

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE  
Faculty of Education  
Department of English Language and Literature

# **The Approach of Czech Upper-Secondary English Teachers to Pronunciation Teaching**

**DIPLOMA THESIS**

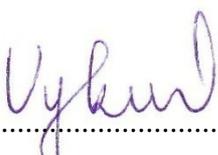
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I hereby declare that the following M.A. thesis is my work only, for which I used exclusively the sources mentioned on the works cited list.

Prague, June 2014

  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The diploma thesis aims at mapping the approach of Czech upper-secondary English teachers to pronunciation teaching. The theoretical part advocates the importance of pronunciation for successful communication, demonstrates the positive effect of explicit pronunciation instruction on students' perception and production skills, and scrutinizes the reasons why teachers in various countries tend to neglect pronunciation teaching. The practical part presents and analyses the data collected in a questionnaire survey completed by 228 Czech teachers. The research outcomes reflect their beliefs, the quality and quantity of their pronunciation teaching, their use of pronunciation materials, the difficulties they face, and the factors which could motivate them to teach pronunciation more frequently and systematically.

Key words: pronunciation teaching, communicative approach, teachers' attitudes, motivation

## **ANOTACE**

Diplomová práce mapuje přístup českých středoškolských učitelů angličtiny k výuce výslovnosti. Teoretická část ukazuje výslovnost jako zásadní dovednost pro úspěšnou komunikaci, podává důkazy pozitivních účinků explicitní výuky výslovnosti na studenty a zkoumá důvody, proč učitelé v různých zemích světa mají tendenci výuku výslovnosti zanedbávat. V praktické části jsou hodnoceny výsledky dotazníkového šetření, jehož se zúčastnilo 228 českých učitelů. Zahrnuty jsou údaje o základním přesvědčení učitelů, údaje o kvalitě a kvantitě jejich výuky výslovnosti, o používaných učebních materiálech, o obtížích, kterým učitelé nejčastěji čelí, a o faktorech, které by učitele motivovaly k častější či systematictější výuce výslovnosti.

Klíčová slova: výuka výslovnosti, komunikativní přístup, přesvědčení a postoje učitelů, motivace

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

Having taken courses in both English and German phonetics and phonology, I was surprised by the extent of improvement I could observe in my oral performance concerning pronunciation. At the age of over twenty I was still able to develop in this area even though none of my teachers at that time was a native speaker of the languages instructed. Hence my strong belief that pronunciation can be effectively taught by non-native teachers, too, and that under systematic explicit instruction students can make progress in this area even at an adult age. This experience sparked my interest in pronunciation teaching at the upper-secondary level and in the support English teachers are offered by the current teaching materials.

In my bachelor thesis I analysed eight contemporary English course books – four British and four Czech, all of which were designed for elementary adult students. The aim was to evaluate the extent of support they provide teachers with in terms of pronunciation. The investigated criteria involved the amount of pronunciation exercises, their quality with regard to taught phenomena and the used teaching techniques as well as the extent of their integration in the teaching of other linguistic components and skills. It was found out that the main topic taught and practised in both groups of the course books were phonemes. This might be caused by the fact that the materials were designed for elementary level students to whom correct pronunciation of segments is probably most important and easier to learn at the same time. Although there were differences between particular textbooks, all the Czech ones more or less concentrated on phenomena causing difficulties to the Czech learners.

Certain dissimilarities were found between the Czech and the British textbooks as for the teaching techniques. Despite the variability among individual samples, it turned out that the Czech course books tended to make greater use of analytical techniques, i.e., activities based on phonetic and phonological knowledge (e.g., transcription, description of articulation and minimal pair distinction). This might be explained by the lack of native-like input in the Czech educational environment and the need to implement other teaching means than pure imitation of a perfect model. On this account, the Czech course books probably also laid more emphasis on explanation and reasoning whereas the British ones showed a higher degree of integration. All in all, despite the individual differences the analysis clearly proved that the pronunciation instruction is strongly supported in all the four British textbooks and in two of the Czech ones. The investigated student's books offered pronunciation practice in more than three quarters of all presented units and adequate support for the teachers could be found in

the corresponding teacher's books. Moreover, British workbooks provided the learners with a lot of supplementary exercises for further practice or self-study.

Considering the solid support found in the sample of recently published general English course books, it might seem there is no reason for teachers to avoid teaching pronunciation in their English classes. Nevertheless, I do not remember much pronunciation work done in the English lessons I attended at my secondary school. My recollections might well be outdated or they may reflect the teaching style of one teacher only. Nevertheless, the experience gained during my teaching practice in both lower and higher-secondary schools two years ago did not change my personal impression. Pronunciation still seems to be an area of foreign language teaching which does not receive as much attention as it should. While wondering what lies at the core of this discrepancy, this thesis seeks to survey Czech upper-secondary English teachers' approach to the teaching of pronunciation. We wish to find out whether pronunciation really tends to be an area of neglect in the majority of Czech upper-secondary schools. If so, we would like to reveal the reasons and thus hopefully offer the initial impulse for improvement.

On both the historical background and the basis of current research findings, the importance of pronunciation as an essential component of one's linguistic competence is explained in the theoretical part. A brief account of the effects of explicit pronunciation instruction on students over 15 years of age follows and in fact the sense of such instruction is advocated. Then, we scrutinise the reasons which make English teachers in various countries hesitant about or even prevent them from teaching pronunciation in their classes. Supposing that the situation and beliefs of Czech English teachers will be in many respects similar to those of their foreign colleagues, the information collected in the theoretical part helped us design our own questionnaire to survey the way in which Czech secondary English teachers approach pronunciation instruction. The account on the preparation of this questionnaire, its content, distribution, and the analysis of the amassed data constitute the practical part of this thesis.

## **2. THEORETICAL PART**

Many researchers interested in pronunciation observe with certain regret that the degree of attention paid to this domain and its teaching has not been as high as the scientific effort devoted to other components of a foreign language instruction, e.g., grammar, vocabulary, language skills involving listening, speaking, reading and writing, use of instructional materials or technology. Furthermore, from the relatively scarce number of published studies, many have come to the conclusion that in common English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) classroom practice, pronunciation tends to be an area of neglect.

This is certainly a multidimensional phenomenon, which cannot be explained by a single cause. Among others, curricular issues, material equipment or students' motivation and aptitude might play the role; the reasons may vary from school to school, from teacher to teacher, or from class to class. One of the crucial factors, however, must be the teachers' cognition about pronunciation, i.e., their knowledge and beliefs, or according to Baker and Murphy, 'the reasoning that underpins what teachers do in classrooms' (33). For the author of this thesis, a teacher is hardly imaginable to dedicate much time and energy to the teaching of pronunciation if he/she considers it as an unimportant part of linguistic competence, or a domain not as important as some others (e.g., vocabulary, grammar etc.). Analogically, for a teacher to be inclined to intentionally teach pronunciation, it is essential that he/she believes in his/her students' capacity for mastering it and in the general possibility of giving effective instruction in this area.

In the following chapters, the reasons why some teachers from various countries tend to neglect the area of pronunciation will be examined and the implications for our own research will be drawn. We will begin with a brief historical overview of how pronunciation was viewed within various teaching methods. Furthermore, we would like to advocate the significance of pronunciation for successful communication as it is seen by the researchers today. We also wish to provide some brief evidence of the positive effect which *explicit*, in other words, intentional and targeted pronunciation instruction can have on students of over 15 years of age (i.e. at the upper-secondary level). Hopefully, we can thus encourage some teachers who have been reluctant to work with the sound system of the English language in their classes.

## **2.1. Importance of Pronunciation for Successful Communication**

Throughout the historical development of the EFL methodology, different approaches have been adopted to the teaching of pronunciation, reflecting the degree of importance this linguistic component received within the various conceptions of foreign language teaching. From the 1840s to the 1940s, foreign language instruction in Europe was dominated by the Grammar Translation method. It was originally designed for the teaching of classical languages and later adopted for all foreign language teaching; it aimed mainly at enabling students to read and appreciate foreign language literature and providing them with good mental exercise as well (Larsen-Freeman 4). As there was no real attempt to help students manage conversation in the target language (Krashen 129), it is no surprise that pronunciation received very little attention, if any.

A completely contrasting approach was introduced by the Direct Method. In the early part of the twentieth century, it was popular among those who, first and foremost, viewed foreign language instruction as a preparation for oral communication. Language learning was expected to be achieved by exposing the students to the language, making them use it and so absorb its structures (Richards and Rodgers 46). Since pronunciation was considered as an essential factor for developing good oral communicative skills, it was worked upon intensively from the very beginning of a course. Inspired by child language acquisition, however, the techniques relied on mere imitation. Students were simply supposed to approximate a model – a teacher or a recording – to their best (Celce-Murcia 3). Thus, any progress was highly dependent on a particular student's receptive skills and the teacher's influence was rather limited.

Although phonetics as a linguistic discipline became established in the second half of the nineteenth century and the application of its findings to the teaching of pronunciation had already been proposed by the representatives of the Reform Movement about the 1880s (Richards and Rodgers 8), it did not become a common practice until the 1950s. At that time, the Audio-lingual methodology was developed in the USA and the Situational Language Learning in the UK. Language was understood as a system of structurally related elements encoding meaning, and language learning as the mastery of these forms and the rules for their combination. As Morley points out, 'along with correct grammar, accuracy of pronunciation was a high-priority goal ... Instruction featured articulatory explanations, imitations, and memorization of patterns through drills and dialogues, with extensive attention to correction' (485).

From the late 1960s, much discussion about pronunciation in the EFL curriculum emerged. The importance of pronunciation as an instructional focus was put into question, and doubts about whether it could be taught explicitly and learnt under direct instruction at all arose. The ways and means of teaching pronunciation usual so far started to be viewed as ‘meaningless non-communicative’ drills. In general, pronunciation obtained less and less attention and some teaching programmes even dropped it entirely (Morley 485 – 486). Pronunciation instruction was strongly de-emphasised, for example, in methodologies influenced by the Cognitive Code theory. According to its advocates, native-like pronunciation was an unrealistic, inaccessible goal and time was to be invested rather to the teaching of some more learnable items, such as grammar and vocabulary (Celce-Murcia 5).

In the 1970s, several different teaching methods appeared which fall within the term Humanistic Approach. They all saw the student as a complex personality whose feelings needed to be involved to achieve optimal learning results. Nevertheless, they varied significantly in both the ways they attempted to achieve this goal as well as in their attitude towards pronunciation. Some of them operated with special concepts related to pronunciation acquisition (e.g., Total Physical Response and the ‘silent period’), some even developed specific pronunciation teaching techniques (e.g., Community Language Learning with its ‘human computer’, or the Silent Way with its intricate system of wall charts and the Cuisenaire rods). Some did not explicitly focus on pronunciation and its teaching (e.g. Suggestopedia), however, they did not seem to consider it as an unimportant language component either (Pokludová 10-14).

### **2.1.1. Pronunciation within Communicative Approach**

Communicative Approach, the prevalent EFL methodology of today, lays emphasis on communication, as the name of the approach itself suggests. Communicative competence is the goal to be achieved and linguistic competence is seen as a part of it. Shifting the focus of foreign language learning to other dimensions, such as sociolinguistic, discourse, pragmatic or strategic elements of communication, the attention has been drawn from linguistic accuracy to fluency and conversational appropriateness (Cenoz and Lecumberri 261). Especially in its onset in the 1970s, this method used to marginalise pronunciation, considering it rather a question of accuracy and seeing learners’ dissimilarities to the native-speaking model as authentic features of each individual learner.

As Morley remarks, in the 1980s, the interest in pronunciation slowly started to rise again, which was marked by a significant increase in both journal articles and teacher resource book publication. It became recognised that ‘pronunciation – like grammar, syntax, and discourse organisation – *communicates*’ and that it is ‘an essential part of what we communicate about ourselves as people’ (489). Nevertheless, in line with the emphasis on input-based instruction, which is typical of Communicative Approach, pronunciation was still seen as a ‘by-product of appropriate [communication] practice over a sufficient period of time’ (Celce-Murcia 327). It was especially the period of the 1990s, which brought evidence that ‘there are some aspects of English that are not influenced by input alone’. In other words, foreign-language learners ‘need to have their attention drawn to specific characteristic of language if they are to make changes in their own productions’ (Breitkreutz et al. 52). Whether these assumptions apply to pronunciation and to which of its many aspects in particular, has been the subject of recent research, as we will see later on in this work.

Having recognised ‘intelligible pronunciation as an essential component of communicative competence’ has nevertheless brought many other questions to light in the last two decades (Morley 513). One of them relates to the model of pronunciation which a learner of English should strive to approximate. Across various differing EFL methods (e.g., Direct Method or Audio-lingualism), the original perspective of such an ideal was the students’ achievement of native-like pronunciation. In courses designed for immigrants living in an English speaking country, the intended model might not be difficult to find. However, in a country where English is not a mother tongue, we do not prepare students for contact with native speakers only. Even if so, the question arises as to which native variety we should focus on. We might think of certain Englishes (e.g. Australian, Indian or South African) as less probable than others (e.g. British or American) for Czech learners of English to get into contact with. Yet, we can never know in advance. Besides, we should not forget about the changing role of English in today’s interconnected world which is reflected in the emergence of English as an international language, i.e., English for communication predominantly among non-natives.

In our foreign environment and in the contemporary global context, opting for one concrete pronunciation model proves rather problematic. In addition, we must ask whether when teaching students over 15 years of age, achieving native-like pronunciation is a realistic goal or not. As we will see later in this work, this question should definitely not make us completely give up all our efforts to teach pronunciation as was the case with the proponents

of the Cognitive Code methodology. Nevertheless, the authors of several current studies hold the view that intelligible pronunciation does not necessarily have to equal the native-like one, which actually ‘a very small number of highly motivated [adult learners], and those with special aptitude’ can reach (Derwing and Munro, 384). Although ‘a heavy accent can result in negative judgments about the speaker’s personality and competence’, Brawn points out that acceptable pronunciation is not synonymous with ‘sounding like the Queen of England or the President of the United States’. He further distinguishes between two levels of intelligible pronunciation – *understandable but not pleasant to listen to* vs. *understandable and pleasant to listen to*, supposing the latter to be the goal of pronunciation instruction (116).

Recognizing perfect or native-like pronunciation as unnecessary for comprehensible communicative output, several authors warn that for both students and teachers, such perfectionistic goals can be devastating. As Morley says, ‘they can defeat students who feel that they cannot measure up, and they can frustrate teachers who feel they have failed in their job’ (498). Brawn even observes that there is no reason to believe that such goals are achievable in typical ESL classrooms since no study documents a link between pronunciation instruction and the complete elimination of a foreign accent. Thus, although adult foreign language learners may occasionally acquire native-like speech patterns, most learners who strive for nativeness are likely to become disheartened. He concludes that ‘though all learners should be encouraged to reach their full potential, which may as well exceed the minimum required for basic intelligibility, it may do more harm than good for teachers to lead learners to believe that they will eventually achieve native pronunciation or to encourage them to expend time and energy working towards a goal that they are unlikely to achieve’ (384).

Another related subject, which researchers are dealing with nowadays, is the question of whether certain aspects of pronunciation contribute to intelligible pronunciation more significantly than others. Whereas for earlier methodologies it was mainly the segmentals (individual consonants and vowels) to be worked on, there has been a crucial shift of focus. Current texts ascertain suprasegmentals (rhythm, intonation, stress) as being more important from a communicative point of view. Some studies suggest that unlike suprasegmental aspects of speech, which may be improved by pronunciation training, segmental instruction might not even transfer to students’ spontaneous speech (Breitkreutz 52). O’Brien conducted research on learners and native speakers of German and observed that ‘non-native pronunciation of individual sounds may be overcome with native-like intonational, stress, and rhythm patterns’ (5). The question arises, however, whether it is possible to achieve native-

sounding intonation and rhythm patterns without some basic mastery of segmentals at least. Moreover, other studies show that ‘phonetically untrained listeners [can] identify non-native speakers on the basis of short samples of speech, including individual segments, and even segment portions’, which would to some extent contradict the assumption that the suprasegmentals are what matters most to the recipient of an uttered message (Derwing and Murno, 383).

To make the situation even more complicated, the research done by Jenkins suggests that ‘when English is used by non-natives in international contexts, pitch movement quality does not affect communication. Nuclear stress placement is crucial for intelligibility, [instead]’ (Pardo 12). This brings us to the idea that comprehensibility itself is rather a slippery concept. As Morley makes us aware, ‘intelligibility may be as much in the mind of the listener as in the mouth of the speaker’ (499), depending not only on the recipient’s own linguistic background as mentioned above but also on his/her attitude, relationship to the producer, willingness and interest to understand. The degree of communication success may be of course further determined by the recipient’s physiological capacities, as well as by some situational factors such as noisy surroundings. Moreover, the quality of production is not influenced only by the extent to which the speaker has mastered individual pronunciation aspects during the instruction. The actual performance is significantly determined by emotions and the overall physical condition, having a tendency to deteriorate under stress or fatigue, for example.

As we can see, there are many issues and questions concerning pronunciation teaching. Which model to choose? What level of perfection to aim at? Which aspects of pronunciation to focus on? For both the teachers and researchers, the answers are certainly far from easy to find. What the researchers definitely agree on, however, is the fact that pronunciation *is* an essential skill. Whereas originally seen as rather unimportant by the proponents of Communicative Approach, who also understood various deviations from a pronunciation standard as unique characteristics of individual speakers, nowadays it has been recognized as vital for successful communication. It seems to be an unrealistic goal for most adult students to strive for native-like perfection, and such instructional objective can be strongly demotivating for both students and teachers. However, an accent too far from a recognised standard might lead to social and professional disadvantage. Therefore we suggest a teacher should set a concrete pronunciation model to stick to and guide his/her students towards it, while not insisting on them sounding like a native speaker at the same time. At the

same time students should be exposed to a large variety of both native and non-native accents which reflects the linguistic reality outside the classroom.

When choosing a model variety of English, one should ideally take into consideration the most probable communication partners of one's students. On the upper-secondary education level, however, these are rather difficult to predict. The choice will be therefore naturally influenced by other factors, such as teaching materials or the teacher's personal preferences, strengths and competencies. Similarly, since we can hardly predict who exactly our students will once most often speak to, we should therefore provide them with some universal spectrum of practice as for various pronunciation aspects. We should not neglect the suprasegmentals, which seem to be crucial for successful communication with native speakers. For English as an international language, it is especially advisable to work on nuclear stress. Nevertheless, since 'segmentals and prosodic aspects are not completely independent' (O'Brien 5), individual sounds should not be forgotten either; mainly those causing difficulties to Czech students.

In conclusion, there does not seem to be a universal ready-made manual for the teachers concerning the issue of an optimal pronunciation model or the choice of phenomena to be taught. Yet, opting for a particular variety according to meaningful criteria and adopting a balanced approach to pronunciation teaching seems to be in any case better than giving it up completely. Pronunciation awareness might significantly enhance students' listening abilities but most importantly, as mentioned earlier, pronunciation *communicates*. It plays a crucial role in successful transmission of the linguistic content of a spoken message and more than that. It often conveys other psychological and social meanings. It should therefore be given attention and space in English classes.

## **2.2. Effect of Explicit Pronunciation Instruction**

Having been clear about the significance of pronunciation as a part of one's linguistic competence, we might still have doubts about its learnability and the extent to what it can actually be taught. There are English learners whose pronunciation very much resembles the native model without ever having received any special pronunciation training. Such learners seem to have picked up pronunciation *implicitly*, without their attention having been drawn to it. On the other hand, it is certainly not exceptional to deal with students who are not able to achieve such results. What is more, some seem to make very little progress even under *explicit pronunciation teaching*, i.e., intentional and targeted instruction, primarily aiming at

developing their pronunciation skills. The experience with such students might reasonably make teachers feel uncertain about the value of explicit pronunciation instruction as to whether it is necessary at all on one side, or whether it brings any effect on the other.

A strong scientific argument against pronunciation teaching is the Critical Period Hypothesis. According to its supporters, there exists a physiological age-based limitation to language acquisition in general as connected to maturation and lateralisation of brain. Students learning a language ‘outside of this critical period (roughly defined as ending sometime around puberty)’ are not supposed to have any chance of achieving native-like linguistic competence (Schouten 1). While ‘native-like morphosyntactic acquisition may occur as late as 15 years’, foreign accents tend to appear much earlier; according to various authors as early as 6 or even 3 years of age. On the other hand, other researchers found out that although it seems to be a fairly exceptional phenomenon, ‘some [non-natives] who began learning later in life are able to pass for native speakers’ (O’Brien 1-2).

O’Brien himself confirms this assumption in his experiment with a group of English speaking learners of German, aged 19-22. Among other outcomes, this study resulted in the finding that ‘the age at which these subjects began to learn German is not correlated with the native-likeness ratings given to them by native speakers of German’ (4). Thus, the age of learning seems to be far less significant a variable than suggested by the proponents of the Critical Period Hypothesis. Moreover, we have said before that it is not native-like but comprehensible pronunciation which students and teachers should be striving for. As concluded by Pennington or Breitzkreutz et al., in spite of the fact that adults are not likely to master pronunciation of a foreign language as naturally as children do and despite the total elimination of an accent being an unrealistic goal in most cases, significant pronunciation progress *can* be made by adult learners and comprehensibility *can* be enhanced over time.

This might be partly explained and further justified by the fact that the age of exposure is only one of many factors influencing one’s success in pronunciation learning. Schouten, for example, speaks of ‘sociological, psychological, and [other] physiological factors’ (1). O’Brien mentions ‘musical and mimicry ability, strength of concern for pronunciation, motivation, formal instruction in the [foreign language], and overall amount of [foreign language] input or use’ (3). Parlak points out the negative effect of unrealistic goals set by the teacher, inhibiting the possible progress of a demotivated student. Pennington warns the teachers who believe that being concerned about a foreign accent is socially and politically unacceptable. She stresses that this form of ‘political correctness’ might not necessarily be

consistent with their students' needs and desires (323) and might negatively influence the quality of formal instruction. In this context, we can further mention Brawn's significant observation about a possible problematic mismatch between the learners' and teachers' points of view. According to the research carried out on this topic, learners do believe in the importance of pronunciation and its learning. Teachers, however, often seem to underestimate this area; seeing it as less important (113). In his meta-analysis, Pardo also sums up that it is the students who paradoxically tend to be more positive about pronunciation instruction and pronunciation learning contrary to the teachers, who show a tendency to be rather sceptical about its teachability (13). Surprisingly and sadly, by underrating the importance of pronunciation and neglecting its instruction, it is often the teachers themselves who deprive the students of the opportunity of potential progress and improvement.

Admitting that there are many more variables than the age and aptitude which affect the students' accomplishment of comprehensible pronunciation, the question finally arises, how important the role of instruction is and how beneficial explicit teaching of pronunciation can be. Out of 25 studies examined by Pardo, 'only 2 do not support the claim that teaching improves learners' pronunciation' (31). Parlak conducted his own experiment on a group of 18 – 19 year old English learners of various native language backgrounds. Its results also confirmed the positive effect of explicit pronunciation instruction on students. The use of untrained native raters in judging the degree of progress in comprehensibility is of special importance. As Parlak says, 'if native speakers with no training or pedagogical background can recognize a positive change, it would mean that pronunciation instruction can noticeably improve the efficacy of [foreign language] speakers' oral production'. It would therefore be obviously beneficial to make pronunciation instruction a part of listening and speaking classes.

Just as there is discordance among researchers about what aspects of pronunciation most significantly contribute to intelligibility, various opinions exist on what pronunciation features are most effective to teach. Derwing's study reveals that although segmental instruction proved beneficial when students were asked to read sentences aloud, it was suprasegmental teaching only, the effect of which seemed to transfer to spontaneously produced speech (Breitkreutz 53). Other studies examined by Pardo show similar results, for example, 'training on suprasegmentals leads to improved performance in communicative aspects of spoken language. In particular, fluency-oriented training is clearly more helpful than a more segmental focus on individual, specific sounds' (32). Parlak promotes balanced

focus on both segmental and suprasegmental elements. At the same time, in his previously mentioned study, which resulted in favour of explicit pronunciation instruction, the subjects spent approximately 30% of the training time on segmental features and 70% on suprasegmentals.

Couper carried out an action research project on 15 adult subjects of different nationalities, the results of which did not only support the idea that explicit instruction has positive effect on students' pronunciation but also offered valuable information about the participants' attitude towards such instruction. The majority of students strongly favoured the systematic approach to pronunciation teaching adopted in this experiment. The techniques most valued by those students were the teacher's explanations, listening and repeating. The fact that the students did not feel confident about their own pronunciation can be 'partially explained by an increased awareness of their own deficiencies as a consequence of the teaching programme, which may have caused them to be cautious in their self-evaluation' (64). As Pardo points out, a temporary effect of explicit pronunciation teaching might even be the students' worsened performance as a consequence of the development of self-monitoring skills (31), which are essential for further progress.

We earlier mentioned the idea that foreign-language learners 'need to have their attention drawn to specific characteristic of language if they are to make changes in their own productions' (Breitkreutz et al. 52). Now we can see that systematic pronunciation instruction can result in students' raised awareness. Moreover, 'the evidence that explicit instruction in pronunciation improves adult performance is on par with the evidence that explicit instruction in grammar improves performance' (Pennington 323). Pardo concludes that 'success in pronunciation learning may be closely linked to exposure factors'. Therefore teachers should encourage their learners' involvement in real-life language situations where they are exposed to input-rich contexts. Nevertheless, the idea that pronunciation is, even by adult learners, spontaneously 'acquired' in input-rich environments, as promoted by the early Communicative Approach, is not supported by the research in this area (33 – 34).

To sum up, the success in pronunciation learning seems to be determined by several different factors. The age-related constraint appears to be only one of them. Other influential elements are for example the overall amount of input, physiological prerequisites such as the individual students' aptitude, psychological factors like individual interests, goals and motivation. In a class, students necessarily differ in these characteristics. This does not imply, however, that explicit pronunciation instruction cannot bring any effect. On the contrary, the

quality of instruction itself appears to significantly influence the results. Students seem to favour a systematic approach, which should be fluency-oriented and embodied in meaningful communicative practice of other language skills. Segmentals are rather to be seen as building stones while suprasegmentals are advised to receive the main attention. The fact that students tend to be very positive in their opinions about the learnability of pronunciation seems to be important. Teachers should therefore not demotivate the learners by setting unrealistic goals, e.g., achieving native-like pronunciation, neither should they stand in their way to learn and improve by considering this skill as minor and neglecting its instruction.

### **2.3. Reasons for Neglecting Pronunciation Teaching**

The choice of a model and the pronunciation syllabus (i.e., pronunciation phenomena and features to be taught), setting realistic goals and especially the uncertainties regarding learnability, teachability and the effect of explicit instruction might certainly rank among the reasons which prevent teachers from focusing on pronunciation in their classes. We hope that the previous lines have contributed to dispelling some of these doubts at least. Despite all the above mentioned facts speaking well for explicit pronunciation instruction, this area still seems to remain a Cinderella of foreign language teaching. To give evidence based on current research, less than 7% of the 350 Spanish primary, secondary, and adult teachers surveyed by Walker systematically planned their pronunciation work. Less than 2% considered their students' pronunciation unimportant. However, 37% of the teachers dealt with pronunciation regularly in their lessons, 45% occasionally and about 27% of all secondary teachers admitted working on pronunciation on a 'purely spontaneous basis' only (Pardo 10). Why do teachers feel the lack of confidence in this part of their work? Why do pronunciation instruction and its systematic preparation tend to be marginalised? As we will see, valuable answers are provided by the research carried out for example in Canada, Australia, the USA, Malaysia and several European countries.

Breitkreutz et al. surveyed sixty-seven Canadian ESL teachers. The opinions and attitudes of most respondents appeared to be in line with the current research on pronunciation instruction. For example, the majority disagreed that the goal of pronunciation programme should be to eliminate a foreign accent. 'Two thirds of the respondents recognised that there is an age related limitation on the acquisition of native like pronunciation, yet three quarters believed that teaching pronunciation resulted in permanent changes' (56). Most of the teachers favoured a balanced approach to pronunciation instruction, focusing on both

individual sounds and prosodic features. Although three quarters of the respondents indicated that they felt capable of teaching pronunciation; ‘a number of comments suggested a need for more integration of pronunciation in a communicative classroom [as well as] a lack of knowledge about how to do so’ (57). Many respondents addressed the lack of sufficient training; almost a third of all respondents admitted having received no pedagogical training in this area and limited opportunities of specific professional development. Some participants also expressed disappointment with the teaching materials available, calling for less technical, more interactive and more communicative resources.

Macdonald interviewed eight Australian teachers, who in the preceding survey indicated that they did not like teaching pronunciation, feel good at it and/or teach enough of it. According to the teachers, it was the formal curricula and the core texts used in their courses, which ‘did not encourage them to teach pronunciation’ (6). Focusing on other areas of language, these materials did not push the teachers to engage in pronunciation instruction. Furthermore, most participants perceived the objectives formulated in their curricula as vague descriptions of learner goals, lacking sufficient detail to be easily and consistently used. Time constraints were mentioned, too, together with the related need to gain more skills in integrating pronunciation in other linguistic components teaching. In this way, pronunciation could be better incorporated into the syllabus. Not being clear about how to adapt their teaching materials to include effective pronunciation practice, the teachers also demanded a wider range of integrative and communicative ‘off-the-shelf’ teaching resources. Another issue appeared to be the teachers’ low confidence in monitoring learners’ progress and giving appropriate feedback. This was attributed not only to the lack of training in this area but also to the absence of a clear and functional assessment framework. The existing formal guidelines were referred to as too broad and unspecific to be of much help.

In Baker’s research, interviews and classroom observations were completed with five experienced American teachers. The aim was to find out how their attitudes in relation to the teaching of pronunciation had developed and how they were reflected in their actual practices. None of the five participants seemed to be even partially reluctant to teach pronunciation. However, differences appeared in what gave the teachers confidence in this area and to what extent. One of the participants received limited graduate education on pronunciation and pronunciation pedagogy. For her, it was the collaboration with a colleague and especially her [own] experience of learning multiple foreign languages, which had the strongest influence on her pronunciation teaching. Another participant, who obtained little or no education in this

area, 'showed a strong dependence on the course textbook when teaching pronunciation' (90). The practice of the other three participants, who had taken graduate courses in pronunciation and related methodology, was most strongly influenced by this education. To conclude, the 'findings reveal that the amount of training teachers have received in pronunciation pedagogy strongly affects not only their knowledge, but also their confidence in that area' (82).

In ten European countries, an extensive international online survey prepared by teachers has been running recently. Henderson reports on the initial results for 598 respondents. More than a half of the teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the training they received. An astonishing 20.7% evaluated their training as 'extremely poor', 10.8% as 'very poor' and 23.4% as 'moderately poor' (127). In the light of the previously mentioned findings by Baker, these numbers appear to be quite alarming. On the other hand, it is rather positive that almost three quarters of the participants consider pronunciation extremely (18%), very (36%) or at least moderately (17.1%) important in relation to other language skills and components. A similar number of teachers feel confident in their own pronunciation. According to the author, these might be the reasons why despite the lack of satisfactory training teachers find their way and 'independently acquire enough skills to find teaching pronunciation not extremely difficult' (133). Almost two thirds of respondents claimed excellent (17%) or good (43%) awareness of their students' skills. Only 29% of the teachers indicated, however, that their assessments of learners' pronunciation were linked to an established scale, i.e., for all of these teachers but two to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Twenty-seven Malay teachers took part in Wahid and Sulong's study consisting of a survey, teaching observations and semi-structured interviews. 'Although the survey findings suggest that the teachers taught pronunciation on regular and sustained basis, it was found from the observations that the actual teaching was very minimal', usually restricted to error correction (136). Time constraints, the absence of pronunciation in the syllabus, limited access to language laboratories, learners' attitudes and a lack of motivation appeared to be the main obstacles. Some teachers also believed that native speakers would make better instructors because with them students can get more exposure to a good model. Nevertheless, certain vagueness as to the pronunciation model itself as well as to the concrete aims of pronunciation instruction could be observed among the teachers. In the actual lessons, pronunciation did not receive high priority. Grammar, on the contrary, was often integrated in the teaching of all other skills. Therefore, it would be beneficial to show grammar 'as a

language aspect that works hand-in-hand with pronunciation' (141). In spite of the admission that intonation and rhythm are important, segmentals clearly won over suprasegmentals. In accordance with Dalton and Seidlehofer, the authors point out that whereas suprasegmentals seem to be more important from communicative point of view, individual sounds are in general less complicated to teach and to correct, i.e., more teachable (Pardo 11).

The participants of Wahid and Sulong's research demonstrated a rich understanding of their teaching situation and they were all very committed to teaching, which is certainly the case of many other teachers who took part in the previously mentioned studies. At the same time, these teachers were 'not able to display much technical knowledge with regard to pronunciation, [its pedagogy and] effective teaching techniques that may not involve high technologies' (140). This might be certainly caused by the unsatisfactory or insufficient training, which also many of the questioned teachers complained about, as well as the lack of opportunities for further professional development in the area of pronunciation and its methodology. Nevertheless, Wahid and Sulong draw our attention to yet another important phenomenon, which is the gap between research and practice in the teaching of pronunciation. They observe that 'researchers are often viewed as belonging to a higher professional status than that of the teachers [and] the unequal distribution of power leads researchers and teachers to "mistrust" each other'. Researchers do not always feel the need of their explorations being informed by the teachers. Teachers, in turn, tend to 'view research findings presented to them with scepticism, questioning its practicality, conclusiveness and relevance' (134).

How can this gap be closed? 'Many have suggested that the onus is on the teacher to bridge the divide. However, acknowledging that teachers possess their own expert knowledge requires researchers to similarly make the effort to learn from them and equally share that responsibility.' Based on the results of their study, Wahid and Sulong then come to the conclusion that 'teachers must increase their uptake of research and its findings to build their technical knowledge'. On the other hand, 'researchers must equally strive to make their research more relevant to teachers by taking into account the latter's practical knowledge and refine their findings from this perspective' (141).

### **2.3.1. Implications for the Research**

In order to contribute to the closing of the gap between research and practice, we genuinely wish to base our survey on the information gathered from the practitioners, i.e.,

teachers, by other researchers so far. We could see that teachers in various countries tend to be hindered from the teaching of pronunciation from at least some of the following reasons:

- *lack of confidence* often caused by;
  - unsatisfactory graduate training,
  - insufficient technical and/or pedagogical knowledge, and
  - scarce opportunities for further professional development in pronunciation teaching.
- *lack of motivation* related to;
  - the formal curricula,
  - unclear objectives (e.g., pronunciation model and required degree of perfection),
  - vaguely formulated assessment criteria, and
  - negative attitudes on the side of students.
- *lack of time in the lessons*, which might be linked to the teacher's *limited ability to integrate pronunciation teaching* in the instruction of other linguistic skills, and
- *disappointment with teaching materials*.

Therefore we would like to focus our questionnaire around these topics. We believe that the issue of *teachers' beliefs* related to pronunciation and its instruction is not to be forgotten either. Underpinning and determining the way the teachers approach pronunciation teaching, they have been shown to have a profound impact on the classroom reality. We are also interested in finding out whether these beliefs of Czech upper-secondary English teachers are in line with the current research done in this area.

### **3. PRACTICAL PART**

This chapter deals with the design, distribution and the content of our questionnaire, the aim of which was to survey and explore the approach of Czech upper-secondary English teachers to pronunciation instruction. The analysis of the collected data and discussion follow. Based on the knowledge gained in the theoretical part, we presuppose that the practices of Czech teachers will be in many respects similar to those of their foreign colleagues; therefore the *hypothesis* was formulated as follows:

Pronunciation instruction in Czech upper-secondary English classes will be marginalised. The reasons might lie in teachers' opinions concerning the importance of pronunciation and the effect of its explicit instruction, lack of confidence, knowledge and/or motivation caused by various other issues mentioned earlier, lack of sufficient time in lessons, limited ability to integrate pronunciation in the teaching of other skills, as well as in disappointment with teaching materials.

#### **3.1. Method**

A survey among Czech upper-secondary English teachers was carried out by the means of a questionnaire, which was created on the basis of the knowledge gained in the theoretical part of this thesis.

##### **3.1.1. Content of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire, which can in printed version be found in Appendix I, consisted of approximately 30 questions, the exact number depending on the concrete answers the participants gave. Since our research was meant to have quantitative character, our goal was to achieve a high response rate. Therefore we wished to minimise the time needed for the completion of the questionnaire. We also needed to ensure realistic processability of the potential data. For these reasons, the majority of the questions were closed, offering the participants to choose answers from several suggested variants. Many of these answer sets, however, contained the option 'Other' with a possibility of specification in case the participants could not fit in any of the proposed categories. Thematically, the questionnaire

was divided into five main parts: Personal Details, The Nature and Learnability of Pronunciation, In your English Lessons, Teaching Materials and Motivation.

In the Personal Details part, the information about the participants' age, gender, length of teaching experience, type of school they teach in, qualifications for teaching English and specific qualifications regarding pronunciation and its instruction was collected. The Nature and Learnability of Pronunciation section was meant to ascertain the participants' basic opinions about pronunciation and its teaching. We asked the teachers whether they thought pronunciation was an important component of students' language competence, whether students older than 15 years could still improve their pronunciation of a foreign language at least to some extent, whether in their opinion explicit pronunciation teaching (i.e., teaching activities specifically focusing on pronunciation) had positive effect on students' pronunciation skills, what level of pronunciation competence they thought their students should achieve and what were their assumptions expressed in the previous questions mainly based on.

The next part was focused on the quantity and quality of pronunciation teaching which the participants do in their English classes, hence the heading In my English Lessons. We wanted to know whether the participants teach pronunciation systematically, on a random basis or not at all. The teachers who indicated systematic pronunciation instruction were further questioned about the frequency and the amount of time they usually devote to it within a lesson. The teachers who claimed random pronunciation teaching were asked to choose or specify on their own, a situation in which they usually deal with pronunciation. The participants who do not practise pronunciation at all were asked to give reasons. All teachers but for the last group then indicated which pronunciation phenomena they most often focused on and further, what type of activities they mostly used to teach pronunciation in class. For this part we drew inspiration from the analysis of activities used in the current English textbooks done in our previous research (Pokludová 2010). We thus let the teachers choose from either 'imitative', 'analytical', 'combination of the preceding' activities or the 'I don't know' option. In the end, the participants' were asked whether and how successfully they integrated pronunciation activities into their teaching of other linguistic areas such as grammar, vocabulary or the skills.

In the Teaching Materials section, the participants reported on which materials they most often used to teach pronunciation. They were asked to indicate which course books they used in their English lessons and to evaluate the quantity and quality of exercises these

textbooks offered to practise pronunciation. In an optional answer they could express what they liked, disliked or missed in these books with regard to pronunciation instruction. We were further interested in the participants' opinion on additional ready-made materials available. The teachers were asked whether they thought that there were enough of such materials available, whether they found them useful, whether they used some of them and which, or if not, then why. The last question was if the teachers encouraged their students' involvement in authentic audio and video materials in order to improve their pronunciation skills. Optionally, they could account on how or why not.

The final part of the survey was called Motivation, and investigated whether the participants liked teaching pronunciation or why they did not, what they found most difficult about dealing with sounds and whether any of the proposed factors could motivate them to teach pronunciation more often or more systematically. The task was to rate each suggested factor in the form of a wish clause on a five-point scale from highly motivational to not motivational. The factors were formulated as follows:

1. If my own pronunciation of English was better,
2. If I knew more about the English sound system,
3. If I knew more about the methodology of pronunciation teaching,
4. If I could receive some training in teaching pronunciation,
5. If I had more time in my lessons,
6. If there were more ready-made teaching materials available,
7. If there were more concretely formulated objectives of pronunciation teaching,
8. If I had better tools to assess my students' progress,
9. If I believed more in the importance of pronunciation as a skill,
10. If I believed more in my students' ability to improve in pronunciation,
11. If I saw more interest in this area on the side of my students, and
12. If pronunciation was more strictly assessed in official exams (e.g. maturita).

The middle value was meant to show that the participant did not need such kind of motivation because he/she for example considered his/her pronunciation good enough, had enough time in his/her lessons, saw enough interest in this area on the side of his/her students etc. The 'Other' option gave the teachers possibility to formulate their own suggestions of motivational factors if needed. The survey was closed by an invitation to comment on the questionnaire or on any issue which the survey had raised if desired.

### 3.1.2. Form, Distribution and Response Rate

To enhance the chance of a high response rate, we decided to distribute the questionnaire in an electronic form. It was created in the web application *i-dotaznik.cz*, which proved to be very user friendly. The questionnaire was directly accessible via a link sent out via e-mail. The participants could not see the complete form at once but the individual questions were displayed one by one; the next question occurred after the previous one had been answered. To keep the time of filling in the form short for the participants, it was not possible to come back to the already answered questions. Two of the respondents found this a disadvantage, as they indicated in their final observations. Another participant commented negatively on the fact that the whole questionnaire was in English. In his opinion, more forms would have been completed had the questions been posted in Czech. In a brief introduction to the questionnaire, the teachers were informed that the survey was in English. Nevertheless, they were explicitly instructed not to be hesitant to answer any of the open questions in Czech if they felt the need from any reasons. In Portable Document, MS Word and Excel format, the gathered data were then exported for further processing.

As already mentioned, the whole survey consisted of mostly closed questions. The exact number of tasks varied for different respondents since the settings of the questionnaire enabled to pose only the questions which fitted to the participants' previous answers. For example, when a teacher indicated that he/she did not teach pronunciation at all, logically he/she was not asked how often the topic was taught or what areas he/she mostly focused on. Yet, a brief account on why he did so was required instead. Also, individual questions differed in the status of compulsoriness, some being optional but most of them obligatory, as indicated in grey square brackets in the printed form of the questionnaire in Appendix I. Technically, a respondent could not proceed to the next question unless he/she had completed the obligatory one. Before the distribution of the questionnaire, its technical functioning, the comprehensibility of questions and the length of completing the survey were tested by the author and the supervisor of this thesis as well as by two other teachers of English. Both of them found the questionnaire understandable and working well. They also managed to finish it within the estimated 15 minute limit. At the end of the real survey, the average time of completion turned out to be 19 minutes and 53 seconds with the middle value of 16 minutes and 39 seconds.

Unfortunately, we did not find an effective way to obtain direct e-mail contact to a significantly high amount of English teachers. The link to the questionnaire was therefore distributed to 1,153 e-mail addresses of headmasters or secretaries of secondary schools from all fourteen regions of the Czech Republic. The addresses were collected from the website *www.firmy.cz* and included 368 grammar schools plus 785 other secondary schools with final maturita exam. In the accompanying letter briefly explaining the form and purpose of the survey, the headmasters and secretaries were asked to kindly forward the message to all English teachers working in their schools. We can neither determine the amount of well functioning contacts from our database along with the number of successfully delivered messages, nor can we estimate how many English teachers our survey reached. For these reasons it is impossible to calculate a valid response rate. What we know for sure, however, is the fact that the questionnaire was begun by 356 and fully completed by 228 addressed teachers. In the following analysis of results we will only take into account the answers given in the fully completed questionnaires.

### **3.1.3. Participants**

As we can see in Table 1 below, out of the 228 teachers who completed the whole questionnaire, 15.3% were male and 84.7% female. The average age of respondents was 42 ½ years, the youngest being 25 and the oldest 81 years old. The average length of participants' English teaching experience was 14.8; the shortest was 2 and the longest 55 years. More than a half of respondents teach in a 'střední odborná škola' or an 'obchodní akademie' and about one third of them in a 'gymnázium'. Teachers from 'Střední odborné učiliště' constituted mere 3.5% of all participants. The category 'Other' was chosen by 5.7% of teachers and included a combination of 'SOŠ' and 'SOU', 'osmileté gymnázium', conservatory, 'vyšší odborná škola', language school or teaching individuals. The majority of respondents gained their qualifications for teaching English at the Faculty of Education or the Faculty of Arts of one of the Czech or foreign universities. Some participants indicated additional exams such as FCE, CAE, Státní jazyková zkouška, TEFL, TKT, JASPEX, while for others these certificates were the only English qualifications they received. Two thirds of the participants experienced education focusing on pronunciation. Mostly they indicated two semesters of English phonetics and phonology which, however, does not necessarily include training in related methodology. The other third (36.4%) admitted not having any specific qualifications in this

area at all. This number is comparable with, or more precisely slightly higher than the results presented by Breitzkreutz, for example; ‘The respondents reported that a majority of ESL instructors in their programs do teach pronunciation (73%), although only 30% have any pedagogical training in this area’ (56).

**Table 1: Respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Female	84.7	193
Male	15.3	35
<b>Age (Average)</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
42.5	25	81
<b>Years of Teaching English (Average)</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
14.8	2	55
<b>Type of School</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Gymnázium	32.9	75
Obchodní akademie	10.5	24
Střední odborná škola	47.4	108
Střední odborné učiliště	3.5	8
Other	5.7	13
<b>Qualification related to pronunciation teaching</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes	63.6	145
No	36.4	83

### 3.2. Results

In line with the respective parts of the questionnaire, the data collected from the 228 participants will be presented, analysed and discussed in six chapters concerning the following categories:

- teachers’ opinions about pronunciation teaching,
- quantity and quality of pronunciation instruction,
- use of teaching materials,
- attitudes to pronunciation teaching,
- motivation, and
- additional comments and observations.

### 3.2.1. Teachers' Beliefs about Pronunciation and its Teaching

From our respondents, only 1.8% (i.e. four teachers) do not believe that pronunciation is an important component of students' linguistic competence. All the others do, which we find as a very positive fact. Some teachers even left explicit comments on the importance of pronunciation, for example: 'Pronunciation is one of the most important features of English as you can either give impression or discourage the other people from communicating with you. If you know lots of word items but pronounce them badly, other people think your English is not good and mainly, they do not understand you properly. Whenever someone has to put an effort into talking to someone, they stop it.' or 'Bad pronunciation can spoil the effect of good grammar and vocabulary knowledge.' Very similar results come out as far as the age related limitations to learning pronunciation are concerned. Thus, 97.8% respondents supposed that students over fifteen years of age still possess the ability to improve their pronunciation of a foreign language. Apart from three negative responses, however, two teachers indicated that they were not sure. Interestingly enough, about ten times so many teachers replied with 'I don't know' to the question whether explicit pronunciation teaching has positive effect on students' pronunciation skills or not, while twice so many respondents believed it does not. The number of teachers who expressed an affirmative opinion with regard to this issue was thus about 10% lower in comparison to the preceding questions.

**Table 2: Importance and learnability of pronunciation**

<b>Is pronunciation an important component of students' language competence?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes	98.2	224
No	1.8	4
I don't know.	0.0	0
<b>Can students over 15 years of age improve their pronunciation of a foreign language?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes	97.8	223
No	1.3	3
I don't know.	0.9	2
<b>Does explicit pronunciation teaching have positive effect on students' pronunciation skills?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes	87.3	199
No	2.6	6
I don't know.	10.1	23

Teachers seem to be more unclear about the effect of explicit pronunciation teaching on their students than they are about the importance of pronunciation in communication and its learnability after the age of fifteen. Yet, most participants' beliefs seem to be in line with the current research in this area. Similarly, their opinions correspond to the scientific findings regarding the level of perfection which learners should strive to achieve. Only about 3% of teachers would set the goal of native-like pronunciation for their students, an objective which the researchers evaluate as unrealistic, unnecessary and potentially demotivating. Three quarters of respondents opted for 'intelligible as well as pleasant to listen to' and a fifth was for 'intelligible, although not necessarily pleasant to listen to'. According to current studies, intelligibility as such is essential. However, the latter group of respondents would possibly risk their students' potential, social and professional disadvantage, which as some authors say, often results from an accent too remote from a recognised standard. The majority of teachers who opted for 'Other' expressed their opinion that the level to be achieved depends on the abilities and previous skills of individual students. 'For most students I'd choose the option B, while with some students I am happy to achieve what is written in the option A.' Plus, there should be 'special care for those gifted enough to achieve the native-like level'. To sum up, most participants' beliefs about this aspect of pronunciation teaching also appear to be in line with current research.

**Table 3: Instructional goal – level of perfection**

<b>What level of pronunciation competence do you think your students should achieve?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Intelligible, although not necessarily pleasant to listen to.	20.2	46
Intelligible as well as pleasant to listen to.	74.1	169
Native-like.	3.1	7
Other.	2.6	6

Finally, we need to take a closer look at what these attitudes of our respondents are mainly based on. Two thirds of the participants claimed that their assumptions expressed in their responses to the previous questions were mainly supported by their experience as a teacher. Another quarter of respondents derive their beliefs from their own experience as a learner of a foreign language. Other nine teachers indicated the combination of these two sources, one of them adding her 'hope' as another influencing factor. The next eight participants rely mainly on their intuition. Two teachers claimed the combination of all the

mentioned factors including scientific research. Apart from the fact that this is a rather low number, none of the participants chose scientific findings as an explicit source of their beliefs. Looking back at what other authors have observed, this might be caused by two main reasons: Either the teachers lack the knowledge of research findings in this area or they tend to ignore them, most probably because they view the results as unrelated to their teaching reality. A third option might be that the latter even becomes the cause of the former.

The exact reasons could definitely be subject of further research. Nevertheless, the numbers we have might partly explain the teachers' relatively lower confidence in the impact of explicit pronunciation teaching on learners' performance as seen in Table 2. The confidence in importance and learnability of pronunciation can easily be gained through one's own learning and teaching experience. The extent of progress due to explicit instruction, on the contrary, is much more difficult to estimate just by everyday observation. As a learner, one is usually not much aware of the individual factors contributing to one's knowledge development, unless one specifically focuses on tracking them. Particularly with short teaching experience, it is also rather complicated to judge the impact of one's teaching efforts. In general, pronunciation is a part of one's linguistic competence, the mastery of which is rather difficult to assess and thus the progress itself is not easy to measure, let alone determining the exact factors and the scope of their impact. Therefore it is no wonder that without the knowledge of research based evidence teachers might tend to have doubts about what impact their teaching can have on their students' pronunciation.

**Table 4: Gap between research and practice**

<b>What are your assumptions expressed in the previous responses mainly based on?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
On my experience as a teacher.	67.1	153
On my experience as a learner of a foreign language.	24.6	56
On my intuition.	3.5	8
On scientific research.	0.0	0
Other.	4.8	11

### **3.2.2. Quantity and Quality of Pronunciation Instruction**

We may feel pleased by the fact that only one of all the respondents indicated that she did not teach pronunciation. This 38 year-old teacher with 18 years of teaching experience received her qualifications for teaching English at the Faculties of Education of two different

Czech universities out of Prague, including an extension study for teaching at secondary schools. For all that she claimed no specific qualifications concerning pronunciation and its instruction. Remarkably, she believes in the importance of pronunciation as well as in its learnability beyond fifteen years of age and the positive effect of pronunciation teaching. In her lessons she uses the Maturita Solutions course books. She does not think it contains enough pronunciation exercises, nor does she find the available activities useful. As she reports, she misses drills. She is probably not very familiar with additional ready-made materials for pronunciation teaching, since her response for the question about her opinion was ‘I don’t know’. Lack of time is the reason she gives for both not teaching pronunciation and not encouraging her students’ involvement in authentic audio and video materials in order to improve their pronunciation. She does not like pronunciation teaching because she does not feel confident in this area. Being a good model herself is what she finds most difficult, in her own words, ‘to be an example’. She would find all of the factors mentioned on page 24 highly motivational.

**Table 5: Teaching pronunciation**

<b>In my lessons</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
I teach pronunciation systematically, with previous planning and preparation.	30.7	70
I teach pronunciation randomly, without systematic planning and preparation.	68.9	157
I do not teach pronunciation at all.	0.4	1

The results further show that almost a third of the participants teach pronunciation systematically, with previous planning and preparation, more than half of them even every lesson. Almost a fifth of these teachers do so once a week and another one once a month. The majority of the other comments given indicated that the frequency depends on situation, time, subject matter or the level of students’ knowledge. As a respondent observed, ‘the more beginners the pupils are, the more often I teach pronunciation.’ When teaching pronunciation, slightly more than one third of teachers usually spend from 5 to 10 minutes on it, another third up to 5 minutes. About one fifth of the respondents tend to devote 10 to 15 minutes to pronunciation, one indicates 20 minutes, another one up to 40 minutes and yet another one the whole 45 minute teaching unit per month. Other teachers say that it depends on what phenomenon they are dealing with.

**Table 6: Systematic pronunciation instruction (70/228)**

<b>How often do you teach pronunciation?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Every lesson.	54.3	38
Once a week.	18.6	13
Once a month.	17.1	12
Other.	10.0	7
<b>How much of lesson time do you devote to it on average?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Less than 5 minutes.	34.3	24
5 - 10 minutes.	37.1	26
10 - 15 minutes.	21.4	15
Other.	7.1	5

More than two thirds of those who teach pronunciation do so randomly, i.e., without systematic planning and preparation. Within the lessons of these teachers, it most commonly comes to pronunciation instruction when a problem on the side of the students comes up, e.g., when they mispronounce something (52.2%). Then, pronunciation teaching occurs when they deal with an unknown word or structure (29.3%) or when they come across a pronunciation exercise in the textbook (11.5%). The majority of the other comments combine the first two or all the three options. Interestingly, none of the participants uses pronunciation instruction as a fill-in activity in the moments when they need to kill time, e.g., at the end of a lesson. This might certainly mean that there is usually no time to spare in our respondents' lessons. As another possible explanation we suggest that they might not feel adept or comfortable enough in this kind of activities to promptly set about some of them when needed. However, to find the exact reasons some more inquiry would definitely need to be done.

**Table 7: Random pronunciation instruction (157/228)**

<b>When do you mostly teach pronunciation?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
When a problem on the side of the students comes up (e.g., they mispronounce something).	52.2	82
When we deal with an unknown word or structure.	29.3	46
When we come across a pronunciation exercise in the textbook.	11.5	18
When I need to kill time.	0.0	0
Other.	7.0	11

As for quality of instructions, our respondents were asked to choose which pronunciation phenomenon they most often tend to practice with their students. They opted from individual sounds, word stress, sentence stress and rhythm, intonation, connected speech (e.g., linking words together), combination of the preceding and ‘I don’t know’. The latter was chosen by one teacher, intonation was the second most infrequent option followed by word stress, and sentence stress with rhythm. About a tenth of respondents mostly practice connected speech, while individual sounds are the main focus of one fifth of the teachers approximately. The majority of respondents indicated a combination of the areas mentioned.

**Table 8: Pronunciation phenomena (227/228)**

<b>What areas do you mostly focus on?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Individual sounds	21.6	49
Word stress	5.3	12
Sentence stress and rhythm	8.4	19
Intonation	3.5	8
Connected speech (e.g., linking words together)	11.0	25
Combination of the preceding	49.8	113
I don’t know	0.4	1

In their specifying comments many claimed that it depended on the particular situation, on the subject matter covered in the textbook or on the needs and the level of their students. Observations such as ‘I consider all the areas important’, ‘we need to teach everything’, ‘I think all these areas should be practised’, ‘for intelligible pronunciation it is important to pay attention to all these areas’, ‘the features cannot be separated’, ‘all five options should go hand in hand, I assume’, supported by the numbers in Table 8 above in any case suggest that there is a tendency towards a balanced approach to the teaching of various pronunciation phenomena, at least among the half of the participants. In the other half we can see that individual sounds are the features most frequently taught, whereas intonation receives attention by the least of teachers.

In our previous research we found out that all the Czech and British English textbooks which we had analysed to some extent, combine the imitative and analytical approach to the teaching of pronunciation. At the same time, despite the differences between individual course books, the Czech ones seemed to prioritise the analytical whereas the British course

books the imitative techniques. It seems that our respondents tend to adopt an approach more similar to that of British authors. More than a half of them mostly use imitative techniques (e.g., listen, listen & repeat, read aloud). All the other respondents but for two, who opted for analytical techniques (e.g., transcription, articulation pictures or descriptions, minimal pairs), combine both. It might be that the teachers are influenced by their textbooks in this respect, since most of them indicated using British ones, as we will see later in this work. In favour of the imitative approach, a respondent points out: ‘Pronunciation goes with listening - as we learn our mother tongue. The more they hear the better they are able to speak.’ Hence probably the high rate of respondents (90.8%), too, who claimed encouraging students to use authentic audio and video materials to improve their pronunciation.

**Table 9: Teaching techniques (227/228)**

<b>What type of activities do you mostly use to teach pronunciation?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Imitative (e.g. listen, listen & repeat, read aloud)	55.9	127
Analytical (e.g. transcription, articulation pictures or descriptions, minimal pairs)	0.9	2
Combination of the preceding	43.2	98
I don't know	0.0	0

The lack of skill to integrate pronunciation activities into the teaching of other areas of language appeared to be an issue for some inquired teachers in other countries, as we could see earlier. More than a half of our participants indicated doing so without problems. Nineteen teachers claimed not doing so. Thirteen of these did not find it necessary, while the other six did not know how to. The rest of respondents, i.e., more than a third, stated that they were trying to do their best in this respect but would appreciate some more training. Further professional development in this area would thus be beneficial for these teachers, and especially for those who admitted not knowing how to effectively integrate pronunciation teaching in activities focused on other linguistic components. We also believe it to be relevant for teachers, too, who did not believe in the importance of such integration. Since ‘the proper place of pronunciation in the second language curriculum [is] as an integral part of communication, not as an isolated drills-and-exercises component set aside’ (Morley 493).

**Table 10: Integration (227/228)**

<b>Do you integrate pronunciation activities into your other areas of teaching (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, skills)?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes, I do without problems.	54.6	124
I am trying to but I would appreciate some more training.	37.0	84
No, I don't because I don't know how to.	2.6	6
No, I don't because I don't find it necessary.	5.7	13

### 3.2.3. Use of Teaching Materials

According to our participants, the predominantly used material for teaching pronunciation at secondary schools is the exercises from the general English course books. The following series of textbooks were most frequently mentioned: Maturita Solutions (81), Headway (43), New English File (25), Opportunities (21), Horizons (18), Time to Talk (15), Success (14) and Maturita Activator (13). The fact that these include only two of the eight course books we analysed in our previous study, indisputably illustrates the gap between research and practice, by the way. Other textbooks used by our respondents were e.g., Face to Face, Gateway, Matrix, Maturita in Mind, Eurolingua English, Challenges, different FCE/CEA materials as well as Angličtina pro jazykové školy or Angličtina pro samouky. These materials are used as the basic material for pronunciation instruction by 70.1% of the participants. Another 16.7% take exercises prevalently from additional ready-made materials while the remaining 13.2% prepare most of pronunciation activities for their classes themselves.

**Table 11: Prevalent teaching materials (227/228)**

<b>What materials do you most often use when teaching pronunciation?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
The exercises from the course book.	70.1	159
Additional ready-made materials for teaching pronunciation.	16.7	38
Materials which I prepare myself.	13.2	30

Assessing the above mentioned textbooks, about two thirds of the respondents believe that there are enough pronunciation exercises available whereas slightly more than a third disagree. Most teachers also find these exercises useful or rather useful whereas approximately a tenth does not. About 3% were not able to judge the quality and quantity of

pronunciation activities provided by the course book they use, probably because they ‘haven't thought about it’ or because they tend to focus on other areas of teaching: ‘Who really cares if you pronounce like a native speaker!!! But have you already mastered all English words and idioms???’ It might be worth noting that the author of the latter comment formerly indicated pronunciation as being an important component of students’ linguistic competence; he did not know whether students over 15 years of age could improve in this area and he expressed disbelief in the effect of explicit pronunciation instruction. Generally, the Maturita Solutions textbook was evaluated as insufficient with regard to the amount of pronunciation exercises. Course books, which teachers rated positively on the other hand, were the Headway and especially the New English File series, which is this time in line with our previous findings. Several participants missed a systematic approach to the teaching of pronunciation in their textbooks, the training of phonetic symbols (IPA) and the comparison between British and American variety, or the presence of other than British pronunciation standard in general. Other complained about the international focus of pronunciation activities, i.e., the excessive practice of phenomena non-problematic for Czech learners and insufficient training of the problematic ones. Many teachers recognised that despite finding the majority of provided pronunciation activities useful, they miss exercises which would be more interesting and fun for the students, such as tongue-twisters, poems and rhymes for example.

**Table 12: Quantity and quality of exercises in textbooks**

<b>Are there enough pronunciation exercises available in the course book you use?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes	61.0	139
No	35.5	81
I don't know	3.5	8
<b>Do you find the pronunciation exercises available in this course book useful?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes	26.3	60
Rather yes	57.9	132
Rather not	11.8	27
No	0.9	2
I don't know	3.1	7

This brings us to the topic of additional ready-made, i.e., off-the-shelf pronunciation teaching materials. Little less than a half of our respondents think there are enough of such materials available, 39.5% find them useful while 7.9% do not. The majority of teachers, however, do not seem to be very well informed about the existing resources, since 26.7% assume there are not enough of them on offer and another 25.9% do not know. These numbers correspond to the fact that less than half of the participants use additional ready-made materials for teaching pronunciation in their lessons whereas the majority of teachers do not. Frequent reasons given for not utilising such materials were lack of time, financial limits (the school does not support a purchase of extra publications for teachers or they set a copy limit, for example), satisfaction with the amount and quality of exercises embodied in textbooks, the ability to make up one's own activities as well as the necessity to focus rather on other areas: 'The Czech students have too many problems with structure and grammar that this problem can be classified as a secondary one', 'my students are very weak, and I am really glad when they are able to learn vocabulary, so specific practice of pronunciation is random', or 'I do not find teaching pronunciation the main aim of teaching English.'

**Table 13: Additional ready-made materials**

<b>What is your opinion on additional ready-made materials for teaching pronunciation?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
There are enough of them available and I find them useful.	39.5	90
There are enough of them available but I don't find them useful.	7.9	18
There are not enough of them available.	26.7	61
I don't know	25.9	59
<b>Do you use any additional ready-made materials for teaching pronunciation in your lessons? (227/228)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes	45.4	103
No	54.6	124

Some teachers indicated that they had not been very much concerned with additional pronunciation-focused materials so far: 'To tell the truth, I have not searched for other materials. It might be an excuse, however, as a teacher I sometimes suffer from lack of time during the lessons', 'no experience with them, difficulty of finding suitable ones which will fit the lesson, my teaching style and so on.' Some expressed a newly raised awareness and interest, too, which is a positive result, we think: 'I haven't cared about it yet, but I am going

to think about it now.’ Shortly after distributing the questionnaire, we even received an e-mail from a teacher who according to her words felt interested in the research topic. She asked us to recommend some theoretical as well as practical sources concerning pronunciation teaching, which could be truly applicable at the secondary school level. In spite of the lack of capacity to refer to currently published additional materials in detail within this work, we would like to reflect this request. We also take into account the above mentioned results, including comments such as ‘I do not know where to find them.’ Therefore, in Appendix II we would like to offer a list of additional pronunciation teaching materials which we think the teachers might find helpful, divided into categories by contents or level. A bibliographic list of these publications follows in Appendix III. We do not think one cannot provide quality pronunciation instruction without incorporating these, nevertheless, we genuinely believe they can serve to the teachers as a good source of inspiration. Last but not least, it is important to say that it is just these materials that can help to make pronunciation practice more fun for the students – which rather many respondents expressed a wish for.

**Table 14: Students’ involvement in authentic materials**

<b>Do you encourage your students’ involvement in authentic audio and video materials in order to improve their pronunciation skills?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes	90.8	207
No	9.2	21

As we can see in Table 14 above, compared to additional sources designed for pronunciation instruction, teachers appear to be much more positive about authentic materials. Only about 9% claimed not encouraging their students’ involvement in such materials in order to improve their pronunciation skills. The main reasons given were lack of time and disinterest on the side of students: ‘I am not willing to spend time on tasks that majority of students will not do’. This indicates that this question must have been confusing for some participants, since the teachers’ support of students’ outside-the-class involvement in authentic materials was originally inquired. Some respondents believed that their students engaged in such materials on their own anyway, so no extra encouragement on the part of the teacher was needed. Other observed that they did not know how to do so, or that they did not have any interesting materials of this kind. Another respondent remarked: ‘I encourage my students to listen to English radio to improve their listening rather than their pronunciation

skills.’ This comment seems to illustrate a kind of unawareness of the interconnection of the two. The 91% who indicated their support of students’ involvement in authentic materials most often referred to encouraging their students to listen to English music and news on the radio, to watch films, series or other videos on television or on the internet, to play computer games in English. Some also mentioned doing certain of these activities in the classroom as well as visiting English spoken theatre plays with the students. The Gate and Bridge magazines were also referred to as sources of authentic materials. Concrete sources recommended by our participants can be found in Appendix II, added to the list of selected ready-made pronunciation teaching materials.

### 3.2.4. Attitudes to Pronunciation Teaching

All participants were asked if pronunciation instruction was an area of teaching they liked. Two thirds of respondents expressed a positive attitude, another fifth approximately answered negatively and the remaining ones were ambivalent about their likings. We believe that the teachers’ personal attitude is closely connected with the extent of their confidence in this area. In several studies we have seen that the confidence appears to be significantly related to the amount of received education. Therefore the collected data indicating the participants’ personal likings were compared to those showing whether the respondents gained any specific qualifications in pronunciation and its instruction or not (Table 1, p. 27). We are of course aware of the fact that the relation of these two domains is an issue much more complex. In our case, the correlated numbers do neither reflect the amount of education received, nor its quality. Our assumptions seem to have been confirmed nevertheless, as we can see in Table 15 below. The number of teachers with positive attitude to pronunciation teaching proved to be higher within the group of participants who received some qualifications in this area. At the same time, more respondents with no such qualifications opted for the negative or ambivalent answer.

**Table 15: Personal attitude to pronunciation teaching**

Do you like teaching pronunciation? (Percentage)		Education	No education
Yes	65.3	68.3	60.2
No	18.9	17.2	21.7
I don’t know	15.8	14.5	18.1

Respondents who claimed that they did not enjoy teaching pronunciation were further asked to state their reasons. Nearly a third of them (13) claimed low confidence as the cause, resulting either from a perceived lack of experience and methodological competence or from mistrust in the perfection of one's own pronunciation: 'I haven't figure out a systematic way of teaching pronunciation. I don't feel as competent [as in] teaching other aspects of the language system', 'I don't feel well prepared to do it', 'I don't have enough experience', 'I don't trust my own pronunciation.' Three of these teachers explicitly addressed their non-nativeness: 'I am not a native speaker; I can't teach it so perfectly like a native speaker could.' About a quarter of comments ascertained pronunciation teaching as *boring*: 'It's rather boring', 'It is not as entertaining as group activities or pair work', 'Pronunciation is extremely important, teaching it in a schoolish way may be extremely boring.' Some of these teachers observed that 'it is often artificial, not connected with real needs' or that 'students sometimes do not want to do that; teachers have to find interactive ways, [which is] quite hard, I would say, harder than teaching vocabulary, for example.' Lack of interest on the side of the teachers, the students and their shyness as well as lack of time and interesting materials were other reasons mentioned. One teacher remarked that pronunciation teaching was not so important because of the 'international English', another mentioned that it has small effect on students and yet another one said that 'it is difficult to teach pronunciation [to] the students who are "deaf", and that many students are just lazy or unable to hear the difference.'

The question of what they find most difficult about teaching pronunciation, which was obligatory for all participants, followed. Intentionally, it was formulated in a very general way, not specifying whether we asked about specific features, i.e., phenomena to be taught, or rather about pedagogical aspects or anything else. The second highest number of respondents (24.7%), however, stuck to specific subject matter as to the most challenging part of teaching English pronunciation. These teachers either primarily understood the task as aiming at this issue or we suggest it might indicate a possible lack of technical and methodological knowledge. Out of these respondents, one mentioned transcription and two other the grapheme-phoneme correspondence. About a half indicated the teaching of segments, i.e., individual sounds as the biggest challenge. Some of them specifically referred to the sounds different from Czech, especially the fricative consonants [θ] and [ð]. Suprasegmentals constituted the other half of these comments where intonation was seen as the most difficult by more teachers than sentence stress and rhythm. Concerning specific pronunciation phenomena, word stress appeared challenging in the lowest number of answers.

The majority of comments (28.1%) addressed the issue of students' motivation. In about a fifth of these, teachers found it most difficult to convince their students of the importance of pronunciation: 'Maybe to persuade students to be interested in the right pronunciation because it is vital for making themselves understood', 'Making some students understand that pronunciation is an important part of the language and that it will help them understand better in a long-distance run.' The currently increasing use of English as an international language was mentioned as a factor playing down the importance of systematic pronunciation practice in the eyes of students as well. Other comments were related to giving feedback, e.g., 'make clear to the students that the way they're speaking is really bad, they are hard to understand but nevertheless they could improve themselves' and to official assessment: 'Overcoming students' opinion that their pronunciation is passable when it isn't and [their opinion] that its level shouldn't be reflected in their mark', 'Sometimes my students underestimate the problem of pronunciation. They don't get marks for this specific problem and they seem to believe that it is not so important', 'There is nearly no tradition of grading pronunciation at secondary schools and students tend to work hard only when a grade is at stake.' Here we would like to point out that within the current maturita state exam pronunciation makes a mere 8%, i.e., 3 points out of 39, which one can achieve as the best result. This fact is highly probable not to be a strong motivational factor for either students or teachers to work on pronunciation.

More than a third of the entries concerning motivation addressed students' personal objections against pronunciation practice. According to the respondents, these objections originate either from the learners' bashfulness or from the age-specific unwillingness to participate in pronunciation activities: 'Many students are just shy and I hesitate if I do not hurt their feelings by making them to try the pronunciation which is quite difficult for some of them', 'To make students feel comfortable with imitating something that's not natural for them, especially intonation', 'Some students are simply not willing to play the "game". It's difficult to break the ice sometimes', 'The age of my students – they are already too "old" to "play" with their teeth, tongue, lips and so on.' From our own experience we can confirm that especially pronunciation practice is frequently deprecated and despised by the teenagers at the beginning – and often rather explicitly. One of the participants observes, however: 'Students are not used to pronunciation [exercises] in their lessons. They always look at me with surprised faces but [in the end] they get used to it.' This is also something we know from our lessons – in both English and German. Sometimes one can even see the students enjoying the

activities in the end even though they heavily protested against doing them initially. May this experience be an encouragement for teachers not to get demotivated too soon after facing their students' demotivated faces.

In most of the answers concerning motivation, however, the teachers considered it especially challenging to make pronunciation instruction interesting. In their words it is difficult 'to teach it in an interesting way', 'not to make it boring', 'keep students interested', 'balance the drill activities with fun' or 'choose the appropriate method that is both entertaining and useful.' Surprising in comparison to Table 13 above, the least participants (3.1%) explicitly expressed their sensation of lack or their dissatisfaction with teaching materials. About the same quantity of respondents raised issues such as a lack of creativity and stamina but also finding effective ways of making students practise and subsequently use what they have learnt. Some of these teachers mentioned the high number of students in a class and the related difficulties to create activities which enable all students to actively participate in pronunciation practice. They said that 'repeating en masse [could be] tricky' but at the same time 'it [was] not possible to work with students individually' and to 'check properly with every student on regular basis' unless one spent too much time on it. From these comments we got the impression that the teachers might benefit from getting acquainted with and possibly receiving some training, too, in teaching techniques which are not time consuming, yet effective, involving and practicable with rather larger groups of students.

In this place, we would like to recommend the article by Beverly Galyean on *confluent language teaching* (see Appendix II or III). The approach is not specifically focused on pronunciation instruction but the techniques might, in our opinion, come to be useful. They integrate grammar teaching in intensive but controlled oral practice, thus giving a lot of space to natural imitative pronunciation instruction, too. Basing the content of the drills on students' personal life experience, they should also keep the learners interested. From our experience again, it takes some time before the students accept such kind of practice but in the end it can work rather well, practising grammar through speaking with pronunciation going along. For illustration, let us introduce a little example. The objective is to exercise the structure of 'like to doing something' and students are required to complete the sentence 'I like \_\_\_\_\_' with the gerunds of three (or more) verbs. They are encouraged to make true sentences about themselves, hence the personalisation of the whole activity. Then a student reads one of his/her sentences aloud to the class, e.g., 'I like swimming in the sea'. The teacher asks the class 'Does X like swimming in the sea?' All the other students are supposed to reply in

chorus 'Yes, X likes swimming in the sea.' Then another student presents his/her sentence. Various modifications can be done of course. What is important, while sharing information about themselves and practicing a grammatical structure, pronunciation can easily and naturally be worked on at the same time (here most probably the nasal speech sound [ŋ] in the -ing suffix, but possibly intonation and sentence stress, too), with the teacher being a model of each question posed.

Back to our data analysis, however. After students' motivation and specific pronunciation features, the students' lack of aptitude was the third most frequently reported difficulty in pronunciation teaching – hand-in-hand with the participants' own lack of confidence (12.7% both). On the former: 'For some students it's very difficult to distinguish the difference, they can't hear it', 'Well, let's say that students are somewhat immune to the correct pronunciation. You can make them utter the words correctly during the pronunciation drills, but the next lesson they will pronounce Czenglish again.' A teacher with an evidently optimistic approach noted: 'It's not about "finding difficult"; but it is sometimes hard to realise (admit), that there are students, whose pronunciation will never be good. It has to do with the "sense of music". I don't blame them, on the contrary: I let them listen to authentic speech of some non-native politicians, celebrities, etc. whose pronunciation is far from perfect, and they are famous and even "on TV".' On the latter, the participants remarked that the most difficult for them was '[their] own pronunciation', 'to be an example', 'to sound as a native speaker does', 'to get rid of [their] own flaws', in other of their words the lack of experience, skills and also education. A respondent wrote: 'It should be taught only by a native speaker. A foreigner can hardly teach correct pronunciation. It can be done only by imitation of the original.' It is obvious that many teachers would undoubtedly appreciate further training in English pronunciation themselves. We would like to add to the lastly mentioned comment, however, that we personally experienced a huge progress under the instruction by a non-native speaker. Hence our strong belief that a well trained non-native speaker can equally contribute to the improvement of his/her students' improvement.

Another topic addressed, which did not explicitly come out of the foreign research, is closely connected to the fact that to a large extent secondary education must in fact build upon the student's previous experience. Specifically in teaching foreign languages, this issue appears to us particularly significant. Thus, 8.8% of participants mentioned the difficulty of correcting learners' bad habits: 'Re-teaching', 'To make them forget the wrong pronunciation they have learnt before', 'When somebody needs to re-learn already established wrong

pronunciation.’ Many of those teachers associated students’ wrong pronunciation with their previous education, criticising not only the supposed imperfect models from the side of (sometimes unqualified) teachers, but also the insufficient amount of attention which they think pronunciation tends to receive in primary schools. They said, for example: ‘Most difficult is the lack of importance [of] teaching pronunciation at elementary schools. It leads to bad habits [which are] very hard to overcome. Teachers themselves don’t pronounce correctly and it’s a bad model for young learners. I fight it almost every day’, ‘unpleasant is the situation when students come to secondary school and they mispronounce a lot of words. Unfortunately, it doesn’t have to be only their fault [but the] teachers who didn’t pay attention [to] their pronunciation’ or ‘students are not used to paying attention to pronunciation, stress, intonation, fluency, etc., from their previous schools.’

Similar opinions emerged also in the very final comments to the questionnaire where the teachers attributed the responsibility not only to primary teachers but also to schools and the system as such: ‘The bad habits in pronunciation from basic schools are enormous! Especially in some small schools. Unskilled teachers [are] the next problem. The question is, who actually [checks] the teachers who teach English. I haven’t experienced any audit so far.’ Another participant observed: ‘I know that pronunciation is something teachers in general tend to underestimate. Perhaps it’s because they do not know it themselves. However, if this is the case, I would not let them teach English (I’m talking about teachers who would mix “think” with “sink”). Students always want a good teacher and if he/she is not, they cannot be motivated well. It’s up to the universities to set up stricter criteria.’ Other respondents saw the main cause of wrong pronunciation habits in other factors – adopting the nonstandard pronunciation of some celebrities and the influence of other varieties of English: ‘They imitate their pop, rock or rap idols’, ‘We should teach British English. The Czech media, [however,] use the American pronunciation, e.g. DANCE, and students think it’s the only correct pronunciation.’ The discrepancy between varieties was explicitly mentioned as a teaching difficulty by other 3.6% of respondents. ‘Differences between British and American pronunciation sometimes confuse [students]’, ‘and another thing is that pronunciation is different between England, America, Scotland etc.’, ‘students are used to American English (watching films, listening to songs, playing games) and we teach British English so all the time I have to explain the differences’; ‘the fact that my pupils are exposed to various versions of pronunciation by native speakers and that they don’t always want to follow the

principles of standard pronunciation. They often use the American version of pronunciation mixed with the British and with British vocabulary.'

The last significant issue named by teachers as a challenge for them in teaching pronunciation was time constraints, i.e., lack of time in the lessons: 'Finding time for it; it's hard to find time for everything'. 'Students forget very quickly, it would need more time than there is available.' In comparison to foreign research, it surprisingly constituted the second least frequently mentioned phenomenon, being addressed by about 5.3% of participants. The topic, however, emerged again in some of the final comments to the questionnaire, also in connection with the already mentioned size of learner groups and pronunciation teaching in primary schools: 'In my opinion, one of the main drawbacks is that there are too many pupils in a group at elementary schools (usually about 20) and it is in fact impossible to focus on pronunciation of each child. The same situation is at secondary schools. Imagine: 15 students in a class, [i.e.,] each has chance to speak aloud for 3 minutes. It is nine minutes a week and about 360 minutes a school year (six hours). This is 24 hours in four years of study (in case all lessons are focused on pronunciation). A child practises [his/her] mother tongue eight hours a day at least. So?' These are certainly serious issues of everyday teaching reality in both primary and secondary schools. We presuppose, too, that the settings mentioned can hardly be changed overnight. We genuinely believe, nevertheless, that providing teachers with knowledge and training in the integration of pronunciation in the teaching of other linguistic components could significantly contribute to the elimination of these constraints.

Several participants observed that they did not find anything difficult about teaching pronunciation, one of them stating that French was even more challenging. We intentionally present this comment to the reader, reflecting our own experience that it might be comforting sometimes to learn that our own situation is far from the most complicated. To give some more encouragement, there were respondents, too, who not only did not find pronunciation teaching difficult but also said that 'it's always fun.' Factors, which could make and make it easier for teachers to engage in pronunciation instruction, will be discussed on the following lines.

### **3.2.5. Motivation**

After reporting on the difficulties which our respondents face in connection to the teaching of pronunciation, they assessed motivational elements. They were asked to rate twelve factors according to how much these would motivate them to teach pronunciation

more frequently or more systematically. The choice was from highly motivational, rather motivational, no need for further motivation in this area, rather not motivational and not motivational at all. To make the results more lucid, in Table 16 below we reduced the categories to motivational, no further motivation needed and not motivational by merging the first two and the last two original options together. A more detailed account on the data collected can be seen in the tables included in Appendix IV. The potential motivational factors were formulated on the basis of foreign research summarized in the theoretical part. We can see that they rather successfully matched the issues which our respondents addressed themselves in the preceding open question (i.e. what they find most difficult about teaching pronunciation). These topics included possible lack of technical and methodological knowledge (compare with item 2, 3 and 4 of Table 16 below), students' lack of interest (item 11), lack of teachers' confidence in their own pronunciation (item 1), students' lack of aptitude (item 10), wrong habits established earlier (no match), issues such as official assessment (items 7, 8 and 12) , lack of time in lessons (item 5), differences between varieties of English (no match) and dissatisfaction with available teaching materials (item 6). We now wish to take a closer look at the results for individual items.

**Table 16: Motivation**

<b>I would feel motivated to teach pronunciation more often or more systematically in my English lessons ...</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No need</b>	<b>No</b>
1. if my own pronunciation of English was better.	41.3	42.5	16.1
2. if I knew more about the English sound system.	27.6	45.2	27.2
3. if I knew more about the methodology of teaching pronunciation.	58.4	24.1	17.5
4. if I could receive some training in teaching pronunciation.	60.1	24.1	15.8
5. if I had more time in my lessons.	73	18.0	9.2
6. if there were more ready-made teaching materials available.	56.6	29.4	14.0
7. if there were more concretely formulated objectives of pronunciation teaching.	42.6	30.3	27.1
8. if I had better tools to assess my students' progress.	50.4	27.2	22.3
9. if I believed more in the importance of pronunciation as a skill.	23.2	56.6	20.2
10. if I believed more in my students' ability to improve in pronunciation.	36.8	43.9	19.3
11. if I saw more interest in this area on the side of my students.	67.1	23.7	9.2
12. if pronunciation was more strictly assessed in official exams (e.g. maturita).	39.9	34.2	25.9

As we can see, almost a half of participants (42.5%) feel confident about their pronunciation of English. Nearly the same number (41.3%), however, would find it helpful if their own pronunciation was better. This fact seems to reflect the previously discussed results. The ratio of teachers who would not feel motivated by increasing their technical knowledge of the English sound system was the highest of all items (27.2%). Slightly more respondents (45.2%) indicated enough expertise in this area than in the area of practical pronunciation skills (42.5%). Almost twice as smaller portion of respondents (24.1%) on the other hand feel comfortable about both their methodological competence and the amount of training in pronunciation teaching which they have received. The majority of teachers would benefit from extending their knowledge of pronunciation pedagogy (58.4%) and even more of them would wish for further training in pronunciation instruction (60.1%). Again, these results appear to be in line with what we have found out so far. While time constraints occupied the third last place in difficulties referred to by our respondents, only an incomplete fifth (18.0%) feel that they have enough time in their lessons. Almost three quarters (73%) marked the possibility of having more time as motivational. At the same time, this item gained the highest ratio of the 'highly motivational' responses, as we can see in Appendix IV. As for ready-made teaching materials, less than a third of participants (29.4%) thought there were enough of them while more than a half (56.6%) would appreciate more materials on offer. This roughly corresponds to the 60.5% of respondents who either are not well informed about the available materials or they think there is a lack of them or they do not find the available ones useful (see Table 13).

Most teachers would feel motivated if there were more concretely formulated objectives of pronunciation teaching, but the majority constitutes less than a half of participants this time (42.6%). Almost a third (30.3%) thinks that such clear objectives exist and the number of teachers who would not feel motivated by this factor is the second highest. Similar results came out for better tools to assess students' progress, although the quantity of the 'motivational' responses very tightly exceeds the half (50.4%). With the following factors we come back to the 'no further motivation needed' area. Most teachers do believe in the importance of pronunciation as a skill (56.6%) as well as in their student's ability to improve in pronunciation (43.9%). On the other hand, these numbers equal nearly a half of what the teachers indicated about their opinions in Table 2. Especially with the latter item, quite many teachers would feel motivated if their belief was stronger. This reflects the fact that many teachers presented students' lack of aptitude as the biggest difficulty they face in

pronunciation teaching. We assume that this discrepancy in findings might result from the fact that the data presented in Table 2 tend to mirror the teachers' theoretical, idealistic or wished-for presuppositions. The open question about difficulties posed towards the end of the survey, just after the participants had already pondered the topic and their teaching reality for a while, might have evoked more practice-and-experience-related answers. A high number of participants (67.1%) would definitely find encouragement in seeing more interest on the side of their students while this factor would not be motivational for the fewest of them (9.2%, beside the 'more-time-available' item). Some teachers highlighted that marks and official assessment is often the only possibility of raising students' interest in the subject matter. In spite of this fact, surprisingly the lowest amount of teachers would feel motivated if pronunciation was more strictly assessed in official exams, e.g. *maturita* (39.9%) whereas the third highest number of participants would not.

If we now approach the results presented in Table 16 as a whole we can say that for all items the 'non-motivational' numbers are the lowest. This means that all of these factors have to some extent proven the potential of encouraging teachers to more frequent and more systematic teaching of pronunciation. There are four factors by which the majority of our respondents already feel motivated enough. From the most highly rated, they are their beliefs in the importance of pronunciation, the extent of their knowledge of the English sound system, their beliefs in their students' ability to improve in pronunciation and their confidence about their own pronunciation of English. Especially the latter two factors also showed potential for further motivation nevertheless. In their comments, some respondents revealed other factors which already encourage them to teach pronunciation. Many contributions were related to the importance of pronunciation as a skill: 'It's easy – if their pronunciation is bad, I really do not understand the students. Sometimes I can also be pretty “nasty” just by pretending not to understand until they say the word correctly. It's always fun and they know it', 'It helps my students with listening skills', 'The more my students speak correctly themselves, the more able they are to understand what they listen to', 'It helps students with their fluency, [because] they feel more confident when they are understood.' Another participant mentioned correct pronunciation as leading to better understanding of the connection between spoken and written language. She noted, too, that 'incorrect pronunciation can also create the impression that I am less intelligent or from a lower social group.' Other comments included the teachers' own 'struggles with [pronunciation as a student] at grammar school', their own love of English and its sound, their admiration to their

native colleagues as well as seeing pronunciation practice as an opportunity to ‘have fun with students.’

The factor which the absolute majority of teachers marked as motivational was ‘having more time in lessons’ (item 5 in Table 16). At the same time, it was the item which received most ‘highly motivational’ rankings, followed by ‘seeing more interest on the side of students’ (item 11). These two factors were also chosen as non-motivational by the lowest number of respondents. This implies that the lack of time for teaching pronunciation seems to be an issue for most teachers. The question, however, is whether more intensive integration of pronunciation teaching into the instruction of other language components could not be the solution. In other words, whether it could help if teachers made greater use of the instruction in other areas (especially grammar, vocabulary, listening and speaking, we suggest) to explicitly focus on pronunciation as well – see our previous short reference to confluent language teaching as example. More than a half of respondents indicated practicing such kind of integration without problems (see Table 10). Given the numbers referring to perceived lack of time in lessons, however, classroom observations would probably be needed to confirm these results. In any case, more than a third of participants claimed they would appreciate the opportunity to extend their expertise in this field. The lack of students’ interest, which appears to demotivate the second highest number of teachers, might well be age-specific, unfortunately. From our experience we know how extremely difficult it can be sometimes to raise concern for anything in teenage learners. As one respondent observed, ‘we have low motivated students, not highly motivated adults.’ However, we would like to invite the teachers not to let themselves discouraged. Along with some of our participants we have noticed so far that if we do not give up, the students may get used to explicit pronunciation practice and in the end it can even be fun.

Many participants agreed that it was challenging for them, however, to make pronunciation activities exciting for students – as we ascertained when dealing with teachers’ difficulties. This might be closely connected to what has just been said about the motivation of teenage learners. Nevertheless, as in the case of integration, it might possibly reflect a need for further methodological training on the side of teachers, too. At the beginning we could see that more than a third of respondents claimed not having received any qualifications in pronunciation and its teaching (see Table 1). Most of the other teachers indicated having gone through two semesters of English phonetics and phonology. This has been our personal experience, too. In spite of the attempts of the lecturer to get the students acquainted with as

many practical activities as possible within the seminars, which we acknowledge with thanks, the overall course appeared to be mainly theoretically focused. Within the course of methodology pronunciation was reflected only in one teaching unit and the short discussion was aimed at revising what to teach rather than how to teach. The opportunities of further professional development in the area of pronunciation pedagogy also seem to be limited. As a teacher in private language schools in Prague in the previous school year, the author of this thesis attended several workshops and lectures in EFL methodology offered by the language schools themselves or by various publishing houses and foreign lecturers. None of these seminars dealt with pronunciation. The participants of our survey seem to have confirmed the significant need of further education in this area – indirectly in connection with the issue of integration and creation of interesting teaching activities, directly by the fact that items 4 and 3 (Table 16) were rated as motivational by the third and fourth highest number of respondents. We would also like to note here that the number of teachers who felt the need to improve their own practical pronunciation skills was of almost the same height as of those who felt confident in this respect.

The factor evaluated as motivational by the next highest number of participants was ‘if there were more ready-made teaching materials available’ (item 6). As we could already see in Table 13, less than a half (47.7%) of respondents thought the offer of such materials was high enough. Nearly a half of the remaining participants opted for the ‘I don’t know’ answer, which contributes to the assumption that quite many teachers tend to be rather poorly informed about the existence of such pedagogical tools. To promote existing teaching materials explicitly focused on pronunciation, which in our opinion could be of great inspiration if not direct help for the teachers; we attach an already mentioned list of recommended sources in Appendices II and III (bibliography). It might be worth noting that this list includes and denotes materials, which were recommended by the participants of our survey themselves, i.e., by teachers with a long teaching practice. The need for further teaching materials as indicated by more than a half of the respondents might, however, show on another issue than that of insufficient awareness of the existing resources. We dare to suggest that it may possibly be related to the teachers’ limited capability of adjusting the basic materials they dispose of for the purpose of providing pronunciation instruction. If this is the case, the call for the teachers’ further professional development comes to light again. Due to our personal experience we recognise, nevertheless, that an objective lack of time for

preparation might play its role here as well, although probably rather in case of teachers with shorter teaching practice so far.

The last three factors which were marked by the majority of participants as motivational concerned teaching objectives and assessment. Out of these three, for most teachers it would be encouraging if they had better tools to assess their students' pronunciation progress (item 8). In this respect, Fraser's *Teaching pronunciation: A handbook for teachers and trainers. Three frameworks for an integrated approach* (see Appendices II and III) as referred to by Macdonald may provide some help. Further training, this time in monitoring and assessment might be beneficial. More concretely formulated objectives of pronunciation teaching (item 7) and stricter official assessment, e.g., in the matura exam (item 12) resulted as the last factors rated by the majority of respondents as motivational. As compared to the previous factors, these two rank rather in the category of extrinsic motivation. For Czech teachers, as opposed to some of their foreign colleagues, this kind of motivation does not seem to be so important, as we can see. The data collected from our respondents have clearly shown that it is rather the lack of methodological (and partly practical pronunciation) confidence – directly and indirectly shown – which mostly appears to prevent Czech upper-secondary English teachers from providing a more frequent or a more systematic pronunciation instruction.

### **3.2.6. Additional Comments and Observations**

In their final comments to the survey, some teachers criticised its length. We admit that with a shorter version we might have received some more fully completed questionnaires. On the other hand, the number which we dispose of nevertheless seems relatively high to us. Another area of criticism was the limited choice of answers. We must say, however, that this is a natural consequence of the quantitative character of our research. If we had allowed for individual answers in a larger extent, the possibility of relevant statistical processing of the data would probably have been significantly decreased. Moreover, we strongly believe that beside the few open questions we provided relatively much space in the 'Other' options of the closed questions, offering or asking the participants to specify. Some comments negatively assessed the attractiveness of the topic or its relevance: 'I have to say that pronunciation is less needed than extensive vocabulary which I strongly believe is more neglected in English teaching in our country', '...the pseudo-problems of phonetics and phonology are not really

needed', 'I regret I started completing this form.' Some teachers complained about not knowing the purpose of the survey, which rather shows that they unfortunately did not pay attention to the accompanying letter or that it was not forwarded to them, however. Another teacher observed that the survey was 'out of real world of teaching teenagers' and thus explicitly addressed the gap between the research and practice.

The author of this thesis herself must admit that her current teaching experience, gained only after the distribution of the questionnaire, has changed her point of view in many respects. She retrospectively filled in the questionnaire herself in the course of her first upper-secondary teaching year. She then found herself strongly disappointed by her own pronunciation teaching practice, especially in contrast to her previous idealistic ideas acquired during her university studies. On the other hand, she then viewed the questionnaire as a useful tool for self-reflection, which is always the necessary first step towards any change. Although she is still far from satisfied with her pronunciation teaching, certain progress has definitely been made. Luckily, it seems she was not the only person for whom the questionnaire served as a positive impulse. Here, some respondents' positive final comments: 'Thanks for the questionnaire. It made me think and realise my priorities', 'It was quite interesting for me', 'As far as I am concerned this questionnaire was useful', 'I am glad that someone is interested in this topic and motivates both native and non-native speakers [to teach pronunciation]', 'Thank you very much for this survey. I deeply hope it will help', 'Thank you for dealing with this topic, you're doing an important job.'

### **3.3. Discussion**

The results of the questionnaire survey showed that despite some contradicting opinions the attitudes of most participants are in accord with the current scientific findings. The vast majority of them consider pronunciation as a communicatively important part of one's linguistic competence. They also believe that students over fifteen years of age can still improve their pronunciation skills and that explicit instruction has a positive effect on students. Noticeably fewer respondents indicated to be sure of the latter, however, and none of the teachers indicated research as the main source of their beliefs. Most frequently, the participants' experience as a teacher was claimed as the source of their cognitions, followed by their own experience as a learner of foreign languages. This might probably indicate a lack of knowledge in the area of current scientific findings presented in academic, semi-academic journals or at conferences. Another possibility is that as a result of the so called gap between

researchers and teachers the latter tend to ignore the findings of the former. Although the exact reasons would definitely need to be subject of further investigation; from our own experience we can say that the views based on theory can significantly differ from those underpinned by real teaching practice. Therefore, in accordance with some foreign authors we suggest that it is in the interest of both researchers and teachers to find common ground to cooperate, share their expert knowledge and experience, and benefit from mutual support.

As far as the teaching goals and the subject matter are concerned, most of our participants' cognitions also seemed to correspond to the current research findings. Nevertheless, the majority was not as high as for the previously mentioned issues. Native-like pronunciation, which is by the researchers seen as an unrealistic and discouraging goal, was chosen by very few participants. Three quarters of the teachers think that their students should strive for intelligible pronunciation which at the same time is pleasant to listen to, i.e., it is not too far from a recognized standard. Another fifth would, however, be satisfied with intelligible pronunciation only, thus putting their students at risk of potential social and professional disadvantage. Regarding the content of instruction, an incomplete half of respondents showed an attempt of a balanced approach, teaching a combination of various pronunciation phenomena. From the other half of results, however, we can see that individual sounds are the feature most frequently taught, whereas intonation receives attention by the least teachers. This might either reflect students' specific needs or confirm the assumption that segments are easier to teach and consequently more frequently taught than suprasegmentals. For more than two thirds of participants, the prevalent pronunciation teaching material appears to be the course book. Most of the teachers agreed that they encourage their students' involvement in authentic audio and video materials in order to improve their oral production. More than a half of the teachers, however, indicated not using any additional ready-made resources and about the same number claimed there were either not enough of such materials available or they did not know them. Here we suggest that the existing resources focusing on pronunciation need to be more intensively promoted. With this aim in mind, we have attached a list of some of them including recourses recommended by our respondents (Appendix II).

A single participant admitted not teaching pronunciation at all, which would imply that pronunciation instruction in Czech secondary schools is far from neglected. At a closer look, however, we can see that less than a third of the teachers tend to teach pronunciation systematically, with previous planning and preparation. The other two thirds do not. One

might wish to say we are to be glad that almost all participants do teach pronunciation. However, we are trying to imagine at this point how many of us would consider it acceptable to teach grammar or vocabulary on a random basis to such a large extent. These results are nevertheless comparable to what was found out in other studies (see page 17). About two thirds of our respondents reported that they liked teaching pronunciation. Interestingly, the number was slightly higher among those who indicated having received some specific qualification in pronunciation and pronunciation pedagogy. This would confirm the findings of other authors that education in this area has a significant impact on teachers' practices. Therefore we find it rather alarming that slightly more than a third of our respondents agreed on not having received such education – although these results are again comparable to the findings from other countries (Breitkreutz reports almost a third). It was not very surprising then to observe that from twelve offered factors 'learning more about methodology' and 'receiving some more training' were rated by the third and fourth highest number of our participants as motivational.

The need of further professional development was indirectly indicated by the factor obtaining the most 'motivational' ratings, i.e., 'having more time in lessons'. We are not alone to believe that the perceived lack of time to a significant extent reflects the limited abilities of the teachers to integrate pronunciation instruction into the teaching of other aspects of the language – in other words, to make use of the instruction in other linguistic components for simultaneous explicit focus on pronunciation. The second highest number of motivational ratings went for 'seeing more interest on the side of my students'. This is an issue certainly related to the age of students since teenagers appear extremely difficult to be motivated by anything at school. On the other hand, many participants indicated their difficulties with making their pronunciation instruction interesting and yet effective. The fifth highest amount of teachers would feel motivated if 'there were more additional ready-made materials available'. This may indicate not only the already mentioned lack of acquaintance with the existing materials on offer but also possibly the lack of skills to adjust the commonly available materials for explicit pronunciation teaching. Moreover, the number of teachers who would appreciate their own pronunciation being better was nearly as high as that of the respondents who claimed confidence in this aspect. Whereas in Henderson's study it was nearly three quarters of teachers confident about their pronunciation, in our case it was less than a half. The following most highly rated factor was 'having better tools to assess one's students' progress', which we think also shows a call for further training. From all of these

reasons we suggest that further professional development in pronunciation pedagogy would be highly beneficial for Czech upper-secondary English teachers and we reflect with regret that there does not seem to be much opportunity in this respect so far.

All in all we can say that the issues raised by teachers in the investigated foreign research more or less matched those addressed by our respondents. Among our participants not a real unclarity about the pronunciation model could be seen, however, the contradicting influence of different varieties of English was mentioned as teaching difficulty. A topic which arose specifically in our research was the necessity of re-teaching and correcting bad pronunciation which the students already started their upper-secondary education with. Some respondents attributed these bad habits of students to the influence of celebrities and mass media; others perceived them as a result of their students' previous education. Some participants specifically complained about unqualified primary school English teachers. We do not have any data concerning this issue. Nevertheless, as several of our respondents indicated, their only qualifications for teaching English at a secondary school were the FCE or a similar exam. More than one third of these teachers, in addition, received no specific qualifications in the area of pronunciation pedagogy. The observations addressing insufficient expertise on the side of primary English teachers cannot therefore be considered as irrelevant. We could further observe that in comparison to some foreign colleagues, extrinsic motivational factors such as officially set teaching objectives and strict official assessment did not seem so important for Czech teachers. As opposed to intrinsic motivation springing from the teachers' own technical and methodological confidence, which along with the interest on the side of the students seems to be essential for our respondents.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

At the beginning of this thesis we gave a brief historical account on the status of pronunciation and its instruction within the main methodological concepts of a foreign language teaching. Coming up to the Communicative Approach, the prevailing methodology of today, we highlighted the main issues dealt with in current research to this topic. We advocated the importance of pronunciation as a part of one's linguistic competence and presented scientific evidence indicating that significant progress in pronunciation skills can be made even at an adult age. Although differences between individuals appear due to various influencing factors, research shows that it is relevant to teach pronunciation to adults, including the upper-secondary school students. It was also proven that explicit teaching, i.e., instruction explicitly focused on pronunciation, has positive effect on students' abilities. For those who think one does not have to sound like a native speaker and, consequently, that pronunciation instruction is not so important, we would like to emphasise that such instruction does not appear to have an impact on learners' productive competence only. It can also significantly enhance receptive skills, i.e., listening comprehension, which for successful communication is undoubtedly as important as intelligible pronunciation itself.

Revealing that pronunciation, related methodology and especially teaching practice in this field tend to be an area of neglect as compared to other components of language, we searched for reasons. Results of research on this topic in various countries revealed to us several factors which seem to discourage teachers from frequent or systematic pronunciation instruction. An important issue appeared to be the teachers' lack of confidence caused mostly by an unsatisfactory graduate training, insufficient technical and/or pedagogical knowledge, and scarce opportunities for further professional development. Teachers felt demotivated by their formal curricula, unclear objectives (e.g., pronunciation model and required degree of perfection), and vaguely formulated assessment criteria or by negative attitudes on the side of students. Many also complained about the lack of time in their lessons, which researchers usually correlate with the teachers' limited ability to integrate pronunciation teaching in the instruction of other linguistic skills. Another significant factor was the teachers' disappointment with teaching materials. On the basis of these findings we designed our own survey to briefly map the situation among Czech upper-secondary English teachers. We wanted to ascertain their basic beliefs in relation to the teaching of pronunciation and to see whether these are in line with the current research. Furthermore, we wanted to gain some

basic information about the quality and quantity of pronunciation instruction done by the teachers and the teaching materials used. The final part of the questionnaire aimed at the teachers' attitudes and motivation towards pronunciation teaching. Our hypothesis was that like abroad; pronunciation teaching tended to be an area of neglect in our schools from reasons similar to those indicated by our foreign colleagues.

Complete data was collected from 228 upper-secondary English teachers in the Czech Republic. With regard to the importance of pronunciation as a communicative skill, its learnability after the age of fifteen, the effect of explicit pronunciation instruction and the subject matter to be taught, the opinions of most participants appeared to be in line with current research. They were, however, claimed not to be based on it, which may show on a gap between teachers and researchers as referred to by some other authors. All but one participant stated dealing with pronunciation in their lessons. We cannot conclude then that pronunciation instruction in Czech upper-secondary schools is fully neglected. Less than a third of respondents, however, recognised teaching it systematically. More than a third of participants admitted not having received any education specifically focused on pronunciation and its pedagogy. Both numbers are comparable to the findings of authors from other countries. The reasons preventing our respondents from a more systematic approach to the teaching of pronunciation also largely corresponded to the factors mentioned in various foreign studies. Thereby our *hypothesis* has partly been confirmed.

The factors which would motivate our respondents to do more frequent and more systematic pronunciation teaching appeared to be the following: having more time in lessons indirectly showing on a possible lack of training in integrating pronunciation instruction into the teaching of other language components; higher motivation on the side of students along with the explicitly desired increase of skills to make pronunciation teaching interesting for students; opportunities to gain more knowledge of methodology in this area and some further practical training; more ready-made teaching materials available indirectly showing on the lack of familiarity with those on offer; increasing one's skills in assessing students' progress. Lack of confidence in one's own pronunciation appeared to be an issue for a significant number of respondents. A problem addressed specifically by Czech teachers was students' wrong pronunciation habits resulting from their previous experience of learning English. Some respondents pointed to this as being caused by the lack of qualified primary English teachers. Taking account of the data showing on our respondents' qualifications we could not disprove this statement. In conclusion, we propose that a higher proportion of English

teachers be provided with proper undergraduate education on pronunciation and its pedagogy as well as with more opportunities for further professional development in this area. Furthermore, it would be beneficial if such training could aim at effective teaching techniques suitable for students of the respective age, with a special focus on integrating pronunciation into the instruction of other aspects of the language. Improving their own pronunciation could also enhance confidence of a significant number of teachers. Last but not least, existing additional teaching materials should be more intensively promoted along with enabling the teachers training in effective adjustment of commonly used textbooks for the teaching of pronunciation.

In the end we find it important to stress that the data collected are only based on the respondents' perspectives and self-evaluation. To obtain more precise information, interviews with the teachers, students and especially classroom observations would be needed. By no means do we want to claim our participants' statements for unreliable. However, it seems to be a natural phenomenon that the teachers' perspectives and insights might slightly differ from their real teaching practices, as we could see in Wahid and Sulong's study for example. Another limit of our survey is the already mentioned prevalence of closed questions. We fully recognise that the sets of provided response options did not always have to precisely reflect each participant's teaching reality. The aim of our research, nevertheless, was to collect relevant information from as many teachers as possible on a broad spectrum of issues to briefly survey the situation. Under no circumstances do we intend to present the results as a complete picture of the reality. They are rather to be seen as an outline and hopefully an impulse for further qualitative or combined research in the suggested or other related areas of pronunciation instruction.

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## **6. APPENDICES**

Appendix I: The Questionnaire

Appendix II: Recommended Additional Teaching Materials

Appendix III: Recommended Additional Teaching Materials – Bibliography

Appendix IV: Motivation to Teach Pronunciation – Detailed Results