

Review of Bachelor's Thesis by **Anna Mišutková:**
Selected Examples of the Use of Czech by University Language Students

Anna Mišutková chose a topic of particular relevance to her fellow students: the somewhat surprising use by some of Czenglish, despite years of study of English and participation in further courses at the Faculty of Pedagogy of Charles University. She backs up her thesis with reference to current language learning theory, and most convincingly, by a survey of first, second and third year students of Modern English and a statistical break-down of its results. The task was realistic in scope, well-researched, and of genuine practical value.

In her introduction she attributes this phenomenon to the fact that her classmates have been studying and continue to study English (for the most part) in their own country where "exposed to the influence of their mother tongue... they create a new language which takes linguistic rules from the Czech language and transform them into English". And many are unaware of this fact.

Section 2 examines the theoretical background for the existence of Czenglish. She finds the behaviourist theories of the 60s and 70s inadequate to explain the complex process of language acquisition. Error analysis, in particular, proved of little benefit, though it has still has some limited usage. Mišutková looks more to the theories of "interlanguage" introduced by American linguist Larry Selinker, discussing language transfer (both positive and negative) overgeneralization and simplification. Negative interference now seems to cause fewer problems than positive interference. It would seem that it is positive interference which leads directly to the "unconscious transfer" that creates Czenglish (and other such blended languages).

Mišutková's survey to test her classmates' use of Czenglish was given to first, second, and third year Modern English students. The first part of the survey, which identified age, gender, years of study and time spent in English-speaking countries showed that years of study mattered less than the quality of the study – though third year students did better than second year, and second year better than first. Significantly, students who had spent more than a month (most from three to five months) in an all-English environment did 15% better than their classmates.

The test itself had three parts: the first part giving 25 Czech words or expressions (false friends) to translate into English. The results showed Czenglish in 13 of the 25 words used. The second exercise (finding common mistakes) was less conclusive, while the third (choosing correct English words for a sentence) showed most students doing quite well. She then analyzed each question in detail, a very useful part of the whole. The overall percentage of wrong answers was 51% – conclusive proof of Mišutková's thesis.

The fact that there are now solid statistics to demonstrate both the specifics and the seriousness of the problem is extremely useful, both in general terms, and especially for the Faculty of Pedagogy itself.

I might add that the giving (and marking) of the survey in my first year Modern English classes was very interesting and highly instructive - for the students and for me.

Recommended grade: 1
Roslyn Rosenfeld, May 8, 2010