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**PROBLÉMY ANGLICKÉ INTONACE PRO  
ČESKÉ STUDENTY ANGLIČTINY**  
**PROBLEMS WITH ENGLISH INTONATION  
FOR CZECH LEARNERS OF ENGLISH**

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# PROBLEMS WITH ENGLISH INTONATION FOR CZECH LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

## Annotation

The final paper titled Problems with English Intonation for Czech Students of English is focused mainly on the differences between Czech and English intonation systems and the Czech students' ability to produce and recognise some basic English intonation patterns. The aim of the thesis was to help the Czech students of English to avoid typical mistakes and to give them advice about how to improve their production of English intonation. In addition to the study of the literature available, research was performed to detect what factors might influence the right performance of English intonation.

## Anotace

Bakalářská práce nazvaná Problémy s anglickou intonací pro české studenty angličtiny se zaměřuje především na rozdíly mezi českým a anglickým systémem intonace a na schopnost českých studentů imitovat a rozpoznat některá základní anglická intonační pravidla. Cílem práce bylo pomoci českým studentům angličtiny, aby se vyhnuli typickým chybám a poradit jim, co dělat, aby se zlepšili v produkci anglické intonace. Kromě studia literatury dostupné k tomuto tématu, byl proveden průzkum ke zjištění, jaké faktory mohou ovlivnit správnou produkci anglické intonace.

## **Key words**

Czech intonation system, English intonation system, utterance, intonation phrase, sentence group, nuclear tone, stress, pitch movement

## **Klíčová slova**

Český intonační systém, anglický intonační systém, promluva, intonační fráze, větná skupina, jádrový tón, přízvuk, pohyb hlasu

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# INTRODUCTION

The thesis entitled Problems with English Intonation for Czech Learners of English is focused mainly on the differences between Czech and English intonation and Czech students' ability to produce and recognise some basic English intonation patterns. Intonation is a part of suprasegmental phonology. Suprasegmental phonology is concerned with aspects of phonology such as tone, stress and intonation, not only the segments of sound. Unfortunately, suprasegmental phonology has been rather ignored compared to segmental phonology. It might be presumably due to the fact, that the orthography of languages like English encourages one to see the sound system as being a simple linear sequence of segments. I decided to focus on intonation owing to my personal interest in phonetics and phonology and also because not many works have been written about the differences between Czech and English intonation.

Moreover, it is a shame that some advanced students of the English language doing very well on the segmental level, suddenly fail when it comes to intonation and their utterances sound conspicuously foreign. Intonation is capable of disambiguating and affecting the interplay in a significant way. In order to avoid possible misunderstanding, it is therefore very important to place the intonation centre appropriately so that the how does not contradict what we are saying.

The thesis elaborates on the distinction between Czech and English intonation systems. I contrast the differences and thus refer to the typical mistakes Czech people make due to interference of Czech patterns. In addition to the study of the books,



research was carried out on this issue to possibly help the Czech students of English.

The research performed focused on the problems Czech learners face while learning English as a foreign language. The task was to discover, what might possibly help Czech learners of English to learn the language more effectively and how to avoid the common mistakes. To do that, the assembled pieces of information given by students were processed to make general results. For the survey; students of different levels of English were interviewed.

Firstly, a questionnaire was developed, in which I learned about the existing experience of the students of English. In the second part of the research, an assessment of the students' performances of English intonation was implemented. The results of the survey were analysed, therefore some of my assumptions were confirmed and others were refuted. It was hoped that Czech learners of English who work with the language more actively, for instance they listen or talk to native speakers, watch films in English, or have spent some time in an English speaking country, were likely to achieve better results than those who do not engage in such activities. It was also expected that learners who are musical and experienced in playing a musical instrument, or are interested in singing and music in general, would be more successful.

Regarding the contribution of my thesis I believe the conclusions of my research will help readers to tackle some of the intricate mechanisms of speaking English as a foreign language, and I equally hope that this study might be of further use for linguistic and educational purposes of Czech learners of English.

# 1. Literature Review

## 1.1 Basic Terminology

### **Intonation**

Intonation is defined as the melody of speech, where the pitch of the voice plays the most important part. As Cruttenden (1986, 2) argues: "Pitch concerns the varying height of the pitch of the voice over one syllable or over a number of successive syllables." This variation of pitch is used by speakers to convey linguistic and pragmatic meaning. To analyse intonation it is necessary to listen to the speaker's pitch and its changes. Pitch is described in terms of high and low. While observing the variations of the pitch, we are interested only in those changes, which carry some linguistic information. It is unimportant for us to pay attention to those changes, which are outside of the speaker's control, for instance while riding a horse the speaker's pitch makes a lot of unintended rises and falls.

Intonation is an essential part of suprasegmental phonology, which is very important in communication, as the speakers' attitudes and focus are expressed by it. Therefore, non-native speakers of English might be misunderstood to be rude or bored as they sound uninterested when using a level tone. Due to unawareness of different intonation patterns, learners of English as a foreign language are not able to e.g. recognise whether the native speaker is asking a question, or making a statement. Without intonation, human speech would be monotonous. It would remain only one pitch and every utterance would employ the same stereotype tune all the time.

## Prosodic Features

Wells (2006, 3) says that the rhythm of speech is made up from a combination of so called prosodic features. The prosodic or suprasegmental characteristics of speech are pitch, length, and loudness. Although the prosodic patterns of different languages are not the same, some similarities can be observed. For instance, all the speakers speed up when they are excited and slow down when they are being thoughtful or weighty. Then, it is common that people speak more quietly when they do not want to be overheard; on the other hand, they speak more loudly to be heard over a distance or in noisy conditions.

However, it is impossible to transfer the prosodic features of one's mother tongue to a foreign language, as it leads to making you sound foreign, and it might contribute to misunderstandings by other speakers. Even though English language do not use stress placement lexically, to differentiate between the meanings of the words, stress is another important characteristic of the spoken language.

Cruttenden (1986, 8) defines the following several terms, which are important for the study of pitch variations: A continuous piece of speech beginning and ending with a clear pause is called an *utterance*. The overall behaviour of the pitch is *tone*. Speech consisting of utterances can be said with either a level tone or a moving tone. Instead of using the level tone, which does not sound natural, people prefer using the moving tone, which includes a few basic movements of the pitch: a falling tone, a rising tone, a fall-rise and a rise-fall tone. The falling tone comes down from a higher to a lower pitch. On the other hand, the rising tone moves from a lower pitch to a

higher one. The tone, where the pitch descends and then rises again, is called the fall-rise, while in the less frequently used rise-fall tone, the pitch follows the opposite movement. For the common use of the particular tones see section 1.2 entitled Functions of intonation, the attitudinal function.

It also needs to be considered, that each speaker has their own normal pitch range. Therefore, a top level, the highest pitch normally used by a speaker, and a bottom level, the height of the pitch speaker does not go below, vary among the speakers. Normally, the intonation is situated within the lower part of one's pitch range. However, extra high pitch is used in situations when speakers express strong feelings.

## 1.2 Functions of Intonation

It is necessary to introduce some basic functions of intonation to the reader to illustrate its significance and also because recognition of some of them was covered in the recognising part of the survey for this thesis.

The linguistic importance of the phenomena we observe, intonation, is given by its several functions. Speakers choose from a selection of tones accordingly to the way the utterance should be heard. It is not completely possible to state what the function of each different aspect of intonation is, and therefore make rules for teaching the foreign students to use it as the native speakers. Although there are some general rules which can help the learners of English, without regular talking or at least listening to native speakers of English they are not likely to learn English intonation. Moreover, all the functions mentioned can overlap to some extent.

Roach lists four basic functions of intonation (2000, 183–203):

### The Attitudinal Function

Thank to this function of intonation, people are able to express emotions and attitudes as they speak; therefore a special meaning is added to speech. The same sentence can be labelled in a different way depending on the way it is said. We might be for example showing pleasure or anger, interest or boredom, seriousness or sarcasm, and many others. The tone used is the most significant factor while expressing the attitude of the speaker. There are the most frequent examples of the use of the particular tones in English and also Czech language mentioned: (The marks indicating rise "/", fall "\", rise-fall "\/", and fall-rise "\\" were used in the following examples; accented syllables/words were marked by underlining them)

### The Fall

- Expresses *finality and definiteness*: That is the end of the \news

I'm absolutely \certain

Stop \talking

### The Rise

- (i) *General questions*: Can you /help me

It is /over

- (ii) *Listing*: /Red /brown /yellow or \blue

(A fall is usual on the last item)

- (iii) *"More to follow"*: I phoned them right a/way  
(...and they agreed to come)

You must write it a/gain  
(...and this time, get it right)

- (iv) *Encouraging*: It won't /hurt

### **The Fall-Rise**

- (i) *Uncertainty, doubt*: You \/may be right

Its \/possible

- (ii) *Requesting*: Can I \/buy it

Will you \/lend it to me

### **The Rise-fall**

- *Surprise, being impressed*: You were ^/first

^/All of them

Apart from tone, also sequential, prosodic, and paralinguistic factors, which are related to intonation, might be important to analyse one's attitude while speaking. Firstly, sequential components are those of preheads, heads, tonic syllables and tails, pauses, and tone-unit boundaries. Then, prosodic elements are characteristics that can be observed in speech. These are for example: width of pitch range, key, loudness, speed, and voice quality. Both elements mentioned are specified closely in chapters 1.3.1 Czech intonation system and 1.3.2 English intonation system.

Finally, so called paralinguistic features include facial expressions, gestures, and body movements, also some vocal effects like laughs and sobs. Even though this *body language* is obviously relevant to the act of speaking, it is not considered as a component of speech, so not important to be discussed here extensively.

### **The Accentual Function**

It is derived from the word *accent*, which relates to the word *stress*. Wells (2006, 11) calls it also "focusing" or "informational" function. Intonation enables us to mark some words as the most important in the tone-unit by *tonic stress* placed on a particular syllable, which is also called *sentence stress*. The second term is not appropriate as the sentence is a unit of grammar, whereas the location of the stress is of a tone unit, which is a unit of phonology. Regarding the position of the stress, the last lexical word of the tone unit (e.g. noun, adjective, verb, and adverb) is mostly stressed. However, any single word might be the bearer of the tonic syllable depending on the focus of the information.

Roach (2000) mentions two pairs of examples of normal placement (i) and contrastive (ii) form (195). Note that the symbol "" refers to a stress mark in the further example sentences used in the thesis:

- (i) I 'want to 'know 'where he's \travelling to  
(The word "to" at the end of the sentence, being a preposition and not a lexical word, is not stressed.)
- (ii) (I 'don't want to 'know 'where he's 'travelling \from)  
I 'want to 'know 'where he's 'travelling \to

In the survey of this thesis (Appendix 1, exercise II.V. 6 Highlighting) an exercise on *highlighting* to detect how well the students are able to recognise the accented words in a sentence was added.

## **The Grammatical Function**

It is easier for the listener to indicate such things as the placement of boundaries between phrases, clauses or sentences, the difference between questions and statements, and the grammatical subordination by the use of intonation.

For instance, the sentence "Those who sold quickly made a profit" looks ambiguous when written; it is possible to paraphrase it in two ways:

(i) A profit was made by those who sold quickly

(ii) A profit was quickly made by those who sold

Intonation also helps for example to differ between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses by placing the tone-unit boundary in the right place. Additionally, it is also important to mention that one particular sentence can be said either as a statement or a question:

(i) The \price is going 'up

(ii) The/price is going 'up

Similar exercises were put in the recognition exercise in the survey I made. See them in Appendix 1, II.I.7 Tone, Certainty, ex. 3., 4.

So called *question-tags* (also used in the exercise for the survey in Appendix 1, II.I.7 Tone, Certainty, ex. 1., 2.) can be said either with a rising or a falling tone, with



a difference in meaning. In the following example sentences the question-tag is "aren't they". In the first case (i) it has a falling tone, meaning that the speaker is certain that the information is correct. Whereas in the sentence (ii) it has a rising tone, which implies to a lesser degree of certainty, so that the function of the question tag is a request for information. In these cases the grammatical and the attitudinal functions overlap.

(i) They 'are 'coming on \Tuesday | \aren't they

(ii) They 'are 'coming on \Tuesday | /aren't they

### **The Discourse Function**

Another function that intonation bears is to signal what the new information is and what was already given. The speaker can also notify the listener about what kind of response is expected by the use of intonation. Moreover, the meaning of a sentence might be interpreted in a different way in relation to discourse; therefore studying it in isolation can be wrong.

Wells (2006, 12) mentions two other functions in addition to these four:

### **The Psychological Function**

People can split long speech into units as they are easier to perceive, memorize and perform by the linguistic intonation system called tonality.

### **The Indexical Function**

Apart from other pronunciation features, the characteristic intonation of the

person is also an indicator of their social identity. For instance, it makes a mother sound like mother, a clergyman like clergyman, and officials like officials.

## 1.3 Comparison of Czech and English Intonation Systems

A brief overview of the two intonation systems of the Czech and English language discussing the concepts of segmentation of connected speech, prosodic prominence, and tone patterns was given in this chapter. The descriptions of the particular features of the two systems were ordered similarly in both sections to be easier to follow. The linguistic terms mentioned may vary in works written by various authors. However, they do not usually imply a different approach, so I tend to use one of the most frequently used terms with a note of other possibilities.

After the characterization of the two systems, differences and similarities of the use of intonation in the two languages were listed. In the final part of this chapter, the most frequent mistakes of Czech learners of English in production of the English intonation were described.

### 1.3.1 Czech intonation system

#### Segmentation of Connected Speech

There are commonly shown five levels of the ultimate hierarchy of linear units ordered from the smallest to the largest: *syllable*, *stress/rhythm group*, *utterance unit*, *utterance*, and *speech*. For this thesis the three biggest units were investigated.

## Stress Group

Stress group or also rhythm group „is a linear unit of the prosodic system defined as a group of syllables bound together with one word stress“ (Daneš in Headlandová Kalischová 2010, 9), which often coincides with one or more words. Their boundaries are signalled mainly by word boundaries in the Czech language and their average length is estimated at two or three syllables.

In the Czech tradition, a sequence of multi-syllable lexical words equals a sequence of separate stress groups as Palková in Headlandová Kalischová (2010, 11) shows:

'Včera 'začaly 'letní 'olympijské 'hry

Whereas the monosyllabic stress groups such as pronominal forms, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, or particles are usually not stressed and added to the preceding or the following word. For example:

'Zlobilase a'plakala

A monosyllabic word can be attached to the main stress as well, if it is placed in the beginning of the stress group. It is shown in the following example:

'Jetouž 'starý 'pes

The main stress often falls onto the preposition in case of prepositional phrases. The two words build one stress group together, e.g.:

'Zíral 'namuže 'předsebou

A tendency for lexical words to maintain prosodic independence can be observed, whereas grammatical words usually lose it. However, segmentation into stress groups

is affected by other factors such as tempo, rhythm, and especially meaning must be considered as well. As Palková (1997, 282–284) mentioned.

### Utterance Unit

Unlike the English traditional description of an utterance unit (see section 1.3.2 entitled Intonation phrase), the Czech language does not specify any internal structure. Instead it is determined by its characteristics as summarized by Headlandová Kalischová (2010, 10):

- (i) An utterance unit is composed of one or more stress groups and as such is superior to them,
- (ii) the boundary between units is constituted by a pause,
- (iii) preceding the pause there is a specific tone pattern, termed *cadence*, *intoneme* or *melodeme*, which is realized by sentence stress and a particular melody,
- (iv) it does not necessarily have a counterpart on the syntactic level, although it often corresponds to a clause or to a member of a multiple sentence element,
- (v) it is a unit perceived by both the speaker and the listener.

### Utterance

An utterance, already defined below in section 1.1, may concern syntax, prosody, or meaning. As for the syntactic approach, it corresponds to a sentence. In prosody it might consist of one or a few utterance units and regarding meaning, it has its own arrangement, related to the function of the sentence.

## Prosodic Prominence: Absence of Stress, Word Stress, Sentence Stress

Word stress includes main and secondary stress. The main stress, which is located on the first syllable of a word, has a role to signal word boundaries. On the other hand, the secondary stress fulfils a rhythmical function. (Headlandová Kalischová 2010, 13)

The most prominent stress throughout an utterance is called sentence stress or intonation centre. Its neutral position (i), (ii) is on the stressed syllable of the last stress group, but any other word can be accented if it is important in the context of the speech. The word can be emphasized by placing it to the initial position (iii), or for instance, by a word "alespoň" ("at least") requiring prominence (iv).

(i) Pojd'te se sem podívat

(iii) Sem se pojd'te podívat

(ii) Pojd'te se podívat sem

(iv) Pojd'te se *alespoň* sem podívat

### 1.3.2 English Intonation System

As the English is an international language, far more works were found focusing on its intonation system than on that of the Czech or any other language.

#### Division of Connected Speech

The following six segments of connected speech are considered in the English language: *phoneme*, *syllable*, *foot*, *intonation phrase*, utterance, and speech.

## Intonation Phrase

The functionally most important element is an intonation phrase (IP); various authors also use terms: *tone unit*, *tone group*, *word group* etc. It can coincide with one or more words or a clause. Its location is signalled by tone unit boundaries, which are given by a change of pitch and a pause.

The internal structure of an IP consists of other segments, which are: *prehead*, *head*, *nucleus*, and *tail*.

Wells (2006, 7) describes the nucleus, or also called *tonic syllable* and *intonation centre* by other linguists, as the place where the most important accent is placed in the IP. The nucleus indicates the end of the focused part of the speech by a change of pitch or a pitch movement. Concerning the location, it is usually situated at the end of the IP, unless there is a reason to place it somewhere else. For example:

I. I think it was ri\'diculous

II. I think it was ri/'diculous

The syllable "-dic-" refers to the nucleus in these examples. As for the nucleus, the tone movement starts here; no matter whether a rising tone or a fall.

The nucleus is usually followed by a part called the tail, which does not include any stressed syllables, e.g.:

1. Im \sure

2. Im /sure

There is not a tail in the IP, if the nucleus is placed on the last syllable of it. The other possible accent located before the nucleus is named the *onset*, which is the first syllable of the head. The part from the onset to nucleus, excluding the nucleus, is called the head. Before the head and onset, there is a part called the prehead. If the IP contains no stressed syllable before the nucleus, then there is no head. Similarly, there is no prehead in case that no unaccented syllable is present before the first stressed syllable (onset or nucleus).

The only obligatory segment in the IP is the nucleus. It is not necessary for all the IPs to have the other elements. The boundaries of the parts of an IP are not always given by word boundaries, but they have to coincide with syllable boundaries. See the following example, where the particular segments of an IP are labelled:

We're 'planning to fly to 'Italy.

Prehead (*We're*), onset (*plan*), head (*planning*), nucleus (*It*), and tail (*aly*)

### Prosodic Prominence: Primary, Secondary, Tertiary Stress, and Unstressed

The main phonetic features while analysing the prosodic prominence are those of pitch, length, and loudness. Primarily, these so called prosodic features give a signal of prominence of certain words among others. Learn more about the prosodic features in chapter 1.1 titled Basic terminology.

The *primary stress* or accent refers to the stress of a nucleus. The *secondary stress* is a non-nuclear pitch accent, which also involves a subsidiary pitch prominence. The *tertiary stress* is not produced by pitch, but only by length and loudness. Headlandová Kalischová (2010, 22)

### **1.3.3 Similarities and Differences between the Czech and English Intonation Systems**

In this section, the main features of the intonation systems I analysed were compared. Firstly, the patterns that the Czech and English tradition have in common were described. Then, other features in which they differ according to the research made in the previous chapters were covered.

Far more similarities than differences of the systems were found. They both share the hierarchy of the units of connected speech, identifying an intonation centre in the Czech and a nucleus in English, some functions of intonation, and many others.

The most prominent syllable in both Czech (intonation centre) and English (nucleus) intonation systems is identified similarly. The two systems share the importance within the unit and also the location tends to be at the last lexical item in both the languages.

Another feature they have in common is recognition of the same linear unit as the most significant for analysis of intonation. Although different terms are used: in Czech it is called an utterance, while in English an intonation phrase, these units coincide with a clause. There is one main peak of prominence containing a tone pattern in each linear unit.

However, a variation can be found in the internal structure of the units of the two intonation systems. The English IP is divided into individual segments. By contrast, the Czech utterance contains stress groups creating the rhythm of speech.

Regarding the other differences, the Czech traditional system distinguishes three



degrees of prosodic prominence: absence of stress, word stress and intonation stress. While in the English tradition, only a three-level scale is recognised: absence of stress, unaccented stress, accented stress, and nuclear stress.

Another difference was found in the Czech and English transcription systems. The pitch movement tends to be shown above or below the text in a Czech graphic model, whereas English systems mark the stress and pitch movement in the text.

The Czech and English language share the principle of the use of intonation, but they differ in the structure of the *inflectional* Czech language *and isolating* English language. The following 14 points are the characteristics that (Skaličková 1982, 176–181) mentions: (Melody of the examples given further was implemented by marks: "/" meaning a rise tone, "\" used for a fall tone, "\_" for a low position of pitch, and "- " indicating a high position of pitch)

1. The position of the boundaries of the stressed groups in the Czech language might vary from the location in English. In the Czech, the tone unit commonly coincides with a word, but in the English it is not so frequent and it is rather a rhythmical unit.

Czech: - 'Potřebuji 'informaci\

English: /I 'need some 'infor'mation\

2. The Czech sentence usually begins in a stressed syllable and at this place it is at the top of the intonation. By contrast, the English one tend to start in an unstressed component, which is low and after that is getting high.

Czech: - 'Zdálo se to 'beznadějné\

English: /It - 'seemed 'hopeless\

3. In the Czech traditional system, the melody falls or rises step by step by syllables. On the other hand, the change of pitch in the English is often implemented within a syllable

Czech:    - 'Řekl - jsem 'čer\ve\né\

English: I - 'said 'red\

4. In the Czech, an initial higher point, which exists in the English, can be missing because of the different structure of a question.

Czech:    - 'Dals- jí to?/

English: - 'Did- you 'giveittoher?/

5. The Czech language usually has the two word-naming for the same thing instead of one word as in the English.

Czech:    - 'To- je\psací\stroj

English: - 'This- is- a 'typewriter\

6. In the English, there is a tendency to make sort of "maxi stress groups", where a few lexical words behave as if they were one stress group.

Czech:    - 'Kdy \odcházíte? \

English: - 'When- are- you- going- a\way?

7. Whereas in the English the prepositional phrases are frequent, where the preposition belongs melodically and rhythmically to the preceding stress group, in the Czech it goes with the following word.

Czech:    'Máte\'ruční\'brzdu\'v- pořád/ku?

English: - 'Is\your 'handbrake- in\'or\der?/

8. The difference between the Czech free word order and by way of contrast, the stable one in the English also results in melody differences. In the Czech tradition, meaning is expressed by a word. However, the English uses stress and melody to convey meaning.

Czech:    ˘ 'Neplet˘ sem\ 'pá\ na\ bo\ ha

English:   ˘ 'Dont\ 'bring 'God\ into it\_

Czech:    ˘ "Pána˘ boha˘ sem\ ne\plet˘\_

English:   \_ Dont bring/'God\into\ it\_

9. As for the question tags, they are used in both languages for the same purposes, but the melody is not exactly the same as is shown in the following examples. See more on the use of question tags in the section 1.2 Functions of intonation, the Grammatical function.

Firstly, the speaker wants just to get confirmed what they say:

Czech:    ˘ Znáte\ho\, ˘ že\ a\ no

English:   \_ You /know\him\_, ˘ don't you\

Secondly, they are not sure and want to know if they are right:

Czech:    ˘ Znáte\ho\, ne?/

English:   \_ You /know\him\_, \_don't you?/

10. With regard to so called *declarative questions*, in which the auxiliary „do“ is missing in the English, they grammatically function as a statement. The fact that it is a question is indicated by the use of intonation as in the Czech.

Czech:    ˘ Vyrobila˘ to\ sa/ma˘ ?

English:   \_ She/'made˘ it ˘ her ˘ '\self?/

11. The accenting of words by their melody is more or less the same in the two languages. In the Czech it is done throughout more syllables, whereas in English by one syllable. In English there might be also bigger differences in height and it is used there more frequently.

Czech:    \_ To 'ne\

English:   \_ Not 'that\

Czech: \_'Varo/val\jsem\tě\

English: \_I /'warned~ you\

12. The rising ending in apology, request, greeting and short answer is considered as more respectful and polite than the falling ending. While some speakers can regard them as theatrical:

Czech: Pro~ miň\te/

English: I'm~ sor\ry/

Czech: ~Podal~ bys~ mi~ sůl?\

English: ~Would~ you\pass me the salt?\

13. It is typical for the British broadcasters to use the exaggerated falling melody at the end of a sentence. Their pitch tends to rise even higher than the surrounding stressed syllables. Then falls lower than the rest of the words. It is similar in Czech, but the change of pitch is not as rapid as in the English.

Czech: \_Jako\_samostatný 'stát\

English: \_As\_a\_separate 'state\

14. In case of a longer sentence in the English language, the voice does not fall continuously. It again rises and then continues in the fall. This change might be separated by a pause.

English: \_I/saw the tall man/coming a\long the road\

#### 1.3.4 Common Mistakes in Prosody Made by Czech Learners

The frequent mistakes Czech learners of English as a foreign language make were developed by investigating the particular differences between the Czech and English intonation systems. As the common locating of prosodic prominence in the Czech and English language is not the same, Czech speakers often place the stress wrongly

while producing English intonation. Therefore, a frequent mistake of Czech speakers might be accenting the first syllable of the sentence or a tone unit, whereas the English sentences frequently start in a non-accented syllable.

Another difference in the tradition of the two languages which leads to mistakes being made can be caused by various levels of the low and the high pitched syllables present in a tone unit of the English and Czech. In the Czech intonation system the contrasts are rather minimal, so that the speech may sound monotonous for English speakers. In English, by contrast, there is a wider pitch range. English speakers tend to distinct the low and high pitch movements much more steeply. Interestingly, even though Czech learners might know about this difference, they feel embarrassed to emphasize the changes of pitch in a way the English speakers perform it.

## 1.4 Intonation in Students' Books Used by Native Czech Teachers of English

In order to confirm our presumptions that there is not enough notice of intonation in the learning process of English at schools, the most frequently used books were examined. The goal was to discover whether there is any focus on intonation practice of the learners of English in these books. For better illustration, a few examples of exercises on intonation present in the books were added to the Appendices.

### 1.4.1 *Project*

One of the widely used books at elementary schools recently is *Project* by Thomas Hutchinson, Oxford University Press.

In the first volume the learners are taught mainly pronunciation of particular phonemes, which are considered problematic for them. Attention is also paid to weak forms and recognising the number of syllables. As for intonation, it is mentioned twice. (See them in Appendix 3) In Unit 4 the intonation of *wh* questions is introduced. The students are supposed to listen to and repeat four questions. In Unit 6 there is an exercise on revision of intonation. The learners' task is to listen to and repeat six sentences (two *wh* questions, two *yes/no* questions, and two statements).

In the second and third volume there are exercises on particular sounds, weak forms, word stress, and also phrasal stress. However, intonation is completely ignored.

In the fourth part of Project, even less attention is paid to pronunciation, it contains a kind of revision of the overall sound system. Word and sentence stress are also revised, but no intonation patterns are practised.

In the next volume called *Project Plus*, there is one exercise focused on the use of so called *corrective stress* (see it in Appendix 3), but no training of intonation was found there.

To summarise what has been found in Project series, intonation is being rather ignored in these students' books, which are widely used at elementary schools in the Czech Republic. The most exercises were found in the first volume. On the other hand, the following volumes do not focus on intonation at all. Even though it is a very good idea to start with learning English intonation from the elementary level, it is also important to continue on practising and make improvements on this ability.

### 1.4.2 *New English File*

*New English File*, new students' books by Clive Oxenden, Christina Latham-Koening and Paul Seligson firstly published in 2004 by Oxford University Press I firstly met at the language school I teach. Due to its well organized structure and number of additional practice in the Teachers' book I think it is likely to become more and more popular among teachers.

There is a great focus on pronunciation practice in the students' book called *New English File Elementary*. In addition to exercises focusing on vowel, consonant sounds, and word stress. There are a lot of listening exercises, where the main point is to repeat the melody of common phrases and sentences, always emphasising "Copy the rhythm" in the instructions. Therefore the elementary students of English can learn and practise the right intonation patterns from the very beginning.

Then, *New English File Pre-Intermediate* was examined. The tasks oriented on pronunciation were similar to the previous volume. Although the students have possibilities to train word stress, sentence stress and rhythm, no intonation patterns are taught in this volume.

In the next book, *New English File Intermediate*, a large amount of pronunciation practice was discovered. However, the majority of these exercises dealt with segmental phonology. Only one task focused on an aspect of intonation, namely the patterns in question tags. (See it in Appendix 2)

Summarising the findings, New English File books have a great potential to replace some of the commonly used books at schools. Nevertheless, hardly any

exercises on intonation patterns were included in the particular books; therefore they were assessed to be insufficient for the study of intonation.

### **1.4.3 *New Headway***

*Headway* students' books by Liz and John Soars, printed in Oxford, are widely used at various high schools in the Czech Republic. Therefore they were chosen to be assessed in terms of how much attention is paid to intonation in them. As this was the course which seemed to pay most attention to intonation practice, compared to the other English course books mentioned above, I chose examine one of the several different editions called *New Headway*. The other editions were also examined more briefly. It was found that these series slightly differ in focus on intonation practice.

First, *New Headway Beginners* was investigated. Even though tasks aimed at sentence stress and corrective stress present in this book are useful for further right produce of English intonation, no exercises concentrated directly on intonation were detected.

Then, in *New Headway Elementary* a lot of listening exercises focusing on pronunciation were found, but the training of intonation patterns was completely ignored.

Another volume examined was *New Headway Pre-Intermediate*, which also appeared to be not sufficient when it comes to intonation practice.



*New Headway Intermediate* seemed to be the first book from the Headway series that was concerned with intonation extensively. Listening and speaking exercises paying particular attention on stress and intonation were found in this book.

Even more exercises dealing with intonation were found in the last volume, *New Headway Upper-Intermediate*. As in the previous book, exercises improving listening and speaking skills aimed at learners' intonation were common here. Example tasks from the two last books mentioned were added to Appendix 6.

## **2. Research Question**

### **2.1 Aim of the Research**

The aim of the thesis was to elaborate on the distinction between Czech and English intonation systems, which differ in some aspects. I contrasted the differences and therefore refer to the typical mistakes Czech people make while speaking in English due to Czech interference. In addition to the study of the books, a research on the existing ability of the Czech learners of English was made.

The survey was carried out to discover what factors affect the production of English intonation of Czech learners studying English language, in other words: What makes some people better at producing and recognising the intonation patterns?

### **2.2 Duties of the Research**

1. To make sure to have all the equipment and conditions to elaborate the research
2. To realize the testing procedure
3. To assess the performances of the tested students
4. To compare the performances according to the experience of English and other aspects
5. To verify or falsify the expectations of the thesis
6. To draw general conclusions

## 2.3 Expectations of the Research

Before I embarked upon my research I expected to confirm the following nine points:

1. The students (more information about the group tested can be found in 3.1 Characteristic of the group) who have been learning English for more than 6 years are likely to be better than those who studied English for a shorter time
2. The students who are trained in terms of intonation should be assessed highly better than those who have not practised intonation patterns yet
3. Presumably, the students who have been to an English speaking country for 3 months and more would reach better results than the students who have not been there or have been there for a shorter time
4. It is more likely that students who watch films in English at least sometimes (once a month) will do better in the research than those who do not watch films regularly
5. The students who communicate in English to their Czech or foreign friends face to face at least sometimes may well achieve a better assessment than the students who communicate in English only via e-mail, or chat, or do not communicate in English at all in their free time
6. The students who have opportunities to communicate with English native speakers, or at least listen to them, are highly likely to reach better assessment than those who do not
7. The students who have at least any experience with playing a musical instrument will presumably be better in producing intonation patterns than

the students who have never played a musical instrument

8. The students who like both listening to music and singing should be more successful in our testing procedure than those who are not interested in such activities
9. It is presumed that the students who consider themselves musical or quite musical will probably achieve better results than those students who think of themselves as not at all musical

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Characteristic of the Group Tested**

The first aim was to detect whether the assessed performances of students would differ in accordance with the previous knowledge of intonation patterns. Therefore the group of students was heterogeneous in terms of level of their English. Ten of the elementary or intermediate level and ten of the advanced level students were interviewed. Only students of the Technical University in Liberec were chosen in order to test learners of similar age and level of education.

The ten people studying English as the main subject at the Faculty of Education of Technical University in Liberec had passed the courses of Phonetics and Phonology 1 and 2. Previous knowledge of the patterns which had been covered in these courses was meant to significantly differentiate the students of English from the students of the other group, who had not attended these courses.

Then, the other ten students of other fields of study than English were tested. There were three students of the Engineering Faculty; four students studying at the Economics Faculty, and three students were students of the Faculty of Education. These learners differed slightly in the time they had been learning English, but in all cases it was from two to five years.

All the students chosen were able to read and imitate the intonation patterns with more or less no difficulty. However, for some students an unknown word or expression caused slips of the tongue. In this case I decided whether it was necessary

to repeat the phrase or not. Mostly the words wrongly pronounced did not affect the resulting melody, so they did not have to.

Owing to the fact that the students of non-English specialisation had not taken any course of English intonation, they were not familiar with the term and functions of intonation. Therefore; it was crucial for some basics of intonation to be introduced before testing these students. First, I examined whether they could think of anything when it comes to intonation. I questioned: what it is, why and how it is used, if there are any differences in various languages, etc. Then, an introduction exercise (See Appendix 1, Example) was put at the beginning to discover that one specific question *What is your name?* can be denoting different meanings dependent on the particular context. Once it was said neutrally with a falling tone. In the next recording a rise tone was used and the stress was put on the word *name* showing interest. Finally, the question was used to request the hearer to repeat the name using a rise tone again and accenting the word *what*. By this exercise they became familiar with the basic tones and an attitudinal function of intonation, which they later used in the test.

### 3.2 Description of the Research Material

All the participating students were supposed to undergo a test consisting of two exercises, the imitation and the recognition one. I had chosen exercises which were found frequently in the practise intonation books. On that account they were considered basic and important for the students. By means of these exercises I wanted to test how the students were able to copy and describe some typical intonation patterns. To study it closer, the whole test was added in Appendix 1.

The first exercise was focused on the students' skill at imitating certain intonation patterns. In each case, example words or sentences were recorded to help the students to prepare for imitation of the records or examining the features. The students were played a recording of a word/sentence pronounced with different intonation in each case. Their task was to repeat the intonation as accurately as possible. Their performances were recorded using a voice recorder and were evaluated later.

By the second exercise, the students' ability to recognise some intonation patterns was tested. Each student listened to a few recordings demonstrating an intonation pattern. After that they were asked to answer some multiple choice questions to find out how well the student was able to detect it. In these recognition exercises, the task was to find out, what the feelings and attitudes of the speaker were and also what change of pitch was used.

My task was to make the intonation exercise and the questionnaire which followed this, meaningful for all the survey recipients. In order to avoid misunderstanding, as simple instructions as possible were used. In addition, formal or not commonly known expressions were eliminated.

Another aim was to attract the students' attention to the questionnaire. The students were asked easier or general questions at the beginning, so that they did not feel intimidated about answering.

In addition, arrangement of more general tasks first helped the logical order of the questionnaire to be easier to follow. Thus, the students were able to answer the subsequent questions without any problems. Close-ended questions were mostly

used, so that it would be easier for the respondents to know the purpose of the questions.

### 3.3 Organization and Course of the Research

My effort was to make the testing as time saving as possible. However, this attempt could not be implemented completely, as the students including me as the evaluator had their own timetable and limited spare time. The testing procedure of each student, to be done in a proper way, lasted for approximately half an hour. In a very few cases I managed to arrange a meeting with several students subsequently one after another so that I did not spend much extra time travelling and preparing the equipment, but this was rarely possible.

The place of testing varied, sometimes it was held at the person's home or in the university library. There was enough space and no noise disturbances apart from those of students present in the library. In case of such interference, the testing was stopped until it grew silent.

With regard to equipment, a laptop was used to play the recording and a voice recorder to record the students' performances. For the exercise, the students were given sheets of paper with the task and a pen to circle the right options. One copy of the questionnaire for the survey was given to each student to comment on their existing experience with learning English.

English was largely used for asking the questions and giving instruction, whereas Czech was used to make the instructions clear. It was not the aim to test the level of



speaking and understanding skills, but to examine their ability to reproduce and recognise patterns of English intonation. Sometimes, it was necessary to repeat the instructions, if a student was not able to understand for the first time hearing.

### 3.4 Data Processing

Concerning the processing of the data, the answers of all the students were written on their individual answer sheets. The performances of the intonation were recorded by a voice recorder to be assessed later. As for the interview, another copy was printed for each student to mark the answers and to add possible comments to the questionnaire form.

As soon as all the data needed were collected, my task was to process them. Firstly, the recognition exercise was checked. The particular number of points and mistakes that the student made in the exercise were written on the front of each paper as e.g. 21/25, so that the results would be easily noticed in further processing. The students were ordered according to the number of points they achieved from the highest to the lowest. Additionally, a list of the most frequently mistaken exercises was done to comment on it later.

Secondly, the assessment of the imitation exercise was done by listening to each student's performance with main focus on intonation. While listening to all the recordings, notes were made about mistakes, use of word and sentence stress, level of naturalness, enthusiasm, or other features. After that, the information obtained in each completed questionnaire was processed to be included in the overall evaluation.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Assessment of the Group Tested

The assessment of the students in the recognition exercise was simple; the more answers they got right, the better they were judged. In case of the imitation exercise, the review was not as easy as in the first exercise. As I mentioned above in chapter 3.4 entitled Data processing, my job was not just to assess if the pattern was copied correctly. I also had to focus on other aspects at the same time. The individuals' performances differed not only in terms of ability to imitate the melody itself, but also in terms of naturalness, enthusiasm, and using word and sentence stress, which are also essential parts of a well-performed intonation pattern. Some students sounded very natural, positive, but the others rather foreign, bored, or uninterested. Although some learners were able to imitate the changes of pitch correctly, their performances were not good enough to be categorized as *the best* students.

Hence, the recordings of the students were judged broadly by marking them simply as *appropriate* and *inappropriate*. The performances which were exactly or very near the original record were considered appropriate. By contrast, the unsuccessful attempts of reproduction of the patterns were rated as inappropriate.

After evaluating the exercises, a list of good and weak students was made. The main task of the survey was to examine the differences in the students' performances of copying and recognising certain intonation patterns. Thus, I was meant to develop a possible explanation of the various outcomes. A personal interview with all the

previously-tested students was done to interpret their results. From the twenty learners examined, the performances of the best students were investigated in order to find out what this group has in common. The students were asked eleven close-ended and four open-ended questions concerning the students' previous experience with English language, especially intonation. Moreover, some other features which were thought that might have influenced the achievements were discussed in the questionnaire. See the questionnaire form used in this survey in Appendix 2.

During the evaluating I had to face some difficulties, as each student excelled in a different part of the test, yet was not as good in the other parts. In addition, as expected, some students reached good results in the exercise aimed at reproducing the intonation pattern, but a worse assessment in drill and vice versa. The students who achieved better results in the reproduction exercise had probably already trained it actively. Beyond those who were able to recognise the patterns were theoretically educated, but have had not practised it much. Another reason could be that they were experienced, but just not talented. In the event that the student's reproduction was better than recognising the patterns, it might be resolved in a way that the students were gifted in repeating the patterns, probably due to the fact that they are musical. However, these were just our presumptions; a more accurate explanation was yielded by interviewing the students face to face.

## 4.2 Results of the Testing

### 4.2.1 The Imitation Test

The imitation test (See the exercises in Appendix 1) contained five exercises ordered from the shortest and as expected the easiest (imitating of words/short phrases containing 1 stressed syllable) to the longest and thus the most demanding (imitating of sentences with four and more stressed syllables). The fifth exercise was focused on drill of the different intonated word "yes", which appeared to be the most difficult one for majority of the students.

The results of the evaluation of imitation proved my expectations, due to the fact that most students did well in the drill of the short phrases. The general trend was that the more complex the sentences were, the more mistakes they made, (see Table 1).

However, the students faced the most difficulties in the fifth exercise on imitating the word "yes" said five times with a different tone. It was usually difficult for the learners to distinguish the similar-sounding tones, for example "yes" said using the rising tone from the fall-rising tone and the level tone from the falling tone.

**Table 1. Results of the exercise on imitating some basic English intonation patterns**

IMITATION	Appropriate performance		1 inappropriate		2 inappropriate		3 inappropriate		Total mistakes
1 syllable	12	60%	6	30%	2	10%	-	-	10
2 syllables	9	45%	7	35%	3	15%	1	5%	16
3 syllables	8	40%	9	45%	2	10%	1	5%	16
4 syllables	6	30%	8	40%	4	20%	2	10%	22
yes	5	25%	7	35%	5	25%	3	15%	26
Average	8	40%	7,4	37%	3,2	16%	1,4	7%	18

The average student made four and a half mistakes in a total of twenty-nine words/sentences their task was to imitate, which is brilliant. The easiest exercise was the first one. On the other hand, the one with the largest number of mistakes was the fifth. The rest of the exercises were more or less similarly troublesome for the participants of the test.

After all, three learners did perform all the utterances appropriately, therefore they were considered to be *the best* students. A discussion on the characteristics they share can be found in chapter 4.3.1 Best students.

#### **4.2.2 The Recognition Exercise**

The part of the test focusing on the recognition of some basic English intonation patterns showed some interesting conclusions. First, the students easily identified whether the English native speaker was saying a sentence or asking a question. (See Tone, certainty exercise in Table 2) Next, the learners of English were mostly able to recognise the attitudes of the speaker and also could distinguish the possible politeness and rudeness in the speech. (Politeness and Attitudes in Table

2) Recognising the highlighted word throughout the sentence uttered was not problematic for most of the students. Only three students made a mistake in this exercise. (Highlighting in Table 2) By contrast, the toughest task for the majority of the learners was detecting the changes of pitch and tone in a complex sentence. I observed that they were not able to recognize the possible rise or fall tone. Without previous theoretical knowledge of the patterns used in this sentence, (listing and question tags) the learners did badly in this exercise.

**Table 2. Results of the exercise on recognising some basic English intonation patterns**

RECOGNITION	Correct		1 mistake		2 mistakes		3 mistakes		4 + mistakes		Total mistakes
Tone, certainty	14	70%	1	5%	5	25%	-	-	-	-	11
Politeness	15	75%	2	10%	2	10%	-	-	1	5%	7
Attitudes	15	75%	3	15%	2	10%	-	-	-	-	7
Change of pitch and tone	1	5%	5	25%	3	15%	5	-	6	30%	52
Highlighting	17	85%	3	15%	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Average	12,2	61%	3	15%	2,4	12%	1	5%	1,4	7%	16,2

On average, every student made four mistakes in the whole recognition exercise containing a total number of twenty-six tasks. This is a remarkably good result. One student even achieved all the twenty-six points and many other survey recipients reached number of twenty points.

### 4.3 Dependence of the Students' Performances on the Expected Factors

Firstly, there were a number of students learning English for more than six years, who did not achieve significantly better results than the students who have not been studying the language for so long. On the other hand, some students who had been learning the language only for a few years did surprisingly very well.

Secondly, the students who had been trained in terms of intonation (e.g. have passed Phonetics and Phonology 2 classes) were not generally assessed better than those who had not practised intonation patterns. Surprisingly, a few of these students reached even much worse results in the recognition part of the test than those who had not been studying English phonetics and phonology.

Generally, it does not seem to be that all the students who have been to an English speaking country for 3 months and more are better than the students who have not been there or have been there for a shorter time.

The first expectation that was proved is the one regarding watching films in English. Therefore; students who watch films in English at least sometimes (once a month) did better in the research than those who do not watch films regularly.

Another confirmed factor that affects well the production of intonation concerns communicating in English. The students who talk in English to their Czech or foreign friends face-to-face at least sometimes; achieved in most cases better

assessment than the students who communicate in English only via e-mail or chat or do not speak in English at all in their free time.

In addition, the students who have opportunities to communicate with English native speakers, or at least listen to them, reached a better evaluation than those who do not.

It has not been proved that the students who have at least some experience with playing a musical instrument are significantly better in producing intonation patterns than the students who have never played a musical instrument.

As the students mostly claimed that they like both listening to music and singing, and nobody confessed to be talented. Hence, no trend was detected showing that interest in music somehow affects the performance of intonation.

Regarding the musicality of the students, they usually considered themselves musical or quite musical. Nobody thought of themselves as not at all musical, so it was not possible to say whether this factor somehow influences the ability of the right intonation or not. To discover more on this feature, it would be necessary to examine the relationship between musical and intonation analysis skills by another research. Dankovicová (et al. 2007) already inquired into this relation. Her studies "...revealed an overall significant relationship between musical training and intonation task scores, and between the music test scores and intonation test scores."



#### **4.3.1 Best Students**

My goal was to investigate what the best judged students have in common. The factors they share were discovered; therefore a general conclusion could be made about which factors might influence the production of intonation.

There were three students out of twenty, whose performances were appraised as perfect in the imitation and also recognition test. They sounded natural, interested and emphasized the stressed syllables in the right way.

Each of the three women has studied English for more than six years, so that they have constantly studied the language for a long period of time.

All of them also have passed the course of Phonetics and Phonology 1 and 2, where they became acquainted with the rules of the right use of intonation. The attendance in these courses enabled them to eliminate possible mistakes by correcting done by the experienced native English speaking teacher.

Additionally, watching films in English frequently in their free time supported them with a real form of the language including the correct natural intonation.

Then, all these students have at least a few Czech or foreign friends and acquaintances, who they communicate with in English. The active use of the English language appeared to be one of the most important factors, as two of these students meet a lot of foreign friends including native speakers.

The next factor they all share is a present or past ability to play a musical instrument. Two of them still can play it and the other used to play it as a child.

Another hobby they have in common is listening to music and dancing. At the same time they think of themselves as being at least quite musical. Moreover, two of them were also judged as being musical by the others.

Surprisingly, only one of them had been to an English speaking country for more than six months, while the next had spent two months there on a summer holiday. The third student had never been there. It appeared that a stay in an English speaking country is not necessarily of great importance.

One of the tasks included in the interview was to give some advice how to improve the existing knowledge on intonation. I thought it would be valuable to share the pieces of advice given by the students. To examine all the findings of the questionnaire and the most frequent answers, see Appendix 3.

All the best students emphasised listening and speaking to native speakers and also watching films in English. Some of the typical statements they made were:

- "Listen, listen, and listen to different kinds of conversations – so watching films, but also for example news"
- "By communicating with and listening to native speakers, by watching films and listening to music in English, by reading English texts aloud"
- "Listening to native speakers, watching films in English"

The other students participating in the survey mentioned several points. One commented that the musical and on the contrary the not musical students should follow different guidance:

- "There are two ways of improving your English intonation. If you are a musical person then the best way would be listening and speaking to native speakers. But if you are not musical (like me), then your only chance would be practising and the best would be if there is someone who is good at it with you since you cannot hear it properly."

Next piece of advice given was to:

- "Practise in front of the mirror"

One of the students interviewed recommends:

- "Attend an intensive course with a native speaker, or travel abroad"

Summarising the suggestions made by the students, the best possible thing learners can do to improve their production of intonation is to *use* the language. Listen, but also *repeat* after native speakers, no matter where. Drill the intonation patterns if you are attending an English class, meeting your English friend, or just watching a film in English at home.

# CONCLUSION

After having done the research and evaluating all the students' performances, my task was to draw a general conclusion resulting from the survey. Surprisingly, the ability of Czech learners of English to recognise and reproduce English intonation does not seem to have been influenced by all the factors I had expected. No one single factor seem to have greatly influenced a student's ability to recognise or imitate particular intonation patterns in English. Some factors even appeared to have little or no effect at all on a student's achievements in the test.

What did emerge, though, was that those students who were successful had been exposed, in a variety of ways, to authentic English. Those students who frequently watch films in the English language and communicate with native speakers either face to face or via Skype were assessed the best in both the imitation and recognition part of the survey. Since there are many opportunities nowadays to encounter real English while in the Czech Republic, it is now no longer indispensable for the learners of English to travel abroad to learn the correct natural English intonation.

Based on this research, the best students would be described as having several characteristics in common. It appeared that some typical personal attributes might well affect the production of intonation in a significant way. A very important feature that was detected was that those students who were successful were not afraid to present their ability to imitate English intonation. Indeed, it was observed that the highest-rated students excelled over the others because of their self-confidence.

Unfortunately however, many English learners feel embarrassed, or foolish while speaking English. Therefore they fail in the production of the melody of speech, even though their theoretical knowledge might be at a good level. This self-consciousness

could be overcome once the student feels at ease in the language that is by regular training. Not only listening, but mainly repeating after the native speakers or experienced Czech teachers, makes learners more self-assured.

Nevertheless, it is not only self-confidence, which influences the student's ability to pronounce correctly. It is obvious that people who have a passion for the language are likely to achieve better results than those who study it because they need it for work or to get a degree. On the other hand, strong will and regular qualified training might well help even those students, who miss some of the factors, as intonation patterns can be learned.

To learn the English intonation successfully, not only must Czech students be given opportunities in class to practise drilling imitation, but they should also be given confidence. Therefore, the teacher needs to incorporate special training of intonation into classes, which help them not to feel embarrassed. This might be implemented by group work, where the individual students do not feel afraid to talk as in front of the whole class. Similarly, another possibility would be choral work, where the students do not feel embarrassed while imitating in a group, not individually. Most importantly, however, students should be encouraged to enjoy the language by encountering authentic English at all levels.

After all, it is these factors, or a combination of them, which will enable students to learn and enjoy the studying of the intonation patterns at the same time.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1 The Exercise for the Survey

Ability to recognise and reproduce some typical English intonation patterns

Exercises from the handbooks by Armstrong (1926, 5, 9, 24, 27, 59, 60) and Allen (1954, 55–57) were used to create the following test:

*Example:*

You are going to hear the same sentence „What is your name?“ three times.  
Does the melody go up (rise tone) or down (fall tone)? Circle the right option:

1. What is your name?
  - a) up ↑ (rise)
  - b) down ↓ (fall)
  
2. What is your name?
  - a) up ↑ (rise)
  - b) down ↓ (fall)
  
3. What is your name?
  - a) up ↑ (rise)
  - b) down ↓ (fall)

## I. IMITATION

1. Copy intonation of the following words and sentences with one stressed syllable. Before you copy, listen to the example record to help you.

*Example: You (rise) ↑*

*He can't (fall) ↓*

- 1) who
- 2) wait
- 3) me
- 4) We're late.
- 5) Thank you.
- 6) I can't

2. Copy intonation of the following sentences with two stressed syllables:

*Example: Goodbye (rise) ↑*

*Help yourself (fall) ↓*

- 1) Good afternoon.
- 2) If you like.
- 3) It's not bad.
- 4) I would like some information.
- 5) I think it's all right.
- 6) It wasn't ready.

3. Copy the intonation of following sentences with three stressed syllables:

*Example: He was very successful in his work. ↓ ↑*

- 1) The house is old-fashioned.
- 2) I want a ticket for Liberec, please.



- 3) What colour are your eyes?
- 4) Are you quite sure?
- 5) They all brought a camera with them.
- 6) Have you been staying here long?

4. Copy the intonation of following sentences with four and more stressed syllables:

*Example: It was the last thing I expected to find there. ↓ ↑*

- 1) Didn't they promise to do it at once?
- 2) Alice was beginning to get very tired.
- 3) She has a very small private income.
- 4) Don't forget to write your aunt.
- 5) I go home at six, generally.
- 6) What a pity he couldn't come sooner.

5. Copy the 5 different intonation patterns of the word „Yes“

*Example: No (rise) ↑*

*No (fall) ↓*

## II. RECOGNISING THE PATTERNS

### II. I TONE, CERTAINTY

6. You are going to hear one sentence „You came this morning, didn't you?“ twice with the different intonation. Circle the right options:

Does the melody go up (rise tone) or down (fall tone)?

Is the speaker certain or uncertain?

1. You came this morning, didn't you?
  - a) up ↑ (rise)
  - b) down ↓ (fall)

- c) certain
- d) uncertain

2. You came this morning, didn't you?

- a) up ↑ (rise)
- b) down ↓ (fall)
- c) certain
- d) uncertain

7. You are going to hear a statement „The score was 1:0“ twice with different intonation. Circle the right options:

Does the melody go up (rise tone) or down (fall tone)?

Is the speaker certain or uncertain?

3. The score was 1:0

- a) up ↑ (rise)
- b) down ↓ (fall)
- c) certain
- d) uncertain

4. The score was 1:0.

- a) up ↑ (rise)
- b) down ↓ (fall)
- c) certain
- d) uncertain

## II. II POLITENESS

2. You are going to hear one sentence „I can see it.“ twice said differently.

Circle the right options:

Does the speaker sound polite or rather rude?

(Before playing the recording, read the options.)

A. I can see it.

- a) polite
- b) impolite

B. I can see it.

- a) polite
- b) impolite

3. You are going to hear one sentence „What do you want?“ twice said differently. Circle the right options:

Does the speaker sound polite or rather rude?

(Before playing the recording, read the options.)

C. What do you want?

- a) polite
- b) impolite

D. What do you want?

- a) polite
- b) impolite

## **II. III ATTITUDES**

4. You are going to hear the phrase „I’m sorry“ 3 times said in a different way. Circle the right options:

What does the speaker mean in each case? He is:

(Before playing the recording, read the options.)

A. I’m sorry

- a) really, really sorry
- b) not sorry at all

- c) asking for clarification
- B. I'm sorry
  - a) really, really sorry
  - b) not sorry at all
  - c) asking for clarification
- C. I'm sorry
  - a) really, really sorry
  - b) not sorry at all
  - c) asking for clarification

## II. IV CHANGE OF PITCH AND TONE

Now, you are going to listen to a short recording, where the speaker talks about what he has to do that day. Your task is to focus on the intonation of the speech and try to recognise when it rises, or falls.

Then, underline the word, on which you think there is a change of pitch and write there ↑ if it rises, or ↓ if it falls. There are 5 changes of the pitch. Analyse the sections which are marked by ||. You will hear the recording twice. (Before playing the recording, read the sentence.)

**Example: My name's Jack↓ and yours? ↑**

I have to go to the dentist's, || to the post office, || and to visit my grandmother. || It's a lot to do, || isn't it? ||

## II. V HIGHLIGHTING

5. You are going to listen to a sentence: „Steve is going to buy a new car

tomorrow.“ six times. The speaker wants to emphasize something different each time.

After you hear what he means by the sentence, write a number before the sentence. (Before playing the recording, read the options.)

*Example: **John** is single (=not Bob, but John)*

*John is **single** (=he isn't married, he's single)*

\_\_\_\_\_ = **Steve**, not Peter or anybody else is going to buy a car

\_\_\_\_\_ = He hasn't bought the car yet, he **is going to** do it

\_\_\_\_\_ = He isn't going to sell it, but **buy** it

\_\_\_\_\_ = He is going to buy a **new** car, not an old one

\_\_\_\_\_ = He is going to buy a **car**, not a motorbike

\_\_\_\_\_ = He isn't going to buy it next week, but **tomorrow**

## **Appendix 2 The Questionnaire for the Survey**

Factors which might influence the production of intonation  
in English

(What makes some students better at reproducing the  
intonation patterns than the others?)

### **I. EXPERIENCE WITH LEARNING ENGLISH**

1. How long have you been learning English?
  - a) 1-3 years
  - b) 3-6 years
  - c) More than 6 years
  - d)
  
2. Have you practised intonation patterns in the class or somewhere else?
  - a) No, never
  - b) Yes, but only a little
  - c) Yes, by myself (on the internet, in books)
  - d)
  
3. Have you taken any course in which you are taught about intonation?  
If so, tell me which one and comment on it.
  - a) no
  - b) yes (which one, possible comments)
  - c)

### **II. OTHER ACTIVITIES TO LEARN ENGLISH**

4. Have you been to an English speaking country?

If so, for how long?

- a) No, I have not
- b) 1 week-3 months
- c) 3-6 months
- d) 6 months and more
- e)

5. Do you watch films in English?

How often?

- a) Never
- b) Hardly ever (once a year)
- c) Sometimes (once a month)
- d) Often (once a week or more often)
- e)

6. Do you have Czech or foreign friends and acquaintances who you communicate with in English?

- a) No
- b) Yes, but I communicate with them only by chat and email
- c) Yes, a few and we sometimes communicate in English
- d) Yes, I have a lot of English speaking friends and we regularly meet each other
- e)

7. Do you communicate with English native speakers?

- a) No, not at all
- b) Yes, but only listen to them
- c) Yes, we communicate only in the class
- d) Yes, we communicate regularly also in my free time
- e)

### **III. OTHER CHARACTERISTICS WHICH MIGHT INFLUENCE THE PRODUCTION OF INTONATION**

8. Have you played any musical instruments?
- a) Never
  - b) I cannot play any musical instruments or it has been a long time ago I could
  - c) Yes, I played a musical instrument when I was a child
  - d) Yes, I have played a musical instrument and can still do it
  - e)
9. Do you like singing and listening to music?
- a) I am not very into listening to music and singing
  - b) I like listening to music, but I cannot sing well
  - c) I often listen to music and I also like singing
  - d) Music is my hobby, I love listening to music, singing (and dancing)
  - e)
10. Would the others call you musical?
- a) They say I am not musical at all
  - b) I am quite musical
  - c) People say I am musical, but I don't know
  - d) They say I am very musical
  - e)

### **IV. UNDERSTANDING OF INTONATION AND ATTITUDE TO ITS IMPORTANCE**

11. What do you think is the most important while speaking in English?
- a) Being accurate in grammar
  - b) Being accurate in vocabulary
  - c) Getting the individual sounds right



- d) Focusing on the melody of your speech
- e)

12. What do you understand of the word intonation?

13. How do you think you could make your intonation better?  
Do you have any tips?

14. Do you think that intonation is only for *advanced* students?

15. Have you ever misunderstood someone who is speaking English?  
Or have you been misunderstood when speaking English. If so, could you briefly describe why.

## **Appendix 3 Other Findings from the Questionnaire**

To introduce the reader to the important findings of the research via the interview with the English learners, who had been previously tested on intonation some facts and example answers were added to the thesis. The questions were listed from the questionnaire for my survey, concretely from part IV. Understanding of intonation and attitude to its importance.

### **Question: What do you think is the most important while speaking in English?**

Most students (7/20) consider being accurate in vocabulary as the most important while they speak in English. It often results from the misunderstandings caused by the lack of ability to express themselves or understand the people talking because of their limited vocabulary.

One fourth of the interviewed students (5/20) think that getting the individual sounds right is the most crucial while speaking English. This is caused by possible exchange of two similarly pronounced words for one another because of mispronouncing them. Some words differ only in one vowel or consonant sound, or they are pronounced exactly the same. In case of these so called homophones, it is important to know the context of the speech.

Being accurate in grammar is of great importance for 2/20 tested students. These students focus on the correctly used grammar patterns, because they want to avoid misunderstanding caused by use of e.g. a wrong tense and eliminate mistakes to

indicate their level of English for example at oral exams.

Focusing on melody is the most significant for another two people. They chose this option owing to their previous experience of misunderstanding because of intonation. It was difficult for one student to recognize whether someone is asking a question or stating something. The other one finds intonation important while speaking to her friends to convey the meaning of her speech.

The last one fifth of the twenty tested learners believe the combination of all the factors above to be important, and that is why they are not able to choose only one skill.

**Question: What do you understand of the word „intonation“?**

Most students who have passed the Phonetics and Phonology course answered in the right way. The other students mostly described the term by its functions and use.

- "The melody of speech"
- "The pitch is changing during the speech, it can affect the meaning a lot."
- "It's a sound of your speech. English is an analytic language, so it's essential not only to put the words in right order to be able to evaluate the meaning, but also to pronounce the words correctly and intonate the sentences in the right way."
- "It's the melody of voice while speaking, the changes of pitch that can help people to recognise the real meaning of a spoken language. (The same sentences can be said in different ways and their meaning changes.)"

- "Type of speaking, when we move up and down our voice to signalize meaning of the sentence"
- "Intonation is the change of pitch while speaking. There is rising intonation, falling intonation, peaking intonation which rises and then falls and dipping intonation that falls and then rises. Every language has its own intonation."

Some other students focused on the attitudinal and accentual function of intonation, probably because they were shown them in the research they had done.

- "What I want to emphasize in a sentence."
- "Emphasizing of something to be able to understand, to say something louder"
- "To say something in a way not to be misunderstood in what I say"

One student dealt with the question differently from the rest, emphasizing the role of sounding natural while speaking:

- "Melody of words as the native speaker use it, according to your ability the people get to know how *like an Englishman* you sound."

**Question: Do you think that intonation is only for advanced students?**

This question was answered always negatively. These are the most frequent reasons given by the students:

- "It should be for all the students, as they don't sound like robots."
- "I don't think so. I think that it's better to learn some phrases (in a restaurant etc.) with the intonation (e.g. polite), even with beginners. But I wouldn't go very deep in that issue with beginners."

- "No, but it is usually a problem for beginners."
- "Not at all – the sooner you start with intonation, the better."
- "Definitely not. The sooner students pay attention to intonation the better.  
It is advantageous for them to be taught by a native speaker, so they can pick up the intonation naturally from a very beginning of their studies."
- "Absolutely not. I think that it is a very important part of a language, which is absented in teaching English on basic schools."
- "In my opinion, intonation doesn't concern only „advanced“ students.  
Each student is different and so are their learning skills, talent and other things which play role in a language learning process. Therefore, there can be a beginner that picks up the English intonation quite naturally due to his musical talent, but there can also be a university student of English that still has a problem to intonate right."

**Question: Have you ever misunderstood someone who is speaking English? Or have you been misunderstood when speaking English. If so, could you briefly describe why.**

All the learners have experienced such misunderstanding. It was mainly because of wrong use of vocabulary, pronunciation, or owing to differences between British and American English, difficult accent, English collocations and phrases etc. No misunderstandings caused by wrong use of intonation were detected.

As for the wrong pronunciation, one of them mentioned a misunderstanding regarding numerals. He did not manage to distinguish between thirty and thirteen.

Next one pronounced the word „key“ as /keI/ instead of /ki:/, so that the native speaker did not understand her.

- "I experienced both of course for many reasons – vocabulary, culture differences, accents..."
- "Many times, but it was usually due to misunderstanding particular words not due to wrong intonation."
- "Yes, I have, especially at noisy places."
- "I have been misunderstood because of the lack of knowledge – collocations which are in English, of course, different from those in Czech."
- "Often, mainly it happens because of fast speaking by the person. From my side it is mainly because of stress or wrong pronunciation."
- "There have been cases when I misunderstood someone or I, myself, was misunderstood because of wrong word pronunciation or language accent, but not language intonation."
- "I misunderstood a new teacher because of his difficult accent and me, when I started learning the language; I was often misunderstood by the teacher using wrong grammar."

## Appendix 4 The Exercises on Intonation in *Project*

**48** Pronunciation coach

**9 Intonation – yes / no questions**

**a** Listen and repeat.

Have you got a pet?

I've got a hamster.

Is she from America?

She's from Australia.

**b** Say the sentences.

Have you got a brother?

Is it your birthday today?

My sister's name is Mandy.

Has Ben got a watch?

This is Tony's CD.

**59** Pronunciation coach

**7 Intonation – wh- questions**

Listen and repeat.

What do you want?

What sports do you play?

Where's my book?

What's the time?

**63** Pronunciation coach

**6 Intonation – revision**

Listen and repeat.


What are you doing? Is Jane getting dressed?

Is Tony ready? We're waiting for you.


He's having a shower. Why are you doing that?

## Unit 6

### Corrective stress

**a**  **71** Listen to these two sentences. Which word has the main stress in each sentence? Why?

- 1 No, I live at twenty-four Prescott Street.
- 2 No, I live at twenty-two Prescott Avenue.

**b**  **72** Listen to the B sentences. Tick the correct A sentences.

- 1 **A** 1 I'm going to John's party on Saturday.  
2 Are you going to Peter's party on Friday?  
**B** John's party is on Friday.
- 2 **A** 1 Is your birthday in August?  
2 Is your sister's birthday in July?  
**B** No, my birthday is in July.
- 3 **A** 1 Are we going to Brussels tomorrow?  
2 Are we going to Berlin on Sunday?  
**B** No, we're going to Berlin tomorrow.
- 4 **A** 1 Is your phone number 749254?  
2 Is your phone number 849264?  
**B** It's 749264.
- 5 **A** 1 Here you are. A cheese sandwich and a cup of coffee.  
2 Here you are. A tuna sandwich and a cup of tea.  
**B** I ordered a tuna sandwich and a cup of coffee.

**c**  **73** Listen to the complete dialogues. Check your ideas.



## Appendix 5 The Exercises on Intonation in *New English File*

### 3 PRONUNCIATION & SPEAKING intonation in question tags

a 7.9 Listen and complete the dialogue between a policeman and a suspect.

P Your surname's Jones, \_\_\_\_\_?

S Yes, it is.

P And you're 27, \_\_\_\_\_?

S Yes, that's right.

P You weren't at home last night at 8.00, \_\_\_\_\_?

S No, I wasn't. I was at the pub.

P But you don't have any witnesses, \_\_\_\_\_?

S Yes, I do. My brother was with me.

P Your brother wasn't with you, \_\_\_\_\_?

S How do you know?

P Because he was at the police station. We arrested him last night.

b 7.10 Listen and repeat. Copy the rhythm and intonation.

## Appendix 6 The Exercises on Intonation in *New Headway*

### 3 Stress and intonation

Work in pairs. Take it in turns to be A or B.

- 1 Student B should respond to A's remarks using the words in brackets. Make changes where necessary and continue the conversations further.

Example

A I've never seen Tina eat meat.

B *I know. She must be a vegetarian.*  
(must, vegetarian)

A *But I've seen her eat fish.*

a A Oh no! I've lost my passport.

B (could, leave, in the taxi)

b A It's an early start for us tomorrow.

B (What time, have?)

c A The traffic's not moving. We'll never get to the concert.

B (Don't worry, should, time)

d A I've brought you some flowers. I hope you like tulips.

B (How kind, needn't)



e A All the teachers are going on strike!

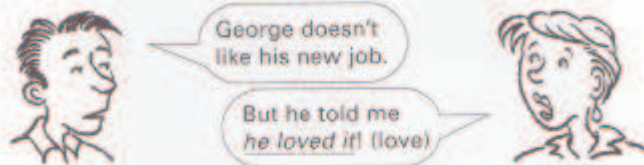
B (Brilliant, don't have, come, tomorrow)

- 2 **T8.3** Listen to the sample answers, paying particular attention to the stress and intonation. Are they the same as your replies?

### 3 Stress and intonation

- 1 Work in pairs and complete the conversation.  
A is talking to B about a friend, George. B has not heard the same as A.

Example



- a A He loves living in London.  
B But he told me \_\_\_\_\_! (hate)
  - b A He's moving to Canada.  
B But he told me \_\_\_\_\_! (Australia)
  - c A His girlfriend has left him.  
B But he told me \_\_\_\_\_! (he/leave/her)
  - d A He'll be thirty next week.  
B But he told me \_\_\_\_\_! (twenty-one)
  - e A He went to Amsterdam for his last holiday.  
B But he told me \_\_\_\_\_! (Barbados)
  - f A He can't give up smoking.  
B But he told me \_\_\_\_\_! (three years ago)
  - g A He was given the sack last week.  
B But he told me \_\_\_\_\_! (promotion)
  - h A He's fallen in love with a French girl.  
B But he told me \_\_\_\_\_! (with me)
- 2 T.87 Listen and check your answers. Pay particular attention to the stress and intonation.  
Practise the dialogues with a partner.