

Abstract

The present BA thesis is concerned with perception and production aspects of weak forms of grammatical words in advanced Czech-accented speakers of English. The theoretical part first compares speech rhythm in Czech and English. Discussing the components of rhythm in English, it focusses on sentence stress, including the role of changes on grammatical words. Production and perception are described as observed in native versus non-native speakers. A systematic overview of weak forms of grammatical words is provided. Finally, the need for perception and production training in non-native speakers is emphasised. The first half of the analytical part, focussing on production, examines recordings of proficient Czech-accented speakers. It uses the data to present an overview of areas in which their production of weak forms and other connected speech processes differs from native-like. The hypothesis claiming that the more accented the speaker, the fewer weak forms and associated connected speech processes can be found in their production is confirmed. The second half of the analytical part is based on two perception tests, one asking the listeners to assess the level of comprehensibility and one the level of accentedness. The results showcase the presence of patterns in the way Czech listeners perceive weak forms and associated connected speech processes. Comprehensibility proves to be subjectively easier for Czech listeners to assess than accentedness, no matter their academic seniority in terms of studying English. Czech listeners' being aware of accentedness and comprehensibility levels implies their perceptiveness to weak forms of grammatical words and associated connected speech processes, as these constitute both aforementioned qualities of speech. Finally, these results are compared to and integrated into previous findings on this topic.

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[Note: Due to a system glitch in the SIS, it was necessary, as per the advice given by the SIS helpdesk, to duplicate the text of this abstract solely to achieve a higher word count.]