ON SOME PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE VOWEL SYSTEM IN SPANISH, REGARDING CZECH LANGUAGE AS THE MOTHER TONGUE

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ABSTRACT

Comparison of the acoustic structure of Spanish and Czech vowels suggest that even in textbooks designed for a wider public appropriate attention should be devoted to pronountiation.

Correct pronountiation of Spanish vowels has been given only little attention in Czech instruction books on Spanish. The authors have mainly relied on the facts that both in Spanish and Czech there are five vowel phonemes /i/, /e/, /a/, /o/, /u/ and the vowel position does not affect its auditive characteristics [1], [2], [3]. Major distinctions were seen in the Czech phonological quantity and numerous tautosyllabic vowel groups /di- and triphtongs/ in Spanish. In textbooks designed for a wider public there have been only scarce mentions about Spanish having vowel phonemes /e/ and /o/ with both open [ɛ], [ɔ] and closed [e], [o] combinatoric variants. Thus the authors usually stated that in general the Spanish and Czech vowel pronountiations correspond.

On the other hand, auditive analysis by native speakers of Spanish discourses produced by Czech speakers, as well as experiences in teaching Czech to Spanish-speaking population have revealed a more complicated relationship between the two vowel systems.

Comparing the F1 and F2 values of Spanish and Czech vowels we obtain the following:

Czech vowels [7]:
[i] - F1 300 - 500 Hz
F2 2100 - 2700 Hz
[e] - F1 500 - 700 Hz
F2 1600 - 2100 Hz
[a] - F1 800 - 1000 Hz
F2 1200 - 1400 Hz
[o] - F1 500 - 700 Hz
F2 900 - 1200 Hz
[u] - F1 300 - 500 Hz
F2 600 - 1000 Hz

Spanish vowels [4], [5]:
[i] - F1 202 - 243 Hz
- F2 2308 - 2422 Hz
[e] - F1 283 - 405 Hz
F2 1822 - 2349 Hz
[a] - F1 607 - 729 Hz
F2 1012 - 1417 Hz
[o] - F1 283 - 505 Hz

- F2 850 - 1012 Hz

[u] - F1 203 - 243 Hz

F2 576 - 850 Hz

It is evident that F1 has considerably lower values in Spanish that in Czech. The Czech vowels F2 values indicate, generally, mayor dispersion than that of Spanish vowels.

Thus the acoustic structure of Czech i-vowels falls into the dispersion area of Spanish e-vowels; the dispersion area of Czech e- and o-vowels partly cuts across that of Spanish a-vowels; the dispersion area of Czech u-vowel covers partly the dispersion area of Spanish o-vowels. Czech a-vowels thus reveal incorparably higher F1 than their Spanish counterparts. Bearing on mind that the resulting F1 and F2 values are in any case result of an overall configuration of the oral cavity [6] generalizing the statement about direct proportions between F1 and oral cavity opening, and between F2 and front articulation, we may suggest, especially for teaching purposes, that compared to Spanish the Czech vowel articulation is more open; thus thus Czech i-vowels reach the acoustic values of Spanish e- vowels, etc.

Under certain circumstances, inaccurate pronuntiation may hamper communication. This fact is a sufficient reason for maximal extension of both instructions and practical drilling of Spanish vowel pronuntiation in textbooks in preparation.

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