

Západočeská univerzita v Plzni

Fakulta pedagogická

Katedra anglického jazyka

Diplomová práce

**VÝUKA VÝSLOVNOSTI V HODINÁCH
ANGLIČTINY NA 2. STUPNI ZÁKLADNÍ ŠKOLY**

Ilona Hanzlíková

Plzeň 2012

University of West Bohemia

Faculty of Education

Department of English

Thesis

**TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION AT THE
UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL**

Ilona Hanzlíková

Plzeň 2012

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

V Plzni dne 19. června 2012

.....

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank to my supervisor, Mgr. Danuše Hurtová for her guidance, support, patience and all the suggestions.

I would also like to thank to all the teachers who filled in the questionnaire.

ABSTRACT

Hanzlíková, Ilona. University of West Bohemia. June, 2012. Teaching English pronunciation at the upper primary school level. Supervisor: Mgr. Danuše Hurtová.

The thesis deals with a phenomenon of teaching English pronunciation at the upper primary school. The goal of the thesis is to answer two research questions:

1. Which way pronunciation and its individual aspects are being taught at upper primary level?

2. How do textbooks deal with the phenomenon of pronunciation?

The final work is divided into two parts - practical and theoretical (research). There are four different subchapters connected with teaching pronunciation and pronunciation itself in the theoretical part. Theoretical part covers characteristic of a process of teaching and learning, language and pronunciation teaching at the upper primary level and concrete approaches to pronunciation teaching. This section is concluded by description of individual aspects of pronunciation. Theoretical part derives from specialized publications which are connected with teaching in general and teaching pronunciation. Practical part consists of a method, which was used to carry out the research, of results emerging from the research presented in a form of tables and charts and supplemented by my personal commentaries and of implications resulting from the research, including limitations of the research and suggestions for further research.

Resulting from the research, teachers approach to teaching pronunciation as to a matter of peripheral importance. On the other hand, textbooks provide a good support for teaching pronunciation but they would need to extend a range of pronunciation exercises.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	3
2.1	Process of teaching and learning.....	3
2.2	Language and pronunciation teaching at the upper primary level	4
2.3	Teaching pronunciation	6
2.4	Aspects of pronunciation.....	9
2.4.1	Vowels.....	9
2.4.2	Consonants	12
2.4.3	Syllable.....	13
2.4.4	Spelling	15
2.4.5	Weak forms	16
2.4.6	Aspects of connected speech	16
2.4.7	Intonation	17
3	METHOD.....	20
4	RESULTS AND COMMENTARY	22
4.1	Which way pronunciation and its individual aspects are being taught at the upper primary level?	22
4.1.1	Classes the teachers teach in.....	22
4.1.2	Teaching pronunciation as a whole	23
4.1.3	Teaching individual aspects of pronunciation	26
4.2	How do textbooks deal with the phenomenon of pronunciation?	29

5	IMPLICATIONS	35
5.1	Pedagogical implications	35
5.2	Limitations of the research	36
5.3	Suggestions for further research	37
6	CONCLUSION	39
7	REFERENCES	41
8	APPENDIX	42
9	SHRUTÍ	45

1 INTRODUCTION

English has become an international language, so called 'lingua franca'. It means that the language serves people whose mother tongue is not English to communication. The main aspect of successful communication is intelligibility. And a correct pronunciation is of great importance to intelligibility and therefore to successful communication.

However, it seems that the priority of Czech teachers is to teach students grammar and vocabulary, to practice functional dialogues, focusing on language skills. Frequently, teachers make a little or no attempt to teach pronunciation and its individual aspects individually and only give attention to it in passing or not at all.

This alarming fact made me to find out how the situation concerning teaching pronunciation looks like at the upper primary level in Czech schools. Based on these facts, two research questions have emerged:

1. Which way pronunciation and its individual aspects are being taught at upper primary level?
2. How do textbooks deal with the phenomenon of pronunciation?

The first question was chosen because it is quite disputable whether upper primary learners have some awareness about pronunciation and its individual aspects such as sounds, word stress, intonation. Yet, they cannot produce a correct sentence without knowing about it. So the goal of this question is to find out, which aspects of pronunciation are explained to learners, in what extent and which way teachers present it to their learners. The second question was set because of finding out whether textbooks provide enough supporting material for learning and teaching pronunciation and which aspects they direct at. To get answers to these questions a research will be carried out. A teacher questionnaire was chosen as a method of data collection. This method is used to answer both the research questions. Gathered data will be analysed and the findings of the research will be presented with appropriate commentary and visual support. Implications resulting from the research as well as suggestions for further research will follow. The research part is concluded with appendix illustrating the research.

However, first of all, some theoretical background about the issue must be provided to a reader. It covers areas of general process of teaching and learning; language and pronunciation teaching at the upper primary level based on European and Czech education

programmes; teaching pronunciation in greater detail including most frequent errors learners make and possible ideas how to improve learners' pronunciation; and finally, individual aspects of pronunciation such as sounds, spelling, weak forms, rhythm and stress, and intonation. The following chapter covers a research method – teacher questionnaire. It contains a description of questionnaires in general and then it is focused on a description of my concrete questionnaire. Then results and commentary chapter shows the results sequent upon the research. Respondents' answers are illustrated on charts and followed by individual commentaries concerning particular results. The last chapter involves pedagogical implications; it includes limitations of the research and suggests how to proceed with further research. The conclusion summarizes the thesis and findings resulting from the research. Finally, appendix includes the teacher questionnaire.

The aim of the thesis is to answer the research questions regarding amount of pronunciation learners are exposed to at the upper primary level through a questionnaire filled in by teachers in several primary schools in the Czech Republic.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The goal of the thesis is to find out which aspects of pronunciation are being taught at the upper primary level in Czech schools and by which means it is supported. Therefore, at this stage I would like to provide reader with some basic theoretical background necessary for understanding teaching in general, phenomenon of pronunciation and its individual aspects. This chapter begins with presentation of process of teaching and learning, followed by language and pronunciation teaching at the upper primary level according to European and Czech education programmes, then the chapter devoted to teaching pronunciation itself comes up. This section is concluded with an overview of individual aspects of pronunciation, providing basic information about them.

2.1 Process of teaching and learning

In this subchapter process of teaching as well as process of learning will be considered. Components of education process are learner, teacher and content of education.

The teacher's main function is to help learners learn. This includes both the formal classroom process (introducing and practising language and skills in lessons) and learning outside the classroom (sources as TV, magazines, books, friends or native speakers). Lindsay and Knight (2006) pointed out that among the teacher's responsibilities is necessary to take into account "what is taught, the resources used, the type and order of activities, classroom management, assessment, feedback, correction, and so on" (3).

The language learning process is comprised of following five stages: input, noticing, recognizing patterns and rule making, use and rule modification, automating. In other words, first of all learners need input, which is all the target language that a learner is exposed to. Learners will notice some of the language they are exposed to. Then, learners might start to put together the pattern of a particular language unit and figure out the rule. In that moment, learners should have opportunity to produce their own examples, using the language unit and according to that modify the rule. Finally, learners are able to use the language unit without consciously thinking of it – the language has become automatic (Lindsay & Knight, 2006, pp. 11-12).

According to Scrivener (2005), when teaching the teacher does not have to forget that people learn more by doing things themselves rather than listening about them. The second fact is that new learning is based on the foundations of learner's own former

learning. This means that any piece of new information is quite different for different people. Among teachers characteristics that help to create an effective learning environment are: respect, empathy and authenticity (being oneself) (pp. 21-24). The same goes for learning pronunciation. Just to be exposed to the language does not mean, that learners are actually able to produce it. It takes a lot of repeating to pronounce a sound, word or phrase correctly.

Another important part of the successful learning process is to reach language learning aims, which the aspects of pronunciation are an integral part of. According to Lindsay and Knight (2006), these consist of fluency – choosing and putting language together into a comprehensible message quickly enough to carry on the conversation; accuracy – at the same time learners should be able to produce a message that is accurate enough (they should approximate their output to the ideal way) in terms of word order, word endings, pronunciation, and so on; complexity – developing of the range of expressions in order to produce language correctly and fit it to the situations learners are a part of; appropriateness – the language the learner chooses must fit the situation, including accurate, complex sentence produced without hesitation (12-13).

One way of looking at a language is understanding of it as a process starting with the smallest component and working upward. As the smallest components are individual letters and sounds - individual sounds are so called phonemes, their proper recognition and production is a base for forming and producing bigger language units such as words and phrases up to clauses and sentences (Lindsay & Knight, 2006, p. 27). Therefore, pronunciation is of great importance as without appropriate knowledge of individual aspects of pronunciation, learners cannot build bigger language units. As this, pronunciation can be considered as a cornerstone of language learning.

At this moment it is appropriate to classify individual components. Phonology belongs with lexis, grammar, function and discourse to language systems. Language systems and language skills create the subject matter of language teaching. Language skills include two productive skills: speaking, writing; and two receptive skills: reading and listening (Scrivener, 2005, pp. 27-29).

2.2 Language and pronunciation teaching at the upper primary level

In this subchapter, language and especially pronunciation teaching will be considered according to two education programmes – Common European Framework of

Reference at European level and Framework Education Programme for Basic Education at national level.

In Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) six levels appropriate to the organisation of language learning and the public recognition of achievement are stated. These are divided as following: A1 (breakthrough) and A2 (waystage) forming together a 'basic user'; B1 (threshold) and B2 (vantage) forming an 'independent user'; and C1 (effective operational proficiency) and C2 (mastery) forming a 'proficient user'. (CEFR, pp. 22-23). At the end of upper primary school level, students should reach A2 level which global presentation in CEFR is defined as: "Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need" (p. 24).

Concerning phonology, the phonological control in A2 level should be as following: "Pronunciation is generally clear enough to be understood despite a noticeable foreign accent, but conversational partners will need to ask for repetition from time to time" (CEFR, p. 117). Nevertheless, in Framework Education Programme for Basic Education (FEPBE) is defined nothing such that. In terms of English as the first foreign language being learnt, the only two pieces of information concerning pronunciation itself given in FEPBE are the two following: a learner reads aloud texts of adequate extent fluently and phonetically correctly; he/she understands simple and clearly pronounced discourse and conversation (MŠMT, Framework Education Programme for Basic Education, 2010, p. 27). More is not specified.

In CEFR, there are given several pieces of advice how learners should be expected/required to develop their ability to pronounce a language¹:

- a) simply by exposure to authentic spoken utterances;
- b) by chorused imitation of the teacher; audio-recorded native speakers; video-recorded native speakers;
- c) by individualised language laboratory work;
- d) by reading aloud phonetically weighted textual material;
- e) by ear-training and phonetic drilling;

1 CEFR, 2010, p.153

- f) as d) and e) but with the use of phonetically transcribed texts;
- g) by explicit phonetic training;
- h) by learning orthoepic conventions (i.e. how to pronounce written forms);
- i) by some combination of the above

2.3 Teaching pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation is a process consisting of several steps, which will be presented in this subchapter. Also possible ways of pronunciation integration into a lesson will be suggested. The subchapter is concluded by suggestions how to improve learners' pronunciation and what factors can cause problems to students in terms of perception and production of it.

Before the teacher starts to teach any pronunciation, he/she must decide which pronunciation variety he/she is going to teach. There used to be a widespread assumption, that all the students needed to produce a language that sounded as close to UK – and that means received pronunciation (RP) variety, usually regarded as a standard educated British English pronunciation; or US or Australian pronunciation as possible. But the reality is that learners, in most cases, will communicate with other non-native English speakers who do not use 'RP' as well. Therefore, the need for learning this variety seems to lack the sense. Nevertheless, 'RP' is mainly what is being used in the majority of current UK-published and also in international textbooks. According to Scrivener (2005), learners should learn pronunciation that will allow them to be understood in context or milieu, which they are most likely to be a part of. Secondly, he suggested, that the teacher should teach the pronunciation he/she speaks himself/herself and only to draw attention to local variations he/she is aware of or to differences in accents that appear in course materials (p. 286).

Considering all the information above, the teacher has to decide whether it is appropriate for the learners to practise recognising and producing 'RP' features such as weak forms and elision.

Also Kenworthy (1990) supported the idea, that the goal of teaching pronunciation should be intelligibility rather than a native-like pronunciation, "the more words a listener is able to identify accurately when said by a particular speaker, the more intelligible the speaker is" (p.13). Factors that influence intelligibility are: speech full of self-correction, hesitation and grammatical restructuring; speaking too quickly; listener's familiarity with the foreign accent; listener's ability to use contextual clues when listening (Kensworthy,

1990, p. 14).

Nevertheless, some learner's pronunciation strategies may lead to intelligibility problems. For example, sound substitution, or leaving out a sound, adding sounds, inappropriate use of stress, inappropriate use of rhythm and intonation may be potential sources of unintelligibility (Kensworthy, 1990, pp.17-19).

Before starting teaching pronunciation, learners need to understand the function of components of pronunciation as well as their form (Kensworthy, 1990, p.27). When teaching pronunciation, first of all, the teacher needs to be sure that the learners can hear and identify the sounds the teacher wants to teach. The same stands for teaching intonation, rhythm and stress. The teacher can check the learners' success in the perception by requesting imitation, or seeing if learners can distinguish between minimal pairs (such as red/reed, man/men and so on), or by playing a record with acceptable and unacceptable samples of pronunciation (Ur, 1997, p.53) .

The next step for some learners may be the exact formulation what to do: what is it, how it ought to be, what is absolutely wrong. This can be supported by a sketch of the mouth and describing the pronunciation of a sound in terms of lips, tongue, teeth, palate etc. This is useful especially when presenting sound formation (Ur, 1997, p.53).

Kensworthy (1990) pointed out that teaching pronunciation is an integrated teaching: "pronunciation is so often a part of many language learning activities that it is automatically integrated" (p.113). It is even more extreme, "whenever learners hear English or try to speak themselves they are 'doing pronunciation work'; every lesson is a pronunciation lesson; every time the teacher speaks he or she is presenting a spoken model" (Kensworthy, 1990, p.113). For example, when presenting new vocabulary, aspects as sounds of words, stress patterns of words, spelling correspondences and clusters of sounds can be easily integrated. Concerning intonation, learners' attention should be called to the use of intonation when listening, and their use of it should be commented on when speaking (Kensworthy, 1990, pp.114-118).

On the other hand, Harmer (2007) suggested, that it depends on the teacher when to include pronunciation teaching in lesson sequence. Regarding whole lesson teaching, he pointed out that, for example, working on connected speech, concentrating on stress and intonation makes sense; or students may listen to a longer recording, practising listening skills before moving to the pronunciation itself. Another possibility is that the teacher inserts short, separate bits of pronunciation into lesson sequence. This alternative is considered very useful and engaging. The third option is pronunciation issues being an

integral part of a lesson (for example, when listening to a recording, the teacher draws learners' attention to pronunciation features in the recording etc.). The last type is opportunistic teaching of pronunciation. This means that teacher tackles pronunciation issue when it just has 'come up'. Teachers usually use a mixture of the ways suggested above (pp. 251-252).

There are some ideas for improving learners' pronunciation²:

- imitation of teacher or recorded model of sounds, words, and sentences
- recording of learner speech, contrasted with native model
- systematic explanation and instruction (including details of the structure and movement of parts of the mouth
- imitation drills: repetition of sounds, words and sentences
- choral repetition of drills
- varied repetition of drills (varied speed, volume, mood)
- learning and performing dialogues (as with drills, using choral work, and varied speed, volume, mood)
- learning by heart of sentences, rhymes, jingles
- jazz chants
- tongue twisters
- self-correction through listening to recordings of own speech

Ur (1997) presented several sources of making pronunciation errors. First of them is the absence of a specific sound or sounds in the learner's mother tongue, so the learner often while trying to produce the sound, may substitute the most similar equivalent he or she knows (for example the substitution of /d/ or /z/ for the English *ð*). The second one is that there can exist a sound in the mother tongue, but not as a separate phoneme. This means that the learner does not understand it as a different sound from the one in the mother tongue. Next problem may be that despite of having the actual sounds right, the learner have learnt the stress patterns of the word or group of words inappropriately, or the learner is applying an intonation from the her/his mother tongue (pp. 52-53). Some others may be a pronunciation of the neutral 'schwa' vowel (the first syllable of *away*), or a tendency to not make a distinction between lighter or heavier stress of syllables, or a tendency to shorten diphthongs (instead of the sound /ei/ in *way* producing /é/) (p. 58). The errors that must be corrected are those which may lead to incomprehension or change

2 Ur, 1997, p. 54

the meaning of the utterance.

2.4 Aspects of pronunciation

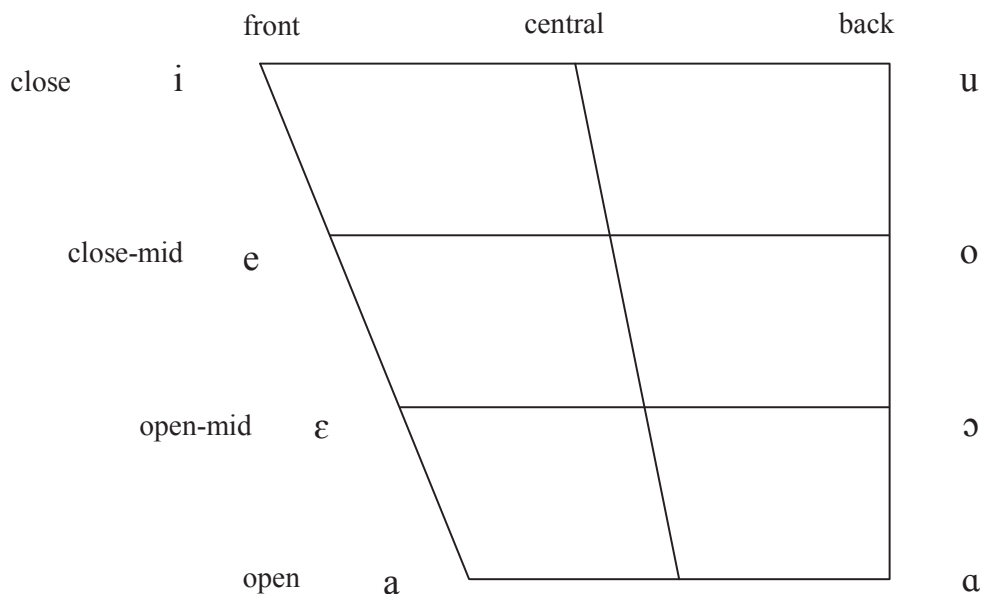
Individual aspects of pronunciation are described in this subchapter. They are presented in an ascending order. It begins with sounds – vowels and consonants, proceeding with syllable, spelling, weak forms, aspects of connected speech (rhythm and stress, assimilation and elision) and intonation. Basic facts are given as well as peculiarities of individual aspects.

2.4.1 Vowels

As was mentioned above, the individual sounds of a language are so called phonemes. They are divided into two types: vowels and consonants. Roach (2000) defined vowels as, "sounds in which there is no obstruction to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips" (p.10). An example of vowel is when you say "ah". When it is difficult or impossible for the air to pass through the mouth then these sounds are called consonants. Examples of consonants are sounds *s*, *d*. However, in some cases it is difficult to determine whether the sound is vowel or consonant. Some English sounds that are thought as consonants, such as the sounds at the beginning of the words "hay" and "way" hinder the flow of the air so little as some vowels do. Another thing is that division of sounds into vowels and consonants is different in different languages (Roach, 2000, p.11).

Vowels are divided into open and close. When the tongue is held up close to the roof of the mouth while making a vowel as in an *i:* vowel, it is close vowel. On contrary, when there is a greater distance between the surface of the tongue and the roof of the mouth as in an *æ* vowel, it is open vowel. Besides that vowels are also divided into front and back vowels. A front vowels is when the front part of the tongue is raised when making a sound (for example vowels *æ* and *i:*). A vowel in which the back of the tongue is the highest point is called back vowel (for example vowel *a:*). For exact accuracy, phoneticians have developed a set of vowels which are arranged in a close-open, front-back diagram but are not the vowels of any particular language. These vowels are so called cardinal vowels and denote the range of vowels that the human vocal apparatus can make. So-called primary cardinal (*i*, *e*, *ɛ*, *a*, *ɑ*, *ɔ*, *o*, *u*) vowels, diagram of which you can see below are most familiar to the speakers of most European languages. Secondary cardinal vowels (*y*, *ɥ*, *œ*,

æ, ʌ, ʊ, ɯ) sound less familiar (Roach, 2000, pp.12-14)

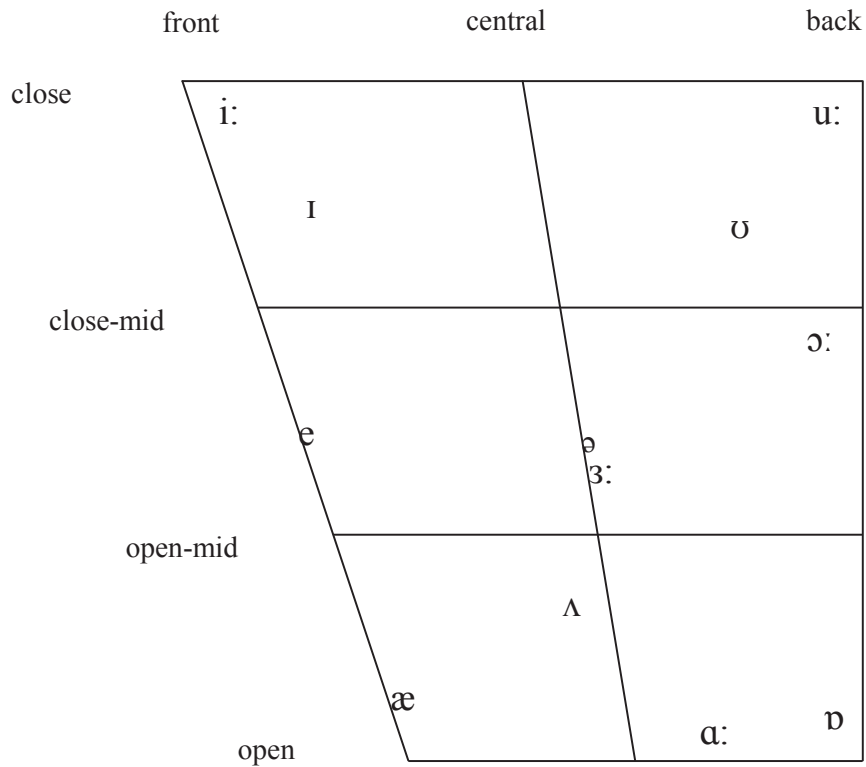


Besides classifying vowels according to their tongue height and their frontness and backness, lip-position is also considered. The three main positions are as following:

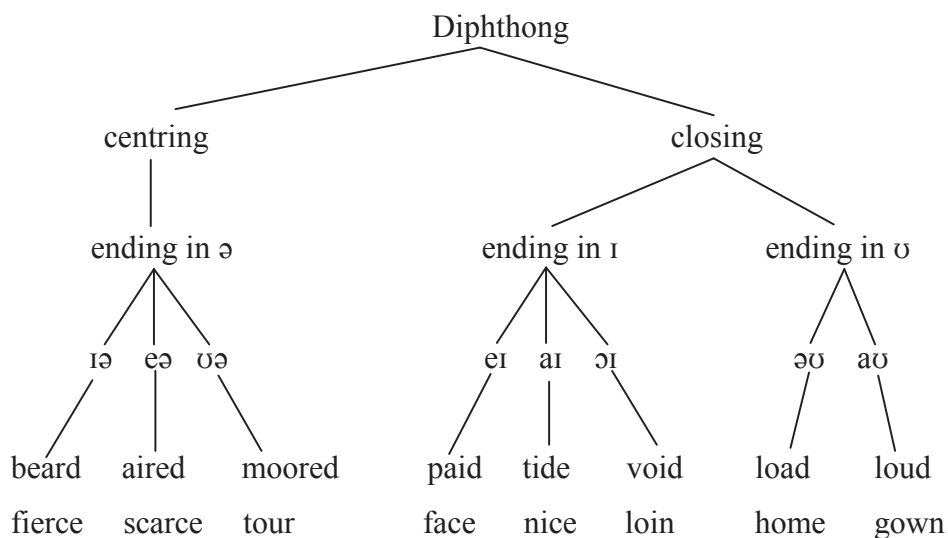
- a) rounded – those where the corners of the lips are brought towards each other and the lips pushed forwards (ɔ, o, u)
- b) spread – the corners of the lips moved away from each other, as for a smile (i)
- c) neutral – the lips are not noticeably rounded or spread (written "er")

The first ones from a large number of vowel sounds presented here are short vowels, the symbols of which are following: ɪ, e, æ, ʌ, ɒ, ʊ. These vowels are short only relatively as vowels can have quite different lengths in different contexts. A special kind of a mid central short vowel is so-called schwa (ə). The opposite of short vowels are long vowels. These are: i:, ɜ:, ɑ:, ɔ:, u:. These vowels are longer than short vowels in similar contexts and also differ in quality, which is caused by different tongue shape and position, and lip position when pronouncing it. Diagram of short and long vowels³:

³ Based on Roach, 2000, pp.19-21



Another vowel sounds are diphtongs, defined by Roach (2000) as, "sounds which consist of a movement or glide from one vowel to another" (p. 21). Diphtongs are as long vowels, where the first part of diphtong is much longer and stronger than the second part. The division of diphtongs is as in the following diagram:



The last type of vowel sounds present triphthongs, which are the most complex of

the previous ones. Roach (2000) described it as, "a glide from one vowel to another and then to a third, all produced rapidly and without interruption" (p.24). The triphthongs are composed of closing diphthongs plus ə on the end. The final combinations are as following:

eɪ + ə = eɪə ('layer')	əʊ + ə = əʊə ('lower')
aɪ + ə = aɪə ('liar')	aʊ + ə = aʊə ('hour')
ɔɪ + ə = ɔɪə ('royal')	

The difficulty English learners may have is that the middle of the three vowel qualities of the triphthong can hardly be heard in present-day English and therefore learners may mistake them for some of the diphthongs and long vowels (Roach, 2000, p.25).

2.4.2 Consonants

The first group of consonants presented here are plosives. They have several characteristics. First, one articulator is moved against another, or two articulators are moved against each other. That forms a stricture that keeps air in the vocal tract. After air is compressed behind the stricture, it is released. The noise called plosion is produced if air behind the stricture is still under pressure when the plosive is released. In English, there are six plosives: p, t, k, b, d, g. Plosives are subdivided according to their place of articulation. Bilabial are plosives *p* and *b* because when being producing, the lips are pressed together. When the tongue blade is pressed against the alveolar ridge, alveolar plosives *t* and *d* are made. The last type present velar plosives *k* and *g*, pronouncing by pressing the back of the tongue against the area where the hard palate ends and the soft palate begins. Compared to *p*, *t* and *k*, which are always voiceless *b*, *d*, and *g* can sometimes be partly or fully voiced (Roach, 2000, pp.32-33).

When air escaping through a small passage makes a hissing sound, consonants called fricatives are produced. Fricatives *f* (fan, fool, enough, photo) and *v* (voice, have, saver) are labiodental (lower lip is in contact with the upper teeth), *θ* (thing, teeth, thumb) and *ð* (this, father, thus) are dental fricatives (the tongue is placed behind the teeth with the tip touching the inside of the lower front teeth and the blade is touching the inside of the upper teeth), *s* (see, city, facing) and *z* (zip, phasing, rose) are alveolar (the same place of articulation as *t* and *d*), *f* (ship, sure, emotion) and *ʒ* (garage, pleasure, beige) are so called post-alveolar fricatives (the tongue is in contact with an area slightly further back than that

for *s* and *z*). The last type of fricatives *h* (ham, ahead) is glottal (the narrowing that produces the friction noise is between the vocal folds) (Roach, 2000, pp.48-52).

Another type of consonants, called affricates begin as plosives and end as fricatives. There are only two affricative phonemes in English – *tʃ* (chair, nature, teach) and *dʒ* (gin, joy, edge) (Roach, 2000, pp.48, 54).

The last group of consonants are nasal consonants. The main feature of this group is that the air escapes through the nose, which is caused by a complete closure in the mouth at some point. These consonants include three phonemes: a bilabial *m*, alveoral *n*, velar *ŋ*. The consonants *m* (man, ham) and *n* (no, tin) are simple and straightforward with distributions. However, to produce *ŋ* (ringer, sing, finger, drink) may be a serious problem for foreign learners. The reason is that the place of articulation is the same as that of *k*, *g* (Roach, 2000, pp. 58-59).

Nevertheless, there still remain four consonants that are not easy to fit into previous groups. These are: a lateral *l* (left, bell), post-alveolar *r* (run, very) and approximants *j* (yes, yet) and *w* (wet, queen). The lateral consonant *l* is realized by complete closure between the centre of the tongue and the part of the roof of the mouth where contact is to be made, so the air escapes along the sides of the tongue. However, there are considerable differences in *r* distribution and articulation in different accents of English, for foreign learners is recommended only one pronunciation – a post-alveolar approximant. An approximant means that in its production the articulators approach each other but do not get close enough to produce a "complete" consonant such as plosive, nasal and so on. Another feature of production *r* consonants is that the tip of the tongue approaches the alveolar area, like when producing *t* or *d*, but never touches any part of the roof of the mouth. It is worth to mention that in many accents of English (including RP) there is no *r* in the pronunciation when it is followed by a consonant or it stands at the final position. On the other hand, most American, Scots and West of England accents do pronounce it in such cases. The last two consonants – palatal *j* and bilabial *w* are approximants as the previous consonant. However, they are phonologically consonants, phonetically they are like vowels. The articulation of *j* is quite similar to *i*: just shorter. The same goes for *w* and *u*: (Roach, 2000, pp.61-64).

2.4.3 Syllable

At the beginning of the first word when a speaker begins to speak after a pause can

occur a vowel, or one, two but no more than three consonants. Similarly, the word can end with a vowel, or with one, two, three, but no more than four consonants. Two or more consonants together are called a consonant cluster. There are two types of initial two-consonant clusters – first of them is comprised of *s*, called pre-initial consonant followed by one of the set of initial consonants *p* (spin), *t* (sting), *k* (skin), *f*, *m* (smoke), *n* (snow), *l* (slip), *w* (sway) or *j* (Sue). The second type begins with one of the following initial consonants: *p*, *b*, *t*, *d*, *k*, *g*, *f*, *θ*, followed by one of the set of post-initial consonants *l*, *r*, *w*, *j* (Roach, 2000, pp.70-73).

Concerning final consonant clusters, they are much more numerous. If there is only one consonant at the end of a word, it is called the final consonant. Any consonant can be a final consonant except for *h*, *r*, *w*, *j*. As there were two types of initial two-consonant clusters, there are also two types of final two-consonant clusters. First of them consists of one of the pre-final consonants: *m* (bump), *n* (bent), *ŋ* (bank), *l* (belt), *s* (ask), followed by a final consonant. The second type consists of post-final consonant *s* (bets), *z* (beds), *t* (backed), *d* (bagged), or *θ* (eighth) preceded by a final consonant. Final three-consonant clusters are divided into those that comprised of pre-final plus final plus post-final (helped, banks, bonds, twelfth) and those that have no pre-final consonant but have two post-final consonants (fifths, next, lapsed). It is similar with final four-consonant clusters. They either consist of one pre-final, one final and two post-final consonants (twelfths, prompts), or no pre-final, one final and three post-final consonants (sixths, texts). To sum up, the maximum phonological structure of the English syllable consists of following: onset (pre-initial plus initial plus post-initial consonants) plus vowel plus coda (pre-final plus final plus post-final 1 plus post-final 2 plus post-final 3 consonants) (Roach, 2000, pp. 73-76).

Syllables can also be divided into strong and weak. The difference between them is that the vowel in a weak syllable is shorter, of lower intensity and different quality. For example, in the word 'father' (fɑ:ðə) the second syllable is weak, is shorter than the first one, is less loud and contains vowel that cannot occur in strong syllables. A strong syllable contains one of the vowel phonemes except for *ə*, *i* and *u*. On the other hand, these three vowels occur in a weak syllable endings. For example, *ə* in such words as 'better' (betə), 'open' (əʊpən), 'sharpen' (ʃɑ:pən); *i* (symbolising a close front unrounded vowel in the general area of *i:* and *ɪ*) in such words as 'happy' (hæpi), 'radio' (reɪdiəʊ); *u* (symbolising a close back rounded vowel in the general area of *u:* and *ʊ*) in such words as 'thank you' (θæŋk ju), 'influence' (ɪnfluəns). In terms of stress, the strong syllables are stressed and weak syllables are unstressed (Roach, 2000, pp.81-82).

2.4.4 Spelling

Concerning correspondence between sounds and symbols, there are usually certain rules and ways, how to pronounce certain letters or their combinations. In most languages possible variations are also governed by consistent rules. English language is an example of the language, where are many exceptions to such rules. Thus, spelling of many words cannot be logically predicted from their pronunciation and vice versa.

The first time the learners face sound-system correspondence is at the stage of learning the alphabet. Every new symbol needs to be taught with its pronunciation. The problems may occur when the alphabet of learners' mother tongue is very similar or the same to the learned one but the letters sound differently. After learning the basic sound-system correspondence, learners may be able to perceive and pronounce any written text and write down the language they hear. Some teaching ideas for pronunciation-spelling correspondence follow⁴:

- dictation of random lists of words, of words that have similar spelling problems, of complete sentences, of half-sentences to be completed
- reading aloud of syllables, words, phrases, sentences
- discrimination 1: pairs of words which differ from each other in one sound-letter combination – learners either read them aloud, taking care to discriminate, or the teacher reads them aloud himself/herself, and asks learners to write them down
- discrimination 2: the teacher provides a list of words that are spelt the same in the learners' mother tongue and in the target language: the teacher or the learners read them aloud and discuss the differences in pronunciation
- prediction 1: the teacher provides a set of letter combinations, which are parts of words the learner know, the learners guess how to pronounce them, then the teacher reveals the full word
- prediction 2: the teacher dictates a set of words in the target language which the learners do not know yet, but whose spelling accords with rules, the learners try to spell them, then the teacher reveals meanings

4 Ur, 1997, p. 58

2.4.5 Weak forms

There are about forty words in English that can be pronounced in two ways. The forms are called strong and weak. As an example can be used the word 'that', which can be pronounced either *ðæt* (strong form) as in the sentence 'I like that' or *ðət* (weak form) as in the sentence 'I hope that she'll come'. Most of words that have both forms are words such as auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions etc. (Roach, 2000, pp.112-113).

2.4.6 Aspects of connected speech

Aspects of connected speech include rhythm, assimilation and elision. They are described below.

Ur (1997) pointed out that "English speech rhythm is characterized by tone-units: a word or group of words which carries one central stressed syllable. Other syllables, if there are any, are lightened" (48). One of the way how to indicate stress in writing is to write the stressed syllable in capital letters; in phonemic transcription is common to write a short vertical line above and before the stressed syllable as in /'teɪbl/.

At the moment it is important to show differences between stressed and unstressed syllables. Roach (2000) mentioned following four distinctions: first, stressed syllables are louder than unstressed; second, if the syllable is produced longer than others, it tend to be heard as stressed; third, a stressed syllable is perceived, when it is produced with high pitch compared to the others produced with low pitch; fourth, a syllable that contains a vowel that is different in quality from neighbouring vowels will be considered as stressed. However, a syllable may be found stressed by means of only one or two characteristics mentioned above (pp. 94-95).

Compared to, for example, Czech language where the first syllable is usually stressed, in English word stress cannot be decided simply in relation to the syllables of the word. Frequently, it is considered to learn stress placement of the individual word when the word itself is learned. There, of course, exist some rules but there are a lot of exceptions to these rules and it would be purposeless for our needs to list them here.

English is considered having stress-times rhythm. That means that stressed syllables tend to occur at relatively regular intervals, either separated by unstressed syllables or not. Nevertheless, there is a phenomenon called stress-shift, that can cause problems to learners. As an example can serve following pair of words: compact *kəm'pækt*

x compact disc *'kɒmpækt 'disk*. Besides that, in some situations we can speak very rhythmically in other we can speak without rhythm. Despite that, it is necessary to keep in mind the difference between strong and weak syllables (Roach, 2000, pp.134-138).

Plavka (2003) defined assimilation as, "the process by which one sound is replaced by another sound that closely resembles the following or preceding sound" (p. 28). Assimilation varies in extent according to speaking rate and style: it occurs more often in rapid, casual speech than in slow and careful speech. There are two types of assimilation. The first one is progressive, which means that the first sound influences the second ('in the' *ɪn ðə*). In regressive assimilation second sound influences the first one, which causes the voicing of voiceless consonants ('that person' *ðæt pɜːsn*) (Plavka, 2003, p.28).

Elision is also typical of rapid, casual speech. It can be described as disappearing of some sounds under certain circumstances. There are shown some examples: 'potato' *ptetəʊ*, 'lots of them' *lɒts ə ðəm*, 'scripts' *skripts* and so on (Roach, 2000, pp.142-143).

2.4.7 Intonation

Another important aspect of pronunciation is intonation, melody of speech. When we speak, the pitch (degree of highness or lowness of speaking voice) is constantly changing. It is important to point out that intonation varies from individual to individual, from region to region and so on (Plavka, 2003, p.60). The one-syllable utterances can be pronounced in five ways: with a level tone, a falling tone or a rising tone and less frequent fall-rise and rise-fall tones. In this case, the function of falling tone is to give an impression of "finality"; of raising tone to convey an impression that something more is to follow; of fall-rise tone is to express "limited agreement" or "response with reservation"; of rise-fall to convey rather strong feelings of approval, disapproval or surprise; of level tone to convey a feeling of saying something routine, uninteresting or boring (Roach, 2000, pp.152-158).

The whole utterance is termed a tone unit; the most prominent syllable, carrying the significant level or movement of pitch, is termed the tonic syllable; the tonic syllable divides the tone unit into pre-tonic segment (which can be subdivided into 'head' = first stressed syllable, and the 'pre-head' = unstressed syllables before the beginning of the head) and the tonic segment (it includes the tonic syllable and any post-tonic syllables, called 'tail'). The tonic syllable is obligatory, and the pre-head, head and tail are optional (Tench, 1991, pp.85-87). As an example can serve the following utterance:

It would have been	better not to have	<u>paid</u> for it.
pre-head	head	tonic tail
pre-tonic segment		tonic segment

An easy way how to identify the boundary between one unit and the following one is as it was described by Tench (1991), "the number of tonic syllables perceived in a stretch of speech gives the (same) number of tone-units in that stretch. The boundary may be identified by a slight pause, or by a change of pitch, which indicates that the pitch of a tail has come to an end" (p.87).

The most important function of intonation is to convey pieces of information as the speaker deems them. Usually, new information is being placed at the end of a tone-unit, but necessarily always. The tonic expresses the focus of information, or new information. Different placements of tonic can be shown in the following example (Tench, 1991, pp. 90-91):

All the girls swim well.

All the girls swim well.

All the girls swim well.

All the girls swim well.

A second function of English intonation is the expression discourse function. The falling tone have statements without any emotional or attitudinal colouring, *wh*- questions and commands; the rising tone have 'yes/no' questions without any emotional or attitudinal colouring. The third function is the expression of attitudes and emotions. When the speaker is surprised, the falling tone starts from a higher pitch than normal does. On the contrary, when the speaker talks about something that is quite common and expresses expectation, the falling tone starts from a lower pitch than normal does. Reservation or doubt is expressed by fall-rise, a strong assertion by rise-fall (Tench, 1991, pp.91-93).

Based on these theoretical knowledge about pronunciation two research questions were stated. The first of them covers the phenomenon of pronunciation aspects - how, even if they are presented to learners. The second of them deals with this phenomenon from the textbook point of view.

1. Which way pronunciation and its individual aspects are being taught at upper primary level?
2. How textbooks deal with the phenomenon of pronunciation?

Therefore, this chapter covers topics from the basic facts about the process of teaching and learning in general, through language and pronunciation teaching to individual aspects of pronunciation.

The following chapter describes a method which was used to carry out the research leading to answering the research question

3 METHOD

This chapter covers the practical part of the thesis and is devoted to the description of the method used to carry out the survey. To gather data necessary for answering the research questions a teacher questionnaire was used. In the following part the method is discussed in a greater detail with a special focus on its application in my research.

A questionnaire belongs to research techniques which are classified as 'introspective' as they involve respondents reporting on themselves, their views, their interactions and so on. They can also be used to elicit factual data (for example asking people which classes they teach). Responses can be statistically analysed since there is a big enough sample (Wallace, 1998, p.124). Questionnaire is answered by ticking responses, or writing short answers. In the first case, the questions are so called 'closed' questions, which make questionnaire easier and quicker to fill in and contribute to more reliable scoring of the responses. In contrast, the second type are so called 'open' questions and the responses to them are open-ended, which are quite difficult to analyse (Wallace, 1998, pp.134-135).

The questionnaire was determined for English teachers teaching at the upper primary level. The questionnaire was written in English language (see Appendix). The survey was carried out during the spring 2012. The questionnaire was sent to all the teachers teaching at any elementary school in Pilsen and was also available on the internet, so it was freely accessible to any teacher who wanted to contribute to the research. I have got back 32 completed pieces of it. The questionnaire was made in an electronic form on "Google docs⁵" to be fast and easy to fill in and to address as many respondents as possible and consequently, to be more effective.

The questionnaire itself consists of 12 questions. The question number 1 is a functional question, the aim of which was to find out which classes respondents teach in. The question number 2 is open-ended as the teachers were supposed to write which textbook they use when teaching. Questions 3, 4, 5, 6 and 11 are close-ended with possibility to choose only one answer. Questions number 7, 8, 12 are close-ended with the possibility to choose more answers and/or to write their own choice or opinion in addition. Questions number 9 and 10 are close-ended as well and they find out how much time the teachers devote to the pronunciation as a whole up to its individual aspects. Questions number 6, 9, 10, 11 and 12 were designed to answer the first of the two research questions

5 Google docs is an electronic service provided by Google to create documents.

(Which way pronunciation and its individual aspects are being taught at upper primary level?), questions number 2, 3, 4, 5,7 and 8 to answer second research question (How do textbooks deal with the phenomenon of pronunciation?).

This chapter described a particular method – the teacher questionnaire, which was used to gather data for finding answers to the research questions. Each question was determined as well as its focus on answering a particular research question. The results emerging from the questionnaire are discussed in the following chapter with appropriate commentaries to all these results.

4 RESULTS AND COMMENTARY

The data gathered from the research will be introduced and analysed in this chapter. The results are illustrated by charts and tables to be lucid. Gathered data will be presented question by question. The first research question includes teaching of pronunciation as a whole and all its aspects and also frequency of teaching each of them. The second covers overview of textbooks used at the upper primary level and a way how they deal with the issue of pronunciation. Each chart is accompanied by a commentary on a particular result as well as the most important findings are highlighted.

4.1 Which way pronunciation and its individual aspects are being taught at the upper primary level?

As mentioned above, the teacher questionnaire was used to find the answer to this question. This subchapter is divided into three parts. The aim of the first of them is to find answer to the question which classes the teachers teach in, of the second to find out which way teaching pronunciation as a whole takes place and of the third what and how are the individual aspects of pronunciation presented to the learners and which of them are the most difficult for the learners. Results from individual charts are compared to get complex view of the issue.

4.1.1 Classes the teachers teach in

In this subchapter, there is a chart and a table showing in which classes of upper primary level the teachers, filling in the questionnaire teach. The question has a form of a multiple choice, so they could tick more options.

The question was following:

Which **CLASSES** do you teach English in? A) 6. B)7. C)8. D)9.

Figure 4.1

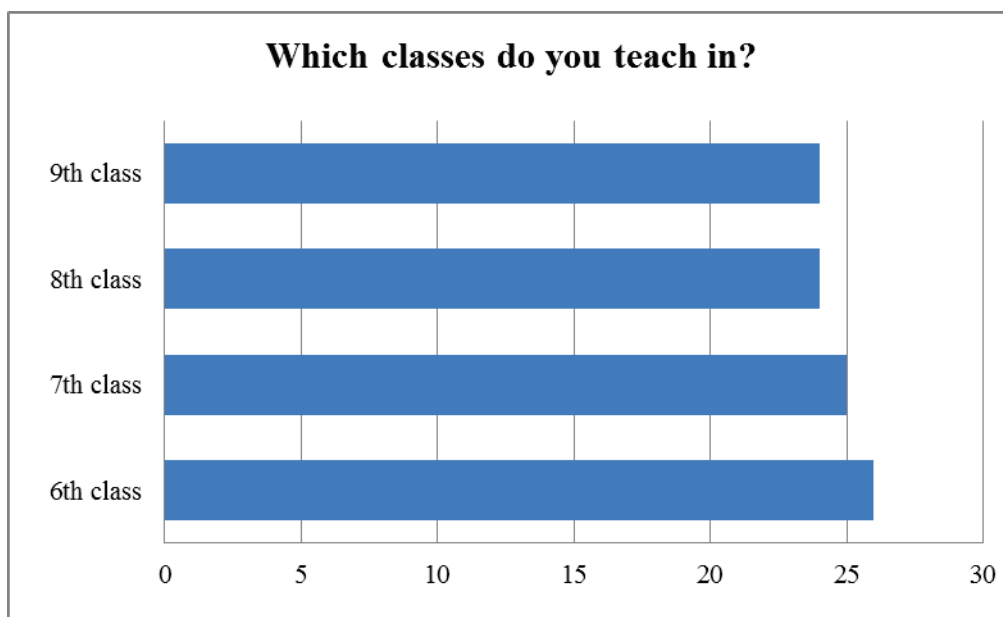


Table 4.1

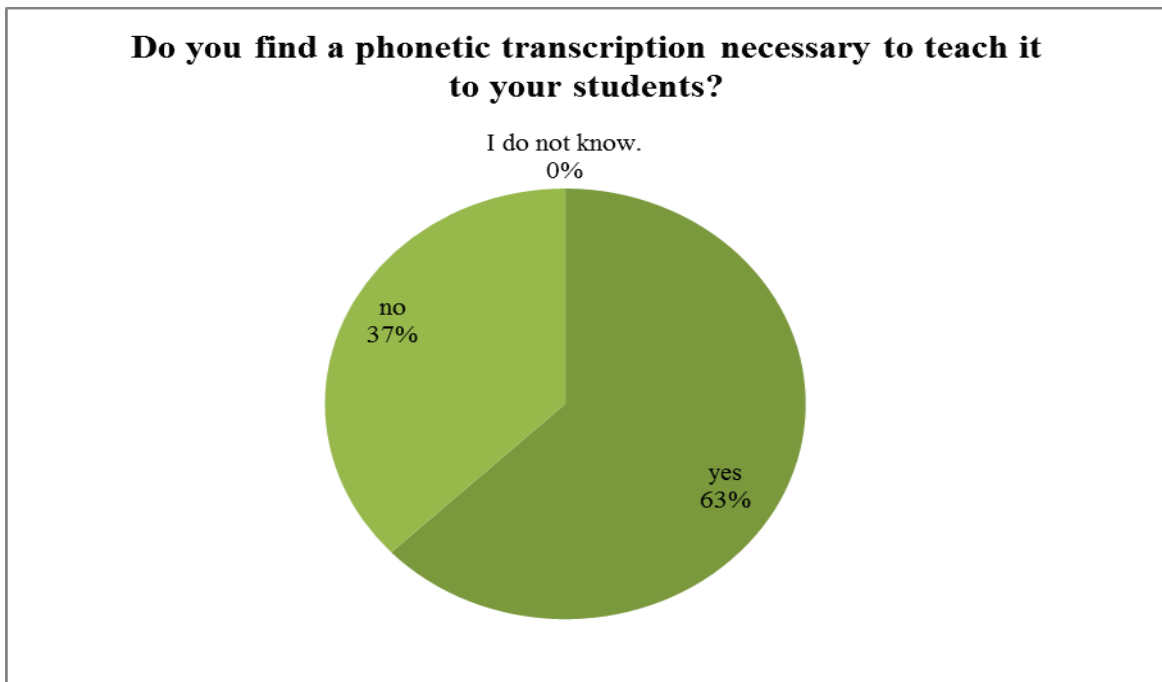
class	number of teachers	number of teachers (%)
6.	26	79
7.	25	76
8.	24	73
9.	24	73

This question was involved to prove that all the teachers were teaching at this level and in case of a very high number of teachers in one class contrasting to very low number in others, it would have to be taken into consideration in the following results. Resulting from the questionnaire, language teaching at upper primary level is quite equal.

4.1.2 Teaching pronunciation as a whole

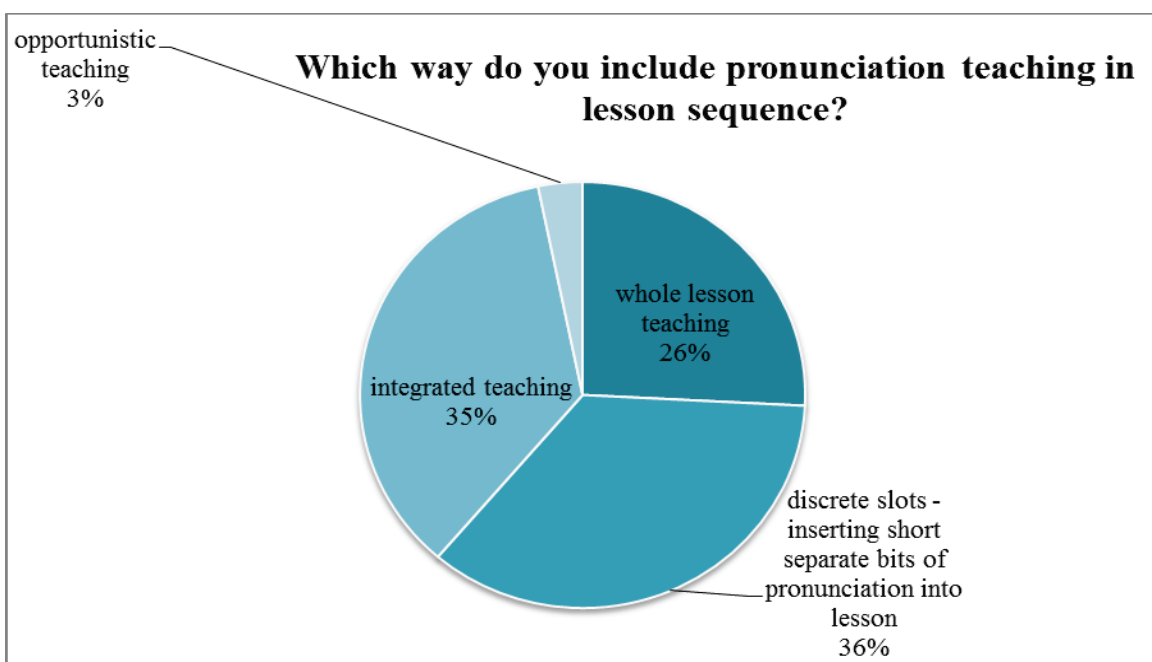
First, I have focused on teaching pronunciation as a whole. It means how the teachers approach to teaching pronunciation as a phenomenon. To find answer to this part, questions number 6, 9 and 11 were formed. It covers issues of importance teaching a phonetic transcription, what position pronunciation and other language systems take in a teaching process, and which way the teachers include pronunciation teaching into a lesson sequence.

Figure 4.2



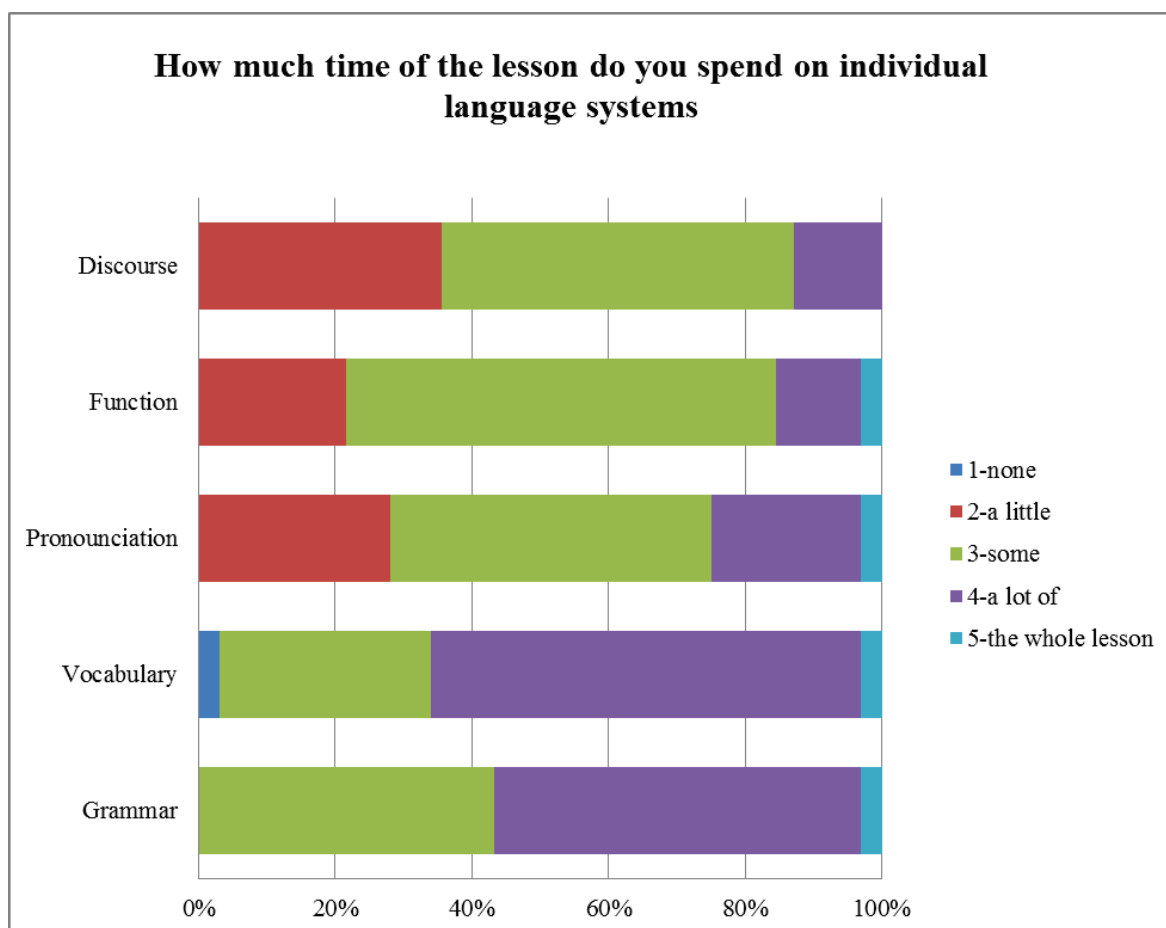
Resulting from the questionnaire more than a half of the teachers find a phonetic transcription necessary to teach it their students. 37% do not find it necessary, nobody answered that they do not know. With this question is connected a question number 5, the goal of which was to find out whether a phonetic transcription of the vocabulary and of phrases is included in the textbook the teachers use.

Figure 4.3



Concerning of the way the teacher include pronunciation teaching in lesson sequence, almost the same number of responses got integrating teaching and inserting short separate bits of pronunciation into lesson. A surprisingly high number of positive answers got the choice of whole lesson teaching. Only 3% of the teachers prefer opportunistic teaching.

Figure 4.4



From this figure we can see how much time the teachers spend on individual language systems during their classes. Teachers could tick on scale from 1 to 5 their preferences concerning each of the systems. Only in case of teaching vocabulary 3% of the teachers answered that they do not spend any time on it. In other cases the teachers always spend some time on the systems. The most positive votes got grammar, where teachers spend mostly some or a lot of or in few cases the whole lesson on it. It is followed by vocabulary, where teachers responded that they mostly spend a lot of time on it. Not much time teachers spend on discourse and function. Pronunciation is situated somewhere in the middle concerning of the importance of individual systems. The most points got the answer

that they spend some time on it. Also many teachers responded that spend either a little or a lot of on it, only 3% of teachers answered that they spend the whole lesson on it.

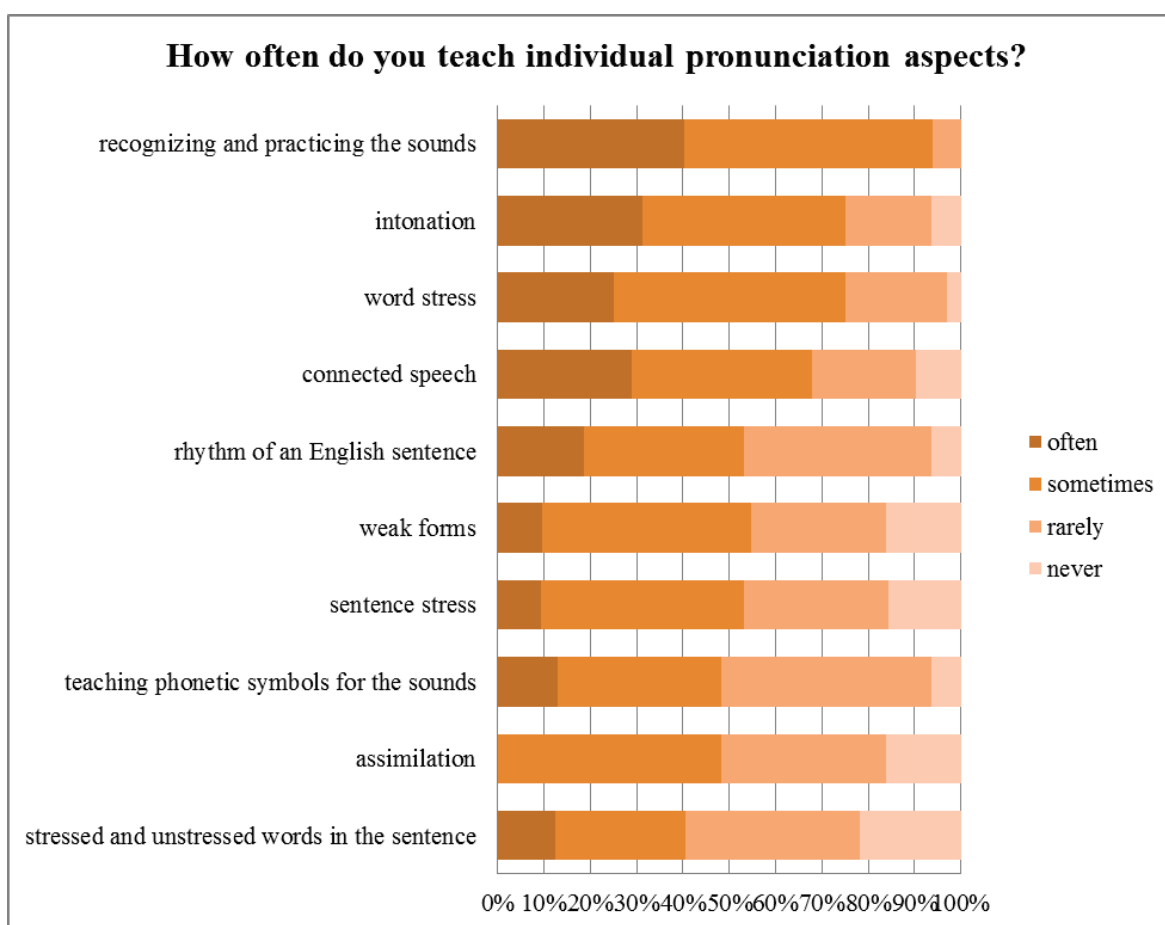
Commentary on figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4

From the figures it is obvious that pronunciation is not felt as the most or least important language system. Nevertheless, at the time when a communicative approach is preferred all over the world it is startling that the main position occupy teaching grammar. At the end of primary level students should have only a basic knowledge of grammar, should be able to use some simple structures. I think that here still persists a conviction about the greatest importance of grammar, which is difficult as well as boring for learners at this age. Systems as pronunciation and discourse which are the base for that approach are more likely on a tail of teachers' attention. Teachers also do not often teach pronunciation for a whole lesson and do not take much care of it when some pronunciation problem comes up in case of opportunistic teaching. Nevertheless, from the point of effectiveness and time economy the most preferred answers (integrated teaching and discrete slots) seem very appropriate and engaging. To the issue of teaching pronunciation as a whole also belongs teaching of a phonetic transcription. As was mentioned above more than a half of the teachers finds it necessary. I agree with this as learners will come into contact with phonetic symbols in a variety of situations, for example when working with their textbooks or dictionaries. Nevertheless, from the following figure you can see, that now matter how they find it necessary, they almost do not teach it.

4.1.3 Teaching individual aspects of pronunciation

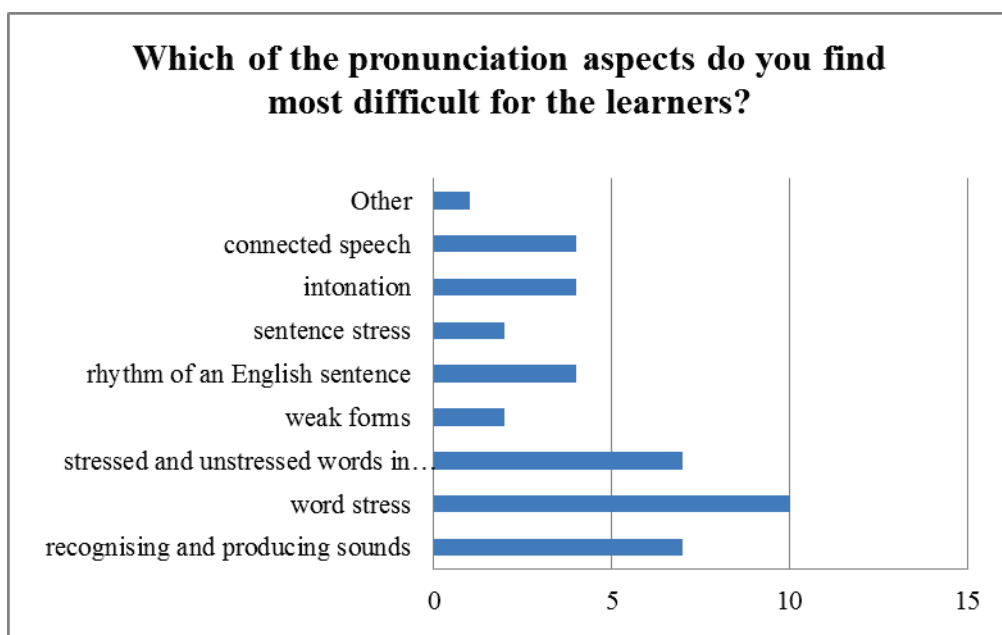
At this stage, concrete aspects of pronunciation will be discussed. It covers following aspects and activities: recognizing and practicing the sounds, intonation, word stress, connected speech, rhythm of an English sentence, weak forms, sentence stress, teaching phonetic symbols for the sounds, assimilation, stressed and unstressed words in the sentence. Questions number 10 and 12 provide answer to the question of teaching them. In those, frequency of teaching these individual aspects will be found out. And what aspects the teachers find the most difficult for the learners will be discussed.

Figure 4.5



From this figure we can see how much time the teachers spend on individual aspects of pronunciation during their classes. Teachers could tick on scale from 1 to 4 their preferences concerning each of the aspects. Most often the teachers prefer recognizing and practising the sounds followed by intonation. In case of recognizing and practicing sounds none of the teachers answered that he/she never deals with this issue. These two aspects are followed by a connected speech and word stress, which after recognizing and practising the sounds got the lowest number of negative answers. On the other hand, most negative answers got stressed and unstressed words in the sentence. Similarly, none of the teachers often teach assimilation. The other aspects of pronunciation – rhythm of an English sentence, weak forms, sentence stress and teaching phonetic symbols for the sounds have more or less similar preferences, but all of them almost do not cross the border of 50% of higher frequency of teaching it.

Figure 4.6



The goal of this question is to find out which aspects of pronunciation the teachers find the most difficult for their learners. Teachers could tick more than one option. Most of the teachers find word stress the most difficult for the learners. The second most difficult they find recognising and producing sounds. Then with 4 positive answers follow connected speech, intonation and rhythm of an English sentence. Least number of the teachers find difficult weak forms and sentence stress. One teacher did not respond to this question.

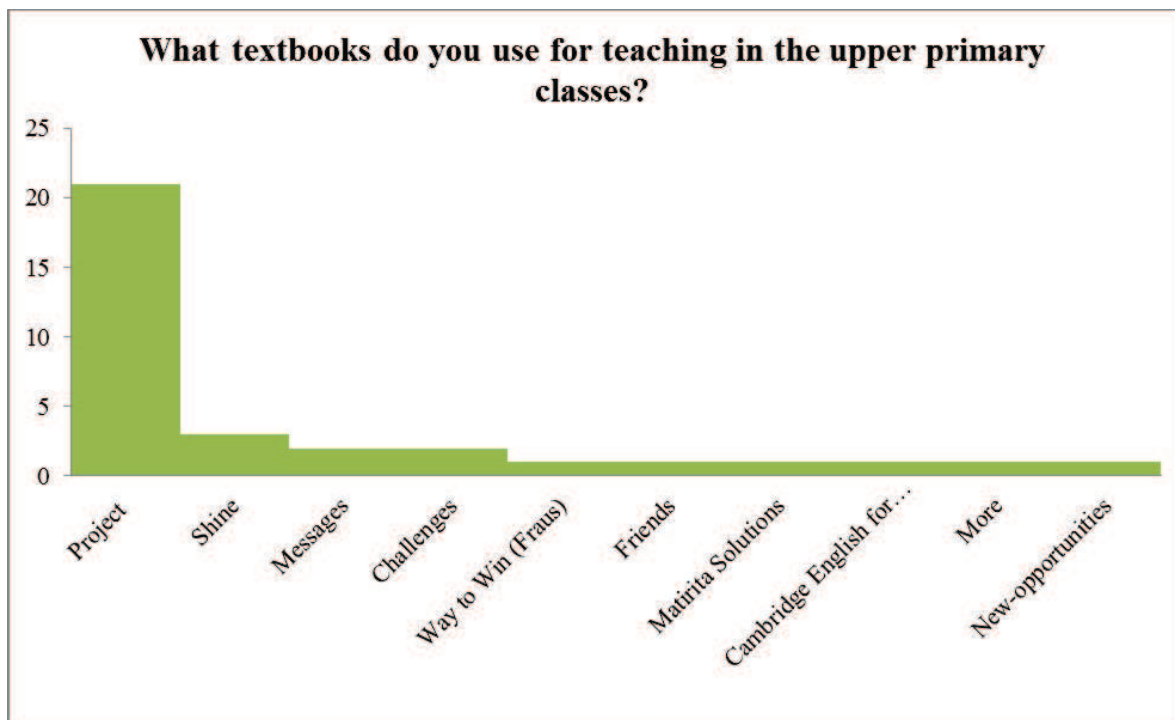
Commentary on figures 4.5 and 4.6:

When we compare the answers from these figures we should come to the result that the teachers most often teach such aspects that are the most difficult for the students to learn. In this case, results slightly differ. The teachers mainly teach recognizing and practising sounds but they consider it less difficult than word stress for their students. Word stress and intonation are the second most often taught aspects but the teachers do not consider intonation so much difficult for the learners. Similar positions in both the figures occupy connected speech, rhythm of an English sentence, which the teachers teach quite often and find it quite difficult. The same goes for sentence stress and weak forms, which the teachers do not teach very often and do not find it difficult for the learners. What absolutely differs are stressed and unstressed words in the sentence, which the teachers teach really rarely but they find it the third most difficult aspect to learn for the learners.

4.2 How do textbooks deal with the phenomenon of pronunciation?

In this subchapter are analysed the results connected with the second research question. To get the answer the questions number 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 provided necessary data. This subchapter includes an overview of the textbooks used at upper primary level, how the textbooks deal with a phonetic transcription, whether they include recordings focused on pronunciation and how often teachers use them, and the last issue discussed here is what kind of activities is common in the textbooks and how often teachers use those activities in their lessons.

Figure 4.7

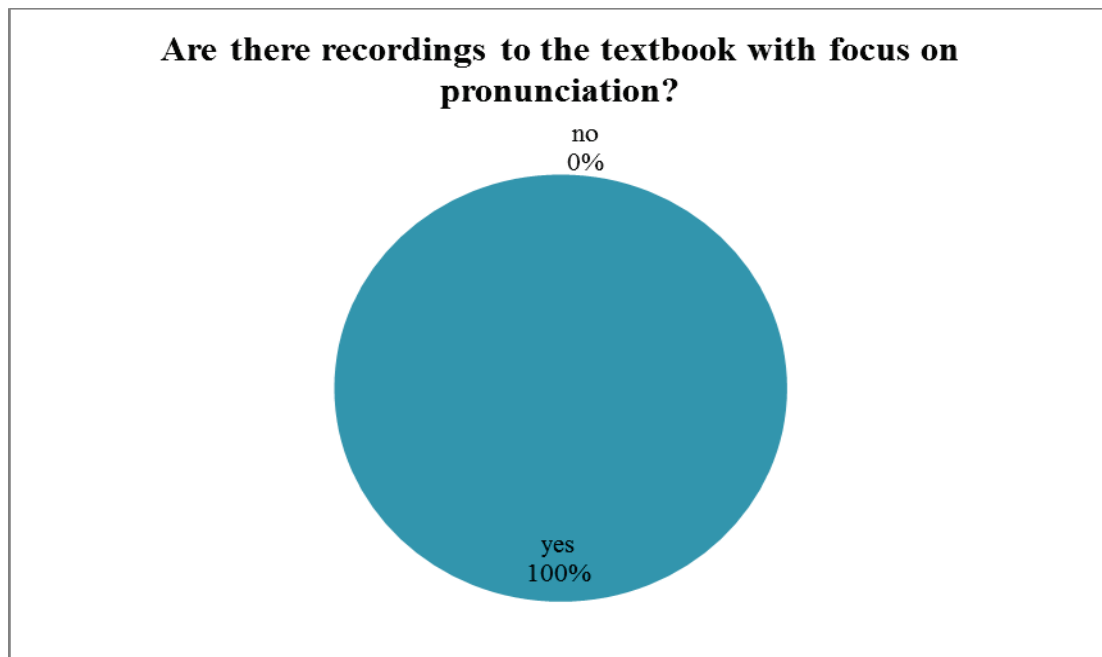


Emerging from the questionnaire, the textbook used the most at upper primary level is Project. Teachers use various editions, from the first one to a new edition. Three teachers use Shine, two teachers use Messages and Challenges. One point got following textbooks: Way to win, Friends, Cambridge English for schools, More, Maturita Solutions, New-opportunities.

According to the results, it seems that a prevailing textbook is Project. It shows that the most of primary schools have been sticking to this textbook for a long time. Nevertheless, it does not indicate that this textbook is inappropriate in terms of providing

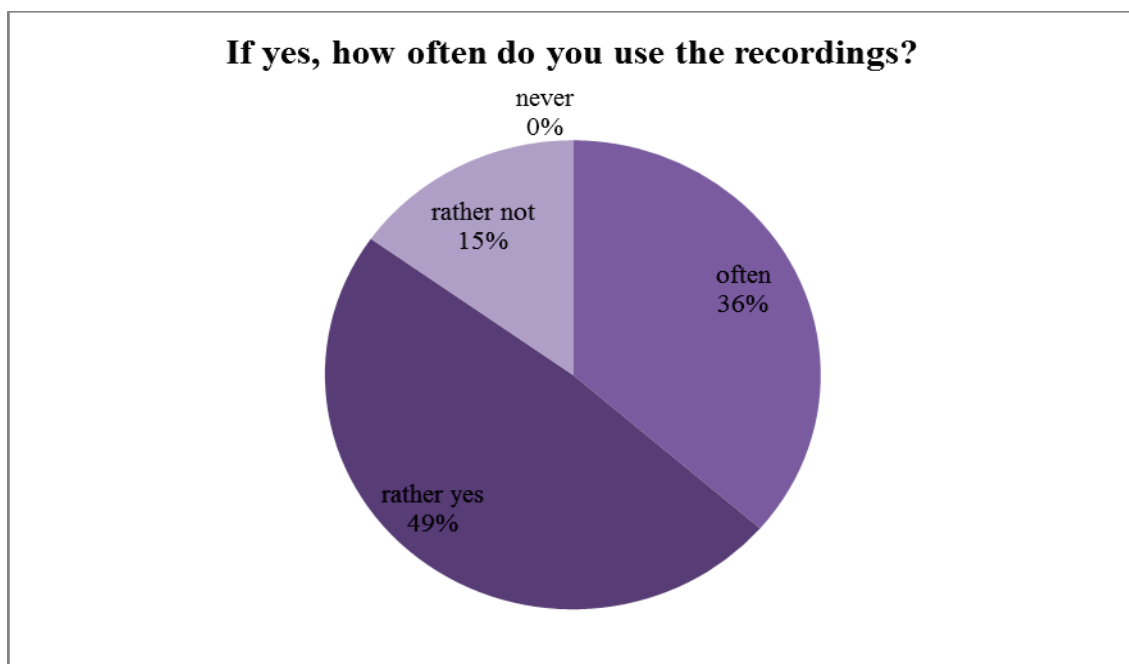
support for teaching pronunciation.

Figure 4.8



Concerning this question, the answer is obvious. 100% of respondents stated that in the textbooks they use there are recordings focused on pronunciation, so all the textbooks mentioned by the teachers provide support for pronunciation exercises.

Figure 4.9

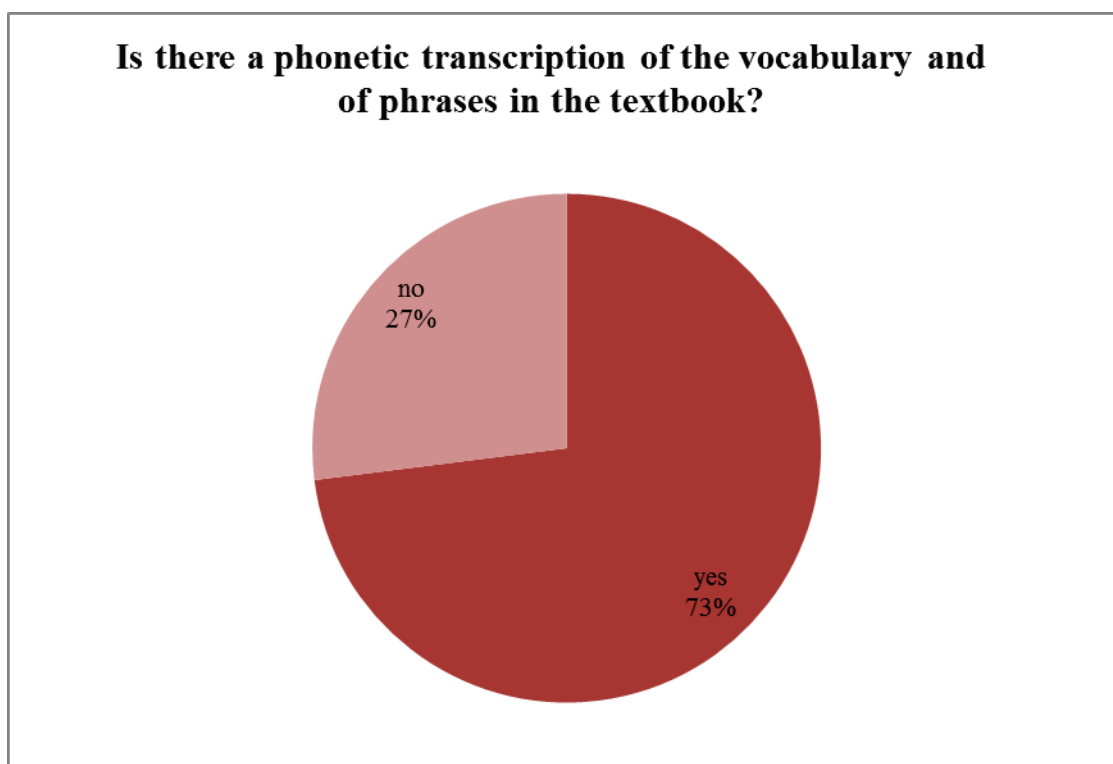


Nevertheless, from the following figure we can see, that not all of the teacher use them quite often. Only 36% of respondents answered that they use these recordings often, 48% that they rather use them and 15% that they rather do not use them. Yet, none of them answered that he/she does not use them at all.

Commentary on figures 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9

It is obvious that contemporary textbooks provide enough audio material for perception of spoken language with focus on pronunciation. To summarize results concerning using of such materials, 84% of respondents answered that they use them. Despite that, the rest of the respondents rather do not use them and it is not an insignificant number of teachers. At this stage of language learning, perception of the language is very important as with misperception gaps in communication are arising. In my opinion, recordings in textbooks are a useful tool, but it depends on the teacher whether he/she wants to use them or their own pronunciation as a pattern for their learners. Nowadays, there are different approaches to this topic and cannot be said that either of them is correct or wrong.

Figure 4.10



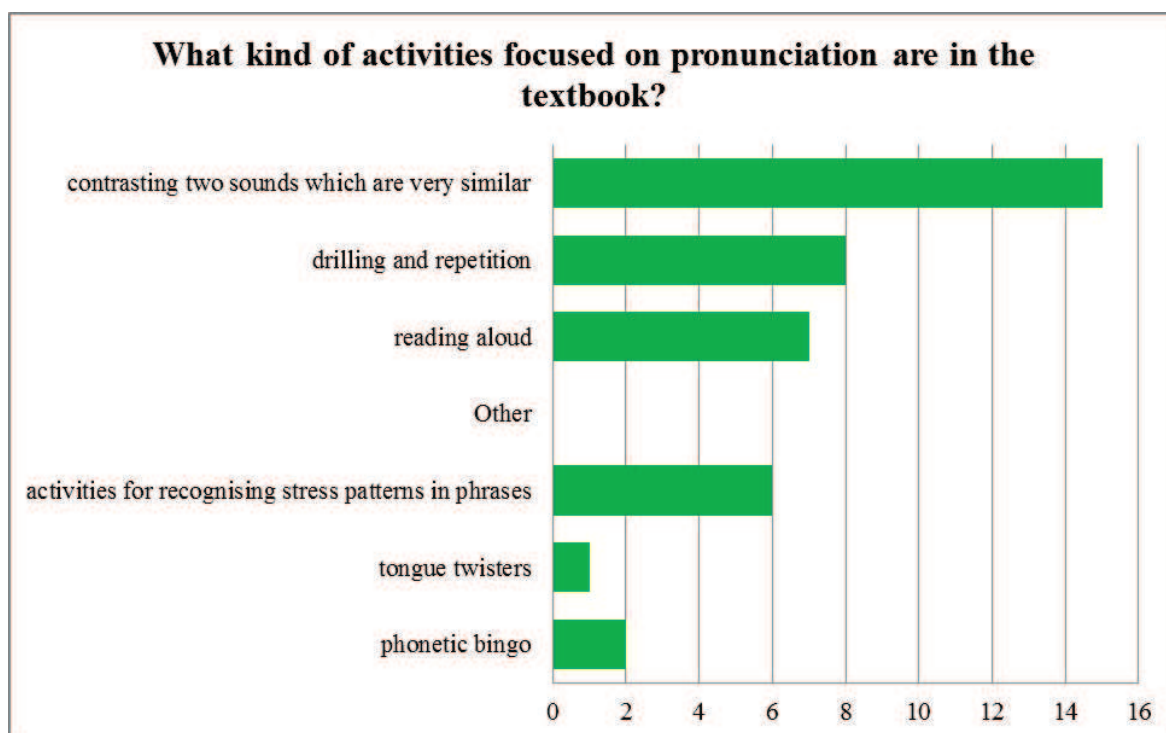
From this figure emerges, that in 73% of textbooks there is a phonetic transcription

of the vocabulary and in case of 27% there is not. An interesting fact is that some teachers that use Project answered that there is a phonetic transcription of words and of phrases and other answered that there is not.

Commentary on figure 4.10:

In most cases, there is a phonetic transcription of words in the textbooks. But almost in one third there is not. When there is not a phonetic transcription it means that if the teacher does not provide learners with it they do not know it at all. This can cause first problems connected with pronunciation to learners as they do not have visual support for they learning of it. Nowadays, there occurs such idea that students should first learn the words only through phonetic transcription and only at later stage they should be provided with a 'normal' letter form. Also, learners face a phonetic transcription in dictionaries and when they do not know which symbol means what they can be quite confused. Taking these facts into consideration, teachers as well as textbooks should pay at least some attention to the phonetic transcription.

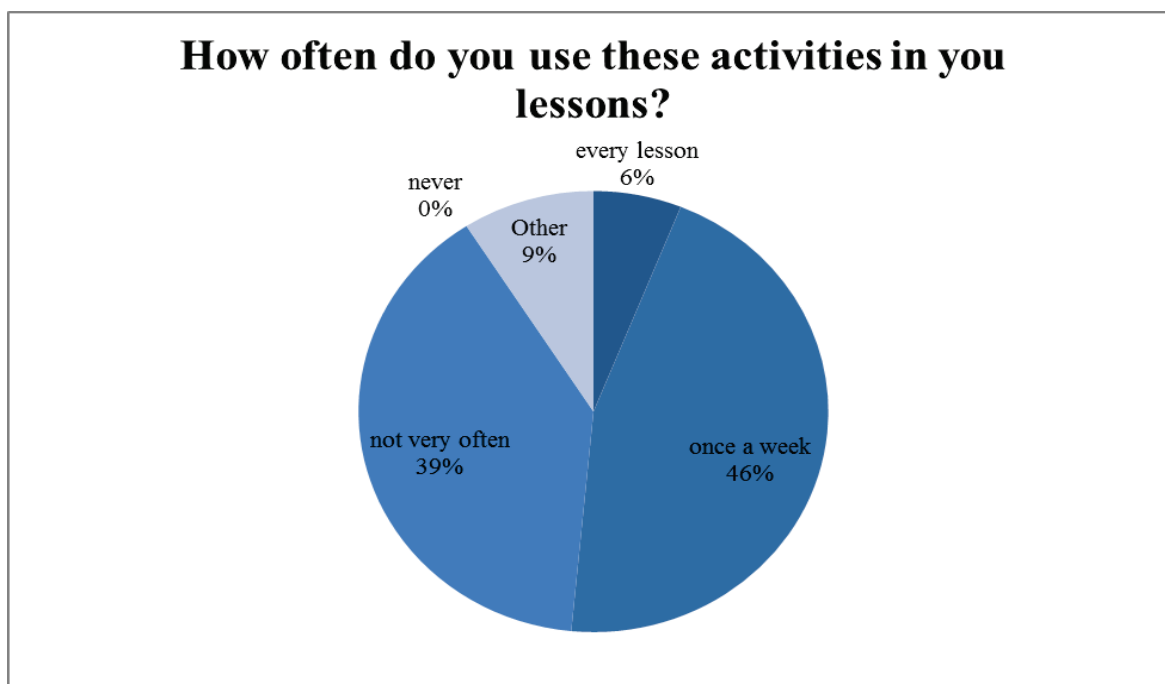
Figure 4.11



In this question, teachers could choose more than one option. Regarding activities focused on pronunciation in textbooks, 15 teachers answered that there are activities

focused on contrasting two sounds which are very similar, 8 that drilling and repetition activities. 7 answers got reading aloud activities, 6 activities for recognising stress patterns in phrases, 1 tongue twisters and 2 phonetic bingo. None of the teachers provided other activities.

Figure 4.12



Every lesson these activities use only 6% of teachers, once a week 45% of them. 39% of the teachers answered they do not use them very often and 9 % chose other option, which was in case of two teachers using these activities according to the lessons in the textbook (every lesson in the textbook) and one teacher did not reply at all.

Commentary on figures 4.11 and 4.12:

In some cases I expected a concord in a high number of answers as most of the teachers at the beginning of the questionnaire responded that they use Project as a textbook. Regardless of different editions the exercises should be more or less the same. This concord appeared only in case of contrasting two sounds which are very similar activities and the number of responses is not as high as was expected. According to the highest number of answers the second position occupy drilling and repetition activities and third reading aloud. This is not a surprise as these commonly appear in textbooks. Drilling

and repetition are still popular among teachers and when students do not go through a preliminary phonetic course their only chance how to learn how to pronounce appropriately is a way of drilling and repetition over and over again. These activities can be effective but they are often boring and stressful for the learners. Reading aloud is also popular, but it can cause some troubles to learners. Often they are ashamed and it can be hard for them to read aloud in front of the whole class. Nevertheless, reading aloud texts fluently and phonetically correctly is one of the objectives at the upper primary level set in Framework Education Programme for Basic Education. On the other hand, activities such as phonetic bingo and tongue twisters got the lowest number of responses. At the same time, these activities are not just effective but also engaging for students. I think that they should appear more in current textbooks. Nevertheless, only a half of the teachers actually use these activities in textbooks. It can signify that students do not practise their pronunciation skills enough and resulting from that cases of misunderstanding are very often as the learners do not have a sufficient pronunciation base.

In this chapter, there are presented and analysed results emerging from the research I carried out. The chapter is divided into two parts – according to the research questions. To answer the first research question: 'Which way pronunciation and its individual aspects are being taught at upper primary level?' – results from questions number 6, 9,10,11 and 12 in teacher questionnaire were used. To answer the second research question: 'How do textbooks deal with the phenomenon of pronunciation?' – results from questions number 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 in teacher questionnaire were used. These results are presented in a form of charts and tables and they are followed by my personal commentaries. Research implications, limitations that influenced the research and suggestions for further research follow in the next chapter.

5 IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter I will deal with research implications arising from the findings of the research in greater detail. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first of them shows implications for teaching, emerging from the survey. The second one presents limitations, which influenced the process of the research and the research itself. The last subchapter provides suggestions for further research, including its possible advancement and expansion.

5.1 Pedagogical implications

From the first part of the research it is obvious that teachers do not pay much attention to teaching pronunciation. They find it quite important but do not spend much time on it. They still stick to teaching mainly grammar and vocabulary. All the systems should have the same weight and should be distributed equally. I think that at the very early stages of language learning students should go through a basic phonetic course, including presentation of a phonetic transcription. Teachers often use it later when teaching vocabulary but often do not realize that students actually do not know what these symbols mean and then writing words or phrases in a phonetic transcription forfeits sense as students are not able to be knowledgeable in it. Also, at these early stages of language learning whole lesson teaching of pronunciation seems appropriate. As learners mainly begin their learning by listening to the songs or chants, a base of their pronunciation skills should be set, including for example recognizing and producing sounds. At the later stages, for example in 8th and 9th classes, integrated teaching or discrete slots are effective and also engaging for students. Teachers also should not avoid opportunistic teaching. When any pronunciation problem comes up, the teacher should deal with it. Firstly, learners are interested in such sudden problems and their solutions and secondly, they will better remember it.

Then, when teachers know that learners have mainly problems with some particular aspects of pronunciation, they should more focus on them and not strictly stick to the exercises in the textbook. It is really strange, that the teachers find very difficult for the learners stressed and unstressed words in the sentence but spend almost no time on them when teaching. Logically, then it will remain problematic for the learners if they do not practise it. Teachers can figure out their own exercises and from time to time integrate them into a lesson sequence in a form of discrete slots.

Concerning the second part of the research, the textbooks used by teachers at upper primary level provide sufficient amount of audio materials, but more than 25% of respondents do not use them very often. I think that it is an advantage to have such a support and based on audio materials teachers can show and explain many aspects of pronunciation. Teachers can also use only their way of pronunciation as a pattern, but learners should be getting used to different varieties of pronunciation, including native speakers who are mostly those who record the recordings for the textbooks. It will help the learners to be flexible in communication with speakers of different varieties of English.

More than two third of the textbooks mentioned by the teachers include a phonetic transcription of words and of phrases. As was mentioned above, I find it important for the learners to know it. If the textbook does not include it, the teacher should present it herself/himself to the learners as they will sooner or later come into contact with it.

Regarding activities focused on pronunciation in the textbooks, contrasting two sounds which are very similar are the most frequent ones. I consider these activities very useful and important as one incorrectly perceived or produced sound can absolutely change the meaning of the statement. Therefore, I really recommend practicing of it to the teachers. Drilling and repetition is also an appropriate tool but more for younger learners as they have a good mechanical memory. Learners at upper primary level have already developed a logical memory and logical thinking, so activities for recognising stress patterns in phrases or forming dialogues would be more appropriate. Activities such as phonetic bingo and tongue twisters or jazz chants are engaging for learners at a whole primary level. Despite the fact, that according to my research contemporary textbooks not really include them I think teachers should use their own from time to time to boost the lesson and learners' pronunciation. On the other hand, as was already mentioned in the previous chapter, reading aloud is one of the predominant activities. I think that this tendency should be decreasing and instead of that more natural and effective tools should be used, for example forming real-life dialogues.

5.2 Limitations of the research

In this subchapter, it is important to mention several factors which might have influenced reliability and accuracy of the research results. The first limitation is a quite low number of respondents. Naturally, the more respondents the more accurate results will emerge. Secondly, the teachers could have read and understood the questions improperly

and therefore the results might be distorted. Thirdly, the teachers possibly did not want to spend much time on filling in the questionnaire and therefore in case of questions where I mentioned several options they ticked only one or none. Similarly, in cases where they could have provided their own option/s they skip this possibility. Then, questionnaires are generally subjective, therefore, the teachers might describe things how they appear to them and not how they really are. Better results would also be provided by using more research methods than just the teacher questionnaire, for example my own observation. More on that will be discussed in the following subchapter.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

The aim of the research was to find out which way pronunciation and its individual aspects are being taught at upper primary level and how do textbooks used at this level deal with the phenomenon of pronunciation. To find answers to these questions the teacher questionnaire was used.

To determine how to approach to teaching pronunciation at upper primary level (teaching a phonetic transcription or not; whether pronunciation is of higher importance than other language systems; preferring whole class teaching, integrated teaching etc.) the survey could be extended to lower primary level as well as high/secondary schools in terms of teacher questionnaire and observation. Then the results should be compared to find out how, if anyway the ways of teaching pronunciation at upper primary level differ from teaching at other levels. The same goes for teaching individual aspects and comparing how the textbooks at different levels deal with pronunciation.

The research could be extended by a long term observation. This observation could be carried out in all the classes at upper primary level to summarise how teaching pronunciation proceed at upper primary level or in one particular class at different schools to compare results of the same class level.

Other method that could be used to supplement information obtained by the questionnaire is the analysis of documentary evidence. After finding out which textbooks teachers use at upper primary level the results emerging from questionnaire can be compared with those obtained by analysing these textbooks. Furthermore, it would be interesting to find out which other textbooks intended for upper primary level apart from those mentioned by teachers in the questionnaire are available in the Czech Republic and find out whether there are any differences in approaches to teaching pronunciation.

Finally, personal interview with the teachers could take place as sometimes when fulfilling a questionnaire, they do not read the questions carefully and so inaccuracy can arise. Moreover, when interviewing a person, interviewer can get information that he/she would never get in a questionnaire. During a conversation, new questions can arise and also the interviewee can come up with new ideas about the issue and so enrich and extend the research. The disadvantage of this method is that it would take a lot of time to interview such a high number of teachers.

In this chapter, implications emerging from my research were summarised. It covers implications for upper primary English language teachers, limitations which could have possibly influenced and distorted the research results and finally, several suggestions how to extend and improve my research. Hopefully, the research results and following implications will be useful for upper primary English language teachers and will help them at their work. In the last chapter, there is included conclusion of the thesis, reflecting the results of my research.

6 CONCLUSION

The thesis consists of two main parts. First of them is a theoretical background which provides a reader with basic information essential for the topic of the work and for the following research, supported by opinions of linguists. This part deals with process of teaching and learning, followed by language and pronunciation teaching at upper primary level according to European and Czech education programmes, then the chapter devoted to teaching pronunciation itself comes up. This section is concluded by overview of individual aspects of pronunciation, providing basic information about them.

The second part, a practical part covers method which was used to carry out the research, its description in general and a detailed description of its application in my research. Then the research results with commentaries follow. The goal of the thesis was to answer following research questions:

1. Which way pronunciation and its individual aspects are being taught at upper primary level?

To answer this question the teacher questionnaire was used. Resulting from the research, the teachers still do not lay great emphasis on teaching pronunciation and its individual aspects. Pronunciation is being in the shadow of grammar and vocabulary. It reflects also inclusion of pronunciation in a lesson sequence where teachers mostly prefer integrated teaching and inserting only short separate bits of pronunciation into lesson. Also concerning individual aspects of pronunciation, the teachers teach most of them rarely or never, the rest of them except for recognizing and practicing the sounds and intonation they teach only sometimes with few cases of often answers. Only in a low number of cases the teachers teach what they actually find difficult for their learners. Also, more than a half of respondents answered that they find teaching a phonetic transcription necessary to their students, but only a small part of them answered that they teach it often or at least sometimes. Apparently, the teachers are not of one mind about the way how to teach pronunciation and the way they do it seems disorganized.

2. How do textbooks deal with the phenomenon of pronunciation?

Concerning textbooks, the teachers use a variety of them. The choice of the textbook depends on the school they teach in. The most preferred textbook is Project. Nevertheless, it seems that the way the textbooks deal with pronunciation is quite similar.

In all of them are recordings focused on pronunciation, in most of them is included a phonetic transcription, and most of them include the same types of exercises. Basically, they provide sufficient material for teaching and practicing pronunciation and its individual aspects, but the type of exercises is quite limited. Resulting from the research, they usually include four main types of exercises. This fact is worrying as monotony can lead to boredom, mechanical fulfilling of exercises and loss of motivation.

The thesis is concluded by pedagogical implications emerging from the research, overview of research limitations and my suggestions for further research.

The appendix contains a full English version of the teacher questionnaire.

7 REFERENCES

- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited
- Kenworthy, J. (1990). *Teaching English Pronunciation*. Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited
- Lindsay, C. & Knight, P. (2006). *Learning and Teaching English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Plavka, R. (2003). *Aspects of English Pronunciation*. Havlíčkův Brod: Fragment
- Roach, P. (2000). *English Phonetics and Phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning Teaching: The Essential Guide to English Language Teaching*. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited
- Tench, P. (1981). *Pronunciation Skills*. London: Macmillan Publishers Limited
- Ur, P. (1996). *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Wallace, M., J. (1998). *Action Research for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Internet resources:

Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (2010). *Framework Education Programme for Basic Education* . Retrieved from [http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/framework-education-programme-for-basic-education?](http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/framework-education-programme-for-basic-education?highlightWords=Framework+Education+Programme+for+Basic+Education)

[highlightWords=Framework+Education+Programme+for+Basic+Education>](http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/framework-education-programme-for-basic-education?highlightWords=Framework+Education+Programme+for+Basic+Education)

8 APPENDIX

Teacher Questionnaire (English version)

This questionnaire is designed for English teachers at the upper primary level in the Czech Republic. The collected data will be used as a source material for a research, which is a part of my diploma thesis 'Teaching English pronunciation at the upper primary level'. The questionnaire is anonymous. Answer, please, following questions:

Thank you, Ilona Hanzlíková

1. Which classes do you teach in? A)6 B)7 C)8 D)9

2. What textbooks do you use for teaching in the upper primary classes?

3. Are there recordings to the textbook focused on pronunciation?
A) yes
B) no

4. If yes, how often do you use the recordings?
A) often B) rather yes C) rather not D never

5. Is there a phonetic transcription of the vocabulary and of phrases in the textbook?
A) yes
B) no

6. Do you find a phonetic transcription necessary to teach it your students?
A) yes
B)no
C) I do not know.

7. What kind of activities focused on pronunciation is in the textbook?
(it is possible to tick more options and/or add your own option)
A) tongue twisters

- B) phonetic bingo
- C) contrasting two sounds which are very similar
- D) activities for recognizing stress patterns in phrases
- E) drilling and repetition
- F) reading aloud
- F) other

8. How often do you use these activities in your lessons?

(it is possible to tick only one option or add your own option)

- A) every lesson
- B) once a week
- C) not very often
- D) never
- E) other

9. How much time of the lesson do you spend on individual language systems?

Grammar	none	a little	some	a lot of	whole lesson
Vocabulary	none	a little	some	a lot of	whole lesson
Pronunciation	none	a little	some	a lot of	whole lesson
Function	none	a little	some	a lot of	whole lesson
Discourse	none	a little	some	a lot of	whole lesson

10. How often do you teach individual pronunciation aspects?

Recognizing and practicing the sounds	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Teaching phonetic symbols for the sounds	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Assimilation	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Word stress	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Stressed and unstressed words in the sentence	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Rhythm of an English sentence	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Sentence stress	often	sometimes	rarely	never

Intonation	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Connected speech	often	sometimes	rarely	never

11. Which way do you include pronunciation teaching into a lesson sequence?

- A) whole lesson teaching
- B) discrete slots – inserting short separate bits of pronunciation into lesson
- C) integrated teaching
- D) opportunistic teaching

12. Which of the pronunciation aspects do you find most difficult for the learners?

(it is possible to tick more than one option and/or add your own option)

- A) recognizing and producing sounds
- B) words stress
- C) stressed and unstressed words in the sentence
- D) weak forms
- E) rhythm of an English sentence
- F) sentence stress
- G) intonation
- H) connected speech
- I) other

9 SHRNU TÍ

Práce se zabývá problematikou výuky anglické výslovnosti na 2. stupni základní školy. Cílem práce bylo odpovědět na dvě výzkumné otázky:

1. Jakým způsobem se na 2. stupni základní školy vyučuje anglická výslovnost a její jednotlivé aspekty?

2. Jakým způsobem se učebnice anglického jazyka zabývají problematikou výslovnosti?

Práce se skládá ze dvou částí – teoretické a praktické. Teoretická část obsahuje čtyři podkapitoly, které se zabývají výukou anglické výslovnosti a výslovností jako jevem. Tato část zahrnuje charakteristiku procesu učení a vyučování, charakteristiku vyučování cizího jazyka a výslovnosti na 2. stupni základní školy, a konkrétní přístupy k vyučování anglické výslovnosti. Teoretická část je zakončena popisem jednotlivých výslovnostních aspektů. Praktická část sestává z popisu metody, která byla použita při vedení výzkumu, z výsledků vyplývajících z výzkumu, které jsou předloženy ve formě grafů a jsou opatřeny mým komentářem, a možnými důsledky vyplývajících z výzkumu, včetně přehledu omezení při vedení výzkumu a návrhu na jeho rozšíření.

Z výsledků výzkumu je patrné, že učitelé přistupují k výuce anglické výslovnosti spíše jako k okrajové záležitosti. Učebnice na druhou stranu poskytují kvalitní podporu pro výuku výslovnosti, ale u většiny z nich by bylo potřeba rozšířit škálu typových cvičení.