Filozofická fakulta
Faculty of Philosophy

Jihočeská univerzita
v Českých Budějovicích
University of South Bohemia
in České Budějovice

POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: Anglický jazyk a literatura (dvouoborové studium)

Název práce: Unpredictable Pronunciation of British Place Names

Autor/-ka práce: Eliška Kopecká

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: PhDr. Vladislav Smolka, Ph.D.

Oponent/-ka bakalářské práce: Mgr. Petr Kos, Ph.D.

Stručná charakteristika práce

In her thesis, the author offers a compiled list of British place names with unpredictable pronunciation from a Czech speakers' perspective. The following two main chapters, in which she analyses the listed names, focus on the formation of place names in different language eras and on the formation of place names from the phonological point of view. These three main parts are supplemented by a brief overview of the development of the English language.

Celkové zhodnocení

The pronunciation of British place names is definitely a tricky area for speakers of English as a second language, and it is of merit that we are presented with a thesis which lists the unpredictable names in one place and offers some background for understanding the irregularities.

This thesis generally meets the expected requirements; however, a few comments do arise.

It is not clear what the main objective of the work is; whether it is the compilation of the list (as mentioned both in the abstract and the introduction), a phonological analysis of the listed names (as suggested in the conclusion), or evidence of the connection of the place names with the history of the country (as suggested a few times in the text). The work thus lacks unity when none of the above mentioned perspectives is comprehensively elaborated.

In the introduction we learn that the main objective of the thesis "is to create a list of British place names which have an unpredictable pronunciation." (p. 1) If this is to be the main goal of the whole thesis, then we lack a description of any relevant criteria used for the compilation of the list – the only criterion mentioned, namely "which I found interesting" (p. 8), does not prove to be satisfactory. Thus the list is a random choice of place names with a problematic pronunciation rather than a systematic and comprehensive list of such - we would also expect names like *Cambridge* /keɪmbrɪdʒ/ (the first closed syllable could suggest the pronunciation /æ/ on the analogy with the River Cam /kæm/), *Swansea* /swɒnzi/ (cf. the voicing of the second *s*), *Edinburgh* /edɪnbərə/, to name but a few (by the way, is the pronunciation of *London* /lʌndən/ really predictable, or is it just the frequency of use that makes its pronunciation "easy"?).

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The list also completely ignores instances of towns which have two possible pronunciations, e.g. *Cirencester* or *Shrewsbury* (the two pronunciations of *Shrewsbury* are actually used in the work but without any explanation of the inconsistency, cf. p.12 and p.24).

The phonological analysis provides an explanation for a few instances of unpredictable pronunciation only, with no attempt to systematically cover most of the listed names.

Another area of weakness is the relevancy of the description of the development of the English language. Most of the information mentioned in the overview does not seem to be directly linked with the topic of the thesis.

The work also includes some individual errors. Even though the right-hand bases, such as *–ford* and *–mouth,* may behave like suffixes in terms of pronunciation (reduced form) due to the process of lexicalization, I do not believe it is justifiable to classify them as such (Chapter 4). It then leads to rather misleading conclusions that, for example, *Plymouth* is composed of a prefix and a suffix only (not attached to any stem) (p. 18).

Also, the analysis of the first base *Ply* in *Plymouth* (p. 18) is apparently wrong when just a brief look at the map suggests that the city is situated near the mouth of the River Plym. The name thus follows the expected compound pattern (river name + *mouth*).

The thesis is written in good English with only a few apparent mistakes.

Práci **doporučuji** k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **dobře**

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