



## POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk a literatura (dvouoborové studium)**

Název práce: Language change in terms of gender in the era of Early Modern English

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### Short characteristics of the thesis

The aim of the work is to focus on language change in Early Modern English and specifically on the role of gender in fueling such changes. It attempts to verify a hypothesis that women are leaders in language change as they are considered the initiators in the use of the new forms as well as they are the first to abandon the use of the old ones. This hypothesis is verified on a sample of letters (corpus) dating in the Early Modern English period, specifically on the use of personal pronouns and the 3<sup>rd</sup> personal singular ending. The results of the analysis are presented in graphs which are subsequently commented on.

### Overall assessment

Even though it is not specifically mentioned, the work is divided into two major parts. The first one (Chapters 2 to 7) provides a theoretical background describing the phenomena relevant for the study, while the second one (Chapters 8 to 10) deal with the analysis of data and description of the tendencies.

Generally, the first part is well written and cohesive. The only two major reservations I have are about the chapter on research methodology (p. 9) and corpus linguistics (p. 10), namely why research methodology is mentioned at the very beginning of the work and not with the research itself and whether such a general description of corpus linguistics is relevant for the work. Also, the first part is given more space than the second part, which means that in my opinion the second part (analysis) should have been more elaborated.

Unfortunately, it is the second (more important) part that demonstrates major shortcomings. This part has no introduction in terms of the purpose of the analysis, the methods chosen, and most importantly the description of how large the sample of letters from the given period is. We cannot thus assess whether the sample is large enough to have some illustrative value. Also, if the work is interested on diachronic change, are the samples from individual periods of the same size as well as of the same size for men and women? From the hints in the text we can assume that it is not the case, as we can read that "...while male line keeps rising, this phenomenon is most likely due to the amount of letters written by male correspondents..." (p. 41). Generally, such issues must be well thought of, described, and justified in order to bring some relevant outcomes.

Also, it is not clear why the author chose three instances of language change, namely *ye/you, my/thy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular ending *s/th*, only for her analysis. We do not learn



whether the author considers such a choice representative enough to demonstrate the given tendencies.

The method for the description of the individual changes does not seem to be fortunate. The quotations from various letters are dominant compared to the accompanying descriptions and are sorted chronologically (not according to any other criteria), which makes it very difficult to follow the main focus of the thesis, i.e. the role of gender on language change. I believe that it would have been much more illustrative if the author focused on the description of the tendencies using the examples as mere illustrations.

My major reservations in this part, however, concern the use of graphs. Firstly, we do not know what data are used in the graphs, as there is no table containing numbers that would serve as the source. Again, we do not know how many excerpts are used to illustrate the tendencies (did the author include the examples from the text or more?). More importantly, it is not clear what kind of data are used on the axis X in the graph. Is it the frequency of use of the individual forms? If so, how come that the lines in the graph constantly grow and then they stop? Logically we would expect a falling tendency in the original forms and a growing tendency in the new forms, but both forms in the graphs demonstrate a growing tendency.

In general, I am far from claiming that the author comes to false conclusions; just the data (not) provided and its use in the graphs may not serve as sufficient evidence.

These are the major methodological shortcomings. On the other hand, we should appreciate that the author worked with samples of Early Modern English which may have proved to be a challenging task.

The work includes occasional language mistakes.

A question for the defence: Could you please explain the use of graphs and demonstrate how they illustrate the described tendencies?

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: dobře

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Datum

Podpis