

Abstract

The thesis focuses on the differences between British and American English in terms of their phrasal characteristics (length of phrases, nuclear pitch movement, pitch range). By doing so, it aims to fill a gap in research which lies in a lack of comparative studies of the two mentioned varieties of English on the suprasegmental level. The theoretical part describes prosody and its functions in language, intonation, and individual types of nuclear pitch movements and their functions. The paper further concentrates on the differences between the British and American schools of intonation notation and also the differences and discrepancies between their terminologies. Finally, it introduces a new term inspired by Czech terminology, FMU, which is not present in English terminology and helps to differentiate between the form and function of the nuclear pitch movements. FMU corresponds to the scope of the Czech term “melodém” (the function of the pitch movement, e.g., the falling FMU), as opposed to the realization (Czech “kadence”, the concrete realization of the FMU, e.g., the level-fall). The empirical part presents a study carried out on a sample of 800 phrases (400 British and 400 American), which are compared in the following areas: the length of phrases, type of the nuclear pitch movement, and speakers’ pitch range. The study is concluded with a discussion of the results and with a short overview of the implications for further research.

Key words: prosody, intonation, phrase, length, nuclear pitch movement, pitch range, FMU, terminology