



Ústav světových dějin FFUK

Master's Thesis Review

Student's name and surname: *Bc. Aneta Klánová*

Title of the thesis:

Linguistic Identity in the English as a Lingua Franca Communication: Changing Perceptions on English Non-nativeness in the Context of an Erasmus Community of Practice

Reviewer's name and surname: Jiří Janáč, PhD

1. Heuristic (please, evaluate by grade 1, 2, 3, 4 – in case of grading 3 and 4 the reviewer is obliged to formulate critical points)

1.1 Evaluation of the selection of literature and sources	1
1.2 Complexity of used sources from the perspective of the state of the art	2

Short evaluation:

This highly original thesis combines three major bodies of literature – globalization studies, cultural studies on identity formation and socio-linguistic (the latter two having been recently merged in Linguistic Ethnography). All this set against a broad historical background. This proved (as expected) to be a highly demanding task. While especially from the perspective of historiography the thesis seems to be occasionally a bit superficial in its dealings with historical complexity (see e.g. the discussion of the concept of Lingua Franca, chapt. 2.1), Aneta successfully managed to merge conceptually divergent and fragmented scholarly traditions into a logical and terminologically coherent narrative.

2. Research problem and its solution (please, evaluate by grade 1, 2, 3, 4 – in case of grading 3 and 4 the reviewer is obliged to formulate critical points)

2.1 Choice of the formulation of the research issue respects the task given to the student	2
2.2 The relevance of the goal from the perspective of research area methodology	1



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Short evaluation:

Given the highly original and innovative theoretical and methodological framework, it seems inappropriate to judge the result from a single “research area” perspective. The topic addressed by the thesis (i.e. emancipation of non-native English speakers from normative standards) is a highly relevant issue with wide implications in the context of globalization. However, from a “historical” point of view the formulation of research goals could have been more clearly linked to the territorial aspects of chosen case study (European cultural policy).

3. Thesis’ structure evaluation (please, evaluate by grade 1, 2, 3, 4 – in case of grading 3 and 4 the reviewer is obliged to formulate critical points)

3.1 Is the structure of the thesis logical?	1
3.2 Does the thesis’ structure work along the methodology and methods declared in the introduction	2

Short evaluation:

The opening theoretical and methodological part seems a bit too long when compared with the analytical part (the Erasmus students case study), but this is understandable considering the complicated (above mentioned) interdisciplinary character of the thesis.

4. Quality of analysis and interpretation (please, evaluate by grade 1, 2, 3, 4 – in case of grading 3 and 4 the reviewer is obliged to formulate critical points)

4.1 Analysis of sources and literature	1
4.2 Interpretation of sources and literature in their interaction	2

Short evaluation:

The case study is well chosen and developed and responds to the general objective of the research and its theoretical framework. However, conclusions tend to be too detailed and could have been stronger and better crafted. The final summary basically confirms the hypothesis that Erasmus students develop a different linguistic identity, but this is not linked with the broader questions proposed in the theoretical part of the thesis (globalization, regionalization).



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5. Quality of the text (please, evaluate by grade 1, 2, 3, 4 – in case of grading 3 and 4 the reviewer is obliged to formulate critical points)

5.1 Style and grammar	1
5.2 Use of terminology	1

Short evaluation:

The quality of the language and other formal aspects of the thesis are of a high standard. However, some parts seem a bit repetitive - the chosen qualitative research methodology is well described in the section devoted to methodology, but then retold again in the description of the research itself. While this seems redundant, it must be said that many anthropological studies follow the same pattern. Consequently, analytical part appears a bit “talkative.”



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6. Synthetic evaluation (minimum 500 signs):

The central argument of thesis is relatively clear and simple. According to the author, self-perception of non-native English speakers is currently changing from being aspiring learners of normatively defined foreign language towards becoming self-confident users of English as lingua franca (ELF). In other words, the position of non-native speakers basically shifts from a learner to an independent user and English usage shifts from being considered a special talent to a basic skill, which serves as a flexible communicative tool lacking strong normative standards. Such a transformation (or emancipation) of linguistic identity, Aneta argues, derives from globalization of English and concurrent de-centralization and de-territorialisation of the language standard and undermines the traditional division between non-native and native speakers creating a new, highly individualized form(s) of English. However, the extensive use of (necessary) jargon sometimes obscures this central message.

After a comprehensive overview covering the theoretical development of the ELF concept in socio-linguistics, the thesis introduces a case study of a community of Erasmus programme students in Prague. Coming from different native language backgrounds, with a different level of English proficiency, Erasmus students faced the need to communicate and sort out various tasks. This made them a "community of practice," in which social aspects and collective learning contributed to a gradual development of new linguistic identity. Using the qualitative methodology (interviews) Aneta analysed how the co-construction of community and linguistic identity went hand in hand and clearly proved that the self-image of participants as "English speakers" shifted towards ELF.

The thesis is based on an innovative methodology and offers an interesting insight into the contemporary process of "globalization of English" in European context. Perhaps the major drawback of the chosen research strategy is the dominant focus on linguistic literature. While the thesis clearly proves that the transition from ELF to ELF occurs, it does not fully consider the historical, social and political contexts of the process – for instance the issues of Europeanization (in both senses of the term as a political top-down process – Erasmus programme - and the bottom up integration processes) and the formation of European identity based on ELF.



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7. Questions and comments which should the candidate answer and discuss during the defence:

What is the role of English as the Lingua Franca in the process of globalization; how is the ELF different from its predecessors (such as Latin, Jiddish, Svahili etc.) and competitors (Hindi, Spanish etc.)?

The link between the theoretical part and the case study is clearly established, but the latter fails to deliver all that the former promises. This leads to a provocative question : was the central aim of the thesis to find out 1) whether (as stated in Conclusions), 2) how (as application of CoP concept suggests) or 3) why (theoretical introduction) the linguistic identity of students changed?

Let's think big – what are the broader implications of the process? How can the transition from EFL/EIL to ELF influence formation of European identity or affect the global power hierarchies?

Suggested grade: 1

Date: 28.8.2018

Signature: