



REVIEW of MA diploma thesis

Author: **Natálie Wimmerová**

Title: **Encoding Motion in L2 English**

Supervisor: **Mgr. Michaela Martinková, Ph.D**

Opponent: **Mgr. Andrea Ryšavá**

Author of this review: **Mgr. Michaela Martinková, Ph.D**

Points (for each section)		Final evaluation (Ø) ¹
excellent	5	A
very good	4	B
good	3	C
acceptable	2	D
weak/sufficient	1	E
insufficient	0	F

In the following paragraphs fill in the numeric value. You can also add a short comment - alternatively you write concluding remarks to the summary in the end.

Points

1. Originality and new contribution to the field, up-to-date presentation of the problem.

The topic was assigned by the supervisor.

N/A

2. Awareness of treatments in the field (literature).

The topic of encoding of motion events in L2 speech is a widely researched area and the author shows a solid grasp of the sources. She rightly points out the problems with defining basic terms, including Motion event itself. Events, i.e. units of activity into which the continuous stream of our visual input is segmented, do not exist in the world around us, but are created in our mind, i.e. are part of our cognition. Motion richness, however, is also a term and should be defined – the author should do so in the presentation, include reference to sources, and explain how motion richness was calculated in Table 5). If I am to point out some more weaknesses, then rather than about organization of *the Conceptualizer of multilingual speakers* (11) the author should speak about organization of the conceptual system/s of such speakers. The section on acquisition of

¹ The grades here do NOT provide the final evaluation - some weaknesses are more crucial than others and some cannot be compensated for at all.

articles is perhaps too long (the author should make it clear in the presentation why the paper is important for her thesis). 4

3. Clarity of the topic, research question(s), hypotheses.

The aim is to find out whether *crosslinguistic influence of L1 on L2 [can] be observed in the learners' narratives*, more specifically if L1 influence on the conceptualization of motion events can be observed in more advanced learners of L2 English. Concrete research questions follow on p. 41, it would have been better if hypotheses followed the research questions. At present there is only a hypothesis without a research question. 3

4. Methodology.

The author carried out an experiment in which the narratives of two groups of English L2 speakers were elicited. These were compared to 12 recordings by L1 English speakers, available as part of the CHILDES database. The author deserves credit for the hard work connected with the experiment: not only making the recordings, but also transcribing them. The data is available on the CD attached, which means that it can be used by other researchers. The problematic aspect of the study, namely the fact that the two groups are not fully comparable in terms of proficiency, is recognized by the author.

Due to the difficulties of finding native speakers of satellite-framed languages with a very good command of English in Olomouc ... (p.47) – what was meant here was native speakers of verb framed languages? 4

5. Argumentation, discussion, interpretation of the results, summary.

The analytical part of the thesis is sometimes difficult to follow. For example, the author argues that *The average recording of a Czech L2 learner contained 15.58 motion verbs....* (p. 52) but goes on to say that *The results, however, slightly change if we take into accounts another factor, i.e. the length of an average narrative. The altered data from the three groups are compared in the table below.* Table 5 brings some average numbers and percentages but it is not clear how the data changed with respect to the length of recordings. Relative frequencies would have been useful here. Could the author calculate them for the purposes of the thesis? Similarly, it is sometimes not clear whether the numbers apply to type or tokens. For example, the author says that *[i]n case the same motion event was described twice or more times within one recording using the same or almost identical words, the verb was counted only once* (p. 52), which suggests that what we have here is a type frequency. Later on (p. 57) the author observes that *Czech learners indeed used the verbs "fall" (32 items), "run" (16 items), and "climb" (15 items) most often.* A table with the number of tokens of individual verb types would have been helpful.

The reader tends to get lost also in the description of individual scenes: *the peaks of motion richness in all three groups of narratives can be found in scenes 2, 6, 8, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22 and 28. In the storyline, these numbers correspond to the frog's escape from the jar, the dog's fall from the window, the boy's and the dog's arrival in the woods, the fall of the beehive with the bees coming out of it, the bees chasing the dog, the boy climbing the stone, the deer carrying the boy on his antlers while the dog is following them, the fall from the cliff, the fall into the lake, and the boy's departure with the dog and the frog, respectively* (p. 60). In some cases, these are later only referred to by numbers, which makes reading difficult. In Graph 5 summarizing the type of verb used in the depiction of the owl emergence, non-manner motion verb is only *come*? If so, this should perhaps be explicitly stated in the graph description. Generally, the two types of grey are sometimes difficult to distinguish.

Some of the explanations are hard to follow for me, especially those on page 60:

Yet the average number of motion events used in the description of the two scenes is almost identical in the three groups the different prominence in the graph is caused by the fact that the greatest number of motion events in the narratives of the L1 English speakers appeared in the scenes 19 and 20;

The two learner groups exhibited great motion richness in scenes 12 and 15, i.e. the fall of the beehive with the bees coming out of it and the bees chasing the dog. However, in the narratives of the native English speakers, the motion prominence in these scenes appears to be rather moderate. What is meant by motion prominence?

The author should be more careful in the use of the terms segment and motion event. Are these interchangeable?

What I miss in the Conclusions is a discussion of the findings in the view of linguistic relativity suggested in the early parts of the thesis. The author should integrate this into the presentation.

2-3

6. Formal aspects of the work: format, graphics, bibliography formatting.

The section called Research (p. 41) has unclear status. Second hand citations on p. 54: e.g. Slobin (qtd. in Selimis 2002), Zlatev (qtd. in Selimis 2002), Zlatev is not in Bibliography.

4

7. English (language correctness, style).

The thesis is written in very good English. Problems can sometimes be seen in the use of connectives (*and, therefore, the issue of prepositions was not of much significance then* p.21, *although speakers of verb-framed languages typically don't encode Manner of motion in a verb, they do not ignore Manner information completely but instead, they sometimes express it in an alternative way. Still, it could be argued* p. 32), articles (*he works as the teacher of Spanish language* p. 48), or are due to hasty adding: *The pictures the participants of Cadierno's study (2010) were supposed to described depicted a rather wide repertoire of Manners of motion* p. 57, *either present-day of former students of the bachelor's or master's programme* 46, *Altogether, the L1 English speakers mentioned and 22 motion events in scene 19* p. 60

8. (only for supervisors) Co-operation with the candidate during the writing of the thesis

We met regularly to discuss the theoretical part of the thesis and the design of the experiment. The student worked independently and there was a meeting to discuss the findings. The analytical part was submitted too shortly before the deadline for submitting the whole thesis, so there was no chance to meet in person.

Topics / Questions for the defence:

(2-4 *specific questions which should be answered at the defence*)

(1) On page 21 the author paraphrases Matsumoto, saying that "although prepositions are not satellites, they do fit the definition of a non-head". Does this mean that prepositions are not heads of Prepositional phrases?

(2) The author observes the usage of the transitive verb *knock* by L1 speakers of English. Can motion verbs be transitive?

(3) In the introductory part the author observes that it is *not possible to coordinate more prefixes per verb root, instead the speaker must coordinate whole clauses* and therefore Czech often does not allow complex Path constructions to be expressed in a single clause (p. 36). Can the data be interpreted with respect to this statement?

(4) On page 35 the author quotes Slobin saying *that the constraint applies not only in boundary-crossing situations but also “whenever a change of path direction occurs.”* Can she demonstrate that with data?

(5) Does CHILDES include only child language data? Briefly introduce the corpus.

I recommend the work for the defence

YES

Proposed classification (see above):

C

Date: 28/8/2019

Name (and signature): Michaela Martinková

Supervisor's statement about plagiarism:

Na základě kontroly vysokoškolských kvalifikačních prací systémem Theses.cz ani jiným způsobem nebyla u výše uvedené práce zjištěna taková shoda s jinými pracemi, dokumenty nebo texty, která by zakládala odůvodněné podezření z porušování autorských práv.

Prohlášení vydává: Michaela Martinková, vedoucí práce