THE MOST IMPORTANT DIFFICULTIES WHEN TEACHING SPANISH PHONETICS TO CZECH

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ABSTRACT
The most important difficulties when teaching Spanish phonetics to Czech native speakers are closely related to the rhythmical segmentation of the Spanish utterance. The differences between the two languages are relevant both on the segmental and the suprasegmental levels and become important not only from the point of view of the production of the speech signal, but also from the point of view of its perception.

1. INTRODUCTION
The aim of our paper is to point some problems which students of Spanish, whose mother tongue is Czech, grapple with. We will pay our attention to the problems linked up with different continuous speech segmentation into rhythmical units in Spanish and in Czech.

The problem can be seen on two levels:
a) speech production;
b) speech perception.

2. SPEECH PRODUCTION
When analyzing the segmentation of the Spanish continuous speech into rhythmical units, among the sound means, the suprasegmental phenomena are exclusively taken into account. The rhythmical units are, as a rule, defined exclusively on the basis of only suprasegmental means conceived abstractly regardless of their concrete realizations in the flow of the speech, and only defining the rhythmical unit, exclusively one suprasegmental phenomenon is often taken into consideration. If the phenomenon concerning the definition of the rhythmical unit delimitation are taken into account, only the pauses, which stand, in fact, outside the rhythmical unit itself, are considered. Therefore the so defined rhythmical units become more likely a theoretical concept serving for the language description and only seldom represents the unit being perceived like that by listener.

On the other hand, when defining the rhythmical unit as a rhythmical semantic group, it must be conceived as a sound unit corresponding to a grammatical and a semantic unit, whose sound boundaries are marked by an interruption of the flow of speech potentially realized by a pause, by differences in the distribution of the position-
its openness. One of the manifestations of this phenomenon is the superiorit of the syllable structure to the lexical one within the scope of the rhythmical-semantic group, as mentioned above, but also several assimilation phenomena become very important.

As for the type and the direction of assimilation, the articulation assimilation occurs more frequently especially as for the place of articulation. The unstability of the place of articulation of nasals and laterals may be considered as a manifestation of this phonosyntactic phenomenon: con todo [kANTÔDÔ] - assimilation of the place of articulation, etc.

In the Czech language, the situation is rather different. The fundamental type of assimilation is the assimilation of voice. Owing to these differences, the Czech native speakers:

a) do not respect the assimilation of the place of articulation in Spanish;
b) pronounce the consonants with the assimilation of voice.

Other problem of the syllable structure of connected speech is closely related to the above mentioned glottal stop, because of its absence in Spanish, due to the phonosyntactic phenomenon called synalepha. It means that the Czech native speakers do not avoid the pronunciation of expressions like a Ana [a'ana] with the glottal stop [a'ana].

2.3. Stress

Further problems are linked up with the word stress within the scope of the rhythmical-semantic group. Unlike the like in the quantity of syllables, which has a definitory function, Spanish is a language where the stress falls on different syllables, considered as that of a given word category, and therefore has a distinctive function. On the other hand, not all "distinctive" stresses are realized with the same intensity. In the flow of speech they even be stressed syllable which do not carry the distinctive stress (so called unstressed words - conjunctions, prepositions, unstressed forms of personal pronouns, etc.) In these cases, the stress is considered contrastively and it is realized within the scope of the rhythmical-semantic group.

2.5. Quantity

The problem of quantity is also closely linked up with the problem of stress. If we start from the statement of incompatibility of free stress and phonological quantity, we find that the differences between Spanish and Czech consist inter alia in the fact that the quantity is phonological in the Czech language, while it becomes very fixed and has a definitory function. Spanish is a language where the stress falls on different syllables, considered as that of a given word category, and therefore has a distinctive function. On the other hand, not all "distinctive" stresses are realized with the same intensity. In the flow of speech they even be stressed syllable which do not carry the distinctive stress (so called unstressed words - conjunctions, prepositions, unstressed forms of personal pronouns, etc.) In these cases, the stress is considered contrastively and it is realized within the scope of the rhythmical-semantic group.

3. REMARKS ON THE SPEECH PERCEPTION

When analyzing the problem of the Spanish fluent speech perception by Czech native speakers, we must deal with difficulties caused mainly by two features of the above mentioned rhythmical-semantic group, both related with the syllable structure within it: by synalepha and by the assimilation phenomenon. Both phenomena complicate the determination of the lexical units as components of the rhythmical-semantic group, and therefore the comprehension of its sense.

4. CONCLUSIONS

When summarizing the notes concerning the aspects defining the rhythmical-semantic group in Spanish from the Czech native speakers point of view, it can be seen that the selection of sound qualities of the rhythmical-semantic unit is the starting point for doing analysis of an inadequate pronunciation of Spanish as foreign language, and it enables to find a common denominator for interpretation of a number of sound phenomena which would be otherwise correlated with difficulty.

The emphasis on understanding of sound relation within the rhythmical-semantic group is important not

only for explanation and training of the correct pronunciation of suprasegmental means, but it also enables a more profound view even on relations between segmental means, e.g. where a mere comparison of articulatory and acoustic features and repertory of consonants in Spanish and in Czech, differences in assimilation, etc. is not sufficient.

5. REFERENCES