Masaryk University
Faculty of Arts

Department of English
and American Studies

English Language and Literature

Hana Vrtalová

Accent Reduction
and the Training of General American

Bachelor's Diploma Thesis

Supervisor: PhDr. Kateřina Tomková, Ph. D.

2014

I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

………………………………………..

Author's signature

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

1. Introduction

Accent reduction is in Meier's opinion (2012) a "term often used to describe the process of modifying a non-prestige dialect or accent, or changing a foreign-language accent towards a perceived standard, mainstream, or prestige dialect" (p. 1). It is also known (in the U.K.) as elocution, accent modification or accent neutralization. It consists of several steps which lead from identifying deviations in a speaker's individual accent to modifying his or her speech through methods of learning speech patterns and habits, rhythm, intonation and voice settings. Motivations for modifying one's accent differ. Accent reduction can be realized for the purpose of improving social status or getting a job requiring an intelligible and prestige accent.

In the USA accent reduction trainings are provided by a high number of language schools and institutions and there exist a lot of coaches focusing specially on helping to modify pronunciations of various non-native speakers from all over the world. The situation in the Czech Republic as for number of coaches focusing solely on English pronunciation differs. Basics of English pronunciation are usually provided through common English lessons at primary, secondary schools and universities and courses at language institutions.

Celce-Murcia claims "The goal of teaching pronunciation to…learners is not to make them sound like native speakers of English. With the exception of a few highly gifted and motivated individuals, such a goal is unrealistic" (as cited in Yoshida, p. 1). It implies that as English becomes a worldwide language, teachers who teach English as a foreign language focus more on helping students to communicate rather than teaching them the pronunciation of a specific accent. This might be the reason why accent reduction concerns almost exclusively English speaking countries and ESL speakers more than those countries where English is taught merely as a foreign language.

It as well means that acquiring a foreign accent for such a motivated student could be complicated due to a lack of opportunities and resources in a country he or she lives.

2. Topic description

The objective of the study is to find out to what extent it is possible for a motivated student of English (EFL student) to acquire the General American accent. Research object was the pronunciation of Veronika who as an advanced student decided to modify her accent. Her goal is to eliminate pronunciation mistakes and distinctions from the targeted accent, which is General American. She wants to sound as much as a native speaker as possible.

The main secondary source for this purpose became the course book *Mastering American Accent* by Lisa Mojsin. The study focuses on the course book and the methods it uses as well. The chapter *Mastering the American Accent course book* provides a brief description of the overall structure of the book and presents the main approaches that Mojsin suggests. The practical part of the research is partially included in this chapter in the form of discussion. The unusual structure of this study has been chosen to connect clearly each of the General American features (presented by Mojsin) to Veronika's actual performance of them.

The whole research lasted six months consisting of weekly lessons (90 minutes per week). Apart from studying the course book Veronika was introduced to the basic phonetic terminology such as stress, rhythm, intonation and voice settings. During the research three voice recording sets (two recordings in each of the set) were taken in order to monitor her progress. All the recordings could be found on the CD attached to this work.

Sounding like a native speaker requires not only authentic pronunciation but also quite extensive knowledge of local customs, common conversational phrases and cultural background. Although this approach is important for the final oral impression, the study focused predominantly on pronunciation itself leaving only little space for the sociolinguistic context.

3. Comparison of Czech and English Phonemes

In the following theoretical section basic information about Czech (Veronika's native language) as well as English language system and their comparison is provided.

The analysis of both language systems is based on Skaličková (1974). Despite the fact that the book contains rather obsolete terminology and was released forty years ago, it provides complex and organized knowledge of Czech and English. In her study, Skaličková (1974) compares Czech to Received Pronunciation. Although there are differences between RP and General American, the basic features remain the same or they are at least similar. Specific GenAm vowels and consonants are introduced in detail in the chapter *Mastering the American Accent course book*.

3.1. Comparison of Czech and English Vowel System

Skaličková (1974) explains that Czech vowel system is much simpler than the English one. She recognizes ten Czech phonemes which are bound to pairs and differ only by quantity (length) [a – á, e – é, i – í, o – ó, u - ú]. The approximate frequency areas where particular sounds are created, the author calls "timbre areas" and she uses them to compare both systems. The situation of Czech vowels seems to be more complicated partly because of varying length of the vowels in every timbre area.

English, in contrast, has more representatives in several timbre areas e.g. [e, Θ] in the *e* timbre area or [℘, A] in the *a* timbre area (Skaličková, 1974, p. 19).

In general, Skaličková's findings imply significant pronunciation differences. The number of Czech and English vowels varies (twelve English vowels, eleven Czech vowels) as well as manners of articulation. Quantity, the length of vowels, has mostly secondary character in English, but it is crucial in Czech. On the other hand, the approximate timbre areas where particular vowels are held are clearly determined in English, but the same areas are much more indistinct in Czech. This fact implies that exactness of the vowel position in the timbre area in Czech has the secondary importance (Skaličková, 1974, p. 21).

3.2 Comparison of the Czech and the English Consonants

The consonant system of Czech has twenty six phonemes, which is two more than the English system. Although the number of consonants is comparable, the consonants themselves vary a great deal. English has no equivalents for the Czech consonants [ř, ť, ď, ň] and neither does Czech contain any phonemes that would be close in pronunciation to [T, Δ, ω]. Even consonants that are more or less similar display a different frequency, usage and distribution (Skaličková, 1974, p. 62).

Skaličková furthermore claims that distinguishing between minimal pairs in Czech and English is realized via sonority as well as suprasegmental features. The 'oppositeness' of pair consonants e.g. [b - p] is determined primarily by sonority, while in English the sonority categorization is sometimes replaced by the 'oppositeness' of articulatory 'tenseness'. In cases of the initial, medium (close to fortis consonants) and especially the final positions of consonants in English, sonority can entirely disappear (Skaličková, 1974, p. 64-65).

Both consonant systems vary in the pronunciation of the final consonants as well. In Czech the final voiced consonant is pronounced as if it was voiceless. It is the reason why words like *led* and *let* sound the same. In English, by the contrast, the final voiced consonant remains voiced and it is why verbs *let* and *led* are easy to distinguish (Skaličková, 1974, p. 67).

Besides these issues sources of dissimilarity lie also in the aspiration and palatalization. Aspiration is put on the consonants [p, t, k] in the position of the stressed syllable in English. 'Oppositeness' in palatalization appears in Czech word pairs such as (tyká – tiká, hady - hadi) and does not occur in English at all.

4. Suprasegmental features

4.1 Stress

Vaníčková (2007) defines stress as a term which can refer to two different phenomena. One means "the prominence of certain syllables over the others" and in its wider sense can correspond to the features such as loudness or duration. The second connotation of stress is concerned with the physiological process of achieving the impression of the prominence (p. 8).

The general position of stress (stressed syllable) varies among languages. In French it occurs on the last syllable, in Polish the penultimate syllable is stressed and in Czech it lies on the first syllable (Gimson, 2008, p. 235). English, on the other hand, belongs among languages with only little predictability in word stress (Cruttenden, 1997, p. 15).

4.2 Rhythm

Maintenance of rhythm in connected speech is accomplished by stress. Rhythm is therefore a function of stress and appears in the form of regular intervals between stressed syllables. Irregularity applies for unstressed syllables as they are stuffed among stressed syllables (Vaníčková, 2007, p. 27). What emerges from this statement is the changing pace of speech, which can flow from a slow and relaxed speed through far more rapid stages to the end of a sentence (Kelly, 2000, p. 71).

Kelly furthermore points out that "stress timing and regular rhythms are most noticeable in highly stylized language, such as poetry or nursery rhymes" (p. 71). Due to this fact several stress patterns and poems were chosen for Veronika to become more familiar with a changing pace of speech in English and its regularity in stress. Stress patterns (Tomková, 2008) also demonstrate reduction of a vowel length in unstressed syllables, which signifies the tendency of English towards "the stress-timing end of the continuum" (Kelly, 2000, p. 71).

4.3 Intonation

Cruttenden states about intonation the following:

Intonation involves the occurrence of recurring pitch patterns, each of which is used with a set of relatively consistent meanings, either on single words or on group of words varying length (p. 7).

The author adds that different levels of grammatical constituents (up to a whole sentence) can be treated as intonation groups with their own meaningful tone (p. 7).

According to Kelly intonation is instrumental in ways people express their thoughts and it enables them to understand each other as well. Though it is perceived

subconsciously, people are very sensitive to it as it underlines the importance or urgency of utterances and phrases (p. 86).

In order to determine meaning Kelly suggests listening to the melody of speech so the attitude of speaker could be extracted from the way he or she uses intonation. Student should try to assess whether a speaker is interested, bored, honest, lying, and so on. Another related issue emerges from the fact that "the same words and structures can be given different meaning or convey a different attitude by altering the intonation" (p. 86). Such evaluations can be facilitated by a visual contact with the speaker as additional non-verbal features such as facial expressions or body language could also indicate speaker's mood.

Intonation throughout the sentence rises and falls in connection to grammatical structures as well. Kelly recognizes seven examples which give a general idea of the behavior of intonation within these structures:

1) <u>Information questions</u> with *who, what, where*, etc: Falling intonation (if being asked for the first time), e.g. *What's your name?*

2) <u>Questions expecting</u> a *'yes/no'* answer: Rising (*Is it a blue one?*).

3) <u>Statements:</u> Falling (*He lives in the house on the corner*).

4) <u>Imperatives:</u> Falling (*Sit down. Put it on the table*.).

5) <u>Question tags expecting confirmation:</u> Falling (*You're French, aren't you?*).

6) <u>Question tags showing less certainty:</u> Rising (*Your train leaves at six, doesn't it?*).

7) <u>Lists of items:</u> Rising, rising, and finally falling (*You need a pen, a pencil and some paper.*) (p. 89).

Veronika uses most of these "intonation patterns" automatically, although some of the fallings at the ends of sentences disappear in her speech when she does not complete a thought or a sentence unit.

At the initial stage it was observed that Veronika's intonation in the reading of a text was reminiscent of the BBC broadcasters announcing the news. Apart from the similar intonation structures Veronika also included to her pronunciation typical British diphthong [↔Y] in words like *phone* and *stone*. This pattern naturally did not occur in her spontaneous speech. Veronika was recommended listening to actors in American films and TV series and observing the way they use intonation in everyday situations.

5. Teaching Methodology

Although they use different terminology authors of pronunciation teaching guides agree that this process involves integrating three main parts: reading, listening and repetition (Kelly, 2000; Kenworthy, 1987; Murphy, 1991). Literature describes many methods and factors influencing student's acquisition of the authentic pronunciation. Some of the factors are innate and cannot be changed whereas others can be partly or fully modified.

5.1 Factors Affecting Pronunciation Learning

According to Kenworthy (1987) six factors influencing pronunciation of English can be identified. Apart from the speaker's native language it is also age, amount of exposure to a targeted language, phonetic ability, student's attitude and identity as well as one's motivation and concern for good pronunciation. In the following paragraphs

these factors will be elaborated as well as Veronika's attitude towards them will be described.

5.1.1 The native language

In case of Veronika's pronunciation (initial state, before the research) there is no significant imprint of Czech accent such as alveolar trill or pronouncing final [ινγ] endings in words like *reading* or *swimming*. A subtle indication of native language is recognizable in her intonation, which is slightly flat and corresponds with the stress which occurs more frequently on the first syllable.

Besides Czech and English Veronika speaks also Polish, Croatian and Slovenian as she studies Slavonic languages.

5.1.2 The age factor

The age when a person starts to learn a new language could have according to studies mentioned in Kenworthy (1987) an impact on pronunciation:

Some researchers claim that there is a sensitive period for language learning, and that biological changes take place in the brain after a certain age (usually said to be between 10 and 13 years). The claim is that people actually lose certain abilities after this age. (p. 6)

Veronika started to study English at the age of eleven and after years of learning she achieved advanced level and thus she meets Kenworthy's criterion. When the research started her age was thirty.

5.1.3 The amount of exposure

As Kenworthy (1987, p. 6) claims it is not an exposure to English-speaking environment that matters but "how the learner responds to the opportunities to listen to and use English." Although Veronika cannot benefit from living in GenAm accent environment, she herself visited the USA two times and devotes free her time to receiving American accent via audio and video materials available on the internet.

5.1.4 Phonetic ability

Every speaker (unless hearing-impaired) has an inborn ability to discriminate between two sounds. As Kenworthy (1987, p. 7) claims it is the reason why a person is able to learn the sounds of his or her native language. However, she also points to studies showing that "some people are able to discriminate between two sounds better than others" Kenworthy (1987, p. 6). Since the methods and approaches to determine a level of one's phonetic ability vary, no specialized test of Veronika's aptitude was taken. The accuracy of her pronunciation yet indicated high sensitivity to the variability of English sounds.

5.1.5 Attitude and identity

The sense of personal identity and community is one of the crucial aspects determining the acquisition of accurate pronunciation of foreign language (Kenworthy, 1987, p. 7). Author also argues that adopting and imitating a certain speech style or accent depends on the speaker's attitude and his or her further motivation.

Veronika's wish to move to the USA motivates her to build the appropriate attitude to American environment. Kenworthy (1987) points out that if a person decides to settle in the country where the particular targeted accent is spoken, the acquisition of this accent is very likely (p. 8). She also adds that the adoption of the accent cannot be realized when there remains a strong identity connection of the person to the place of his or her birth. It is thus probable that if Veronika's accent modification will be realized and remain permanent will depend on a duration of her stay in the USA and her identity ties to the Czech Republic.

5.1.6 Motivation and concern for good pronunciation

On the subject of motivation Kenworthy (1987) furthermore states the following:

> Personal commitment to a community, and a willingness to be identified with the members of that community, can be revealed through the way a person chooses to speak (p. 8)

The initial impulse for Veronika's decision to take part in this accent reduction research was her negative experience in the USA. She encountered a native speaker who implied that she had a foreign accent. This incident motivated her to sound native-like and to improve her overall pronunciation.

Her concern to sound as authentic as possible almost led her to a reluctance to speak which Kenworthy (1987, p. 9) calls the "I don't want to say it if I can't say it perfectly" mentality. She also highlights that this self-critical approach can lead to a very specific goal and the desire to do so indicates the 'achievement motivation' (p. 8).

5.2 Pronunciation Teaching Techniques and Activities

Kelly (2000, p. 15) suggests teaching pronunciation by using methods suitable for individuals as well as for entire class. In the following paragraphs there will be described six of the activities that were applied in the research.

5.2.1 Drilling

This technique is, as Kelly (2000, p. 16) explains, based on class repeating words or structures after the teacher. Though it originates in behaviorist psychological theory, which is nowadays considered to be obsolete, drilling persisted as a tested method (Kelly, 2000, p. 16).

The activity was realized by selected words from *A collection of pronunciation errors* (Tomková, 2012). Veronika was given these words and was instructed to try to pronounce them first and then consult them with a dictionary (according to American English pronunciation).

Two online dictionaries were used: *Macmillan dictionary* and *Cambridge Free English dictionary*. Both offer along with RP transcription also GenAm but each of them is using different IPA symbol sets. Another advantage of these online dictionaries is the option to play an audio track of a corresponding pronunciation of a word (though tracks were not available for all of the words). Difficult words were repeated, so Veronika could distinguish between the specific sounds.

5.2.2 Minimal pairs and related activities

Motivation to pronounce authentically could be in Kelly's opinion aroused by introduction to 'minimal pairs' issue. Words such as *cat* and *cut*

differ by only one phoneme and therefore they form a minimal pair (Kelly, 2000, p. 18). Drilling utterances in which similar sounds appear close to each other is also supported by *Mastering the American Accent*. The course book used this technique to revise newly acquired pronunciation of vowels showing a potential shift of meaning that can occur if the vowel is mispronounced.

5.2.3 Pronunciation and spelling activities

Kelly (2000) suggests spelling activity as a way to investigate how the sounds can be represented on a page and adds that homographs and homophones are useful in order to demonstrate relationship between pronunciation and spelling (p. 20).

In accordance with the focus of this research it was decided to apply this activity by using only homographs, the words that have the same spelling but different pronunciations. Origin of these pronunciation dissimilarities lies not solely in using the same spelling for the words with a different meaning but also in a shift of stressed syllables within a word. The second example affects such a noun or an adjective that keeps the same spelling even as a verb but the stress shifts to a different syllable. For example the noun and the verb *present* is in the form of a noun stressed on the first syllable [∪πρεζ(↔)ντ], βυτ ασ the verb it takes stress on the second syllable [πρΙ∪ζεντ]. The list of selected homographs was used to extend Veronika's awareness of this phenomenon and then practiced during the lessons through reading specially designed texts containing both of the word forms.

5.2.4 Listening activities

Kelly (2000, p. 21) argues that a prior listening exercise could be advantageous for students as they can avoid extensive drilling later. About a quality of recordings designed for the listening exercises in course books he claims following:

> Listening comprehension exercises in course books are often designed to sound as realistic as possible, with the participants talking at a normal speed and using natural language (p. 21).

Kelly's argument seems truthful and it is probably the reason why recordings from course books are easily applicable for ordinary English classes. However, using only these tapes would not be enough for realizing the research.

Although Mojsin's *Mastering the American Accent* offers many recordings for almost every exercise in the book, additional sources were necessary to provide Veronika with more fluent impressions of the General American accent. Online educational sources providing reliable audio materials were employed into the listening process such as IDEA website (International dialects of English archive), list of *Audio Samples of Local Dialects* at Rick Aschmann's website, *Spoken Wikipedia* articles found at www.manythings.org and interactive video sketches at English Central website.

All of these websites mention additional information about speaker's accent. Rick Aschmann's webpage contains also more concrete location information including a town or a city and a state from which the speaker comes. IDEA webpage recordings are furthermore followed by supplementary information about speakers: age and a note whether a speaker is Caucasian or African-American.

5.2.5 Reading activities

According to Kelly (2000) reading alongside to listening belongs among receptive activities and therefore should be integrated into pronunciation teaching process (p. 22). The author suggests adding also tongue-twisters and rhymes apart from regular 'encyclopedia texts' (p. 22).

Reading and listening activities were often combined and followed by drilling exercises. Written texts functioned as ways to practice suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm and intonation). During these exercises Veronika was instructed to listen to a recording first and then she was supposed to mark stress and intonation into the transcript. Her attention was brought to a 'linking words' feature so she could read and pronounce the transcripts more naturally and fluently.

5.2.6 Recording student's English

Recording Veronika's progress was the most important part of the research. Besides three main recordings, additional ones were taken as a feedback for her personal use. Veronika was encouraged to search on the internet for recordings of such a GenAm speaker to whom she could relate in terms of age, gender, interests and voice. These conditions were necessary because they have built a background for pronunciation models she could imitate. In this way both her voice and recordings of her "models" could be easier to compare.

5.3 Integration of Speaking, Listening and Pronunciation

The teaching process should not focus solely on receptive or productive activities. Murphy (1991) introduces two currents in a teaching of oral communication:

The first current focuses upon elements of phonological accuracy, a subset of both speaking and listening skill development, while the second focuses upon broader aspects of interpersonal communication, namely fluency in speaking and listening (p. 60).

He moreover claims that there should be a certain balance between these two approaches. Students need considerable practice with more opportunities to express themselves to benefit from the knowledge of phonological patterns and further examinations of the English sound system (p. 60).

To achieve this balance both receptive and productive activities were alternating during the research. The first lessons, however, concentrated more on listening and reading activities in order to build up a solid basic skill for success in oral exercises. These lessons covered (apart from a brief introduction to English sound system) mainly suprasegmental features: stress patterns, rhythm and intonation.

5.4. Voice Settings

Segmental approach in the form of learning discrete sounds and distinguishing between them ('minimal pairs' activity) or stress patterns may not be the only way to introduce a pronunciation of a foreign language. In their research Esling and Wong (1983) support method of making students aware of more general characteristics of an accent.

Voice quality settings are "the long-term postures of the larynx, pharynx, tongue, velopharyngeal system and lips, as well as long-term laryngeal configurations reflected in the diverse phonation types described by Catford (1964)" (Esling & Wong, 1983, p. 89). The authors point out to the fact that underestimation of voice settings in

English might cause an obstacle to intelligibility of a speaker (p. 90). They also note that when a child learns his or her native language's setting, segmental features are perceived automatically in this 'mutually combined system'. However, using the settings of one's native language in English might "evoke unfavourable response from English speakers" (p. 90-91).

Veronika was instructed in this matter and she was recommended practicing following broad model of the voice quality settings in American English presented by Esling and Wong (1983, p. 91):

1. spread lips

2. open jaw

3. palatalized tongue body position

4. retroflex articulation

5. nasal voice

6. lowered larynx

7. creaky voice

Authors refer to spreadness of the lips in American English as preferable and point out that extensive labialization can be inappropriate in pronunciation of certain consonants such as [σ] or [λ]. To avoid this feature they suggest practicing smiling while speaking (p. 91).

The degree of openness varies in case of Czech vowels from the nearly closed position of [ɪ] and [ʊ] to the most opened [α] (Krčmová, 2007, p. 55). It as well differs from the degree of openness in American English which is sometimes described as if American person would be "chewing a gum" while speaking.

Palatalized tongue body position Esling and Wong (1983, p. 92) demonstrate on the raising of vowel in the pronunciation of the word *yeah*.

About retroflexion of the tongue tip authors state that it is characteristic for many varieties of North American, as well as Irish English, which both have postvocalic [ρ] (p. 92). It occurs in words as *later*, *matter* or *waiter*. This feature turned out to be one of the most difficult for Veronika to develop.

Lowering the larynx, giving a voice a deeper or hollower sound is often connected to the national political figures or news announcers in the USA or Canada (Esling & Wong, 1983, p. 92). It is considered to be prestigious and it would be unusual in British context. Its exceptionality is the reason why this setting became one of the priorities in the research.

Nasal and creaky voice belongs to rather individual pronunciation settings. Veronika has a naturally clear voice with a frequent occurrence of the nasal features even when she speaks Czech.

5.5 Recording Methods

All of the three recording sets were taken in the equal intervals to monitor the progress. That means in the second, the fourth and the sixth month of the research. One recording set comprises of two recordings, the first one of Veronika's pronunciation during a reading of a short paragraph of text, whose pronunciation she has prepared and the second one is of a text she was not given time to practice for.

Analysis of recorded material paid less attention to intonation during reading the texts. One reason for this approach is as Laan (1997, p. 44) claims that the intonation during reading text is mainly the opposite of the everyday speaking style and that is the reason why "spontaneous" speech is generally considered to be more "natural." The other difficulty affecting the resulting intonation of a reader is his or her

familiarity with a text. Therefore the emphasis was put on accurate pronunciation of words and on approximate position of sentence and word stress.

6. General American

According to Gimson (2008) General American is the "form of American English which does not have marked regional characteristics…and is sometimes referred to as 'Network English' " (p. 84). It is one of the two globally preferred dialects of English next to RP and is widely spoken by broadcasters.

Meier (2010) describes General American as the accent which was not always popular throughout the whole time of its existence. Before American English has come to its acceptance it was considered to be somehow less attractive or even inferior. The RP remained an undeniable model for pronunciation until the World War II, when GA gained its influence among actors, journalists and other professionals (p. 175).

The most prominent signature sounds according to Meier (2010) are: rhoticity also known as r-coloration, lack of intrusive [ρ] (in contrast to RP) and the sound of the consonant [τ], which is in some positions treated as a *flapped* or *tapped* (p. 176-178). More of the vowels and consonants specific to GA will be described in the chapter *Mastering the American Accent course book*.

6.1 Suprasegmental features of General American

Meier (2010) argues that successful imitation of an accent does not depend solely on capturing the phonemic features. Intonation, rhythm and tone of the specific accent must be considered as well. He adds that description of any accent in terms of "acoustic patterning and tonal qualities" can be done only by comparing it to another accent (p. 182). Suprasegmental features of GenAm in the following paragraphs will be

thus compared to RP. Meier puts in this sentence the two of the preferred accents in total contrast:

> The American begins strongly and ends weakly, is slower, louder, harder toned, lower in pitch, stress evenly distributed, high pitches avoided, volume used for emphasis; while the RP speaker begins weakly and ends strongly, is faster, quieter, softer in tone, higher in pitch, selects fewer key words to stress and uses high pitches to stress them rather than volume (p. 182-183).

7. Mastering the American Accent course book

Mastering the American Accent is the course book written by voice coach Lisa Mojsin and for the time of this research it served as a guideline to General American Accent. The book is addressed to every ESL or EFL learner who would like to acquire a clear and prestige GA accent. Recordings of female and male voice accompany the majority of pronunciation exercises.

The course book comprises of nine chapters dealing with vowel sounds and their detailed description, consonants (including a chapter with 'problematic' consonants), word stress, intonation, extra features helping students to sound native-like and the exceptions to memorize. Chapters focusing on vowels and consonants contain exercises for practice putting word pairs (minimal pairs) next to each other or sentences to practice. An additional chapter offers a guide to native speakers from all over the world focusing on the common pronunciation mistakes. Despite the high number of manuals for speakers from Asian countries such as Chinese or Filipino to some of the European languages such as French or German, this guide lacks a manual for Czech speakers. The book tends to be user-friendly and instead of extensive introduction to

IPA it briefly summarizes English vowels and consonants (only those appearing in the GenAm pronunciation) into two tables at the beginning of corresponding chapters.

In the vowel table there are two discrepancies between the standard IPA symbols and the symbols used by Mojsin. Author uses the symbol [□] for [℘] in words like *jump* and *but* and also replaces long schwa [∈] with the same vowel symbol compounded with the consonant [ρ] so the words like *her* and *work* are transcribed with the "vowel" [□ρ] (Mojsin, 2009, p. 8-9). Veronika was pointed out to this nonstandard transcription so she would be aware of this difference when searching for words in dictionaries and for time of her work with the course book.

Another slightly confusing fact was that some recordings of the male voice (Lou Savage) in the author's opinion did not always fully and clearly demonstrated pronunciation aspects. His unclear pronunciation seemed in some comparative exercises rather obscure in contrast to hypercorrect pronunciation of Lisa Mojsin's. This obscurity occurred far more often in the chapter concerning vowels.

7.1 Vowel sounds

Each of the fifteen vowel sounds including diphthongs introduced in the book are described in detail. Every opening to a new vowel starts with the description of the visual aspect of lips, position and setting of the tongue and common spelling pattern. In addition the author mentions common mistakes that happen when one mispronounces a vowel e.g. dangerous mistake in case of replacement of the long [ɪ] with the short [I] in words like *sheet*, *beach* or *piece*.

Mojsin in the following table uses example sentences with the underlined vowel groups for each of the fifteen vowels. These examples are used to show a wide range of vowel combinations that in some cases stand for only one phoneme. This sample

sentences are helpful not only for students with a minor knowledge about general rules of pronunciation. It moreover helps students who have already acquired some pronunciation model of English (e.g. RP) to realize the main differences.

Table 1

1.	[ı]	*read, heat, meet, seat, seen, feet*	Please eat the meat and the cheese before you leave.
2.	[I]	*in, bit, this, give, sister, will city*	My sister Linda will live in the big city.
3.	[εI]	*late, gate, bait, fail, main, braid, wait*	Jane's face looks great for her age of eighty-eight.
4.	[E]	*let, get, end, any, fell, bread, men, said*	I went to Texas for my friend's wedding.
5.	[Θ]	*last, apple, add, can, answer, class*	The handsome man lost his baggage after his travels.
6.	[A]	*stop, lock, farm, want, army, possible, got*	John is positive that his car was parked in that lot.
7.	[□]	*come up, jump, but, does, love, money, about*	Your younger brother doesn't trust us, does he?
8.	[□]	*all, fall, author, also, applaud, thought, fought*	Paula was doing laundry all day long.
9.	[oY]	*go ,slow, so, those, post, moment, drove*	Oh, no! Don't open the window, it's cold.
10.	[Y]	*look, took, put, foot, wolf, cookie*	He would read the good book if he could.
11.	[υ]	*cool, soup, moon, boot, tooth, move, true*	Sue knew about the food in the room.
12.	[□ρ]	*her, work, sure, first, early, were, earn, occur*	What were the first words that girl learned?
13.	[αI]	*time, nine, dry, high, style, five, China*	I advise you to ride a bicycle in China.
14.	[αY]	*south, house, cow, found, down, town*	He went out of the house for about an hour.

15. [□I]	*oil, choice, moist, enjoy, avoid, voice*	Let's av<u>oi</u>d the ann<u>oy</u>ing n<u>oi</u>se.

Table 1. Main vowel sounds of American English (Mojsin, 2009, p. 1-2)

Mojsin (2009) characterizes vowels as front, middle and back and also divides them into high and low depending on the position of the tongue. From the vertical point of view she distinguishes two positions: The first in high vowels when "the tongue is pushed up high near the roof of the mouth…and in low vowels, the tongue is flat down at the bottom of the mouth" (p. 2).
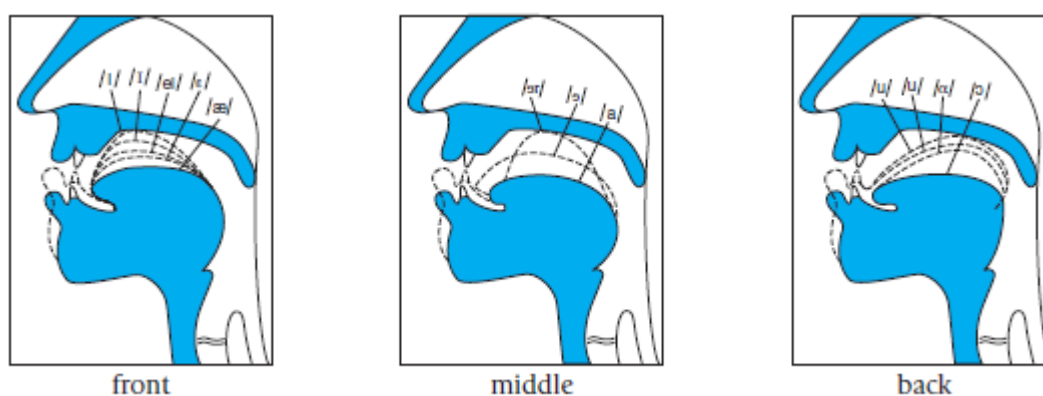
Figure 1. Horizontal positions of the tongue (Mojsin, 2009, p. 2)

As mentioned in the chapter dealing with intonation, the most difficult vowel for Veronika appeared to be the diphthong [oY], which in her case was rather reminiscent of the British [↔Y]. The tone of mispronounced diphthong was underlined by Veronika's nasal mouth settings. However, during the research this mistake was almost eliminated. The pronunciation of vowel [Θ] required more attention as well. Mojsin recommends practicing pronunciation by pushing the tongue to the lowest position possible along with a quite high degree of openness of lips. Veronika's attempts to apply these procedures on the separate words like *fat* and *man* were successful but in her common speech the degree of openness was slowly decreasing.

7.1.1 Vowels in Detail

This chapter contains a revision of vowel sounds as well as introduction to some problematic features of General American. Mojsin points out to diphthongization or even triphthongization by adding 'extra schwa sound' into the words in which the vowels are followed by [ρ] or [λ] phoneme.

As for [r] sound, the word *far* contains according to Mojsin a diphthong, so the whole duration of the word is longer [ɸA☐ρ]. Similar rule applies for the words such as *hair* or even for the word *four* where the original vowel [☐] is triphthongized into [ɸoY☐ρ] (Mojsin, 2009, p. 28).

The same rules also applies for some of the vowels followed by [λ] phoneme. It occurs in the words such as [ɸι☐λ] or sale [σεI☐λ] (Mojsin, 2009, p.51).

Adding 'extra schwa' was not a pronunciation difficulty for Veronika. She occasionally forgot to use it in her spontaneous speech, however, when the overall tempo of the speech did not allow her to prolong the corresponding words. Generally Veronika adds the 'extra schwa' only in some of the words and the regularity of it depends on many factors including the tempo of speech and the nature of conversation.

Mojsin also highlights the fact that Americans tend to, in contrast to British, leave out the additional [φ] sound in the words such as *tune* or *steward*. The words are thus pronounced only with prolonged [u] instead (Mojsin, 2009, p. 26).

Veronika had often the British tendency of [φ] pronunciation and the GenAm feature was entirely strange to her. Although she implemented it

quite quickly, she occasionally forgets to pronounce it. At the end of the research she mostly managed to use it with the full awareness.

7.2 Consonants

For better understanding how production of consonant sounds actually functions, Mojsin (2009) suggests to "know how the instruments of the mouth work together" (p. 29). Author furthermore defines consonants and points of articulation:

A consonant is a sound that is made when the airflow is blocked by either your lips or your tongue. The different places where this block may occur are called "points of articulation." The point of articulation is, therefore, a point of contact of one part of your mouth with another part (p. 29).

Mojsin gives examples of alveolar, velar and bilabial consonants without using the actual phonetic terminology and she rather recommends awareness of these features than the full academic knowledge. She also provides an illustrated picture of articulators.
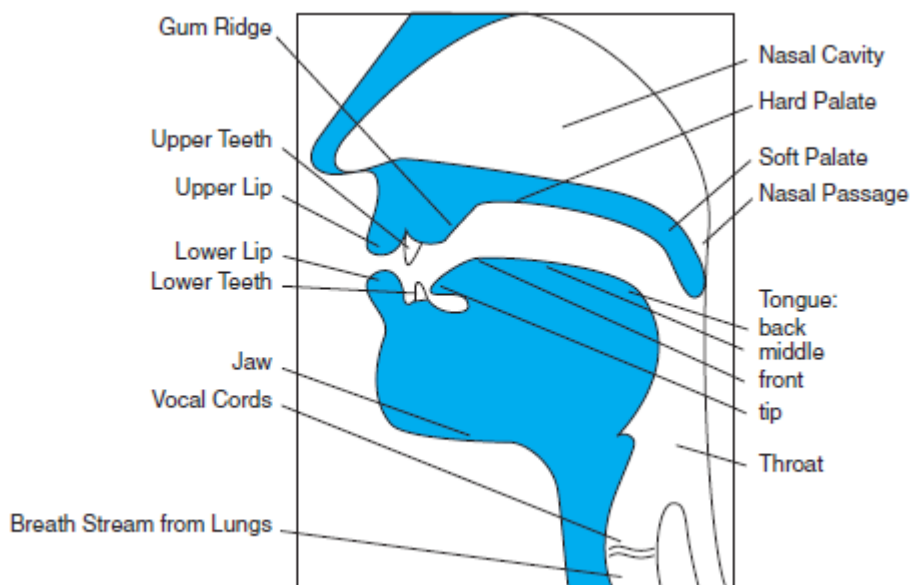
Figure 2. Forming American Consonants (Mojsin, 2009, p. 29)

The course book introduces the issue of sonority as well as Skaličková (1974). Mojsin highlights the issue of voiceless and voiced consonants in connection to the length of the preceding vowel, which can be either prolonged or shortened depending on consonant's sonority. In her opinion students should be aware of sonority in the connection to the correct pronunciation of *-ed* and *-s* endings of words. To demonstrate how to distinguish between voiced and voiceless consonants the author suggests observing the changing intensity of vocal cords' vibrations. This process can be monitored when a person touches his or her neck (Mojsin, 2009, p. 30).

The brief description of sonority is followed by a division of consonants into three tables: *Voiceless and Voiced Consonants Pairs*, *More Voiced Consonants* and a separate table containing the consonant [η]. The first table contains plosive, fricative and affricate consonants while the second (*More Voiced Consonants*) introduces nasals and approximants (Mojsin, 2009, p. 30).

All of the tables furthermore provide a detailed description of the mouth cavity settings and the moves of the tongue. The manual is particularly helpful for consonants [T, Δ, ρ] that have no equivalent in Czech and therefore they are pronunciation obstacles for many ESL or EFL students.

Minimal pairs in the table *Voiceless and Voiced Consonants Pairs* are chosen to show the behavior of each consonant at the beginning of a word as well as at the end. With the only exception of consonants [Σ] and [Z] Mojsin has chosen deliberately minimal pairs to demonstrate a potential change of meaning when the sonority of respective consonant is altered.

Table 2

Voiceless Consonants (vocal cords do not vibrate)		Voiced Consonants (vocal cords vibrate)		How to Produce the Sound
[p]	pet rope	[b]	bet robe	Lips start fully together, then part quickly to produce a small release of air.
[t]	ten seat	[d]	den seed	Tip of the tongue is slightly tense as it firmly touches and then releases the gum ridge.
[k]	class back	[g]	glass bag	Back of tongue presses up against soft palate (back of mouth) and releases.
[f]	fault leaf	[v]	vault leave	Lower lips lightly touch upper teeth; vibration occurs on the lips from the flow of air created.
[T]	thank breath	[Δ]	this breathe	Tip of the tongue touches back of front teeth or edges of front teeth. Air flows out between tongue and teeth.
[σ]	sink price	[ζ]	zinc prize	Sides of tongue touch middle and back upper teeth. Tip of tongue is lowered a bit. Air flows out of middle part of the tongue.
[Σ]	pressure wish	[Z]	pleasure massage	Tip of tongue is down, sides of tongue are against upper teeth on sides of mouth. Air flows out through middle of tongue.
[τΣ]	choke rich	[δZ]	joke ridge	Tip of tongue is down, sides of tongue are against upper teeth on the side of mouth. Tip of tongue quickly touches gum ridge and then releases.

Table 2. Voiceless and Voiced Consonants Pairs (Mojsin, 2009, p. 30)

Table 3

[μ]	mom from lemon	Lips together. Air flows out of the nose.
[ν]	non fun any	Tip of tongue touches gum ridge, and the sides of the tongue touch upper teeth; air any flows out of the nose.
[N]	going spring king	Back of the tongue touches the soft palate; air flows out of the nose.
[λ]	love will yellow	Tip of tongue touches upper gum ridge. Tongue is tense. Air comes out on the sides of the tongue, at the corners of the mouth.
[ρ]	red four card	There are two ways to produce this sound: 1: Tip of tongue curls a bit and then is pulled back slightly. 2: Tip of tongue is down; center of the tongue touches hard palate.
[ω]	win lower quiet	Rounded lips as for the vowel /u/ in *moon*. Air flows out through the lips. Tongue is in position for the vowel sound that follows the /w/.
[ψ]	yes mayor young	Tip of tongue touches lower front teeth. Front of tongue is raised near the hard palate.

Table 3. More Voiced Consonants (Mojsin, 2009, p. 31)

Table 4

[h]	happy behave who	Vocal cords are tense and restricted, back of tongue is pushed against the throat to create friction as the air flows out from the back of the mouth.

Table 4. The Consonant [h] (Mojsin, 2009, p. 31)

7.2.1 Vowel length and voiced and voiceless consonants

After introducing consonants Mojsin returns to the issue of prolonging vowels in case of a voiced preceding consonant. She warns not to change the sound of vowel when prolonging it. The vowel [I], for instance, could be lengthened, but it shall not become the vowel [ɪ]. Therefore words *hid* and *heed* are pronounced differently.

Although a wrong use of [ɪ] concerns mainly Chinese speakers (Mojsin, *Native Language Guide*, p. 132), it rarely occurred in Veronika's pronunciation as well. This feature is explained as a consequence of experiments with exaggerating of the vowel prolongation because it completely disappeared in the later phase of the research when Veronika pronounced it automatically.

7.2.2 Stops and continuants

Besides sonority aspect, Mojsin categorizes consonants as 'stops' and 'continuants'. She defines continuants as the consonants that can be released for as long as there is an air in the lungs e.g. the [σ] sound in the word "yesssssssss". Stops, on the contrary, are consonants stopped by the closure of the lips (Mojsin does not mention in this context other e.g. alveolar consonants that are stops too, even though they are not stopped by the closure of lips). For example the consonant [β] in the word *job* cannot be continued and that is why it is considered to be a stop (Mojsin, 2009, p. 33).

7.2.3 Holding Final Stops

An interesting feature of General American that Mojsin presents is what she calls holding final stops. This process involves holding lips closed after

pronouncing words ending with consonants [π, β, τ, δ, g]. Although this rule does not always apply, it is generally used by Americans (Mojsin, 2009, p. 33).

The sound of the stopped consonant is slightly reminiscent of glotalization of RP speakers. The main difference is obviously in the actual production of the sound. RP speakers use their glottis to produce the glottal stops whereas GenAm speakers produce it with their lips or tongues.

Mojsin states the following about the final stops followed by words beginning with consonants:

The final stop is always held when the next word within the same sentence begins with a consonant. However, when a word with the final stop is at the end of a sentence, the rule is much more flexible. The final sound can either be held or released (p. 33).

The implementation of holding final stops into Veronika's speech was complicated. Mojsin herself does not provide a complete manual when to use stops and in other sources used in the research this feature was barely mentioned. For instance Cook (2000) in the similar course book *American Accent Training* does not even mention such an aspect of General American. Veronika holds final stops only occasionally and it happens more frequently at the end of sentences, in case of consonant [t] or in utterances than between two words like Mojsin described.

7.3 Difficult Consonants

In the chapter *Problematic Consonants* Mojsin focuses in detail on the specific consonants or the consonant clusters causing frequent pronunciation obstacles to

students. In the following paragraphs three of those consonants that caused Veronika most difficulties will be introduced.

7.3.1 Various t Sounds of American English

The sound of *t* is in Mojsin's opinion one of "the most distinctly American consonants" (p. 34). It can be pronounced in several different ways. The resulting sound of the letter *t* depends on its position in a word (in connection to other specific consonants like [n] in the word *mountain*) or in a sentence. The *t* can sometimes turn into the sound that reminds [d] (e.g. atom, water), it can be held or not pronounced at all.

The held t

The held *t* is one of the consonant stops. To pronounce it correctly, Mojsin advises touching the gum ridge with a tongue without the final release of the tongue. As the second way to pronounce this sound she suggests glotalization: "The other way to make this kind of silent *t* is just to press the vocal cords together to stop the airflow, and then release" (p. 34). Veronika found the second method more easily applicable and preferred to glotalize rather than not releasing the tongue from the position behind her teeth.

Mojsin emphasizes holding *t* as a prominent feature of a native speaker in comparison to non-native speakers who can be easily recognized when they release it. In contrast to other final stops as [p, b, d, g] holding final *t* appeared quite often in many audio materials that was used in the research. Although the final *t* is in Mojsin's opinion held almost every time, she adds as well a note that introduces specific situations when it is released:

37

You will sometimes hear Americans release the final *t*. If they do, it's usually at the end of a phrase or a sentence, or for special emphasis of a word. For example: "That's great!" "It's so hot!" There is no absolute rule about always holding the *t*, but keep in mind that if you release the *t* at the end of every word, it will sound like a foreign accent (p. 35).

Guided by this note, Veronika was instructed to hold the final *t* at least in some intervals in her speech or in the pronunciation of some frequently used words such as *but* or *not*. In author's opinion, learning to pronounce these words with the holding of *t* can reduce the impression of a foreign accent. It will help Veronika as well, thus she does not have to think about holding *t* in every word ending with it and as she grows confident using it, there is a possibility she will apply it on more words.

The Sound of t in Connection to the Consonant n

Pronunciation of the consonant *t* depends on its position in the word as well. Mojsin claims that in the words where the *t* is followed by [n] sound, *t* is always held. This rule applies to words such as *certain* or *mountain* (Mojsin, 2009, p. 36). Holding *t* within the word means that the residual air that would be normally used on full pronunciation of *t* must be released through the nose.

As for words where the [v] sound precedes *t*, the sound of *t* is completely omitted. The feature occurs in words such as international [Iνρ∪νΘΣνλ] or twenty [τωενι] (Mojsin, 2009, p. 36).

The 'Fast d' Sound

Mojsin recognizes the *t* sound that she calls "fast d". It is an additional sound to the alveolar [δ] and according to the author in some languages this sound is also described as the "rolling r". Production of this sound is realized by the movement of the tongue that quickly touches the upper gum ridge. Mojsin additionally mentions the term "tapped t" that is very close to Gimson's definition of the "voiced tap" (Gimson, 2008, p. 85; Mojsin, 2009, p. 38).

The sound of "fast d" appears in some specific words where the consonant *t* stands between two vowels e.g. *better*, before [λ] sound like in the word *little* and after [ρ] sound e.g. *party*. It as well occurs between two words provided the first word ends with the consonant t. "Fast d" thus appears in utterances as *it is* or *get up* (Mojsin, 2009, p. 37).

The sound of voiced tap was one of the pronunciation obstacles for Veronika as well. She quite easily and authentically managed to pronounce "fast d" in words like *matter* or in the middle of above mentioned utterances. However, in words where the diphthong [εI] preceded t, she was not able to clearly pronounce the tap e.g. words *later* and *waiter*. The sound she pronounced always turned into the simple alveolar [δ] or [ρ]. In order to avoid a strong sound of [d], she was recommended pronouncing the sound that is close to a quick [ρ]. However, it turned out that Veronika's regular pronunciation of [ρ] sound takes place in the back of her mouth in the way that could be seen in the picture bellow (Method 1). Previous recommendation, on the contrary, worked on the presumption she would use her tongue touching her gum ridge as shown by the Method 2.
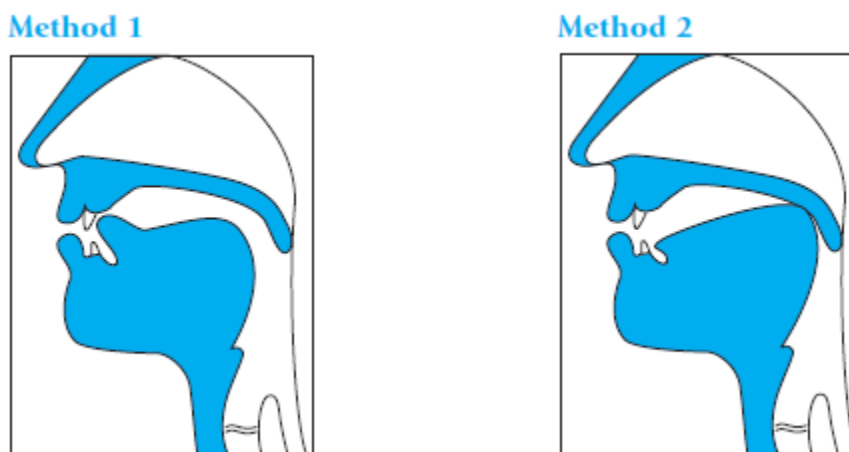
Figure 3. Forming the American r (Mojsin, 2009, p. 48)

Her attempts to pronounce the tap in this particular case were more or less successful. The resulting phoneme she uses has not been fixated in the concrete position and it always fluctuates between the alveolar [δ] and [ρ].

7.3.2 The [v] sound

The [ϖ] phoneme was natural for Veronika to pronounce as well. However, she had some difficulties pronouncing [ϖ] in words like *visit* or *vehicle*. Instead of relatively relaxed position of the mouth in the pronunciation of [ϖ], her lips tend to round a bit and pronounce [ω]. This problem probably lies in her subconscious. She is aware of the correct pronunciation of *v* as well as she knows it is pronounced in such words. The problem probably originates in exaggerating and the hypercorrectness Veronika tried to keep when she was learning the phoneme [ω].

7.3.3 Other Difficult Consonants

As for other consonants categorized by Mojsin as 'problematic', Veronika found no difficulties pronouncing them. Mostly she manages to pronounce accurately even dental fricatives [τ,Δ], that belong among frequently mispronounced phonemes. Mojsin in this chapter draws attention to

the pronunciation of -s and -ed word endings and [τΣρ] and [δΖρ] affricates appearing for example in the words *traffic* or *dream*. Author points out to -ing endings [N], which pronunciations non-native speakers frequently replace with [v] (Mojsin, 2009, p. 39-47).

All of the consonants Mojsin points out to have been a regular part of Veronika's English speech or she implemented them immediately with a permanent effect. Increase of awareness and revising them was enough for her to remember them and to use them in the "authentic American way".

7.4 Stress and Intonation

In the chapters concerning suprasegmental features Mojsin explains the basic rules of stress and intonation. Due to the description of these features in the introductory theoretical chapters, this section will not engage in this issue too much. Veronika was introduced to stress, rhythm and intonation mainly from other sources and thus this chapter and its content is of lesser importance for this study.

Mojsin divides the suprasegmental section into the three chapters: *Syllable Stress*, *Word Stress* and *Intonation*.

In the first chapter the author recognizes stressed and unstressed syllables and the corresponding stressed and reduced vowels as well as she demonstrates the danger of stressing the wrong syllable as it can happen in the word *invalid*. The most useful section of this chapter is the guideline to syllable stress patterns. Mojsin mentions here some of the basic rules for stressed syllables in the two-syllable words. She claims that in many cases stress lies on the first syllable for nouns and on the second for verbs as could be seen in the example of words *teacher* and *attach*. She as well adds there are

many exceptions and encourages students to look up new words in a dictionary or consult them with a native speaker (Mojsin, 2009, p. 69).

In this chapter another inconsistency in the use of IPA symbols has been detected. The author presents schwa by the following sentence: "The vowel within the unstressed syllable is reduced and becomes a neutral, short vowel called the "schwa" and is pronounced as [↔]" (Mojsin, 2009, p. 66). In the exercise part, where she stresses the contrast of different pronunciations of words like man and salesman (to show changing pronunciation of reduced vowels) she uses the symbol [ ]. Although these symbols differ from each other only a little, this can be confusing for some students.

The chapter dealing with word stress focuses on stressing a word as an entire unit. Mojsin in this section explains which of the compound words should be stressed, and that stress should be put on the noun providing that it is combined with an adjective. She explains where should be stress posited in phrasal verbs and abbreviations as well as in the names of places and people (Mojsin, 2009, p. 78-84).

However, the most important part of this chapter (for the purpose of the research) is the section concerning word stress within a sentence. Mojsin introduces the lengthening of stressed vowels and the role of content words in connection to the overall sentence stress. She defines content words as words carrying the meaning that would provide the general idea of a sentence even if all of the surrounding words would be removed e.g *went, store,* and *morning* in the sentence *I went to the store this morning*. As for verbs she highlights the necessity of stressing the main verbs rather than participles, gerunds or modal verbs. In addition, in the part concerning nouns, she suggests putting stress on the nouns and names e.g. *woman* or *Kate* and leaving the pronouns such as *he* or *it* unstressed (Mojsin, 2009, p. 87).

The part dealing with the weak forms of words emphasizes reduced words that are usually said very quickly and contain the neutral schwa sound replacing the original stressed vowel sounds. Mojsin mentions as well the relative position of stress. Words are stressed not solely in compliance with the stressing rules but they are stressed as well in order to emphasize particular words (if there is a need for clarification). It means that even preposition or commonly unstressed auxiliaries could be stressed in the certain situations (Mojsin, 2009, p. 93).

Mojsin defines intonation as the "rising and falling melody" that people use to express their intentions or emotions (p. 95). She gives similar instructions as Kelly (see page 13). Besides introducing various situations in which intonation is supposed to rise or fall, Mojsin points out to the issue of unfinished thoughts and to introductory phrases. As for unfinished thoughts, she instructs to raise the pitch at the end of the utterance as it indicates a possible continuing of the sentence. The same rule applies for the introductory phrases e.g. *as a matter of fact* (Mojsin, 2009, p. 97-98).

Veronika's ability to put the stress on the words in agreement with the stressing rules is very natural and quite automatic. The intonation and the melody of her spontaneous speech seems to flow smoothly as it corresponds with usually accurate sentence stress. Subtle deviations from authentic native-like pronunciation occur when she puts stress on a different syllable within the particular word. In the author's opinion Veronika has acquired her fluent speech by intensive and long-term listening to real native speakers in American movies and TV shows. Her intonation in the reading of text, on the contrary, is less natural and does not sound authentic either. Although she stresses regularly and accurately in her spontaneous speech, this does not apply when she has a visual contact with the content. Even her intonation in this case has similar unexpected rises in those parts of sentence where intonation should fall or stay at

the same level. However, recordings of Veronika's "reading" speech became the subject of assessment as they project the accuracy of the overall stress, rhythm and intonation as well. The fluctuating intonation in the recordings of "unprepared" texts was not included into the assessment because it was probably caused by Veronika's little familiarity with the text, and thus she could not phrase accurately the sentences and the compounds.

7.5 Sound like a true native speaker

This chapter in Mojsin (2009) is a guideline to the features of General American that have not been mentioned in any of the previous specialized chapters.

In order to achieve the maximal fluency in speech, Mojsin suggests a "linking words" feature. Author explains that connecting "the last sound of one word to the first sound of the next word ...creates the smooth, uninterrupted sounds that are the key to a natural, fluent sounding speech" (Mojsin, 2009, p. 101). Author provides more detailed instruction in the section *Rules for Linking*. In the part dealing with linking of consonants to vowels, Mojsin recommends imagining the second word of a two-word utterance as if it began with the last consonant of the previous word. She demonstrates her idea on several utterances. For instance the sentence *I like it* she transcribes as "I lie kit" that should correspond more with the GenAm pronunciation (Mojsin, 2009, p. 102).

Although these examples are chosen to introduce the word-linking more simply, in the author's opinion some of them do not take into account all of the pronunciation aspects. Mojsin presents the utterance *deep end* and in the second column called *sounds like* she claims that it could be pronounced as *depend.* This generalization can be dangerous for students as it wipes away significant differences in stress and aspiration.

In the part focusing on linking consonants to the same consonants, Mojsin underlines the importance of not doing a pause between such two words. It is the reason why a native speaker would pronounce the sentence *Help Paul* as *help all* (Mojsin, 2009, p.103).

Mojsin suggests to approach vowel linking as if there was an additional [ω] or [φ] sound (depending on specific vowels which should be connected). The question *How are you* will be thus pronounced as "how ware you" (p. 104). This comparison seems quite functional to me and it was easily applicable for Veronika as well.

Author additionally introduces the reduction of pronouns in connection to the word stress that concerns usually only nouns. Mojsin claims that silencing the first consonant in pronouns happens more frequently in the casual speech but it occurs in the formal speech as well. As an example, Mojsin points out to the sentence *I love her*, where the [η] sound is completely omitted and the sentence sounds like "I lover" (Mojsin, 2009, p. 107).

In the last section of this complex chapter Mojsin adds that native speakers are more likely to use contractions when they pronounce auxiliary verbs. To provide more contextual information about a casual conversation between native speakers, she additionally gives examples of shortening, simplification and slang. For instance the sentence *Do you wanna go* is shortened to *Wanna go* or the word *probably* to "probly" (p. 115). She as well provides the table *Rules and patterns of casual speech* containing helpful examples of everyday speech patterns (Mojsin, 2009, p. 116-117).

Veronika responded to these pronunciation features positively. She adopted linking vowels instinctively and during the research she became more confident in linking consonants as well. Although her performance of these additional native-like pronunciation features is not always balanced, the frequency of word-linking in

Veronika's speech has increased. It has been observed that it occurs much more frequently when she is relaxed and try to sound like a native speaker by speaking faster and mumbling some words that contain reduced vowels. The feature Veronika appreciated the most was the list of slang phrases. She found it very helpful and she quickly acquired many of the words and phrases.

7.6 Memorizing the Exceptions

Mojsin provides a supplementary chapter *Memorizing the Exception*s as the revision of previous chapters. Author focuses on the tricky words such as those with the same spelling but different pronunciation or the words that she labeled as "especially difficult words". This list was comprised of subjectively chosen words with the "high level" of difficultness in pronunciation. Mojsin categorizes them as such because they are words "frequently mispronounced by non-native speakers". She included words such as *aluminum* or *choir* (Mojsin, 2009, p. 121-122).

Other interesting features the author recommends practicing are "words with dropped syllables" and "words with silent letters". The first feature is presented as a list of thirty most common words e.g. *laboratory* in which the sound of the first *o* should be according to Mojsin omitted completely. The same applies for the section *Words with Silent Letters* in which the author arranged these words according to consonants or consonant clusters which are not pronounced e.g. silent *b* in the word *doubt* or silent *k* in the word *knife* (Mojsin, 2009, p. 123-124).

8. The Analysis of Recordings

8.1 Phonemic and Pronunciation Analysis

The following data in the tables are based on the specific features of General American as well as phonemes that either Mojsin or Veronika marked as difficult. The pronunciation of individual words was assessed according to Macmillan online dictionary and Cambridge Free English Dictionary. Every recording set comprised of two recordings. In the first recording Veronika is reading the text the pronunciation of which she prepared and in the second one she reads a text she did not practice.

The pronunciation analysis was divided into vowel and consonant tables. The heading e.g. *1p* indicates that it is the first recording set and the recording of the prepared text (*1u* thus means the first recording set of unprepared text). The abbreviation w.a. stands for weighed average. The *Total ratio* shows the number of phonemes pronounced authentically from all of the studied phonemes in the text. The numbers in the *Success rate* (below the total ratios) indicate the same values expressed as a percentage. The numbers in the *Success rate* (below the w.a. columns) indicate the average success in each of the category.

The specific vowels were studied only in the content words which carried the meaning of the sentence and they would be stressed in a common speech in contrast to auxiliary verbs, prepositions, particles or conjunctions. Some of the studied phonemes and phenomena were not included in all of the texts and thus were not counted among weighted averages or success rates. The feature *holding final t* was counted only if it was followed by another word beginning with the consonant in a text. Repeated mistakes which occurred in the same word were taken into account as well. All the six transcripts could be found in the Appendix A (p. 58).

8.1.1 The First Recording Set

The first recordings were assessed in two tables taking into account the following phonemes:

Table 5

Vowels	1p	1p, w.a. [%]	1u	1u, w.a. [%]
Θ	3/5	60	½	50
A	5/7	71	0/1	0
ʋ	-	-	-	-
oY	0/3	0	0/5	0
Total ratio	8/15		1/8	
Success rate	53	44	13	17

Table 5. Success rate in the pronunciation of vowels (first recording set)

The first recording was taken before Veronika was introduced to all of the GenAm features. It is thus logical she could not cover all of the studied categories. Despite this fact the recording was taken to provide a general picture of Veronika's initial stage of pronunciation. At this stage she was introduced to [Θ, A] phonemes as well as notified about the pronunciation of [oY] she tended to mix up with British [↔Y].

In the first prepared text Veronika managed to pronounce fifty three percent of all the studied vowels. She pronounced authentically three out of five *open a*'s. However, the degree of openness in the pronunciation of these three phonemes was lower than it should be according to Mojsin. It is easily recognizable due to slightly longer duration of the phoneme when the degree of openness is lower. Veronika missed two out of seven phonemes in the pronunciation of [A] and all of the GenAm [oY] she pronounced as [↔Y].

In the unprepared text her score was much lower. It might as well have been caused by the more frequent occurrence of the vowels that were difficult

for Veronika to pronounce and lesser number of the vowels she pronounced quite easily in the second text.

Table 6

Consonants	1p	1p , w.a.[%]	1u	1u, w.a. [%]
pronunciation of [ϖ]	1/1	100	0/1	0
dental fricatives [Δ, T]	11/13	85	11/12	92
holding final t	-	-	-	-
holding t before [ν]	0/2	0	1/3	33
silent t	-	-	-	-
voiced taps	2/2	100	1/2	50
Total ratio	14/20		13/18	
Success rate	70	71	72	44

Table 6. Success rate in the pronunciation of consonants (first recording set)

As for consonants Veronika's score was generally higher. A very interesting phenomenon occurred in the category of *holding t before [v]*. Although Veronika was introduced to this feature in the later phase of the research she instinctively used it in one of the cases of the word *mental* in the second (unprepared) text. The scores in using dental fricatives were high in both prepared and unprepared texts. Veronika was very careful about pronunciation of voiced taps as well.

8.1.2 The Second Recording Set

By the time of the second recording Veronika had been introduced to all of the studied vowels, consonants and special features.

Table 7

Vowels	2p	2p [%]	2u	2u [%]
Θ	¼	25	0/3	0
A	4/8	50	1/2	50
ʊ	-	-	0/3	0
ɔY	½	50	1/1	100
Total ratio	6/14		2/9	
Success rate [%]	43	42	22	38

Table 7. Success rate in the pronunciation of vowels (second recording set)

In comparison to the results of the first recordings success rate in pronunciation of vowels in the prepared text was lower. Veronika managed to pronounce forty three percent of the studied vowels in comparison to fifty three percent in the first recording set. Also average success rate per category slightly decreased. This decrease is explained by Veronika's insufficient preparation for the recording. However, the success rate of the unprepared text increased. This deviation is probably caused by smaller ratio of possible phonemes that could have been pronounced to the phonemes she actually pronounced accurately in comparison to ratio in the prepared text.

An interesting fact is that she managed to pronounce the diphthong [ɔY] authentically in the unprepared text but she did not manage to pronounce all of them correctly in the prepared one. This fact in author's opinion confirms Veronika's sloppy preparation but it as well suggests that the authentic pronunciation of this particular phoneme had been partially implemented into her subconscious and speech.

Table 8

Consonants	2p	2p [%]	2u	2u [%]
pronunciation of [ϖ]	-	-	1/1	100
dental fricatives [Δ, T]	17/17	100	11/12	92
holding final t	2/3	67	0/1	0
holding t before [v]	-	-	-	-
silent t	-	-	0/1	0
voiced taps	2/2	100	4/4	100
Total ratio	21/22		16/19	
Success rate [%]	96	89	84	58

Table 8. Success rate in the pronunciation of consonants (second recording set)

The success rate in pronunciation of consonants significantly increased. Veronika managed to pronounce almost all of the studied consonants and GenAm features. The "holding t before [v]" feature was not measured in this recording set.

The only success rate that has not increased rapidly was average rate per category of the unprepared text. Lower percentage was caused by Veronika's failure in two categories: *holding final t* and *silent t*. Unfortunately, the text she was reading unprepared contained only one studied consonant in each of the categories. It is the reason why these two mistakes decreased the overall percentage of average success.

8.1.3 The Third Recording Set

The third recording set shows an amazing improvement on Veronika's part. The high success rates in all of the categories indicate an excellent preparation as well as a progress in the acquisition of GenAm features. Veronika pronounced the specific features even in the unprepared texts.

Table 9

Vowels	3p	3p [%]	3u	3u [%]
Θ	3/3	100	7/7	100
A	13/14	93	2/2	100
υ	2/2	100	-	-
οY	7/7	100	2/3	67
Total ratio	25/26		11/12	
Success rate [%]	96	98	92	89

Table 9. Success rate in the pronunciation of vowels (third recording set)

Success rates in both prepared and unprepared texts exceeded ninety percent. In the prepared text Veronika made the only mistake by not pronouncing the word *upon* with a clear [A] sound. Lower average success rate per category of unprepared text was caused by inaccurate pronunciation of the word *holds*.

Table 10

Consonants	3p	3p [%]	3u	3u [%]
pronunciation of [ϖ]	2/2	100	1/1	100
dental fricatives [Δ, T]	34/34	100	28/28	100
holding final t	-	-	6/8	75
holding t before [ν]	1/1	100	2/2	100
silent t	3/3	100	-	-
voiced taps	8/8	100	3/3	100
Total ratio	48/48		40/42	
Success rate [%]	100	100	95	95

Table 10. Success rate in the pronunciation of consonants (third recording set)

As for consonants Veronika managed to achieve the maximum hundred percent in the prepared text. It is an excellent result considering a high number (forty eight) of studied phonemes in the text. In the unprepared text Veronika achieved high scores as well. The only mistake she made was not holding the final t between the words *revert back* that repeated twice in the text.

8.1.4 The Overall Average Results

The table below contains the results obtained by making an average of vowel and consonant rates in each of the recording sets and for all of the four percentage values in the columns.

Table 11

	prepared	unprepared	prepared w.a.	unprepared w.a.
1. recording set	62	43	58	31
2. recording set	70	53	66	48
3. recording set	98	94	99	92

Table 11. Overall and weighed averages from the pronunciation success rates of vowels and consonants

There is a clearly visible uptrend in all of the studied categories. The growth rates vary among studied categories as well as the initial percentage in the first recordings.

The data show a significant and much faster progress from the second recording to the third. In author's opinion this phenomenon was caused by Veronika's conscientious preparation and higher motivation. It is as well possible that by the time of the third recording she had properly absorbed and implemented all the new knowledge she has gained throughout the research.

8.2. The Stress, Rhythm and Intonation Analysis

Suprasegmental features of the three recording sets were not quantified. Veronika usually managed to stress the appropriate syllable. There was only one misplaced word stress in the first prepared text. Veronika pronounced the word *recent* as [ρɪ∪σεντ]. As for the second recording set, the only misplaced stress appeared in

the word *prosecuting*, which she pronounced with more reduced first syllable: [πρ□σ□∪κφυPIN].

Veronika's intonation throughout the research developed as well: From quite artificial intonation to a relaxed and natural one. In the first recording of unprepared text her voice quite unexpectedly rose in a few moments for example when she pronounced *because* in the sixth line. An unnatural pause occurred in the same text at the end of the sentence in the passage "before they offended to protect the public". However, Veronika's overall intonation improved throughout the research. In the third recording her intonation flows naturally and her speech is very fluent. The rhythm of her speech gained a regular character as well as sentence and word stress which co-created the whole background for authentic intonation. One of the features that in the author' s opinion helped to make Veronika's intonation smoother was an increased amount of reduction that she employed in her speech in some cases in the form of quick mumbling.

9. Conclusion

The study aimed to find out whether it is possible (and to what extent) for a motivated EFL student to acquire the General American accent. Veronika, an advanced student of English, decided to sound as much as a native speaker of General American as possible. Due to the fact that her mother tongue is Czech, accent reduction was the first necessary step in the process. Veronika's progress was monitored by three recording sets taken in the different stages of the research.

The first part of this study focuses on comparison of both Czech and English language systems from the phonemic point of view. Vowels and consonants are compared with an emphasis on potential obstacles in pronunciation and intelligibility.

In the second part attention is drawn to suprasegmental features of both languages. The basic differences in stress, rhythm and intonation between the two languages are explained as well as the phonetic terms themselves.

The third theoretical section engages in teaching and research methodology. Two main approaches are discussed: factors affecting pronunciation learning and the teaching techniques and activities. The theoretical part also includes a chapter inquiring into an integration of both receptive and productive skills into pronunciation teaching. A special chapter is dedicated to the voice settings as it is frequently neglected but inseparable part of an individual's pronunciation.

General American accent is introduced in the fourth theoretical section with the emphasis put not solely on the accent description but also on providing a historical background. One chapter in this section deals with specific suprasegmental features of General American.

Mastering the American Accent Course Book is the last of theoretical chapters and it partially provides a practical insight into the research. The course book has served

as a manual for American accent teaching and that has therefore been evaluated from a methodological point of view as well. The chapter presents an outline of the book and further elaborates the particular chapters of the book that have been relevant for the research. Some of the sections are followed by discussion describing Veronika's attitude towards the specific GenAm features and the steps she has taken to implement them into her speech.

The practical section consists of analysis of the three recordings sets. In these recordings Veronika reads first the text the pronunciation which she practiced and in the second recording she reads a different text unprepared. The analysis is thus divided into the assessment of pronunciation performance in reading a prepared text and an unprepared one. Each of the analysis deals with vowels and consonants separately studying the average success rates in both categories.

The results have shown a significant uptrend in Veronika's pronunciation. The data indicate a progressive acquisition of all of the studied phonemes and the specific General American features. The success rates of the final recording set reached almost a hundred percent and even the indicators showing the average success rate in each of the studied category were close to ninety percent.

The overall analysis of the recordings implies that Veronika has managed to reduce her accent and has successfully implemented the features of General American into her speech. An added value was provided by Veronika herself when she tested her newly acquired accent in the USA by speaking and listening to native speakers. She has had authentic positive feedback, considers her accent to have significantly improved and feels confident in her speech. Whether the state of her pronunciation remains permanent will probably depend on her attitude and further development and practice of her speaking skills.

Mastering the American Accent course book proved to be a suitable source for teaching General American accent in this case study. However, Veronika's resulting pronunciation was supported by a number of supplementary sources providing a solid theoretical background and authentic audio materials.

Although acquiring the particular English accent by an EFL student is considered to be difficult or almost impossible, it can be at least approximately accomplished with a strong motivation and determination. The extent of such acquisitions depends on many factors and further research could show their roles and importance in this issue.

Appendix A

Transcripts of the Recordings

Glossary to the transcripts

Ρ - voiced tap

ǃ – holding final t

ν - holding t before [n]

ɾ - silent t

All of the IPA symbols in the transcripts indicate the correct English or authentic General American pronunciation of the above written phonemes. Mispronounced phonemes are marked red. Mispronounced words are highlighted gray.

Transcript of the First Recordings

Prepared text

What the psycholinguistic accounts of Smith and Goodman tended to neglect was the
 Δ   T   Δ
social nature of the reading process. Consequently, later description of the reading
              Δ   A   A   P   Δ
process, including Goodman's more recent work, have turned to the consideration of
   A   Δ
sociolinguistic factors, that is the way language use, in this case written language use, is
              Θ   Δ   Δ   Θ   Δ   Θ
affected by factors both in the immediate communicative situation between reader and
              Θ   oY   Δ   P
writer and in the wider institutional and sociocultural context discussed in 3. For it is
              Δ   A   T
not just psychological, cognitive, or affective factors which influence our interpretation
   A   A   A   Θ
of texts, but social ones. Kress (1985:44) says 'so although from individual's point of
                                                   oY   oY
view her or his reading "just my personal opinion", that personal opinion is socially
ν   Δ
constructed'.

Mispronounced words: communicative

Wallace (1992, p. 43)

Unprepared text

This minefield has just seen an eight-year, £8m struggle over the new draft mental
                   oY   Δ   Θ   ν

health bill come to a messy end. The attempt to rewrite mental health law began with an
  T   Δ   T   T

earlier individual case; a tragic event which re-enforced in the public mind the link
                    Δ   Δ

between mental illness and violence. Michael Stone, convicted in 1996 for killing Lin
      ν   v   oY

and Megan Russell, had a dangerous, severe personality disorder, but could not be held
                 P   A

under mental health legislation because he was considered untreatable. The proposed
    ν   P   Δ
oY

new bill abandoned this criterion, so that people like Stone could be deprived of their
       Θ   Δ   Δ   oY   Δ

liberty before they offended to protect the public. If it had been merely a public
  P   Δ   Δ

protection bill, it might conceivably have been coherent.
                oY

Mispronounced words: dangerous, criterion, merely, coherent

Petit-Zeman (2006)

Prepared text

According to Goodman, this is done on every cognitive level, including an optical
        Δ   A P   A

cycle, so that readers do not have to decode every letter or word: instead, they
  oY Δ **!**   A   oY   P   Δ

reconstruct the text according to the graphic cues they have sampled, aided by
   ! Δ   Δ Θ   Δ   Θ

knowledge of the language and its redundancy rules. In addition, the theory claims that
  A   Δ Θ   Δ T   Δ **!**

this is a universal process, and posits the Reading Universals Hypothesis: the model
Δ   A A Δ   A T Δ A

'has been built through the study of English reading, but it must be applicable to reading
     T   Δ

in all languages and all orthographies.
  Θ   T

Paran (1995, p. 25)

Unprepared text

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Brian Murphy told the judge "the charges against Mr.
    A   oY Δ   Δ

Castro are based on premeditated, deliberate and depraved decisions to snatch three
        P   Θ T

young ladies from Cleveland's West Side streets to be used in whatever self-gratifying,
                  P   P

self-serving way he saw fit."

"Today, the situation has turned, your honor," Murphy said. "Mr. Castro stands before
  Δ   Θ

you as a captive. … The women are free to resume their lives that were interrupted."
  Θ   Δ   υ Δ Δ   /

Cleveland Municipal Court Judge Lauren Moore ordered Castro held on $8 million
    υ   **!**

bond — $2 million for each of the four victims — the three women and the child born
 A   Δ ϖ Δ T   Δ

to one of them during her captivity
  Δ υ   P

Mispronounced words: prosecuting

Investigators Find Suicide Note From Cleveland Kidnapping Suspect

(https://fox2now.com/2013/05/09/investigators-find-suicide-note-from-cleveland-

kidnapping-suspect/)

Prepared text

What is Design Thinking?

1. Design Thinking is human-centered
      T   /
- Focus on people / customers and their needs and not on a specific technology or
  oY   Δ   A   A
  other conditions.
  Δ
- Methods therefore used are observations, interviews, brainstorming,
    T   Δ   A   /
  prototyping…
   P
- Innovating at the intersection of business, technology and people leads to
      P   Δ /   A
  radical, new experience innovation.
  Θ   υ
- The user is the one to decide if a product or a service should exist or be
 Δ   Δ   A
  established.
   Θ
2. Design Thinking is an iterative learning process
     T   P   A
- During anytime of the projects, Design Thinking teams work with the iterative
  υ   Δ A   T   T Δ   P
  approach: Redefining the problem, needfinding, ideation, building of prototypes,
  oY   Δ   A
  oY P
  testing with the user.
    T Δ
- The iterative approach enables a higher expertise in the field of human needs
 Δ   P   oY   Δ
  and supports variety of results.
    ϖ   P
3. Design Thinking projects consist of diverging and converging phases
    T   A
- Design Thinking enables team members to think diverse.
    T   T
- The results of diverse thinking build the base for the converging finalization.
 Δ   T   Δ   Δ

- Design Thinking is a structured method with clearly defined milestones over a
    T   T   T   oY oY
  project timeline.

A
- Projects are usually built upon a certain goal defined in the beginning. Design
A   A   ν oY   Δ
- Thinking projects on the other hand, have a lot of ambiguity to it as the outcome
  T   A   Δ   Δ   Θ   A   P   Δ
  is open until the very final phase.
  oY   Δ   ϖ

What is Design Thinking? (http://dthsg.com/what-is-design-thinking/)

Unprepared text

The Himalayan Jumping Spider
Δ
Can survive: Low pressure, freezing temperatures.
  Θ   oY
The polar opposite of the devil worm, this spider holds the record for the animal that
Δ   oY A   Δ   Δ   oY Δ   Δ Θ   Δ !
claims residency at a higher point than any other (4.1 miles above sea level). It's able to
                                  ! Δ   Δ
survive long periods without food, freezing temperatures, and a distinct lack of
                          Δ   !   ! Θ
atmospheric pressure. The only sources of nutrition available to the Himalayan jumping
Θ   Δ   Δ
spider are the tiny insects that get blown up the mountain by the high winds.
            Δ   Δ   Δ   ν   Δ

The Immortal Jellyfish
Δ   P
Can survive: The aging process.
  Θ   Δ   A
These jellyfish have the ability to revert back to their infant stages in adverse
Δ   Δ   P   ! Θ   Δ   ν !
conditions, making them effectively immortal. There doesn't seem to be any limit on the
                        Δ   P   Δ   Δ
number of times that they are able to revert back to their infancy. Unfortunately, they're
              Δ ! Δ   ! Θ   Δ

highly vulnerable to predation and disease every time they live out their immature,
      ϖ   Δ   Δ
smaller stages.

Mispronounced words: vulnerable

6 Extreme Animals Sure To Survive The Apocalypse

(http://www.realclear.com/science/2013/07/09/extreme_animals_that_can_survive

_the_worst_conditions_2222.html)

Appendix B

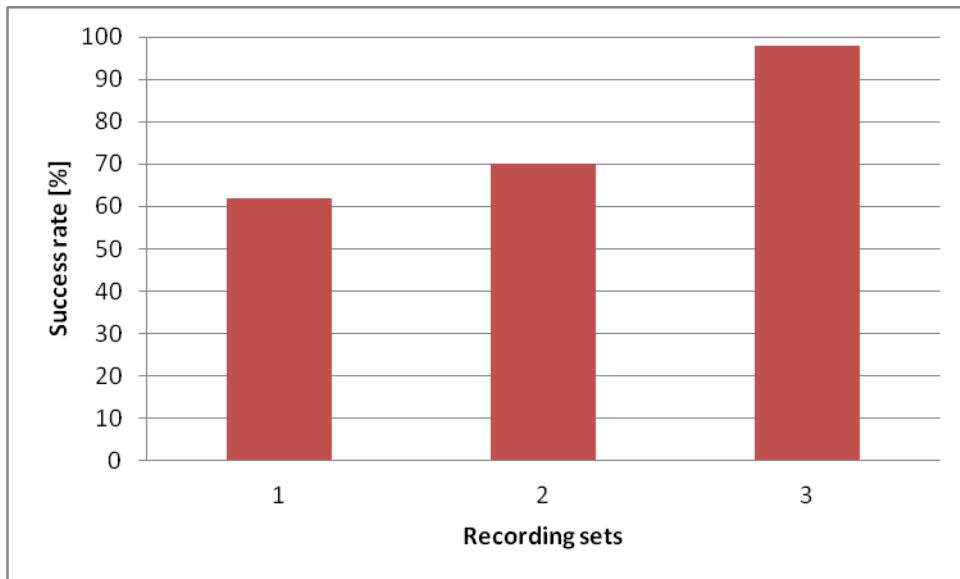## The Development of Veronika's General American Accent

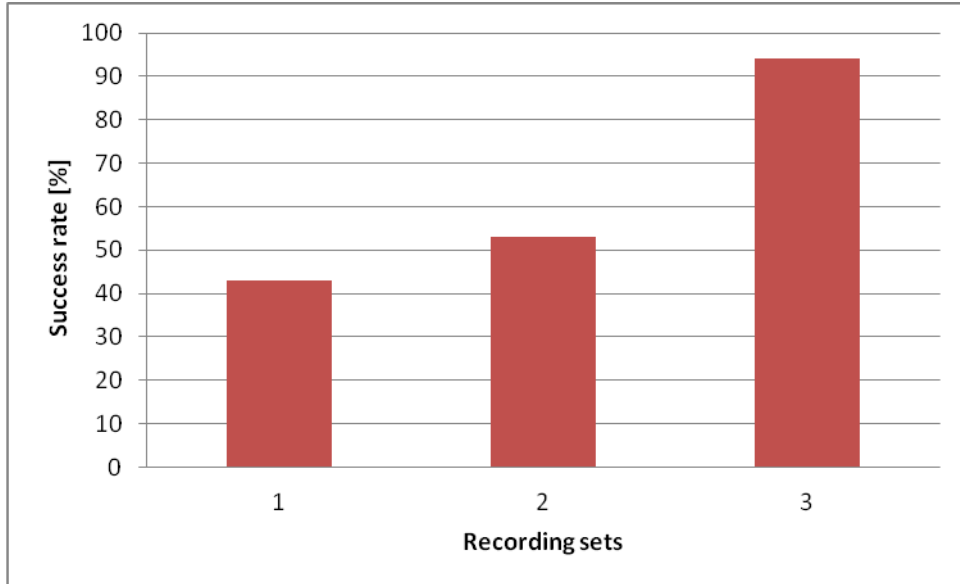Figure 4. The development success rate in the recordings of prepared texts

Figure 5. The development success rate in the recordings of unprepared texts
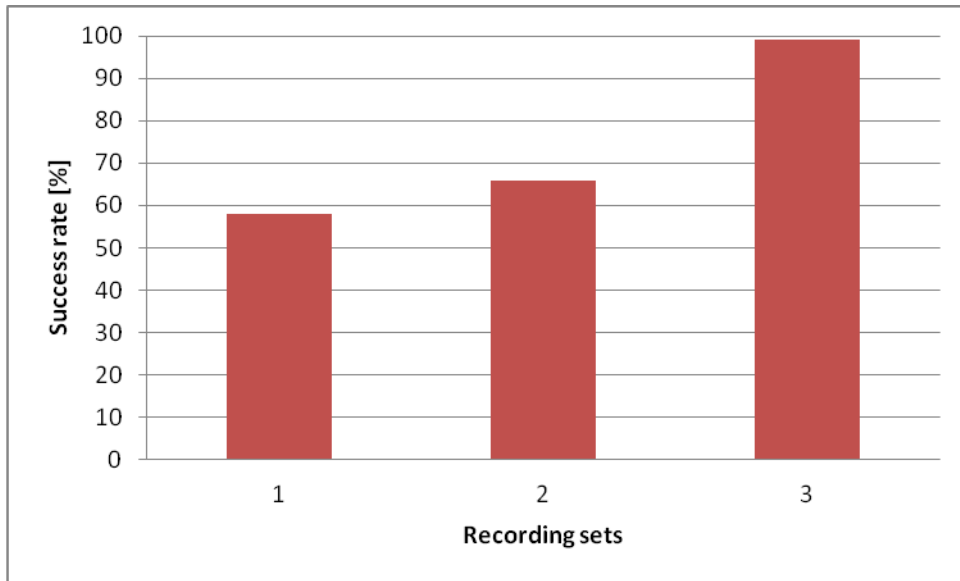
Figure 6. The development average success rate per category in the recordings of
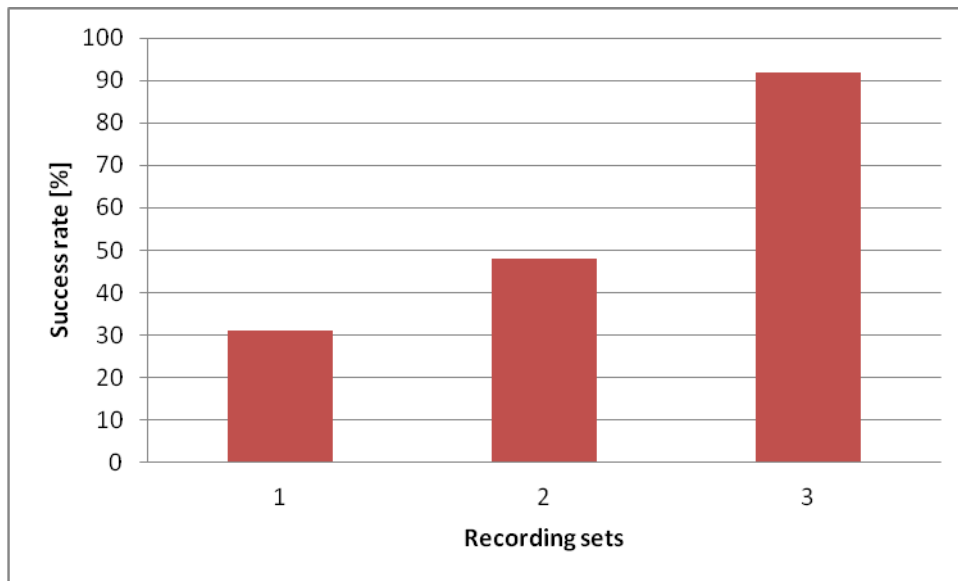
prepared texts

Figure 7. The development average success rate per category in the recordings of

unprepared texts

Appendix C

Feedback Letter from Veronika

As an added value Veronika decided to contribute to the research with the feedback evaluating it from her point of view. She mentions the approaches and teaching methods that influenced her pronunciation as well as she provides her own opinion about the progress she has made.

Teaching methods

At first, I was quite unhappy, especially about the amount of words in the *Collection of errors* I was supposed to look up in a dictionary and verify their pronunciation (American and British too). Although it was very useful, it was really time consuming. It was also important we returned to it a few times throughout the research and used the words intentionally within a conversation. Otherwise this part of the work would be lost because of an insufficiency in repeating and simply forgot. We both use, as we have realized, different dictionaries and the phonetic alphabet used in each of them varied. Fortunately, I was allowed to use a phonetic transcription of the dictionary I use.

I am also grateful that I was required to learn the symbols of the phonetic alphabet – now when I look up a pronunciation of a word in a dictionary, I feel confident about decoding it correctly. Moreover, I started to see certain patterns in the way that General American pronunciation goes and now I am able to predict it with a great accuracy. It vastly helped me to acquire the basic principles so I can apply it in a common speech. It also made me feel confident even when I read the words, whose pronunciation I'm not sure of. I found really helpful and useful when I was asked to

prepare a certain passage of a text so I could read it with the right pronunciation and intonation.

Really amazing technique was when I could listen to a voice recording of a native speaker and I could read a transcript of the speech at the same time. It was much easier for me to repeat it afterwards. In the course book a certain group of words followed by a few rather short sentences occurred frequently as well. However, they were made up too artificially, in my opinion. I listened to all of them, but I rather prefer a natural text such as an article. I do not think that every lesson should be consisted of just going through the course book. Besides, I did not trust the pronunciation of the male voice in the course book's recordings, because it clearly (and quite frequently) did not correspond with the theoretical description of particular features. I really appreciated when I could also watch a person speaking fluently in a video and repeat after him or her.

I think a common conversation as a part of the training should take place during every lesson as well. It is probably the only way to verify that a student can apply the newly acquired knowledge in practice.

I can imagine a part of the training that could also include a work with the new vocabulary we ran into when we worked with the new texts. However, I understand it is not in the spotlight of research's attention.

I positively perceived Hana's effort to provide me with American slang expressions, despite of fact that less is more and smaller amount of expressions but generally more frequently used would be nice.

Difference and confidence

I feel massive difference in my pronunciation now. Above all, now I feel really confident about its consistency and authenticity. I do not think my pronunciation was too bad before, although it became better as well. However, it is mainly the consistency I am so happy about now. If I do not know the right pronunciation of some word I can always look it up and I learn it very fast with a help of knowledge of the phonetic alphabet. I started with the training because I was so disappointed I was frequently asked by people in Florida to repeat myself. A few months after the training ended I have been to a few cities in California and in Las Vegas and I was absolutely thrilled when I came back to the Czech Republic having the experience not being asked to repeat myself, not even once. Apart from that, it is nice to know my pronunciation reached a certain level, so I do not have to be nervous about speaking in public at conferences. Plus, now I truly like listening to myself speaking.

I am not aware of any differences between the General American features I have learned during the research and the actual accent of native speakers.

I would recommend Hana as a pronunciation trainer to anyone interested in learning GenAm accent. Her enthusiasm, empathy and true interest in the matter is overwhelming and I believe it has a direct positive effect on a student's progress.

Works Cited

Cook, A., (2000). *American accent training*. New York: Barron's Educational Series.

Esling, J. H.,Wong R. F., (1983). Voice quality settings and the teaching of pronunciation. *TESOL Quarterly*. 17 (1), 89-95. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/3586426

Gimson, A. C., (2008). *Gimson's pronunciation of English*. 7th ed. Great Britain: Hodder Education.

Kelly, G. (2000). *How to teach pronunciation*. Essex: Pearson Education.

Celce-Murcia, M., Brighton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (2010). *Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide*. Hong kong: Cambridge University Press.

Cruttenden, A. (1997). *Intonation*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from http://books.google.cz/books?id=wfXRzq74X2YC&pg=PA15&hl=cs&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4

Kenworthy, J. (1987). *Teaching English pronunciation*. New York: Longman Inc.

Krčmová, M. (2007). *Úvod do fonetiky a fonologie pro bohemisty*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

Laan, G. P. M. (1997). The contribution of intonation, segmental durations, and spectral features to the perception of a spontaneous and a read speaking style. *Speech Communication*, *22*(1), 43-65. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167639397000125

Mojsin, L., (2009). *Mastering the American accent*. 1st ed. New York: Barron's Educational Series.

Murphy, J. M. (1991). Oral communication in tesol: Integrating speaking, listening, and

pronunciation.*TESOL Quarterly*, *25*(1), 51-75. Retrieved from

http://www.jstor.org/stable/3587028

Paul Meier Dialect Services (2012). *Glossary*. Retrieved from

http://www.paulmeier.com/glossary.pdf.

Skaličková, A., (1974). *Srovnávací fonetika angličtiny a češtiny*. 1st ed. Česká

republika: Academia.

Tomková, K. (2008, March 12). *Stress patterns*. Retrieved from

https://is.muni.cz/auth/el/1421/podzim2012/AJ11501/STRESS_PATTERNS.doc?

studium=573420

Tomková, K. (2012, December 10). *A collection of pronunciation errors*. Retrieved

from

https://is.muni.cz/auth/el/1421/podzim2012/AJ11501/Errors_December_2012.doc

?studium=573420

Vaníčková, P. (2007). *Stress and rythm in English and Czech*. Unpublished bachelor's

thesis, Masaryk university, Brno.

Yoshida, M. *Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide. chapter notes

prepared by Marla Yoshida*. Retrieved from

http://teachingpronunciation.weebly.com/uploads/9/5/9/1/9591739/pronunciationc

hapterhandouts2ndedition.pdf

Websites

Aschmann, R. (n.d.). North American English Dialects, Based on Pronunciation

Patterns.*American English Dialects*. Retrieved April 26, 2014, from

http://aschmann.net/AmEng/

Cambridge Free English Dictionary and Thesaurus. Retrieved from

http://dictionary.cambridge.org/

IDEA International Dialects of English Archive. (n.d.). *IDEA International Dialects of*

English Archive. Retrieved April 26, 2014, from http://www.dialectsarchive.com/

Macmillan Dictionary and Thesaurus: Free English dictionary online. Retrieved from

http://www.macmillandictionary.com/

Selected Excerpts from Spoken WikipediaText & MP3 Files. (n.d.). *Selected Excerpts*

from Spoken Wikipedia for ESL Students. Retrieved April 26, 2014, from

http://www.manythings.org/wikipedia/

Watch & Learn English. (n.d.). *EnglishCentral.com*. Retrieved April 26, 2014, from

http://www.englishcentral.com/videos#!/index/all/all/trending/0

Transcripts of Recordings

6 Extreme Animals Sure To Survive The Apocalypse. (n.d.). *RealClear*. Retrieved April

26, 2014, from

http://www.realclear.com/science/2013/07/09/extreme_animals_that_can_survive

_the_worst_conditions_2222.html

Investigators Find Suicide Note From Cleveland Kidnapping Suspect. (2013, May 9).

Fox2now.com. Retrieved September 14, 2013, Retrieved from

https://fox2now.com/2013/05/09/investigators-find-suicide-note-from-cleveland-

kidnapping-suspect/

Paran, A. (1995). Reading in efl: facts and fictions. *ELT journal*, *50*(1), 25-34.

Retrieved from http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/content/50/1/25.full.pdf

Petit-Zeman, S. (2006, May 20). Dilemmas of insanity. *Prospect*. Retrieved from

https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/dilemmasofinsanity/#.U1t0SPl_v

SZ

Wallace, C. (1992). *Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

What is Design Thinking?. (n.d.). *Design Thinking HSG Established in 2005*

    Prototyping since back then. Retrieved April 26, 2014, from

    http://dthsg.com/what-is-design-thinking/

Summary

The study aimed to find out whether it is possible (and to what extent) for a motivated EFL student to acquire the General American accent. Veronika, an advanced student of English, decided to sound as much as a native speaker of General American as possible. Accent reduction was the first necessary step in the process. Veronika's progress was monitored in three recording sets taken at different stages of the research.

The theoretical section of the study consists of five parts. The first two parts focus on the comparison of both Czech and English language systems from the phonemic as well as from the suprasegmental points of view. The third part engages in teaching and research methodology and the fourth one describes the General American accent. *Mastering the American Accent Course Book*, a guideline of the research in terms of teaching General American, is the last of the theoretical chapters. The course book has been evaluated from a methodological point of view as well.

The results have shown a significant uptrend in Veronika's pronunciation. The data indicate a progressive acquisition of all of the studied phonemes and the specific General American features. The overall analysis of the recordings implies that Veronika has managed to reduce her accent and has successfully implemented the features of General American into her speech. Veronika revisited the USA after the research and she has tested her newly acquired accent there by speaking and listening to native speakers. She has had authentic positive feedback, considers her accent to have significantly improved and feels confident in her speech.

Keywords: accent reduction, pronunciation teaching, General American, accent training, suprasegmental features, common pronunciation mistakes

Resumé

Práce se zabývá tím, zda a do jaké míry je možné, aby si motivovaná studentka angličtiny (EFL) osvojila americký akcent. Veronika se rozhodla, že se chce co nejvíce přiblížit výslovnosti rodilého mluvčího. Prvním nezbytným krokem výzkumu byla modifikace jejího vlastního akcentu. Veroničin pokrok byl sledován ve třech sadách nahrávek, které byly pořízeny v jednotlivých fázích výzkumu.

Teoretická sekce práce se skládá z pěti částí. První dvě se věnují srovnání češtiny a angličtiny z výslovnostního a suprasegmentálního hlediska. Třetí část se zabývá výukovou a výzkumnou metodologii a čtvrtá popisuje americký akcent. Učebnice *Mastering the American Accent*, která sloužila jako průvodce americkým akcentem, je poslední teoretickou kapitolou této práce. Učebnice byla v této kapitole hodnocena taktéž z metodologického hlediska.

Byl prokázán výrazný vzestupný trend ve Veroničině výslovnosti. Ze získaných dat je patrné její postupné osvojení všech studovaných fonémů a specifických prvků amerického akcentu. Z celkové analýzy nahrávek vyplývá, že Veronika dokázala nejen poopravit svůj vlastní akcent, ale také úspěšně zakomponovat prvky amerického akcentu do své výslovnosti. Po ukončení výzkumu navštívila Veronika opět USA, což jí umožnilo otestovat svůj nový akcent při běžné komunikaci s rodilými mluvčími. Dostala velmi pozitivní zpětnou vazbu. Veronika dodává, že pociťuje výrazné zlepšení svojí výslovnosti a cítí se nyní mnohem sebevědoměji při anglické konverzaci.

Klíčová slova: modifikace akcentu, výuka výslovnosti, americký akcent, trénování výslovnosti, suprasegmentální jevy, běžné chyby ve výslovnosti