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BACHELOR'S THESIS

Awareness and Knowledge of Lexical and Spelling Differences Between  
British and American English Among Czech Students of English  
Povědomí a znalost lexikálních a pravopisných rozdílů mezi britskou a  
americkou angličtinou u českých studentů angličtiny

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I hereby declare that I have elaborated this Bachelor's thesis by myself under the supervision of PhDr. Klára Matuchová, Ph.D., using sources and literature listed on the Works Cited page. I also declare that I have not used this thesis to obtain any other degree.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is concerned with lexical and spelling differences between British and American English. The theoretical part provides an overview of the history and development of those differences, including a list of selected high frequency items. It also focuses on the role of American culture in the world and its impact on the English language. The practical part is based on a survey and attempts to discover whether Czech upper secondary students are aware of British and American English and the differences between them, with special attention to the media dominated by American English and their influence on students' language competence.

## **KEYWORDS**

British English, American English, spelling, vocabulary, media, upper secondary students

## **ANOTACE**

Tato práce se zabývá lexikálními a pravopisnými rozdíly mezi britskou a americkou angličtinou. Teoretická část nabízí přehled dějin a vývoje těchto rozdílů a zahrnuje seznam vybraných vysoce frekventovaných slov. Dále se zaměřuje na roli americké kultury ve světě a její dopad na angličtinu. Praktická část sestává z průzkumu a jejím cílem je zjistit, zda mají čeští studenti středních škol povědomí o britské a americké angličtině a rozdílech mezi nimi. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována médiím, v nichž převládá americká angličtina, a jejich vlivu na jazykovou způsobilost studentů.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Britská angličtina, americká angličtina, pravopis, slovní zásoba, média, studenti středních škol

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## **1 Introduction**

The idea of this thesis came up owing to my personal experience from the penultimate year of grammar school. I wrote ‘realise’ on the blackboard and was immediately corrected by my English conversation teacher, who was also a native speaker from America, on the ground that ‘realize’ is the only correct spelling. I did not want to argue with him, but I was convinced I had seen it spelt with -ise somewhere. I was confused about the spelling until I was finally informed about the existence of British and American spelling difference. This experience motivated me to take further interest in differences between British and American English and to conduct research on awareness and knowledge of those differences among Czech students.

English is the most frequently used language of the modern world, often referred to as a lingua franca. It is commonly spoken in all continents and taught in almost all countries in the world. Considering such an enormous number of speakers who are geographically distant and do not share the same historical and cultural backgrounds, it is not surprising that the English language has many variants that differ in a number of aspects.

British English and American English are nowadays considered to be the major varieties. This is due to the fact that the former is used as a standard for teaching at schools in Europe, while the latter is actually spoken by no fewer than three quarters of all native speakers. Apart from grammar and pronunciation, which are not dealt with in this thesis, both varieties differ to a considerable extent in spelling and vocabulary.

Admittedly, American English is in general more accessible through American popular culture, which often overshadows other national cultures, especially in the area of entertainment (TV, cinema, music, video games), and therefore penetrates into British English as well. “However, both nations seem to strive to preserve their form of spelling and vocabulary for the sake of traditions and national awareness” (Krapp 328), which results in a gradual increase in differences. Today’s learner of English does not acquire a single, homogenous language but a combination of varieties that undergo a continuous development, which is a fact very often overlooked in textbooks and other teaching materials. It is likely that students will be confused about what is correct and what is not,

since the usage of spelling and vocabulary in their favourite films, TV series or video games often differs from the usage of English in their textbooks.

There are those who might argue that English is learned as a uniform language and the two varieties do not differ from each other as much as to cause incomprehension between two people. A similar attitude is also adopted by Algeo and Pyles in their book *The Origins and Development of the English Language*. The authors describe English as one language and claim that differences in varieties are “insignificant in comparison with the similarities” (Algeo and Pyles 203). However, other people would consider this claim to be only partially true. English still is, without doubt, one language, but the attribute “insignificant” in terms of national differences seems to be a little strong. The evidence can be seen in the increasing number of websites that deal not only with descriptions of the differences but also with tips and proposals of how to teach them.

Furthermore, according to Christopher Davies, “An estimated 4,000 words in everyday use in Britain have a different meaning or are used differently in the US” (Davies 1). It is one of the reasons why students wonder how it is possible that a single word has more meanings which, in some cases, are not even related to each other, like the word *dumb*, meaning originally ‘mute’ in British English, while in America it is commonly used to say ‘stupid’. Besides, with regard to the number of dialects in both countries, it is expected that differences will increase.

It is therefore necessary for students to be aware of both varieties if they are to communicate without difficulties and avoid possible misunderstandings and uncomfortable situations. A humorous example of such misunderstanding is presented on the website of the British Council, UK’s International Organisation for Cultural Relations and Educational Opportunities. There is a dialogue between a British woman and an Englishman who recently returned from the United States. Right in the beginning, the man tells the woman she has nice *pants*. At first, the woman does not realise that *pants* is an American word for *trousers* and she wonders how the man can see her *pants*, which in British English actually means *knickers/underpants*.

In addition to that, only few works take a closer look at spelling, implying that it is considered of peripheral importance and thus not worthy of being dealt with. However, the

sole fact that the matter of British and American differences, including spelling, is increasingly attracting attention on the Internet proves quite the opposite. For instance, the verb *realise* can be spelt in two different ways; either with an ‘s’ or with a ‘z’. American English does not admit any other possibility than *realize*, and therefore this form does not usually appear in dictionaries of American English. Nevertheless, the author of *The Penguin Dictionary of American English Usage and Style* clearly states that in British English, -ize, which is considered to be the original form, is often spelt -ise due to the influence of French verbal ending -iser, and also adds, “*The Oxford English Dictionary* finds no good reason for -ise, in opposition to that which is at once etymological and phonetic” (Loving 197). However, *realise* is still retained in most grammar and vocabulary books that a learner may encounter.

This is one of many examples of British conservatism that might easily lead to confusion of learners. Wrongly set spell checkers correcting British/American preferences may cause difficulties for someone who is not aware of the existence of both varieties. Students are expected to start asking their teachers which form is correct and why is it that the spelling differs in the first place. If the curriculum includes familiarisation of students with the history of English speaking countries, which is then one of the topics of the school-leaving exam, it appears reasonable to inform them about the consequences of linguistic development as well, for they are likely to encounter them in the future.

Finally, given the increasing demands on the language acquisition level at schools and other language institutions, it is advisable that students should know about the differences between both varieties and learn to use only the preferences of one of them in their essays and homework, since mixing both of them looks unnatural and may be even undesirable. Advanced students are likely to take an interest in differences they encounter through the media. However, less advanced students may not be aware of the varieties; therefore, it should be teachers’ duty to bring this subject to their students’ attention in class.

The theoretical part of the thesis deals with a description of American and British English differences in spelling and vocabulary with a focus on their history and development. A list of the most frequent of those differences is included in the Appendix section; the vocabulary part contains only lexical items corresponding to the level A1-B2 according to



the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages due to the limited scope of the thesis and the purposes of the research. One chapter of the theoretical part is also dedicated to the impact of the American media on today's learners. The final chapter focuses on some works and studies that deal with the topic and are worth mentioning.

The practical part on the basis of a survey attempts to find out whether the students of the selected schools are familiar with lexical and spelling differences between British and American English. Another aim is to determine the role of the media and their influence on the students' knowledge of those differences, ability to match them with British and American English and personal preferences and consistency in usage of both of varieties. One hundred students were asked about the existence of British and American English and also about their regular contact with various types of the media. Then their knowledge of the selected high frequency words and their spelling forms was tested.

There are two hypotheses to be confirmed. Overall, students are presumed to show better knowledge of variations of British English. However, this knowledge is expected to be more or less inconsistent as well as the performance in distinguishing the vocabulary and spelling of either national variety, as a result of a regular contact with the American English-dominated media.

Although the research study is designed specifically for upper secondary students, the theoretical part is more complex and includes some lexical items beyond the supposed level of those students. This is to make the thesis a brief and comprehensive guide to the development of American English and its influence on British English, which could be useful for both students and teachers.

## 2 Theoretical Part

### 2.1 The Differences between British and American English, Past and Present

#### 2.1.1 The History of American English

The origins of American English date back to the beginnings of the seventeenth century and the first successful colonization of the New World. Although the first English explorers led by Walter Raleigh had landed on the coast some three decades before, the attempts to establish a settlement failed due to unexpected conflicts with Native Americans. Jamestown, the first English colony named after James I was established in 1607. It was but one of many settlements that promptly started to fill the coast and adjacent islands. In 1620, a ship called the Mayflower landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Its passengers were Puritans, also known as the ‘Pilgrim Fathers’, seeking to set up a colony purified (therefore Puritans) from the Church of England of which they strongly disapproved.

These settlers, having lost touch with England, kept speaking the way they were used to in their motherland, and thus English was progressively being developed on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. This also resulted in American English being in certain aspects more similar to the original language than the British one. A case in point is the past participle of the verb *to get*. In older British English, the form used to be *gotten*, but in the present standard it is replaced by *got* and *gotten* is preserved only in the phrase ‘ill-gotten gains’. In American English, however, *gotten* is commonly used as a past participle, for example in “Every day this month I've gotten spam on my e-mail.” (Algeo and Pyles 204). The American conservatism, as Algeo and Pyles put it, manifests itself in preserving words such as *turnpike* for *toll road*, *fall* for *autumn*, and *a deck of cards* for *a pack of cards*, even though the British counterparts are not unknown in America (204). Similarly, expressions such as *son of a gun*, *I guess* and *in back of* for British *behind* are currently considered to be purely American, despite having been once commonly used in Britain.

Nevertheless, this has been a two-way process and there are words and phrases commonly used in Britain that are no longer frequent in the United States, such as *straight away*

meaning ‘immediately’ or *presently* meaning ‘in a short time’ (Davies 3). *Waistcoat* is known as *vest* in America, while *vest* means *undershirt* in Britain. *Fortnight*, used to say ‘two weeks’ in Britain, is another word that has almost completely disappeared in American English. Other examples include some topographical terms, as they are called. These are the words that have no use in American English, for the features they designate are not to be found in America, like *copse* (a group of small trees), *dell* (a wooded valley), *fen* (wet land), *heath* (wasteland covered only in grass and small plants), *moor* (an open boggy and grassy area unsuitable for farming) and *spinney* (a small wood) (Algeo and Pyles 204). Similarly, the colonists had to adopt some new terms for the topographical features they had never encountered before. That is how compounds like *backwoods* or *underbrush* (*undergrowth* in BrE) were created (Algeo and Pyles 205). The Americans also borrowed words like *canyon* from Spanish or *prairie* from French. The majority of animals and vegetation unknown in Europe were simply called by their Indian name, for example *chipmunk*, *hickory*, *moose*, *raccoon* and *skunk* (Crystal 247).

### **2.1.2 Reformative Spelling**

Until the colonies in America gained their independence from their mother country, there was no need to be concerned with spelling. “It was doubtless generally assumed that spelling was a blessing, of more or less qualified character, to be received without question, as other gifts were received from across the water” (Krapp 329). The standard for spelling at that time was particularly *A Dictionary of the English Language* by Samuel Johnson, the esteemed English writer and lexicographer whose work had a great impact on the development of Modern English. However, after the War of Independence, some reformers and revolutionaries started to pay attention to the issue of spelling, trying to pay homage to the Age of Reason. As the new republic was established, it seemed advisable, as well as opportune, to simplify the spelling by getting rid of irregularities and inconsistencies. Such attempts were made as far back as at the end of the 1760s, when Benjamin Franklin introduced his phonetic alphabet with six new symbols to make spelling more regular and precise. Nevertheless, Franklin’s suggestion, along with a few subsequent attempts to reform spelling, was not accepted.

Noah Webster is indisputably responsible for the American spelling that survived to this day. He is also presumably the first to use the phrase *American English*, when in 1806, he predicted that in fifty years time American English would be spoken “by more people than all other dialects of the language” (qtd. in Pederson 24). Webster emphasized the need to leave the language to its development: “our honour requires us to have a system of our own, in languages as well as in government. Great Britain, whose children we are, should no longer be our standard; for the taste of her writers is corrupted, and her language on the decline” (qtd. in Crystal 249). *The American Spelling Book*, first published in 1783, was an enormous success. Within a century it sold about eighty million copies, which was approximately thirty million more than the actual population in 1880s. In terms of popularity, *The American Spelling Book* was never overcome by any other spelling book or guide. Webster’s greatest work, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, precursor of today’s Merriam-Webster, was first published in 1828 and made its author the founder of American lexicography.

Webster’s reforms were supposed to achieve a certain uniformity of English spelling by introducing letter-sound correspondence into irregularly spelt words. It must be pointed out, however, that not all the changes Webster had proposed were received with enthusiasm. He had to face considerable difficulties and criticism even from his kind for being too extravagant and inconsistent. It is true that his work must have been very confusing, since he tended to use different forms of spelling in different books and essays. In any case, Krapp sees the explanation for Webster’s ‘failure’ in his underestimation of the power of emotions (335). Spelling was not seen as a matter of politics among the majority of the population, though patriotic; on the contrary, it represented the bonds and traditions in their hearts. The Americans were fond of British literature and surely did not think of its language as different from the one they spoke. “In determining the forms which American spelling was to take, Webster undoubtedly exerted some influence, but this influence operated through his spelling books and dictionaries, not through the radical proposals of the phonetic alphabet” (Krapp 335).

Some of Webster’s early proposals became an object of profound disdain and mockery, e.g., changing ‘ch’ to ‘k’ (*karakter* for *character*); digraph ‘ae’ was changed to ‘ee’ in

reezon for *reason* and *reeder* for *reader*, and to ‘e’ in *helth* for *health* and *breth* for *breath*; final /z/ was to have its support in writing, therefore *waz* and *iz* for *was* and *is*; he also omitted silent ‘w’ in *write* and *wrong*, which thus became *rite* and *rong*, and silent ‘e’ in *examine* and *medicine*, which resulted in *examin* and *medicin*; according to the same logic the /ʌ/ was to be represented by ‘u’ in *tung* for *tongue*, *munth* for *month* and *spunge* for *sponge*; and /u:/ by ‘oo’ in *proov* for *prove*. On the other hand, his deletion of the final silent ‘k’ in words such as *public*, *music*, *magic*, *tragic* or *havoc* was accepted and survived to this day in both varieties of English. Unlike the omission of ‘k’, which was very inconsistent throughout his work, Webster constantly focused on leaving out some other silent letters, which for that time resulted in differences between both varieties of English. Words like *analogue* and *catalogue* lost their final ‘ue’, in the same way that ‘u’ was removed in syllable endings of words such as *armour*, *favour*, *honour*, *savour*, *behaviour*, etc. This was to distinguish them from the trigraph ‘our’ with a different pronunciation in monosyllabic words like *flour*, *hour* and *sour*. Nonetheless, the word *error* is another example of Webster’s influence on Modern English, for it was originally spelt *errour* in Johnson’s Dictionary.

### **2.1.3 Vocabulary Development**

The United States has always been a country characterized by multiculturalism, which is also one of the reasons American English departed from its mother language. Since the beginning of the European colonisation, a considerable part of America had been settled by the Spanish, who were mainly in the west, the French, occupying large territories in the north and the Dutch, who were settled in New York (originally called New Amsterdam) and its surroundings. The inland was increasingly being settled by the Germans at the turn of the seventeenth century. On top of that, there were a large number of African Americans, mainly in the eighteenth century, as the outcome of the Atlantic slave trade. After winning independence and gradual decolonisation, the newly formed United States began to welcome migrants from all over the world. The immigration culminated during the nineteenth century due to large political, social and economic changes. A great number of Irish people were escaping the consequences of the potato famine in the 1840s. Many Germans and Italians were fleeing the results of the series of unsuccessful revolutions in

1848. During the 1880s, a large number of European Jews came to America in order to escape religious persecution. It is estimated that at the turn of the century, the United States received around twelve million immigrants (Crystal 245). All these foreign nations have been involved in the enrichment of the English lexis. The multicultural diversity of the United States can be found in a large number of place names and mainly the names of the states. There are names of European origin, such as *Florida* (Spanish for ‘land of flowers’), *Colorado* (meaning ‘red earth’ in Spanish), *Montana* (Spanish for ‘mountainous’), *Rhode Island* (*Rhode* stands for ‘red clay’ in Dutch), *Vermont* (French compound meaning ‘green mountain’), *Louisiana* (the former French colony named after King Louis XIV) and several others, mainly from the Spanish language. Some states were named after English rulers, for example *Georgia*, named after King George II, or *Virginia*, named after Queen Elizabeth I, also called ‘The Virgin Queen’. However, about a half of the states were given names from languages of the Indian tribes, like *North* and *South Dakota* (*Dakota* means a ‘friend’ in Sioux), *Ohio* (from Iroquoian ‘beautiful river’) and *Oklahoma* (meaning ‘red people’ in Choctaw). Other place names include the cities of Spanish origin, such as *Las Vegas*, *Los Angeles*, *Rio Grande* and *Sacramento*, Indian names like *Saratoga*, or French names ending in *-ville* (‘town’), for example *Louisville*, *Nashville* and *Washingtonville* (Crystal 245). Other examples, including the complete list of US state names, are presented in Crystal (*The English Language: A Guided Tour of the Language*).

As a result of multiculturalism, the most significant differences between the two varieties are in vocabulary, an area where two people can easily misunderstand each other. Apart from the above mentioned topographical terms, there are other words coming from the Indian languages, such as *moccasin*, *tomahawk*, *totem* or *wigwam*. French loan words include *cache*, *cent*, *poker* or *saloon*. The Dutch contributed to the American word stock with *boss*, *coleslaw* or *cookie*. The Spanish added words like *cafeteria*, *canyon*, *marijuana*, *mustang*, *ranch*, *lasso*, *rodeo* or *tornado*. Italian loan words are mainly connected to food, for example *espresso*, *pasta*, *pizza* or *spaghetti*. The German language gave English the famous *hamburger*, along with *dumb*, *kindergarten*, *pretzel* and *sauerkraut*. From Yiddish came the word *kosher* and phrases like *Get lost!* and *Enjoy!* (Crystal 247).

With the gradual arrival of the Industrial Revolution came the need for the invention of new words for newly developed technologies. Since America had separated from Britain and become autonomous, there was no reason to adhere to its terminology. British engineers and technicians used British terms, while the Americans started to use their own ones. That is also the reason why American lexis differs from the British particularly in technical terms and jargon. A good example of such contrast is vocabulary related to the railway; for example, *carriage* denotes *car* in Britain, *point(s)* is called *switch* in America and *guard* is a British name for *conductor* in America (Davies 70).

Over the years, as no one paid much attention to unify the words, the differences deepened, not only in professional areas but also in everyday-used words and phrases. These new lexical items reflect a specific lifestyle, activities and, of course, the new political system, and include for example *bartender*, *Congress*, *cowboy*, *maverick*, *popcorn*, *prairie*, *bury the hatchet*, *hit the jackpot*, etc. (Crystal 248). Most of these words were integrated into the Standard English, which means that they are known and used in all countries where English is spoken, regardless of their national varieties. However, there are words specific to American English which set this variety apart from the others, particularly from British English.

Algeo and Pyles point out that most synonyms of the two varieties are perfectly understandable and usually used in both the USA and Britain, even though one of them is always preferred (205). They give many examples to support this claim, for instance the word *package*, which is presumed to be American, and its supposedly British synonym *parcel*. In fact, *parcel* is a well-known word in America, as until recently, American packages were sent by International Parcel Post. The synonyms *car* and *automobile*, the first believed to be British and the latter American, are a similar case. Whereas *automobile* is nowadays regarded as a formal word in North America, *car* is commonly used. On the other hand, *automobile* appears in the names of several organisations in Britain, such as the Royal Automobile Club.

Nevertheless, there are words that are not always known to the speakers of the other variety, or which are not used except by the media. The Americans do not use *bill* for *check* in a restaurant nor *petrol* for *gas* and vice versa. On top of that, some words are

known and used in both varieties but with a different meaning. For example, *smart* usually means ‘intelligent’ in the US but ‘tidy and stylish’ in the UK, or British *first floor*, which actually refers to *second floor* in America, while *first floor* is called *ground floor* in Britain. Some American words are nowadays more commonly used in Britain, for example *billion*, which means ‘a thousand million’ in the US, but which was originally used to say ‘a million million’ in Britain. Since British English is constantly exposed to the prevalence of American English, it is sometimes difficult to recognise which expressions come from which variety. Nonetheless, it is advisable to know about this phenomenon to avoid being misunderstood by a chaotic mixing of varieties.

## **2.2 The Power of American Culture in Today’s World**

American culture has always been specific from the very beginning. The notion of the American dream, the pursuit of new and better opportunities for everyone, resulted in highlighting the commonplace and the ordinary, while mocking the lifestyle of aristocracy and upper classes at the same time. Soon after WWII, American culture began to expand to all corners of the world. Nowadays, the United States has become an economic superpower with an enormous influence on world culture. The best examples of its dominance on the market are computers and other devices (tablets, smart phones, etc.) and the World Wide Web, including social networks such as Twitter or Facebook. Furthermore, since English is a global language, America has no trouble distributing its films, TV programmes and songs all over the world. According to Cappelen Damm, “in 2006, 64% of all movies shown in the European Union were American”. With such a massive everyday dose of American English, whether it comes from TV, radio, video games and other gadgets, social networks or the Internet in general, one is hardly surprised at seeing words like *drive thru* and *sales* on shop signs and advertising boards, or hearing *OK*, *joke* and *ready* in small talk in countries where English is not an official language, not to mention words like *weekend*, *coach*, *meeting* and others of the sort that have already been adopted in most languages. What is more, America’s chief role in the world’s media results in some nations worrying about the preservation of their own cultures. A good example of such concern is France and its law against American film and TV production, allowing TV stations to broadcast only 40% of non-European programmes (Rinaman).



As far as English itself is concerned, an interesting quote could be mentioned by Mark Twain. Already in 1897 he remarked in his collection of essays titled *Following the Equator* that “there is no such thing as the “Queen’s English”. The property has gone into the hands of a joint stock company and we own the bulk of the shares” (qtd. in Damm). Considering the fact that almost two thirds of all native English speakers are from America, it is obvious that American English progressively serves as the world’s standard, with the exception of most European countries where the tradition of British English still prevails. There is no doubt about the influence both American and British varieties have on each other. However, given all the aforesaid factors, the impact of American English on the British variety must inevitably be far more prominent.

As is apparent from the previous sections of the thesis, both American spelling and vocabulary increasingly pass to the “Queen’s English”, despite unflagging protests from conservative Britons. Young people are particularly susceptible to pick up words from films, TV series, songs or videos on YouTube or MTV. The American entertainment industry, characterized by innovative technologies, big budgets, common themes and dramatic scenes is quite appealing in the eyes of a common viewer. Although some people have objections to American English as being low and improper, phrases such as “You’re kidding me!” or “What’s the big deal?” are likely to be on the rise even in Great Britain.

### **2.3 Works and Research Studies Dealing with the Topic**

There are several publications dealing with the topic, for example the aforementioned *The Origins and Development of the English Language* (Algeo and Pyles) or *The English Language: A Guided Tour of the Language* (Crystal). They focus on the history and development of the English language in general and include national varieties (usually Irish, American, Black, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand, and South African; sometimes also Scottish) and reasons for their formation. Few books focus only on the differences between the two varieties, like *Divided by a Common Language: A Guide to British and American English* (Davies) or *A to Zed, A to Zee: A Guide to the Differences Between British and American English* (Darragh). As far as lexis is concerned, most works present the individual preferences and some of them provide the reader with a list of synonyms, alternatively with their etymology. As for spelling, linguists do not pay such a

consistent attention to the individual differences and usually mention only the most frequent words, though sporadically. Therefore, an exception must be noted, a book titled *American and British English Preferences* (Salama and Ghali), a complex summary of preferences in spelling, grammar and vocabulary along with research studies on the frequency of usage of these phenomena among native speakers. The only drawback of this detailed work is that it was published in 1982, and thus several terms and their usage are becoming out-of-date.

Moreover, advanced students of English are paying increasing attention to this topic and also to research on variations preferred by the Czech learners. It is worth mentioning two Bachelor's theses, also from the Department of English at the Faculty of Education, Charles University. The first one, whose author is David Kožíšek, contains a comprehensive list of more than two hundred words with their origins, while the second one, of Pavlína Stelzerová, focuses on teaching the differences and its impact on learners' comprehension and acquisition (this approach is further developed in her Master's thesis). As a matter of fact, essays and guides to teaching the differences between British and American English are on the increase. For example, the website of the British Council is filled with ideas and recommendations for teachers and even includes 'Word Family Framework', which is a resource of more than twenty thousand lexical items, both British and American preferences, categorized into six levels of acquisition according to the Common European Framework of Reference.

### **3 Practical Part**

#### **3.1 Research Aims and Hypotheses**

Since British English is the model for teaching English in most European countries, including the Czech Republic, it is reasonable to assume that Czech students of English will be inclined to variations of British English, in both spelling and vocabulary, and, if asked, show better knowledge of them. However, the role of the media in language acquisition has become very important over the last decades. It must be remembered that students are nowadays surrounded by the English language in various ways most of the time of a day; in fact, they usually spend more hours watching films, playing video games or surfing the Internet than being at school. Therefore, they are more than likely to pick up quite a large number of expressions and their spelling outside school, which may either enrich their knowledge of English, or interfere with the British variety that is required in their school environment.

The primary aim of this text is to determine whether the students I have worked with are familiar with lexical and spelling differences between British and American English. In order to achieve this aim, students were asked about the differences and their knowledge of the selected high frequency words and their spelling forms was tested. Emphasis was put not only on correct translation and spelling but also on the students' ability to match variations with the relevant variety.

Secondary aims of the research are then related to the role of the media and their influence on the aforesaid knowledge of the differences, ability to distinguish British and American English and personal preferences and consistency in usage of both these varieties.

Considering what has been said, the research is based on these hypotheses:

- 1) Overall, students will show better knowledge of variations of British English, which they learn at school, than of American English.
- 2) However, this knowledge will be more or less inconsistent and their performance in distinguishing the vocabulary and spelling of either national variety will not display sufficient reliability, as a result of a regular contact with the American English-dominated media.

### **3.2 Upper Secondary Students**

The survey was aimed at upper secondary students due to several reasons. First of all, the differences in knowledge stemming from various lengths of previous English study at primary and/or lower secondary school should be gradually fading away. In the ideal case, students should achieve the level B1-B2 to be able to pass the 'Maturita' exam if they choose to do so.

Secondly, upper secondary students are at the age when they are most likely to be swayed by the media, for they spend quite a lot of time watching films and TV series, listening to music, playing video games and chatting on social networks. It is almost impossible for them not to encounter some spelling or lexical differences of identical lexical items outside school. Students either adopt them unintentionally or take some interest in the matter and deliberately ask their teachers about it. In any case, they are almost sure to be confused about the differences unless someone provides them with sufficient information/explanation. Therefore, the research part of this thesis aspires to find out whether the selected Czech students are as confused and their usage of lexis and spelling is as inconsistent as is expected. The results should serve as a reminder that the topic of British and American English in Czech schools is very important, even though very often neglected.

It must be said that first-year students were excluded from the survey, for they have to adapt to a new environment and teaching procedures due to which their competence cannot be compared to other upper secondary students.

### **3.3 Research Method**

The survey was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire (a blank sample is included in Appendix), which was used as the most suitable instrument for obtaining information from a higher number of respondents due to its universal application, easy distribution and rapid assessment of results.

There were one hundred respondents in total from three different upper secondary schools: 25 from Střední zdravotnická škola Trutnov (Trutnov Nursing School), 25 from Střední průmyslová škola Trutnov (Trutnov Technical School) and 50 from Gymnázium Trutnov

(Trutnov Grammar School), 25 students from the four-year type and 25 from the eight-year type. Different types of school were chosen in order to ensure a greater diversity of students' knowledge and a stronger objectivity of the research.

### **3.4 The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was written in Czech in order to be fully understood by all respondents, regardless of their level of English. It was also anonymous, so that students would not be under any pressure of being examined and feel free to answer truthfully. They were also asked not to guess if they were not sure of the answer; in that case they should not respond at all.

The questionnaire contained six questions and three exercises:

#### **Questions 1 and 2**

First of all, students were asked whether they knew about the existence of American English which is in several aspects different from the English they were taught. Another related question was whether their teacher brought (or had brought in the past) the differences to their attention in class. Since this topic is not in the curriculum, teachers are not obliged to talk about it in class, and therefore students who are not interested in English outside school might not even know about American English and the aspects in which it differs from the English they learn.

#### **Questions 3 to 6**

The following questions were aimed at how often and in what way students come into contact with English in the media and especially written English outside school. First, students were asked how often they watched films, documentaries or TV series in English (never, sometimes, often, or they try to watch them only in English) and whether they preferred British or American versions or both. After that they stated whether they encountered written English outside school and if so, how (in video games, social and other websites, books and magazines, lyrics, subtitles or other sources).

#### **Exercise 1 – Czech to English Translation**

In the first exercise, students were supposed to translate ten Czech words into English, where five of them were focused on vocabulary and the other five on spelling. As there

were no other instructions apart from the translation itself, students could choose to write both British and American synonyms. The exercise was designed to find out which national variety would automatically occur to students, provided they knew how to translate the word in the first place. For that purpose, the most of the Czech words were rather elementary and corresponded to the level A1-A2. The words to be translated were *film*, *dovolená*, *kalhoty*, *sušenka* and *byt*, aimed at the choice of a lexical variant, and *divadlo*, *soused*, *dialog*, *šek* and *program* aimed at the choice of spelling.

### **Exercise 2 – Choose the Variation**

The second exercise was focused on spelling only. It contained nine pairs of words representing some of the most frequent spelling differences and five pairs of sentences with different forms of past participles. The nouns were (the first word of each pair represents the British preference) *centre/center*, *moustache/mustache*, *favour/favor*, *defence/defense*, *jewellery/jewelry*, *omelette/omelet*, *cheque/check*, *analyse/analyze* and *aeroplane/airplane*; the participles were *got/gotten*, *burnt/burned*, *cancelled/canceled*, *spelt/spelled* and *dreamt/dreamed*. Students were asked to circle the variation that corresponded to British English.

### **Exercise 3 – English to Czech Translation**

The last exercise consisted in translating thirty-four nouns into Czech and deciding whether the English words belonged to British or American English. The words were written in two columns and each column contained both British and American variations. The order of the words was random, so that there would not be any pattern for students to follow. Several words were proposed in both varieties in order to find out which one was better understood. The British variations were *lorry*, *railway*, *rubbish*, *lift*, *cooker*, *queue*, *petrol*, *tap*, *pub*, *underground*, *rubber*, *handbag*, *motorway*, *cab*, *trainers*, *bill* and *postman*; the American variations were *closet*, *purse*, *elevator*, *movie*, *vacation*, *restroom*, *pants*, *gas* (meaning *benzín*), *stove*, *mail*, *subway*, *truck*, *candy*, *cookie*, *trash* and *eraser*. There was one curious word: *chips* could be translated either as British *hranolky* or American *brambůrky*.

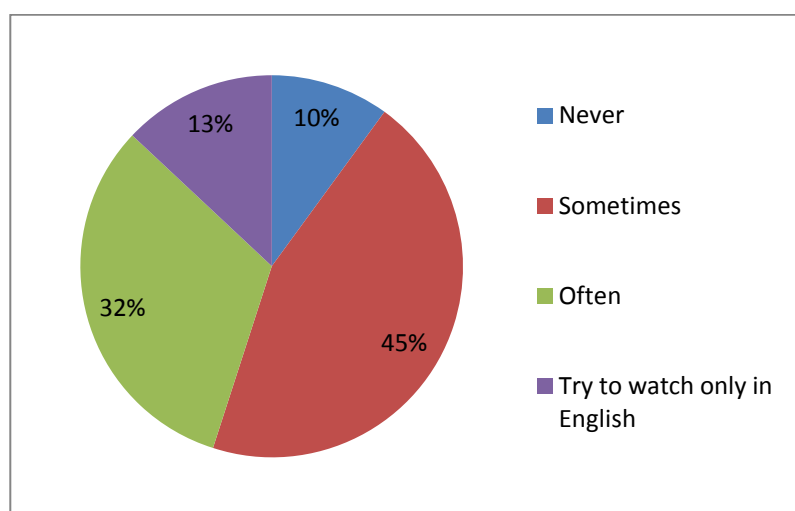
### 3.5 Results

#### Questions 1 and 2

All grammar school students answered positively both questions, which means they were familiar with American English and their teachers drew or had at some point drawn their attention to the differences in class. As for the technical school, all respondents claimed they knew about the differences, but six of them denied having been informed about them by their teachers. The nursing school had similar results, only four students could not remember their teachers having talked about the differences, yet all of them claimed they were aware of American English.

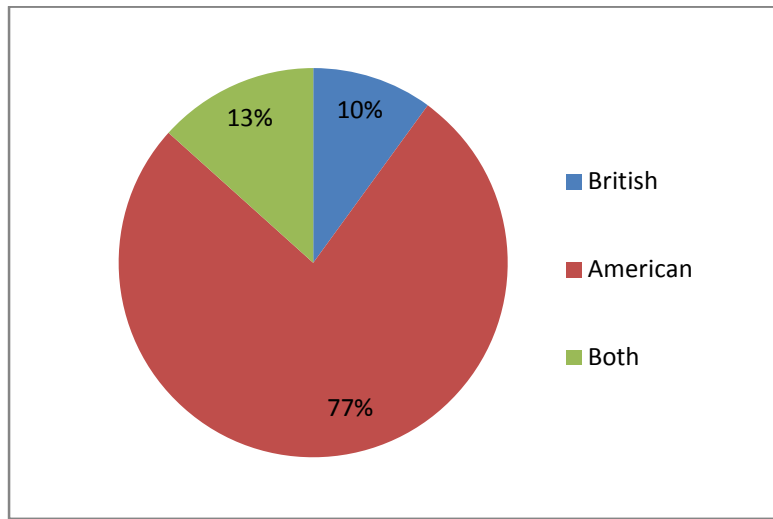
#### Questions 3 to 6

The following graph shows results for the third question: how often students watch films, documentaries or TV series in English.



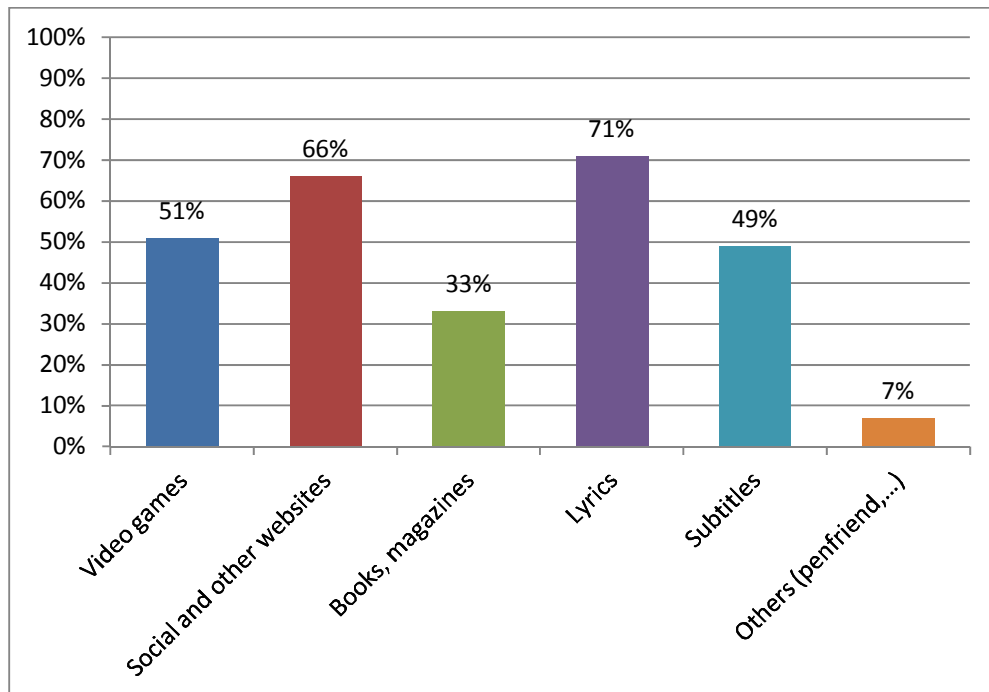
*Graph 1 – Frequency of watching films and broadcasts in English*

Graph 2 reveals the students' preference related to the fourth question: whether they watch films, documentaries or TV series in British English rather than in American English and vice versa. When they could not decide, they answered both.



*Graph 2 – Film and television preferences*

In the fifth question, students were asked whether they encounter written English outside school. Only two students from nursing school and four students from grammar school answered negatively. The last graph shows the results of the last question: in what ways the rest of them come into contact with written English outside school (what type of the media they use).



*Graph 3 – Contact with written English through various types of the media*



### Exercise 1

The following table demonstrates the students' lexical and spelling preferences in the translation of 10 words they should know well. Furthermore, the results reveal the students' knowledge of those words as well as their ability to write them correctly. The table represents the overall percentage of answers (choice of national variation or both of them, incorrect translation and ignorance). An additional table (Table 4) is included in the Appendix section and shows the number of cases in relation to the individual lexical and spelling items.

	<b>Nursing school</b>	<b>Technical school</b>	<b>Grammar school – 4-year</b>	<b>Grammar school – 8-year</b>
<b>British variation</b>	43%	45%	50%	54%
<b>American variation</b>	36%	44%	42%	38%
<b>Both</b>	2%	1%	2%	5%
<b>Incorrect</b>	12%	7%	2%	1%
<b>Did not know</b>	7%	2%	4%	2%

*Table 1 – Overall results of the 1<sup>st</sup> exercise*

### Exercise 2

The results of the second exercise expose how students perceive the differences between British and American English and to what extent they are competent to determine which variation is preferred in which variety. The task was to circle the form belonging to British English, which was therefore considered as the correct answer. If students marked the form preferred in American English, the answer was taken as incorrect. Again, the following table represents the overall percentage of answers. Table 5 included in Appendix shows the number of cases in relation to the individual spelling forms.

	<b>Nursing school</b>	<b>Technical school</b>	<b>Grammar school – 4-year</b>	<b>Grammar school – 8-year</b>
<b>Correct</b>	59%	45%	51%	60%
<b>Incorrect</b>	38%	48%	48%	40%
<b>Did not know</b>	3%	7%	1%	0%

*Table 2 – Overall results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> exercise*

### Exercise 3

The success rate of the third exercise says much about how well students know the basic English vocabulary they are supposed to meet regularly in teaching materials at school, along with an understanding of their counterparts and some other words frequently used in America, which they are expected to come across mainly, if not only, outside class. Once more, students' ability to distinguish both varieties was examined. Table 3 represents the overall percentage of answers. There are two other tables in the Appendix section, showing the number of cases in relation to the individual words (Table 6 represents the results of the translation and Table 7 shows the results of the variety matching).

	<b>Nursing school</b>	<b>Technical school</b>	<b>Grammar school – 4-year</b>	<b>Grammar school – 8-year</b>
<b>Correct translation</b>	50%	62%	64%	72%
<b>Incorrect translation</b>	10%	7%	13%	11%
<b>Did not know</b>	40%	31%	23%	17%
<b>Correct variety</b>	26%	37%	48%	56%
<b>Incorrect variety</b>	15%	23%	20%	20%
<b>Did not know</b>	59%	40%	32%	24%

*Table 3 – Overall results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> exercise*

### 3.6 Data Analysis

#### Questions 1 to 6

The results of the first question are far better than expected. Since all respondents answered they were aware of the American variety, which is somehow different, one can assume they were interested in the language as such and prepared to get to know more about the whole matter.

The results of the second question are also very positive, yet ten students in total are convinced their teachers did not tell them about the differences, which is something that should be improved in the future. Despite many factors influencing the results of the survey, one of the reasons why grammar school students achieved better results may be the fact that the differences in national varieties are at least somehow mentioned in class.

Questions three and four are crucial for this study. The answers reveal that 90% of students at least sometimes watch films, documentaries or TV series in English, which is the fastest and the easiest process of foreign language acquisition. Students listen to native speakers in a particular context, thanks to which they remember the newly learned information better. It must also be realised that they not only listen to the language, but also come into contact with written English, whether they use English subtitles or not, through various writings and signs used in the programme. The results also show that despite British English being the model for teaching English in Europe,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of students actually prefer American films, documentaries or TV series, and therefore it is possible for them to meet American English more than the British one, and not only outside school but in general as well. Thanks to that they can enrich their knowledge of the language as such and, of course, vocabulary in particular. Nevertheless, if a student comes across a certain American expression more in TV than with its British synonym at school, the American variation can soon replace the British one. Moreover, such student can become confused about both meaning and usage of some expressions, which may lead to misunderstandings not only at school but also in future life. For that reason, students should be provided with sufficient information about this topic.

The preceding assertion is supported by the results of the last two questions, which show that 94% of students come into a regular contact with written English outside school, meaning that students are nowadays surrounded by all kinds of the media practically all the time. Therefore, they encounter different varieties of English on a regular basis, American English probably most of all.

### **Exercise 1**

The results of the research show large inconsistency in students' vocabulary and spelling. It is evident already from the first exercise. Surprisingly enough, most students had difficulty translating some words, with the exception of *film* and *divadlo*. The translation of the word *šek* into English was the biggest problem, despite the word corresponding to the level A2. Another problematic word was *dialog*, whose translation was omitted or misspelt in thirteen cases. *Program* was not filled or misspelt in twelve cases and *soused* was left out eleven times and incorrect three times.

As far as the actual preferences are concerned, the first exercise brought some very interesting results. Regardless of school they attended to, sixty-one students, more than a half of each group, translated *film* as *movie*, forgetting the still frequent British preference which is identical with the Czech language. The translation of *dovolená* and *byt* were the most consistent, only six students chose American *vacation* over British *holiday* and six students decided for *apartment* instead of *flat*. The translation of the word *sušenka* was particularly telling. Thirty students wrote *biscuit*, while the rest automatically chose *cookie*, which is also a type of American baked food popularised all over the world, including the Czech Republic. In addition to that, *cookie* also exists in the IT terminology and does not translate into Czech. The choice for *kalhoty* was similar to the previous item, but, as expected, the majority of students (sixty-five) wrote *trousers*.

Those results show that British variations are not as deep-seated in students' minds as was expected. The word choice seems to be quite consistent, except for *film/movie* and *biscuit/cookie*. In a sense, *film/movie* is a questionable word. Although both variations have evolved and are used in slightly different contexts, *movie* is much more common in the US, having developed into informal phrase *go to the movies*, which would be replaced by *go to the cinema* in the UK. *Movie*, as well as *cookie*, can nowadays be seen more often than their supposed British counterparts, for example on the Internet, posters and even food wrappers. Therefore, it should not be such a surprise to see them being preferred. On the other hand, other words which are more likely to appear in students' textbooks than in other sources, were more or less consistently translated into British English.

Nevertheless, when it comes to spelling, the results are more ambiguous. In spite of the fact that *theatre* and *neighbour* were spelt according to the British preference, a number of students who decided for the American spelling is not insignificant, with regard to nursing and technical school in particular. Moreover, the rest of the words were preferably spelt according to American English. *Check*, which is stigmatized in the UK, was preferred to rather unusually looking French loan word *cheque* and *dialog* and *program* were more frequent than *dialogue* and *programme*. It is true that the British nowadays use *dialog* and *program* as well, yet students probably decided for the simplified forms because they were the same as in Czech. Besides, students could be influenced by the use of American

preferences, especially *program*, which is frequently associated with all kinds of video games and computer applications.

## Exercise 2

Similar results come from the second exercise, where students were supposed to decide which variation was regarded as British, implying they were to choose the form they knew well from school. However, the numbers are rather contradictory. *Moustache* was chosen over *mustache* in seventy-three cases, as well as *favour* over *favor* in seventy-eight cases and *jewellery* over *jewelry* in total of eighty-seven cases. Therefore, it can be assumed that the British spelling of these words is rather deep-rooted in students' memory. As for *mustache* and *jewelry*, students may not even be aware of those forms, as *moustache* and *jewellery* do not belong to the most frequently used words. *Omelette* was a tricky word, considering that students probably use this word more frequently in their mother tongue than in English. Yet sixty-eight students came to a conclusion that the simplified form would probably be preferred in the US.

Nevertheless, the rest of the results are not so convincing. In the first pair of variations, *centre/center*, only twenty-eight students chose the British spelling correctly, which might be the result of the frequency of the word. Moreover, final *-re/-er* seems to be very confusing, all the more so because *-re* does not have any support in pronunciation. *Defence* as opposed to *defense* was chosen in more than a half of cases. *Cheque* seems to be the most difficult word in the whole questionnaire. The strangely looking spelling of French origin was chosen thirty times in total, which means that seventy students chose *check*. It is a little closer to the Czech spelling and also frequently occurs as a verb, which might be confusing. On the other hand, choosing *airplane* over *aeroplane* is not very surprising, mainly because the latter British preference is nowadays being replaced even in textbooks and dictionaries. A similar characteristic also applies to *analyse*, which is sometimes regarded as obsolete even in the UK.

Deciding which participle is preferred in British English was particularly interesting. While *got* was correctly chosen as the British preference with a great certainty, the rest of the results are much less convincing. Only forty-four students chose *burnt* as opposed to *burned*, thirty-eight picked *spelt* instead of *spelled* and thirty-one chose to mark *dreamt*

over *dreamed*. However, *cancelled* with double -l-, which has no support in pronunciation, was chosen with a larger certainty, in sixty-three cases. On the whole, a half of students were not able to match the British variety and confused it with the American one, despite the fact that they are not supposed to encounter this still more frequent, regular and simplified spelling in class at all.

### **Exercise 3**

The results of the third exercise demonstrate that quite a significant number of students have trouble translating even some basic expressions they should already be familiar with. Surprisingly enough, more than a half of students were not able to translate *lift*, while sixty-three people translated its American counterpart *elevator* correctly. Other problematic British words were *cab*, surely better known as *taxi* that is also used in Czech, and *tap*, which seventy-one students apparently saw for the first time. The less problematic words were *movie*, *chips* and *postman*, probably due to the first two being among the most frequent words and the last one being quite easily deducible. The less known American words were *purse*, *closet*, *restroom*, *gas*, *stove* and *eraser*, while British synonyms *handbag*, *cooker* and *rubber* were known much better. *Petrol* was many times confused with *oil*, yet translated correctly in more cases than *gas*. *Restroom* was the least known American word translated as ‘a room for rest’ in thirty-eight cases. *Motorway* was sometimes mistaken for *road(way)* and *cooker* for a *cook*, which is a common mistake, especially with lower level students. Another understandable, yet unexpected mistake was confusing *mail* with *e-mail*, since *mail* is informally used with the same meaning in Czech as well. The most interesting was a translation of *rubber*, which was a few times and in different schools translated as *thief*. However, overall, students’ knowledge of British words was slightly better and proved that teaching vocabulary at school should not be underestimated.

Nonetheless, what students find particularly difficult is matching synonyms with varieties. *Movie* and *cookie* were the most frequent mistakes; *movie* was marked as a British preference thirty-two times and *cookie* in almost a half of cases. Once again, it demonstrates that students must come across *movie* and *cookie* very often, if not more than across *film* and *biscuit*. Other problematic words on the American side were *elevator*,

*vacation, mail, candy* and *gas* and on the British side *cab, lift, tap* and even *lorry*. Apart from British *tap, bill* and *petrol*, students were also most uncertain about *purse, stove, closet, stove, vacation* and *trash*. These are also the words the students had difficulty translating, with the exception of the last two.

On the whole, students achieved better results matching British English than American English, even though their answers were rather inconsistent. However, it must be remembered that even though respondents were asked not to guess, no one could guarantee they would not want to try; therefore, the results might be slightly misrepresented. In any case, it only proves that students do not feel confident about distinguishing American English from British English.

### **3.7 Research Conclusions and Implications**

The research was set out mainly to discover whether the students who took part in the survey were familiar with lexical and spelling differences between British and American English. It was because the whole thesis was based on the assumption that it is necessary for students to be aware of both varieties and the aspects in which they differ, so as to communicate without difficulties and avoid possible misunderstandings and uncomfortable situations. In order to achieve this primary aim, students were asked whether they knew about the existence of British and American English and their knowledge of the selected frequent words and their spelling forms was tested.

Secondary aims were to explore the role of the media and their influence on the students' knowledge of the differences, performance in matching them with the relevant variety and personal preferences and consistency in usage of both varieties.

The study sought to confirm or disprove the following hypotheses:

- 1) Overall, students will show better knowledge of variations of British English, which they learn at school, than of American English.
- 2) However, this knowledge will be more or less inconsistent and their performance in distinguishing the vocabulary and spelling of either national variety will not display sufficient reliability, as a result of a regular contact with the American English-dominated media.

Generally, both hypotheses have been confirmed. The results of all three exercises prove that in general, students know words preferred in British English better than their American synonyms, even though the difference is not as significant as it might be and their knowledge and preference of both lexis and spelling are quite inconsistent. As far as matching varieties is concerned, students are not very confident about distinguishing American English from British English and in many cases mix them up even with the most elementary words. Although there are many factors influencing the whole survey, the results suggest that the role of the media in teaching and learning a foreign language should not be underestimated, as they are to a great degree responsible for the inconsistency in students' competence, and that the power of American culture has a great impact on students' English also in the Czech Republic.

As far as the individual schools are concerned, it was expected that grammar school students, from the 8-year type in particular, would achieve slightly better results than other secondary schools. It is undoubtedly the result of high demands on students and, in case of the 8-year grammar school, a more consistent teaching process. However, such results do not have to (and ought not to) become a rule. Given the fact that employers have been making significant demands on foreign language competence of their employees (the English language in the overwhelming majority of cases) over the last decade, schools should try to make learning a foreign language more efficient and support competent, conscientious and demanding teachers to do so.

In spite of the fact that most students answered that their teacher (had) mentioned the differences sometime in class, it would seem insufficient, considering the results, which may be worsening in the future if this topic is not paid attention to. Teachers themselves should keep learning the differences and be prepared for possible questions and misunderstandings from students, so that they would not confuse them even more but support them in their foreign language development and help them to improve their English. It has already been mentioned that upper secondary students should achieve the language level B1-B2. This level corresponds to an 'independent user' who should be competent to understand a clear text, produce one on familiar or topical issues and cope with regular situations that may occur while travelling in the country where the language is



spoken (*Common European Framework of Reference* 33). Such a student is supposed to have acquired the basic vocabulary as well as the rules of spelling, which implies that he or she is capable of absorbing new information in order to broaden their horizons. Also, since 'Maturita' includes topics such as countries where English is the official language, students are encouraged to retain a brief history of those countries. Hence, there is no reason not to familiarise them with the language differences between those two countries that, incidentally, happen to have the biggest number of native speakers.

Finally, the current approach of TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) is that students should be informed about the differences, for it could help them facilitate communication, especially when they decide to go abroad, either to study or work. Such practice should not be regarded as an effort to impose something on someone but merely to prevent students from getting into confusing or even embarrassing situations. In consequence, there has been an increasing number of websites and blogs written by teachers and linguists, providing the reader with a list of preferences, quizzes, tests and ideas for teaching differences in classes.

## 4 Conclusion

This thesis deals with lexical and spelling differences between British and American English and explores how Czech students of English perceive them.

The theoretical part of the thesis focuses on a description of American and British English differences in both spelling and vocabulary with a special attention to their history and development. Two lists, each dedicated to a different area of differences, contain the most frequent items and are included in Appendix. There is also one chapter describing the impact of the media dominated by American English on today's learners and one chapter focusing on some interesting works and studies dealing with the topic.

As far as the practical part is concerned, both hypotheses have been confirmed. The results prove that students know lexical items and their forms preferred in British English better than their American counterparts. However, their knowledge and preference of both lexis and spelling are quite inconsistent. The performance in matching varieties demonstrates that students are not very confident in distinguishing American English from British English and often confuse them even with the most frequent and elementary words. In spite of many factors that might have influenced the survey, the results clearly suggest the power of the media in teaching and learning a foreign language, which in many cases leads to inconsistency in students' competence. American culture and its impact on skills of students should be taken into consideration in the process of teaching the English language.

Altogether, despite the fact that all the respondents were to a certain degree aware of the differences, the research findings show that the topic of the thesis needs to be paid more attention to in class. Ignorance of the differences between varieties may easily interfere with students' language competence and result in misunderstandings or awkward situations.

Eventually, this thesis could serve as groundwork for further research, alternatively as the basis for teaching lexical and spelling differences. Both teachers and students at any level of English could profit from an overview of the basic and most frequent differences, their history and development, as well as the importance of being well acquainted with them.

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## 6 Appendix

### 6.1 Lists of Differences

#### 6.1.1 List of Spelling Differences

The following section consists of several selected differences in spelling. With regard to the limited extent of a Bachelor thesis, these are mainly some typical representative items and the most frequent words in everyday use. The source for this section was *American and British English Preferences* (Salama and Ghali) and Crystal's *The English Language: A Guided Tour of the Language*. Considering the publication dates of both books, it was necessary to additionally consult the Oxford and Cambridge Online Dictionaries along with *The Facts On File Student's Dictionary of American English* (Barnhart) in order to update the common usage. The left-hand column represents the preferences in British English, while the right-hand column focuses on their counterparts in Standard American English.

#### **-ae-, -oe-**

aeroplane

anaemia

anaesthesia, anaesthetic

archaeology

diarrhoea

encyclopaedia

foetus

haemoglobin

manoeuvre

orthopaedic

#### **-e-**

airplane

anemia

anesthesia, anesthetic

archaeology, archeology

diarrhea

encyclopedia

fetus

hemoglobin

maneuver

orthopedic

Under the influence of American English, the word *encyclopaedia* is preferably spelt *encyclopedia* in both Oxford and Cambridge Dictionaries.

#### **-ise**

apologise

authorise

#### **-ize**

apologize

authorize

civilise	civilize
dramatise	dramatize
generalise	generalize
modernise	modernize
nationalise	nationalize
organise	organize
realise	realize
recognise	recognize
symbolise	symbolize

Note that not all the words ending in -ise belong to this group. Words of French or Latin origin where -ise is not a suffix are spelt -ise: advertise, advise, comprise, compromise, despise, disguise, exercise, revise, supervise, surprise.

<b>-yse</b>	<b>- yze</b>
analyse	analyze
paralyse	paralyze
<b>-our</b>	<b>-or</b>
armour	armor
behaviour	behavior
colour	color
favour	favor
glamour	glamor
harbour	harbor
honour	honor
humour	humor
labour	labor
neighbour	neighbor
rumour	rumor
saviour	savior
savour	savor

Note that agent nouns like *governor* (from the verb ‘to govern’) are spelt with -or, with the exception of *saviour*.

**-re**

centre, central

fibre, fibrous

kilometre

litre

metre, metric

spectre, spectral

theatre, theatrical

**-er**

center, central

fiber, fibrous

kilometer

liter

meter, metric

specter, spectral

theater, theatrical

Measuring devices are spelt *meter*, as well as *barometer*, *pentameter*, *thermometer*, etc.

*Acre*, *massacre*, *mediocre* and *ogre* are spelt with -re because of the pronunciation of final /k/ and /g/.

**-se**

defence

licence (noun)

offence

pretence

practice (noun)

**-ce**

defense

license (noun/verb)

offense

pretense

practice (noun/verb)

**-ll**

cancelled

counsellor

jewellery

marvellous

quarrelling

traveller

woollen

**-l**

double final ‘l’ only if the final syllable (of two or more) is stressed

canceled

counselor

jewelry

marvelous

quarreling

traveler

woolen

But: controlled, controlling

controlled, controlling (the final syllable is stressed)

**-l**

enrol

fulfil

instalment

skilful

wilful

**-ll**

enroll

fulfill

installment

skillful

willful

**-pp**

kidnapped, kidnapper

worshipped, worshipper

But: gossiped (exception)

**-p**

kidnaped, kidnaper

worshiped, worshiper

gossiped

**-ogue**

catalogue

dialogue

epilogue

monologue

**-og**

catalog

dialog

epilog

monolog

Note that the British variations are also used in the United States.

**-ge**

acknowledgement

ageing

judgement

**-g**

acknowledgment

aging

judgment

Note that *judgment* is becoming more and more common in British English.

**Individual items**

aluminium

axe

cheque

cosy

aluminum

ax

check

cozy



disc	disk
doughnut	donut
draught	draft
grey	gray
kerb	curb
liquorice	licorice
mould	mold
moustache	mustache
nought	naught
omelette	omelet
plough	plow
programme	program
pyjamas	pajamas
sceptic	skeptic
speciality	specialty
storey	story
sulphur	sulfur
tyre	tire
whisky	whiskey

*Gramme* with double -mm is still used, but *kilogram* is spelt with a single -m, as well as *telegram* or *hologram*.

### **Past tense and past participle of verbs**

In general, people in Britain still have a tendency to use the irregular forms ending in -t, while in America, people are inclined towards the regular -ed forms.

broadcast, broadcast, broadcast	broadcast, broadcasted, broadcasted
burn, burnt/burned, burnt/burned	burn, burned/burnt, burned/burnt
dive, dived, dived	dive, dived/dove, dived
dream, dreamt/dreamed, dreamt/dreamed	dream, dreamed/dreamt, dreamed/dreamt
dwell, dwelt, dwelt	dream, dwelled/dwelt, dwelled/dwelt
fit, fitted, fitted	fit, fit(ted), fit(ted)

forecast, forecast, forecast	forecast, forecasted, forecasted
kneel, knelt/kneeled, knelt/kneeled	kneel, kneeled/knelt, kneeled/knelt
knit, knitted, knitted	knit, knit(ted), knit(ted)
lean, leant/leaned, leant/leaned	lean, leaned, leaned
leap, leapt/leaped, leapt/leaped	leap, leaped/leapt, leaped/leapt
learn, learnt/learned, learnt/learned	learn, learned, learned
light, lit/lighted, lit/lighted	light, lighted/lit, lighted/lit
plead, pleaded, pleaded	plead, pled/pleaded, pled/pleaded
smell, smelt/smelled, smelt/smelled	smell, smelled, smelled
speed, sped, sped	speed, speeded/sped, speeded/sped
spell, spelt/spelled, spelt/spelled	spell, spelled, spelled
spill, spilt/spilled, spilt/spilled	spill, spilled, spilled
spit, spat, spat	spit, spit/spat, spit/spat
spoil, spoilt/spoiled, spoilt/spoiled	spoil, spoiled, spoiled
sweat, sweated, sweated	sweat, sweat(ed), sweat(ed)

### 6.1.2 List of Lexical Differences

The following synonyms were chosen particularly for the purposes of the thesis, and therefore generally correspond to the level A1-B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. They are divided thematically and ordered alphabetically. The left-hand column represents the British vocabulary.

#### Travel and transport

boot (of a car)	trunk
cab	taxi
crossroads	intersection
engine	motor
lorry, van	truck
motorway	freeway
petrol	gas
railway	railroad
roundabout	traffic circle

toll motorway  
underground/tube  
windscreen

turnpike  
subway  
windshield

### **Sports and free time**

film  
football  
holiday  
pub

movie  
soccer  
vacation  
bar

### **School and education**

graduate  
maths  
public school  
rubber  
secondary school  
state school  
university

alumnus  
math  
private school  
eraser  
high school  
public school  
college

### **Clothes and accessories**

handbag  
trainers  
trousers  
waistcoat  
zip

purse  
sneakers  
pants  
vest  
zipper

### **Shops and advertisement**

chemist's  
hoarding  
off-licence  
shop

drug store  
billboard  
liquor store  
store

### **Food**

bill (at restaurant)

biscuit

chips

crisps

grill

sweets

tin

check

cookie

French fries

potato chips

broil

candy

can

### **Occupation**

caretaker

estate agent

postman

solicitor/barrister

janitor

realtor

mailman

attorney

### **Home and living**

bin/dust bin

cooker

cupboard

flat

garden

ground floor

lift

nappy

post

pram

rubbish

tap

tea towel

toilet/loo

torch

thrash can

stove

closet

apartment

backyard/yard

first floor

elevator

diaper

mail

baby carriage

trash

faucet

dish towel

bathroom/restroom

flashlight

### **Miscellaneous**

autumn  
pavement  
queue  
ring

fall  
sidewalk  
line  
call

## 6.2 Result Tables

**Table 4, Exercise 1**

The following abbreviations were used for practical reasons: N. school (nursing school), T. school (technical school), G. school (grammar school) and ‘pct’ as a percentage.

	N. school	T. school	G. School – 4-year	G. School – 8-year	Total in pct
<b>Film</b>	7	6	7	8	28%
<b>Movie</b>	15	18	15	13	61%
<b>Both</b>	3	1	3	4	11%
<b>Did not know</b>	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Incorrect</b>	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Holiday</b>	23	23	21	22	89%
<b>Vacation</b>	0	1	3	2	6%
<b>Both</b>	0	0	0	1	1%
<b>Did not know</b>	1	0	0	0	1%
<b>Incorrect</b>	1	1	1	0	3%
<b>Trousers</b>	20	15	14	16	65%
<b>Pants</b>	4	8	9	8	29%
<b>Both</b>	1	1	1	1	4%
<b>Did not know</b>	0	1	0	0	1%
<b>Incorrect</b>	0	0	1	0	1%
<b>Biscuit</b>	6	7	8	9	30%
<b>Cookie</b>	17	18	16	13	64%
<b>Both</b>	1	0	1	3	5%
<b>Did not know</b>	1	0	0	0	1%
<b>Incorrect</b>	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Flat</b>	23	23	22	21	89%
<b>Apartment</b>	1	1	2	2	6%
<b>Both</b>	0	0	1	2	3%
<b>Did not know</b>	0	1	0	0	1%
<b>Incorrect</b>	1	0	0	0	1%
<b>Theatre</b>	12	15	14	15	56%
<b>Theater</b>	13	10	11	10	44%
<b>Both</b>	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Did not know</b>	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Incorrect</b>	0	0	0	0	0%

*Table 4 – Number of cases in relation to the individual items, 1<sup>st</sup> exercise - part 1*

	N. school	T. school	G. School – 4-year	G. School – 8-year	Total in pct
Neighbour	10	14	19	18	61%
Neighbor	8	5	5	6	24%
Both	0	0	0	1	1%
Did not know	6	5	0	0	11%
Incorrect	1	1	1	0	3%
Dialogue	2	6	6	8	22%
Dialog	17	14	17	16	64%
Both	0	1	0	0	1%
Did not know	4	3	1	0	8%
Incorrect	2	1	1	1	5%
Cheque	2	1	6	8	17%
Check	1	14	11	12	38%
Both	0	0	0	0	0%
Did not know	16	7	5	3	31%
Incorrect	6	3	3	2	14%
Programme	2	3	7	10	22%
Program	14	22	16	14	66%
Both	0	0	0	0	0%
Did not know	3	0	0	0	3%
Incorrect	6	0	2	1	9%

Table 4 – Number of cases in relation to the individual items, 1<sup>st</sup> exercise - part 2

Table 5, Exercise 2

	N. school	T. school	G. school – 4-year	G. school – 8-year	Total in pct
Centre	9	5	8	6	28%
Center	16	18	17	19	70%
Did not know	0	2	0	0	2%
Moustache	22	12	18	21	73%
Mustache	2	8	7	4	21%
Did not know	1	5	0	0	6%
Favour	21	18	19	20	78%
Favor	4	5	6	5	20%
Did not know	0	2	0	0	2%
Defence	16	7	10	13	46%
Defense	7	18	15	12	52%
Did not know	2	0	0	0	2%
Jewellery	23	21	21	22	87%
Jewelry	2	3	4	3	12%
Did not know	0	1	0	0	1%

Table 5 – Number of cases in relation to the individual items, 2<sup>nd</sup> exercise - part 1

	N. school	T. school	G. school – 4-year	G. school – 8-year	Total in pct
Omelette	17	14	18	19	68%
Omelet	2	6	5	6	19%
Did not know	6	5	2	0	13%
Cheque	4	3	9	14	30%
Check	21	22	16	11	70%
Did not know	0	0	0	0	0%
Analyse	8	9	8	9	34%
Analyze	16	12	17	15	60%
Did not know	1	4	0	1	6%
Aeroplane	11	12	9	10	42%
Airplane	12	13	16	15	56%
Did not know	2	0	0	0	2%
Got	22	22	21	23	88%
Gotten	3	3	4	2	12%
Did not know	0	0	0	0	0%
Burnt	13	9	10	12	44%
Burned	12	15	15	13	55%
Did not know	0	1	0	0	1%
Cancelled	21	12	16	14	63%
Canceled	4	11	9	11	35%
Did not know	0	2	0	0	2%
Spelt	10	8	7	13	38%
Spelled	15	15	18	12	60%
Did not know	0	2	0	0	2%
Dreamt	8	4	6	13	31%
Dreamed	17	19	19	12	67%
Did not know	0	2	0	0	2%

Table 5 – Number of cases in relation to the individual items, 2<sup>nd</sup> exercise - part 2

### Table 6, Exercise 3

Apart from the aforesaid abbreviations, the following table contains some others: Cor. (correct), Inc. (incorrect) and Dnk (did not know).

	N. school			T. school			G. school – 4			G. school – 8			Total in pct		
	Cor.	Inc.	Dnk	Cor.	Inc.	Dnk	Cor.	Inc.	Dnk	Cor.	Inc.	Dnk	Cor.	Inc.	Dnk
Lorry	16	2	7	14	0	11	17	3	5	20	2	3	67%	7%	26%
Railway	18	0	7	21	0	4	13	8	5	17	5	2	69%	13%	18%
Closet	7	12	6	15	2	8	13	3	7	15	4	8	50%	21%	29%
Purse	3	3	19	12	3	10	9	7	12	10	4	8	34%	17%	49%

Table 6 – Number of cases in relation to the individual items, translation, 3<sup>rd</sup> exercise - part 1



	N. school			T. school			G. school – 4			G. school – 8			Total in pct		
	Cor.	Inc.	DNK	Cor.	Inc.	DNK	Cor.	Inc.	DNK	Cor.	Inc.	DNK	Cor.	Inc.	DNK
Chips	24	1	0	21	2	2	24	1	0	24	1	0	93%	5%	2%
Elevator	11	0	14	19	0	6	13	8	4	20	2	3	63%	10%	27%
Rubbish	11	0	14	18	2	5	18	4	3	20	2	3	67%	8%	25%
Lift	3	3	19	11	0	14	14	4	7	19	3	3	47%	10%	43%
Cooker	11	11	3	20	3	2	20	3	2	21	3	1	72%	20%	8%
Queue	9	0	16	19	0	6	23	0	2	24	0	1	75%	0%	25%
Petrol	4	4	17	14	2	9	16	4	6	19	4	1	53%	14%	33%
Tap	0	2	23	1	5	19	5	5	16	8	3	13	14%	15%	71%
Movie	24	1	0	24	0	1	25	0	0	24	1	0	97%	2%	1%
Vacation	9	0	16	16	2	7	16	3	6	18	2	5	59%	7%	34%
Restroom	5	10	10	7	10	8	10	9	6	8	9	8	30%	38%	32%
Pub	18	1	6	18	0	7	20	2	3	20	2	3	76%	5%	19%
Pants	14	0	11	18	1	6	17	2	6	19	2	4	68%	5%	27%
Underground	22	2	1	22	1	2	22	2	1	22	1	2	88%	6%	6%
Gas	11	2	12	6	2	17	14	4	7	15	4	6	46%	12%	42%
Rubber	21	1	3	19	1	5	22	1	2	23	1	1	85%	4%	11%
Stove	6	1	18	11	1	13	11	2	10	13	4	10	41%	8%	51%
Mail	12	3	10	8	6	11	14	6	5	16	6	3	50%	21%	29%
Subway	19	1	5	16	2	7	18	3	4	20	3	2	73%	9%	18%
Truck	14	0	11	21	0	4	16	3	6	19	1	5	70%	4%	26%
Candy	20	2	3	18	0	7	19	1	5	20	2	3	77%	5%	18%
Handbag	20	0	5	22	0	3	21	0	4	22	1	2	85%	1%	14%
Cookie	22	3	0	23	0	2	21	1	3	23	0	2	89%	4%	7%
Motorway	7	10	8	14	2	9	15	5	5	18	5	2	54%	22%	24%
Trash	10	3	12	19	0	6	15	2	8	17	1	7	61%	6%	33%
Eraser	6	0	19	9	1	15	9	3	15	9	2	12	33%	6%	61%
Cab	3	2	20	7	2	16	7	6	14	9	4	10	26%	14%	60%
Trainers	13	4	9	7	7	11	14	4	8	15	3	5	49%	18%	33%
Bill	9	2	14	14	0	11	15	2	9	18	2	4	56%	6%	38%
Postman	23	0	2	22	0	3	22	2	1	23	1	1	90%	3%	7%

Table 6 – Number of cases in relation to the individual items, translation, 3<sup>rd</sup> exercise - part 2

Table 7, Exercise 3

	N. school			T. school			G. school – 4			G. school – 8			Total in pct		
	Cor.	Inc.	DNK	Cor.	Inc.	DNK	Cor.	Inc.	DNK	Cor.	Inc.	DNK	Cor.	Inc.	DNK
Lorry	4	8	13	9	4	12	11	5	9	15	5	5	39%	22%	39%
Railway	9	3	13	11	2	12	13	7	5	16	6	3	49%	18%	33%
Closet	5	6	14	8	5	12	13	5	7	15	2	8	41%	18%	41%

Table 7 – Number of cases in relation to the individual items, matching variety, 3<sup>rd</sup> exercise - part 1

	N. school			T. school			G. school – 4			G. school – 8			Total in pct		
	Cor.	Inc.	DNk	Cor.	Inc.	DNk	Cor.	Inc.	DNk	Cor.	Inc.	DNk	Cor.	Inc.	DNk
Purse	4	4	17	10	2	13	11	5	9	12	6	7	37%	17%	46%
Chips	12	3	10	16	4	5	23	1	1	22	2	1	73%	10%	17%
Elevator	7	2	16	6	10	9	10	9	6	13	6	6	36%	27%	37%
Rubbish	9	2	14	13	4	8	15	5	5	17	4	4	54%	15%	31%
Lift	6	3	16	10	6	9	12	5	8	13	6	6	41%	20%	39%
Cooker	10	2	13	14	3	8	13	7	5	15	6	4	52%	18%	30%
Queue	3	3	19	8	6	11	14	3	8	18	4	3	43%	16%	41%
Petrol	6	3	16	7	5	13	12	5	8	13	10	2	38%	23%	39%
Tap	0	3	22	4	7	14	5	7	13	5	10	10	14%	27%	59%
Movie	3	10	12	11	8	6	12	8	5	12	6	7	38%	32%	30%
Vacation	4	1	20	6	8	11	13	5	7	14	5	6	37%	19%	44%
Restroom	5	4	16	7	5	13	10	9	6	8	9	8	30%	27%	43%
Pub	8	4	13	12	4	9	15	3	7	18	3	4	53%	14%	33%
Pants	6	4	15	9	7	9	11	5	9	17	3	5	43%	19%	38%
Underground	16	1	8	16	3	6	20	2	3	22	1	2	74%	7%	19%
Gas	5	6	14	5	8	12	8	7	10	9	9	7	27%	30%	43%
Rubber	10	1	14	15	1	9	15	3	7	21	1	3	61%	6%	33%
Stove	5	2	18	4	9	12	11	5	9	10	6	9	30%	22%	48%
Mail	5	6	14	3	15	7	10	6	9	11	8	6	29%	35%	36%
Subway	16	2	7	16	1	8	18	3	4	20	3	2	70%	9%	21%
Truck	6	4	15	13	3	9	13	3	9	16	3	6	48%	13%	39%
Candy	5	7	13	8	7	10	10	5	10	13	5	7	36%	24%	40%
Handbag	5	5	15	10	7	8	12	5	8	14	4	7	41%	21%	38%
Cookie	6	8	11	11	9	5	12	6	7	14	4	7	43%	27%	30%
Motorway	7	3	15	9	6	10	11	4	10	13	4	8	40%	17%	43%
Trash	5	4	16	8	6	11	9	5	11	11	5	9	33%	20%	47%
Eraser	3	4	18	5	6	14	8	3	14	9	5	11	25%	18%	57%
Cab	4	2	19	4	9	12	7	6	12	10	5	10	25%	22%	53%
Trainers	8	4	13	6	7	12	9	4	12	11	5	9	34%	20%	46%
Bill	4	4	17	4	7	14	7	5	13	8	6	11	23%	22%	55%
Postman	11	2	12	14	2	9	13	2	10	19	1	5	57%	7%	36%

Table 7 – Number of cases in relation to the individual items, matching variety, 3<sup>rd</sup> exercise - part 2

## 6.3 Questionnaire

### Dotazník k bakalářské práci

Vážení studenti a studentky,

jmenuji se Alena Nováková a jsem studentkou 3. ročníku na Pedagogické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy v Praze. Obracím se na Vás s žádostí o vyplnění mého dotazníku, který poslouží jako podklad pro bakalářskou práci, zkoumající povědomí studentů o rozdílech mezi britskou a americkou angličtinou v oblasti pravopisu a slovní zásoby. Rovněž Vás žádám, abyste odpovídali pravdivě a neopisovali, pokud neznáte odpověď, na otázku neodpovídejte. Dotazník je naprosto anonymní a dobrovolný a jeho vyplnění Vám zabere přibližně pět minut. Odpovědi zakroužkujte či doplňte.

**1. V České republice se tradičně vyučuje britská angličtina. Věděli jste, že existuje také angličtina americká a od britské se v mnoha ohledech liší?**

ano    ne

**2. Upozorňuje Vás učitel/ka (nebo již dříve upozornil/a) na rozdíly mezi britskou a americkou angličtinou během vyučování?**

ano    ne

**3. Jak často sledujete filmy, pořady či seriály v angličtině?**

nikdy            občas            často            snažím se je sledovat jen v angličtině

**4. Sledujete spíše britské nebo americké filmy, pořady či seriály? (pokud jste v předchozí otázce odpověděli „nikdy“, neodpovídejte)**

britské            americké            nevím

**5. Přicházíte do kontaktu s psanou angličtinou i mimo školu?**

ano    ne

**6. Jak? (počítačové hry, webové stránky, knihy, texty písní, titulky apod.)**

.....

**7. Přeložte následující slova do angličtiny.**

film	divadlo
prázdniny	soused
kalhoty	dialog

sušenka

šek

byt

program

**8. U každé dvojice zakroužkujte tu variantu, která patří do britské angličtiny.**

center – centre

defence – defense

check – cheque

moustache – mustache

jewellery – jewelry

analyze – analyse

favor – favour

omelette – omelet

aeroplane – airplane

I've gotten an e-mail. – I've got an e-mail.      She spelt her name. – She spelled her name.

He burnt the cake. – He burned the cake.      I dreamed about you. – I dreamt about you.

The flight was canceled. – The flight was cancelled.

**9. Přeložte následující podstatná jména do češtiny a uveďte, zda patří do britské či americké angličtiny (stačí připsat „A“ jako americká či „B“ jako britská).**

lorry

underground

railway

gas (ne plyn)

closet

rubber

purse

stove

chips

mail

elevator

subway

rubbish

truck

lift

candy

cooker

handbag

queue

cookie

petrol

motorway

tap

trash

movie

eraser

vacation

cab

restroom

trainers

pub

bill

pants

postman

Mnohokrát Vám děkuji za trpělivost a spolupráci.