

Undergraduate Thesis Assessment Rubric
Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia

Thesis Author: **Gabriela Klimendová**
 Title: *Variants of English acquired by Czech students*
 Length: 62 pages
 Text Length: 46 pages

Assessment Criteria	Scale	Comments
1. Introduction is well written, brief, interesting, and compelling. It motivates the work and provides a clear statement of the examined issue. It presents and overview of the thesis.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
2. The thesis shows the author's appropriate knowledge of the subject matter through the background/review of literature. The author presents information from a variety of quality electronic and print sources. Sources are relevant, balanced and include critical readings relating to the thesis or problem. Primary sources are included (if appropriate).	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
3. The author carefully analyzed the information collected and drew appropriate and inventive conclusions supported by evidence. Ideas are richly supported with accurate details that develop the main point. The author's voice is evident.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
4. The thesis displays critical thinking and avoids simplistic description or summary of information.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
5. Conclusion effectively restates the argument. It summarizes the main findings and follows logically from the analysis presented.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
6. The text is organized in a logical manner. It flows naturally and is easy to follow. Transitions, summaries and conclusions exist as appropriate. The author uses standard spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
7. The language use is precise. The student makes proficient use of language in a way that is appropriate for the discipline and/or genre in which the student is writing.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
8. The thesis meets the general requirements (formatting, chapters, length, division into sections, etc.). References are cited properly within the text and a complete reference list is provided.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	Strictly speaking, the page numbering is not in accordance with the conventions.

Final Comments & Questions

As a well-known song writer noted almost threescore years ago: "The times they are a-changin'". These words seem equally applicable today, and no more so than in the field of linguistics. Gone, it seems, are the days when TEFL instructors would advise their students to choose one of the two main varieties of English, namely British or American, and stick to it consistently. The idea of mixing the two would have been considered rather gauche, something akin to an enthusiastic learner of Czech as a foreign language deciding, say, to combine Pilsen pronunciation with the vocabulary of Hantec.

Nowadays things are less clear-cut as several erstwhile distinctions between BrE and AmE have become blurred. The thesis under review here contains several references to the BBC, which was once considered a bastion of good language use; however, this reviewer can only note with regret how its reporters in recent years, at least in World News broadcasts, have begun to quote even British stock market prices in dollars rather than pounds sterling, refer to Premier League football managers as "head coaches" or describe posing a difficult question as "throwing a curve ball" rather than "bowling a googly". Thus the precise categorisation of linguistic phenomena as either BrE or AmE seems destined to become increasingly problematic, as exemplified by the following passage on p. 32: *In the first exercise the majority of prepositions coincided with the AmE usage, except for one sentence which was completed following British grammar use: I will write__ you as soon as I get home, the respondent chose no preposition for this clause.* In the opinion of this reviewer, a BrE speaker, omission of the preposition in this sentence is an Americanism; true, it can also occur in some BrE dialects but would be considered non-standard.

The thesis is not without other eyebrow-raising moments, such as the third research question on p. 9: *Which variant should be taught at school and why in the students' opinion?* Even if one variant or the other were made mandatory by the Ministry of Education, how would one define the parameters and how would the ruling be enforced? In the event of any complaints, would school inspectors even be sufficiently qualified to judge the linguistic nuances involved? Meanwhile, what is to become of the numerous other variants of perfectly legitimate English? Are they to be treated as somehow sub-standard, thus reinforcing the impression that the Brits and the Americans are guilty of linguistic imperialism? (Incidentally, Ms. Klimendová does mention three other variants on p. 14 of her work, namely Canadian, Australian and New Zealand, though the reason for allowing each a potted paragraph is not completely clear since they play no further part in the research.)

As regards the questionnaire, why anyone should want to switch between the two codes in question in their own language production is something of a mystery. True, there are occasions where misunderstandings can occur between native Brits and Americans and substitution of a particular word or phrase by its equivalent on the other side of the Atlantic is a useful aid to comprehension. But this is a far cry from repeatedly and consciously crossing some imaginary linguistic demarcation line with everything, if done properly and consistently, that process entails (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, use of idioms).

All that said, the thesis as a whole is diligently researched, logically organised and maintains a consistently high standard of language throughout. The main text reads fluently and offers the reader an insight into students' motivations and preferences in their language acquisition. One appreciates the amount of effort that has gone into the thesis and the outcome is a fluent and highly readable text deserving of the highest grade.

As a final note: the author suggests in her conclusion that *the research, despite its fairly limited form, could give some teachers an idea of students' attitudes towards English and help them understand where their uncertainties in pronunciation, spelling and possibly grammar lay. And furthermore lead them to unify the use of the language.*

This seems rather vague: one may agree that various uncertainties may arise due to different varieties of English but, rather like the afore-mentioned issue of which variant to teach, how is the teacher supposed to "unify" conflicting elements, especially when the author's own research shows a considerable majority of students prefer AmE to BrE (62.5% v. 37.5%), yet still 48% think BrE should be taught in schools, compared to 28% supporting AmE? In fact, though, this dilemma may disappear of its own accord. In 2017 British author and journalist Matthew Engel published a book entitled *That's The Way It Crumbles: The American Conquest of the English Language* in which he suggests that by 2120 Americanisms will have completely absorbed the English language. The obvious implication here is that "the English language" belongs to the English, which more or less echoes a sentiment expressed several decades earlier by the late right-wing English politician Enoch Powell: "Others may speak and read English – more or less – but it is our language, not theirs. It was made in England by the English and it remains our distinctive property, however widely it is learnt or used." Alas, it is highly unlikely any of the people linked with this thesis, be it as author, survey respondent or examination board, will be alive to attest to the accuracy or otherwise of Engel's prediction; however, it may well be that, 100 years hence, anyone reading Ms Klimendová's work will wonder what all the fuss was about.

Recommended grade: **výborně**

Reviewer: Andrew Tollet

Date: 3rd June 2021

Signature: