

## 1. Segmental

### 1.1. Vowel Sounds

1.1.1. Czech only has 5 vowel phonemes, compared to 20 in English. As Czech has a direct link between spelling and pronunciation, this can cause problems for speakers when they do not know which vowel sound to use in a particular English word.

1.1.2. In Czech all syllables are pronounced equally. All vowels are strong and no equivalent to the English schwa /ə/ exists.

1.1.3. Czech speakers find it hard to differentiate between the sounds /æ/, /e/ and /ʌ/, in pairs such as *bad/bed, cap/cup*

### 1.2. Consonant sounds

1.2.1. Neither pronunciation of the morpheme 'th' (/ð/, /θ/) exists in Czech. Learners have a tendency to replace them with similar sounds which do not involve putting the tongue between the teeth, namely /d/ or /dz/ for /ð/ and /f/ or /s/ for /θ/.

1.2.2. /w/ does not exist in Czech. Learners often replace it with /v/. They sometimes also use /w/ in place of /v/.

1.2.3. /r/ is pronounced in the middle and at the end of words, where it should only be pronounced at the beginning. Czechs also sometimes roll the /r/ sound, which is not necessary in English. It should rather be used to lengthen the preceding vowel sound (see 1.3.2.2).

1.2.4. /ŋ/, /g/, /k/: these phonemes are most often confused at the end of a word ending in -ing (*thing/think, sing/sink*). The /g/ can be lost or pronounced as /k/.

1.2.5. Voiceless /s/ and voiced /z/ are often confused, such as *bus/buzz*.

1.2.6. 'ch' exists as a single phoneme /χ/ in Czech. Learners transfer this to English, especially to replace /k/ in words such as *chaos*.

1.2.7. The phonemes /p/, /t/ and /k/ at the beginning of a word are often not aspirated by Czech speakers of English. Alternatively, they over-aspirate the same phonemes in mid- and final positions in a word.

### 1.3. Other

- 1.3.1. All Czech words are stressed on the first syllable. This is often transferred to English.
- 1.3.2. The differences between English spelling and pronunciation cause the following problems:
  - 1.3.2.1. incorrect choice of vowel sound (see 1.1.1)
  - 1.3.2.2. confusion when Vowel + Consonant = Vowel sound e.g. 'er' in *father* = /ə/ not /ɜ:/, 'al' in *calm* = /a:/ not /æl/
  - 1.3.2.3. pronunciation of silent letters, such as /b/ in *bomb*
  - 1.3.2.4. a difficulty in predicting the pronunciation of previously unseen words

## 2. Suprasegmental

- 2.1. Czech is a syllable-timed language, whereas English is stress-timed. Czech speakers of English therefore find it difficult to use weak forms of common words such as *of*, *a*, *can*. They tend to place equal stress on all the words in a sentence. This is further confused when contrastive stress is introduced to students and they have to decide which stress pattern to choose.
- 2.2. There is a much wider range of intonation patterns in English than in Czech. This can lead to Czech English sounding 'flat' to a native speaker.
- 2.3. Linking words and sounds through assimilation<sup>1</sup> and elision<sup>2</sup> is much more common in English than in Czech.

<sup>1</sup> process by which one sound becomes more like a nearby sound, within a word or between words, e.g. /hænd bæg/ to /hæm bæg/, want to /wɔnt tu:/ to /wɔn nə/ "wanna", five pence /faiv pens/ to /faif pens/, that girl /ðæt gɜ:l/ /ðæk gɜ:l/

<sup>2</sup> omission of a sound or syllable when speaking, as in I'm, let's, family /'fæmɪli/ to /'fæmli/ vegetable /'vɛdʒətəbəl/ to /'vɛdʒtəbəl/, /'vɛtʃtəbəl/, comfortable /'kʌmfərtəbəl/ to /'kʌmftərbəl/