

**TITLE:**

The Influence of Selected and Systematically-Used Methods for the Teaching of Pronunciation on the Perception and Production of *Schwa* by Czech Pupils of English

**AUTHOR:**

Mgr. Kristýna Poesová

**DEPARTMENT:**

Department of English Language and Literature

**SUPERVISOR:**

doc. PhDr. Jan Volín, Ph.D.

**ABSTRACT:**

This dissertation thesis explores the theme of teaching English pronunciation in the Czech educational environment. Its aim is to reveal whether the development of phonetic awareness has positive effects on one's pronunciation skills. Specifically, whether explicit teaching of pronunciation can induce any improvement in Czech pupils' perception and production of vowel reduction predominantly realised as the English mid-central vowel *schwa*. The theoretical framework of the work is provided by the latest findings in English phonetics and phonology, didactics of foreign languages and second language phonology acquisition. The research was carried out as a three-month experiment using the technique of parallel groups at a lower secondary school in Prague. The level of perception and production of the target feature was measured in an expressly devised test in the initial and final phase of the experiment during which experimental groups underwent dedicated *schwa* training while control groups did not take part in any extra pronunciation practice. The collected data were compared and statistically verified. The results indicated partial improvement in the pupils' perceptive and productive skills due to the teaching of pronunciation. The research further drew the attention to the problem of strong negative transfer, particularly in the area of speech production. The conclusions of the research offer recommendations for classroom practice as well as training of future English teachers.

**KEYWORDS:**

second language phonology acquisition, effectiveness of pronunciation teaching, vowel reduction, schwa, perception and production, experiment