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Report on **Darin Nshiwi's PhD thesis**

Title: The Effect of Metalinguistic Awareness and the Previously Learned Foreign Languages on Fourth Language Acquisition by Adult Learners

This dissertation investigates an important and current issue in applied linguistics/language pedagogy, namely, the relationships among metalinguistics awareness and fourth language acquisition. It is praiseworthy that the candidate explored the interrelationship of these variables with the help of a mixed-methods study. The structure of dissertation is exceptionally clear and logical. In terms of the language and format, I still found some typos and formal inaccuracies, but these do not hinder understanding, as the dissertation has been written in clear academic English and reads well.

The introduction is organized in a logical way and sets the scene for both the theoretical and physical contexts of the research. The research gap and the rationale for this study are explained and justified in a convincing way, and it is clear that the study is novel in several ways and it is adequate for a PhD dissertation.

The literature review summarizes the most important studies in the fields related to the topic of the research. The structure of this section seems to be logical but I would have appreciated an introduction to this part of the dissertation, in which Darin explains and justifies the scope of the review. The technical terms used in the study are defined in an adequate way and there is a good balance between theoretical and empirical studies. What I miss is a similar balance between description and evaluation as well as a critical voice,

without these it is difficult to assess the rationale of the research gap. The text is referenced well.

Chapter 3 presents the research methods employed in the dissertation. I think it would have been important to start this part with the research questions in order to show the link between the established research gap and the selected research design/methods. The steps of the studies are described well but the justifications of the decisions taken are consistently missing.

Some additional comments/questions:

1. I am not sure what the difference between testing population and sample is.
2. What sampling procedures were used in the study? Why?
3. Research sites should have been anonymised in order to further protect the participants.
4. I appreciate the careful pilot study.
5. It would have been more reader-friendly to link the statistical techniques to the appropriate research questions.

The results of the dissertation are presented in a logical way in Chapter 4. It is praiseworthy that the research questions are presented along with the results, although this practice is not used consistently in this section of the dissertation. Sometimes it is not clear or evident why a particular technique was used. For example, it is unjustified why correlation analysis has been used to investigate the facilitator role of the foreign language repertoire. I would have expected a regression analysis to answer this question.

Formal problems:

1. p cannot equal zero. When zero is printed in a statistical software, $p < 0.001$ should be written.
2. All the results should have been tabulated. I am not sure why pie charts were needed to present the results of ANOVA or t-tests. This is a non-academic practice that should have been avoided.

Chapter 5 contains the discussion of the results. This is an exceptionally well-written part of the dissertation, which is praiseworthy as writing a good-quality discussion is notoriously difficult. My question here concerns the fact that only direct relationships and impacts were considered. I am not sure what the actual results were if indirect impacts were also taken into account.

The conclusion of the dissertation contains all the necessary elements except ideas for future research. I wonder what follow-up studies could be designed to the present investigation and what further research could contribute to the theoretical advancement of this field.

Concerning the formal aspects of the dissertation, I have found occasional lapses in academic style concerning the use of language, paragraphing and both in-text and after-text referencing. In addition, the use of quotation marks is not consistent throughout the dissertation. A final, careful proof-reading could have eliminated most of these minor problems.

On the basis of the above considerations, I can conclude that this thesis presents an original research on a timely and important topic, and, therefore, I think that it meets the requirements of a PhD degree. I am looking forward to discussing the dissertation with Darin at the public defence.



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