

Příloha k protokolu o SZZ č.....
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Diplomant: Synková Karolína

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Recenzent*)
Vedoucí*) diplomové práce
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POSUDEK DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

English Teaching within University Distance Education Programmes (téma)

The goals

The author's stated goal was to provide an overview of both theory and practice employed in teaching at a distance, with a special reference to language instruction. Her impulse for tackling this subject, she writes, had come from her experience in teaching English for the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology.

Contents and structuring

The thesis is divided into two distinct parts. The first 36 pages are devoted almost exclusively to theories underpinning distance education, with the sources coming prevalently from the English-speaking world. Karolína does include several comments on the state of distance learning in Central Europe in general and the Czech Republic in particular, but no literature is quoted. The second part deals with the author's experience in teaching English at a distance for the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology. We get acquainted with the ways these courses are structured, the nature of the study materials and a description of the individual face-to-face lessons.

Notes

- The parts which deal with the current theories of education at a distance are well-organized and competently presented. Karolína manages to cover most of the salient features related to this field, including the main obstacles that both the students and the teachers can be faced with, such as the lack of (students') self-regulation, inadequate access to relevant technology, the teachers' frustrations of having to rely on instructional designers and technical support, etc. Interspersed with this analysis there are the author's own reflections.
- There is heavy reliance on literature from the English-speaking world, however, in particular on Moore and Kearsley, almost to the total exclusion of other sources. In total, I counted about 30 references to those two authors. And although Karolína comments on the problems present in the Czech distance-education programmes, sometimes referring to them as "*the Central European schooling tradition*" (page 27), she does not quote any studies to back up her claims.

- The segment dealing with the theory of teaching English at a distance is inadequately developed (in view of the title and the stated aims of this thesis). It is covered in less than three pages and fails to deal with such crucial topics as interactivity and feedback, so crucial to language teaching. A large part of this segment in fact only lists institutions and websites that (may) offer online English courses.
- In the practical part which follows, the author has described her recent experiences in teaching English at a distance. The author explains that the distance programmes are “*typical with long blocks of classes taking place only a few times per semester,*” and these are supplemented with what is called “*self-study*”. I have tried hard to understand the component that could be positively identified as distance teaching here. It is presumably the use of the self-study textbook English Step by Step in electronic form which the students were able to access with the help of group e-mail. The author states that the e-mail address “*proved particularly practical when providing audio materials*” (pages 39-40), but the audio materials are not described, neither is there any description of the online transactions and communications that may have gone on between the teacher and the students. The bulk of this part, in fact, deals with a detailed description of the face-to-face classes the author had conducted.
- In the latter parts of her thesis, the author has also included a section called Needs Analysis. At this stage one would perhaps rather expect some of the students’ reflections on the methods, richness and usefulness of communications outside the F2F environment. A questionnaire was used for this purpose. The questions, however, in no way dealt with the online delivery of the course and/or any other distance-education transactions. Instead, they are concerned with such issues as the uses of English by the different students, vocabulary preferences, skill preferences, etc. The author did a very good job in presenting the results of her Needs Analysis, but the issues discussed are not concerned with distance-education interactions. Further, a Needs Analysis should always appear in the initial stages of any teaching/learning project, not at the end.
- In her conclusion, the author suggests that the university is using “*an inefficient out-of-date course design*” (page 90). This argument could carry more weight if there was a clear description of the existing distance education components and a more in-depth analysis of the opportunities that may lie ahead, such as the experiment with Moodle, which is briefly referred to.
- The author writes in highly readable English but she has, unfortunately, only used a spell check, omitting the use of her own judgment in correcting mistakes. Thus there is a huge array of mistakes in the text where the spell check had accepted words that exist but are not what the author would have wanted, for instance: “*Identify the ration of complete beginners*” (page 47); “*Fits the students were told...*”(page 51); “*urgent need for course resigning*”(page 91), etc.

The presentation:

In general, this work is well-organized and labeled. There are no typographical errors. Graphics designed by the author are of high quality.

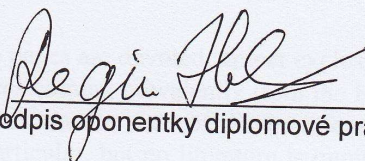
Overall evaluation

A great deal of effort went into this work, but the contents presented do not seem to correspond to the stated goals. This thesis is therefore assessed as a C.

Questions:

- Outside the F-2-F environment, how would you describe the depth and quality of your interactions with the students?
- You have said in the end that there is an out-of-date course design. What changes would you suggest?
- What role (if any) could Facebook and other online social networks play?

Návrh na klasifikaci diplomové práce: - dobře -


podpis oponentky diplomové práce

V Českých Budějovicích dne 25.5. 2010.....

Stupeň kvalifikace	výborně	velmi dobře	dobře	nevyhověl
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