



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. Eva Dvořáková

Reviewed as: a supervisor an opponent

Author of the thesis: Bc. Margarita Afanaseva

Title of the thesis: Gender-neutral pronominal reference in British parliamentary debates

Year of submission: 2025

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 (by the supervisor, ca. 100-200 words):

Review, comments and notes (ca. 100-200 words)

Strong points of the thesis:

- The topic is highly relevant, as there are ongoing discussions about inclusive language in the law, and the field appears to be in a state of flux.
- The research takes an original approach by examining whether the strategies recommended for legislative drafting can be identified in parliamentary debates. Given that modern legislative drafting emphasizes aligning legal language with standard language, exploring the interplay between legal written and spoken language is very valuable.
- Important implications: If the singular “they” has become the preferred option in parliamentary debates, it could signal a broader adoption in legal drafting in the future. The current stance of the OPC remains relatively cautious about the singular “they”.
- The theoretical background provides a very good overview of the relevant literature, and the research was conducted with great care.
- The thesis is well-written, with a clear structure and a smooth flow.

Weak points of the thesis:

I identified only a few very minor issues:

- “kos” translated as “scythe” (p. 13), the typo “Xathaki” (“Xanthaki”) (p. 55), repetition of “hereinafter CaDG” (p. 24, p. 25)
- (p. 24) “*The problem with this strategy is hidden in losing the link between the antecedent and the referent, and thereby putting the clarity of the text at risk.*” – this sentence is unclear.
- The discussion of plain language (in connection with “you”) seems slightly irrelevant (p. 46)

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

1. (p. 28) “*While some of the works mentioned above also address developments in recent years (e.g. Revell & Vapnek, 2020), these studies mostly examine the legal codes or other legal texts such as **opinions of the higher courts** (e.g., Williams, 2008; Rose, 2008). The **language of such texts is heavily edited and easily governed by the drafting rules.***” – Are you implying that the language of court opinions is easily governed by the drafting rules?
2. (p. 39) Example 35: “(35) *Basically, what we are looking at is the reverse of a 999 scheme: instead of the **citizen** telephoning the emergency services and asking for help, the emergency services contact the **citizen** and give the **citizen** advice. (George Young, #59662004)*” – You find the repetition of “citizen” far-fetched and excessive, and suggest its replacement with a pronoun. Can you think of a possible reason why the author may have opted for repetition in this case, rather than a pronoun?
3. (p. 45): “(57) *My Lords, passenger and transport **worker** safety is absolutely paramount. To help make (?their) **journeys** safer, my department has today published new guidance for both transport operators and passengers. (Charlotte Vere, #96379933)*”



- a. I understand you looked for singular nouns (e.g., person, worker). I wonder whether example 57 fits. Can you comment on this?
 - b. You suggest that a pronoun may be lacking with "journeys". Is it possible that the author preferred the option with no pronoun for a good reason?
4. (p. 45): "(60) Far too often, the social worker with that case is moved on. It is my experience that the social **worker** working with the family and the school is often employed only for six months, and 12 months if **you** are lucky."
- a. "you" in this case is ambiguous. Is it possible that the author may have intended a different antecedent/referent for "you" than a "worker"?
 - b. You say that in this case "the co-reference pro-form is easily substituted with singular generic they" (p. 46), adapting the text to "(60b) ... It is my experience that the social **worker** working with the family and the school is often employed only for six months, and 12 months if **they** are lucky. (Michael Storey, #81786346, adapted)" What are the possible antecedents of "they" here? Is "they" singular or plural?

Other comments:

I would like to see an example of

Proposed grade:

excellent very good good fail

Place, date and signature of the reviewer:

Prague,

22 January 2025