



FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University

Department of English and ELT Methodology

A Review of a Final Thesis
submitted to the Department of English and ELT Methodology,
Faculty of Arts, Charles University

Name and titles of the reviewer: Mgr. Kateřina Vašků, Ph.D.

Reviewed as: ☒ a supervisor ☐ an opponent

Author of the thesis: Emma Tomoriová

Title of the thesis: *Colour Adjectives in British and American English*

Year of submission: 2021

Submitted as: ☒ a bachelor's thesis ☐ a master's thesis

Level of expertise:

☐ excellent ☒ very good ☐ average ☐ below average ☐ inadequate

Factual errors:

☐ almost none ☒ appropriate to the scope of the thesis ☐ frequent less serious ☐ serious

Chosen methodology:

☐ original and appropriate ☒ appropriate ☐ barely adequate ☐ inadequate

Results:

☐ original ☒ original and derivative ☐ non-trivial compilation ☐ cited from sources ☐ copied

Scope of the thesis:

☐ too large ☒ appropriate to the topic ☐ adequate ☐ inadequate

Bibliography (number and selection of titles):

☒ above average (scope or rigor) ☐ average ☐ below average ☐ inadequate

Typographical and formal level:

☐ excellent ☐ very good ☒ average ☐ below average ☐ inadequate

Language:

☐ excellent ☐ very good ☒ average ☒ below average ☐ inadequate

Typos:

☐ almost none ☒ appropriate to the scope of the thesis ☐ numerous



Brief description of the thesis:

The thesis takes up an examination of adjective gradability in British and American English with the aim to explore the opposite conceptualization of colour adjectives as gradable or non-gradable properties. The method is mostly appropriate to the topic, taking a macro-perspective in the first, quantitative part, and then examining a sample of 200 examples of graded or intensified adjectives in more detail. The results reveal that both varieties prefer the synthetic gradation for basic colours, with a higher proportion of the analytic gradation in AmE. The examination of sample examples indicates that analytic forms are more common in the predicative position than in the attributive position. Probably the most important finding of the thesis is the different proportion of synthetic and analytic forms in AmE depending on the semantics: whereas in literary uses, the proportion of synthetic and analytic form is very balanced, in figurative sense, the sample indicates a clear preference for the synthetic form. Although the thesis brings interesting findings about colour adjectives gradability, the research and its presentation in the thesis has some flaws (see below), which are probably largely due to the lack time in the final stage of thesis writing.

Review, comments and notes:

Strong points of the thesis: One of the strongest points in the thesis is the amount of literature worked through and presented in the theoretical part. Unfortunately, some of the sources are not presented according to referencing standards (e.g. in Section 2.3, various opinions are presented with vague reference to “some” and “other” authors, without any names. Names are provided in the beginning of section 3, but with no reference by means of the publication year and possibly also page. Another strong point is the interpretation of most data in the analytical part (see the description of main findings above).

Weak points of the thesis: In my opinion, the thesis is weak in the way how some fundamental parts of the research are presented. The introduction is difficult to understand because of many vague formulations (e.g. “The form of the colour adjectives under analysis is the set of synthetically and analytically inflected adjectives, and modifiers functioning as intensifiers and emphasizees to colour adjectives”). The aim of the thesis is not presented clearly: in the introduction, the aim is not presented, but there is a research question (which can be assumed to present the aim). In Methodology, it can be read that „[t]he thesis aims to take into account the ambiguity that revolves around the gradability of colour adjectives and classify them in sense of syntax and semantics.“ and in the conclusion, one can read that “The aim of the thesis was primarily to discuss the gradability of colour adjectives in British and American English, the way these adjectives form inflection and classify them in sense of syntax and semantics.“. I found it unfortunate that the aim (i.e. comparison of gradability of colour adjectives in BrE and AmE) is not described clearly throughout the thesis and that the analysis itself is actually presented as the aim.

The choice of *really* is not very illustrative since *really* can be used with both gradable and non-gradable adjectives. I think that the thesis would profit from a narrower scope, focusing on synthetic and analytic comparatives only.

The basic information about the sample of 200 examples is neither presented in Methodology, nor at the beginning of the relevant section. It would be definitely convenient for the reader to know how many instances of each sequence are in the sample, how many synthetic and analytic comparatives, and how many instances of modification.



Questions to answer during the Defence and suggested points of discussion:

How did you differentiate between the intensifying and emphasizing function of *really*? Is there any test that can be used or any hint to indicate that *really* is to be perceived as a degree modifier?

Mondorf's results differ in the proportion of synthetic and analytic comparatives in the figurative sense. Your results show more instances of synthetic inflection in this group. Did you try to find out how this could be explained?

Can you elaborate on this thought (p. 31)? "After a brief visual examination of *very red* and *very white* in BNC search, we could see a frequent figurative meaning, mostly regarding parts of the body while concerning the mental state of a person."

Other comments:

Although the analysis itself differentiates between analytic inflection and intensification (using premodifier *very*), premodification by *very* is described as "analytic inflection" on page 26 and elsewhere.

Rather frequent language errors sometimes make understanding hard, for example:

word-order (p. 8): "when, how and to what degree are used the comparative forms of colour adjectives in the two varieties"

grammar (p. 8): "This particular topic is examined because it is interesting to observe and examine the topic where nor grammars nor dictionaries cannot consent to one definite standard usage of colour adjective comparison"

lexicon (p. 46): "classify them in sense of syntax and semantics"

Proposed grade:

☐ excellent ☒ very good ☒ good ☐ fail

Place, date and signature of the reviewer: 30.8.2021

Prague,