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Analysis of Errors in English Pronunciation Typical of Russian Speakers

Bachelor Thesis

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Supervisor:

Mgr. Irena Headlandová Kalischová, Ph.D.

Author:

Yulia Volkova

Declaration

“I hereby declare that I have worked on this thesis independently and the information used in the thesis has been acknowledged in the text and included in the list of references.”

Brno, 29 March 2015 ……..

Yulia Volkova

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Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá analýzou výslovnostních chyb rusky mluvicích uživatelů angličtiny. Teoretická část práce zkoumá nejdůležitější aspekty výslovnosti nerodilých mluvčích, klasifikací chyb a porovnáním fonetických systémů anglického a ruského jazyků. Tato část se zejména soustředí na hledání odlišností těchto jazyků způsobující rusky mluvícím potíže. Praktická část překládá výsledky rozboru nahrávek šestnáctí rusky mluvících, kteří se experimentu zúčastnili. V rozboru jsou předloženy chyby v oblasti samohlásek, souhlásek, intonace a slovního přízvuku. Cílem práce je získat co největší množství informací o zvláštnostech anglické výslovnosti rusky mluvících a stanoveni jejich příčin. Vedlejším cílem práce je zjistit zda existuje určitá souvislost mezi jazykovou úrovní mluvčích a výskytem výslovnostních chyb.

Klíčová slova

ruština, angličtina, fonetika, fonologie, ruský přízvuk, výslovnost, výslovností chyby, výslovnost nerodilých mluvčích, osvojování druhého jazyka, fonetický systém ruštiny, fonetický systém angličtiny, nerodilí mluvčí, nahrávky

Annotation

This bachelor thesis deals with analysis of errors in English pronunciation of Russian speakers. The theoretical part of the thesis explores the most important aspects of non-native pronunciation, classification of errors and the sound systems of English and Russian focusing on the differences between the languages. The practical part presents the analysis of 16 Russian speakers' recordings. The primary aim of the research is to gather as much information about the specific features of Russian speakers' pronunciation as possible. The secondary aim is to find any consistency between the language level of the speaker and the number of their mistakes.

Key words

Russian, English, phonetics, phonology, Russian accent, error, non-native pronunciation, second language acquisition, Russian sound system, English sound system, non-native speakers, recordings

Table of Content

Introduction

This bachelor thesis is based on a premise that everyone speaking a language speaks it with a certain accent. This fact refers not only to speakers for whom English is a second language but also native speakers because depending on their geographical or socio-economic background they also have various manners of pronunciation. As for non-native speakers, a particular manner of pronunciation mainly reflects their linguistic background, which comprises their mother tongue and level of proficiency in the second language. Thus when people hear someone speak with an accent which differs from their own, they notice the difference and might draw a conclusion about the origin of the speaker.

The main question being investigated in this bachelor thesis is to what extent native speakers of one of the most wide-spread Slavic languages, the Russian language, differ from speakers of other languages in their pronunciation of English. As a native speaker of Russian language living in the Czech Republic and studying English, I often notice how Russian speakers including myself produce English sounds and handle English intonation. The way this group of speakers pronounce English sounds differs from the pronunciation typical of, for example, Czech speakers. Based on my own experience, I can say that these differences sometimes cause misunderstanding between the Czechs and Russians who use English language for communication with each other. I am also aware of the fact that native English speakers and non-native advanced level speakers can observe this difference as well. Therefore I am interested in such questions as which aspects allow distinguishing Russian speakers from speakers of other nationalities and backgrounds, which characteristics and mistakes in their pronunciation are typical and, apart from that, what the reasons causing these similarities and differences are.

The thesis is divided into two parts. In the first part, there is brief and the most important theoretical information about sound systems of English and Russian languages as well as information about the difference between the sound systems of the languages. Here I focus on both segmental and suprasegmental aspects of phonology, which involves not only vowels and consonants but also stress and intonation. Apart from that, in this part I also answer some general questions regarding non-native pronunciation such as what effects non-native pronunciation or what model of pronunciation is considered to be the standard. As the focus of the thesis is on the errors in pronunciation, I also describe what an error is and how they can be classified. In the

second part, there is an analysis of the recordings of 16 Russian speakers who volunteered to take part in the research. There is a description of the speakers and the criteria for choosing them. The main emphasis of the practical part is the analysis of each aspect of speakers' pronunciation.

It is worth mentioning that the idea and methodology of the thesis was inspired by Klára Sedláčková's (2007) bachelor thesis called "Some Aspects of Non-native Acquisition of English Pronunciation in Portuguese Speakers" and the bachelor thesis "Some Problems with the Pronunciation of English Typical of Native Speakers of German" by Pavel Hrubeš (2008). Both of them were a great inspiration to me and encouraged me to do my research connected with my mother tongue. However, in my thesis, I try to put emphasis on the errors Russian speakers make and increase the number of the participants in the research. Apart from that, I also focus on investigating whether there is any consistency between learners' proficiency level of English and the amount of mistakes they make. Unlike the previous researches, I focus on the individual segments of pronunciation rather than on the performance of the speakers involved into the work.

Theoretical Part

1. Non-native Pronunciation

1.1 Received Pronunciation

As it has been already mentioned in the introduction, various manners of pronunciation occur within both non-native speakers and native speakers of English. English is a language spoken all over the world and an official language of such countries as the United Kingdom, the United States, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and many others. This geographical expansion along with different socio-economic reasons causes co-existence of numerous varieties of English. The varieties differ in a number of features, which comprise differences in grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation. Therefore, a certain manner of pronunciation can lead to a mistake in one variety of the language but at the same time can be acceptable in another.

For the purposes of this research as well as for teaching and learning English in general it is necessary to define pronunciation that is considered to be the standard in spite of the fact that a number of possible variations exist. According to Roach, the manner of pronunciation or the accent that most English learners focus on and that is also the most recommended for foreign learners studying British English is identified by the name Received Pronunciation, which is often abbreviated to its initials, RP (Roach, 2000). In addition to that, Pennington states that origins of Received Pronunciation accent lie in the south-east of England, however, it is currently a social accent associated with the BBC, the Public Schools in England, and with upper-middle and upper classes. This source also claims that in spite of the fact that RP is taught to foreigners; it is used by only 3 to 5 per cent of the population (Pennington, 1996).

Apart from Received Pronunciation, which is considered to be the model of British English pronunciation to the foreigners learning the language, there is also a generalized standard for American English called General or Standard American English. However, for the purposes of this research and for analysing pronunciation of speakers in the practical part, we are going to use RP. The main reason for doing that is that 15 out of 16 speakers involved claimed that the variety of English they concentrated on while learning the language was British English, which means that the model of pronunciation they were expected to master was Received Pronunciation.

1.2 Role of Mother Tongue in Non-Native Pronunciation

Most linguists agree that one of the crucial factors affecting non-native pronunciation and non-native language acquisition in general is the mother tongue of the language learner. The learner acquires second language through their initial knowledge of the mother tongue and this influence of the native language can concern all language levels. For example, when starting the process of language learning, many learners often tend to apply mother tongue grammar patterns or misuse words the pronunciation of which is similar in both languages but meanings are different.

As for pronunciation, when a learner speaks a foreign language, the principles typical of the first language can be visible in his or her manner of pronunciation as well. Within some learners the influence of their first language is so noticeable that the part of the world they came from can be easily identified. More than that, it is said that in comparison with other categories of language skills, the influence of the mother tongue becomes the most recognisable in case of pronunciation, "*where the phonological structure of a speakers first language and the associated 'articulatory setting' of the lips, tongue, jaw, etc. usually affect his or her English speech quite strongly*" (Swan & Smith. 2004, p. 11). This strong effect is achieved not only when individual vowels, consonants and clusters of sounds are produced but also when it comes to such suprasegmental aspects of phonology as rhythm and intonation.

According to Swan and Smith (2004), there are several ways the mother tongue can affect the learner's English. In their Teacher's Guide to Interference, they apply these ways to learning English as a second language in general. In the following paragraphs we will attempt to adapt their rules to interference in the field of pronunciation and support them with examples applicable to Russian language.

1. The first way in which the mother tongue affects non-native pronunciation is based on the absence of a sound or a pattern in the first language and its presence in English sound system. In other words, when the target language contains sounds that do not occur in the learner's first language, they are likely to have problems with these sounds. For example, /θ/ and /ð/ do not exist in the Russian sound system so they cause major difficulties for Russian speakers.
2. The second way is based on presence of a sound in the both languages, English and a native one. Such sounds as /ʃ/ or /ʧ/ can be found both in Russian and English so they are not normally considered problematic.

3. The third point correlates with the second one. Even though there are some similar features in different languages, these features are rarely identical. Learners may make so-called ‘interference’ or ‘transfer’ errors assuming that the correspondence between the languages is complete. Repeating the example from the previous point, we can again have a look at /ʃ/ and /ʧ/. In spite of the fact that these consonants exist in Russian, the Russian sound /ʃ/ is always hard, so learners might make /ʃ/ before vowel harder than the correct slightly palatalised English sound. The situation with /ʧ/ sound is opposite; this consonant is hard and unpalatalised in English but is palatalised in Russian, so words like *challenge* pronounced by a Russian speaker can sound “softer”.
4. The last way in which the mother tongue can influence pronunciation benefits speakers of languages unrelated to English, which means that, for example, Chinese speakers do not often experience abovementioned ‘transfer mistakes’ because when they learn English, they learn absolutely unknown sounds and patterns. In their language there are no patterns that would correspond to English ones, so they have nothing to base their new knowledge on. This point is hardly applicable to Russian native speakers.

1.3 Other Factors Influencing Non-native Pronunciation

Although the speaker’s first language plays a massive role in their pronunciation in terms of the second language, it is not the only factor. According to Kenworthy, there are five more factors that affect pronunciation learning. They include the factor of age, the amount of the exposure to a language, phonetic ability, attitude and the motivation of the learner (Kenworthy, 1990).

As for the factor of the learner’s age, there is a belief that states the connection between learner’s early age and mastering pronunciation. This belief was supported by several researches which showed that many learners who started acquiring a foreign language as adults lack near-native pronunciation, even though they managed to master grammar and have a wide range vocabulary. Apart from that, some specialists in the field of linguistics, psychology and biology claim that “the period up to puberty (around age of twelve) is a critical period for acquisition of a language without a foreign accent” (Pennington, 1996). However, there are also some other studies which prove that younger learners do not necessarily have an advantage in learning to pronounce foreign sounds and that this factor is not crucial.

The amount of the exposure to English represents the amount of time the learner spends and participates in an English-speaking environment. It is very important not just to be surrounded by English but also to actively use the language. This constant reception and

production of sounds can lead to improvement in one's pronunciation. However, that does not necessarily mean that a speaker should live in an English-speaking country because such influence can be reached even when a speaker uses English on a regular basis in many areas of their life such as work, school or for such leisure activities as reading, watching films and series, online gaming, browsing the Internet and many more.

Phonetic ability or also 'phonetic coding ability' is a component of general language aptitude, which is also believed to be related to the level of intelligence of the learner, and presents a natural ability for learning a foreign language (Ellis, 2008, p.73). Good phonetic ability enables learners to easily identify sounds of a foreign language, remember and then precisely produce them.

The other important factors in influencing non-native pronunciation are attitude and the identity of the learner. This point considers such questions as whether the learner would like to keep his or her identity seen through their accent or not. Some learners want to preserve their foreign accent because it distinguishes them from native speakers and them seem unique. There is also a question of what attitude a person has towards the target language and society identified with it. Sometimes a speaker with a certain attitude to society, country or nationality can purposely refuse to acquire proper pronunciation (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994, p. 9).

In comparison with language aptitude, which represents cognitive abilities of the learner, motivation represents the degree of effort that the learner invests in mastering pronunciation. R. Ellis identifies several kinds of motivation and reasons for it. Instrumental motivation takes place when a learner has a particular reason to make an effort, for example, passing an important exam. Integrative motivation is important when the learner "is interested in the people and culture represented by the target language group". (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994, p. 10*)* There is also resultative motivation which is the cause of some achievement in language learning. More successful learners may be willing to achieve more because of their success exactly as less successful learners may be less motivated to learn due to their failure. However, we cannot assume that the learner's motivation is constant; it is something that can be different according to context and other factors.

2. Classification of Errors

In order to answer the question of what errors Russian speakers can make when producing English, it is important to define what is considered to be an error in general and what is considered an error in particular when it comes to such an area of language skills as pronunciation. Following paragraphs deal with the various classifications of errors according to the different criteria.

Before focusing on categorization of errors, it is necessary to explain the reason why it is important to consider errors to be one of the main features of the language learning. For some learners it may seem unfair and even frustrating to focus mainly on what they get wrong in their speech rather than on what they succeed in. However, investigation and analysis of problematic areas play a great role in improving learner's language skills as well as help language teachers to realise problems of a particular group of learners and decide which study topics have to be included in the syllabi.

2.1 General Classification of Errors

It is worth mentioning that some language experts claim that there is a certain distinction between the terms "a mistake" and "an error". According to Rod Ellis (2008),

> Errors reflect gaps in a learner's knowledge; they occur because the learner does not know what is correct. Mistakes, on the other hand, reflect occasional lapses in performance; they occur because, in a particular instance, the learner is unable to perform what he or she knows. (p.17)

This distinction is based on the consistency of the learner's speech. In other words, depending on the learner's language proficiency level one can decide on whether it is a mistake or an error. It can be also assumed that if the learner is able to see a problem and correct themselves, then it is a mistake. Otherwise, we should use a term "an error". Moreover, as an error reflects a gap in the knowledge, it is more likely to reoccur and thus is systematic. (Gass & Seliker, 2008, p. 102)

Errors can be generally classified by several criteria which include *"the reason for their production and their linguistic type"*. As for the reasons for errors, we must consider whether the error is resulted by a random guess, which is called a pre-systematic error, or is produced when testing hypothesis, called a systematic error. Post-systematic errors are usually slips of the tongue caused by accidental carelessness (Rolf, 2003).

The linguistic type of errors is divided into two categories depending on whether the mode of behaviour is connected with language reception or language production. The modes of language behaviour which are usually associated with reception are listening and reading. The modes related to production are writing and speaking. Pronunciation is also an area of language production. Thus, pronunciation errors are ones of the productive type as well.

2.2 Classification of Pronunciation Errors (Pennington)

According to "Pedagogical classification of pronunciation errors and problems" presented in "Phonology in English Language Teaching" by Pennington (1996, p. 256), there are three classes of pronunciation errors divided by the degree of their importance for proper English pronunciation or alternatively by the effect they have on intelligibility, the definition of which is explained in the following section of the thesis.

1. The first class of the classification presents the most important pronunciation errors and problems. The author here distinguishes between the problems which occur most frequently and the ones with the greatest effect on intelligibility. Examples of the most frequent errors are:
    - Mispronunciation of a particular phoneme. This point may include substitutions, deletions, or insertions of sounds (Kenworthy, 1990, p.17). Speakers may substitute foreign English sounds with familiar sounds from their mother tongue. In case of Russian speakers, one of the phonemes that are substituted most is, for example, /ð/. Phoneme deletions often occur within consonant clusters such as deletion of /θ/ or /s/ in *months*.
    - Mispronunciation of a common morpheme. The morpheme is the smallest grammatical unit. One of the examples can be found within inflectional morphemes which modify verb's tenses. For instance, *-ed* pronounced as *ed* or *et* after voiceless stops, as in *walked, stopped*.
    - Mispronunciation of a common lexical item. The common lexical item is, for example, a single word such as *can't* or *there*.

    Examples of the most serious errors which have the greatest effect on pronunciation:
    - Stresses placed on wrong words or syllables (*the ˌwhite ´house* vs. *the ´White House*)
    - Misleading intonation. For instance, high pitched intonation is placed on an old piece of information; using of rising intonation for non-polar questions (wh-questions) where it is not appropriate in a conversation. However, is important to mention that in some cases the use of this type of

intonation can be appropriate. The choice of intonation often depends on the context.

- Loss of final consonants (as in *can't, mosque, sent*)

2. The second class deals with pronunciation problems which will benefit most from remediation and have the greatest effect on performance. This class includes problems that are, according to the author, the easiest to correct, which means that there is a chance for successful remediation:
    - A very soft or monotonous voice
    - Stress on incorrect word
    - Misleading intonation

    However, the assumption that the above mentioned aspects are easy to correct is quite arguable. The chance for successful remediation does depend on learner's motivation and persistence.
3. The following class considers pronunciation errors from the point of view of the learner. The errors in this section are identified by the learners themselves as the ones needing attention. The reason can lie in learner's personal attitude, social, academic, or professional needs There are three areas of errors in this class, which include stereotyped errors:
    - Unreduced vowels
    - Substitutions such as /θ/ and /f/, /i:/ and /i/
    - Loss of *–ed* and *–(e)s* endings

    Errors causing embarrassment or obvious miscommunication:

    - Incorrect stress or intonation
    - Mispronunciation of common words
    - Unintentional profanity caused by phonemic substitution. For example, lowering or shortening of the vowel in the word *sheet*.

    Items learners would like to pronounce correctly:

    - New words, phrases or sentences which have been encountered recently in their language learning or picked up from their friends or the media
    - Common or favourite expressions
    - Key words in their field of specialization

2.3 Intelligibility

The aspect of intelligibility mentioned in the previous section is crucial for assessing errors and pronunciation of language learners in general. Moreover, intelligibility is viewed by Kenworthy as the pronunciation goal for the majority of learners. When defining the term, linguists often contrast between the proper native-like pronunciation (e.g. Received Pronunciation) and pronunciation of a speaker with a strong foreign accent, which appears unusual and difficult for understanding. Within this contrast, intelligibility lies more or less in the middle of these two poles because to a certain extent it empowers the learner to retain their native accent but also enables others to understand their speech as comfortably as the speech of native-speakers. This means that the way a person speaks does not have to be perfect and can contain some errors but the meaning of what they say is easy to understand regardless of possible mistakes. Thus, the main feature of intelligibility is a degree of comfort that a person experiences when listening to someone speak. The comfort does not relate to conveying the meaning only but also involves being appropriate and being able to communicate in specific situations.

However, the criteria of good, intelligible pronunciation cannot be viewed as something universal. They vary depending on the situation, context, and speakers involved in a speech act. For example, the pronunciation of Polish or Czech speakers is more intelligible for the Russians than the speech of Indian speakers whose pronunciation habits are drastically different from those of Slavic languages speakers. So the most relevant way of evaluating intelligibility is to take all important factors into consideration and to assess learner's intelligibility from all possible points of view, which means including spontaneous speech as well as reading aloud and evaluating by judges who are familiar and unknown for the speakers.

3. Comparison of the English and Russian Sound Systems

In order to introduce Russian language, it is important to state some general information about it and its speakers. Russian is a part of the Slavic branch of languages. Along with Ukrainian and Belarussian, it forms East Slavic language group. According to recent surveys[1], Russian is the eighth most spoken language in the world by number of native speakers and the seventh by total number of speakers. The language is not only spoken by the vast majority of Russian Federation population, but also by "*an estimated 80 million native speakers in the former Soviet republics and around 40 million people in newly independent countries using Russian as a second language or lingua franca*" (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 45).

Being representatives of different language groups, historical and geographical backgrounds, English and Russian have a great number of dissimilarities. The most obvious one is usage of different writing systems. Russian is written using the Cyrillic alphabet, whereas English employs the Latin one. Beginner level English learners, who just start acquiring both the language and the Latin alphabet, sometimes might make mistakes when reading out loud. For instance, they can confuse English letter *y* with Russian *y* /u/ or English *p* and Russian letter *p* /r/ as the graphemes look identical.

There is a range of further differences that make learning English for Russian speakers and vice versa a serious challenge. The fundamental differences include rather fluid word order in Russian, where any sentence element can be at any place in a sentence. Unlike English, Russian is a synthetic language and conveys meanings through variations of word order and by overlaying of morphemes.

When speaking about difficulties that Russian speakers might face learning English, it is worth mentioning that Russian is a phonetic language, which means that words are mostly pronounced the way they are written. There are only minor differences between spelling and pronunciation, which is the reason why Russian learners of English often struggle with the lack of consistency between spelling and pronunciation in English.

In the following paragraphs, differences in Russian and English sound systems are described in more details. As it is assumed that language learners might experience difficulties with each of pronunciation components, both segmental and suprasegmental features are included.

[1] The Summer Institute for Linguistics (SIL) Ethnologue Survey (1999)

3.1 Vowels

The system of English vowels appears to be rather more complex than the one of Russian language. The main reason for assuming that Russian speakers may find English vowels difficult is that there are 12 vowel sounds including the short and long ones in English and only five vowels in Russian without differentiating by length. Other than that, Russian system does not include any diphthongs, sounds consisting of two vowels put together, whereas there are eight diphthongs in English. The chart below represents correlation of English and Russian vowel. The vowels in red are found in Russian and the vowels in blue are found in English. In case a vowel is marked with the both colours, it means it can be found in both English and Russian.

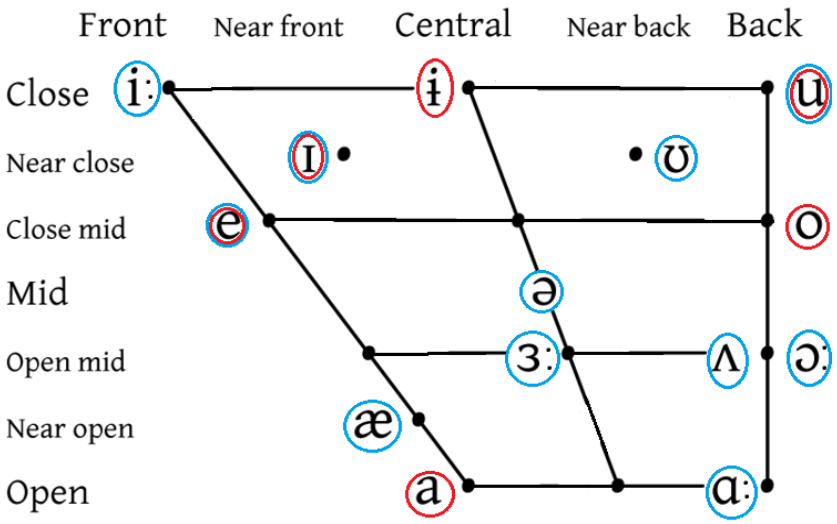

Chart 1 Correlation of English (blue) and Russian (red) vowels

These five basic vowels of Russian are /i/, /u/, /e/, /o/, /a/. They are represented in language as ten letters a /a/, я /ja/, э /e/, е /je/, о /o/, ё /jo/, и /i/, ы / ɨ/, у /u/, ю /ju/, As it can be seen in the transcriptions of the letters, the letters form pairs where both of them are connected with one vowel sound. For example, the graphemes *у* /u/ and *ю* /ju/ embody vowel sound /u/ and as in the other pairs, the second item has the preceding consonant /j/. Appearing of the /j/ consonant is a part of palatalization process which is presented in more details in the next chapter Consonants.

Another important aspect of Russian pronunciation and sound system is vowel reduction (Marren, 2011, p. 75). Reduction of vowels in Russian as well as in English is tied with word stress and strong and weak syllables. Vowels in unstressed or weak syllables have different pronunciation. In English, however, vowels in weak syllables are mainly reduced to schwa /ə/ sound and less frequently to /i/ and /u/ (Roach, 2000, p. 82). At the same time, in Russian each

vowel has its own defined set of reduced variations, the choice of which depends on the position of the unstressed syllable in a word. So for instance, the vowel /o/ is pronounced as /o/ in a syllable under stress but transforms into /ʌ/ in the first level of reduction and into /ə/ in the second level. The first level of reduction includes first syllable before stress, first syllable in a word without stress and last syllable. The second level of reduction includes more than first syllable before stress and after stress syllables.

However, we cannot say that every English vowel that is not found in Russian automatically leads to mispronunciation. Swan and Smith (2001) mark only /æ/, /ɑː/, /ɔː/ and /ɜː/ as the potentially problematic because in comparison with the rest, they do not have any kind of even near equivalent in Russian.

Thus /æ/, which is not found Russian, is expected to be replaced by more familiar for the learners /e/. However, the difference between /æ/ and /e/ is crucial and can lead to confusion in such pairs as *ten* and *tan* or *pen* and *pan*. The vowels /ɑː/, /ɔː/ and /ɜː/ are ranked as the most problematic ones for two reasons. The first one is mentioned above, the vowels do not exist in Russian. So Russian learners might be expected to replace them by more familiar to their articulatory habits vowels. /ɑː/ and /ɔː/ tend to be replaced by more frontal and short Russian /a/ and /o/. /ɜː/ might be substituted by the /jo/ combination. The second reason is absence of long vowels in Russian. This difference in length is something that the learners have to pay greater attention to because it might also influence intelligibility of their pronunciation.

The rest of English vowels including diphthongs are not expected to cause major difficulties to Russian learners because they have near equivalents in form of individual sounds or combination of sounds.

3.2 Consonants

As well as the systems of vowels, consonants in both languages carry a great number of dissimilarities. There are 36 consonants in Russian which are categorized by manner and place of articulation, voicing and absence or presence of palatalization. The categories of 24 English consonants do not include palatalization as the main feature.

The significant difference in the amounts of consonants is formed due to the fact that Russian has pairs of palatalized and unpalatalized consonant phonemes. Palatization refers to a way of pronouncing a consonant in which the front of the tongue is moved towards the hard palate. In Russian, the palatalized consonants are called soft and the unpalatalized ones are called

hard. Palatalization is English is less frequent but is an essential part of the /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ sounds in such words as *she* or *measure* or also a main feature of initial /j/ in *yellow* (Gimson, 1994, p.16). As in Russian there are 15 consonant pairs where palatalization appears (p-p, b-b, m-m, v-v, f-f, n-n, d-d, t-t, z-z, s-s, g-g, k-k, l-l, r-r,), it is assumed that the learners might unnecessarily soften some consonants in English when they are followed by vowels that typically soften consonants in Russian words. For example, consonants /l/ and /t/ in such words as *link* and *tea* are followed by /ɪ/ and /i:/ which in most cases make preceding consonant softer in Russian. Therefore, learners tend to carry this habit in English pronunciation as well.

Describing consonants as voiced or voiceless is found in both English and Russian. It refers to participation of vocal cords in the articulatory process. When a phoneme is marked as voiced, it means that vocal cords vibrate when the phoneme is being produced. As it was mentioned in Vowels chapter, vowel reduction is a typical feature of Russian pronunciation. Additionally to that, rotation of stressed and unstressed syllables also influence voicing quality of consonants. Devoicing in Russian also depends on a position of consonant in a word. Final devoicing becomes a systematic phonological process where a consonant in the end of a word turn voiceless. Examples include the word *хлеб* with *b* as the last letter which is pronounced as the voiceless /p/. Therefore, Russian speakers are expected to devoice final consonants in English words as well.

Apart from some unknown to Russian speakers vowels, there are also a few consonants. The consonants that do not appear in Russian include both voiceless and voiced dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, voiced glottal fricative /h/, voiced post-alveolar affricate /ʤ/, voiced bilabial approximant /w/ and voiced velar nasal /ŋ/. All of the above mentioned consonants are foreign to Russian speakers' ear and to their articulatory habits, which means that they might substitute them with more familiar alternative. Each of the mentioned consonant phonemes and its possible substitutions are described in the following paragraphs.

/θ/ and /ð/ are dental fricatives that are present in such frequently used words as *think, three, this, they*. Due to the frequency, learners cannot avoid these phonemes and need to master them even though they are not present in their native language. Voiceless /θ/ is often substituted by voiceless fricatives /s/ or even /f/ because their pronunciation is the closest to /θ/. For the same reason, /ð/ is substituted by voiced /z/ and occasionally by /d/. Thus *think* becomes *sink* and *they* can become *zey or day*.

/h/ is a sound that is a lot more delicate than Russian voiceless velar fricative /x/ which it is often changed for. According to many researches, it is close to Scottish *ch* in *loch.*

/ʤ/ represent two consonants that exist in Russian separately. However, /d/ and /ʒ/ hardly ever stand next to each other. It is only possible when a prefix ends with /d/ and a root starts with /ʒ/ and in some borrowed words such as *jeans*, but even in this case, the sounds are pronounced as separate ones.

/w/ is a voiced labial-velar approximant which is often confused with /v/ and vice versa. In words like *west* and *vest* it can lead to misunderstanding.

/ŋ/ especially in –ing ending is expected to be replaced by either more familiar /g/, /k/ or /n/

3.3 Word Stress

In order to describe the function and the use of intonation, it is necessary to first define which syllables are stressed and how word stress functions in both English and Russian as both of the suprasegmental elements are connected quite closely. It is known that some languages, for example, Czech or French, have their fixed rules regarding the position of word stress. In Czech, that is a first syllable that usually carries the stress. On the other hand, French has word-stress fixed on a last syllable in a word. When it comes to English and Russian, the similarity is that both languages do not have a stable word stress pattern that could be applicable to the majority of the words in the language. Just like Russian, English has variable stress patterns and as it was mentioned previously, vowel sounds can change depending on whether a syllable is stressed or unstressed.

As Cruttenden (1997, p. 15) states, "*any description of English word-stress rules inevitably involves a large number of exceptions*". However, the author also claims that it is still possible to distinguish some rules and suggests dividing words into stems and affixes. Stems, or single free morphemes like *blood* or *survive* and parts of words remaining after an affix is removed as in *tremend-ous*, conform to a set of informal simplified rules. In case of verbs and adjectives, stress is placed on the penultimate syllable when final syllable has a short vowel (*surrender, polish, astonish*). If the final syllable contains a long vowel, the vowel is stressed (*relate, maintain, reject*). In case of nouns, if the final syllable has a short vowel, the rule is applied as well (*elephant, moment*). However, it is necessary to emphasize that the above-mentioned set of rules is very informal and flexible. For instance, in words with more than two syllables with a final long vowel, stress may occur not on the final syllable but on the antepenultimate (e*scalate, organise, pedigree*), which contradicts with the rules above.

Depending on how suffixes influence word-stress, there are three categories of them. In the first category, there are suffixes that do not affect word-stress as in *fulfil/ fulfilment, usual/ usually*. Secondly, suffixes which themselves take the stress (*picture/picturesque, China/Chinese*). The third category includes suffixes that shift the stress on the stem (*economy/ economic, curious/ curiosity*).

As the rules cover only a minor part of word stress cases, many language learners are forced to memorise stress patterns of each particular word they come across. In other words, they learn it from their experience with spoken language. However, if a learner places stress on the wrong syllable in English, it may sound strange, but it does not significantly affect intelligibility and the speakers are most likely to understand each other (Marren, 2011, p.77). On the contrary, word stress in the Russian language plays an important role in defining not only a grammatical meaning but also a lexical meaning of a word. As well as in English, stress may fall on any syllable in a word but in Russian it is characterized as so called "free stress", which means that the position of stress within one word may vary for different grammatical forms (Avanesov, 1964). For example, words *´дома* and *до´ма* looks identical but as the stress is placed on the different syllables, *´дома* means *at home* but *до´ма* means *houses*.

As word-stress plays such a crucial role in the Russian language, Russian speakers might be expected to be able to differentiate word-stress in English without major difficulties. In the practical we will see how the learners manage word stress depending on their language level.

3.4 Intonation

Intonation is one of the most important intelligibility factors both in English and in Russian. Incorrect use of intonation is one of the most frequent reasons for misunderstanding between speakers. Roach (2000, p. 183) also states that intonation helps listeners "*better recognize the grammar and syntactic structure of what is being said*". In order to be aware of Russian speakers' background regarding the use of intonation, it is necessary to know what a crucial role intonation plays in the language. As presented on the example from Marren's research (2011, p. 79), the word *water/воды* in Russian pronounced as /va'dɨ/ can be expressed with three different types of intonation. In case of intonation, a very unstable phonological factor, it is less risky to call a reoccurring characteristic a tendency rather than a pattern. Using the intonation with a fall of a tone *(Воды.)* gives the meaning of the request "Give me some water!". Using the intonation with "*a dramatic rise and abrupt fall in tone within the stressed syllable*" (Marren, 2011, p. 79) would be an offer as in "Some water?"/ *Воды?*; and the

exclamation *Воды!* with a rise of a tone is used to express astonishment about how much water there is, like “So much water!”. The above-mentioned case is a great example of how it is not necessary to rearrange word order in Russian in order to change the communication purpose of the sentence. The use of a different intonation pattern is in many cases sufficient.

The following chart represents the differences in use of the intonation patterns between the English and Russian languages. Due to some crucial dissimilarities in English and Russian syntax, the chart does not cover every purpose that can be found in both of the languages. For example, it is impossible to include typical of the English language question tags, as they do not exist in Russian.

Purpose	**Typical intonation in English**	**Typical intonation in Russian**
Statement (provide information)	Falling	Falling
Wh-question (non-polar question including the words *who, what, where, when, why, how*)	Falling	Falling
Exclamation (e.g. *What a beautiful day!)*	Falling	Rise-fall or rising
Yes-No question (polar questions)	Rising	Rise-fall
Unfinished utterance (something more is to follow e.g. *Excuse me* or *When I was young…*)	Fall-Rise	Rise-fall
Listing (e.g. *… brown, black, grey and white.*)	Rising and falling on the last item	Rising and falling on the last item

Chart 2 Differences in use of intonation

Although the chart shows that there are more similarities than differences regarding the intonation used, it is impossible to say that the languages sound similar even in the cases with

same communication purposes. In the same way, it is impossible to assume that the language learners have no problems mastering English intonation. Apart from the tones used, there are other important aspects involved. Bratus (1972) argues that there is an absence of gradual descending scale in Russian i.e. the first word is often not the highest in pitch. Other than that, "*the range of fall of intonation in statements is greater in Russian than in English*". In much the same way, "*there is a steeper rise in tone for the stressed syllable in Russian and Russian only allows rise in tone to occur on stressed syllables, unlike in English, where unstressed syllables may have a rise in tone, and the fall-rise intonation is not used in Russian*" (as cited in Marren, 2011, p. 80).

According to some previous researches (Swan and Smith, 2001, p.149), Russian learners may ask polar questions with falling instead of rising intonation, which may not sound polite to English native speakers. English speakers can see the falling intonation in case of yes-no questions inappropriate because in context of English, it sounds as if the speaker have already asked the same questions before and now suggests rather than asks. The possible reason is that Russian yes-no questions only start with a rise in tone but end with a fall after the stressed syllable. Apart from that, there are some difficulties regarding tag questions as the use of fall and rise tones is often confused.

3.5 Foreign influence on English and Russian

The last paragraphs of the theoretical part are dedicated to the words in English and Russian that share same origins. The words like *catastrophe, pneumonia, climate, ballet, gigantic* and many others are foreign to the both languages. Such words as *catastrophe, psychology, crisis, pneumatics,* prefixes *micro-*, *auto-*, *bi-* etc. are etymologically Greek or Latin and were borrowed to English and Russian directly or by means of mediator languages. The words did not keep their authentic pronunciation and adjusted to the pronunciation habits of English, Russian and any other language speakers. Thus when the learners come across a word that looks almost identical in their own language and also has the same meaning, they are often confused by its pronunciation and tend to carry the way it is pronounced in their mother tongue to the foreign language.

For example, the word *psychology* has its analogue *психология* in Russian. However, whereas the word in English is pronounced as /saɪˈkɒlədʒɪ/ with the silent *p* and /aɪ/, the Russian

variation keeps the *p* and has /ɪː/ as the first syllable vowel /psɪːkɒlɒgija/. The example also proves that Russian is a highly phonetic language and even the borrowed words tend to be pronounced the way they are spelt.

Apart from the words of Latin and Greek origin, there is also a number of words borrowed from the French language due to the French influence to the politics and culture on both Russia and England in history. Where English tends to copy the original French long /eɪ/ ending, Russian has a short /–jet/ or /e/. So the learners have to pay special attention to such words as *ballet* /bæ̲leɪ/, *bouquet* /boʊkeɪ/, *buffet* /bʌ̲feɪ/, *cafe* /kæ̲feɪ/, *resume* /rezjuːmeɪ/.

Practical Part

1. Overview

The following part of the thesis is fully dedicated to the practical research that was conducted within a group of Russian speakers. The necessary information about the research process, speakers involved and materials used is provided in the next paragraphs.

The 16 speakers involved into the research had been found via social media where they claimed their interest in the research. They considered their participation as an opportunity to receive some feedback on their language skills, more specifically, the quality of their pronunciation. It is important to state that the speakers were not only Russian by nationality but also Ukrainian, Belorussian, Kazakh and Moldavian. By nationality, there are six Russian participants, five Ukrainian, two Belorussian, two Kazakh and one Moldavian. Despite such a wide geographical divide, all of the speakers consider Russian to be their mother-tongue and do not speak other official languages of their state. This had been taken into consideration before choosing participants. Applicants who considered Russian as their second language could not have been chosen. Other than that, none of the participants had learned any other foreign language except English, which allows to exclude any influence of learning other foreign languages on their English pronunciation.

All of the participants are foreign students of different universities in Brno and all of them belong to the same age group: 18 – 25 years old. Respondents' levels of proficiency, however, do differ and range from A2 to C1 levels according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This makes it possible to investigate whether the language level of the speakers has an impact on their pronunciation.

The level of proficiency was defined either by the participants themselves as some of them passed international language exams in the past. Or, in case they had never taken any of international examinations, they were asked to pass a short online placement test. The test was designed by British Council for personal use to give language learners an approximate indication of their English level. After summarizing the results of the exams and the test the speakers provided, we were able to define four focus groups according to speakers' proficiency level. Speakers' proficiency level are stated with accordance to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Three participants belong to A2 or Elementary level. There are five participants in B1 (Intermediate) and four B2 (Upper Intermediate) level groups. The most proficient C1 group, or Advanced, consists of 4 speakers.

As for the meetings with the respondents, they mostly took place in a quiet area of Moravska Zemska Knihovna in Brno, where recording would not be interrupted. The speakers were firstly asked the questions from the questionnaire. The choice of language for the interview part and instructions depended on the level of proficiency each speaker individually. With some speakers, A2 group specifically, it was necessary to ask the questions, give instructions and explain the tasks in Russian as otherwise it might not have been clear enough for them. However, with the rest of the participants, groups B1-C1, the language of instructions was strictly limited to English. In case the speakers required further explanation in Russian, it was provided. After the questionnaire part was completed, practical tasks were explained and then recorded with a digital voice recorder. All the recordings were provided with a consent of the speakers. They were fully aware that they were being recorded and what the recording were going to be used for.

1.1. Questionnaire and Samples

The questionnaire includes 15 questions which range from more general to more specific ones. The questionnaire was composed considering the aspects influencing non-native pronunciation included into the theoretical part. The first question finds out necessary basic information about a speaker, their age, gender and place of birth. As it was already stated above, all of the speakers belong to the same age group. The place they were born does not play a major role as the first language for all of them is still Russian. Questions n. 2-6 are aimed at gathering information on the amount of exposure to the language as well as speakers' experience with language learning. The speakers are asked for how long and where they have been learning the language and whether they are still learning it now. Question n. 7-11 are more specific and focus on experience with mastering pronunciation specifically. The speakers are asked whether they had any classes on pronunciation, e.g. familiar with IPA and which variation, British or American English they were taught. Moreover, questions n. 9-10 and 14-15 focus on speakers' motivation and attitude towards mastering English and its proper pronunciation. It is assumed that the more motivated a learner is, the more time they dedicate to practising pronunciation on their own. In question n.11, the speakers are asked for possible evaluation of their pronunciation and whether they already know they have to work on something. In addition to the placement test mentioned above, question n. 12-13 concern speakers' proficiency level in English. The questionnaire can be found in the Appendix 1.

The samples for reading were selected from different sources. Most of them were also adjusted for the needs of this research. Overall, the samples included into the practical part are

quite versatile and contain both samples aimed at detecting pronunciation errors and also regular extracts from student's books. The following paragraphs introduce the samples in more detail and justify why they had been chosen.

In the Task 1, the extracts from New English File Intermediate Student's book are slightly shortened. Some more difficult words are purposefully added to the extract. The last two paragraphs of the task contain samples from the study materials for Phonetics and Phonology class for 1st year students of the Faculty of Education, the samples are practice exercise on /p/ and /b/, long and short i.

Original extract from New English File Intermediate Student's book	**Modified extract/ Modifications**	**Aspects tested/ potential errors.**
I hate people who use their mobiles in the car, even if they are hands free. Whenever you see someone driving badly, nine times out of ten they're on the phone. (p.)	**No modification**	/h/ in *hands, hate*
What really annoys me are people who use their phones a lot when they're with other people – like when you're out having a drink or a meal with someone and they spend the whole time talking on their phone and texting other people to arrange what they're doing the next day. I think it's really rude. (p.)	What really annoys me are people who use their phones a lot when they're with other people – like when you're out having a drink with someone and they spend the whole time talking on their phone and texting to arrange their plans. I think it's really rude. **Slightly shortened in order to make it easier for the reader.**	*-ing* ending /h/ in *who* /r/ in *really rude*

I think the English are very polite, but I don't think they are too polite – I mean I don't think it is a bad thing, I think it's a good thing. . In my job, I have met a lot of English people and I think they are much more polite than we are, both in the way they talk and also in the way they respect other people's opinions. Well it isn't true about all English people though. The football hooligans and some of the tourists that come here to Turkey and drink too much – they're not polite – but the majority are and I like. (p.)	The English are very polite, but I don't think they are too polite – I mean I don't think it is a bad thing, I think it's a good thing. In my job, I have met many English people and they are much more polite than we are, both in the way they talk and also in the way they respect other people's opinions. Well it isn't true about all English people though. The football hooligans and some of the tourists that come here to South America and drink too much – they're not polite – but the majority are and It's wonderful. • "I think" deleted two times as its use is already excessive in this piece. • "Turkey" changed to "South America" in order to test th in *South* and schwa in *America*. • "I like it" is changed to "It's wonderful" to test W	*Thing/think* Th (/θ/, /ð/) in *than, both, they, though* Schwa /ə/ in *America* /w/ in *wonderful*
I've been pretty busy. My first patient was Jim Beaton. He had twisted his knee. He slipped on a banana skin in the street. He just needs to rest his knee. He's	No modification. The sentences are put together in order to make a more or less coherent piece of	Aspiration, difference between /p/ and /b/ /niː/ silent k Short vs. long /iː/ and /ɪ/

very fit.		
You'll get your headache back again if you stand on the sand like that. The fat man heard what the sad cat said.	**No modification**	/æ/ vs /e/

Chart 3 Samples for reading overview

The second task contains four sentences that are supposed to test the hypothesis about foreign influence of Greek and Latin on English and Russian. The reason behind including these sentences is explained in the end of the theoretical part, see Foreign influence on English and Russian part. The sentences with such words as *pneumonia, catastrophe, microeconomics, crisis* etc. were created to test whether the speakers would keep their native language pronunciation habits regarding the words of Greek or Latin origin.

Task n.3 is the only task where the participants should improvise and produce a few sentences themselves. The task is included as a test of spontaneous language production. There are three common topics to choose from, favourite food, hobby and sport. After deciding which one is the most attractive to them, speakers are to answer the questions of this topic. The participants were also given about 3 minutes to think about their answer in advance. They were aware that their pronunciation is the main focus of the research, not the answer itself. The improvisation task was not in the main focus of the analysis, it was used a supporting material to the results found in the other tasks.

The last task deals with suprasegmental features: some intonation patterns and word stress. The knowledge of correct intonation patterns is tested in the small dialogue. The first question of the dialogue tests intonation for yes-no questions. The answer to the question tests correct intonation for statements. Non-polar questions intonation is tested in the third and fourth sentences.

Phrase in the dialogue	**Intonation tested**
-Does George play any sport?	Rising intonation in yes-no (polar) questions
-He plays hockey every Wednesday afternoon.	Falling intonation in statements
-What time does the training start? At 3	Falling intonation in non-polar questions,

o'clock?	rising in additional shortened question
-Where is he going afterwards?	Falling intonation in non-polar questions,
-Is it him?	Rising intonation in yes-no (polar) questions

Chart 4 Intonation task

The very last piece of sample tasks deals with word stress. The individual words focus which syllable the speakers would choose for pronunciation. The pairs of words deal with the way the word stress changes depending on the word class.

1.2. Research Questions and Goals

As the name of the thesis suggests, the main goal of this research is to answer the questions of which pronunciation errors are the most typical of Russian speakers. Thus the main goal is to define, list and explain the errors found when analyzing the recordings. By defining the errors, we expect to find a connection between the influence of the mother tongue and the difficulties in mastering English pronunciation. In spite of the fact that the role of the native language is assumed to be the most crucial one, the other factors influencing non-native pronunciation will be taken into consideration as well. Evaluation of the influence of the rest of the factors is based on the data gathered from the questionnaire.

Another concern of the research is to find whether there is any consistency between learners' proficiency level and the quality of their pronunciation. For this reason, in each of the following parts of the thesis there is a mention of the language levels of the speakers.

2. Description of the Collected Data

The IPA chart below presents which English phonemes are less and which are more problematic for language learners. The data are partially taken from the article dedicated to Russian speakers' English pronunciation by Monk and Burak (Swan & Smith. 2004, p. 146-147) and partially from the results of our own research. The phonemes in grey represent the most problematic areas for Russian speakers where they tend to make most of their mistakes. The rest of the phonemes are left white as they do not normally cause any difficulties. Any issues with them are mostly individual.

The segments which follow the chart are organized with accordance to the data from the chart. Each segment is dedicated to one of the problematic areas. The analysis starts with the problematic vowels and continues with the consonants as the aspects in the theoretical part are organized in the same order.

iː	ɪ	ʊ	uː	ɪə	eɪ		
e	ə	**ɜː**	**ɔː**	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	
æ	ʌ	**ɑː**	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ	
p	b	t	d	ʧ	**ʤ**	k	g
f	v	**θ**	**ð**	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
m	n	ŋ	**h**	l	r	**w**	j

Chart 4 IPA with indication of the problematic areas

The format of the following charts is inspired by the charts used in Ph.D. Headlandova-Kalischova's dissertation (2009, p. 48). The top row shows the number of the relevant speaker. The first column contains the word in focus and its correct transcription i.e. pronunciation. The rest of the slots represents the actual way the speakers produced the words. In case the pronunciation was correct, the slot is marked green. In case the pronunciation of the phoneme tested in this particular chart was correct but there was some other error, the slot is marked green but the error is indicated within the slot. When the word is mispronounced, the slot is left white and the way the speaker pronounced the word is indicated. For example, when *plans* is pronounced as /plænz/, the slot is marked as green. When it is pronounced as /plæns/, it is marked as green but the transcription is added as well because even though the vowel is correct, the last consonant is replaced with /s/.

2.1. Vowels

The vowels part begins with analysis of pronunciation of the items that contain either **/æ/** or **/e/** sounds. The samples for reading contain quite a few examples of such words. They appear in the first two paragraphs in such individual words as *hands* /ˈhændz/, *badly* /ˈbædli/ or *plans* /ˈplænz/ as well as in the last sentence of the first task which is fully aimed at testing the difference between the sounds. 11 out of 23 words in this task contain either /æ/ or /e/: *"You'll get your headache back again if you stand on the sand like that. The fat man heard what the sad cat said".* As /e/ phoneme is found in Russian as well as in English and does not normally cause any troubles to the speakers, only 2 words with this phoneme are included into the chart, *again*

and *said*, as they did caused difficulties to some participants. However, the main focus is still on /æ/ vowel.

Word/ correct pronunciation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
hands /hændz/	xends		xendz	xendz	xendz	xendz	xends	xends	xændz	xendz	hendz	xends	hends	hends	hendz	
badly /ˈbædli/	bedli	bedli		bedli	bedli	bedli	bedli		bedli	bedli		bedli		bedli		
plans /plænz/	plens	plens		plenz	plens	plens	plens	plens	plæns	plens	plenz	plens	plens	plæns	plens	
back /ˈbæk /	bek	bek	bek	bek	bek	bek	bek		bek	bek			bek	bek		
again /əˈgen/	əˈgein						əˈgeɪn	əˈgeɪn				əˈgeɪn			əˈgeɪn	
stand /stænd/	stent	send	stend	stend	stend	stend	stend	stend	stend	stend	stend	stend	stend	stend	stent	stend
sand /sænd/	sent	send		send	send	send	send	send	stend	sent	sent	sent	send	send	sent	send
fat /fæt/	fet		fet	fet	fet	fet	fet	fet	fet		fet	fet	fet	fet		fet
man /mæn/	men			men	men	men	men		men	men	men		men	men	men	men
sad /sæd/	set	sæt	sæt	sed	set	set	set	set	set	set	sæt	set	set	set	set	set
cat /kæt/	ket		ket	ket	ket	ket	ket	ket	ket	ket	ket	ket	ket	ket	ket	ket
said /sed/	seɪt	set			seɪt	seɪt	set	set	set	seɪd	seɪt	set	seɪt		seɪt	seɪt

Chart 5 Items containing /æ/ or /e/

The chart above does not contain enough green slots as the vowel /æ/ was indeed one of the most problematic ones. Some speakers, e.g. Speakers 1,4,5,6 and 7, did not produce any word with this vowel properly and in every word substituted it with /e/. Only three speakers (2, 3 and 16) managed to pronounce at least 4-5 words with /æ/ in the column correctly. The most problematic words with this phoneme is *stand*, as it was not pronounced correctly at all, and *sand*, pronounced correctly only once (Speaker 3).

As for the last sentences, it is worth mentioning that only few of the speakers noticed the hidden point of this task and realized that the words in the sentences are pronounced with different vowel sounds. However, most participants did not see any difference and produced the words with the same vowel /e/ and ended up pronouncing *sad* and *said* as the same word. Another error that became obvious in this task is reduction of the last consonant, which is going to be discussed in the Consonants part.

A very similar observation relates to the third paragraph which tests pronunciation of **/i:/** and **/ɪ/.** Some speakers realized that the vowels are different in their length immediately (speakers 3, 13, 14 and 16) whereas many others produced all the words with the same short phoneme. /i:/ and /ɪ/ are both close front vowels which differ in their length. /i:/ is a long vowel and /ɪ/ is a short one. As only the short vowel /ɪ/ is found in Russian, the speakers tend to replace the long vowel with the short one. Mispronunciation of words with /i:/ and /ɪ/ included into the samples would not lead to any problems with intelligibility. However, as it was stated in the theoretical part, the substitution of a long vowel with a short one is one of the most serious errors and it in many cases, it might lead to certain misunderstanding between the speakers.

Word/ correct pronunciation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
pretty /ˈprɪti/																
busy /ˈbɪzi/					bʌsi			biːzi							bʌsi	
Jim /dʒɪm/																
Beaton /biːtən/				bɪtən	bɪtən	bɪtən	bɪtən			bɪtən		betən				
twisted/ˈtwɪstɪd/	twɪst															
knee /niː/	nɪ			nɪ	knɪ	knɪ										
slipped /slɪpt/															slaɪpt	
skin /skɪn/																
street /striːt/	strɪt			strɪt	strɪt											
needs /niːdz/		nidz		nidz	nidz	nidz		nidz	nidz		nid					
fit /fɪt/																
people /piːpl̩/	pɪpl		pɪpl	pɪpl	pɪpl	pɪpl	pɪpl	pɪpl	pɪpl				pɪpl	pɪpl	pɪpl	pɪpl
see /siː/	sɪ	sɪ	sɪ	sɪ	sɪ	sɪ			sɪ						sɪ	sɪ
free /friː/	frɪ		frɪ		frɪ		frɪ	frɪ	frɪ	frɪ		fri				fri

Chart 6 Items containing /iː/ and /ɪ/

The short variation, /ɪ/, was not generally problematic. The only issues with words containing the short vowel occurred because the speakers were probably not familiar with the words at all, e.g. *busy* and *slipped* caused problems to A2 level participants n. 5 and 15. The same reason is applicable to the way Speakers 5 and 6 pronounced the word *knee*. They did not only shortened the vowel but also pronounced the silent *k*. This was caused by either the lack of knowledge or attention.

The most errors within this segment occurred with the words *street, needs, see* and *free*, all containing long /iː/. The same as in the previous segment, the participants replaced the phoneme with the short one. For the word *needs*, the error occurred in 7 out of 16 recordings, *see* – 8 times, *free* – 9 times.

/ɜː/ is an English vowel that also does not exist in Russian. Thus, even before the analysis of the recordings started, it had been marked as potentially problematic. /ɜː/ is characterized as a long, middle, central vowel. In the samples, the phoneme occurs in such words as *heard* /hɜːd/, *world* /wɜːld/ and *first* /fɜːst/. The following table shows how the participants handled the pronunciation of the vowels in the words mentioned.

Word/ correct pronunciation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
heard / hɜ:d/	xɜrd	xɜ:rd		xɜrd	xɜrd	xɜrd	xɜ:rd	xɜ:rt	xɜ:rd	xɜ:rd	xɜ:rd	xɜrd	hɜ:rd	xɪərd	xɪərd	
world /wɜ:ld/	wod			wɜrd		wɜ:rld	wɜrld	wɜ:lrd		wɜrld		wɜ:rld				wɜrd
first /fɜ:st/	fɜst			fɜst	fɜrst	fɜrst	fɜst	fɜst			fɜst	fɜst		fɜst	fɜrst	

Chart 7 Items containing /ɜ:/

As it is visible from the data displayed in the table, the /ɜː/ phoneme was problematic to a number of the speakers. Only 2 out of 16 speakers managed to produce the word *heard* properly, which means that they managed to pronounce both the vowel and the initial consonant correctly. Nine of the speakers managed to produce /ɜ:/ vowel, however, the pronunciation cannot be marked green as absolutely correct because 7 speakers added /r/ after the vowel. The rest of the speakers tended to substitute the vowel with /ɜ/ or /o/ that are closer to Russian pronunciation habits. The same result was faced when analyzing words *first* and *world*. The vowel is mostly shortened (*first* - 6 times; *world* - 8 times) or followed by /r/ (*first* - 2 times; *world* - 7 times). The difficulties with the initial /h/ and with substitution of /d/ in *heard* are discussed in Consonants part.

/ɔ:/ is described as a long, mid-close, back vowel. Only its short and more frontal analogue /o/ is found in Russian. The words from the samples texts that include /ɔ:/ are *talk* /ˈtɔ:k/, *more* /mɔ:/, *also* /ˈɔ:lsəʊ/, *all* /ɔ:l/, *football* /ˈfʊtbɔ:l/, *before* /bɪˈfɔ:/ and *performing* /pəˈfɔ:mɪŋ/. The way the speakers produced the vowel is presented in the table below. Out of 16 speakers, mostly everyone managed to produce the vowel, however, the proper length again caused some problems. For example, only 7 speakers produced the word *talk* with the correct length of the vowel. The rest read the word with the short vowel /ɔ/ which is found neither in English nor in Russian, but the short pronunciation is closer to Russian speakers. The least problematic words in the list of word with /ɔ:/ are *also* and *all* as the error occurred only within 4-5 speakers. The possible reason is the initial position of the vowel. However, there is not enough data to be sure about the conclusion.

As for the word *performing*, quite a few of speakers inserted /r/ either into the first, second or both syllables of the word. The same happened in the previous segment with analysis of the pronunciation of /ɜ:/ vowel. This tendency might be justified by the fact that Russian is a phonetic language and the speakers are familiar a strong consistency between the spelling and pronunciation. The words *performing, heard, first* and *world* are spelt with r, which might have confused the speakers.

Word/ correct pronunciation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
talk /ˈtɔːk/	tɔk		tɔk	tɔk	tɔk	tɔk	tɔk	tɔk		tɔk					tɔk	
more /mɔː/	mɔ		mɔ	mɔ	mɔ	mɔ	mɔ		mɔ		mɔ	mɔ		mɔ		mɔ
also /ˈɔːlsəʊ/			ˈɔːlsɒ		ɔlsɒ		ɔlsɒ		ˈɔːlsɒ			ˈɔːlsɒ	ˈɔːlsɒ	ɔlsɒ	ˈɔːlsɒ	ˈɔːlsɒ
all /ɔːl/				ɔl	0		ɔl	ɔl			ɔl					
football/ˈfʊtbɔːl/	ˈfʊtbəl	ˈfʊtbəl	ˈfʊtbəl	ˈfʊtbəl	0	ˈfʊtbəl	ˈfʊtbəl		ˈfʊtbəl	ˈfʊtbəl	ˈfʊtbəl		ˈfʊtbəl	ˈfʊtbəl	ˈfʊtbəl	ˈfʊtbəl
before /bɪˈfɔː/	bɪˈfɔ			bɪˈfɔ			bɪˈfɔ			bɪˈfɔ				bɪˈfɔ		bɪˈfɔ
performing /pəˈfɔːmɪŋ/		pəˈfɔrmɪŋ	pəˈfɔrmɪŋ	pəˈfɔrmɪŋ		pəˈfɔrmɪŋ	pəˈfɔrmɪŋ		pərˈfɔrmɪŋ	pərˈfɔrmɪŋ		pərˈfɔrmɪŋ	pərˈfɔːmɪŋ	pərˈfɔːrmɪŋ	pərˈfɔːrmɪŋ	pərˈfɔːrmɪŋ

Chart 8 Items containing /ɔː/

The last problematic phoneme included into the Vowels part is **/ɑː/**, a long, open, back and neutral English vowel. There is not an exact equivalent of this vowel in Russian but the shorter, more frontal /a/ does exist. In the samples, the vowel occurred three times: *car*, *banana*, *start*. Within the word *car*, the error occurred only in the four recordings where it was replaced with /a/. Start was the most problematic word. Even though many speakers managed to produce the correct vowel in this word, many of them inserted /r/, which is acceptable in American English and would not be considered an error by many researchers.

The word *banana* is interesting not only as an example of /ɑː/ but mostly because of its final vowel /ə/, which is a result of the reduced vowel at the end of the word. The half of the speakers did not reduce the vowel and pronounced the last vowel as /a/. What is also worth mentioning is the word *America* where the last vowel should be reduced as well. However, only one speaker out of 16 (Speaker 2) managed to reduce the vowel to schwa.

Word/ correct pronunciation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
car /kɑː/					ka		ka			ka		ka				
banana /bəˈnɑːnə/	baˈnana			bəˈnanə	baˈnana	baˈnana		baˈnana		baˈnena		baˈnana		baˈnana	baˈnana	
start /stɑːt/		stɑːrt	stɑːrt		start	start	start	stɑːrt	stɑːrt	start		start	stɑːrt	start	stɑːrt	stɑːrt

Chart 9 Items containing /aː/

2.2. Consonants

This part of the practical section starts with a phoneme which appears to be the most problematic one for the Russian speakers. The **/h/** consonant caused problems to almost all of the participants. The ten sample words containing this consonant can be assessed as the most prominent indicator of the so called Russian accent.

Word/ correct pronunciation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
hate / heɪt	xeɪt	xeɪt	xeɪt	xeɪt	xeɪt	xeɪt	xeɪt		xeɪt	xeɪt	xeɪt	xeɪt		xeɪt		xeɪt
who / huː	xʊ	xʊ	xʊ	xʊ	xʊ	xʊ	xʊ	xʊ	xʊ	xʊ	xuː	xʊ		xʊ	xʊ	xʊ
whole/ həʊl	xɔːl	x	xɔːl	vxol	xol	xʊl	xɔːl	xɔːl	xɔːl		wʊl	xɔːl	xɔːl			
hands /hændz/	xends		xendz	xendz	xendz	xendz	xends	xends	xændz	xendz	hendz	xends	hends	hends	hendz	
hooligans/ ˈhuːlɪgənz	xuːlɪgəns	xuːlɪgəns	xuːlɪgəns	xuːlɪgʌns	xuːlɪgʌns	xuːlɪgəns	xuːlɪgəns	xuːlɪgəns	xuːlɪgəns	xolɪgʌns	xuːlɪgəns	xəlɪˈgʌns		xuːlɪgəns	xuːlɪgəns	xuːlɪgəns
have / həv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv	xəv
here / hɪə	xɪə			xɪə	xɪə		xɪə	xɪə		xɪə	xɪə	xɪə		xɪə		
he / hi	xi		xi	xi	xi	xi	xi	xi		xi	xi	xi		xi		xi
heard / hɜːd	xɜrd	xɜːrd		xɜrd	xɜrd	xɜrd	xɜːrd	xɜːrt	xɜːrd	xɜːrd	xɜːrd	xɜrd	hɜːrd	xɪərd	xɪərd	
headache/ ˈhedeɪk	xedeɪk			xedeɪk	xedeɪk	xedeɪk	xedeʃ	xedeɪk	xedeɪk	xedeɪk	xedeɪk	xedeɪk				

Chart 10 Items containing /h/

Speakers 1, 4, 5, 7 and 12 did not pronounce /h/ in the words properly at all. Speakers 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11 could pronounce it correctly only once. The rest six of the participants showed better results, however, none of them managed to produce the proper phoneme consistently. The sound that the speakers eventually produced instead of /h/ is a lot stronger and rougher. Its closest equivalent is /x/ which is also a voiceless fricative but the place of its articulation is different. It is not a glottal consonant like /h/ but it is a velar consonant.

Even though the error appeared within all the words with this sound, according to the data from the chart above, the most problematic words were *hate, have, who* and *hooligans*. Only one or two speakers managed to produce the words correctly.

As the results from the chart were unexpected and seemed unrealistic, it was decided to listen to and to analyse the recordings of the third task as well. The only improvisation task served as supporting evidence of the results displayed in the chart. All the speakers who experienced problems with /h/ in the reading part made the same mistakes in the improvisation part. Thus, the Russian speakers indeed tend to replace /h/ with /x/.

The following two charts represent errors connected with mispronunciation of voiced /ð/ and voiceless /θ/ represented by *th* in writing. According to the answers from the questionnaire, six speakers marked these phonemes themselves as the most difficult ones for them. Both phonemes undoubtedly cause problems to any speakers of the Slavic languages as they are foreign to their articulation habits.

The first chart shows how the speakers handled the pronunciation of voiced dental /ð/. As it was obvious from the beginning that the participants are going to struggle with these phonemes, the question was not whether the phonemes are going to be replaced but what they are going to be replaced with. In all the instances of /ð/ in the initial position in the word, the consonant is solely replaced with /z/ which is also a voiced fricative. The only exception is the word *though*, which ended up in many different variations. The speakers with higher level of proficiency in the language were able to identify the word and pronounce it correctly. Other

speakers either confused the word with *thought* or pronounced it as /θɔːt/, /θo/ or /fəʊ/. Sound /ð/ in the middle position in *other* was also replaced with /z/ by all 11 speakers who made a mistake in this word.

Word/ correct pronunciation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
their/ ðeə	zei				zeə		zeə	zeə		zeə	zeə	zeə				
they/ ˈðeɪ	zei			zei	zei	zei	zei	zei		zei	zei	zei		zei		
they're / ˈðeə	zeə		zeə		zeə		zeə			zeə	zeə	zeə				
the/ ðə	zə		zə		zə	ze	zə	ze	zə	zə	zə	zə		zə		
with/ wɪð				vɪz	vɪs	vɪs	vɪz	vɪz	wɪz			vɪz		wɪs		wɪs
other/ ʌðə	ʌzə		ʌzə	ʌzə	ʌzə	ʌzə	ʌzə	ʌzə	ʌzə	ʌzə	ʌzə	ʌzə				
than/ ðən	zən			zən	zən		zən	zən	zən	zən		zən				
though/ ðəʊ				θo	θo	fou	fu		θʊt	θɔːt		θɔːt	ðo	θɔːt	θɔːt	θo

Chart 11 Items containing /ð/

The second chart displays the way the participants pronounced /θ/. The voiceless consonant caused significantly less difficulties than the voiced /ð/. In the initial position in words *think* and *thing*, the sound was substituted with /s/ only twice by the same speakers, n. 7 and 12. The main error with these words did not occur at the beginning of the words but at their final consonants. Most of the speakers pronounced think and thing as the same word. It would not be possible to differentiate between these words without the context.

/θ/ in the final position of the word was more problematic. In *both*, three speakers replaced it with /f/ and two speakers replaced it with /s/. In the word *south*, only one speaker replaced /θ/ with /f/. However, the majority of the participants who made a mistake there replaced the consonant with /s/. Speaker 11 pronounced /z/ instead of /θ/.

Word/ correct pronunciation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
think/ ˈθɪŋk	θɪnk			θɪnk	θɪnk	θɪnk	sink	θɪnk	θɪnk	θɪnk		sink		θɪnk	θɪnk	θɪnk
thing/ ˈθɪŋ	θɪnk			θɪnk	θɪnk	θɪnk	θɪng/sing	θɪnk	θɪnk	θɪn	θɪnk	sin/ sink	θɪŋk	θɪnk	θɪnk	θɪnk
both/ bəʊθ				boθ	bəʊf	bof	bəʊs		bəʊf	boθ	boθ	bos	boθ	boθ		boθ
south / saʊθ	saʊf				saʊs		saʊs	saʊs		saʊf	saʊz	saʊs		saʊs	saʊs	saʊs

Chart 12 Items containing /θ/

The following phoneme was also recognized as problematic by a few speakers themselves. The five speakers who claimed /r/ to be a challenging area for them said that even though they understand that there is a difference between English and Russian /r/, they are unable to pronounce it properly.

The samples for reading include quite a few examples of words with /r/. Only four words with /r/ at the beginning (*really, rude, rest* and *respect*) were selected for the chart. The choice

can be justified by the fact that the pronunciation of the consonant in the initial position was easier to identify. Other than that, the initial position seemed to be more difficult for the speakers than middle or final one.

The chart with /r/ consonant looks a bit different from the rest of the charts in the practical part because the common phonetic sing for the English approximant is /r/ as well as the sign for the Russian trill phoneme. Thus it was decided to indicate the typical Russian pronunciation with red.

Word/ correct pronunciation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
really/ ˈrɪəli																
rude/ ruːd																
rest/ rest																
respect/ rɪˈspekt																

Chart 13 Items containing /r/

As the chart shows, the most challenging word for the speakers was the word *rude*. Only five of them managed to keep correct English pronunciation. The same five speakers had the least number of errors in this segment, either one or none.

The last individual consonant presented in the practical part is **/w/.** During the discussion of the phoneme with the speakers, they expressed that they often do not see the difference between /v/ and /w/ sounds. Also in order to produce the correct sound, they need to focus on their pronunciation specifically. Additionally, during the analysis of the recording, it was often quite hard to catch the difference between /v/ and /w/, especially in such short words as *with* or *what*. The most problematic words were the longer words consisting of more than one syllable. 8-10 speakers failed to pronounce *whenever, wonderful and Wednesday* correctly. The shortest words, such as *we, well, way,* were the least difficult for the speakers.

Word/ correct pronunciation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
when/ wen	ven			ven	ven		ven				ven		ven	ven		ven
what/ ˈwɒt	vɒt		vɒt	vɒt	vɒt		vɒt				vɒt	vɒt		vɒt		vɒt
whenever / wenˈevə	venˈevə		venˈevə	venˈevə	venˈevə	venˈevə	venˈevə					venˈevə		venˈevə	venˈevə	venˈevə
with/ wɪð				viz	vis	vis	viz	viz	wiz			viz		wis		
way/ weɪ		veɪ			veɪ			veɪ		veɪ						
we/ wi					vi		vi			vi						
well/ wel					vel		vel					vel				
wonderful/ ˈwʌndəfʊl	ˈvʌndəfʊl	ˈvʌndəfəl					ˈvʌndəfəl	ˈvʌndəfʊl		ˈvʌndəfəl	ˈvʌndəfəl	ˈvʌndəfəl			ˈvʌndəfəl	
Wednesday/ ˈwenzde	venzdeɪ			venzdeɪ		venzdeɪ		venzdeɪ			venzdeɪ			venzdeɪ	venzdeɪ	

Chart 4 Items containing /w/

The closing part of the analysis of the errors related to consonants is dedicated to devoicing. While doing the analysis with the focus on individual phonemes both vowels and

consonants, it was noticed that the majority of the speakers involved tend to replace voiced consonants with voiceless ones at the end of such words as *said, sad, stand, sand, plans, hands, slipped* and *heard*. It is understandable that this tendency comes from native Russian pronunciation habits where vowel reduction as well as devoicing of final consonants is necessary. However, in English such reduction ends up in producing a different word. For example, six speakers pronounced *sand* as *sent* and 14 speakers pronounced *sad* as *set*.

Another interesting aspect that might worth mentioning is the tendency of Russian speakers to pronounce all the letter they see in a word. Unlike English, Russian is a phonetic language where the connection between spelling and pronunciation is direct and the speakers often read the letter that is in fact silent. Thus, the word *knee* was pronounced with /k/ by two speakers. The word performing was pronounced with /r/ after the first or the both vowels by 11 speakers.

2.3. Greek and Latin Words

As it was mentioned in the last section of the theoretical part, there are certain words in English and Russian that share the same etymological background. The content of the second task was meant to test the way the speakers would handle the pronunciation of such words as *pneumonia, catastrophe, microeconomics, crisis, chemist, alcohol, antibiotics, gigantic* and *climate*. The results of the analysis are displayed in the chart below.

Word/ correct pronunciation		**pneumonia/ nju:ˈməʊnɪə**	**catastrophe/ kəˈtæstrəfi**	**microeconomics/ ˌmaɪkrəʊˌekəˈnɒmɪks**	**crisis/ ˈkraɪsɪs**	**chemist/ ˈkemɪst**	**alcohol/ ˈælkəhɒl**	**antibiotics/ ˌæntibaɪˈɒtɪks**	**gigantic/ dʒaɪˈgæntɪk**	**climate/ ˈklaɪmət**
Speaker	1	njumɒˈnia	kətəstˈrɔf	ˌmɪkrɔˌekəˈnɒmɪks			ælkəˈhɒl	entibiˈɒtɪks	dʒɪˈgæntɪk	
	2	pnjuːˈməʊnɪə								
	3	pnɪˈməʊnɪə	kətəstˈrɔf							
	4	pnevmɒˈniə	kətəstˈrɔːf	ˌmɪkrɔˌekəˈnɒmɪks	ˈkrɪsɪs			ˌæntibiˈɒtɪks		
	5	pnevmɒˈniə	kətəstˈrɔːf	ˌmɪkrɔˌekəˈnɒmɪks	ˈkrɪzɪs	ˈʧemɪst	ælkəˈgɔːl	entibiˈɒtɪks	dʒɪˈgentɪk	
	6	pnevmɒˈniə	kətəstˈrɔːf	ˌmɪkrɔˌekəˈnɒmɪks	ˈkrɪzɪs	ˈhemɪst	ælkəˈhɒl	ˌæntibiˈɒtɪks	gɪˈgentɪk	ˈklɪːmət
	7	pnevmɒˈniə	kətəstˈrɔːf	ˌmɪkrɔˌekəˈnɒmɪks	ˈkrɪzɪs			ˌæntibiˈɒtɪks	dʒɪˈdʒæntɪk	
	8	ˈpnevmɒni					ˈɔːlkəhɔːl	ˌæntibiˈɒtɪks	dʒaɪˈdʒæntɪk	
	9	pnevˈmɒniə	ˈkætastrɔːf					ˌæntibiˈɒtɪks		
	10	pnevˈmɒniə	kətəstˈrɔːf		ˈkrɪzɪs			ˌæntibiˈɒtɪks	gɪˈgentɪk	
	11	pnevmɒˈniə	kətæstrəˈfi					ˌæntibiˈɒtɪks	gɪˈgɑːntɪk	
	12	pnəʊˈməʊnɪə		ˌmɪkrɔˌekəˈnɒmɪks	ˈkrɪzɪs			entibiˈɒtɪks	gɪˈgɑntɪk	
	13	pnəʊˈməʊnɪə						ˌæntibiˈɒtɪks		
	14	pnevmɒˈniə	kətəstˈrɔf	ˌmɪkrɔˌekəˈnɒmɪks				entibiˈɒtɪks	dʒaɪˈdʒæntɪk	
	15	pnevmɒˈniə	kətəstˈrɔf	ˌmakrɔˌekəˈnɒmɪks	ˈkrɪzɪs			ˌæntibiˈɒtɪks	gɪˈgɑntɪk	ˈklɪːmət
	16	pnəʊˈməʊnɪə	ˈkætastrɔːf					ˌæntibiˈɒtɪks		

Chart 15 Greek and Latin words

Pneumonia happened to be the most difficult word for the speakers. Only speaker n. 1 omitted the /p/ at the beginning of the word whereas the rest kept the consonant in the pronunciation, which was expected as the transcription of the Russian equivalent is

/pnevmɒˈniə/. However, even the first speaker still made a mistake in this word and placed the word stress on the third syllable instead of the second one. The stress was misplaced by eight speakers in total.

12 speakers made the same mistake in the word *catastrophe* where they placed the word stress on the third syllable, which is the same syllable to be stressed in the Russian analogue /kətəst'rɔf/.

As for the prefixes *micro-* and *anti-*, only *micro-* caused a major difficulty and was replaced by /mıkrɔ/ 8 times. *Anti-* was not problematic for the speakers as it is pronounced the same way in Russian. However, in the word *antibiotics*, 14 speakers pronounced the third syllable as /bı/ instead of /baı/ most likely because the root *bio-* is /bɪɒ/ in Russian.

Overall, the data displayed in the chart demonstrate that the incorrect production of the words in the task was influenced by the way the words are produced in the mother tongue of the speakers. As most of the vocabulary are rather advanced, it is highly possible that some speakers did not know how to pronounce the words correctly because they had never come across them in English and simply tried to guess. Their guesses were mostly based on the experience with the words in the native language.

2.4. Intonation

The forth task offered to the speakers is a short dialogue that was meant to test the types of intonation the speakers would use with the phrases. The results are presented in the chart below. The left side of the chart present each sentence in the dialogue as an independent item. The correct tone is indicated next to the sentence. The arrow ↗ represents a rise of the tone, ↘ indicates a fall of the tone. The underlining highlights the Intonation centre or the focus words of the relevant sentence. In case there are two options for the IC, there are two words underlined as in *He plays hockey every Wednesday afternoon.* ↘. If a speaker placed the intonation centre on the irrelevant word, it is indicated in the slot connected to this speaker and this sentence.

Phrase from the dialogue / correct intonation	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Does George play any sport? ↗					does /↘	does /↘	↘	George						↘		
He plays hockey every Wednesday afternoon. ↘											every/↗					
What time does the training start? ↘	↗				time						↗					
At 3 o'clock? ↗														↘		
Where is he going afterwards? ↘		↗		↗	↗	↗	↗		going/ ↗			↗				
Is it him? ↗														↘		

Chart 16 Intonation task

In general, the speakers handled the intonation in this task quite well. There was only one sentence that can be considered problematic. In a non-polar question *Where is he going afterwards?*, almost a half of the participants, seven speakers, chose rising instead of falling intonation. This choice was unexpected as non-polar questions in the Russian language should also be supported with the falling intonation. However, it may be assumed that the speakers were confused with this sentence as it was preceded by a sentence with a rising tone.

The first question of the dialogue was read with the wrong intonation by four speakers. The speakers, each of whom belong to either A2 or B1 level groups, produced the yes-no question Does George play any sport? with falling intonation. Three speakers also placed the intonation centre on a different word. Two speakers highlighted the auxiliary *does*, which is definitely considered an error, and one speaker placed the IC on *George*, which is acceptable in this case.

Most errors in this tasks occurred in the recordings of Speakers n. 5, 6, 11 and 14. Speakers 5 and 6 made the same errors which can probably be explained by their language level, A2. Speaker 11 produced all phrases in the dialogue excluding one with the same rising intonation. This speaker naturally speaks with a very high pitched voice. On the other hand, Speaker 14 produced almost all the items with the same falling tone and sounded quite monotonous.

2.5. Word Stress

The last focus of the analysis is the errors the Russian speakers made in the word stress exercise. As the word stress in Russian is also a rather unstable matter, it was quite hard to predict any errors in advance. It was only possible to expect the speakers to gravitate towards the syllables that would be stressed in their mother tongue.

The following chart represents the results of the last task. The slots in the left part contain the items from the task and their correct pronunciation with the stressed syllables in bold. The number of the stressed syllable can also be found in the brackets. The white slots with digits

indicate that the speaker placed the stress on a wrong syllable. The number of this syllable is marked inside the slot.

Word/ correct stress placement	Speaker															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
comfortable/ ˈ**kʌm**f(ə)təb(ə)l (1)						3	3							3		
comfort/ ˈ**kʌm**fət (1)						2	2	2								
period/ ˈ**pɪ**(ə)rɪəd (1)												3				
periodical/ ˌpɪ(ə)rɪˈ**ɒ**dɪk(ə)l (3)						5										
mountain/ ˈ**mau**ntɪn (1)				2	2	2						2				
cigarette/ ˌsɪgəˈ**ret (3)**	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
radioactive/ ˌreɪdɪəʊˈ**æ**ktɪv (3)						4					1	4				
photograph/ ˈ**fəʊ**təgrɑːf (1)		2		2		3		3								2
photographer/ fəˈ**tɒg**rəfə (2)	4	3			4	4	4	4		4	4	4				
atmosphere/ ˈ**æ**tməsfɪə (1)	3			3		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3		
central heating/ ˌsentrəl**ˈhi:**tɪŋ (1)	1 (central)	1 (central)									1 (central)					
dishwasher/ ˈ**dɪʃ**wɒʃə (1)	2			2	2	2			2		2	2	2			

Chart 17 Word stress task

According to the data, the most problematic word for thee speakers was the word *cigarette*. All 16 speakers regardless of their language level placed the stress on the first syllable. Another interesting point about this word is that a few speakers pronounced it with /ts/ instead of /s/ at the beginning. As all of the speakers attempt to earn Czech, it can be explained by the influence of this language where *c* is pronounced as /ts/. However, as for the wrong word stress in cigarette, it cannot be explain by the habit from the native language as the stress in Russian *сигарета* is on the same syllable as in English. The most probable reason is the lack of knowledge that the words of French origin usually have their stress on the last syllable.

At the same time, the influence of the native language stress can be applied in case of the words *atmosphere* and *photographer*, where a few speakers placed the stress on the syllables that would be stressed in Russian.

As for the pronunciation of words and expressions with both primary and secondary stress, such as *periodical*, *radioactive* and *central heating*, there was a few instances characterized by the loss of the secondary stress. For example, *radioactive* was pronounced with a distinctive emphasis on the third syllable with the primary stress, but also with no stress on the first syllable at all.

2.6. Additional Information about the Speakers

This section of the practical part deals with the performance of the speakers in more detail. The speakers are discussed in groups according to their level of proficiency in English. This division is supposed to help to find whether there is any consistency between the amount of errors that occurred within the group and the language level of the speakers.

The method applied for counting the results and creating the graph below is the following. From the total number of items (76) in Vowels and Consonants parts we excluded all words a speaker pronounced correctly and got the amount of errors occurred in this speaker's recordings. After that, we created a table where we put the number of the speaker, how many errors he or she made and what their proficiency level is. For example, speaker n. 2 belongs to C1 level group. This speaker made 20 errors in both Vowels and Consonants parts. See details of the rest of the speakers' performance below.

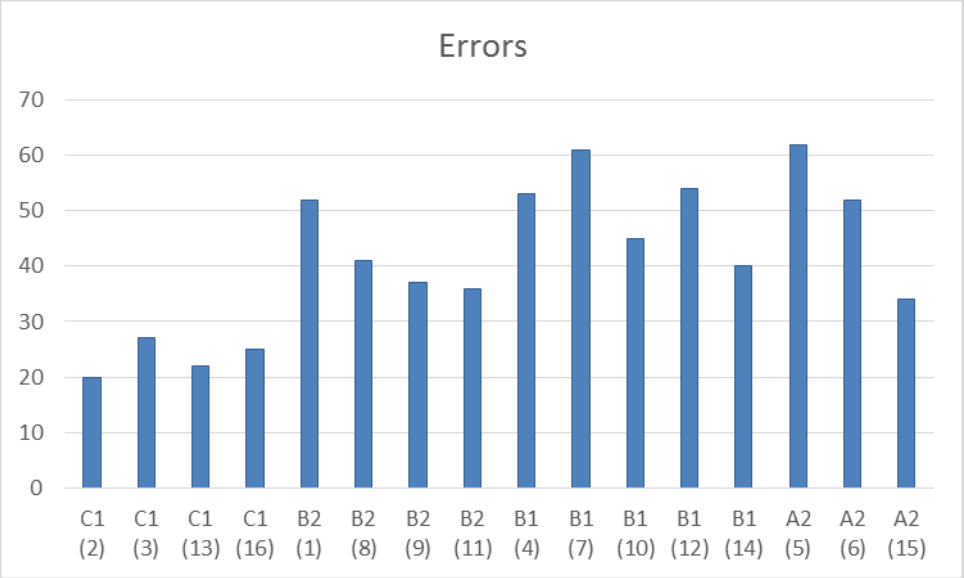

Chart 18 Speakers performance according to the language levels

The graph shows that the most advanced speakers or C1 level speakers are under numbers 2, 3, 13 and 16. According to the data displayed in all the charts in Vowels and Consonants part, pronunciation of these participants can be assessed as the most intelligible and the speakers as the most successful.

The chart shows that even though the C1 level speakers made less mistakes than the speakers of the lower levels, it is not possible to draw the definite conclusion about the direct connection between the proficiency level of the speakers and the frequency of error. This conclusion is impossible because the exceptions are found within each level. For example, Speaker 15 who belong to A2 level made significantly less mistakes than any of the B2 level speakers. Apart from that, B2 level Speaker 1 made as many mistakes as the speakers in the A2 level. In order to sum up the connection between the number of errors and the language level, more participants and more data are required.

However, judging from the overall impression of the recordings, the speech of the A2 level speakers was more monotonous in comparison with C1 speakers who sounded more fluent and

confident. The recordings of the improvisation task where the speakers had to construct their own answers support this assumption.

As there is not enough data to draw a conclusion about the proficiency level, the rest of the factors were taken into consideration as well. According to the information about the age the speakers started to learn English, we managed to find that the speakers with the most significant number of errors e.g. Speakers 5 (62 errors), 7 (61 errors), 4 (53 errors), 1 (52 errors) and 6 (52 errors), started learning the language as teenagers at the age of 11-16 years old. The same speakers claimed that they had never visited an English speaking country or any other country where they had to speak English for a long period of time. In addition to that, these speakers are not using English in their daily life, work or studies. Thus, the minimal amount of time the speakers are exposed to the language and the late age they started learning it are the factors that allow us to judge about the reason of these speakers' low performance.

As for the factor of motivation and attitude, the speakers who work on their pronunciation independently at home were considered to be the motivated ones with a positive attitude to the language learning. The speakers of lower levels (8, 14 and 15) who claimed that they spend their time mastering pronunciation themselves also performed slightly better than the ones who do not. Summary of the answers the participants provided can be found on the following page.

Speaker	Level	Age	Country	Age you started learning English	Total amount of years you have been learning	Are you currently learning English?	Where did you learn English (apart from school)?	Were your teachers native or non-native speakers	Classes on English phonetics and phonology	British or American English	Do you practice at home?	Any aspect of your pronunciation that you personally consider problematic?	Have you ever been to any English-speaking country or a country where you had to use English a lot	Do you speak English on a regular basis?	Number of Errors
1	**B2**	20	RU	16	4	yes	private lessons, self-study	both	no	British	yes	consonant clusters	no	one module at school	**52**
2	**C1**	18	RU	6	12	no	self-study	non	no	British	no	overall accent	no	yes	**20**
3	**C1**	22	RU	10	10	yes	private lessons	both	no	British	no	long/short vowels	work'n'travel in the USA	at work and school	**27**
4	**B1**	21	RU	13	7	no	self-study	non	no	British	no	th, individual words	no	no	**53**
5	**A2**	18	BY	12	6	no	only school	non	no	British	no	overall accent	no	no	**62**
6	**A2**	25	RU	15	16	no	private lessons	both	yes	British	no	r	no	work with international students	**52**
7	**B1**	21	UA	14	7	yes	language orientated school	non	yes	British	no	overall accent	no	only occasionally	**61**
8	**B2**	22	UA	10	9	no	private lessons, self-study	both	no	British	yes	th	work'n'travel in the USA	at school	**41**
9	**B2**	19	KZ	7	10	no	self-study	non	yes	British	no	overall accent, r	no	no	**37**
10	**B1**	21	UA	3	8	no	private lessons	non	yes	British	no	consonant clusters, r, th	no	no	**45**
11	**B2**	19	BY	10	9	yes	private lessons	non	yes	British	no	r, th	no	no	**36**
12	**B1**	29	RU	6	13	yes	private lessons	non	no	British	no	lack of consistency between spelling and pronunciation	no	work with international students	**54**
13	**C1**	22	MD	8	13	yes	private lessons. Self-study	both	yes	British	yes	r, th	yes	currently on Erasmus	**22**
14	**B1**	19	UA	7	12	yes	private lessons, self-study	non	no	British	yes	/æ/ or /e/	no	lived with a roommate from Scotland	**40**
15	**A2**	19	UA	12	5	no	private lessons	non	no	British	yes	th	no	no	**34**
16	**C1**	18	KZ	3	15	yes	private lessons, self-study	non	no	British	yes	th, skip sounds, individual words	no	partner from the UK	**25**

Chart 19 Summary of questionnaire answers

Conclusion

Taking every aspect considered in the both theoretical and practical parts into account, I can conclude that we managed to provide evidence that the influence of the mother tongue is the most prominent feature in the pronunciation of the native Russian speakers who took part in the research. Most of errors and mistakes that occurred in the recordings were caused by the dissimilarities between English and Russian. The most frequent reason for the errors is the fact that a certain phoneme is not found in the native language of the speakers. That is why the speakers unconsciously replaced it with a phoneme which is more familiar to their articulation habits.

The most prominent and unexpected pronunciation error to be made is substitution of English /h/ with Russian /x/. This error occurred in the recordings of all the speakers and apparently not all of them realized their pronunciation is incorrect. On the other hand, consonant /r/ had been expected to cause more difficulties than it actually did. The combination of *th* was also problematic and the sounds were replaced by either /z/ for the voiced phoneme or /s/ for the voiceless one. As for the vowels, the major problems were caused by /æ/ sound which was mostly confused with /e/. Other than that, the different length of vowels was also an issue for the speakers as there is no differentiation by length in the Russian vowels.

We have also been able to find the proof that this replacement tends to happen less frequently with the speakers of the higher proficiency level. However, the data we had in disposition for our research were not sufficient to draw a definite conclusion about the dependence between the frequency of mistakes and the language level of the speakers. The data show that he speakers of C1 level make significantly less mistakes in all the pronunciation areas we attempted to test. However, the number of mistakes in B2, B1 and A2 level does not allow to judge about any consistency in this matter. The other factors such as the age the speakers started learning language, their motivation and the amount of exposure were also found to play a significant role in the performance of the speakers.

In the conclusion part, it is also worth mentioning that the limits of a bachelor thesis do not make it possible to investigate the aspects in more detail. For example, such important points as aspiration, pronunciation of nasal consonants and consonants clusters still remain uncovered. However, even though the results that I have in my disposition now are hardy the full image of Russian speakers' pronunciation, I believe that they can be used in my future teaching practice as a departing point for teaching pronunciation to Russian native speakers. Being aware of the

potential difficulties and errors is the first step to prevent them from happening, which is especially important when teaching younger learners.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Questionnaire

Questions for participants:

1. Age, sex, place of birth.
2. Age you started learning English.
3. Total amount of years you have been learning English.
4. Are you currently learning English?
5. Where did you learn English? (School, language courses, private lessons, self-study etc.)
6. Were your teachers native or non-native speakers?
7. Have you ever had any classes aimed at English phonetics and phonology or English pronunciation?
8. Have your teachers dedicated time to teaching pronunciation? If so, did they prefer British or American English?
9. Do you prefer British or American English?
10. Do you work on your pronunciation independently? Do you practice at home?
11. Have you ever noticed that the way you pronounce English sounds is different from the way speakers of other languages pronounce them? Yes If so, what exactly was it and did it cause any difficulties or misunderstandings?
12. Is there any aspect of your pronunciation that you personally consider problematic? Alternatively, any area of English pronunciation in general that you find difficult?
13. How do you assess you language level (language skills)?
14. Have you ever passed any international language exams such as FCE, CAE, IELTS or other? Which one(s)?
15. Have you ever been to any English-speaking country or a country where you had to use English a lot?
16. Do you use English at work, school or in personal life on a regular basis?

Appendix II. Samples for Reading

I. Read the extracts.

I hate people who use their mobiles in the car, even if they are hands free. Whenever you see someone driving badly, nine times out of ten they're on the phone. What really annoys me are people who use their phones a lot when they're with other people – like when you're out having a drink with someone and they spend the whole time talking on their phone and texting to arrange their plans. I think it's really rude.

The English are very polite, but I don't think they are too polite – I mean I don't think it is a bad thing, I think it's a good thing. In my job, I have met many English people and they are much more polite than we are, both in the way they talk and also in the way they respect other people's opinions. Well it isn't true about all English people though. The football hooligans and some of the tourists that come here to South America and drink too much – they're not polite – but the majority are and It's wonderful.

I've been pretty busy. My first patient was Jim Beaton. He had twisted his knee. He slipped on a banana skin in the street. He just needs to rest his knee. He's very fit.

You'll get your headache back again if you stand on the sand like that. The fat man heard what the sad cat said.

II. Read the sentences.

Before the cure was discovered, pneumonia was a world catastrophe.

Can microeconomics explain the current crisis?

This chemist is addicted to alcohol and antibiotics.

Scientists are performing a gigantic climate experiment.

III. Please, choose A, B, or C and answer the questions.

A. What is your favourite food? Do you like cooking?

B. Do you have a hobby? How do you spend your free time?

C. What is your favourite sport? Do you play any sports?

IV. Read the sentences and pay attention to the intonation

-Does George play any sport?

-He plays hockey every Wednesday afternoon.

-What time does the training start? At 3 o'clock?

-Where is he going afterwards?

-Is it him?

Read the words

Comfortable, comfort Period, periodical Mountain Cigarette Radioactive
Photograph, photographer Atmosphere Central heating Dishwasher

Appendix III. CD with the recordings.