=witch)], who had great power and was dreaded by all the world.  
(The Brothers Grimm)

The children all received the same instruction in Czech so that no misunderstandings could occur:

“Here you have the beginning of the fairy-tale *Rapunzel* by the brothers Grimm. I would like you to read the text for yourself and when you are ready, you can read it out loud. I will record your speech now and again at the end of the year so you can

also hear whether your speech improves or not. Don't worry, the research is completely anonymous, and no one will grade you for it. Do you have any questions?"

The children were recorded one by one in an empty classroom during two meetings, while the others already started their session. They were recorded on a mobile phone with a built-in microphone and the recordings were later downloaded and put together.

The same procedure was supposed to happen at the end of the course. Unfortunately, due to the global pandemic of Covid-19, which happened in 2020, all the schools were closed down and no lessons could take place. The leader of the language club, however, asked the children to continue watching films and TV series at home. They were also kindly asked to record themselves at home reading the text again at the end of the school year and submit their files into a Google Classroom, from where they could be downloaded and paired with the first recordings.

To make the research more objective, another survey was created which aimed at teachers of the English language from several schools. In this form they were asked to listen to the recordings and rate the accentedness, fluency and comprehensibility of every pupil using a one to five scale. The author of the thesis also filled in this survey.

### **3.2 Respondents**

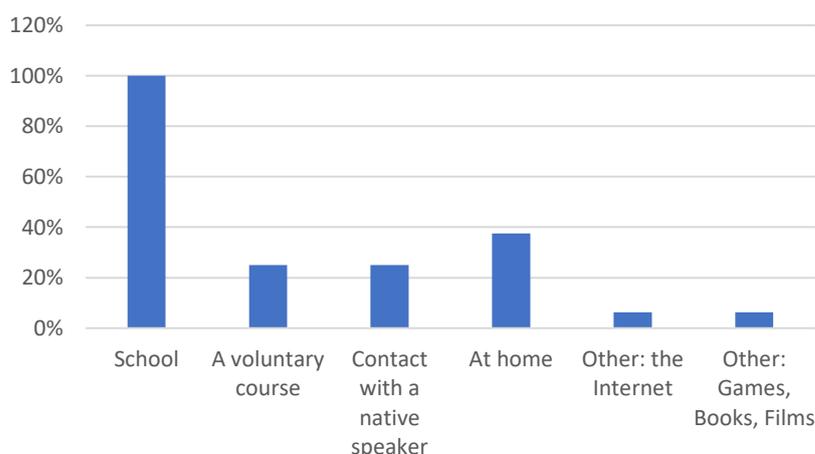
In this part we present the results of the questionnaire, which was answered by all 16 pupils who enrolled in the course at the beginning of the school year. The above-mentioned questionnaire was given to the pupils at their second and third meeting of the language course (some pupils were missing and completed the task the following week), therefore all 16 answers will be taken into consideration, even though only 11 pupils managed to complete the whole course due to the fact that during the year five children decided not to attend the course anymore for various reasons.

The Language Club was attended by 10 girls and 6 boys: 5 sixth graders, 4 from the seventh grade, 3 from the eighth grade and 4 from the last year of compulsory education. All the children were at the age from 11 to 14 years, all having either 3 or 4 English lessons

per week, during which they use the third edition of the textbooks *Project*, second to fifth volume, one for each school year. These textbooks are published by Oxford University Press and contain British pronunciation (Hutchinson). As a complement, their teachers use *English Grammar in Use* and *Essential Grammar in Use* by Murphy. Based on the levels of their textbooks, 5 children should be at the “beginner” level (A1) and the rest should be reaching A2 level, the four ninth graders maybe even B2.

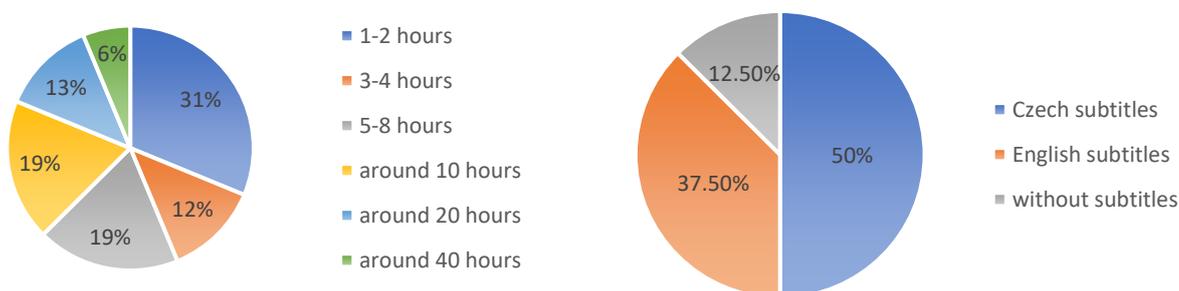
One of the questions of the survey was how long they had already been learning English as a foreign language. The data obtained show that the majority of pupils have been studying English since their first grade in the primary school, as *Základní škola J. A. Komenského* in Louny offers English lessons already from the first year. Ten out of the 16 children started with foreign language acquisition in the first grade, four of them started one year before elementary school. Moreover, two pupils stated that they began learning English even two years before the compulsory school attendance.

It is not surprising that the question relating to the fact where the pupils use English actively suggests that all of them learn at school. Some of them, however, also answered that they encounter English elsewhere, e.g. in a voluntary English course (other than the Language Club), they learn at home or they interact with a native speaker. Two pupils chose the answer “Other” and added the Internet and books, games, and films. The percentages of the pupils’ answers are shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1** Respondents’ active use of English.

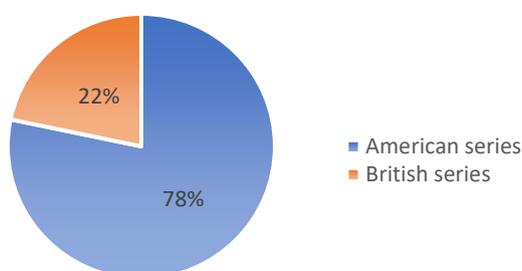
When they were asked whether they watch films or TV series in their free time, all of the pupils answered positively, their weekly watch time ranging approximately from 1 hour to even 40 hours. The collected data suggest that half of the pupils watch films with Czech subtitles, 37,5% with English subtitles and the 2 remaining children without subtitles at all. Moreover, six pupils revealed that they only started watching films and TV series in the original language during the school year 2019/2020, which was supported by the idea of the language club.



**Figure 2** The amount of time spent watching foreign media weekly.

**Figure 3** Use of subtitles.

The pupils were also asked to list various TV series that they watch/like to determine the superiority of an accent, whether GA or GB predominates in their choices. Most pupils named the American series, some of which being Riverdale, Stranger Things, 13 Reasons Why, The Vampire Diaries, The Mentalist or The Simpsons. Several pupils listed the British series, but they were in a minority. These included Peaky Blinders, Sherlock or Good Omens. The listed TV series and the percentage amassed from the questionnaire can be seen in table 4 and figure 4.



**Figure 4** The percentages of the TV series listed by the pupils.

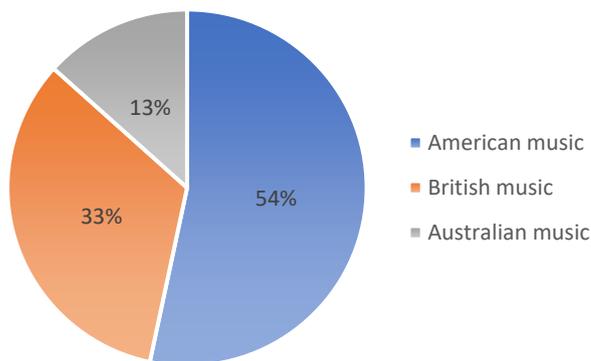
| American series |                              | British series |
|-----------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| 13 Reasons Why  | Riverdale                    | Doctor Who     |
| Adventure Time  | Steven's Universe            | Good Omens     |
| Daredevil       | Stranger Things              | Peaky Blinders |
| Friends         | The Big Bang Theory          | Sex Education  |
| Game of Thrones | The Mentalist                | Sherlock       |
| Gotham          | The Simpsons                 |                |
| Iron Fist       | The Vampire Diaries          |                |
| Luke Cage       | The Witcher                  |                |
| Narcos          | The Amazing World of Gumball |                |

**Table 4** American and British TV series listed by the pupils.

Similar results appeared in the question about music and most listened to/favourite music artists. All the pupils answered that they listen to songs in English. Nevertheless, here the American and British ratio is more balanced, they even listed some Australian singers. The musicians and the percentages can be seen in table 5 and figure 5.

| American artists       | British artists | Australian artists |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Billie Eilish          | Alan Walker     | AC/DC              |
| Eminem                 | Clean Bandit    | Nick Cave          |
| Frank Sinatra          | Ed Sheeran      | Sia                |
| Green Day              | Iron Maiden     | Tones and I        |
| Guns N' Roses          | James Young     |                    |
| Imagine Dragons        | Lewis Capaldi   |                    |
| Juice Wrld             | Queen           |                    |
| Justin Bieber (Canada) | Stormzy         |                    |
| Lil Peep               | The Beatles     |                    |
| My Chemical Romance    | Tom Odell       |                    |
| Post Malone            |                 |                    |
| Shawn Mendes (Canada)  |                 |                    |
| Taylor Swift           |                 |                    |
| Travis Scott           |                 |                    |
| Trevor Daniel          |                 |                    |
| XXXTentacion           |                 |                    |

**Table 5** Music artists listed by the pupils.



**Figure 5** The percentages of the music artists listed by the pupils.

Additionally, the pupils were asked whether they watch any foreign YouTubers and if they play video games as these also belong to the group of media in which English can be heard as a native language. Concerning YouTubers, the answers were even: only 50% of the children stated that they watch English native speakers on YouTube, almost all of which are from America, such as Dude Perfect, Mr Beast, Jaiden Animations, Brent Rivera or James Charles. Only a minority listed Youtuber from the United Kingdom, including Zoella. These responses were surprising as more pupils were expected to watch YouTube in their free time.

Only 5 of the pupils stated that they play videogames, just one of them admitted playing games online with other players, with whom they communicate in English. Although the videogames they listed, e.g. PUBG, GTA or Fortnite, all belong to games in which the players can communicate with others via their microphones.

### 3.3 The Language Club

Základní škola Jana Amose Komenského in Louny offered a voluntary afterschool activity for the pupils of their 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th classes in the schoolyear 2019/2020 that was focused on an active and regular exposure to foreign media, especially British and American films and TV series. Sixteen pupils enrolled in the club, however only eleven participated actively until the end of the school year, these 11 students were used for the pronunciation evaluation.

The Club of Communication in a Foreign Language (“The Language Club”) was established as an activity from the project Template II - New Chances for Pupils and Teachers of Základní škola J. A. Komenského Louny, Pražská 101, příspěvková organizace. The activity takes the form of leisure activities and leads to the development of key competencies of lower-secondary school pupils.

The foreign language communication club was attended by 16 pupils, eleven of whom completed the whole course. One condition for the establishment of the club was inclusion of at least two pupils who are at risk of school failure. The following areas are monitored when identifying pupils endangered by this risk: low motivation to learn, long-term and repeated failure, inconsistency in school preparation, disciplinary offenses, inconsistent parental guidance and socio-culturally disadvantaged environment. Out of the 11 students who completed the course, 3 met at least one of the conditions mentioned above, meaning there was a possibility that they would struggle more than other students.

Given that the activities in the Language Club are to be focused mainly on the development of pupils' communication skills in a foreign language, the teachers (club leaders) decided to implement a film club - joint viewing and commenting on foreign films and TV series that are not dubbed. They based their film choices on their experience and on finding out the pupils' interest. According to club leaders, the pupils of the lower-secondary school spend a significant amount of time watching television and at the same time it is a group of children who at this age perceive and learn relatively quickly. They wanted to motivate them to watch foreign films and thus improve their English considering that lower-secondary school pupils are at the age when they are able to listen to accents, intonation, expand their vocabulary and therefore gain more confidence in communicating in a foreign language.

The club activities took place once a week for 5 consecutive months, starting in October. Unfortunately, because of the situation concerning the spread of the corona virus Covid-19 in the first half of 2020 and all the schools in the Czech Republic being closed down in March, the club could not be attended. Nevertheless, the pupils had enough time at home to continue watching the films, TV series and mainly YouTube videos as they are the most accessible for everyone and they did reliably so.

During the meetings, the pupils watched films and TV series from both American and British production; American prevailed, for the reason that there were more films produced in the USA, therefore the selection of genres is much broader than in the case of British films. Given the fact, that they mainly hear General British in school and often watch American movies and listen to American singers in their free time, both these accents might affect them to a certain extent. Some of the selected works included: some episodes of American TV shows *Friends*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, British series *The Crown* or various films, such as *Green Book*, *Harry Potter* or *Mamma Mia!*. Subsequently, they commented on them together with the teacher and performed various tasks that the teachers prepared for them, including dubbing over the scenes with no sound, re-enacting selected movie scenes, plot interpretation or group discussions.

### 3.4 Data analysis

#### 3.4.1 Analysis of the text

Many words that contain the sounds which often cause problems to Czech learners as they do not occur in the Czech sound system can be found in the text.

Already the first word of the story, *there*, encompasses one of the problematic sounds, /ð/. It also appears in definite articles and demonstrative and possessive pronouns *that*, *these* and *their*. The difference between /v/ and /w/ should be heard in the consecutive words *vain* and *wished*; moreover, /w/ appears for example in the words *woman*, *window*, *wall*, *world* or grammatical words *were*, *was* or *which*. The words *long* and *belonged* contain the sound /ŋ/, which occurs also in the word *length* /leŋθ/, followed by the sound /θ/, this word should then be tricky to pronounce. The approximant /r/ can only be heard in the words *great*, *grant* and *dreaded*, when pronounced in General British. Concerning the vowels discussed in the theoretical part, /æ/ appears in the words *man* and *back* and /ə/ in unstressed positions of the words and in the weak forms of grammatical words.

Additionally, the ending -ed can be found in the text several times; for instance, the words *surrounded* and *dreaded* differ in pronunciation from the words *wished*, *hoped*, *dared* and *belonged*. It might be difficult for the children to recognize the difference, moreover the words *dared* and *dreaded* look very similar at first impression. *Dreaded* and *surrounded*

are adjectives, therefore the correct pronunciation is /'dredɪd/ and /sə'raʊndɪd/. Contrarily, the verbs do not end with /ɪd/: /wɪfɪt/, /həʊpt/, /deəd/, /brɪ'loʊnd/.

As a consequence, it should be detected through the text whether the children actually have problems with English pronunciation, concerning the mistakes that are frequently made by Czech learners as stated in the theoretical part and whether they are able to reduce them with the help of regular language input via films and TV series.

Another phenomenon that is researched in the thesis is the difference between American and British English and to what extent do these accents influence lower-secondary school children. The text too focuses on these discrepancies and contains the differently pronounced sounds, namely /ɒ/ and /ɑ:/, /ɑ:/ and /æ/, /əʊ/ and /oʊ/, /t/ or /ɾ/. The differences in pronunciation may be found for example in the words *God*, *grant*, *hoped*, *little*, *garden* and *herbs* as can be seen in table 6.

|        | <b>GENERAL BRITISH</b> | <b>GENERAL AMERICAN</b> |
|--------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| God    | /gɒd/                  | /gɑ:d/                  |
| grant  | /grɑ:nt/               | /grænt/                 |
| hoped  | /həʊpt/                | /hoʊpt/                 |
| little | /'lɪtəl/               | /'lɪtᵻl/                |
| garden | /'gɑ:dən/              | /'gɑ:rdən/              |
| herbs  | /hɜ:bz/                | /ɜ:bz/                  |

**Table 6** Differences between GB and GA – words from the examined text.

### 3.4.2 Analysis of the recordings

In the speech evaluation, the researcher wanted to concentrate mainly on the pronunciation of frequently mispronounced words, the pupils' accentedness, comprehensibility and fluency as well as the preferred accent at the end of the course.

The analysis was divided into two parts. In the first section, the correction of the pronunciation mistakes and the prevailing accent while reading the target words were examined. The second part focuses on the general pronunciation of the pupils, whether it is fluent or full of pauses, if their speech is intelligible and what accent exceeds overall in their

speech. Concerning the latter, the teachers were asked to decide, whether the children's accent is mostly American, British or Czech, the accent of their mother tongue.

### **3.4.2.1 Frequently mispronounced sound and prevalence of the accent**

In the first part, the author of the thesis was the only assessor and she employed the perceptual analysis. She listened to each recording several times and evaluated the target features using a tick or cross method in an excel sheet. Two excel tables were created for each recording, one for the mistakes and their possible improvement, the other for the particular words that are pronounced differently in GB and GA.

All words containing the frequently mispronounced sounds were listed in the table and for each pupil, a tick was used when the sound was pronounced correctly. Contrarily, mispronunciation was marked with a cross. The researcher then compared both tables and compiled the results of the improvement/deterioration for each sound.

The results for the prevailing accent were obtained with a similar method. Two tables were created which contained all the words that differ in pronunciation in GA and GB and were evaluated separately for each pupil in both recordings. The words were marked with "A" for General American and "B" if their accent was closer to General British. Both tables were then compared, and the overall prevailing accent was determined. Also the transition between the two rounds of recordings was considered.

### **3.4.2.2 Accentedness, fluency and comprehensibility**

The second part of the research was completed with the help of 15 other English teachers who evaluated the accentedness<sup>11</sup>, fluency and comprehensibility of the pupils' speech together with the researcher, using a one to five scale which is often utilized for measuring the given qualities. In these numerical scales only the endpoints are labelled, so for instance when measuring accentedness, the scales range from 'heavily accented' to 'not accented at all' (Knoch 55).

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<sup>11</sup> Accentedness – the difference in a pattern of speech in comparison to the local accent; in other words, how much does the tested pronunciation differ from an accent-free speech (Derwing and Munro 478)

The teachers all received a form with separate pages for each pupil (an example can be seen in Appendix 2), which contained 3 scales for both recordings with the following instruction how to rate each phenomenon:

Accentedness: 1 = very strong accent; 5 = not accented at all

Fluency: 1 = not fluent at all; 5 = very fluent

Comprehensibility: 1 = very difficult to understand, 5 = very easy to understand

Concerning accentedness, the teachers were also given its definition: the degree to which the tested pronunciation differs from an accent-free speech (Derwing and Munro 478).

Two multiple choice questions were put at the end of each page, in which the teachers were asked whether they consider the speech of each pupil to have improved or not and which accent, according to them, predominates in the pupils' speech.

The researcher also answered these questions. All 16 answers were transferred to an excel sheet in which she analysed the pronunciation ratings.

### **3.5 Results**

Firstly we concentrate on problematic sounds, secondly on the words which helped us determine the prevalence of either GB or GA and lastly on the overall results concerning fluency, accentedness and comprehensibility. The results are presented together for all eleven participants and they include both pre- and post-course recordings.

#### **3.5.1 Problematic sounds**

According to the recordings, the sounds /ð/ was partially problematic. Out of the 8 words encompassed in the text that contain /ð/, there were 88 possible chances to pronounce this sound (8 words x 11 pupils); it was pronounced correctly 42 times in R1 and 51 times in R2. Therefore it may be stated that the pupils underwent an improvement. If pronounced incorrectly, the sound was mainly substituted with [d], probably because of its existence in the Czech phonetic system.

The consonant /θ/ could only be found in the word *length*, in which /ŋ/ precedes and therefore makes this word complicated to pronounce. The learners were expected to say [lɛŋkt],

several pupils ignored the /θ/ sound and said [lent] instead. Only 1 pupil managed the correct pronunciation in the first recording, 3 in the second one.

The phoneme /ŋ/, contained in 3 words, was also problematic. In R1, the majority of students pronounced the word *long* with a following plosive sound as they would pronounce it in Czech [lɔŋg], which was anticipated as stated in the theoretical part, or just [lɔn]. Only two pupils managed to pronounce this word correctly at their first try. Some pupils retained the incorrect form at the end of the course, although half of them pronounced the word properly. The other words containing this sound were the already mentioned *length* and *belonged*, which reaped greater success. Only 4 of the pupils did not pronounce *belonged* correctly in R2. They mostly did not know that the ending of the word is not pronounced /ɪd/ and used voiced /g/ to form [bɪlɔŋgɪd]. Out of 33 possible instances (3 words x 11 pupils), 11 /ŋ/ sounds were pronounced correctly at the beginning and 13 at the end of the course.

The recordings also indicate that the phonemes causing the most problems were /v/ and /w/. As a result of the recording assessment it can be stated, that in the majority of cases, the children alternated both sounds without any distinction. The word *woman*, which appeared twice in the text, was one of the trickiest words in R1, often pronounced [vɔmɛn], the number of incorrectly pronounced /w/ in *woman* decreased from 9 to 6 (from 22 possible instances) in R2.

Contrarily, the vast majority of children pronounced /w/ even in the word *vain*, although incorrectly and it did not improve in R2. This may have occurred because of the children's possible desire to sound more "English". They know that the phoneme /w/ appears in English but not in Czech and when they learn to pronounce it, they try to fit this sound in all English words either with <w> or <v>. As they know that we pronounce /v/ in the Czech language too, they may want to use the new foreign sound, even in words in which it does not belong to. In total, /v/ and /w/ were pronounced correctly 128 times out of 176 instances (16 words x 11 pupils) in R1 and 133 times in R2.

Concerning the vowel /æ/, the words *man* and *back* were tested (22 instances). It was pronounced correctly 3 times in R1 and 8 times in R2. The vowel /ə/ was generally only

pronounced in definite and indefinite articles /ðə/, /ə/ and the words *woman* and *flowers*; the weak forms were mostly pronounced with a full vowel quality.

The last problematic item that was researched in the recordings was the past simple ending *-ed*. Its occurrence was tested in 6 words: *wished*, *hoped*, *surrounded*, *dared*, *belonged* and *dreaded*. As expected, the only two words without any hesitations were *hoped* and *surrounded*, the latter perhaps not due to the fact that it is an adjective but because the base form ends with /d/ and it is impossible to pronounce two consecutive /d/ sounds.

The word *wished* was more complicated for some students. In the first recording, 2 pupils read it as [wɪʃɪd], inserting the /ɪ/ sound. In the second recording, only 1 pupil made this mistake; the other one managed to pronounce the word accurately.

Similar mistake happened with the word *dared*. Several inaccuracies were detected, such as [dʌrɪd], [dɑ:d] or [dri:d]; these can be heard in R2 as well. Also the word *belonged* caused troubles to 3 pupils in R1. Their pronunciation was [bɪlɒŋgɪd] or even [bɪlɒndʒɪd] instead of /bɪ'lɒŋd/. This word is widely plentifully used; therefore all the pupils managed the correct pronunciation in R2.

The word *dreaded* brought a different complication. The ending *-ed* was pronounced correctly in all cases, however the graphemes <ea> were tricky for 4 children. They know these graphemes from words like *meat* and *please*, in which the pronunciation is /i:/. Consequently, they implemented this knowledge to all words with the same grapheme, even though it is not applicable invariably. The word *dreaded* should be pronounced [dredɪd], Nevertheless, 3 pupils read it as [dri:dɪd] in R2 as well. Two pupils even pronounced it as [dredɪd], one only in R1, pupil 8 only in R2, which was unexpected. The overall results can be seen in table 7, containing the numbers of correctly and incorrectly pronounced sounds in both recordings.

|           | Recording 1 |     |     |     |     |     |     | Recording 2 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----------|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|           | /ð/         | /θ/ | /ŋ/ | /v/ | /w/ | /æ/ | -ed | /ð/         | /θ/ | /ŋ/ | /v/ | /w/ | /æ/ | -ed |
| correct   | 42          | 1   | 11  | 9   | 119 | 3   | 54  | 51          | 3   | 13  | 8   | 125 | 8   | 64  |
| incorrect | 46          | 10  | 22  | 13  | 35  | 19  | 12  | 37          | 8   | 20  | 14  | 29  | 14  | 2   |
| total     | 88          | 11  | 33  | 22  | 154 | 22  | 66  | 88          | 11  | 33  | 22  | 154 | 22  | 66  |

**Table 7** The overall results concerning frequently mispronounced sounds.

Apart from the words that contain the commonly made mistakes, other words were mispronounced as well, e.g. *child*: [tʃɪld], *woman* [wʊmən], *God* [gɒd] or *by* [bi:]. Several words were even misread completely (*could*, *however*). Nevertheless, it can be seen from table 7, that more mistakes were made in their first recording, the results of R2 are slightly better.

### 3.5.2 Prevalence of GB or GA

Concerning the British and American accent in the recordings, both were applied profoundly. In the word *God*, the British pronunciation prevails over American (R1:5, R2:8), similar with the word *enchantress* (R1: 9, R2:8), even though some children did not know this particular word and were uncertain about the pronunciation. Contrarily, the word *granted* was pronounced mainly in GA /græntɪd/ (R1: 10 R2:7).

The diphthongs in the words *hoped* and *go* were also pronounced predominantly in the American accent (R1: 19, R2:18). In the words *little* and *beautiful*, many children tapped the tongue quicker as it is often heard by American speakers in various American films and series. In these words both the English and American ways of pronunciation were used similarly, neither of these dominated. The ratio of GA and GB concerning the consonant <t> was 13:9 (2 words x 11 pupils) in both recordings. The word *herbs* was pronounced with the /h/ sound according to GB in all cases.

The greatest factor that distinguishes both accents is /r/. In the recordings, the children mostly inserted /r/ in their speech, which did not change rapidly in the second recording. Nevertheless, all of them tried not to pronounce the Czech [r]. Out of 132 possible instances (12 words x 11 pupils), rhotic /r/ was heard 94 times in R1 and 83 times in R2. The overall results can be seen in table 8. The line marked "wrong" indicates words that were pronounced completely wrong or omitted altogether.

|       | Recording 1     |                  |                   |     |     |     | Recording 2     |                  |                   |     |     |     |
|-------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|
|       | /v/<br>x<br>/ɑ/ | /ɑ:/<br>x<br>/æ/ | /əʊ/<br>x<br>/oʊ/ | /t/ | /h/ | /r/ | /v/<br>x<br>/ɑ/ | /ɑ:/<br>x<br>/æ/ | /əʊ/<br>x<br>/oʊ/ | /t/ | /h/ | /r/ |
| GA    | 3               | 12               | 19                | 13  | 0   | 94  | 2               | 11               | 18                | 13  | 0   | 83  |
| GB    | 6               | 10               | 2                 | 9   | 11  | 36  | 8               | 11               | 4                 | 9   | 11  | 47  |
| wrong | 2               | 0                | 1                 | 0   | 0   | 2   | 1               | 0                | 0                 | 0   | 0   | 2   |
| total | 11              | 22               | 22                | 22  | 11  | 132 | 11              | 22               | 22                | 22  | 11  | 132 |

**Table 8** The overall results concerning the prevalence of GA or GB.

### 3.5.3 Accentedness, fluency, comprehensibility

The results of the points, which the children were awarded by the teachers and the researcher using a one to five scales, will be presented here.

Concerning accentedness, most pupils were given the score of 3 in the pre-course recording. In the majority of cases, the scores alternated between 2-3 or 3-4 points, only one pupil received the average score of 1.63, which leads to the overall average value of 3.09.

Through the analysis of the second recording, a moderate improvement can be observed. The scores of the pupils are higher, some of the children even reached scores of 5, meaning that their pronunciation should be accent free. As a matter of fact, the speech is by no means accent free but compared to other children, some reach considerably better results. The overall average score increased to 3.79 which might be considered a favourable outcome.

Second area of the research was the pupils' fluency. Four pupils managed to receive scores predominantly alternating between 4-5, mainly 3 or 4 points were earned by two pupils and five pupils received the scores alternating between 1-2 or 2-3. These results show that the fluency of the tested students was at very different levels at the beginning of the course, some of them could speak quite fluently, others had problems and hesitated frequently. The overall fluency score reached averagely 3.20 points.

It can be observed from R2 that even the fluency of the children increased; most of them received the average score of 4 or 5, only two pupils got averagely 3 points on the scale. This actively demonstrates that all of the children became more fluent in their speech, which

was one of the main purposes of the Language Club. The average score of R2 fluency reached 4.10.

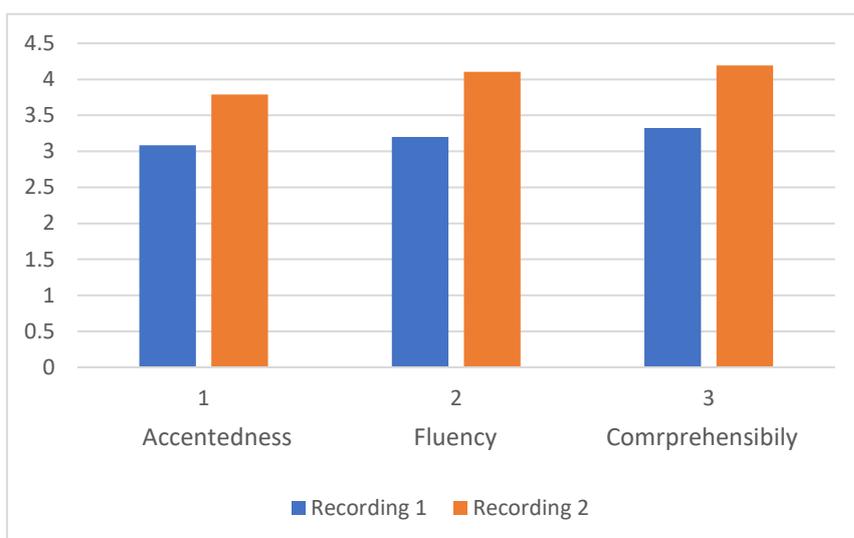
The last investigated phenomenon was the pupils' comprehensibility. Once more, the pupils got averagely 3-4 points on the rating scale; the average value being 3.32. Nevertheless, 3 children received several 5 points and some even only 1-2 points.

A tremendous improvement appeared in this area as well. The majority of the children reached the score of 3-4 or 4-5 points in R2, only one pupil's score was lower, namely 2 or 3 points, although the scores of 3 points were prevailing. The average value increased up to 4.19.

The average scores of the accentedness, fluency and comprehensibility of the individual pupils from both recordings can be seen in the table 9. Figure 6 shows the overall average scores and their improvement.

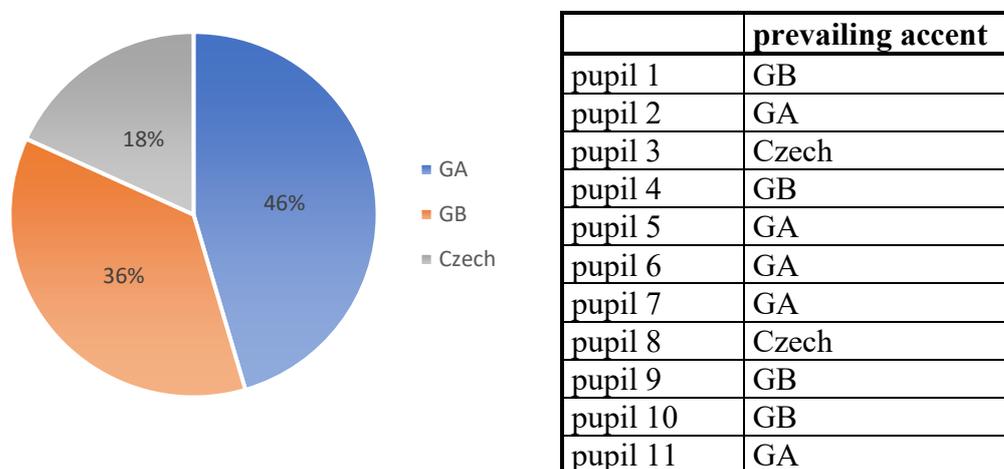
|              | accentednes |             | fluency     |             | comprehensibility |             |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
|              | recording 1 | recording 2 | recording 1 | recording 2 | recording 1       | recording 2 |
| pupil 1      | 3.56        | 4.19        | 4.31        | 4.63        | 4.50              | 4.81        |
| pupil 2      | 2.56        | 3.50        | 2.31        | 3.50        | 2.81              | 3.88        |
| pupil 3      | 1.63        | 2.81        | 1.81        | 3.19        | 1.44              | 2.63        |
| pupil 4      | 3.13        | 3.75        | 2.44        | 4.25        | 3.00              | 4.38        |
| pupil 5      | 3.19        | 4.00        | 3.38        | 4.06        | 4.19              | 4.63        |
| pupil 6      | 3.81        | 3.75        | 4.38        | 4.25        | 4.44              | 4.75        |
| pupil 7      | 3.94        | 4.75        | 4.38        | 4.81        | 4.56              | 4.69        |
| pupil 8      | 2.00        | 2.75        | 1.50        | 3.31        | 2.31              | 3.50        |
| pupil 9      | 3.25        | 3.88        | 2.75        | 3.88        | 2.25              | 3.63        |
| pupil 10     | 3.69        | 4.50        | 4.31        | 4.75        | 3.81              | 4.69        |
| pupil 11     | 3.19        | 3.81        | 3.63        | 4.50        | 3.25              | 4.56        |
| <b>total</b> | <b>3.09</b> | <b>3.79</b> | <b>3.20</b> | <b>4.10</b> | <b>3.32</b>       | <b>4.19</b> |

**Table 9** Average scores of individual pupils obtained from the analysis of accentedness, fluency and comprehensibility.



**Figure 6** Comparison of the overall average scores for accentedness, fluency and comprehensibility before and after the Language Club

The results of the question that aimed at the predominant accent of the pupils in R2 are shown in figure 7 and table 10. Prevailing General American was detected by 5 pupils, General British by 4 pupils and 2 pupils are considered to have their native Czech accent. The percentages can be seen in the figure 7.



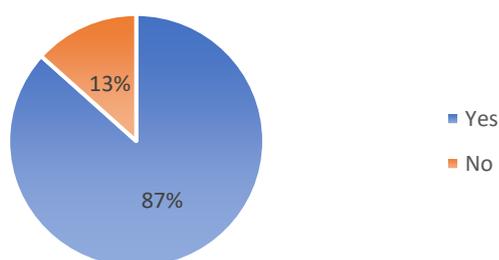
|          | prevailing accent |
|----------|-------------------|
| pupil 1  | GB                |
| pupil 2  | GA                |
| pupil 3  | Czech             |
| pupil 4  | GB                |
| pupil 5  | GA                |
| pupil 6  | GA                |
| pupil 7  | GA                |
| pupil 8  | Czech             |
| pupil 9  | GB                |
| pupil 10 | GB                |
| pupil 11 | GA                |

**Figure 7** The prevailing accent of the pupils according to the teachers.

**Table 10** Individual pupils and their prevalent accents according to the teachers.

The last question of the survey focused on the improvement of the pupils' overall pronunciation. The comprehensive results show that only 13% of all the 176 answers

suggested “No, the pronunciation has not improved”; this is shown in figure 8. The reason why the pronunciation of some pupils did not improve according to some teachers over the year might be even because they already achieved relatively high scores in the first recording and managed to keep their fluency and comprehensibility on a similar level. Nevertheless, if the focus is brought on the results of individual pupils, all of their scores evince either modest or considerable improvement.



**Figure 8** Overall pronunciation improvement of the pupils' speech

### 3.5.4 Research outcomes

The results of the research show that there was an improvement in the pupils' pronunciation, concerning the difficult sounds, even though the numbers of correctly pronounced sounds increased only by a few in R2. Some pupils even managed to mispronounce words that are used quite frequently, such as *child* or *by*. Contrarily, the results of their accentedness, fluency and comprehensibility show greater success. According to the amassed data, all pupils underwent an improvement in their speech, which can also be observed from table 9.

As for the results of the predominant accent, the researcher contrasted GA and GB in the first part of the analysis. The results show that General American was heard more often, particularly in 268 instances out of the possible 440. On the other hand, in the second part of the analysis composed with the help of other English teachers, Czech accent was added to the alternatives. The overall pronunciation was taken into consideration, not just particular sounds. After the comparison of the results, it can be observed that the analysis of the sounds indicated a considerable prevalence of GA, however from the second analysis the results implied, that all three accents were represented equally (5x GA, 4x GB, 3x Czech accent).

### **3.6 Limitations of the research**

A major obstacle in the research appeared at the beginning of the year 2020 when a global pandemic of the virus Covid-19 hit the world and all schools not only in the Czech Republic had to be closed down until the end of the school year. This meant that the activities of the Language Club could no longer happen via meetings in person, however, the children continued to watch foreign media at their homes. Fortunately, all of the pupils were able to provide the final recordings and submit them via the Internet thanks to which the research could be completed.

Another limitation originates from the fact that not only the participation in the Language Club could have influenced the pronunciation improvement. Other factors, which were mentioned in chapter 2.4, also might have been of significance. Nevertheless, it can be stated that the activities of the Language Club contributed to a considerable pronunciation practice.

Last impediment of the research appears in the first part of the pronunciation assessment concerning the problematic sounds and the words that distinguish GA and GB. The problem of the analyses was that only one assessor elaborated on the recordings. This fact could lead to various deviations as no other person could confirm the results obtained from the analysis.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The primary aim of this thesis was to determine whether children attending lower-secondary school are able to improve their pronunciation based on a regular input of native speech in the form of foreign media, namely British and American films and TV series, which were presented to them in weekly meetings of the Language Club held in the school J.A. Komenského in Louny. The secondary aim was to identify the accent that is preferred by the children and to detect whether they also make the mistakes that are common for Czech learners and if so, whether they were able to fix them during the year.

In the theoretical part the factors influencing one's pronunciation learning were scrutinized, particularly the learner's age, aptitude, attitude and motivation, the exposure to the target language and prior pronunciation instruction and experience. It was discovered that all of these factors play an important role in pronunciation learning but age and exposure to the target language were crucial for this research. Concerning age, the critical period was

discussed, including the fact that younger children acquire pronunciation better than adult learners. Exposure to the target language was covered in chapter 2.4.2. and its subchapters, in which foreign media were mentioned in connection to language classes and the benefits of playing movies in the classroom were commented on.

Additionally, the pronunciation teaching today and the preferred models for pronunciation teaching including the differences between General British and General American, as well as the mistakes that are often made by Czech learners, were covered. From the information that has been stated so far, a hypothesis arose that regular exposure to English in the form of either British or American films and TV series may help the pupils improve their fluency, comprehensibility and reduce typical Czech pronunciation mistakes. Moreover, due to the fact that the majority of movie production originates in the US, their prevailing accent after the year should be General American.

The practical part aimed at the confirmation or falsification of the hypothesis as well as the determination of the preferred accent after the year of regular input. The children were given a questionnaire to ascertain the background information about their experience with English and exposure to foreign media and recordings of their speech at the beginning of the Language Club were made. The final recordings had to be done by the children themselves due to the pandemic of Covid-19 and submitted via the Internet.

The recordings were analysed in terms of the pronunciation mistakes often made by Czech learners and their subsequent correction, the pupils' accentedness, fluency and comprehensibility as well as the prevailing accent in their speech. To make the research more objective, 15 English teachers helped with the assessment in the second part.

In general, it can be declared that the hypothesis was confirmed in that the majority of children improved their speech during the year. They have become more fluent in their utterances and most of them even more intelligible. They do not make as many pauses and can be understood quite well. Moreover, some of the mistakes that were made during the pre-course recording were later corrected; nevertheless several mistakes appeared in the post-course recording as well. We cannot attribute this result only to the language club as other factors could have also influenced the children's language improvement, such as

their English lessons at school or the contact with native speakers, which some children have (as they stated in the questionnaire). The fact that they recorded their speech after the course themselves may have also helped with their shyness. Nonetheless, the language club was certainly a good practice for their pronunciation.

Concerning the prevailing accent in the pupils' speech, combination of both General American and General British were detected. From the second part of the assessment (the questionnaire for English teachers) arises the conclusion, that all three accents, including the children's native Czech, were represented equally. In this part of the analysis, the secondary hypothesis was also partially confirmed in that the prevailing accent of the children was discovered to be General American. Contrarily, it can be seen in table 8, in which the predominating accents detected in particular words are portrayed, that GA prevails in R1. However, the table shows that more words were pronounced according to GB in R2. This outcome supports the theory that, despite the sufficient input of American accent in the form of films, children are greatly influenced by their English classes and the textbooks that they use.

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## 5 APPENDICES

### 5.1 Appendix 1

#### Watching foreign media – questionnaire

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you a boy or a girl? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you been studying English? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many English lessons per week do you have at school?
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
5. Where do you use English? (choose all the answers that are true for you)
  - At school
  - At a language course in your free time
  - I learn at home
  - I come to contact with a native speaker (relatives, friends, while playing online games, ...)
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you watch films /TV series/ YouTube videos in English in your free time?
  - Yes
  - No
7. If so, how often? (About how many hours a week do you spend watching films / TV series / YouTube videos?) \_\_\_\_\_
8. If so, do you watch them with subtitles?
  - Yes; Czech subtitles
  - Yes; English subtitles
  - No

9. Have you watched films / TV series / videos on YouTube in English regularly/actively even before the start of the Language Club?

- Yes
- No, I only started this school year

10. Which TV series do you watch? (list every TV show that you can think of)

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11. Do you watch English speaking Youtubers?

- Yes
- No

12. If so, which Youtubers do you watch? (list every name that you can think of)

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13. Do you listen to songs in English?

- Yes
- No

14. If so, who are your favourite music artists? (list every name that you can think of)

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15. Do you play computer games in English?

- Yes
- Yes, I play online games, where the players communicate in English
- No

16. If so, which games do you play?

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## 5.2 Appendix 2

### Recordings assessment - Pupil 1 (example)

Instruction: I would like to ask you if you could please fill in this questionnaire analysing the speech of 11 pupils. They were recorded twice reading the same text, once before they started a voluntary language course and then after the course finished. If possible, could you listen to the recordings and rate the pupils' accentedness, fluency and comprehensibility using a one to five scale and write down your answers?

For each question, please cross the most suitable answer, thank you very much.

Michaela Tužilová

#### 1. Recording 1

On a scale of 1 to 5, how accented is the speech?

accentedness = the degree to which the tested pronunciation differs from an accent-free speech (Derwing and Munro 478)

(1 = very strong accent 5 = not accented at all)

1    2    3    4    5

On a scale of 1 to 5, how fluent is the speech?

(1 = not fluent at all 5 = very fluent)

1    2    3    4    5

On a scale of 1 to 5, how comprehensible is the speech?

(1 = very difficult to understand 5 = very easy to understand)

1    2    3    4    5

2. Recording 2

On a scale of 1 to 5, how accented is the speech?

(1 = very strong accent 5 = not accented at all)

1    2    3    4    5

On a scale of 1 to 5, how fluent is the speech?

(1 = not fluent at all 5 = very fluent)

1    2    3    4    5

On a scale of 1 to 5, how comprehensible is the speech?

(1 = very difficult to understand 5 = very easy to understand)

1    2    3    4    5

3. Recording 2: Which accent would you say predominates in the speech?

(GB: British accent, GA: American accent)

- GB
- GA
- Czech

4. Overall, has there been an improvement in the pupil's speech?

- YES
- NO

### **5.3 Appendix 3**

#### **Pre- and post-course recordings**