

# TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

of DIFFERENT SOUNDS between CZECH and ENGLISH

LANGUAGE at a BASIC SCHOOL

IVANA ŮLEHLOVÁ

In - Service III

PhDr. Marcela Malá

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VYSOKÁ ŠKOLA STROJNÍ A TEXTILNÍ

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## OUTLINE

Thesis: Some English sounds are similar to Czech ones. But I consider most important the special vowels and consonants that are different in the pronunciation from our native language.

## I. Methodology of Teaching Pronunciation

- A. Current trends in teaching pronunciation
- B. Pronunciation theories in text books used at basic schools
- C. My own way of teaching pronunciation

## II. Proposal for an "Auxiliary Pronunciation Workbook" for EFL teachers at beginners level

## A. Different vowels

- 1. æ /man/
- 2. ɜ' /girl/
- 3. ə /a pen/

## B. Different consonants

- 1. p, t, k
- 2. r /room/
- 3. w /window/
- 4. ɪ /English/
- 5. θ /think/
- 6. ð /the father/

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### Abstract

Everybody can find differences between foreign languages. One of them is the pronunciation. If you want to understand a foreign language well, you should have to pronounce its speech sound well too. The English language has several sounds different from Czech sounds. The final Paper offers three vowels and six consonants which are most difficult in pronunciation for children who start learning English. The methodology of teaching of each vowel and consonant has seven steps. Going through these steps, you can find there the explanation, practical exercises, games and tests. After using the methodology, the children are able to read a simple text without pronouncing each letter as it is common in the Czech language.



## I. Methodology of Teaching Pronunciation

### A. Current trends in teaching pronunciation

Pronouncing a language is a skill. Each of us is an expert in the pronunciation of his/her own language. If we want to learn the English language we should know the technique of the pronunciation of the language.

Some experts say that the most important part of a language teacher's technique is his/her own performance that is one's ability to demonstrate the spoken language. Then a teacher can use the tape-recorder to demonstrate other voices of native speakers.

"When we learn our own language as babies, we learn to recognize certain sounds and to say those sounds. It's as if we develop a box in our brain for each sound. When we hear a sound, we put it in the correct box and understand it. When we speak, we take the right sounds out of their boxes"

/O'Connor and Fletcher, 1991:3/.

I agree with this quotation. Some English words are similar to Czech sounds. But the "boxes" that are most different and most important in English pronunciation are the special vowels and consonants for which there are no "boxes" in Czech. No teacher would want to teach his or her students "Czech English." Students must listen to the "sounds" of English and then try to use them in their own communication.

Some experts think that it is necessary to tell the students something about a sound, /how to make it, where it is made/ to explain the movement or describe the position of the articulators.

" There are two kinds of 'r' in terms of the articulatory organ: the front or apical r and the back or uvular r. The first is pronounced in such a way that the tip of the tongue, touching the alveoli, is pressed forward by the stream of air" /Malberg, B., 1963:46/.

I think this theory is important for teachers themselves, but you can't use it in your lesson. Your explanation has to be simple for the children to understand it very well, and the process of teaching pronunciation should be as quick as possible because the children's attention isn't so long at this age.

#### I. B. Pronunciation theories in text books used at basic schools

I started teaching the pronunciation in my own way after going through the textbooks that are used at basic schools.

First, I went through the Project English I, now a very popular textbook at our elementary schools. You can find several fragments about the pronunciation in each lesson. For example, on page 9, you can see the title "Pronunciation practice". It directs students to listen and repeat



the contrast [ ð ] and [ θ ] in separate words like this x three, there x thanks, they x thirteen, and then only one simple sentence including these sounds. This is my thirteenth birthday. That's all.

Then, I had a look into the older Czech book, printed for teaching English at basic schools in 1981. I have discovered several exercises, some games, separate words for special consonants and vowel there that I use in this paper. It was the basic stone for creating my own programme to teach the pronunciation to beginners.

After that in 1991, new Czech books were published. They have an audiooral course at the end of the textbooks. Teachers can find some sentences practicing falling and rising intonation, rhythm or words with stressed and unstressed syllables, full and reduced forms of certain words. You can see on p.268 the first mention of the methodology about the sound /ð / and /θz/ and only one example.

Ex. teach/teacher/teachers

learn/learner/learners

play/player/players

As you can see, it is much more focused on grammatical rules than on the pronunciation.

So I asked my colleagues from other schools how they teach the pronunciation of the sounds different from those in the Czech language. Some of them explained to me they tell

the children the sound, the pupils repeat it after him/her several times but the teachers don't like to waste time with it. They think that the children can listen to the radio, TV set, or the tape recorder.

Now, I'm teaching according to the Czech book Angličtina pro základní školy. There's only the introductory course where you can find 44 steps. In these steps, the children are acquainted with simple grammatical rules, they try to understand the basic meaning of common words and they can listen to the tape recorder. I couldn't find any methodology of teaching the pronunciation of different English sounds. The only thing that is very useful for the pupils is to listen to the native speaker and repeat the words after him or her.

#### I. C. My own way of teaching pronunciation

I have been teaching at a basic school in a small village for five years. I realised the children have to become acquainted with different sounds at the beginning of their study of the English language. Why do I consider teaching pronunciation so important at the beginning level?

First, the children start to learn English at the age of ten. They don't know anything about the new language. Pupils are like small monkeys, they can repeat unknown words after their teacher but they have a lot of problems with the pronunciation of different sounds. The children are helpless



because they can't make these sounds exactly. I could hear English words that are pronounced with Czech sounds.

Second, when a child starts reading the first English words or sentences, she or he has a strong tendency to pronounce each vowel and each consonant as if it is common in the Czech language. There is no difference between written and spoken form of words in our language.

In addition, the pupils don't believe that the pronunciation is so important for them. I try to persuade them that if their pronunciation is correct, their communication will be much easier with foreign people, they will better understand or listen to the radio, watch the TV set, and they will realise that there is a great difference in meaning between, for example day x they, sin x thin.

The demonstration of pronunciation has to be objective, clear and funny for pupils. When I taught the English language five years ago, without any experience in the methodology of pronunciation, I tried to explain to my school children that they had to repeat each English word after me three times, looking in their mirrors. This activity they enjoyed very much and the pronunciation became funny for them. If the children have some difficulties with their pronunciation or they don't understand the sound very well, I use contrasting sounds. Separate Czech words or simple Czech sentences help me too, especially with the children who have a lot of problems in their native language. It is amusing for them to



pronounce the Czech word sýr /cheese/ with θýr, den /day/ with ðen, and so on.

The next year I realised that I could use the transition between Czech grammar and the English pronunciation. For example, pupils have to learn selected words /one of Czech grammatical rules/ but they can revise them with the English pronunciation, for example after 's' θytý, θyn, θýr, θyrový, ..., after 'v' vysoký, vydra, výt, zvykat, ... I also extended the reservoir of my pronunciation games. I started using the tape-recorder because the children should have a possibility of comparing the teacher's pronunciation with that of a native speaker. Pupils can compare a man's, a woman's or a child's voice. The best way is when you have a video in your school. The children shouldn't only listen but also watch the situation on the screen.

Last year, I prepared the first test of pronunciation and later others. After practicing different sounds, we can test our pupils. I use two sorts of tests. One is reading a short text from the pupil's textbook. The other is a writing or listening test /Examples of these tests are written under Step 7 in this paper/. I have chosen nine different sounds that are most difficult to pronounce for the children at the beginning level.

I have decided to use this pronunciation course the first 14 days at the beginning of the school year instead of other audiooral courses. I devote 20 minutes every day in each

English lesson rather than one or two hours a month at the beginning. Even though the children don't understand the simple English sentences, we can use them for the purpose of pronunciation. But pay attention so that two or three different sounds do not appear in one sentence /without preceding exercises/. If some difficulties appear during the school year, I practice several techniques from my Auxiliary Pronunciation Workbook for their revision. A teacher can also make some copies from these pages and use what is important for him or her. It is not necessary to use all the steps in each English lesson. A teacher can choose some of them.

This Auxiliary Pronunciation Workbook should help teachers at basic schools or external students to improve their pronunciation or that of their children in different English sounds.



## II. Proposal for an "Auxiliary Pronunciation Workbook" for EFL teachers at beginners level

### II. A. Different vowels

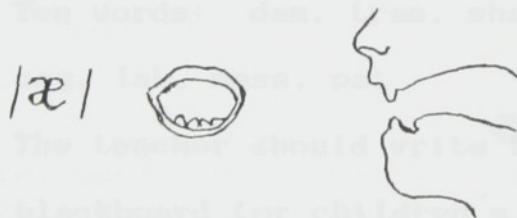
#### 1. $\text{æ}$ /man/

Step 1 - The teacher pronounces a different sound in certain words three times.

man, had, cat, cap, bag, ...

Step 2 - Pupils try to repeat each word three times after him/her.

Step 3 - The teacher explains, where and how the sound is made. To make the sound  $[\text{æ}]$  your mouth should be open like this, and your tongue should be down at the front of your mouth /Headway Intermediate Pronunciation, 1991:34 /.



Step 4 - Children have their own mirrors, look at themselves and try to realise the sound and pronounce the single word three times from Step 1.

Step 5 - practical exercises

contrast sounds

$[\text{æ} \times e]$

$[\text{æ} \times \Lambda]$

man x men

bag x bug

pat x pet

mad x much

bag x beg

fan x fun

Sentences: And every sack had seven cats.

And every cat had seven kits.

Step 6 - game: The teacher writes ten words on the blackboard and pronounces them to the children. They repeat these words after him or her. Then pupils are divided in two groups and they must find the word that has the same letter at the beginning of the word with the preceding one at the end position. Pupils from each group rotate in front of the blackboard and find the right word. They have to pronounce it aloud. If the chosen word and its pronunciation is correct, the group gains two points.

Ten words: dam, tram, sham, mad, shall, gap, bag, lab, mass, pat

The teacher should write the first word on the blackboard for children's imagination.

Ex. sham  
↓  
mass ...

Step 7 - test: The teacher writes these words on the blackboard. Children copy them in their exercise books. Then the teacher reads these words and pupils underline only words where the pronunciation is [æ].

much, match, march, luck, lack, lark,

cart, cut, cat, hum, harm, ham



2. ə / a pen /

Step 1 - The teacher pronounces a different sound in certain words three times.

a pen, a letter, a book ....

sister, doctor, teacher ....

Step 2 - Pupils try to repeat each word three times after him/her.

Step 3 - to make the sound /ə/ ,try relaxing your mouth. The sound is made in the middle of the mouth. Your lips should look like this /Headway Intermediate Pronunciation, 1991:5 /.



Step 4 - Children have their own mirrors, look at themselves and try to realise the sound and pronounce the single word three times from Step 1.

Step 5 - practical exercises

contrast sounds

/ - x ə /

mill x miller

big x bigger

but x butter

Sentences: A teacher has brought a book.

It is a quarter to five.

Step 6 - game: The teacher says two words at the same time.

If his/her pronunciation is the same,

the children say the girl's name Lucy, if it is different, they say the boy's name David.

/- / ə /mill - miller

but - butter

mill - mill

butter - but

mill - mill

butter - butter

mill - miller

but - butter

Step 7 - test: The teacher writes sentences on the blackboard and the children copy them immediately in their exercise-books. Then the teacher reads these sentences and pupils make the circle round the word where the pronunciation is / ə /.

Peter has a little sister.

Mr. Miller sent a book.

Do you like your father and mother?

Who is younger?

contrast sounds

/3/ x 34/

/2/ x 2/

fire x four

fur x four

born x bore

turn x town

fur x fore

pearl x Paul

Sentences: A bird is in the bird house.

First turn left and then turn right.

Step 8 - draw: The teacher will write the words spelling below on the blackboard and will pronounce them once. Then she/he asks a pupil to write



### 3. 3: /girl/

Step 1 - The teacher pronounces a different sound in certain words three times.

heard, word, first, bird, pearl,...

Step 2 - Pupils try to repeat each word three times after him/her.

Step 3 - to make the sound /3:/ your lips and tongue should be in the same position as to make the sound /ə/, but /3:/ is longer / Headway Intermediate Pronunciation, 1991:40 /.



Step 4 - Children have their own mirrors, look at themselves and try to realise the sound and pronounce the single word three times from Step 1.

Step 5 - practical exercises

contrast sounds

/3: x ə u/	/3: x ɔ:/
firm x foam	fur x four
burn x bone	turn x torn
fur x foe	pearl x Paul

Sentences: A bird is in the bird house.

First turn left and then turn right.

Step 6 - game: The teacher will write the words written below on the blackboard and will pronounce them only once. Then she/he asks a pupil to pronounce

the word pointed by him/her. If the pronunciation of a boy or girl is good

he/she'll say, "Come here and stand by me." If the pronunciation is not all right he/she'll say, "Sit down on your desk." The teacher can

see on the first look who is not able to pronounce this sound quite well and he/she can repeat words written on the blackboard.

skirt, girl, firm, dirty, nurse, early, sir

Step 7 - test: Tick the word you recognise in the sentences you hear. / The teacher will prepare all copies for pupils and then only reads the sentences. /

For pupils:

For the teacher:

1/ bed - bud - bird

1/ That is very small bed.

2/ word - ward

2/ That is a very long ward.

3/ walk - work

3/ Why don't you walk faster?

4/ short - shirt

4/ She wears shirt dresses.

5/ er - or

5/ His name is John...er..

Thomas, I think.

Step 8 - Practical exercises

contrast sounds

/k x g/

/after s/

coal x goal

Kate = skate

cap x gap

pot = spot

loc x log

lone = stone

duck x dug

key = ski

Sentences: Put your key on a table.

Karel kiss Puss.



## II. B. Different consonants

1. p, t, k

Step 1 - The teacher pronounces a different sound in certain words three times.

p: Peter, pain, poor, ..., speak, spot, ...

t: take, too, table, ..., stone, strain, ...

k: key, kill, kiss, ..., skate, ski, ...

Step 2 - Pupils try to repeat each word three times after him/her.

Step 3 - p, t, k - have an aspiration at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables. You can practise this by holding a piece of paper in front of your mouth when you make the sound. The air that comes out of your mouth should make the piece of paper move. The sound is not aspirated at the end of words. /Headway Intermediate Pronunciation, 1991:18/

Step 4 - Children have their own mirrors, look at themselves and try to realise the sound and pronounce the single word three times from Step 1.

Step 5 - practical exercises

## contrast sounds

/k x g/

coal x goal

cap x gap

loc x log

duck x dug

/after s/

Kate = skate

pot = spot

tone = stone

key = ski

/t x d/

ten x day

too x do

cat x bad

let x dad

Sentences: Put your key on a table.

Karel kiss Pussy.

Step 6 - game: The teacher will prepare a set of

Step 1 - The words/written below/on small pieces of paper.

words Each word on a separate sheet of paper. Then

read. she/he'll divide the classroom in two groups.

Take. The teacher will put these pieces of paper on

Step 2 - Pupils a pupil's desk. Both groups make a circle

his/her round the pupil's desk and should watch these

Step 3 - to make the sound /r/ turn up the tip

tongue. like this pieces of paper very well. Then the teacher

pronounces these words and children must touch

and show the teacher a sheet of paper with the

right word. Who touches the first, his/her

group will gain this sheet of paper. The group

that has more sheets of paper becomes

a winner. If a child shows a wrong sheet of

paper, he/she must put it down on the desk.

The list of words written on the sheets of paper are:  
words: tall, keep, coal, goal, too,

do, let, dad, pin, bin, scann

Step 7 - test: The teacher says these words written under

this text and pupils only write numbers where

they hear the aspiration.

1/bark 2/dark 3/park 4/back 5/speak

6/tip 7/dip 8/den 9/ten 10/school

a/ /r/ before vowels: b/ /r/ after vowels:

rain, reach, rebel sport, leader, war

real, ready, reason were, start, water

Sentences: You are wrong.

Your radio is not red.

We can practice like the correct tongue position.

go use contrast pairs l & r



2. r /room/

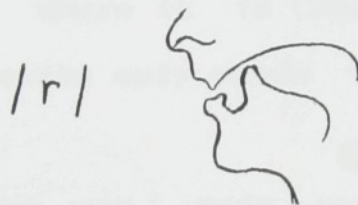
Step 1 - The teacher pronounces a different sound in certain words three times.

read, red, radio, ...

ruka, racek, Roman, ...

Step 2 - Pupils try to repeat each word three times after him/her.

Step 3 - to make the sound /r/ turn up the tip of your tongue, like this:



The tip of your tongue shouldn't touch the roof of your mouth and your tongue should not vibrate - /r/ in English is a very gentle sound /Headway Intermediate Pronunciation, 1991:53/.

Step 4 - Children have their own mirrors, look at themselves and try to realise the sound and pronounce the single word three times from Step 1.

Step 5 - practical exercises

a/ /r/ before vowels:

rain, reach, rebel

real, ready, reason

b/ /r/ after vowels:

sport, learn, hear

were, start, word

Sentences: You are wrong.

Your radio is not red.

We can practice the the correct tongue position if we use contrast pairs l x r .

lane x rain

lak x rak

lock x rock

lyku x ruku

load x road

lok x rok

led x read

líba x ryba

Step 6 - game: The teacher will make several groups. Each

group makes a circle and the ball is thrown. Each

pupil must pronounce the word /Czech or English/

beginning with English sound /r/.

Step 7 - test: The teacher reads several Czech words with

the sound /r/ at the beginning. Children should

recognize where it is Czech or English /r/. They

have to write only words with the Czech pronunci-

ation.

ropa, ruka, rum, ruda, racek, rameno, rýč, rozum,

rakev, rypadlo, ... /underlined words are pronounced

with Czech /r//



3. w /window/

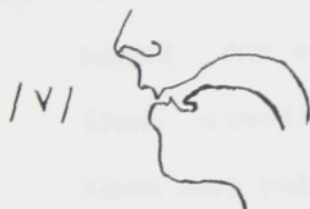
Step 1 - The teacher pronounces a different sound in certain words three times.

wait, wall, wash, ...

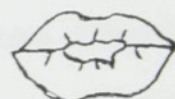
voda, Vašek, vana, ...

Step 2 - Pupils try to repeat each word three times after him/her.

Step 3 - to make the sound /v/ your	to make the sound /w/
top teeth should touch the	your teeth don't
inside of your bottom lip	touch your lips. Your
like this:	lips should be hard
	and round like this:



/w/



If you have problems with the sound /w/ you can try starting with /u:/ like this /Headway Intermediate Pronunciation, 1991:7/.

uuu --- where

uu --- where

u --- where

Step 4 - Children have their own mirrors, look at themselves and try to realise the sound and pronounce the single word three times from Step 1.

Step 5 - practical exercises

contrast sounds: /v x w/

wine x vine, pest x west, veal x wheel

Sentences: One man went to work.

Venca vyšel ven.

Vít vypil víno.

Step 6 - game: The teacher reads these words below. Children listen carefully and if they hear the pronun-

ciation /w/ sound, they will speak up 'one'

and if they hear the sound /v/, they will speak up 'two'.

wane, wane, vain, wane, vain, vain

wet, wet, wet, wet

wine, wine, wine, wine, wine

west, west, west, west, west

Step 7 - test: The teacher writes these words on the black-board /or copy this page/ and children copy them simultaneously. Then the teacher reads them and pupils make a cross on the word that is pronounced with /w/ sound.

one, write, queen, wrist, quite, wrap, equality, version, square, wrangle, quarrel



#### 4. ŋ / English/

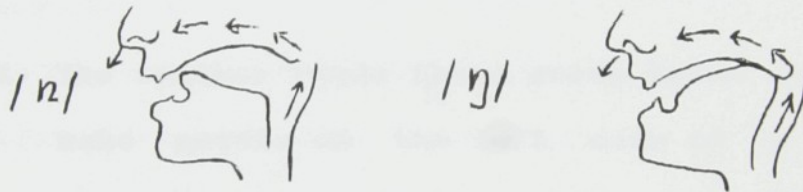
Step 1 - The teacher pronounces a different sound in certain words three times.

branka, Hanka, banka, ...

ring, sing, rang, ...

Step 2 - Pupils try to repeat each word three times after him/her.

Step 3 - to make the sound /ŋ/ the air should come out through your nose as in the sound /n/. But your tongue should touch the<sup>back</sup> of your mouth, not the front: /Headway Intermediate Pronunciation, 1991:66/.



Step 4 - Children have their own mirrors, look at themselves and try to realise the sound and pronounce the single word three times from Step 1.

Step 5 - practical exercises

contrast sounds

/n x ŋ /

sun x sung	ran x rang
sin x sing	wip x wing
sinner x singer	run x rung

Sentences: Hanka vešļa do banky.

As I was going along, along, along,

And singing a comical song, song, song.

Step 6 - game: The teacher will write this chart on the blackboard and make two groups/for ex. boys

and girls/. A boy asks a girl to pronounce the word in 'bottom and right'. If it is

pronounced wrongly, boys will get a point.

Then the girl will ask the boy ...

The group that has more points becomes a winner.

	left	centre	right
top	rung	gong	sing
middle	sin	longer	run
bottom	wing	song	win

Step 7 - test: The teacher reads these words below and pupils make points on the left side of a sheet of their papers for the sound /nk/ and on the right side for the sound /ŋ/.

wink, bang, sing, stink, ring,

sink, wing, bank, rink, sting

/nk/

/ŋ/

/θ x t/

/θ x t/

/θ x t/

this x tin

three x tree

mouth x mouse

thank x tank

thirst x first

than x ann

thick x tick

thrill x irill

think x sink

path x part

death x deaf

think x sink

Sentences: Good health is above wealth.

Glance vs. Galleon.

5. θ /think/

Step 1 - The teacher pronounces a different sound in certain words three times.

θ ýkora, θ ysel, θ ýček,...

thin, third, throw,...

Step 2 - Pupils try to repeat each word three times after him/her.

Step 3 - to make the sound /θ/ your tongue should touch the back of your teeth. If you find this difficult, try putting your finger in front of your mouth and touching it with your tongue like this:

For the sound /θ/ you shouldn't use your voice.

/Headway Intermediate Pronunciation, 1991:12/



Step 4 - Children have their own mirrors, look at themselves and try to realise the sound and pronounce the single word three times from Step 1.

Step 5 - practical exercises contrast sounds

/θ x t /

/θ x f/

/ θ x s /

thin x tin

three x free

mouth x mouse

thank x tank

thirst x first

thym x sun

thick x tick

thrill x frill

thick x sick

path x part

death x deaf

think x sink

Sentences: Good health is above wealth.

θlunce veθele θyftilo.



Step 6 - game: The teacher will choose several words from Step 5 and write the same word on the both side of the blackboard. Then he/she will separate the classroom on two groups. Two pupils come to the blackboard, the teacher will pronounce some of written words and they must circle them. Who will finish it the first, one's group has a point.

Step 7 - test: The teacher reads the words written below. But pupils have these words written without the first or last letter. According the teacher's pronunciation, they have to fill the letter th or s.

for the teacher:

thick, sun, sing, path, sink

mouth, mess, worth, tense, theme

for pupils:

. ick, . un, . ing, pa . , . ink,

mou . , me . , wor . , ten . e, . eme

6. ř /the father/

Step 1 - The teacher pronounces a different sound in certain words three times.

the father, the brother, the mother, ...

řám, řub, řát, řabalit, ...

Step 2 - Pupils try to repeat each word three times after him/her.

Step 3 - to make the sound /ř/ your tongue should touch the back of your teeth. If you find this difficult try putting your finger in front of your mouth and touching it with your tongue like this:

For the sound /ř/ you should use your voice.

/Headway Intermediate Pronunciation, 1991:12/



Step 4 - Children have their own mirrors, look at themselves and try to realise the sound and pronounce the single word three times from Step 1.

Step 5 - practical exercises

contrast sounds

/ř x d/

/ř x z/

they x day

booth x booze

there x dare

bathe x bays

though x dough

clothe x close

than x Dan

breathe x breeze

Sentences: řej řaně řobry řárek.

They like another cat than their friend.

## Step 6 - game: Mini bingo

Play in a group of five people. One pupil calls out the words written above the squares in any order. The others choose one of the boxes A, B, C, or D below. They cross out each word in their box as it is called. The first pupil who crossed out all his/her words wins.

three, they, day, though, dough, booth, booze,  
bathe, boys, mother, father, brother, thir-  
teen, than, their, then, Dan, thirty, the,  
thare, dare, breathe, breeze

A

3	day
than	mother

B

13	booth
father	thare

C

boys	though
30	the

D

bathe	they
Dan	breathe

## Step 7 - test: Match the words with the same pronunciation.

- |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. father | 1. do     |
| 2. than   | 2. booze  |
| 3. day    | 3. there  |
| 4. breeze | 4. mother |



## III. CONCLUSION

It is known that there are differences between Czech and English sounds. If you want to understand the English language very well, you have to pronounce its speech sound well too. It is up to the teachers how they explain this new language to their children. But it should be with pleasure, it means that games and competitions also have their role here.

Pronunciation is a fundamental element for better understanding in EFL. If the children master their pronunciation very well, it is their first step for better communication. Each step in the Workbook develops the children's ability to pronounce this different sound.

The Final Paper offers nine different sounds (three vowels and six consonants) which are most difficult in pronunciation for children who start learning the English language. Each sound is taught 20 minutes at the beginning of the English lesson.

I think it is very important to use a mirror for better imagination of pupils where the sound is made. If the boys and girls have some difficulties, the teacher pronounces Czech words with English sounds. It is amusing for them to hear familiar words with special sounds. The teacher should also prepare the majority of games and tests before her/his lesson. It means copying the words written in Step 6 or

Step 7 for each child. The teaching is more fluently instead of rewriting the words from the blackboard during the lesson. I use my pronunciation course at the beginning of each school year for ten-year old children they don't know anything about English language. After 14 days pupils are able to read a simple text without pronouncing each letter as it is common in the Czech language.

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