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POSUDEK DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

The Native Speaker English Teachers in the Czech Republic (téma)

The stated purpose of this work is to review the pros and cons as well as the conditions and situations of schools (private and public) and to some extent universities employing Native Speakers (NS) of English in the Czech Republic. A huge assortment of questions raised includes the best use of NS (adults or children) as well as appropriate qualifications of NS, among many other things. This topic is practical and timely, although some theoretical issues were attempted in addressing the prodigious questions raised.

The prefatory chapter presents the issues and questions addressed in the chapters and subchapters to follow. The second chapter on theory really reviews basic issues to all language teachers rather than being focused on NS issues pertinent to this diploma work topic. For example, issues of qualifications (or more specifically to teachers without qualifications) or the conclusion that personality is of primary importance rather than qualifications (p. 10) are not issues delimited to NS teachers at all. Perhaps indirectly related to NSs effectiveness, these issues are nevertheless left unresolved in 2.1, as Ms. Větrovcová moves on to issues of attitude, origin (of the teacher), and background rather than sticking to her original dichotomy between qualifications vs. personality as the critical ingredients in determining in-class teaching effectiveness. In reviewing this section, it might have helped to add to the introduction the more general aim of defining effective teaching (regardless if we refer to NS or non-NS teachers).

The issues of autonomy, responsibility, and authority of teachers (2.2), although not limited to NSs, is important since Ms. Větrovcová shows how these issues may be understood differently in the countries where the English-language NSs come from. A useful aspect of this section is Ms. Větrovcová's apposite discussion of the inveterate in-class practices in the CR which seem highly suspect in the minds of NS with regard to fairness, in addition to Czech habits related to showing overly-extended respect and politeness towards the Czech teacher. A minor issue I might quibble with is Ms. Větrovcová's presentation of translating, to wit: "attempts to directly translate the language may appear to be funny or even embarrassing for a NS" (p. 20) – this is largely irrelevant in a theory appropriating student-centered learning. What happens to the teacher is of less significance than the learning taking place among the learners. Likewise the issue of culture shock seems addressed more toward the NS rather than the English language learner. Section 2.6 should not have been placed in the theoretical chapter. It reveals no theory but numerical statistics about teachers of English in CR public schools and Ms. Větrovcová's comments on the data. In the data Ms. Větrovcová shows that the majority of English teachers are not qualified, a problem not directly related to the NS question *per se*, though it shows the need Czechs have for more teachers.

Ms. Větrovcová hedges about this statistical importance since her view is that the importance of qualifications is vitiated by personality – in her opinion – when one wishes to assess quality instruction. However, “personality” is hard to qualify and never comes up in either the case study interviews nor in the questionnaire. Often there is too much anecdotal information from interviewees limited to Kladno or Ceske Budejovice (this reader was extensively cited) rather than broader and more representative information from the entire country. Some chapters do not seem theoretical like salaries and job opportunities and hence do not belong to chapter two, giving a bit of an impression of aimlessness when covering theoretical aspects of NS issues. Yet her comments and presentation of information is clear, quite impressive and even colorful. The writing is lucid and well formatted except that two lengthy paragraphs cited are not single spaced (pp. 17, 21, 22).

Chapter three covers case studies and the questionnaire. In the case study Ms. Větrovcová interviewed three people who hire and supervise NS, and dealt with quite a variety of issues. In the main Ms. Větrovcová divided the problems as to the needs of a private language school learner with those of university students. I feel more people should have been interviewed for a greater representation of the issues raised in this diploma work, especially since no public school teacher or headmaster was interviewed.

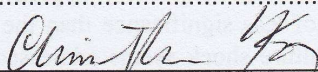
The presentation and interpretation of the questionnaire is well written, and describes the preparation and dissemination to NS throughout the CR. The data retrieved is presented through colorful graphs though the main problem here is that the representativeness of the data is extremely limited and this fact should have been more greatly emphasized while making generalizations throughout the course of reviewing and interpreting data. Of the 238 NS referred to be teaching at secondary public schools, only two responded. Ms. Větrovcová works with data received by 22 respondents (two other respondents were not useful for her research). The strongest section seems to be the error correction discussion distinguishing NS and Czech English teacher in-class pedagogy. The two weakest concern qualifications: “do you believe a NS needs teaching qualification” This question is asked without clearly defining whether a certificate or a university degree – perhaps with a different major – suffices. Yet this is broadly discussed in the theoretical chapter. The next question is ambiguous too – for the same reason: “How many NS do you know who teach without appropriate qualification.” Since the majority of the entire English language teaching force in this nation is not qualified (only 35 % are pedagogically qualified as stated on p. 27), this question seems mute to address to NS when the majority of all English language teachers in the CR are not qualified and/or skilled.

The diploma work’s aims are ambitious, and with little fault directed at Ms. Větrovcová, the data provided was quantifiably negligible, which should have been underscored more clearly in her interpretation of the data. This discussion is important to the profession and further research, particularly with more reliable data, would be useful to administrators and policy makers alike. It would have been proper to eliminate questions universal to all teachers (such as the inevitable and infelicitous low salaries) and place all emphasis on issues related to NS exclusively, as too many issues were included, most rather inconclusively.

My assessment of this work, which is generally well-written and structured, with poignant discussions of importance, is

- velmi dobře -

Návrh na klasifikaci diplomové práce:


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V Českých Budějovicích dne 2010.....

Stupeň kvalifikace	výborně	velmi dobře	dobře	nevyhověl
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