

# English Pronunciation Anxiety among Czech University Students of English

Sára Guryčová

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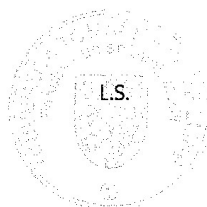
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doc. Ing. Anežka Lengalová, Ph.D.  
děkanka



  
PhDr. Katarína Nemčoková, Ph.D.  
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## ABSTRAKT

Bakalářská práce se zabývá problematikou úzkostí z Anglické výslovnosti, jelikož je to jedna z nejrozšířenějších obav, se kterou se studenti setkávají v procesu osvojování si cizího jazyka. Práce je rozdělena do dvou částí. Teoretická část vysvětluje definici a klasifikuje úzkosti, popisuje přístupy k identifikaci úzkostí způsobené cizím jazykem, dva modely těchto úzkostí a jejich tři složky, dále prostředky k měření jejich rozsahu a aspekty, související s výslovnostními úzkostmi. Praktická část obsahuje výzkum, který byl zrealizován za účelem zodpovězení tří výzkumných otázek a potvrzení, či vyvrácení hypotéz.

Klíčová slova: úzkosti způsobené cizím jazykem, úzkosti z anglické výslovnosti, výslovnostní úroveň, obavy z komunikace v anglickém jazyce

## ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis deals with the problematics of English pronunciation anxiety, as it is one of the most spread apprehensions encountered by learners when acquiring foreign language. The work is divided into two parts. The theoretical one describes definition and classification of anxiety, approaches to identify foreign language anxiety, two models of foreign language anxiety and its three components, as well as the instruments used to assess its range, and the aspects connected to pronunciation anxiety. The practical part contains research conducted in order to answer three research questions and to reject or validate the hypotheses.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, English pronunciation anxiety, pronunciation level, English, communication apprehension

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## INTRODUCTION

“How is it that some people can learn a second language or foreign language so easily and so well while others, given what seem to be the same opportunities to learn, find it almost impossible?” (Gardner and Lambert 1972, 131). That is the question. Even though many people are enthusiastic about acquiring a new language, they might perceive it as a tough process accompanied by various unpleasant experiences. One of the most typical ones is language anxiety. Anxiety experienced by learners when acquiring and using a foreign language might have many sources. For example, it might result from fear of being negatively evaluated by the teacher in the language class or not being understood and not being able to understand other communication participants. The base for such apprehensions might be (except for others) the actual pronunciation level which is the foreign language aspect that is directly related to the topic of the thesis – English Pronunciation Anxiety among Czech University Students of English.

The thesis consists of two parts. The objective of the theoretical part is to provide an overview concerning the problematics of foreign language anxiety (FLA). Firstly the definition and classification of anxiety are provided. Secondly, approaches to identify FLA, two models of FLA and its three components are specified. Thirdly, instruments used to assess the range of FLA are described. Lastly, the aspects which are directly connected to speaking and pronunciation anxiety are stated. Two instruments were used to collect the research data for the practical part of the thesis, namely The English Pronunciation Anxiety Questionnaire and The Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety Scale. Furthermore, the researcher conducted the subjective auditory evaluation of the student’s English pronunciation quality. The objective of the practical part is to answer the posed research questions (RQs) and to either validate or reject the hypotheses (H):

RQ1: What are the major stressors reported by the students learning English at TBU in Zlín?

RQ2: What stressors do not significantly affect the students learning English at TBU in Zlín?

RQ3: What is the pronunciation level of the majority of the students learning English at TBU in Zlín?

H1: One of the major stressors reported by the students is communication with English native speakers.

H2: One of the stressors which does not significantly affect the students is fear of being perceived as incompetent or silly because of improper English pronunciation.

H3: The pronunciation level of the majority of the students is moderate.

## **I. THEORY**

## 1 THE DEFINITION OF ANXIETY

As Horwitz et al. (1986, 128) claim, the foreign language anxiety (FLA) is “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process.” According to Spielberger (1972, 482) anxiety is defined as disagreeable emotional state of a person with typical features of nervousness, stress, and pressure. Furthermore, Scovel (1991, 18) notes that anxiety can be described by psychologists as a psychological construct usually considered to be a state of worry, an indistinct fear which is indirectly associated with an object.

### 1.1 Classification of Anxiety

Many types of anxieties exist. State anxiety is bounded to a particular moment and disappears when the situation vanishes, such as taking an oral examination. Therefore, people who tend to suffer from anxiety in general show significant increase of state anxiety while being in stressful conditions (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991a, 90).

Trait anxiety refers to a state of an individual who tends to become anxious generally, in wide range of situations. (Raglin 2004, 140). According to Horwitz et al. (1986, 125), when the anxiety is caused by language learning situation, it belongs to the specific anxiety reactions category. It is also termed as second/foreign language anxiety. This term is used by psychologists to differentiate those who suffer from trait anxiety and those who get anxious only in specific situations.

Based on this FLA can be understood both as a temporary state caused by numerous indicators and a stable characteristic trait. Horwitz et al. (1986, 125) introduced in their studies a construct of FLA as a situation-specific anxiety which appears under specific type of condition or event. (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991b, 514).

### 1.2 Identifying Language Anxiety

Two general approaches to identify language anxiety exist (Horwitz and Young 1991, 1):

- 1) Unique approach – FLA appears as a response to something which is unique to language learning experiences.
- 2) Transfer approach – FLA is understood as a transfer of different types of general anxieties, such as examination anxiety.

Both of these approaches represent different ways to identify FLA. On the other hand, this do not necessarily mean that they are strict opposites. In fact, the approaches are

combined to reach the mutual goal which is to understand the phenomenon of FLA more thoroughly.

### 1.3 Two models of FLA

Based on the Tobias's (1986, 40) research two models of FLA have been recognized:

- 1) An interference retrieval model of anxiety
- 2) A skills deficit model of anxiety

The interference retrieval model relates to the student's inability to recall previously gained knowledge while being examined. When this model was introduced for the first time in 1977 by Tobias, there were no empirical studies which would support this type of interference, although many students have claimed "to have studied diligently yet 'freeze up' on tests" (Tobias 1979, 576). Moreover, anxious students fear to make mistakes in foreign language (FL) because they consider every correction by a teacher as a failure (Horwitz et al., 1986, 130).

On the other hand, the skills deficit model suggests that the lack of quality performance during examinations is rooted in study skills. According to this model high test-anxious students might possess weaker study skills than the ones who do not get anxious that much which therefore leads to gaining less initial knowledge of such students (Tobias 1986, 40).

From the psychological point of view, Flavell suggests that observed increase of student's anxiety level can be attributed to their metacognitive awareness of the inadequate learning process (1979, 909). Moreover, high test-anxious individuals might have weaker test taking skills than others which naturally leads to lower quality test performance. Again, test anxiety might be rooted in student's awareness of their ineffective test taking behaviour. (Tobias 1986, 41). However, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 268) explain that test anxiety is a general problem and not the one which is directly aroused by FL classroom.

Both of these models have been supported by the research in FL learning. A total number of 97 participants of MacIntyre and Gardner's study were taken from first year credit courses in French as a second language at a large, monolingual (English) Canadian university (1994, 289). Students took several exams during relatively short period of time and their final grades were used to measure their previously gained knowledge on the topic of English and French language. MacIntyre and Gardner found out that "there were

significant negative correlations between Grades and scores on each of the Input, Processing and Output anxiety scales.” Researches did not expect such great correlations but they attributed them to the short time (1-4 weeks) between the individual tests and the final exams. Students “might also reflect a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which anxious students first perform poorly early in the course, then have their anxiety reinforced by continued poor performance, leading them to higher levels of anxiety over the final exam and finally to poor performance on that exam.” (1994, 294).

## **1.4 Components of FLA**

Horwitz et al. (1986, 127) define three components of FLA which are termed as performance anxieties: Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation. They are described in the three following chapters, respectively.

### **1.4.1 Communication Apprehension**

Communication apprehension is a type of fear associated with communicating with other people. Three basic types of manifestations of communication apprehension exist:

- Oral communication anxiety
- Stage fright
- Receiver anxiety

Oral communication anxiety refers to difficulties in speaking in pairs or groups whereas stage fright defines fear of speaking in public. Receiver anxiety occurs in situations in which students have problems with listening to recorded texts and learning a spoken word. Based on this, people who tend to have difficulties with speaking in public are more likely to experience speaking anxiety in language class where they have little control of the conversation development and their performance is being observed by teachers. Al-Saraj (2001, 4) contends that teachers are at least partly responsible for student’s anxiety. Some of the students in her study pointed out that teacher’s characteristics and student-teacher relationship are major causes of anxiety. Moreover, students must communicate in language in which they are less sure about themselves than they are in native language. As a result, students experience communication apprehension derived from them realizing that someone will almost certainly not understand them. This might be the reason why otherwise verbose people are being quiet in FL classes. On the other hand, the opposite seems to be true as well. Speaking in a FL might help shy individuals to gain some kind of new identity and their worries might vanish. This also

resembles the case of stutterers who are sometimes able to speak fluently while singing (Horwitz et al. 1986, 127). In addition, Mejias et al. point out that the scope of communication apprehension is crucial in language learning when “a student is apprehensive about communicating in a particular language ... he or she will have a negative affective feelings toward oral communication and will likely avoid it” (1991, 88).

Phillips (1992, 18) proved that there is a relationship between speaking anxiety and language anxiety. She asserts that the most anxious students performed the poorest even though the instructor did her best to ease them before the examinations by chatting with them. Besides, the anxious ones stated that they had negative attitude towards oral testing. “They reported going “blank,” feeling frustrated at not being able to say what they “knew,” being distracted, and feeling “panicky.” They used words such as “nervous,” “intimidated,” “tense,” “confused,” “worried,” and “dumbfounded” to describe their affective reactions to the oral exam.” Phillips (1992, 19). Based on this, she suggests that language anxiety can have a negative impact on learner’s attitude towards FL learning.

#### **1.4.2 Test Anxiety**

Since grades are inherent part of FL class, test anxiety occurs frequently. It is connected to fears of failure and negative performance evaluation, aversion to test taking and poor study habits (Hembree and College 1988, 73). Students who experience test anxiety during FL class may encounter problems considering the fact that frequent pop quizzes and proper examinations take place. Therefore, even the most talented students may often perform poorly. Moreover, oral testing tends to arouse not only oral communication anxiety but test anxiety at the same time. Anxiety can be attributed to high demands which students put on themselves and are not able to manage them. (Horwitz et al.1986, 128).

Aida (1994, 162) examined relationships between FLA of 96 native English speakers and their performance in Japanese learning. As a base for her research she used Horwitz et al.’s construct of FLA and their Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale which she partially provided support for. Nevertheless, test anxiety, the second component of FLA, was not supported. Based on these findings, she concluded that test anxiety might not be substantial in FLA and items associated with test anxiety could be removed from the FLCAS.

#### **1.4.3 Fear of Negative Evaluation**

The third theoretical concept is fear of negative evaluation. This is defined as “apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the



expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Watson and Friend 1969, 450). According to this concept, learners feel the need to make a good social impression and therefore, they are anxious about negative evaluation. Fear of negative evaluation is not limited only to test taking, although many similarities exist. The scope of it is larger, for example interviewing for a job or speaking in public. Learners may be also sensitive to higher evaluations of their classmates since some of them might be more talented (Horwitz et al. 1986, 128). Moreover, FL students might experience, among many things, “the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language” (MacIntyre 1999, 27) and that suggests FLA. This might have further physical consequences such as sweating, heart pounding or feeling cold. In addition, students may experience lack of creativity and concentration, or give limited performance (Woodrow 2006, 310). According to Aida’s research (mentioned in chapter 1.4.2. Test Anxiety), “speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation may not be totally independent concepts, but rather are probably different labels describing one phenomenon in a language learning situation” (1994, 159). In other words, she suggests that there is a relationship between speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in terms of characterizing a language learning situation phenomena.

Even though these three components (communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation) build solid grounds for FLA description, Horwitz et al. (1986, 128) do not consider the mix of them a definition of FLA. They conceive it, as mentioned in the chapter 1 **Chyba! Nenalezen zdroj odkazů.**, as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process”.

## 2 MEASURING ANXIETY

Since anxiety can negatively affect the FL learning process, it is useful to be able to assess its range. The most commonly used tool for measuring FLA is called the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which has been developed by Horwitz et al. (1986, 129-130). Woodrow (2006, 313) states that existing tools used to assess the range of language learning anxiety do not take into consideration the second language environment of the learner. Therefore, she constructed the Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (SLSAS).

### 2.1 The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

As Horwitz (1986, 559) explains, the FLCAS is “a self-report measure which assesses the degree of anxiety, as evidenced by negative performance expectancies and social comparisons, psycho-physiological symptoms, and avoidance behaviours.” The scale reflects three components: fear of communicating, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in the FL classroom. The choice of components was based on students self-reports about their concerns regarding FL classroom, on clinical experience and on a review of related instruments. The FLCAS consists of 33 items which deal with the topic of FLA. Students are supposed to answer whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the items. Based on the answers, these items are scored from one to five. The higher the total score, the more anxious students are. The possible range of score is 33-165 (Horwitz et al. 1986, 129-130).

In the first study using this scale, Horwitz (1986, 561) detected a significant negative correlation between FLA and grades that were expected by students in their first semester when studying FL. This was also the case of their actual final grades. Based on these findings, the researchers concluded that highly anxious students both expected and received lower grades in comparison to their less anxious classmates. The items of the FLCAS are showed in the table below (Horwitz et al. 1986, 129-130).

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.         |
| 2 | I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.                                     |
| 3 | I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in language class.                   |
| 4 | It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language |
| 5 | It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.                        |

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 6  | During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course. |
| 7  | I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.                          |
| 8  | I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.   |
| 9  | I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.                        |
| 10 | I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.                                |
| 11 | I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.                      |
| 12 | In language class I can get nervous I forget things I know.   |
| 13 | It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.  |
| 14 | I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with the native speakers.                      |
| 15 | I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.                                 |
| 16 | Even if I am prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.                                  |
| 17 | I often feel like not going to my language class.   |
| 18 | I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.  |
| 19 | I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.                      |
| 20 | I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.                      |
| 21 | The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.                                      |
| 22 | I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.                                      |
| 23 | I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.                  |
| 24 | I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.          |
| 25 | Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.                                  |
| 26 | I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.                        |
| 27 | I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.                                 |
| 28 | When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.                                 |
| 29 | I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.                         |
| 30 | I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.            |
| 31 | I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.                 |
| 32 | I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.                   |
| 33 | I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.         |

Table 1: The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

## 2.2 Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale

The scale is constructed in the form of a questionnaire. It consists of 12 items on 5-point Likert type scale. These items reflect the situation in which the learner might appear during communication according to:

- Communicative setting
- Interlocutor variables
- Nature of the communication

The setting of the communication may be in-class or out-of-class. The interlocutor variables describe the communication participants, such as the number of them, their status and whether they are native or non-native speakers of English. The nature of the communication describes the initiative and response of the interlocutors regarding oral communication. Similarly to the FLCAS, the 12 items in the SLSAS are scored according to the extent of anxiety (Woodrow 2006, 313–314).

### 3 LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPEAKING

According to Mak's study (Mak 2011, 210) there are several factors which are connected with second language learning speaking-in-class anxiety. These are:

- Anxiety aroused by speaking FL and fear of negative evaluation
- Apprehension about communication with native speakers
- Negative tendencies towards the language class
- Negative self-evaluation
- Fear of failing the language class and consequences of personal failure
- Speaking in front of the class without previous preparation of the text
- Being corrected when speaking FL
- Inadequate provision of time dedicated to thinking before speaking FL
- Being forbidden from speaking a native language while attending a FL class

#### 3.1 Speaking and Social Anxiety

Speaking anxiety might also be connected with social anxiety. Schlenker and Leary assert that social anxiety "arises whenever people are motivated to make a desired impression on others, but are not certain that they will do so" (1982, 645). This claim suggests that there is a positive correlation between the desire to be approved by others and level of apprehension of not being able to do so as one apprehension increases with the increase of the other. On the other hand, it can be noted that this theory of social anxiety resembles the terror management theory. This theory was introduced by Greenberg et al. (1992, 913) and it explains that "people are motivated to pursue positive self-evaluations because self-esteem provides a buffer against the omnipresent potential for anxiety". In contradiction, Horwitz et al. (1986, 128) state that FL acquisition might arouse anxiety since the learners must communicate in language which they have not mastered yet. Thus, imperfect performance may have a negative impact on self-esteem of such learners.

#### 3.2 Pronunciation Anxiety

Baran-Łucarz defines pronunciation anxiety (PA) as "a feeling of apprehension experienced by FL learners either in the FL classroom or natural setting, deriving from negative FL pronunciation self-perceptions, fear of negative evaluation, and beliefs about the importance of pronunciation, difficulty of learning and the sound of the FL pronunciation" (2014, 38). This definition perceives PA as a multidimensional construct

which has 2 sub elements. These are fear of embarrassing oneself and pronunciation self-perception.

The pronunciation self-perception refers to 3 factors:

- Pronunciation self-image
- Pronunciation self-efficacy
- Pronunciation self-assessment

Pronunciation self-image describes how the student perceives his/her appearance while speaking a FL (how he/she looks and sounds) and whether he/she accepts this image. Pronunciation self-efficacy describes student's belief about his/her abilities needed to master a FL pronunciation. Pronunciation self-assessment is the act of grading someone else's pronunciation, typically the one of another non-native speaker (e.g. peers) (Baran-Łucarz 2014, 39).

### **3.2.1 FLA and FL Pronunciation**

FL pronunciation is closely connected to three components of FLA (communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation). According to Shams, FL pronunciation "can contribute to communication apprehension because the subject may fear that poor pronunciation obscures the meaning of his message. It plays a role in test anxiety when the subject feels that the teacher is assessing and "grading" the quality of pronunciation. It can also contribute to fear of negative evaluation when the speaker fears what others may think of the way she sounds" (2006, 55).

Some anxious students report issues directly linked to pronunciation. For instance, they mention difficulties "discriminating the sounds ... of target language message" (Horwitz et al. 1986, 126) or they reject statements like "I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class." (Horwitz et al. 1986, 129). Moreover, some of them felt embarrassed because they performed pronunciation poorly (Price 1991, 105). On the contrary, non-native English speakers might find well-performed pronunciation ridiculous. A Greek student reported that "My teacher tells me that ... I have a good accent which sounds American. However, I feel embarrassed whenever I speak because the other students make fun of me ... because they think it (pronunciation) sounds too American" (Gkonou 2013, 25). Based on this, even though some students have correct pronunciation they may feel anxious about it because their peers might make fun of them.

### 3.2.2 FL Pronunciation and Self-Perception

There might be a significant relationship between FLA and self-judgement about pronunciation ability. Price views these negative self-judgements as a pronunciation anxiety trigger (1991, 105) as well as Kitano who administered a survey to 211 Japanese students from two U.S. universities and found out that their “self-perceived speaking ability compared to that of peers and native speakers were sources of anxiety” (2001, 560). Thus, Kitano suggests that the level of student’s pronunciation anxiety increased as their self-perception decreased.

Baran-Łucarz examined a group of 43 students on an average Polish secondary school. The aim of her research was to define a relationship between the actual and perceived levels of FL pronunciation. She used a pronunciation test, a Pronunciation Self-Assessment Measure and the FLCAS (2011, 498). Based on her findings, Baran-Łucarz (2011, 509) concluded that LA might be related to the self-perceived level of pronunciation for two reasons:

- Student perceiving his pronunciation level as low might feel the apprehension of not being able to understand spoken word and of being understood incorrectly
- Student’s beliefs about his strong accent might be the subject of laughter

### 3.2.3 FL Pronunciation and Physiology

There is a potential connection between FLA and FL pronunciation in term of physiology. The motor activity of speech mechanisms that learners actively use while speaking is taken into consideration. As Burgess & Spencer explain “pronunciation in language learning ... is the practice and meaningful use of TL [target language] phonological features in speaking” (2000, 191). Speech sounds are produced by 3 speech organs: respiratory, phonatory and articulatory (Rogerson-Revell 2011, 28). Szyszka explains that “neuromuscular problems stemming from feeling of language anxiety may physically impede a FL learner’s appropriate speech articulation. ... Poor pronunciation caused by tense articulatory organs may induce growing levels of language anxiety” (2017, 83). According to this, feelings of nervousness and apprehension might cause neuromuscular problems. That can lead to mispronunciation of words which may in the end result in increased FLA. It is a vicious circle.





## II. ANALYSIS

## 4 THE STUDY

This study aims to shed light on English pronunciation anxiety as experienced by English non-native learners studying at Tomas Bata University in Zlín. Data were collected using student's pronunciation evaluation and two questionnaires developed for this purpose, namely The English Pronunciation Questionnaire and The Foreign Language Anxiety Scale. The relationship between English pronunciation anxiety and student's experience with English learning was examined and the major causes of anxiety are considered. The study posed the following research questions (RQs) and based on the number of the RQs, three hypotheses (H) were formulated.

RQ1: What are the major stressors reported by the students learning English at TBU<sup>1</sup> in Zlín?

RQ2: What stressors do not significantly affect the students learning English at TBU in Zlín?

RQ3: What is the pronunciation level of the majority of the students learning English at TBU in Zlín?

H1: One of the major stressors reported by the students is communication with English native speakers.

H2: One of the stressors which does not significantly affect the students is fear of being perceived as incompetent or silly because of improper English pronunciation.

H3: The pronunciation level of the majority of the students is moderate.

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<sup>1</sup> TBU = Tomas Bata University

## 5 METHODOLOGY

This subsection is aimed at providing information on how the study was conducted. It is divided into 5 chapters and it opens up with detailed description of the students who participated in the study. Then, there is a brief chapter covering methods used in the study. What follows is an introduction of the instruments applied in the research to collect the data, namely the English Pronunciation Anxiety Questionnaire, the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, and student's pronunciation evaluation. Finally, procedures and basic data analysis are described.

### 5.1 Participants

67 non-native English language students served as test participants in this study. They were Czech second-year university students enrolled in the Philology study programme at Thomas Bata University in Zlín. They shared an additional number of variables such as the level of English proficiency (B1-B2) (CEFR 2001, 24), training in English (the similar type of English instruction in the formal setting of Czech schools with a focus on grammar-based instruction).

All participants were adults; the oldest was 35 and the youngest was 19; the average age was 21.5 years (39 students). The vast majority of the students were Czech, the rest were Slovak. There were 53 female (79%) and 14 male (21%) students. The minimum length of exposure to English was 7 years (2 students) with maximum length of 24 years (1 student), the average was 12.8 years (18 students).

While 25 students had never been to an English speaking country, 21 students had paid short 1–3 weeks visit to such countries (mainly vacation), 5 students stayed there for a month and 16 students had spent more than a month (mainly working experience) in an English speaking country. As far as the schools are concerned, the vast majority of the students learned English at a primary school, a high school and a university. 12 students reported to have had a private tuition and 18 students were studying English in language school after graduation. In addition to the school classes, 7 students attended paid language courses. However, the lecturer running the Stylistics course did not report any significant native-like pronunciation performance.

Surprisingly, 30 students hardly ever (or once in a while) communicate in English outside the school environment. On the contrary, 21 students reported to speak English very often (at least three times a week). The rest of the students speak English irregularly (occasionally when having a part time job or on a summer holiday abroad). Interestingly,

only two students claimed they had regular, if rare (a few times a year) contact with native speakers of English that time.<sup>2</sup>

The sample of participants at the beginning of the research (94 students) was higher than the final number (67 students). Even though the majority of the students showed enthusiastic interest in contributing, some of them were not able to complete all of the phases of the experiment (mainly due to the class absence) and thus they were excluded.

## 5.2 Mixed Methods Research

The 1980s was the era of ‘paradigm war’ between the two major research methods of constructivism (i.e. qualitative research) and postpositivism (i.e. quantitative research). Since both of these methods have their own epistemologies and logic, there was a need to find a paradigm to support one’s methodology. Many researches, such as Rallis and Rossman (2003, 500) contend that pragmatism is the best paradigm for justifying the use of mixed methods research.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, 123) define mixed methods research as “the type of research in which a researcher or a team of researchers combines elements of quantitative and qualitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”. This study involves three sources of data:

- Qualitative data from the English Pronunciation Anxiety (EPA) Questionnaire
- Quantitative data from the Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety Scale (FLPAS)
- Student’s pronunciation evaluation

## 5.3 Instruments

### 5.3.1 The English Pronunciation Anxiety Questionnaire

The EPA questionnaire consists of 6 open-ended questions and aims at student’s background knowledge reflecting the language learning process which they have experienced so far. It was constructed and distributed among students in Czech language but for the purpose of the research it was later translated into English. The EPA questionnaire covers these areas:

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<sup>2</sup> In the first year of the study, students attended weekly classes with an American native speaker.

Q1: the length of exposure to English

Q2: schools at which students have studied English so far

Q3: experience with stay in English speaking countries

Q4: frequency of communication with English native speaker

Q5: frequency of communication in English outside the school environment

Q6: preferences concerning watching TV series using CZ/EN subtitles

The answers to the questions (Q1–Q6) were scored from 1 to 5 points. The anxiety score ranged from 6 to 30, with higher scores reflecting lower anxiety. The points were assigned to the answers using the scoring key which is shown in the Table 2 below.

|          | Q1            | Q2                          | Q3                 | Q4                  | Q5                | Q6                 |
|----------|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 point  | 10 yrs.       | ES <sup>3</sup>             | none               | hardly ever         | hardly ever       | CZ<br>dubbing      |
| 2 points | 11–12<br>yrs. | ES, HS                      | a week–<br>2 weeks | occasionally        | occasionally      | CZ<br>subtitles    |
| 3 points | 13–14<br>yrs. | ES, HS, PS<br>(or/and LC)   | 3 weeks            | twice a<br>week     | once in a<br>week | CZ/EN<br>subtitles |
| 4 points | 15–16<br>yrs. | ES, HS, LS<br>(+ S-S)       | a month            | 3 times a<br>week   | twice a week      | EN<br>subtitles    |
| 5 points | + 17 yrs.     | ES, HS, PS,<br>LS (+ other) | + a<br>month       | + 3 times a<br>week | + twice a<br>week | none               |

Table 2: The EPA Questionnaire with Corresponding Numbers of Points

### 5.3.2 The Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety Scale

The design of the second instrument was inspired by the FLCAS introduced by Horwitz et al. (1986, 129-130). Even though FLCAS is not in its entirety related to speaking and pronunciation anxiety, previous study has shown its relevance since there is a strong relationship with second language speaking achievement. Therefore it measures “anxiety primarily related to speaking situations” (Aida 1994, 163). As well as the EPA

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<sup>3</sup> ES = elementary school, HS = high school, PS = private lessons, LC = language courses, LS = language school, S-S = self-study

questionnaire, the FLPAS<sup>4</sup> was constructed and distributed among students in Czech language but for the purpose of the research it was later translated into English. The scale includes 20 declarative sentences to collect student's perception of his/her pronunciation in FL. The items of the FLCAS are shown in the Table 3 below. The content of the items was based on the theoretical considerations of which and how concrete aspects of the student's perceived pronunciation level might determine their degree of FLA. Thus, the scale was subdivided into five sections:

- Oral performance apprehension (statements 1–4)
- Self-concern over pronunciation (statements 5–8)
- Pronunciation self-image (statements 9–12)
- Pronunciation self-efficacy (statements 13–16)
- Attitude towards English pronunciation (statements 17–20)

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | I feel nervous when speaking English.  |
| 2  | I feel shy when speaking English with English native speaker.                                  |
| 3  | I do not mind talking to more advanced English speakers.                                       |
| 4  | I do not like speaking English when strangers are present.                                     |
| 5  | I am satisfied with my English pronunciation.  |
| 6  | I am worried about making pronunciation mistakes.  |
| 7  | I realize that I make a lot of pronunciation mistakes.   |
| 8  | I do not feel embarrassed when I pronounce something wrong.                                    |
| 9  | I am afraid that people will think I am silly or incompetent because of my poor pronunciation. |
| 10 | I consider imitating native-like English pronunciation ridiculous.                             |
| 11 | I am afraid that my classmates will have better pronunciation than I do.                       |
| 12 | Most of my classmates already have better pronunciation than I do.                             |
| 13 | I am worried that others will not understand me because of my improper pronunciation.          |
| 14 | I do not feel ashamed when the teacher keeps correcting my mistakes in the class.              |
| 15 | It seems to me that I cannot get rid of my Czech/Slovak accent in English.                     |
| 16 | It seems to me that I will never master good English pronunciation.                            |

---

<sup>4</sup> The students were given the English-specific pronunciation questionnaire which is referred to as Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety Scale, since the findings seem to be relevant to general FL pronunciation anxiety issues.

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 17 | I think English pronunciation is not that difficult to learn.        |
| 18 | I consider the rules of English pronunciation easy to be understood. |
| 19 | It is very difficult to pronounce like a native speaker.             |
| 20 | I think that good pronunciation is very important.                   |

Table 3: The Items of the Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety Scale

The FLPAS requires the participants to indicate the extent to which they agree/disagree to the statements based on 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The anxiety score ranged from 20 to 100, with higher scores reflecting greater anxiety. Points were related to the varying degrees:

- 5 points – strongly agree
- 4 points – agree
- 3 points – neither agree nor disagree
- 2 points – disagree
- 1 point – strongly disagree

Positive wording of some of the statements, such as “I do not mind talking to more advanced English speakers” required a reversed scoring key to be used. These were statements 3, 5, 8, 14, 17 and 18. The individual levels of anxiety were classified by the research as followed:

- 20–35 points – minimum level
- 36–55 points – mild level
- 56–75 points – moderate level
- 76–100 points – high level

### 5.3.3 Student’s Pronunciation Evaluation

Lastly, the researcher conducted the subjective auditory evaluation of the student’s English pronunciation quality as he/she was giving a 5 minute presentation during his/her Stylistics classes in summer semester. The students were aware of the fact that their pronunciation was being observed in order to collect the research data. The major evaluation criterion was the student’s ability to pronounce words as similarly as an English native speaker would (Received Pronunciation). Other criteria observed was terminology pronunciation, fluidity of the speech and overall impression. Students were assigned points using the following key:

- 5 points – excellent

- 4 points – very good
- 3 points – quite good
- 2 points – not very good
- 1 point – poor

#### **5.4 Procedures**

The study was launched in February 2017 and began with the data collection using the EPA questionnaire and the FLPAS. Both of these questionnaires were filled out by the students during one of their early Stylistics classes within approximately 25 min in the presence of the researcher who provided explanation should students had any doubts about the items in the questionnaires. The students were ensured that the questionnaires were designed for the purpose of academic research and that their response will not be shared with anyone but the researches conducting this study and will be kept confidential. Secondly, the student's pronunciation evaluations took place, which lasted approximately a month. Finally, in March 2017, after the questionnaires and student's pronunciations had been evaluated, the researcher started to put the outcomes of the research into the writing.

#### **5.5 Data Analysis**

The data were collected, and evaluated and the scores of individual parts (the EPA questionnaire, the FLPAS and student's pronunciation evaluation) were analysed using descriptive statistics. The two instruments (the EPA questionnaire and the FLPAS) were submitted to a correlation analysis using non-parametric method of Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficients to discern whether the student's activities concerning English learning and pronunciation anxiety correlate with the pronunciation evaluation subjectively conducted by the researcher. The FLPAS was administrated and collected in the Stylistics class at the beginning of the summer semester by the researcher. The FLPAS score for each student was computed by summing up the scores of each item (1–20). The same pattern was applied to the EPA questionnaire (Q1–Q6).



## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 The English Pronunciation Anxiety Questionnaire

Table 4 shows how many times were points (1–5) assigned to each question (Q1–Q6). The last line of the table displays the total amount of points which were assigned to each question. As described in chapter 5.3.1 The English Pronunciation Anxiety Questionnaire, this instrument provides answers for questions which focus on these areas:

Q1: the length of exposure to English

Q2: schools at which students have studied English so far

Q3: experience with stay in English speaking countries

Q4: frequency of communication with English native speaker

Q5: frequency of communication in English outside the school environment

Q6: preferences concerning watching TV series using CZ/EN subtitles

|                 | Q1  | Q2  | Q3  | Q4  | Q5  | Q6  |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 point         | 8   | 1   | 25  | 15  | 26  | 0   |
| 2 points        | 27  | 5   | 14  | 30  | 15  | 13  |
| 3 points        | 24  | 31  | 7   | 12  | 13  | 16  |
| 4 points        | 4   | 21  | 5   | 4   | 4   | 26  |
| 5 points        | 4   | 9   | 16  | 6   | 9   | 12  |
| Points in total | 170 | 223 | 174 | 157 | 156 | 238 |

Table 4: The EPA Questionnaire with Number of Students and Their Points

The last line of the table shows that the biggest amount of points was assigned to Q6 covering the use of CZ/EN subtitles. 13 students prefer Czech subtitles, 16 students switch between both types, 26 students use only English ones and 12 students do not use subtitles at all which is the best scenario possible for learning FL pronunciation. The total amount of 238 points suggests that watching TV series with CZ/EN subtitles positively influenced student's English pronunciation the most among those mentioned in the EPA questionnaire.

The second most scored question was Q2 concerning education which was expected to be on the top position since it is the education what influences the quality of one's pronunciation since the very beginning. The vast majority of the students learned English at a primary school, a high school and a university. 12 students had a private tuition, 18 students were studying English in a language school, 7 students attended paid language

courses, and 3 students self-studied in addition to regular classes. The total amount of 223 points supported the argument that education is one of the strongest elements which positively influenced student's pronunciation in this study.

Q1 concerning the length of exposure to English received 170 points. Q3 concerning the amount of experience with a stay in English speaking countries received, similarly to Q1, 174 points. The majority of the students (51) have been learning English for 11–14 years. 39 students have no experience with visiting English speaking countries or they have visited them for 2 weeks maximum. 21 students have spent a month or more in an English speaking country. The total amount of points of Q1 and Q3 suggest that these two factors had a moderate influence on student's pronunciation quality.

Lastly, Q4 and Q5 concerning communication outside the school environment and frequency of contact with native speakers received the least points among all the questions. This means that the majority of the students in this study do not really communicate in English in everyday life. Moreover, their contact with native speakers is very limited to the school environment concerning they had weekly classes with an American native speaker in the first year of their study. This is supported by the numbers in the table: 45 students hardly ever (or occasionally) communicate with native speakers and 41 students reported that they seldom (or occasionally) speak English outside the classes. The fact that they lack this kind of regular experience may be the missing aspect of mastering the English pronunciation.

To sum up, the most wide spread extracurricular activity which positively influenced student's English pronunciation learning was watching TV series with CZ/EN subtitles since this is a popular leisure time activity nowadays. The discovery of education to be the second most influencing element was no surprise since it was highly expected to be on the top positions. The length of exposure to English and the amount of experience with a stay in English speaking countries had a moderate influence on student's pronunciation quality as not that many students stayed in such countries long enough to have their pronunciation significantly influenced. Regarding the communication in English outside the school environment and contact with native speakers, the study shows that these elements do not have much positive impact on student's pronunciation as they seldom speak English outside their classes and little do they communicate with English native speakers.

## 6.2 The Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety Scale

Responses to all FLPAS items are reported in Table 5. All numbers refer to the number of students who agreed or disagreed (or strongly agreed and strongly disagreed) with the statements (1–20) concerning FLA. As stated in the chapter 5.3.2 The Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety Scale, it was subdivided into five sections and the result of each section is described below:

- Oral performance apprehension (statements 1–4)
- Self-concern over pronunciation (statements 5–8)
- Pronunciation self-image (statements 9–12)
- Pronunciation self-efficacy (statements 13–16)
- Attitude towards English pronunciation (statements 17–20)

|    | SA <sup>5</sup>  | A  | N  | D  | SD |
|----|--|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | I feel nervous when speaking English.  |    |    |    |    |
|    | 11   | 28 | 8  | 14 | 6  |
| 2  | I feel shy when speaking English with English native speaker.  |    |    |    |    |
|    | 7  | 17 | 12 | 24 | 7  |
| 3  | I do not mind talking to more advanced English speakers.   |    |    |    |    |
|    | 15   | 24 | 11 | 15 | 2  |
| 4  | I do not like speaking English when strangers are present.   |    |    |    |    |
|    | 11   | 27 | 9  | 13 | 7  |
| 5  | I am satisfied with my English pronunciation.  |    |    |    |    |
|    | 7  | 27 | 14 | 17 | 2  |
| 6  | I am worried about making pronunciation mistakes.  |    |    |    |    |
|    | 4  | 20 | 22 | 18 | 3  |
| 7  | I realize that I make a lot of pronunciation mistakes.   |    |    |    |    |
|    | 5  | 17 | 13 | 30 | 2  |
| 8  | I do not feel embarrassed when I pronounce something wrong.  |    |    |    |    |
|    | 6  | 22 | 13 | 30 | 2  |
| 9  | I am afraid that people will think I am silly or incompetent because of my poor English pronunciation. |    |    |    |    |
|    | 1  | 8  | 9  | 30 | 19 |
| 10 | I consider imitating native-like English pronunciation ridiculous.                                     |    |    |    |    |
|    | 3  | 6  | 13 | 31 | 14 |
| 11 | I am afraid that my classmates will have better pronunciation than I do.                               |    |    |    |    |
|    | 2  | 11 | 15 | 28 | 11 |

<sup>5</sup> SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neither agree nor disagree, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree

|    |   |    |    |    |    |
|----|---|----|----|----|----|
| 12 | Most of my classmates already have better pronunciation than I do.                    |    |    |    |    |
|    |   | 3  | 7  | 22 | 27 |
| 13 | I am worried that others will not understand me because of my improper pronunciation. |    |    |    |    |
|    |   | 1  | 6  | 7  | 40 |
| 14 | I do not feel ashamed when the teacher keeps correcting my mistakes in the class.     |    |    |    |    |
|    |   | 4  | 15 | 18 | 27 |
| 15 | It seems to me that I cannot get rid of my Czech/Slovak accent in English.            |    |    |    |    |
|    |   | 3  | 19 | 11 | 27 |
| 16 | It seems to me that I will never master good English pronunciation.                   |    |    |    |    |
|    |   | 1  | 4  | 3  | 39 |
| 17 | I think English pronunciation is not that difficult to learn.                         |    |    |    |    |
|    |   | 5  | 26 | 11 | 23 |
| 18 | I consider the rules of English pronunciation easy to be understood.                  |    |    |    |    |
|    |   | 9  | 35 | 12 | 11 |
| 19 | It is very difficult to pronounce like a native speaker.                              |    |    |    |    |
|    |   | 17 | 28 | 13 | 7  |
| 20 | I think that good pronunciation is very important.                                    |    |    |    |    |
|    |   | 19 | 34 | 5  | 9  |

Table 5: The FLPAS Items with Number of Students Selecting Each Alternative

Students who test high on anxiety endorse the FLPAS items that touch the topic of oral performance apprehension such as “I feel nervous when speaking English” (39); “I feel shy when speaking English with English native speaker” (25); “I do not like speaking English when strangers are present” (38). They also reject statement “I do not mind talking to more advanced English speakers” (17). Based on this, the most anxious students feel deep apprehension about speaking English in the presence of other people. On the other hand, 20 students do not feel nervousness when speaking English and 31 students are comfortable with the presence of an English native speaker. Moreover, 39 students have no problems when communicating with more advanced English speakers. In conclusion, the results concerning oral performance apprehension are 50/50 (anxious – 108 times, not anxious – 110 times).

24 students agree with statement “I am worried about making pronunciation mistakes”. The reason being might be that 19 students are not satisfied with their level of pronunciation. Furthermore, 22 students realize that they make a lot of pronunciation mistakes, and 32 students reject statement “I do not feel embarrassed when I pronounce something wrong”. On the contrary, 34 students are satisfied with their English

pronunciation, and 28 students do not feel embarrassed when they pronounce something wrong. Further, 21 students do not worry about making pronunciation mistakes and 32 students do not think that they make a lot of them. Based on the results of this section, students are rather not self-concerned over their pronunciation, albeit the difference is not striking (anxious – 97 times, not anxious – 115 times).

Anxious students also fear that they are not as competent as their classmates. They report “I am afraid that my classmates will have better pronunciation than I do” (13) but actually, more than a half of the students in this study disagree with this statement which suggests that they do not fear being compared with other students in class. Vast majority of the students disagree with statement “I am afraid that people will think I am silly or incompetent because of my poor English pronunciation”. That confirms that these students do not fear being seen as a poor learner and they do not lack confidence to speak English even though they might make pronunciation mistakes in the process. In addition, 35 students reject statement “Most of my classmates already have better pronunciation than I do”; and 44 students reject statement “I consider imitating native-like English pronunciation ridiculous”. The results of this section show a clear outcome – pronunciation self-image of the students is positive in most of the cases (anxious – 41 times, not anxious – 168 times).

Anxious students are afraid to make mistakes in the foreign language. 30 students reject statement “I do not feel ashamed when the teacher keeps correcting my mistakes in the class” because such students seem to perceive every correction as a failure and they might fear being evaluated negatively in front of their classmates. 22 students feel like they cannot get rid of their Czech/Slovak accent in English. On the other hand, the vast majority of the students reject statements “I am worried that others will not understand me because of my improper pronunciation” and “It seems to me that I will never master good English pronunciation”. This suggest that students are determined to keep learning English pronunciation and that they strongly believe that good level of English pronunciation is an achievable goal. In conclusion, students perceive themselves as efficacious English pronunciation learners (anxious – 64 times, not anxious – 165 times).

Lastly, 31 students endorse statement “I think English pronunciation is not that difficult to learn” and 34 students consider the rules of English pronunciation to be easily understood. This suggests that students perceive pronunciation as the part of language learning that is rather easy to learn and understand. However, the fact that students understand the rules does not necessarily mean that they are able to apply them practically

which is supported by 45 students who believe that it is very difficult to pronounce like a native speaker. Furthermore, vast majority of the students endorse statement “I think that good pronunciation is very important”. In conclusion, students consider acquiring native-like pronunciation a difficult process and they perceive pronunciation as an important aspect of language learning thus they might feel anxious about it (anxious – 134 times, not anxious – 93 times).

### 6.3 Student’s Pronunciation Evaluation

Table 6 describes how many students were assigned each points for their pronunciation performance during a 5 min presentation in their Stylistics class. The better the performance, the higher the amount of points students received. All percentages refer to the number of students in the line above. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

| Points             | 1  | 2   | 3   | 4    | 5    |
|--------------------|----|-----|-----|------|------|
| Number of Students | 6  | 22  | 32  | 5    | 1    |
| % of the Students  | 9% | 33% | 48% | 7,5% | 1,5% |

Table 6: Number of Students Receiving Points for Pronunciation

The table displays that six students have significantly poor pronunciation (1 point). Their FLPAS total score ranged from 51 to 89 (as can be observed in Table 7) with calculated average of 76 which suggest high level of anxiety (as classified at the end of the chapter 5.3.2 The Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety Scale). The most anxious student with 89 FLPAS points supported the expectation that high anxiety suggests poorer pronunciation because this student did not attend any language courses and language schools. In addition, he does not have any experience with the stay in English speaking countries, he does not speak English outside the school environment and seldom does he communicate with English native speakers. On the contrary, student with 51 FLPAS points (mild level of PA) had (besides regular English classes in school) private tuition and reported that she speaks English on daily bases with her friends and uses no subtitles when watching TV series. All of these activities are important when mastering foreign language pronunciation but no experience with stay in English speaking countries and little communication with English native speakers play an important role in the quality of the English pronunciation and level of PA.

22 students were assigned two points for their pronunciation. Their FLPAS total score ranged from 32 to 73 with calculated average of 60 which suggest moderate level of PA.

Surprisingly, the student with 32 FLPAS points (minimum level of PA) reported that she attended language courses, participated in the Erasmus+ programme and visited London for five days. Further, she uses only English subtitles when watching TV series, yet received 2 points for her pronunciation. On the other hand, the student with 73 FLPAS points (moderate to high level of PA) fits this category perfectly because he does not have any additional English learning activities, he does not have an experience with stay in English speaking countries, he communicates in English only in online games and uses Czech subtitles when watching TV series.

As the table shows, the pronunciation of approximately half of the students is moderate (3 points). The total scores from the FLPAS of such students ranged, similarly to 2 points students, from 31 to 77 with calculated average of 55 which suggests mild to moderate level of PA. 12 students from this category have no experience with stay in English speaking countries. On the other hand, 20 students reported that they visited such countries for various reasons: 10 of them left for work, 5 student were studying there and the rest left for holidays. Majority of the students have no (or very little) contact with English native speakers. 14 of them switch between Czech and English subtitles when watching TV series. Therefore, the average pronunciation of these 32 students was expected. Even though the student with 31 FLPAS points has minimum PA and watches TV series with no subtitles, her pronunciation is still moderate. Based on her FLPAS points she is not afraid to speak English but she lacks further experience with the language which would positively influence her pronunciation such as a stay in an English speaking country or contact with English native speakers.

The table displays that five students have very good pronunciation so they were assigned four points. Their FLPAS total score ranged from 42 to 74 with the average of 56 which suggest mild to moderate level of PA. Interestingly, the student with 42 FLPAS points (mild level of PA) does not have any additional English learning activities, hardly ever does she communicate with English native speakers and seldom does she speak English outside the school environment. She also uses Czech subtitles when watching TV series but she reported to have visited an English speaking country for three days. Based on this, the student is not expected to have significantly good pronunciation, yet she received 4 points for it. On the contrary, the student with 74 FLPAS points participated in intensive one year language course after her graduation and attended a language school. Further, she uses no subtitles when watching TV series and speaks English on a language summer camp every year. In spite of all these activities, she still feels anxious when speaking English

because according to her FLPAS points, the level of her PA is moderate to high but her pronunciation is (surprisingly) very good.

Lastly, only one student was assigned five points for excellent pronunciation. This result was rather unexpected since the study programme which students enrolled is Philology and many of the classes are held in English and some of them are focused on language mastering and understanding (e.g. English Phonetics and Phonology, English Morphology and Syntax, Practical English). This student's FLPAS total score was 28 (minimum level of PA). He has been learning English for 22 years and reported to have spent 10 days as a tourist in an English speaking country. He communicates in English few times a week in work and has little contact with English native speakers in school and work. In comparison, the student with 31 FLPAS points (minimum level of PA) has comparable English learning activities with the exception of a stay in an English speaking country, yet received 3 points for her pronunciation. Next, the student with 32 FLPAS points (minimum level of PA) has attended a language course and Erasmus+ programme but performed even worse and received two points for her pronunciation. In this case, the reason of poorer pronunciation might be the length of exposure to English which is 13 years in comparison with the five points student who has been learning English for 22 years. Based on this, even though students might have comparable tendencies to get (or not to get) anxious when speaking English the actual quality of their pronunciation depends on more variables, such as the length of English learning, experience with a stay in English speaking countries, frequency of oral communication in English outside the school environment and contact with English native speakers.

To sum up the quantitative data deriving from the pronunciation evaluation, the pronunciation of approximately half of the students is moderate (3 points). Five students have very good pronunciation (4 points) and the pronunciation of 22 students is not very good (2 points). Six students were discovered to have poor pronunciation (1 point) and only one student's pronunciation is excellent (5 points).

## 6.4 Correlation

Table 7 depicts the total scores achieved by each student in the EPA questionnaire and the FLPAS, and student's pronunciation evaluation points. The last line of the table shows Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficients ( $r$ ) achieved between the EPA questionnaire and student's pronunciation, and the FLPAS and student's pronunciation. In both cases a relationship was confirmed.



As the last line of the table shows, no significant relationship (statistically irrelevant) was found between the EPA questionnaire and student's pronunciation ( $r = 0.2002$ ). The coefficient is positive which indicates the direct proportion – the more activities concerning English learning students have, the more they master the English pronunciation. On the other hand, strong negative correlation ( $r = -0.3446$ ) was computed between the scores on the FLPAS and student's pronunciation which suggests the inverse proportion – the poorer the student's pronunciation, the greater anxiety appears. Nevertheless, the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficients do not show causal relationship. They just prove that there is a link between the ranked variables.

| Student | the EPA Questionnaire | the FLPAS | Student's Pronunciation |
|---------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 1       | 22                    | 65        | 3                       |
| 2       | 15                    | 65        | 3                       |
| 3       | 18                    | 56        | 4                       |
| 4       | 14                    | 51        | 4                       |
| 5       | 16                    | 64        | 3                       |
| 6       | 16                    | 47        | 3                       |
| 7       | 19                    | 56        | 3                       |
| 8       | 21                    | 56        | 3                       |
| 9       | 16                    | 49        | 3                       |
| 10      | 15                    | 56        | 3                       |
| 11      | 23                    | 46        | 3                       |
| 12      | 21                    | 67        | 3                       |
| 13      | 18                    | 64        | 3                       |
| 14      | 16                    | 59        | 3                       |
| 15      | 13                    | 61        | 2                       |
| 16      | 18                    | 68        | 3                       |
| 17      | 13                    | 63        | 2                       |
| 18      | 12                    | 66        | 2                       |
| 19      | 12                    | 77        | 3                       |
| 20      | 14                    | 60        | 2                       |
| 21      | 24                    | 46        | 3                       |
| 22      | 14                    | 48        | 3                       |
| 23      | 23                    | 54        | 3                       |
| 24      | 15                    | 56        | 2                       |
| 25      | 11                    | 54        | 3                       |
| 26      | 18                    | 74        | 4                       |
| 27      | 10                    | 73        | 2                       |
| 28      | 19                    | 58        | 2                       |
| 29      | 15                    | 82        | 1                       |
| 30      | 22                    | 56        | 1                       |
| 31      | 19                    | 65        | 3                       |
| 32      | 16                    | 47        | 2                       |

|    |              |               |   |
|----|--------------|---------------|---|
| 33 | 14           | 62            | 1 |
| 34 | 18           | 53            | 2 |
| 35 | 23           | 44            | 3 |
| 36 | 19           | 64            | 2 |
| 37 | 25           | 52            | 2 |
| 38 | 21           | 28            | 5 |
| 39 | 18           | 60            | 3 |
| 40 | 19           | 37            | 3 |
| 41 | 15           | 61            | 3 |
| 42 | 25           | 55            | 4 |
| 43 | 16           | 64            | 2 |
| 44 | 15           | 53            | 2 |
| 45 | 16           | 31            | 3 |
| 46 | 20           | 56            | 3 |
| 47 | 15           | 50            | 3 |
| 48 | 24           | 32            | 2 |
| 49 | 14           | 73            | 2 |
| 50 | 15           | 58            | 2 |
| 51 | 12           | 89            | 1 |
| 52 | 21           | 50            | 3 |
| 53 | 11           | 59            | 2 |
| 54 | 13           | 66            | 2 |
| 55 | 17           | 50            | 3 |
| 56 | 17           | 48            | 2 |
| 57 | 13           | 45            | 2 |
| 58 | 15           | 59            | 2 |
| 59 | 13           | 51            | 3 |
| 60 | 15           | 61            | 2 |
| 61 | 17           | 62            | 1 |
| 62 | 11           | 42            | 4 |
| 63 | 20           | 42            | 3 |
| 64 | 11           | 44            | 2 |
| 65 | 17           | 57            | 3 |
| 66 | 21           | 51            | 1 |
| 67 | 9            | 55            | 3 |
|    | $r = 0.2002$ | $r = -0.3446$ |   |

Table 7: The Correlation Between the Ranked Variables

## 6.5 The Answers to the Research Questions

This section is divided into three subchapters. The two following ones sum up the overall outcome of the FLPAS and at the same time, they answer the RQ1 and RQ2 posed at the beginning of the research (in Chapter 4 The study). The third one deals with the RQ3. The subchapters focus on the major stressors that students reported to encounter while speaking

English, on the stressors that do not have significant impact on their English pronunciation, as well as on the findings concerning the student's pronunciation level, respectively.

### **6.5.1 RQ1: What Are the Major Stressors Reported by the Students Learning English at TBU in Zlín?**

This research question was addressed by considering the student's responses to the FLPAS (Table 5). As a result, four major stressors were identified according to the frequency of their appearance in the FLPAS. Firstly, communication with English native speakers was discovered to be one of them since 24 students reported to feel anxious in such situation. The reason of this apprehension might be that the students perceive English native speakers as the masters of the language and thus students may fear making pronunciation mistakes in their presence. Similarly to the English native speakers, 27 students do mind speaking English when strangers are present. This suggests that fear of communication in English is not limited only to the school environment in which students and teachers (or/and English native speakers) know each other. Secondly, shame of being corrected by a teacher in front of peers in class was identified to be another major stressor since 27 students reported this feeling. As Horwitz et al. (1986, 130) notes, anxious students fear to make mistakes in FL because they consider every correction by a teacher as a failure. Lastly, embarrassment at pronouncing words incorrectly was discovered to be the greatest stressor that the students encounter. This supports Baran-Łucarz's (2014, 39) definition of pronunciation anxiety which suggests it to be a multidimensional construct with 2 sub elements, one of them being fear of embarrassing oneself. Based on the findings, the first hypothesis (One of the major stressors reported by the students is communication with English native speakers) is validated.

### **6.5.2 RQ2: What Stressors do not Significantly Affect the Students Learning English at TBU in Zlín?**

In order to address this research question, the student's responses to the FLPAS (Table 5) were again taken into consideration. As a result, four stressors that do not significantly affect the student's level of pronunciation anxiety were identified. The findings showed that students (28) are not afraid that their classmates will have better pronunciation than they do. This suggests that these students do not fear facing the competition in the class. They also do not perceive imitating native-like English pronunciation negatively. In other words, they do not think that it is ridiculous to attempt to speak like a native speaker. This might mean that students are willing to learn the Received Pronunciation to sound more

native-like. Furthermore, almost none of the students feel apprehension about others not understanding them because of their improper pronunciation. This proposes that students are not afraid to communicate in English even though they might make pronunciation mistakes in the process. Lastly, 30 students are not afraid that people will think that they are silly or incompetent because of their poor English pronunciation. Based on this, the second hypothesis (One of the stressors which does not significantly affect the students is fear of being perceived as incompetent or silly because of improper English pronunciation.) is validated.

### **6.5.3 RQ3: What is the Pronunciation Level of the Majority of the Students Learning English at TBU in Zlín?**

To address this research question, the outcome of the student's pronunciation evaluation was considered. As can be observed in Table 6, the majority of the students received 3 points for their pronunciation, thus, according to the criteria described in the Chapter 5.3.3 Student's Pronunciation Evaluation, their pronunciation level is moderate. Based on this finding, the third hypothesis (The pronunciation level of the majority of the students is moderate.) is validated. However, concerning the fact that the study programme students enrolled is Philology and many classes are held in English, the outcome could be much better.

## **6.6 Limitations to the Study**

Due to several limitations of this study, its outcome should be viewed with caution. One of the main limitations of this study is the low number of participants involved in it (67). The outcomes would be more relevant with the greater number of participants. Furthermore, the outcomes of student's pronunciation evaluation could be considered more reliable if more judges, including native speakers, were involved in the process of evaluation, not just one because in this case, the researcher conducted the evaluation subjectively. Additionally, the pronunciation evaluation could be complemented with other tasks (such as free speech) since the presentation given in the Stylistics class was short and students did not have much space to show their true potential. It is possible that they would perform better if they could speak on different topics, perhaps on the ones they fancy. Finally, it would be useful to conduct an interview with the most anxious students to collect more qualitative data. Unfortunately, the time frame did not allow the researcher to do so.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to provide an overview concerning the problematics of foreign language anxiety, focusing mainly on pronunciation anxiety, as it is one of the most spread apprehensions encountered by learners when acquiring foreign language.

At first, a theoretical background has been established and divided into three chapters dealing with the definition of anxiety and its classification, measuring anxiety where the instruments used to assess its range were introduced, and with the aspects connected to pronunciation anxiety, respectively. The content of the theoretical part of the thesis should be sufficient for the reader to be able to understand the phenomena of foreign language anxiety. The practical part sheds light on English pronunciation anxiety as experienced by English non-native learners studying at TBU in Zlín. To assess its range, a research was conducted using two instruments to collect the research data, namely The English Pronunciation Anxiety questionnaire and the Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety scale. In addition, the researcher conducted the subjective auditory evaluation of the student's English pronunciation quality. The objective of the practical part was to answer the posed research questions (RQs) and to either validate or reject the hypotheses (H):

RQ1: What are the major stressors reported by the students learning English at TBU in Zlín?

RQ2: What stressors do not significantly affect the students learning English at TBU in Zlín?

RQ3: What is the pronunciation level of the majority of the students learning English at TBU in Zlín?

H1: One of the major stressors reported by the students is communication with English native speakers.

H2: One of the stressors which does not significantly affect the students is fear of being perceived as incompetent or silly because of improper English pronunciation.

H3: The pronunciation level of the majority of the students is moderate.

The study revealed four major stressors reported by the students. Firstly, these are communication with English native speakers (vast majority of the students claim that they encounter English native speakers only at school), and speaking English when strangers are present. This outcome suggests that the fear of communication in English is not limited only to the school environment in which students and teachers (or/and English native speakers) know each other. Secondly, shame of being corrected by a teacher in front of

peers in class was found to be another one. As Horwitz et al. (1986, 130) notes, anxious students fear to make mistakes in FL because they consider every correction by a teacher as a failure. Lastly, embarrassment at pronouncing words incorrectly was discovered to be the greatest stressor that the students encounter. Based on the findings, the first hypothesis is validated.

Four stressors that do not significantly affect the student's level of pronunciation anxiety were identified. Students are not afraid that their classmates will have better pronunciation than they do. This suggests that these students do not fear facing the competition in the class. They also do not perceive imitating native-like English pronunciation negatively. This might mean that they are willing to learn the Received Pronunciation in order to sound more like a native speaker. Furthermore, almost none of the students feel apprehension about others not understanding them because of their improper pronunciation. This proposes that students are not afraid to communicate in English even though they might make pronunciation mistakes in the process. Lastly, students are not afraid that people will think that they are silly or incompetent because of their poor English pronunciation. Based on this, the second hypothesis is validated.

Regarding the RQ3, the majority of the students received 3 points for their pronunciation, thus (according to the criteria set by the researcher), their pronunciation level is moderate which is a reasonable outcome. On the other hand, concerning the fact that the study programme students enrolled is Philology and many classes are held in English and some of them are focused on language mastering and understanding (e.g. English Phonetics and Phonology, English Morphology and Syntax, Practical English), the outcome could be much better. However, as this finding suggests, the third hypothesis is validated.

On the basis of this research it would be interesting to interview the most anxious students to learn the biggest apprehensions they personally face rather than drawing a general conclusion. Due to several limitations of this research, its outcome should be viewed with caution. One of its main limitations is the low number of participants involved in it (67). The outcomes would be more relevant with the greater number of participants.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| EPA   | English Pronunciation Anxiety                |
| FL    | Foreign Language                             |
| FLA   | Foreign Language Anxiety                     |
| FLCAS | Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale     |
| FLPAS | Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety Scale |
| H     | Hypothesis                                   |
| PA    | Pronunciation Anxiety                        |
| RQ    | Research Question                            |
| SLSAS | Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale       |
| TL    | Target Language                              |
| TBU   | Tomas Bata University                        |
| yrs.  | years  |

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## APPENDICES

### ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ANXIETY QUESTIONNAIRE

This following questionnaire was designed for the purpose of academic research. Your response will not be shared with anyone but the researches conducting this study and will be kept confidential. Thank you for your time and participation.

Personal background information

Gender:

Age:

Q1: How long have you been studying English?

Q2: At which schools have you studied English so far? (e.g. elementary school, high school, university, language courses)?

Q3: Do you have any experience with stay in English speaking countries? If the answer is yes, what was the nature of your stay (study, work, tourist) and how long did you stay there?

Q4: How often do you communicate with English native speakers? Where? (e.g. school, family, job)

Q5: How often do you communicate in English outside the school environment? With whom do you communicate? (e.g. customers, family, friends from abroad)

Q6: Do you avoid Czech dubbing? If the answer is yes, do you use subtitles? Czech or English ones?

**ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ANXIETY SCALE**

Please check the box that best corresponds to your answer for each statement below.

1. I feel nervous when speaking English.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
2. I feel shy when speaking English with English native speaker.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
3. I do not mind talking to more advanced English speakers.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
4. I do not like speaking English when strangers are present.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
5. I am satisfied with my English pronunciation.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
6. I am worried about making pronunciation mistakes.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
7. I realize that I make a lot of pronunciation mistakes.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
8. I do not feel embarrassed when I pronounce something wrong.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
9. I am afraid that people will think I am silly of incompetent because of my poor English pronunciation.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
10. I consider imitating native-like English pronunciation ridiculous.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
11. I am afraid that my classmates will have better pronunciation than I do.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
12. Most of my classmates already have better pronunciation than I do.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
13. I am worried that others will not understand me because of my improper pronunciation.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
14. I do not feel ashamed when the teacher keeps correcting my mistakes in the class.  
 strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

15. It seems to me that I cannot get rid of my Czech/Slovak accent in English.

strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

16. It seems to me that I will never master good English pronunciation.

strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

17. I think English pronunciation is not that difficult to learn.

strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

18. I consider the rules of English pronunciation easy to be understood.

strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

19. It is very difficult to pronounce like a native speaker.

strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

20. I think that good pronunciation is very important.

strongly agree  agree  neither agree nor disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

