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**HODNOTA SOUKROMÍ, TLACHÁNÍ  
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**BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE**

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**THE VALUE OF PRIVACY, GOSSIP AND HOME  
IN THE EYES OF THE ENGLISH**

BACHELOR THESIS

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1. Pravidelné konzultace s vedoucím bakalářské práce v průběhu jejího psaní
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5. Před odevzdáním bude celá práce předložena vedoucímu k posouzení, a to s dostatečným předstihem, který určí vedoucí



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Paxman, Jeremy (1999). The English: A Portrait of a People. London: Penguin. ISBN 0-14-026723-9  
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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis includes three chapters that work with three values of the English – privacy, home and gossip. It describes the historical context of these values and explains the connection between them. The thesis works with theories of two great anthropologists, Kate Fox and Jeremy Paxman. After explaining this phenomena, *Pride and Prejudice*, a book by Jane Austen is analysed with the help of these theories. The theories are useful in better understanding everyday life not only of people in the nineteenth century, but also nowadays. The thesis contains some parts of the story of *Pride and Prejudice* and comments on them from the point of view of the value of privacy, home and gossip in the eyes of the English. In the last chapter, all of the above is used in teaching practice.

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# INTRODUCTION

The matter of cultural differences is one of the major topics that we have been studying during our undergraduate program and for me it was the most interesting part of my studies at the university. We have obtained information about current situation and learnt to approach these differences as an opportunity to expand our horizons. Based on this set of knowledge I have decided to research some of the most treasured values in the English nation – home, privacy and gossip – and with the acquired knowledge then try to analyse one of the most famous English books, *Pride and Prejudice*. This thesis explains the theory of those values using books from two great anthropologists – Kate Fox and Jeremy Paxman. I have chosen their works because their theories complement each other and are a very good tool to help the people beyond English borders understand these topics.

First of all, it is important to know a bit of English history to see where those values came from. The first chapter begins with the history of home and its impact on the importance of home - which is also related with privacy and gossip, as it is explained further in the thesis. The essential part of history for this matter is the nineteenth and twentieth century, so I described events of this particular period. The first chapter also brings up some questions, such as: *How can we understand the English? Is there any explanation for their need of home, privacy and gossip and are these values related?* Furthermore, the thesis briefly introduces Kate Fox and her book *Watching the English*, which is a major source for this work. Fox's and Paxman's theories and observations are mutually interconnected and together they give us the whole picture of the English's values. Apart from explaining the history and basics of English cultural and social anthropology in theory, the first chapter also brings useful tips for the present. Not only does Fox explain the issue, she also gives suggestions and strategies for the non-English to avoid any awkward or uncomfortable situations. Her book is like a manual for anyone who wants to understand the English. Broad understanding of this issue is very important for the following analysis.

The second chapter begins with the introduction of the author, Jane Austen and explains why her works are so famous and, in many aspects, contemporary. It also talks about the connection between her books and her own life. Because the book *Pride and Prejudice* is far from obsolete, we can apply the theories by Fox and Paxman in the story and use them as a tool for the book analysis. The topic of gossip is extended with stories

containing scheming and meddling, which is something Jane Austen enjoyed writing about. I have chosen several parts of the book to demonstrate the value of privacy, home and gossip in practice.

Because the first two chapters show that some books, such as *Pride and Prejudice*, can help with us understand the culture of a certain country, I have decided to use this connection in the last chapter and apply it in teaching. First of all, the chapter explains why it is important to include cultural education into teaching a foreign language, in this case English. It shows goals which the teacher should have in mind and describes how he or she can achieve them. I did not want to be only theoretical, so I came up with an idea of how to naturally subsume the topic of home, privacy and gossip into English high school classes. This idea uses the books of Fox and Paxman, and Jane Austen.

This thesis has three main goals: to describe the theory and value of privacy, home and gossip in the eyes of the English and the relations between them; to explain the book *Pride and Prejudice* using these theories and to find a way to use the above as a tool for teaching English culture at high schools.

# 1 History and Theory

## 1.1 The History of Home

The English value home much more than other nations, where homes are open to wide circles of friends and in some cases even to strangers – this contrast can be seen between England and Italy for examples. Is there a historical base for the English to value home so much? There is a theory that the English’s value of home came from the fact that England is very unpredictable when it comes to weather. The English had spent so much time at home involuntarily because of bad weather, that in time they started to make their homes more comfortable to stay at and now staying in is a choice. They take such good care of their homes that they love being there. (Emerson, 1856, p. 27-28) In the nineteenth century, one could vote and participate in democracy only if you were a male householder. That is why national banks often tried to help young men to be able to buy their homes. (Paxman, 1998/2007, p. 808-810). The English did not only buy the house to live in it, it was their passion, almost as if they had a relationship with the house. Instead of putting numbers on their houses – which would have been better in order to make sure to get the mail to the right house – they named their houses! And why? Paxman, a British broadcaster, journalist and author, (1998/2007, p. 813) says: “Names express individuality. A number implies communality.” Giving name to houses shows a strong emotional attachment. But that is not the only thing that indicates the importance of home. We are still talking about the nineteenth century. This is the time when “do it yourself” (DIY) became national obsession – even though the term DIY had not been used until the 1950’s. Already at that time the English took care of their homes with love. And that is something that still lasts. Many English families, together or apart, spend the weekends working on their houses, taking care of the garden, beautifying their terraces and windows. After World War Two the number of house owners increased. And as the opportunities of owning a house were growing for the English, so was the desire to improve the house by themselves. “The fixation with owning their homes is a physical expression of the English belief in privacy,” claims Paxman (1998/2007, p. 818-819). Because DIY had been a huge success, the first superstore with DIY tools was opened in 1969.

To sum up, the nineteenth and twentieth century were the golden age of buying homes and building loving homes. There is a historical base in the importance of *owning* a home – the opportunity to vote. The English love their homes and do a lot of work on them,

that is why DIY became very important to this nation. But why do the English value home so much nowadays? And is there a connection to the importance of privacy and gossip? The next part of this thesis answers these questions.

## 1.2 The Theory of Home, Privacy and Gossip

Getting to know basics of social and cultural anthropology of various English-speaking countries is one of the major subjects in our bachelor program. There are many courses regarding the historical-cultural context connected to present-day sociocultural situation. These courses are not only meant to teach us the facts, their purpose is to help us understand the differences among cultures and find a way to respect them. So how can we accept and understand the English? Is there any explanation for their need of privacy and gossip? Can we try to understand the value of home nowadays?

Kate Fox, who is primarily a social anthropologist and co-director of *Social Issues Research Centre (SIRC)*, wrote one book specifically about the English. All of her books are based on a very detailed research. Besides doing research and writing books, Fox also gives lectures and broadcasts on human behaviour and social relations. She has studied anthropology and philosophy at Cambridge University (“Social Issues Research Centre”, 2019).

*Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour* is a book which describes many habits and attitudes of the English that probably even they are not aware of. Kate Fox, as an observer of English people around her, explains the connections between the phenomena which occur among them. For people watching from the outside – tourists and foreigners – she describes what is usual while having a conversation with an English, and on the other hand what would be odd to say or do and could cause an awkward situation. Among other things Fox clarifies the importance of small talk and mentions the most frequent topics, such as weather. Basically, the book is divided into two parts – part one called *Conversation Codes* and part two: *Behaviour Codes*. At the end of the book, there is a list of characteristics of English people – and same as the rest of the book, it is written in a very funny way. Fox has a nice perspective on things - even though she herself is English, she is very objective. *Watching the English* is the perfect book for the purpose of understanding the English sociocultural specifics, and a whole other subchapter is about theory described in this book – specifically about the topic of **home, privacy and gossip** in the eyes of the English.

“An Englishman’s home is much more than just his castle, the embodiment of his privacy rules, it is also his identity, his main status-indicator and his prime obsession,” says Kate Fox in *Watching the English*, and that is why DIY is so popular in England. One survey shows that only 2% of English males and 12% of English females said that they had never done any DIY. For the English, a house is not only something that you *have* but something that you *do*, you create home by working on it and improving it. But why? Do they do this for themselves, to create a warm, comfortable home? That is one of the reasons, of course - they spent a lot of time at home after all. But there are some more important reasons too. For example, territory marking. DIY means putting a personal stamp on the place. According to Fox’s observations, the English always rip something off when they move into a new apartment/house and replace with something new, something completely theirs, often made by them. This ‘move’ marks the territory. However, marking the territory is not the only reason for constant improvements of one’s home. The appearance of the English’s home is their identity and it tells a lot about their social class.

We often hear about the American Dream. Is there such thing as the English dream? It is, indeed, when it comes to privacy. “The English dream is privacy without loneliness,” that is what Paxman wrote in his book (1998/2007, p. 783). Even though many English people live in apartments, their dream is to have a house in the countryside. The perfect house would be hidden away, lying in between hills, with no strangers invading the family’s privacy. I think it is a nice dream to have, not to mention the air is less polluted than in the city, so it is good for their health. Privacy is definitely affected by either owning a home or being in a rented house or apartment. When you are in a rented space, some owners feel the need to check up on their property sometimes. Also, when you are moving out, the owner can use the two last months of your stay to show the home to potential new tenants, so your privacy is invaded a lot, because you have to let strangers into the place that you are still calling *home* at the time. The English are well aware of this fact, because according to BBC there are about twenty-five million homes in the United Kingdom, of which seven out of ten are owner-occupied. If you want privacy, it is very important to own your place and have the right to decide who you let in.

Minimum visits at home, because you do not want people wandering around at your private home. But if you do not let people in your house, where can you meet people? Or bond with your friends and colleagues? There was a cross-cultural research at SIRC, that showed one interesting fact: “In all cultures, the drinking-place is a special environment, a

separate social world with its own customs and values,” (Fox, 2004, p. 93). That sounds like a perfect place for the English. The pub<sup>1</sup>! If we want to understand the concept of Englishness, we cannot leave this out. Both Fox and Paxman agree on this. Paxman (1998/2007, p. 775) wrote: “The English have a very protective sense of their hearth and prefer the restaurant or pub.” The English do not go to pubs to get drunk, but to socialize. It is also almost the only place in England where you can approach a complete stranger and start talking with them. There is no waiter service in English pubs, so having to go up to the bar to buy drinks creates an opportunity for social contact. In some other countries, it is not so difficult to start a conversation with strangers, for example with people sitting at the table next to yours. But the English are different. “The English are somewhat reserved and inhibited, and we need all the help we can get,” says Fox about the no waiter service in English pubs (2004, p. 94). This may come as a shock to foreigners visiting England. It can often be seen that when people from abroad visit an English pub, they sit and wait for the service. Sometimes it takes them a really long time to realize that there is none. This is a fact that one of my Czech friends, who had spent three years working behind the bar counter, confirmed when he moved back and we talked about the real life in England. What I find interesting about the pub policy is that it has its own rules of communication, and if a person is not aware of those rules, it can create uncomfortable, even awkward situations. For example, the English do not like to talk about money. It is surely connected with the importance of privacy. The English avoid the word ‘buy’, when offering someone to pay for their drink, let’s say offering a free drink to the bartender. It is much better to use a phrase such as: “And one for yourself?” as a suggestion that he or she can add another drink for themselves to the bill. In return, the staff always raises the glass, nods and smiles at the customer who bought the drink for them (Fox, 2004, p. 98-100). So, the pub is the perfect place for the English to meet people and have a conversation without worrying about their privacy.

Speaking of worrying about one’s privacy, this chapter begins with the history of home, and it talks about how the English began to label their homes not only with numbers, but also names. However, there is a catch. The numbers and names are usually impossible to find. But it makes perfect sense, considering Fox’s previous quote about the Englishman’s home being his castle. If we think about it in detail, a castle should be difficult to get to. It would have big, strong walls around it, sometimes it would even be surrounded by a moat.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Pub“ stands for “Public House” as opposed to “Private House” (Home)

Nobles wanted to protect their homes from the possibility of attack from their rivals. The English do not have any rivals to be afraid of, but they are very protective of their privacy. So, they do everything they can to make their homes as hard to find as possible. Now we know how important privacy and home are for the English. It looks like it is impossible to get to know an English person, at least this is what many non-English people think. Without understanding the concept of privacy, foreigners may find many things odd: “What the English see as no more than respect for privacy looks to others like disdain,” said Paxman (1998/2007, p. 768-769). But is it true that the lives of English people are so private? Or is it just their wish, something they value and would like to keep, but the reality is different. Let’s have a look at gossip, it sure clears things up.

As I mentioned earlier, the English are affected a lot by where they come from. England is a country where the weather is unpredictable, and not this does not only affect their attitude towards staying in, it is also a huge topic of their conversations. It makes sense that if you want to protect your privacy, you think a lot about what to talk about and with whom. Especially while having a conversation with a stranger or an acquaintance. There are not many ‘safe’ topics, are there? Well, the safest of them is definitely weather. Weather talk is a very common thing in England, it is considered an act of politeness. But what if you are talking with your close friends or family? This is where gossip comes in. “The English are certainly a nation of gossips,” says the English anthropologist, Fox (2004, p. 46). This may be a little confusing. If nobody knows anything about anyone, based on their privacy rules, how come they love gossip? How does this work? First thing to know is: What *is* gossip? According to Lexico (a dictionary powered by Oxford), this is the definition of gossip: “Casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true.”

Gossip usually does not give us the whole picture. Some information may be changed, twisted or made up. That is why it is so easy to gossip, because all you need is a part of information and an opinion or a lot of your own imagination. This does not mean that gossip always means negative information and criticism, but it is very affected by opinions of the person who is telling the gossip. The English are not the only nation that gossips, of course. But because of their obsession with privacy, gossip is very important to them. Fox (2004, p. 49) works with the laws of supply and demand: “The laws of supply and demand ensure that gossip is a precious social commodity among the English.” The English do not give away any private information easily and it makes other people want to know more.

Unlike in other nations - and I must say that even though Czech people are similar to English in many ways, this is where we differ – the English consider a lot of trivial information private, even the answer for “How are you?”. This is a real question only among family or close friends. Nobody really wants to know that you are doing miserable and why. It is polite, and everyone in England knows that, to answer: “I am fine, thank you. How are you?” or something similar. It is not acceptable to answer this question based on your real feelings, because that is your private life. It is an unwritten rule that giving away something private about yourself always comes with an expectation of getting information in exchange. This reciprocal disclosure strategy is a good trick to get to know the English (Fox, 2004, p. 52). When you talk with the English, they never tell you if they are married, what kind of job they do, if they have children or where they are from. It is too private for them to tell people they do not know well. This is why foreigners often complain that the English are too serious, reserved and unfriendly. However, there is a way to get this information, if you understand the process. The English are used to give you clues, so that they help you answer your question yourself. For example, if you want to know someone’s job, you cannot directly ask “What do you do for a living?” even though this is a common question in other nations, and it is not considered rude. In England, it is too straightforward. You comment on the traffic situation in the mornings and ask the other if he or she drives to work. Then they tell you something like: “Oh, yes, but I work at the hospital, so I avoid the town centre.” And then you try to guess their job position. You start from the best possible positions – in case of hospital, you do not guess they are a receptionist at the hospital, but that they are a doctor. And the conversation continues with other questions (Fox, 2004, p. 46-51). It is possible to get information about someone from England, but it is not as simple as in other countries. That leads back to the laws on supply and demand. It is so difficult to get information about people, that everyone wants it even more. How does gossip work among the English? It has its own rules. You cannot gossip about everyone with anyone. Fox (2004, p. 51) describes phenomena called *The Distance Rule*: “Among the English, gossip about one’s own private doings is reserved for intimates; gossip about the private lives of friends and family is shared with a slightly wider social circle; gossip about the personal affairs of acquaintances, colleagues and neighbours with a larger group; and gossip about the intimate details of public figures’ or celebrities’ lives with almost anyone.” The more distant the subject of gossip is from you, the wider the circle of people you can talk with about it is. This helps make sure that you gossip without severe invasion of privacy. The English use this rule to get to know other people. If they want to find out someone’s opinion on a sensitive subject – marriage,



for example, they do not ask about the person's life, but about this subject in the life of a public figure – because neither of them probably knows the person personally. And if they want to know an opinion of someone's closer to them, they can talk about the marriage of someone from closer circle – a neighbour, colleague or acquaintance. And if there is nobody with discussed issue in their life, there is always an option of making someone up. This way the English can get more information about others. There is another strategy, and I think it is common in many cultures, because it is a natural way of conversation, and that is telling something private from your life in exchange of information from the other person. You do not instantly start with a private information, but tell a minor disclosure and then continue with things more and more private.

There is an exception to the privacy and gossip rules mentioned above, and that is the *print exception*. Books, newspaper columns and also other media such as radio or television shows can reveal almost anything. And the English love it. What is impolite to say in public is tolerated in newspaper (Fox, 2004, p. 54). What is it about? Anything that the English will read. Somebody *might* be pregnant? Let's write about that! Anyone having health issues? Perfect, people will be interested in this! Breakups, love affairs, financial problems – these are very private things, but tabloids are full of them. Of course tabloid journalism is not a unique matter of England, but this country has the most virulent form of it. I picked three recent newspaper headlines to illustrate the way tabloids are 'selling' their articles:

**Pregnant Sophie Turner hides her baby bump beneath a heavy jacket during walk with husband Joe Jonas** (The Daily Mail)

**'IT WAS TERRIFYING' Coronavirus mom unknowingly infects SEVENTEEN of her 18 children with disease as she did not show any symptoms** (The Sun)

**Jealous Sarah Harding watched Girls Aloud videos alone, says ex Chad Johnson** (Mirror)

Anything that sounds scandalous is good to use. People want to see a baby bump of a woman that they do not even know – especially when there are no pregnancy pictures on her Instagram profile. They want to read as much about coronavirus as they can – in addition, when there is the word TERRIFYING in caps lock. And the words 'jealous' and 'ex' in one sentence? Well, just perfect for people who love gossip. Of course, people of all nations gossip, it is not only the English. But for the English, it is often the easiest way of obtaining information, so it is very valuable. Gossip can hurt people, that is for sure, but I will talk about that in a while when analysing *Pride and Prejudice*. There is a fine line

between innocent gossip and revealing information that really should remain private. Men usually joke about women being gossips, but the truth is, men gossip just as much as women. They just call it differently, for example “exchanging information” (Fox, 2004, p. 54).

To sum up this chapter, home is and always has been very important to the English. The Englishman’s home is his castle, the English are very private, do not give away any information about themselves easily, but there are ways to get to know them, if you know the strategies. Gossip has its own rules, as everything in English culture, and not every gossip is negative or contains criticism. The love for gossip is caused by the laws of supply and demand - because it is so difficult to learn something about someone, that the English love gossip even more than people in other nations. And there is an exception for television, print and radio in privacy rules, they can gossip about anything and anyone, anytime – even though it can be dangerous and ruin somebody’s life. This chapter explained the theory of privacy, home and gossip for the English. The next chapter analyses one of the most famous books written by Jane Austen and looks for such phenomena in the story of *Pride and Prejudice*.

## **2 Analysis**

### **2.1 An Introduction to Jane Austen**

Jane Austen is one of the most famous English female writers. She was born in 1775 in Steventon - Hampshire, as the seventh child out of eight (Miles, 2009, p. 7). I have seen a very nice document about Jane Austen by Lucy Worsley (2019), which is very helpful for understanding the social context of Austen’s work. I wondered why her books were so easy to read and felt so real, and the answer I got was simple: Jane Austen described many parts of her life. Her works mostly deal with money, status, scheming and meddling, and the importance of getting married. Austen was not born into a genteel but not wealthy family on the edge of losing both material comfort and status, so she knew how it was to worry about money all the time. She also knew how it felt to have a broken heart only because she did not fulfil the expectations of her lover’s family. Jane Austen loved writing letters and thanks to that we now know a lot about her love life. In 1796, she wrote her sister about a man, Thomas Langlois Lefroy. It was her first big love, but Lefroy was not rich enough to decide

about his marriage on his own – his uncle decided for him. Supposedly, Austen expected him to propose during their last night together (he was from Ireland), but the proposal never happened. As we can read from the letter she wrote to her sister, Cassandra, Austen was devastated. Nobody knows for sure, what happened back then, but Lefroy was a young, successful lawyer, and Austen was ‘nobody’ in the eyes of his family (Mudrová, 2010, p. 16-17). This is something we can see in Austen books – wealth is a big factor in the family’s approval of marriage and they have a huge say in whether their child is or is not allowed to marry someone. What I could not understand was – how is it possible that Jane Austen is so good in describing people of various social classes, when she lived in a not so wealthy family her whole life? The documentary (Worsley, 2019) helped me with that. Austen got to see the life of wealthy people because one of her brothers had been given away and adopted by a very rich couple. She spent a lot of time there, but she did not quite fit in and the family thought of her as odd, even though they knew she was clever. Jane’s best friend was the family’s governess – they had no problem communicating together, because they were from the same social class and had a lot in common. Another thing that we can see in Austen’s books is the importance of first impression. She had learnt the importance of first impression in many occasions, even the town where Jane lived since her twenty-five (Bath) was all about first impressions – the fronts of houses were always pretty, but nobody cared about the side that no one could see. In English homes in the nineteenth century, one of the most important rooms to impress with was the dining room. It was supposed to be fancy, with expensive china on the table (Worsley, 2019). This made me think – if the English care so much about their privacy and barely invite people over, why was the dining room so important? First it seemed to me like a bit of contradiction, but then I realized that it was not only about the first impression, it also was about the love for their homes.

Even though Jane Austen spent a lot of time writing about love and marriage, she never married. She got engaged to Harris Bigg Wither in 1802, but broke off the engagement the next day. We can only guess what the reason was, but this is what she wrote in her unfinished novel, *The Watsons*: “I would rather be a teacher, than to marry a man that I do not love.” One of the theories is, she was not in love with Wither and only said yes because it made sense - she had known him for a long time and it was about time she got married (Mudrová, 2010). Another theory is, she did not want to get married at all, because a man would distract her from writing and she would have to have babies, which would affect her career as a writer. There was a hope of publishing her first book in 1803, but it was not until

1811 she became a published author with her book *Sense and Sensibility*. Two years after that, *Pride and Prejudice* was published.

Why was Jane Austen so popular with women in the nineteenth century? She described perfectly, what almost every woman knew very well - the difficulty of finding a good husband and the trouble that came with it. She wrote about gossip and scheming, so it was not boring at all. But most importantly, she pictured reality in the best possible way, so the women could relate to the story. She is popular around the world and has been for over two hundred years. There are many movies based on her stories, not only in England, but in the whole world. Her works are very contemporary and valuable at all times.

## **2.2 *Pride and Prejudice* – Analysis**

For someone who is not familiar with the theory of home, privacy and gossip, *Pride and Prejudice* could be difficult to understand, or at least it could be very easy not to like some characters – even the good ones, whose only flaws are those caused by misunderstanding English culture by the reader. Already the first chapter indicates the importance of wealth of the potential husband to the family of the Bennet young women: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife,” is the opening sentence of this book. When Mr. Bingley came to town, the Bennets did not have any idea about what kind of person he was. The information about him being wealthy was enough to plan to go to him and introduce their unmarried daughters. “The business of her life was to get her daughters married,” this is a quote from the book (Austen, 2004, p. 3), speaking of Mrs. Bennet. I have already explained the importance of being married in the nineteenth century. But what was the reason? As we already know from the first chapter, owning a home was a requirement for young men who wanted to participate in democracy. That is why many young men bought their homes. And it is clear now, that home was (and still is) extremely important for the English. Getting married was a way to build a home, start a family and get a certain social status, but it also worked the other way. Wealthy men were expected to find themselves a wife. In addition, Mr. Bennet’s property was entailed, therefore the heir of the property after his death had to be a man, not any of his daughters could inherit it – and this would be tragic, losing their family’s home that they loved. That is why Mrs. Bennet would do anything to marry her single daughters.

In the first chapters, the Bennet sisters and their mother attend a ball, where they meet Mr. Bingley, his sisters and his friend, Mr. Darcy. This moment shows the importance of first impressions, as Darcy outrages the whole town and everyone dislikes him immediately, mostly Elizabeth, whom he had called not attractive enough. Even the fact that Darcy is very wealthy will not change that. Everyone wishes they never see Darcy again. Also, the Bennet sisters meet Mr. Bingley's sisters and find them impolite. Even though Jane disagrees with her sister, Elizabeth, and claims that the Bingley sisters are actually nice when you talk to them, Elizabeth does not want to change her attitude and continues to dislike them. One ball and so many people are already pigeonholed, based on the first impression. At the very same ball, we can notice first signs of Mr. Darcy's need for privacy. He does not want to dance with anyone he does not know. When his friend, Mr. Bingley, encourages him to go and dance with one of the beautiful ladies, Darcy says that he detests it, unless he is 'particularly acquainted' with the dancing partner. It is just a dance; the reader may think. Well, for the English, and certainly for Mr. Darcy who is obsessed with privacy, it is not.

Gossip is much-discussed in the whole book, especially the gossip coming from Lydia, the youngest of Bennet's daughters. After the night of the ball, women came together to talk about it – who likes whom, if Darcy really is such a horrible person or if he has the right for his pride, if the single ladies have a chance with Mr. Bingley – and they, indeed, discuss it to the very last detail. Gossip is very closely connected with scheming, because it all is about talking behind somebody's back, but scheming is aiming to achieve something, to manipulate a person into doing what they otherwise would not do. We do not have to go very far in the book to find the perfect scheming plan. The following situation is such well thought through, that the reader will be in awe. Jane was invited to have dinner with Mr. Bingley's sisters, so that they could get to know each other better. She received the invitation while being with her mother and other women from the family. Jane wanted to take the carriage to travel there, but her mother suggested she should go on horseback, because it was starting to rain and Jane would then have to spend the night. It was a very good plan to help Jane spend time with Mr. Bingley. Unfortunately, the plan worked too well and Jane got sick. Due to her illness, the Bingleys refused to send her home and she had to spend more time there. During Jane's stay, her sister Elizabeth comes to visit her and the importance of money and social class shows. Bingley's sisters make fun of Elizabeth, and when Mrs. Bennet arrives to visit her daughters, she is being laughed at, too. The difference between wealthy and poor people is huge – the differences in social status, daily worries and the

standard of living are distinct. At the end of chapter eleven, when Elizabeth and Jane leave and go back home, Mr. Darcy is relieved. Not because he would still despise Elizabeth, but because he is afraid that he may have feelings for her, and marrying someone like her was not an option, considering his social status.

As mentioned earlier, gossip is not always a hurtful thing. The problem begins when people start twisting information and telling half-truths. In *Pride and Prejudice*, first hurtful gossip comes from Mr. Wickham, who is a militia officer and an old acquaintance of Mr. Darcy. Thanks to the fact that Mr. Wickham gave a good first impression, it was easy for Elizabeth to believe everything he said about Mr. Darcy immediately and she was convinced that he was a very bad person, deserving nothing more than contempt. This is cleared up later in the book. But the gossip had sure hurt Mr. Darcy's reputation. This tension and confusion cause some awkward moments at another ball, where Elizabeth and Darcy meet. Elizabeth invades Darcy's privacy by mentioning Mr. Wickham and suggesting that Darcy had scarred him for life. Darcy is clearly uncomfortable speaking of that, so he tries to change the subject. In this moment, Elizabeth broke one of the privacy rules, because it was not her place to comment on the relationship of Darcy and Wickham.

Some time passed and Mr. Collins, snobbish and obsequious man who is supposed to inherit Mr. Bennet's property, asks Elizabeth to marry him. She turns down his offer, because she does not want to marry somebody she does not love, just to be married – for the same reason as Austen, who called off engagement only a day after saying yes. She says no even though it means losing a home. Here comes a surprising twist, when Elizabeth's best friend, Charlotte, agrees to marry Mr. Collins, after things did not work out with Elizabeth. This is a very nice moment in the story, because it directly explains the connection of home and marriage. Of course, Charlotte is not in love with Mr. Collins, but this is what she tells Elizabeth: "You must be surprised, very much surprised, - so lately as Mr. Collins was wishing to marry you. But when you have had time to think it all over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collin's character, connections and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as people can boast on entering the marriage state," (Austen, 2004, p. 96). Elizabeth definitely disagrees with her friend, as she thinks that marriage should be about love. Charlotte represents majority of English women in the nineteenth century – the importance of 'a comfortable home' is undeniable. This is not the only time when money and status wins over love. Mr. Wickham,

who spoke ill of Mr. Darcy, was in a kind of relationship with Elizabeth, but it was not too serious. Then he found another young woman to ‘love’, as she had conveniently recently inherited big amount of money (but does not end up marrying her, as we learn later). Elizabeth sees that many people marry from the wrong reasons and it disgusts her.

Another part of the story where we can see the importance of home is when Elizabeth visits Pemberley. She admires the house and its surroundings and it has a big influence on her decision to marry Darcy. She sees the “large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; - and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance” and is amazed. The house is a great symbol of its owner and we can see that one’s home really should be something the person can be proud of. After all, Austen often describes homes of the book characters in detail, not only from the outside, but also inside – the furniture, rugs, drawings on the walls – anything that can help us imagine the family living there.

The last chapters are quite dramatic. The youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Lydia, elopes with Wickham, a man of no fortune, who only cares about himself and is a coward and a liar. What we know about the relationship, we mostly know from the gossip of other characters, not from real dialogues between Lydia and Wickham. Same as the marriage of Charlotte and Mr. Collins, neither this relationship is based on love. Lydia is young and foolish and all she wants to do is have fun, she does not take marriage seriously and does not really understand what it should be about. Wickham only cares about money, which we can see from the fact that he actually never intended to marry Lydia, and only marries her after being bribed. Not marrying Lydia after running away together would ruin the Bennet family’s reputation, so there was a lot of scheming in order to prevent this to happen. At that time, Elizabeth thinks that having Wickham in the family took away any chances of her marrying Darcy. She does need to worry about Darcy, but more about his aunt, Catherine. She keeps meddling into their relationship and tries to forbid Elizabeth to say yes to Darcy’s potential proposal. However, Elizabeth is a brave young woman and stands up to her, without the need to tell someone else about their conversation – which is a big difference between Elizabeth and Lydia, who gossips all the time about everyone and everything. The story has a happy ending and both, Elizabeth and Jane marry the men they love.

*Pride and Prejudice* really is a book full of scheming, meddling, gossip and family drama. Mr. Darcy is obsessed with privacy and does not like anyone meddling in his personal life. All women in this book love to gossip, but usually in a harmless way. On the other hand, there are situations where gossip can hurt somebody's reputation, such as the lies that Wickham was telling about Darcy. Austen perfectly described the importance of home and its connection to the need of getting married – love was not the priority, but to have a home and be financially secured was important. The writer also provided a description of many homes, inside and out, which shows that home is not only a place to live, but a place to work on, to put a personal stamp on it. When describing Darcy's home, we could see the similarity of Darcy's character and his home. To close this chapter, I think it is accurate to say, that when it comes to the English, it is not 'like father, like son', but 'like owner, like home'.

### **3 Application in Teaching**

After explaining theories about the value of privacy, home and gossip for the English and showing how these theories help to understand *Pride and Prejudice*, questions arise: How is this important in teaching? Is there a way of using this in English classes? Why should students learn about this social dynamic?

We live in days when it is very easy to travel anywhere in the world. Travelling is a life ambition for some people, but almost everyone loves to go on holiday abroad. London – and the whole England - is a very popular destination, especially to students learning English, when they go on educational excursions to English speaking countries. People tend to travel and are happy when they are able to communicate in English fluently, but they do not realize that language skills are not everything. It is very easy to get into awkward situations, to offend the natives or get offended based on misunderstanding. It is usual to learn basics of let's say Asian culture when travelling to Vietnam, China or Thailand. Because people are aware of the fact that it is very different from European culture and want to avoid conflicts. But it is often forgotten, that even inside Europe, the cultures may differ. Of course, we all have a lot in common, but every nation has its specifics that go way back in history – for example the importance of home and privacy for the English. Why do many people, even students learning English, not realize that? Well, the first time many students learn about the culture of English speaking countries, is often at a university. Before that,



high-school students only hear about things like national dishes, differences in holidays and famous sights to see in such countries. That is all very interesting, but is not it more important to understand people's behaviour than to remember their national dish?

When I look back at my high-school studies, I had a great English teacher. She was one of the few with real love for the language, with correct pronunciation and the right attitude for a teacher to have – supportive, optimistic and devoted to her job. The lessons were entertaining and it was so easy to learn everything! But by everything, I mean mostly grammar and vocabulary. Of course, those are very important things to learn, if the students are supposed to be able to speak fluently. But are there really not any spare lessons to talk about culture? Sure there are. Furthermore, culture learning and language learning must be linked. What are the goals of teaching culture? Kulkarni (2019, p. 27) divides these goals into two groups. First, goals for every student, of which, in my opinion, the most important is moving beyond stereotypes and prejudice. Another two goals that I think are most relevant are: 1) recognizing the essentiality of cross-cultural tolerance, because “an understanding of the way of life of other cultures is important to survival in a world of conflicting value systems” and 2) creating a desire to learn more about the culture. The other group of goals aims to students who plan to visit or live in the target culture, and of those I find this one the most important: coming as close as possible to empathy with the target culture. It makes sense that these are the teacher's goals. Each student must decide what level of culture awareness they want to reach. My point is, English teachers should not take away the opportunity of learning about English culture, they should include it into their lessons. I would like to use a quote from a book about intercultural competence (Bianco, Lidicoat & Crozet, 1999, p. 120): “Culture is not acquired through osmosis. It must be taught explicitly.” And who should teach it, other than teachers? I know it may be difficult to include cultural education in high-school classes, so I tried to make a short guide.

First, the teacher himself/herself must understand the particular culture and its similarities and differences from other cultures around the world. The teacher should not avoid talking about the ‘dark side’ of the target culture, but should be able to find balance between the dark and the light. They should be able to honour all cultures, not only the one they teach about. And most importantly, the teacher must have clear goals for teaching culture and know exactly what they want to achieve and how (Kulkarni, 2019, p. 26). These are the basic ‘rules’ to follow if we want to enrich our student's lives of cultural knowledge and help them get the whole package of information and skills in a certain foreign language

– in this case, English. I think it is clear now why this is so important, and because I am aware that this is all just a theory, I thought about one specific way of putting cultural education to an English class.

Because this thesis was all about privacy, home and gossip in the eyes of the English, I am going to focus on that. If the students are not used to learning about culture, it could be a shock for them to just come to class and start explaining these theories – I am sure that most of students would be extremely bored and would not understand why they have to listen to the teacher speaking about all this . I tried to think of the way to naturally place this topic to regular education. Every teacher once was a student. So, I thought: What would I appreciate as a student? Which activity would be entertaining enough to make me interested in this issue? Every year, our English teacher would give us a chance to choose one of many books that she had brought to class, and then we had one semester to read it. To be honest, it was annoying and half the time I did not even know what the book was about. I remember once I read a thriller, but today I do not even know what the title was, let alone remember the characters. Why? Because I did not see a point in reading such book – the only goal was to get us to read something in English, but there was zero real value. How can I, as a teacher, make the reading more entertaining and use it to teach culture? I am going to work with the book which penetrates through the whole thesis – *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen. I would use this book to help me teach about home, privacy and gossip in England. I completely agree with giving students homework regularly. I also agree with the fact that reading in foreign language significantly increases language skills. And there is nothing easier than to use these things to teach culture in high-school. I would not tell the students to read the whole book by the end of semester. I would always tell them which chapters to read - as homework, throughout the whole schoolyear. I would give them a brief introduction of the theory of home, privacy and gossip – using Fox’s and Paxman’s works - so they know what to look for, and then I would create worksheets for each segment of the book. To give an example: While reading chapters, where Charlotte agrees to marry Mr. Collins, the worksheet would include questions such as ‘How do we know that home was extremely important to Charlotte?’ and the students would be able to answer that it is clear from her choice of marrying Mr. Collins, and they may quote the part where Charlotte says that all she wants is to have a good home for herself. Then the students would have a chance to comment on what they thought was important or what they liked in the chapters. On the day of submissions, there could be a short discussion and the students could ask questions, if

there was anything not clear. I, as a teacher, would then briefly comment on the chapters myself and explain it a bit more with Fox's and Paxman's theories, or say something more about nowadays cultural situation in England. This would not be an activity for each lesson, but for example once a month, because there still is a lot of grammar and vocabulary to be taught. On the other hand, I would try to regularly include texts about other aspects of English culture, because a lot of grammar and vocabulary can be taught through reading, so students would learn both culture and grammar simultaneously.

I know that there is a lot to pass on students and it is not always easy to be a teacher. But being a teacher should not be taken as punishment, but as a mission. The goal is not only to teach as much grammar as we can, but to help our students fall in love with the language and understand the culture of the people who use it. I am sure, and can speak from my own experience, that students do appreciate any extra work that the teacher does. Teachers should never stop learning, because there is a lot to know and a lot to give our students. I hope this chapter explained the importance of teaching culture in foreign language classes and provided sufficient number of practical examples. I will end this chapter with a quote by professor Temple Grandin from Colorado State University: "I cannot emphasize enough the importance of a good teacher."

## CONCLUSION

The first goal of my research was to describe the theory and value of privacy, home and gossip in the eyes of the English and the relations between them. I found out that the importance of home has a very rich history. The most important period was the nineteenth and twentieth century, when owning a home was one of the requirements when someone wanted to participate in democracy. Because of that, DIY became popular, the English's interest in their home's appearance increased and in the twentieth century, the first DIY shop was opened. The English spend a lot of time improving their homes without the help of others. It was interesting to find out that even though the English take such good care of their homes, they do everything they can to make finding their home almost impossible – I liked the statement of Kate Fox, that the Englishman's home is his castle. Not only do the English put numbers on their houses, they name them, and as Paxman said, putting names on houses indicates a very strong emotional attachment. This is where one could face difficulties of understanding the social life of the English. If they barely let people in their home, how do they socialize? Using *Watching the English* I explained the importance of pubs. I showed that pubs are one of the few places where it is acceptable to talk to a complete stranger, but this “pub culture” has its own rules – like many other things in England. The first chapter described two basic strategies of communicating with someone who values privacy as much as the English. These strategies are a way to bypass the reserved character of people and get a chance to get to know them. Further in the chapter I came across the connection of gossip and privacy. It is connected to the laws of supply and demand – the less information people give away, the more information the others want to know. And that is why gossip is so popular in England. I also explained the distance rule of gossip by Fox – the more distant the subject of gossip is from me, the wider the circle of people I can talk with about it is. One surprising fact from my research was that there is a “print exception” from privacy rules – media can gossip about anyone and anything, which can be far from innocent gossip among friends and can ruin somebody's life. The first chapter confirmed my belief that the value of privacy, home and gossip are strongly interconnected and that these values are based on historical events of England.

The goal of the second chapter was to use the theories from the first chapter and apply them in the analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*. After understanding the value of home, privacy and gossip it was easy to understand the book characters and the story. I chose a few parts

to show how the theory of privacy, home and gossip works in real life. I was able to do that, even though this book was written a long time ago, because Austen's works are very contemporary and her stories are based on her real life. The major elements of the book are gossip, scheming and meddling – which I showed with multiple examples. Also, the importance of home explained the need of getting married at any cost, just to be financially secured and have a home. The theory of privacy was major in understanding one of the main characters, Mr. Darcy. One could think that he was reserved and mean, but his need of privacy was completely natural. The theory from the first chapter and analysis from the second put together a perfect tool for understanding the English.

The last chapter was supposed to explain why my research was relevant to teaching English at high school and to suggest ways to subsume cultural education into classes – with the help of works by Fox, Paxman and Jane Austen. Using books about cultural education in teaching foreign languages, this chapter described the main goals that the teacher should have – for example to help the students recognize the essentiality of cross-cultural tolerance or create the students' desire to know more about certain culture. I suggested one possible way of doing so by reading *Pride and Prejudice* and analysing it the same way I did it in this thesis. I was trying to emphasize the importance of cultural education beside teaching only grammar and vocabulary. This is definitely something I am going to use in my teaching practice.

I think I achieved the goals of my research. This thesis was definitely very enriching for my university studies. I tried to understand aspects of the values of the English so that I could use this knowledge in my teaching and pass it on my students. I believe I managed to work with the topic of privacy, home and gossip in a way that was logical and can be used as a guide for cultural education.

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## Summary in Czech

Tato práce pojednává o třech velmi důležitých životních hodnotách Angličanů – o domovu, soukromí a tlachání. Popisuje jejich vzájemnou provázanost a vše, co s nimi souvisí. Používá teorie dvou známých antropologů – Kate Fox a Jeremyho Paxmana. Po vysvětlení jejich teorií se práce zabývá analýzou knihy *Pýcha a předsudek* od Jane Austenové. Tato kniha obsahuje spoustu momentů, které její autorka zachytila na základě svého života, a tudíž na nich můžeme pozorovat teorii domova, soukromí a tlachání v praxi. S pomocí porozumění těmto fenoménům je kniha snadno vysvětlena. Spojení teoretického výkladu a analýzy díla od Austenové poskytuje celkový přehled o této části anglické kultury. Poslední kapitola se zaměřuje na využití výše zmíněného v učitelské praxi.