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POSUDEK VEDOUcíHO BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: Anglický jazyk a literatura (dvouoborové studium)

Název práce: Unpredictable Pronunciation of British Place Names

Autorka práce: Eliška Kopecká

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

Stručná charakteristika práce

This BA thesis explores British place names whose pronunciation, particularly from the perspective of native speakers of Czech, cannot be safely predicted on the basis of analogy with rules applying to the pronunciation of general English words. Initially, the author presents a brief overview of the development of the English language with respect to foreign influences. Consequently, Chapter 3 lists place names of unpredictable pronunciation, which are further discussed in Chapter 4, in groups according to the pattern of their word formation and the type of influence. Chapter 5 gives a short survey of phonological changes that affected the pronunciation of vowels and contributed to the separation of spelling from pronunciation. In Chapter 5, the author indicates a possible relationship between geographic location and the form of the place name. In her conclusion, the author identifies two principal factors contributing to the difficulty of predicting pronunciation of some place names: separation of pronunciation from spelling in the course of historical development, and improper use of analogy based on superficial similarity with common English words.

Celkové zhodnocení

The thesis very clearly addresses practical needs of Czech speakers of English, and its principal positive aspect is that it attempts to bring order into the apparent chaos by identifying the separate word-formation patterns employed in place names and by pointing out their common features. It demonstrates that even in place names, analogy can be used to a limited extent to predict the pronunciation of particular names; however, this analogy works differently from the rest of the vocabulary. The identification of the patterns, along with the list of anomalous place names was supposed to be the central point of the thesis.

What is lacking in the thesis is a consistent description of the criteria used to identify the pronunciation of place names as irregular. The material presented and analysed in the thesis shows two different types of deviations: one is related to reduction of unstressed final components of place names some of which exist in present-day English as lexical words (e.g. -ford x ford), while other have lost the status of lexical words (e.g. -by). The process of reduction in unstressed syllable in English might have been described in the thesis in more detail because it is an alien phenomenon in Czech; the second type of deviations concerns the pronunciation of stressed syllables, typically in the initial component of place names, which do not observe the current tendencies of spelling-to-pronunciation correspondence (e.g. the absence of lengthening effect of spelt *r* in



syllable-final position, as in *Norwich* ['nɔɹɪtʃ] and *Norman* ['nɔ:mən], etc.). Other possible difficulties might be due to the position of the lexical stress.

The number of names demonstrating irregular pronunciation is obviously much larger than those listed in the thesis, but it is understandable that the author could not possibly have included all of them, and concentrated on those that are relatively frequent and likely to be encountered by non-native speakers. It is also clear that the degree of unpredictability depends on the relative competence of the speaker. The thesis would greatly benefit from a different ordering of the sections - the separate patterns of word formation might have been listed and discussed first, while an alphabetical list of irregular place names would have been an ideal conclusion of the thesis.

The description of phonological changes occurring in the process of historical development might have been more detailed and more closely related to the topic. Admittedly, such a description would almost certainly exceed the expected extent of a standard BA thesis, and it has to be borne in mind that a course dedicated to historical development of English was not part of the programme, which made the author's task rather difficult.

The terminology used in the thesis is not always consistent. This is especially true about the terms *suffix* and *prefix*. While the difference between lexical units (lexical bases) and true affixes is far from clear-cut, the thesis should have included a more in-depth analysis of the difference. Intuitively, though, the author is aware of the problem because she occasionally refers to the place names as compounds, suggesting that they consist of two lexical bases. An explanation of this problem should be provided by the author in the course of the defence.

Wrong terminology or incorrect classification is sometimes used in other parts of the thesis (the number refers to the page):

The suffix -bury is reduced and voiceless ... (12), which was probably supposed to mean ...unstressed and reduced.

The vowel in the first syllable of the lexical word *borough* [ʌ] is not a front mid vowel (13), and [ɔ:] in the word *ford* is not a open vowel (14).

Greenwich (9) is described as *a district of England* instead *a district of London*.

The language of the thesis is of reasonable quality, although some problems do occur: *When mentioned the disappearance...* (19); *...when the town were built* (27), etc.

Despite these problems, the thesis meets the general requirements posed on BA theses.

Práci **doporučuji** k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **velmi dobře**

10.6.2015
Datum

Podpis