



## POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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

Název práce: **SEMANTIC FIELDS OF DIFFERING BRITISH AND AMERICAN LEXIS**

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### Short characteristics of the thesis

The thesis positions itself within the field of semantics and aims to illustrate the differences in the lexis of British English and American English by adopting an onomasiological approach to assign a single concept, a superordinate category, in which both versions of the lexis are different yet it is possible to communicate the same meaning.

The thesis aims to move beyond the construct of simple comparison of word lists to explore and explain how both British and American lexis evolved, drawing on their initial shared history and cultural values and the evolution of word creation as society has changed and progressed in the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

The study also considers how both American and British speakers understand the lexis deployed by their counterparts and are able to adapt quickly to its use. It advocates the rise of both the communications technology and social media in achieving this.

Excluding references and Appendices the thesis comprises 71 pages, which meets fully the criteria for an undergraduate dissertation. A complete list of reviewed differing British and American lexis is presented at the end of the thesis although this is not presented as an Appendix.

### Overall assessment

Unfortunately, a degree of confusion over the thesis achievement is posed in the opening paragraph of the conclusion in which the author states, "The purpose of the thesis was partly accomplished, when some semantic fields were found after the analysis and data examination" (p. 69). Also, the rest of the conclusion continues along the lines of general statements, mainly restating what has been done as opposed to what the analysis has revealed.

In my view, the thesis has achieved and may be favourably assessed in respect of the following:

- The author has undertaken an enquiry into the lexis of the two native English dialects and compiled a list of differing British and American lexis – this diligent excerptive work needs to be appreciated;
- Some semantic fields in which different terms for single concepts might be prototypically expected were identified;



- An attempt has been made to interpret why particular semantic fields appear more prominent than others.

I feel insufficient insight has been created into the nature of semantic relations (that is, into the relation between meanings, concepts and lexical organisation) of differing British and American lexis. While the author introduces some semantic relations, i.e., hyponymy and meronymy, and asserts that they “play an important role in the process of finding some connections between words”, she actually discusses these connections in a very limited way. Specifically, the author never establishes clearly the notion of **semantic fields** (Lehrer, 1974; Lyons, 1977; Grandy, 1992) – the topic of the present thesis, and never explains her methodology for identifying and interpreting these connections. While she does clarify the key notions of the onomasiological approach, which in this instance is appropriate, she never creates the linkages between the theoretical set up of the approach and what she actually did.

I personally find this lack of understanding manifested also in the formal presentation of quotes and citations used in the thesis. While these often express relevant ideas, the author has a habit of using long or very long quotes, sometimes even successively, with quotes and nothing else constituting entire paragraphs or concluding a sub-chapter, completely without being glossed or interpreted in the context of the present work – notably on pages 11, 12, 15, and 16.

As for referencing, the thesis presents a selection of tabulated data and charts but provides very little systematic description of how these have been compiled and what they interpret, i.e., further work is required to integrate these into the analysis.

The text, although written in generally good English, contains some ungrammatical errors and sentence constructions, as on:

p. 19 Why there are two words for the same thing?

p. 20 to collect as much equivalents as possible.

p. 21 a huge number of

In sum, I would like to express appreciation of the heuristic character of this thesis and the way the author ventured into a field that was, in the main, new to her. The author did take the time to provide an account of selected lexical items – the effort to systematise these in charts is to be noted and attempted to relate some of the tendencies of language use to associated social, historical and cultural changes. She has undertaken sufficient work to meet the requirements for BA theses. Considering the overall improvement on this thesis resubmission, I assess the thesis – with reservations – as grade B (velmi dobře).

Areas for discussion:

1. Please clarify the definition of a semantic field and explain how you applied the notion to your analysis.
2. Explain why you decided to use the Google Ngram Viewer tool and how it informed your analysis of semantic relations.
3. In the conclusion to your thesis, you state two directions in which you would like to develop future research into the topic. These include:



- It is a question, whether people would understand each other in future or not if there was no internet, social networks and television and we could not be aware of the distinctions. This is one idea, which would be explored in further thesis.
- Another topic of great interest would be to pick up just few semantic fields and explore these areas with their vocabulary in more details.

I personally find both of your suggestions for future research work rather problematic and unclear. Could you please explain in your own words: a) what exactly you meant through these assertions; b) how you would like to go about your research; c) why such research work should be meaningful.

Práci **doporučuji** k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **velmi dobře**

15. srpna 2019

Podpis

Datum