

POSUDEK BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Jméno a příjmení studenta: Magdalena Smolková
Název bakalářské práce: Analysis of grammatical errors in pop song lyrics

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- I. Cíl práce a jeho naplnění:
1. Cíl práce byl stanoven a naplněn v souladu s tématem
 2. Cíl práce byl naplněn s drobnými nedostatky
 3. Cíl práce byl adekvátní, ale jen částečně naplněný
 4. Stanovený cíl nebyl naplněn
- II. Struktura práce:
1. Logická, jasná a přehledná
 2. Přiměřená
 3. Uspokojivá
 4. Nevhodná
- III. Práce s literaturou:
1. Výborná: zvoleny a použity vhodné prameny v patřičném rozsahu
 2. Velmi dobrá práce s adekvátními prameny v patřičném rozsahu
 3. Průměrná práce s literaturou
 4. Slabá, chybná nebo nedostačující
- IV. Formální stránka:
1. Odpovídá všem stanoveným požadavkům
 2. Obsahuje drobné formální chyby
 3. Nesplňuje některé zásadní požadavky
 4. Nesplňuje většinu stanovených požadavků
- VI. Jazyková úroveň práce:
1. Výborná
 2. Velmi dobrá
 3. Dobrá
 4. Podprůměrná
- VII. Náročnost zpracování tématu:
1. Velmi vysoká
 2. Vysoká
 3. Střední
 4. Nízká

Vyjádření oponenta bakalářské práce:

The thesis deals with errors occurring in pop song lyrics. The theoretical part presents reflections on the process of songwriting and a survey of categories of mistakes that allegedly occur in them. The practical part explores the lyrics of the top-five songs in each year between 1990 and 2017. Songs belonging to the genre of rap and hip-hop were excluded from the exploration because their lyrics were expected to be significantly non-standard.

The major categories of mistakes include, for example, incorrect use of pronouns in terms of the case, double negatives, subject-verb concord, incorrect verb forms, etc. The categories described in the theoretical part do not fully correspond to the categories actually identified in the lyrics, as is clear from the diagram on page 38, probably suggesting that some of the types did not occur in the lyrics explored.

Theoretically, the thesis is grounded in relatively few serious linguistic sources (and surprisingly, no major English grammars!), complemented by a number of internet sources whose reliability is somewhat dubious, to say the least. The author quotes sources warning against hypercorrection (p 4), however, some of the tips and explanations suggested are guilty of precisely this and very far from linguistic reality; at best they seem to represent a layperson's point of view (p 6-7). What is lacking is the author's assessment of the validity of the sources used. As a result, some of the alleged mistakes are examples of perfectly correct, albeit informal, language use by native speakers.

English has a tradition of descriptive, rather than prescriptive, grammars, and many of the errors have more to do with degrees of formality. As pop songs can be expected to represent very informal, colloquial instances of language use, it is logical that their lyrics will contain language phenomena naturally occurring in spontaneous spoken communication. Current major grammars take account of colloquial language usage. In fact, colloquialisms are listed as one category of "mistakes" (p 10), but this a glaring example of hypergrammaticalisation. It would have been more appropriate to use a different title for the thesis, something like "Informal language in pop song lyrics".

Some of the phenomena described deserve a more detailed commentary (the numbers in brackets indicate the page):

(7) - both *you and I* and *you and me* represent to some extent set phrases and in informal language are treated as a whole; description of structures such as *they were talking about you and I* can already be found in publications by D. Bollinger in the 1970s and 1980s.

(10) - the use of *ain't* has been a common feature of colloquial language use, see the lyrics of an early Beatles song: *I ain't got nothing but love... (Eight days a week)*

(12) S-V concord in English is governed by at least three principles, sometimes contradictory

(14) *were* x *was*: apart from some set phrases (*if I were you*), *was* can always replace *were* in the hypothetical sense

(14, 33) It is not true that *that* can only be used in relative clauses after non-personal/inanimate antecedents; the difference between *who/which* and *that* is largely stylistic, while using *whom* (33) sounds positively 'frozen'.

(17, 21) *loving* as a gerund CAN, of course, be used as a direct object, subject, as well as all other typically nominal clause constituents; the problem is that most native speakers cannot distinguish between a participle and a gerund.

(18-19) using *kind/slow* for *kindly/slowly* is another instance of colloquial use; cf *But the response should certainly not be to 'go slow' on science*. Martin Rees, Reith lectures, BBC, an instance of academic speech presented in public).

(30) *a child misses their blanket* - plural concord is now the norm to avoid the use of gender-specific *his/her*.

(32) *She on my jock* - the choice of vocabulary alone suggests that this is a sample of a very informal style.

(38) Double negation is a feature of colloquial English and the examples identified in the thesis were never meant to be interpreted as litotes (two contradicting negations rendering the statement positive), cf. *we don't need no education* (11).

Other instances of incorrect use may be attributed to the relationship between spelling and pronunciation. One of the key features of English is the reduction of unstressed syllables or even monosyllabic words (weak forms). As a result, such words or syllables are barely audible (reduced to a schwa) even in standard language use, and in colloquial use they can be lost altogether: *we still a team* (22); *What you tryin' to do to me* (25); *I been losing sleep* (35); The omission is conditioned by the weak semantic content of such words. So *If you sexy then flaunt it* can only be interpreted as *if you are sexy*; if the meaning was *if you were sexy*, omission of the verb would be impossible because of the tense marking (the present tense being the default one, the past tense being marked).

The language of the thesis is relatively standard, with some occasional mistakes (a few examples for illustration):

(1) ... *n terms of lyrics(,) which is the reason*

(2) *Verses does not have to be based...*

(3) *using the words or phrases and in case they had an opportunity to change it...*

(3) ...*they don't really count with slang*

(6) ... *the refrain (= chorus) is*

(36) ... *the grammar error appears in the beginning of the song...*

(41) ... *o chybách vytvořené omylem...*

etc.

Práce splňuje základní požadavky kladené na tento typ prací, a proto ji doporučuji k ústní obhajobě.

Navrhovaná známka: velmi dobře

Otázky k obhajobě:

What is primary in text lyrics - the written or the spoken form? Can some of the problems be attributed to incorrect transcripts?

You mention that if the starting point in songwriting is melody, it affects the choice of words, numbers of syllables, etc. Is this more of a problem in English or in Czech?

How do grammars reflect the reality of language use? Comment on the differences in the perception of mistakes between native and non-native speakers of English.

Why did you exclude rap and hip-hop?



Podpis oponenta bakalářské práce:.....

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