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Selected Examples of the Use of Czenglish by University Language Students

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I declare that I wrote my bachelor's thesis independently and exclusively with the use of the cited sources.

Prohlašuji, že jsem svou bakalářskou práci napsala samostatně a výhradně s použitím citovaných pramenů.

Prague, 17th February 2010

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Anna Mišutková

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Abstrakt: Má bakalářská práce má za cíl potvrdit užití fenoménu “Czenglish” univerzitními studenty jazyků. Analýza výsledků a vybraných příkladů Czenglish vede k závěrům potvrzujícím platnost hypotézy. Teoretická východiska jsou založena na teorii osvojování druhého jazyka se zaměřením na behavioristickou a kognitivní teorii učení. V rámci teorie osvojování druhého jazyka je také definována metoda rozboru chyb a pojem tzv. mezijazyku. Hlavní složkou praktické části teze je výzkum založený na dotazníku o Czenglish.

Klíčová slova: Czenglish, teorie osvojování druhého jazyka, mezijazyk, jazykový přenos

Abstract: The focus of the thesis is to prove or disprove the use of Czenglish by university language students. The theoretical starting point is based on the theory of Second Language Acquisition with special focus on the behaviourist and mentalist theories of learning. In addition, the method of error analysis and the notion of inter-language are discussed within the theories of SLA. The practical part of the work consists of the research carried out via *A Questionnaire on Czenglish*. The analysis of its results and of the Czenglish expressions used leads to proving the validity of the hypothesis.

Keywords: Czenglish, Second Language Acquisition, Interlanguage, Language Transfer

1 Introduction

Some university language students who study English as a part of their joint honours degree are often convinced that their proficiency in English is at an excellent level, having many years of studies behind them. Study of the English language at university provides them with a theoretical background as well as with practical classes. However, there is one important factor which makes students doubt their practical skills in the language. They learn English in the Czech Republic, a non-English speaking environment and, therefore, they are exposed to the influence of their mother tongue. Consequently, many Czech students try to learn perfect English but, instead, they create a new language which takes linguistic rules from the Czech language and transform them into English. This new language is called Czenglish. Czech students are not often aware of the use of Czenglish (as they understand each other) until they are confronted with a native speaker of English or with an English-speaking foreigner who immediately remarks this discrepancy. Embarrassing situations causing misunderstanding then arise and that is how I was motivated to focus on this topic

The basic aim of this work is to prove that university language students studying English as their major use Czenglish despite their advanced language level. More specifically, the research is focused on the students of the Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague in the Bc. programme. For these purposes I created a Questionnaire on Czenglish which should confirm the presence of Czenglish.

2 Theoretical background of Czenglish

2.1 Second language acquisition

Rod Ellis (1998) defines second language acquisition (SLA) as a complex process by which people learn a language other than their mother tongue (1998: 3). SLA research is a linguistic approach studying the process of learning of a second language. It may seem to be a transparent definition; however, some words need to be explained in further detail. First, “second”, in this context, does not imply any chronological process or rank of importance. It refers to any language which is learned after the mother tongue. In the case of this work, we deal with Czech university students of English. Hence, English can be their third or fourth language and their level of English can vary significantly.

Secondly, some linguists distinguish between “second” and “foreign” language. When speaking about SLA, these two terms are not contradictory. It is not important whether a person naturally learns a language of a country they live in; or through instruction at a school in their own country. Thus, “second” and “foreign” are interchangeable terms here. The focus of this work is on the second group – students learning a language at school.

The terms "acquisition" and "learning" can also pose a problem. They are not always treated as synonyms, as “acquisition” refers to the conscious aspect while “learning” refers to the subconscious aspect of the process. As in the previous case, their difference in meaning is insignificant; they are both acceptable and will be used as synonyms in this work.

2.2 Contrastive analysis and behaviourist learning theory in the field of SLA

Contrastive analysis is a sub-discipline of contrastive linguistics and is concerned with the comparison of two or more languages or subsystems of languages to determine the differences or similarities between them. This approach was largely used in the 1960s and 1970s for the purpose of second language acquisition research and sought to explain why some aspects of language 2 (L2) were more difficult to learn than others (Ellis, 1998: 31). Since the dominant psychological theory of 1960s was the behaviourist learning theory, it was believed that L2 learning involved habit formation which is a stimulus-response connection.

Learners, for example, could hear a sentence “Switch on the lights”, they subsequently used it themselves and achieved their communicative goal, i.e. the light was switched on when they wanted. Obviously, it was applicable only on direct observation and, furthermore, the learners’ output is not always equal to the input. In this sense, behaviourism cannot adequately explain L2 acquisition as learning is not just a response to external stimulus.

2.3 Mentalist theory of language learning

After the failure of the behaviourist learning theory, linguists advanced with the search for other concepts which would explain the theoretical background of L2 acquisition. This quest was completed as early as the 1960s with the rise of the mentalist theory of language learning.

This theory tries to account for the innovative and creative nature of language use. The principal features of language are that it is rule-governed, internal and abstract (Gass and Schachter 21). Mentalists observe that every human has an innate predisposition towards language acquisition which explains the uniformity and rapidity with which children learn their mother tongue. The ability to learn a language deteriorates with age and by the time of reaching physical maturity it is very low. The theory also stresses that the student's competence rather than his performance should be noticed and analysed.

Rod Ellis (1998) postulates the basic premises of the mentalist theory and summarises them in four main points:

1. Only human beings are capable of learning a language.
2. The human mind is equipped with a faculty for learning a language, referred to as a Language Acquisition Device. This is separate from the faculties responsible for other kinds of cognitive activity (for example, logical reasoning).
3. This faculty is the primary determinant of language acquisition.
4. Input is needed, but only to “trigger” the operation of the language acquisition device (Ellis 1998: 32).

To summarise these statements, the mentalist theory sees a special faculty in language acquisition called the Language Acquisition Device which has its separate place in human

brain. This faculty is vital for language learning. In addition, input is necessary but only as a starter of the complex operation.

2.4 Error analysis

SLA started to use the method of error analysis in the 1960s and it was established by British linguist Stephen Pit Corder. This method provided an alternative to contrastive analysis which is an approach using formal distinctions between learner's first and second language to predict errors. The fundamental discovery of error analysis was that many learner errors are caused by the learners' faulty assumptions about the rules of the second language.

Corder and other error analysts worked with the notion of errors which are systematic, as opposed to mistakes which are not. They created a typology of errors and they distinguish 4 basic types: omissive, additive, substitutive or related to word order. They are further classified according to their conspicuousness into two groups: overt errors, which are apparent also without context (e.g. "You thirsty"), and covert errors visible only in context. A different classification analyses the level of language and discerns phonological, vocabulary, lexical, syntactic and other errors (Corder 1986: 12).

The approach of error analysis struggled with some important methodological issues from the beginning. More precisely, the above mentioned typologies caused problems; linguistic data alone cannot always provide a reliable identification of the type of error. Secondly, error analysis touches on only productive skills (speaking and writing) and neglects receptive skills (listening and reading).

For these reasons, the approach was abandoned. Nowadays, it is still used for specific areas of SLA and it also serves in selected issues of teaching methodology. Corder and his group moved on a more complex approach which was named Interlanguage.

2.5 Interlanguage

The term "interlanguage" was first used by American linguist, Larry Selinker (1986). Several alternative terms referring to the same phenomenon have been used; Nemser calls it "approximative systems" and Corder names it "idiosyncratic dialects" and "transitional competence". They all refer to an emerging linguistic system created by a L2 learner who

studies the target language by applying some features of L1 and by over-generalizing L2 rules and, therefore, creates innovations. In other words, a L2 learner uses a language system which is neither the L1, nor the L2. It is a third language, with its own grammatical rules, vocabulary and so on. The rules used by the learner do not exist in either his/her own mother tongue, or in the target language.

The theoretical background of interlanguage is based on the fact that in a given situation the utterances produced by the learner are different from those that native speakers would produce, had they attempted to convey the same meaning (Selinker 1986: 33). He and other researchers of applied linguistics consequently initiated a discussion focused on three principal features of interlanguage. These declare that language-learner language is permeable, dynamic and systematic.

The learners create their interlanguage by a number of basic processes. The most frequent ones are learning strategies, i.e. activities adopted by the learners in order to help them learn the target language. According to Selinker (1986: 37), three primary learning strategies can explain the origin of interlanguage:

1. Language transfer – the learner's own mother tongue is used as the main source. In the past, this phenomenon was considered to be a mistake whereas nowadays it is recognised that all learners turn to their first language and it is an inevitable process, typical for early stages of L2 learning. The question of language transfer will be described in more details further in this work.
2. Overgeneralization – the learners apply target language rules in inappropriate situations, that is, in which a native speaker would not. This is visible on various levels, from phonetics, through grammatical and lexical to the level of discourse.
3. Simplification – concerning both semantic and syntactic. The speech of the learner is comparable to that of children. This may happen as a result of the lack of knowledge of the form in the target language or of uncertainty in producing the correct form.

2.6 Language transfer

Language transfer (also known as crossmeaning, linguistic/L1 interference) is a phenomenon referring to L2 learners who apply knowledge of their mother tongue to a target language. This may occur on any level – grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation etc. Terence Odlin (1997: 15) indicates that language transfer can cause two opposite effects, negative and positive, and can be conscious as well as unconscious.

A) Negative transfer

Negative transfer can be explained as the application of structures and forms that are not the same in the L1 and the L2. The theory of contrastive analysis proved that the greater the differences between the two languages are, the more negative transfer can occur.

It was believed that the majority of errors were based on the transfer from the L1 to the L2 until the morpheme studies of Dulay and Burt in 1973. Nowadays, it is not so evident that interference is the main cause of errors. Sometimes it is difficult to see that it was the L1 which caused an error.

B) Positive transfer

The effects of language transfer are not only negative. Obviously, if there was no language transfer, there would be no second language learning. The transfer is useful especially in the cases where the first and the second language are historically and linguistically related to each other. It can be said, therefore, that the more similar the two languages are, the more a positive transfer can be anticipated. For instance, English and French share a vast amount of vocabulary and there are more “Vrais Amis” than there are “Faux Amis”. Hence, if French-speaking learners of English or English-speaking learners of French become aware of this fact, they can profit from it.

Language transfer can also be classified as conscious and unconscious. Learners can sometimes guess the correct usage of an item or structure in the target language if they do not know it. This is called conscious transfer. Unconscious transfer means that the student does not think that the structures and internal rules of the two languages are different and he turns to the examples of his mother tongue.

Transfer can also occur between two acquired languages, especially if they are close to each other. For example a German learner of Italian and French can suppose that a particular grammatical issue is the same in both languages and tries to apply an Italian rule to French or vice versa.

The application of linguistic interference from the L1 to the L2 causes the formation of a new distinctive kind of learner acquired language (in this case English). It is a widespread phenomenon and these languages have their specific names created as a blend of the names of the two languages. Some well-known examples of the blends with English are:

Chinglish (Chinese)

Czenglish (Czech)

Engrish or Japlish (Japanese)

Franglish (French)

Spanglish (Spanish)

Tinglish (Thai).

Czenglish

As mentioned above, Czenglish is a blend of the words ‘Czech’ and ‘English’ and it is a synonym for “broken” or incorrect English used by Czech students of English. Czenglish errors can be classified into several main categories, such as grammatical, vocabulary, phrasal, spelling and pronunciation errors. This work concentrates on vocabulary and phrasal errors, paying more attention to the issue of faux amis (or false friends) and nuances in meaning.

3 Practical Part: Research

3.1 General information on the research

The research was done by means of a questionnaire (the complete “Questionnaire on Czenglish” can be found in Appendix 1 of this work, page 34-36). This questionnaire was aimed at university students of the English language. More specifically, the respondents were the students of the Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague studying English language and literature together with a second subject such as French, German, Maths or Pedagogy in B.A. programme. The questionnaire was anonymous and the respondents spent about 15-20 minutes completing it during their Modern English classes. Therefore, the principal hypothesis I base my research on is that pre-service teachers studying English as their major at the Faculty of Education use Czenglish expressions.

3.2 Sources of the examples of Czenglish

There are several main sources of the selected examples of the use of Czenglish which were used in the exercises of the questionnaire. The primary source is my three-year experience at the Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague. I recorded mistakes made by my class-mates during various English lessons.

A valuable source of Czenglish errors can be found in Sparling (1990), Hladký (1990) and Poslušná (2009). All the examples were chosen to match B2 and C1 level of learner knowledge of English, which should correspond with the respondents’ level.

3.3 Structure of the questionnaire

The Questionnaire on Czenglish has two main parts; the first part contains respondent-centred questions. Besides general questions on age and sex there are several questions which ask about the respondents’ year of studies at the Faculty of Education, how long they have been learning English and whether they have ever lived in an English speaking country. The answers should help to monitor any possible influence on the correctness of answers in the second part of the questionnaire.

The second part of the questionnaire comprises of a set of three different types of exercises. The first exercise focuses on the translation of 20 Czech expressions into English. An almost literal translation of these expressions and reclining upon learner's mother tongue is a common approach among Czech students and, therefore, the problem of "false friends" is anticipated.

The aim of the second exercise is to find a mistake in each of the given English sentences; the mistakes are of a vocabulary type. It tests if students are attentive to this type of errors or whether Czenglish formulations seem correct to them.

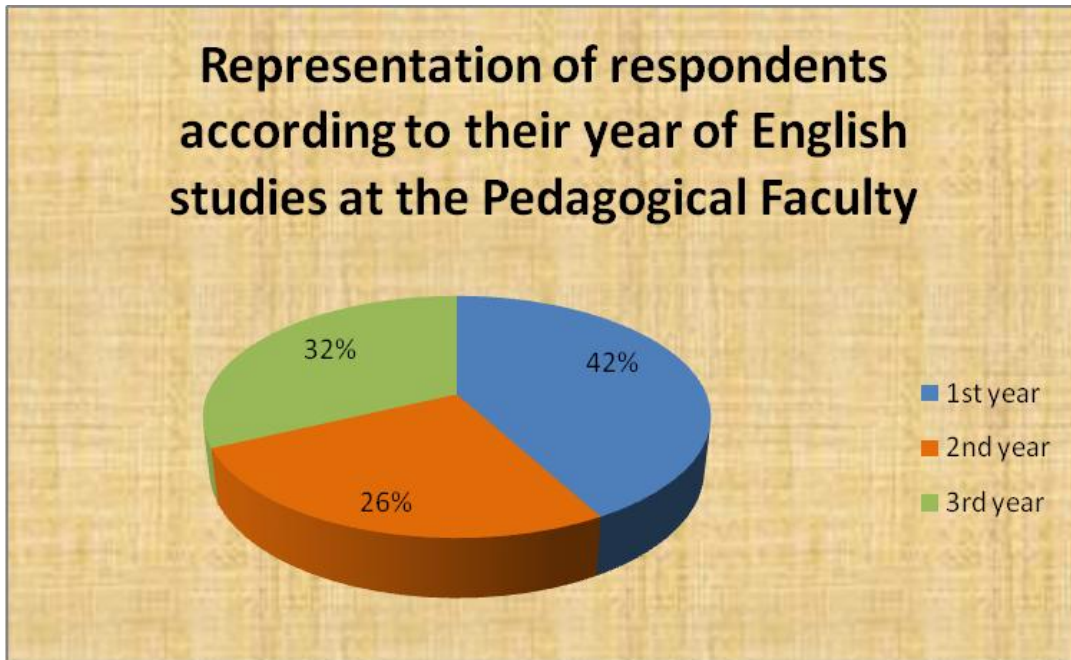
The third exercise offers a box of several synonymous expressions and the task is to put them into a suitable sentence. This exercise can show the respondents' (dis)ability to perceive nuances of specific semantic fields of the English language.

3.4 Statistical evaluation of the questionnaire

The total number of returned completed questionnaires is 145. There were 111 female and 34 male respondents. Their year of birth extends from 1975 to 1990; however, most of them were born during the period 1986-1989.

The number of respondents from each of the three years of the bachelor programme is different. As the graph below shows, the majority of the students were from the first year. In exact numbers, 61 first-year, 46 second-year and 38 third-year students answered the questionnaire. The disproportion in numbers has several reasons, e.g. the absence of some students from the seminars where the questionnaire was distributed and also the different number of students in each year.

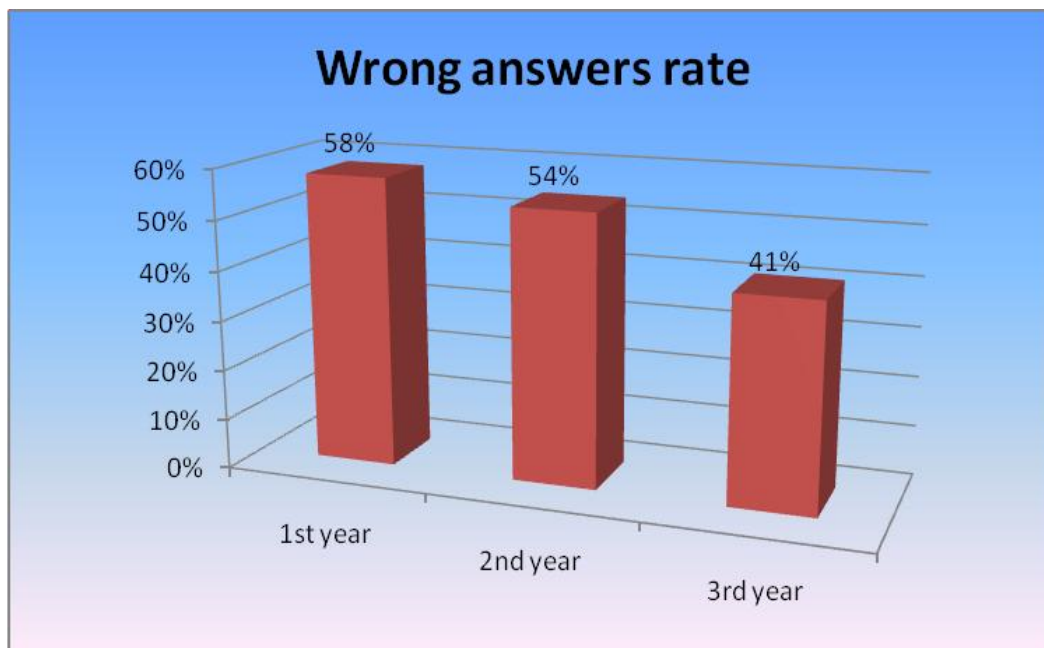
Representation of respondents according to their year of English studies at the Pedagogical Faculty



The data about the length of time the respondents had been learning English revealed that 6 respondents had been studying English for less than 6 years, 51 respondents for 6-10 years and 88 of them for more than 10 years. Surprisingly, the number of errors of the respondents who studied English for a shorter period of time did not differ from the one of the respondents with more years of learning English. This result indicates that the quality of studying English is frequently more important than the number of years.

The following question of the questionnaire monitored the number of students who had lived in an English-speaking country for more than one month. The result was 35 and their stay varied from 2 to 60 months, most often from 3 to 5 months. This fact helped them to achieve better results and they made approximately 15% less mistakes than the students without this kind of experience. Thus, a longer stay in an English-speaking country can be an efficient way of learning proper English.

Speaking about the success vs. failure rate in the exercise section of the Czenglish questionnaire, interesting results can be found if the main parameter is the year of university studies. The following visual representation of the wrong answers rate (in percentages) describes significant differences between the three years of studies at the university and a gradual trend of improving results proportional to the year of studies. This is another factor influencing the use of Czenglish.



Consequently, the final average percentage of wrong answers of all three years can be calculated from this graph. The result is 51% of wrong answers and it means that on average, Czech university students of English at the Faculty of Education used Czenglish in every second response to the questionnaire.

3.5 Quantitative output of the exercises

The complete list of used Czenglish expressions and their number can be found in the Appendix 2, p. 37-39. The following paragraphs will describe only the most important figures and the most frequent Czenglish expressions as the output of the questionnaire.

The first exercise of the questionnaire (see p. 34-36) contained 20 Czech expressions with the focus on 25 words whose translation into English should have proved the existence of Czenglish. On average, Czenglish was detected in 13 of the 25 words and the top 3 Czenglish words were “recipe for anticonception”, “priceless painting” and “tens of autograms”.

The least satisfying results were obtained in the second exercise; from 7 Czenglish mistakes only 2 of them were detected on average. The most serious problem was posed by the expressions “happy end” and “way how to”.

On the other hand, the third exercise showed the best results; from 7 expressions in the box 5 of them were placed correctly. The most frequent mistake was the failure to see the difference between “common” and “usual”.

4 Analysis of the examples of Czenglish in the exercises of the questionnaire

The analysis consists of several stages. First, a Czenglish expression is presented. It is marked by *asterisks* to point out that it is used wrongly. Then the circumstances and the possible origins of this mistake are mentioned. Afterwards, a dictionary definition from the 6th edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary is cited. To avoid misunderstanding, the whole definition is *in italics*. In the end, one of the possible solutions is offered. When it concerns translation from Czech to English, my own translation is used. The explanation is sometimes further exemplified by an example sentence.

4.1 First exercise

Konkurence – konkurent – konkurovat

These expressions represent one of the best known false friends when translated into English. Beginners often translate them as *concurrency* - *concurrent* - *to concur*, however these words have different meaning.

- *Concurrence* is a noun and can be understood as

1 *agreement*

2 *an example of two or more things happening at the same time*

- *Concurrent* is an adjective

~ (*with sth*) *existing or happening at the same time*

which means that not only semantic but also its syntactic use is different

- *To concur* is a verb meaning

~ (*with sb*) (*in sth*) | ~ *agree (with sth)*

Appropriate words for translations could be competition – competition – competitor – to compete, e.g. Peter’s company has won the contract despite stiff competition.

Aktuální (situace)

The translation of the Czech word “aktuální” as *actual* is another example of Czech-English false friends. Fortunately, it seems that Czech university students are aware of this tricky adjective and the expression “aktuální situace” was translated correctly in the questionnaire by most of them.

A quick look into the dictionary reveals the true meaning of the word:

- *Actual* is an adjective

1 *used to emphasize sth that is real or exists in fact*

2 *used to emphasize the most important part of sth*

In this sense, the Czech expression “aktuální situace” can be translated as current, up-to-date or topical situation. For instance: The current situation in Haiti is catastrophic.

Politika firmy

The Czech word “politika” is ambiguous and comprises two meanings. It can be translated as politics as well as policy. The expression “politika firmy” represents one of these two meanings and thus cannot be translated as *firm’s politics*, as some respondents assumed.

- The noun *politics* has several connotations:

1 *the activities involved in getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society*

2 *matters concerned with getting or using power within a particular group or organization*

3 *a person's political views or beliefs*

4 = *POLITICAL SCIENCE*

5 *a system of political beliefs; a state of political affairs*

- On the other hand, the noun *policy* means:

1 *~ (on sth) a plan of action agreed or chosen by a political party, a business, etc*

2 *a principle that you believe in that influences how you behave; a way in which you usually behave*

3 *a written statement of a contract of insurance*

Consequently, the appropriate translation of “politika firmy” is the firm’s policy, e.g. The firm’s policy for this year is to be announced on Monday.

Absolvent gymnázia

The Czech words “Absolvent” and “Gymnázium” are very close in spelling to the English words “Absolvent” and “Gymnasium” whereas their meaning is very distinct. Many university students of English can use them in an appropriate situation but there are some of them who still translate the expression “Absolvent gymnázia” as *Gymnasium absolvent*.

When analysing the meaning of these two English words, we learn that:

- *Absolvent* is a noun derived from the verb “to absolve”:

1 *to free from guilt or blame or their consequences*

2 *to set free or release, as from some duty, obligation, or responsibility*

3 *to grant pardon for*

- *Gymnasium* is a formal noun denoting

1 *a room or hall with equipment for doing physical exercise, for example in a school*

2 *physical exercises done in a gym, especially at school*

3 = *HEALTH CLUB*

From these definitions it is clear that these words are only false friends. Some of the possible correct translations of the above mentioned expression could be “grammar school graduate” (British English) or “high school graduate” (American English).

Mixer

One of the very frequent mistakes of Czech students of English is the translation of the Czech word “mixér” as *mixer*. Though a mixer is a kitchen appliance, it serves to a different function.

- *Mixer* is a noun denoting:

1 *a machine or device used for mixing things*

2 *a drink such as fruit juice that is not alcoholic and that can be mixed with alcohol*

3 *a device used for mixing together different sound or picture signals in order to produce a single sound or picture; a person whose job is to operate this device*

In this case, the correct name of the device “mixér” is blender or liquidizer (in British English) which describes an electric machine for mixing soft food or liquid.

Sympatický kuchař

These two expressions can bring many problems to students with a basic knowledge of English as well as to university students. The two words are often translated as *sympathetic cooker*, which can cause serious misunderstanding as the meaning of these words in English is completely different. The evidence can be obtained from the dictionary.

- The word *sympathetic* is an adjective with the following meanings:

1 *~ (to / towards sb) kind to sb who is hurt or sad; showing that you understand and care about their problems*

2 *~ (to / towards sb/sth) showing that you approve of sb/sth or that you share their views and are willing to support them*

3 *(of a person) easy to like*

- The word *cooker* is a noun and it is

a large piece of equipment for cooking food, containing an oven and gas or electric rings on top

The wrong translation of the word “kuchař” can be explained by its irregular word formation. The names of professions are usually formed by affixation, i.e. the verb+suffix “er”, however, in this case the particular word “cooker” is an exception and does not denote the name of a profession.

The word “sympatický” can be translated as “nice” and the correct word for the Czech word “kuchař” is “a cook”. Then a whole expression is “a nice cook”.

Kriminál

The Czech word “kriminál” is one of the best-known words translated into Czenlish as *criminal*. Obviously, the English counterpart is not so simply translatable.

- The dictionary explains the word *criminal* as a noun

a person who commits a crime

Here the correct word is “jail”. Although the meaning of both words can be found in one lexical field of crime, the difference is still remarkable – a person vs. a place. As an example which could help to learn the meaning of the two words, we could use them together in one sentence, e.g. A criminal sits in jail.

Desítky autogramů

According to the results of the questionnaire these two Czech words caused problems to the majority of respondents. The expression “Desítky autogramů” is placed in the top 3 of the most frequent Czenlish wrong translations, often translated as *Tens of autograms*.

The word “desítky” must not be considered as a number but as an idiomatic expression. The English equivalent for this idiom is “dozens”. However, in some cases, “desítky” can be translated as “tens”, though only when speaking of “tens of thousands” or “tens of millions” etc.

The word “autogram” is a Czech borrowing from Greek; it does not exist in this form in English though. The correct word denoting somebody’s signature is “an autograph”.

Poslední (film W. Allena)

The word “poslední” can express two meanings and this fact poses problems to some students.

- First, it can be understood as *last*, a determiner meaning

1 *happening or coming after all other similar things or people*

2 *only remaining*

- second, as *the latest*, an adjective meaning

the most recent or newest

Thus the expression *last film by W. Allen* is incorrect as Woody Allen is a living director and the fact that it is his most recent film is emphasized. The correct use in a sentence could be for instance “Yesterday, I saw the latest film by W. Allen”.

Rodinný dům/Obytný dům

The translation of these words is primarily a matter of the English concept of housing. No such word as *family house* exists in English. Nor can we say that *we live in a house with twenty flats*.

- The correct translation of “rodinný dům” is “a house” which is a noun describing

a building for people to live in, usually for one family

If necessary, more precision can be given, it may be a detached, semidetached or terraced house (in British English) or a house, a double or a row house (in American English).

Consequently, “obytný dům” can be translated as “a block of flats” (in British English) or “an apartment house” (in American English).

Zadní strana formuláře

The Czech expression “zadní strana” is frequently a matter of misunderstanding when translated into English as *backside*. The Czech word “formulář” is also sometimes wrongly translated as *formulary*. Hence when we put these two Czenglish expressions together and

say, e.g., “Fill in the backside of the formulary as well”, a native speaker of English is totally confused. The dictionary is the solution to this problem.

- *Backside* is a noun denoting
the part of the body that you sit on
- *Formulary* is a noun meaning
 - 1 *a collection or system of formulas*
 - 2 *a set form of words; formula*
 - 3 *Pharmacology. a book listing pharmaceutical substances and formulas for making medicinal preparations*
 - 4 *Ecclesiastical. a book containing prescribed forms used in the service of a church*

In this case, the appropriate translation is “the back of the form”, e.g. “The back of the form contains very important information.”

Citlivý šéf

These two words, especially the first of them, are sometimes wrongly translated as *a sensible chief*. The problem with the first word consists of a very similar spelling of a pair of English words “sensible” vs. “sensitive”. The word “chief” can be used only for a particular function.

- *Sensible* is an adjective and can be understood as
 - 1 *(of people and their behaviour) able to make good judgements based on reason and experience rather than emotion; practical*
 - 2 *(of clothes, etc.) useful rather than fashionable*
 - 3 *aware of sth*
- The word *chief* is a noun describing
 - 1 *a person with a high rank or the highest rank in a company or an organization*
 - 2 *(often as a title) a leader or ruler of a tribe*

Therefore, to describe a superior who is easily upset, a more appropriate expression would be “a sensitive boss” and it can be used in a sentence such as “Our boss has a complicated nature, he is very sensitive.”

Národní kuchyně

The Czech term “kuchyně” has several meanings. One particular meaning has the expression “národní kuchyně” and learners of English should remember that English has a special term for it and that its translation cannot be *national kitchen*.

First, a dictionary definition of the word “kitchen” will be offered.

- *Kitchen* is a noun with singular meaning

a room in which meals are cooked or prepared

Now it is clear that there must be another word denoting a style of cooking that is typical of a nation. This term is “cuisine” and an example sentence would be “Italian national cuisine is very different from the Czech one”.

Turistika (v Alpách)

The Czech words “turistika” and “turista” can be very tricky for inexperienced learners of English. In a general sense, these words can be translated as “tourism” and “tourist”. However, in Czech these expressions have also a more restricted sense when speaking about “turistika v Alpách”, so it is not possible to say *tourism* or *tourist* in the Alps.

- English noun *tourism* has only the following meaning

the business activity connected with providing accommodation, services and entertainment for people who are visiting a place for pleasure

- the noun *tourist* can describe

1 *a person who is travelling or visiting a place for pleasure*

2 *a member of a sports team that is playing a series of official games in a foreign country*

In this particular sense, another expression must be used. A person whose favourite activity is going for long walks in the country or the mountains is “a hiker” and the name of

the activity is “hiking”. We can say for instance “A hiker in the Alps must be prepared for all kinds of danger”.

Procházky v přírodě

Quite a common mistake of Czech students of English is the translation of the Czech words “procházky v přírodě” as *walking in the nature*. Here again the English term “nature” does not always correspond to the Czech word “příroda”. As the dictionary explains, it has a plenty of meanings other than the one spoken of.

- *Nature* is a noun explained as
 - 1 *(often Nature) all the plants, animals and things that exist in the universe that are not made by people*
 - 2 *(often Nature) the way that things happen in the physical world when it is not controlled by people*
 - 3 *the usual way that a person or an animal behaves that is part of their character basic qualities*
 - 4 *the basic qualities of a thing*

Thus, the appropriate word needed for the correct translation of “procházky v přírodě” should describe a place surrounding us, such as fields, meadows, woods and mountains. There are many possibilities, one of them could be the word “countryside or shorter “country”. For example: “My sister adores walking in the country”.

Předpis na antikoncepci

It is necessary to pay more attention when translating special terms from the scientific domain. The Czech expression “předpis na antikoncepci” is classed within the medical field and can by no means be translated as *a recipe for anticonception*.

- A *recipe* is a noun defined as
 - 1 *~ (for sth) a set of instructions that tells you how to cook sth and the items of food you need for it*
 - 2 *~ for sth a method or an idea that seems likely to have a particular result*

Hence, neither of these two definitions carries the relevant meaning.

The word *anticonception* cannot be found in any dictionary as this word is a pure Czenglish and does not exist in English.

The correct translation of these two words is “a prescription” and “a contraceptive” and the whole expression is “a contraceptive prescription”. This example can serve as a warning that the translation of professional terms is not an easy matter.

Ekonomické (problémy)

The word “ekonomický” carries several definitions in Czech. In connection with the word “problémy” it has a specific meaning and cannot be translated as *economical problems* as many students of English think.

- The dictionary definition of an adjective “economical” follows

1 providing good service or value in relation to the amount of time or money spent

2 using no more of sth than is necessary

3 not spending more money than necessary

In other words, it concerns spending money or using something in a careful way that avoids waste. However, the word needed here is “economic” and it is connected with the economy of a country or an area. The expression “economic problems” can be used for example in a sentence like this “The year 2009 brought economic problems to most countries of the worlds”.

Nepohodlný (život)

The Czech expression “nepohodlný život” is, at first sight, easy to translate as *uncomfortable life*. It is wrong though.

- The adjective *uncomfortable* has these definitions

1 (of clothes, furniture, etc.) not letting you feel physically comfortable; unpleasant to wear, sit on, etc

- 2 *not feeling physically relaxed, warm*
- 3 *anxious, embarrassed or afraid and unable to relax; making you feel like this*
- 4 *unpleasant or difficult to deal with*

None of these meanings fit the expression we need. We want to describe something causing trouble or problems, especially concerning what we need or would like ourselves and the best word is “inconvenient”. We can illustrate this example in a sentence “their family lead an inconvenient life without a word of complaint”.

Bezenný (obraz)

Some Czech learners of English (especially beginners) tend to translate the words literally and this is the case in the expression “bezenný obraz” and its wrong translation *a priceless painting*. They analyse the structure of the Czech word, find out that it contains the word “without” and “price” and on this basis use the word “priceless”. The consequences of uttering this expression in a wrong place would be fatal and let the dictionary prove it.

- The adjective *priceless* has two main denotations:

- 1 *extremely valuable or important*
- 2 *extremely amusing*

Therefore, it has an opposite meaning to the Czech word “bezenný”. The appropriate word to express that something has no practical or financial value is “worthless”. To help us remember the difference between “priceless” and “worthless”, we can say that “Amateurs’ paintings are usually worthless whereas the ones created by Picasso are priceless”.

(Moje) nejoblíbenější (kniha)

The Czech word “nejoblíbenější” expresses the superlative of the word “oblíbený”. The English equivalent of this word, in positive degree, is “favourite”, so logically the English equivalent of the superlative should be “most favourite” as in the expression *my most favourite book*. However, this is a mistake.

The adjective “favourite” expresses the superlative degree in English. Consequently, it is the equivalent of the Czech word “nejoblíbenější” and cannot be modified by either “more” or “most”.

It can be uttered in sentences like “Kundera wrote my most favourite book.” or “His favourite hobby is golf.”

4.2 Second exercise

The task of the second exercise (see p. 35) was to find one mistake in each of the sentences.

Prague **belongs to the most beautiful cities of Europe.**

The incorrect use of the verb “to belong” is the mistake sought in this sentence. In this second exercise of the questionnaire it was one of the most frequent unspotted problems; only a few students recognised it.

- The verb *to belong to sth* has the following meanings:

1 to be a member of a club, an organization, etc:

Have you ever belonged to a political party?

2 to be part of a particular group type, or system:

Lions and tigers belong to the cat family.

The third meaning needed for our sentence is missing. If we want to speak about an indefinite group of people, animals or things (such as famous French artists, extinct birds, ancient monuments etc), English does not use the verb “to belong” but other verbs can be used. In our case, we can say that

“Prague is one of the most beautiful cities of Europe”.

Her mother **awarded Susan for her help.**

This sentence has a problem similar to the first one. Here again a verb is wrongly used.

- The dictionary reveals that the verb *to award sb* is defined as

~ sth (to sb) to make an official decision to give sth to sb as a payment, prize, etc.:

He was awarded damages of pound 50000. The judges awarded equal points to both finalists. The judges awarded both finalists equal points.

What is needed here is a verb which expresses the giving of something to somebody because they have done something good, worked hard, etc. The appropriate verb is “to reward somebody” so the correct sentence is “Her mother rewarded Susan for her help”.

At our elementary school they used to *cry* at us a lot.

The verb “to cry” has several connotations; however, we must be aware of the fact that some of them are somehow limited. The dictionary definition says that:

- *To cry* is a verb with 3 meanings:

1 ~ (for sb/sth) | ~ (about / over sth) to produce tears from your eyes because you are unhappy or hurt:

It's all right. Don't cry. The baby was crying for (= because it wanted) its mother.

2 ~ (for sth) to shout loudly:

[V direct speech] 'You're safe!' Tom cried in delight.

3 (of a bird or an animal) to make a loud harsh noise:

Seagulls followed the boat, crying loudly.

Although the second definition seems to fit our sentence, the note in the brackets explains that this verb functions only as an introduction to direct speech. Thus the verb “to shout” is more convenient: “At our elementary school they used to shout at us a lot.”

Most *of* people like music.

A different type of a common mistake occurring among advanced learners of English is use of the expression “most of”.

As Don Sparling explains, “Most of” means a major part of a thing, a group etc that is somehow defined whereas “most + a noun” expresses a major part of a category in general (145).

Since the discussed sentence implies the notion of people in general, the “of” preposition is redundant and the correct sentence is “Most people like music”.

Our adventure had *a happy end*.

A happy end is a Czech expression widely spread among Czech people. It is a term almost domesticated and used in Czech sentences. Thus logically, people assume that this expression is the same in English sentences. Surprisingly, it is not. English has an expression “happy ending”. Then the correct sentence is “Our adventure had a happy ending.” or alternatively “Our adventure ended happily.”

This was the only *way how to* do it.

One of the favourite expressions of many Czech students of English is to say *This was the only way how to do it.* It is caused by almost literal translation without paying attention to the specific rules of English structures. We can only say “This was the only way to do it” or “This was the only way of doing it”.

***Air-condition* is broken in their office.**

The last but not least sentence containing a mistake can be a surprise for many Czechs. The expression *Air-condition* can be often seen in many restaurants, bars and pubs in our country. It is grammatically incorrect, however, since the verb is “to air-condition” and the noun is “air-conditioning”. Thus it can be said that “The air-conditioning is broken in their office”.

4.3 Third exercise

The last exercise (p. 35-36) contained a box of words – pairs or triples which can be expressed in Czech by a single word. The words were as follows:

At once X suddenly

These two words matched the sentences:

You should not eat and speak AT ONCE.

SUDDENLY the sky got dark and it started to rain.

It is important to understand that “at once” means “at the same time” and “suddenly” means “quickly and unexpectedly”.

At the end X in the end

Their position in the sentences below indicates that “in the end” stands alone and “at the end” stand with the preposition “of + noun”.

AT THE END of the lecture the room was almost empty.

IN THE END they made up.

Common X ordinary X usual

These three adjectives have very similar meanings. “Ordinary” is a synonym for “normal”, “common” means that something happens often and “usual” means that something happens or is done most of the time or in most case.

It was an ORDINARY day, nothing special happened.

For our generation, it is COMMON to use computers.

Fish and chips is his USUAL lunch.

5 Conclusion

The principal hypothesis of this work was that pre-service teachers studying English as a part of their joint honours degree at the Faculty of Education use Czenglish expressions. The theoretical starting point was based on the concept of Second Language Acquisition focusing on the behaviourist and mentalist theories of learning. In this approach the method of error analysis and the notion of interlanguage revealed that every learner of a foreign language is influenced by their mother tongue and a number of errors is caused by the application of the rules and items of the first language to the second language. These theoretical premises have prepared the ground for a practical test of the existence of Czenglish among university students.

The practical section of the thesis was carried out by means of a questionnaire “Questionnaire on Czenglish” and 145 respondents consisting of university students participated. The first part of the questionnaire, which contained general questions, monitored the influence of various factors on the success rate in the second part of the questionnaire, i.e. the exercises. The following evaluation of the relationship between the two parts of the questionnaire showed that in second language learning, quality is far more important than quantity (that is the length of studies) and that experience with living in an English-speaking country has a remarkable influence as well. The respondents having previously lived in an English speaking country achieved 15% better results than the others.

Another important criterion, the year of university studies of the respondents, brought interesting results. The statistics showed that the number of Czenglish errors decreases with ascending year of studies. The third-year students made 17% less mistakes than the first-year students. It is clear that this result is influenced also by the fact the senior students of the faculty had already had courses where these errors are discussed.

Finally, it was found that on average 51% of questions in the exercise part of the questionnaire were answered wrongly. Thus it can be concluded that the hypothesis was proved and that a significant number of university students of English uses Czenglish.

The practical section of the thesis not only contained statistical data which confirmed the hypothesis of use of Czenglish but also a detailed analysis of the exercises of the

questionnaire. These selected examples of the use of Czenglish were described and explained. Most of them concerned vocabulary errors with special attention to false friends. The most frequent errors which proved the use of Czenglish were the translations of the Czech expressions “desítky autogramů” (*tens of autograms*), “předpis na antikoncepci” (*recipe for anticonception*) and “bezpečný obraz” (*priceless painting*). The Czenglish structure *the way how* also occurred many times.

The statistical assessment of the research and the following analysis of the selected examples based on the respondents' answers proved the existence of the phenomenon called “Czenglish”. Czenglish is a visible problem with learners beginning to learn a foreign language, as well as with intermediate and advanced students. As the results indicate, more attention should be paid to this issue since the aim of every learner is to learn proper English, not Czenglish.

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Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CZENGLISH

YEAR OF BIRTH: _____

SEX: Male Female

PLEASE STATE THE YEAR OF YOUR STUDIES AT THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION.

1st year

2nd year

3rd year

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN STUDYING ENGLISH?

0 - 5 years

6 - 10 years

11 - more years

HAVE YOU EVER LIVED IN AN ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY FOR MORE THAN 1 MONTH?

YES -> number of months: ____

NO

EXERCICES

I. TRANSLATE TO ENGLISH

Konkurence -

Aktuální situace -

Politika firmy -

Absolvent gymnázia -

Mixér -

Sympatický kuchař -

Míra kriminality -

Desítky autogramů -

Poslední film W. Allena -

Rodinný dům -

Zadní strana formuláře -

Citlivý šéf -

Národní kuchyně -

Turistika v Alpách -

Procházky v přírodě -

Předpis na antikoncepci -

Ekonomické problémy -

Nepohodlný život -

Bezcenný obraz -

Moje nejoblíbenější kniha -

II. FIND AND CORRECT MISTAKES (EACH SENTENCE HAS ONE MISTAKE):

Prague belongs to the most beautiful cities of Europe.

Her mother awarded Susan for her help.

At our elementary school they used to cry at us a lot.

Most of people like music.

Our adventure had a happy end.

This was the only way how to do it.

Air-condition is broken in their office.

III. CHOOSE THE CORRECT WORD FROM THE BOX (ONE FOR EACH SENTENCE):

AT ONCE - AT THE END - COMMON - IN THE END - ORDINARY - SUDDENLY - USUAL
--

1. _____ of the lecture the room was almost empty.
2. It was a/an _____ day, nothing special happened.
3. You should not eat and speak _____.
4. For our generation, it is _____ to use computers.

5. _____ the sky got dark and it started to rain.

6. _____ they made up.

7. Fish and chips is his _____ lunch.

Appendix 2

Czenglish expressions used by the respondents in the first exercise of the questionnaire and the percentage of wrong answers:

Czech expression	Used Czenglish expression	Number of wrong answers in %
Konkurence	concurrence, concurention, concuration, concurection, concuration	54
Aktuální situace	actual situation	34
Politika firmy	company's politics	51
Absolvent gymnázia	gymnasium absolvent	24
Mixer	chopper, mixer, shaker, twister	38
Sympatický kuchař	emphatic, sympathetic, sympathic cooker, chief, cheef	66
Míra criminality	criminality rate, criminal rate, degree	58
Desítky autogramů	tens, tenths, tents of autograms, authograms, autogrammes	86
Poslední film W. Allena	last film by W. Allen	37
Rodinný dům	family house	71
Zadní strana formuláře	Backside, second side, the other side, the last page of formula, list	53
Citlivý šéf	sensible chef	47
Národní kuchyně	kitchen	10
Turistika v Alpách	tourism, touristic(s), turistic	72

Procházky v přírodě	walks in the nature, in the wild	69
Předpis na antikoncepci	Recipe, receipt, recepee for anticonception, antiperception, interception	78
Ekonomické problémy	economical problems	28
Nepohodlný život	uncomfortable life	43
Bezcenný obraz	priceless painting	75
Moje nejoblíbenější kniha	my most favourite book	48

Czenglish expressions used in the second exercise and the number of wrong answers:

Czenglish expression	Number of wrong answers in %
Prague <u>belongs to</u> the most beautiful cities of Europe.	45
Her mother <u>awarded</u> Susan for her help.	58
At our elementary school they used to <u>cry</u> at us a lot.	69
Most <u>of</u> people like music.	76
Our adventure had <u>a happy end</u> .	88
This was the only <u>way how</u> to do it.	91
<u>Air-condition</u> is broken in their office.	70

English expressions used in the third exercise and the number of wrong answers:

English expression	Number of wrong answers in %
AT THE END	23
IN THE END	23
AT ONCE	14
SUDDENLY	14
COMMON	47
ORDINARY	35
USUAL	47