Posudek oponenta disertační práce

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"An Exception to the Rule?

How ELF in academic settings may be an exception to the new conceptualisation of ELF as a mode of communication."

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I. Stručná charakteristika práce

The author of this thesis explores the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in academic settings, specifically within Erasmus seminars at Charles University's Protestant Theology Faculty. The thesis challenges the dominant view of ELF as a fluid, multilingual communicative mode by arguing that, in this context, ELF behaves more like a bounded interlanguage, shaped by exonormative norms (i.e., native speaker standards). Through analysis of self-repairs in speech, classified as either propositional (meaning-altering) or presentational (form-focused), supported by follow-up interviews, the study finds that participants often adjust their language to align with perceived native norms rather than focusing solely on communication. The author suggests a lack of ELF-awareness and identity among users, minimal translanguaging, and a dominating orientation toward correctness. The thesis concludes that ELF in Prague's academic settings may represent an exception to current theoretical models and calls for pedagogical shifts to promote endonormative, multilingual ELF usage.

The author takes upon an innovative angle while challenging dominant paradigms (e.g. Mortensen's and Hall's conceptualisation of ELF as a mode of communication) by proposing that ELF in Prague's academic settings may behave more like a bounded, exonormative interlanguage. He also brings an original perspective while classifying self-repairs into propositional vs. presentational. The weaknesses of the text, on the other hand, lie in structuring and coherence of ideas, diffused description of the research methodology, outlining and organizing individual sections, repetitive passages and statements making it hard to read and orient in the argumentation.

II. Podrobné zhodnocení práce a jejích jednotlivých aspektů

The following detailed evaluation of the thesis is structure according to individual evaluating criteria of scientific texts.

1. Struktura argumentace – structure of argumentation

The thesis follows a conventional **academic structure** including the abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, results and discussion, conclusion, and references, although numbering and leveling individual chapters would streamline following the logical link and orientation in the argumentation.

Theoretical part of the text is comprehensive but occasionally dense with repetitive referencing to variations to the thesis aim which impedes key argumentation and reading flow. Some sections could benefit from more accurate editing. The author engages critically

with existing literature, including Jenkins, Mauranen, and Saraceni, and situates the study within broader debates about ELF identity, normativity, and translanguaging. While the thesis is rich in theoretical terminology, some terms (e.g. "similect", "presentational management") could be more clearly defined. Organizing individual chapters into a more structured system would better show the interrelationships of individual theories, concepts and terms.

The most obscure part of the thesis is the fragmented description of the research **methodology** insufficiently described in the Methods section (p. 32-37), and dispersed into rather random mentions throught the theoretical part (e.g. 24, 27, 29…) as well as the analysis of results (e.g. 40, 43, 44, 46…). The integration of Language Management Theory methodological approach, on the other hand, is well-justified and consistently applied.

The **analytical** part applying the Language Management Theory to classify self-repairs as either propositional or presentational is an effective approach allowing detailed understanding of how ELF users manage their speech in real time. The 14.5 hours of seminar recordings, with 343 utterances logged and categorized provides a solid empirical foundation for a qualitative study. The inclusion of participant interviews to validate the researcher's classifications supports the argumentation. The author carefully examines individual utterances with phonetic, syntactic, and semantic precision. Some passages, however, are dense and overly technical, which slightly hinders readability. Considering the quantitative formulation of primary research questions, some more basic statistical solutions (e.g., proportions, confidence intervals) would add content coherence, results clarity and data generalization.

Conclusions drawn at the end of the thesis are well-reasoned, reflective, and appropriately cautious and directly address the three research questions posed in the purpose statement section confirming a prevalence of presentational self-repairs and their implications for ELF normativity. The rather narrow margin (10 vs. 9), however, may weaken the argument that this may constitute a "feature" of ELF**.** The study is also based on a relatively small sample (five participants, one seminar course), which limits the generalizability of its findings. While the conclusions are well-supported, the claim that ELF in this setting is not ELF at all, but rather an interlanguage, may be too strong given the limited data. The conclusions could benefit from a more concise synthesis of the analytical findings, especially the implications of the self-repair classifications and follow-up interviews hand in hand with reformulation of the primary research quesions.

The author, however, acknowledges the **limitations** of the research, especially the small sample size and lack of comparative data and suggests specific directions for future research, including comparative studies with native speaker settings and longitudinal tracking of ELF development.

2. Formální úroveň práce – formal quality of the text

The formal quality of the thesis is the weakest aspect of the manuscript. Headings and subheadings are used, but not always consistently. A clearer visual hierarchy (e.g. numbered sections) would improve readability. Structuring paragraphs and spacing are chaotic (long empty spaces inconsistent in size between paragraphs and headings – e.g. p. 10, 11, 16, 17…) and unacademical (indented paragraphs). Heading isolated at the bottom of pages, side lines left from the MSWord track-changes function (p. 12, 18…) overall make the impression of an imcompete work together with occasional stylistic inconsistencies, such as long, complex sentences, some grammatical and typographical errors, which could be corrected with thorough proofreading.

The table of contents looks quite unprofessional (as if done by hand), too, figures and tables could be better integrated with explanatory text and unified in style. Some are redundant (p. 46) other missing (see above).

3. Práce s prameny či s materiálem – academic writing and referencing

While **research questions** are clearly stated in the Purpose statement section and properly revisited in the conclusion, their quantitative nature reduces the findings into simple numbers presented graphically on page 40. A qualitative formulation aimed at the sample analyses would be more appropriate for a dissertation thesis and woud allow for deriving a more elaborate, original conclusions advancing existing theories. A discrepancy can also be found in the number of research questions presented in the abstract (two) vs the number of the quesions reiterated in the Purpose statement section (three) (p. 32). Similarly, the research aim is repetitive and redundant as reiterated throught individual sections of the theoretical part makes it rather blurred.

The writing maintains a formal, scholarly tone throughout the whole text. Bibliography is extensive and relevant, though, many of the resources used are rather old and not adequatelly balanced with current research. While the work with resources including citing and paraphrasing is formally correct, their use is occassionally deviating from the academic standards and inconsistent (e.g. p. 12 – internet links in text).

4. Vlastní přínos – own contribution

The author of the thesis contributes to the current state of knowledge in the field of ELF with a new analytical approach, original data, and a critical rethinking of ELF theory in academic contexts. In particular, he applies Language Management Theory to classify self-repairs in ELF interactions as either propositional (meaning-altering) or presentational (form-focused) in a relatively underexplored context of a specific academic setting. As direct participant, he got access to a sound amout of recorded material including the knowledge of the context, yielding a robus number of utterances for analysis. He make a claim that ELF in specific academic setting may behave more like a bounded, exonormative interlanguage shaped by native speaker norms, supported by a slight prevalence of presentational self-repairs. Based on this, the author argues that this may constitute a distinctive feature of ELF in academic settings, potentially marking an exception to current ELF theory. Considering the relatively low number of research participants, however, this claim calls for further research.

Besides theoretical and methodological implications, the thesis has a practical reach in the form of a proposition that ELF users in academic contexts should be encouraged to adopt a more endonormative, multilingual approach, including suggestions for curriculum and teacher training reform.

III. Dotazy k obhajobě

- Your thesis challenges the dominant conceptualisation of ELF as a fluid, unbounded mode of communication. Do you see your Prague-based case as an exception or a

potential redefinition of academic ELF in other European or global context? What kind of factors may confirm or contradict your findings?

- You rely heavily on Language Management Theory to classify self-repairs. How did you ensure consistency and objectivity in distinguishing between propositional and presentational repairs, especially given the subjective nature of interpretation?

- You argue for a shift toward endonormative, multilingual ELF usage in academic settings. What practical steps would you recommend for institutions or educators to foster this shift, and how might resistance to such change be addressed?

IV. Závěr

[Svůj závěr prosím vyjádřete pomocí následujícího formalizovaného vyjádření (které pochopitelně můžete jakkoli rozvést, upřesnit či mu předřadit rozsáhlejší souhrnný hodnotící komentář k práci):]

Předložená disertační práce **splňuje** požadavky kladené na disertační práci, a proto ji **doporučuji** k obhajobě a předběžně ji klasifikuji jako **prospěl**.

31. 10. 2025 Dagmar Sieglová