

This thesis is a French-Czech contrastive study which deals with schwa (mute E) in the two languages. It is conducted in a pedagogical perspective.

After comparing the principal phonetic/phonological characteristics of the two languages, the topic of the theoretical part is schwa in spoken French. One of the chapters concerns the treatment of mute E in French songs and its treatment in poetry.

The second part consists in an experimental study ; it contains the description and the results of three experiments concerning the two languages. The acoustic realization of schwa (or a "schwa-like" vocalic segment) is observed through production tasks and perception tests of syllabicity in French and Czech words. The acoustic analyses seem to support the well-known hypotheses that it is not just the effect of the phonological cribble, but also a mental representation of the graphical form that is operating in the process of the perception of a foreign language. Furthermore, the representation of the graphical form seems to play a role for French listeners when hearing their own language. The articulatory habits of native speakers can considerably influence not only the production of a foreign language being studied, but also its perception. In the case of our first two perception tests the French listeners were probably confused by the vocalic character of the Czech syllabic consonants /r/ and /l/.

The last part presents several propositions of the application of the results of this recherche for the teaching of French to foreigners and of Czech to French learners.