

# UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences  
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

August 13, 2022

RE: Assessment of Bashar M. M. Farran's written doctoral dissertation

To Whom It May Concern,

Bashar M. M. Farran has produced a revised draft of his dissertation on the perception and production of American English by Palestinian Arabic adolescents that constitutes a meaningful contribution to scientific inquiry in the field of second language phonetics and phonology. Furthermore, he composed a careful response to the comments provided by the committee members on the previous draft of his dissertation, taking into account all of the feedback by either incorporating changes to the manuscript in response to certain comments or by providing a reasonable rebuttal to each point. Specific feedback is provided after the overall assessment (see subsequent pages).

The manuscript represents an improvement over its predecessor, and in my estimation, it is sufficient to meet the standards for a written doctoral dissertation. Therefore, **I recommend that the draft be considered to meet the requirement for a written dissertation in partial fulfillment for a doctoral degree.**

Sincerely,



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## Specific Comments

1. I commend the candidate for his detailed response to the feedback. It is evident that he has given considerable attention to the comments and devoted time and effort to the revision.
2. I also thank the candidate for his detailed rebuttal.
3. Overall, the manuscript is a considerable improvement over its predecessor.
4. Adding more information about the study (participants, etc.) is very much appreciated.
5. I also appreciate the candidate giving serious thought to the issue of tenseness. I especially **like the idea of peripheral versus non-peripheral vowel distinction**.
6. In contrast with the above comment, I am less enthusiastic about still seeing the phrase “phonetically tense”, because **tenseness is a phonemic feature** with some phonetic characteristics, but it is most definitely NOT a single phonetic property, and it is not a “phonetic” feature. Moreover, some of the tense/lax contrast is functional in nature from a linguistic point of view and not just phonetic in nature, so claiming the contrast as purely phonetic is a mistake. In English, tense versus lax is an underlying **phonemic** contrast. I still think this distinction is not handled with the care it deserves, but the presentation has improved.
7. Stress-timed versus syllable-timed languages: The division of stress-timed versus syllable-timed languages is linguistically valid; however, Abercrombie’s (1967) and Pike’s (1945) idea that is cited in the dissertation: “*a stress-timed language has a rhythmic structure in which (primary) stressed syllables tend to recur at fixed time intervals, irrespective of the number of unstressed syllables in between stresses*” as well as “*stress-timed languages differ from syllable-timed languages in that syllables in the latter type take up approximately equal time intervals so that the timelapse between two stressed syllables increases linearly with the number of unstressed syllables in between the stresses*” have not stood up to experimentation. One of the candidate’s own references (Dauer, 1983) refers to this problem. Science on timing has moved on from the idea of isochronous stress versus syllable units to other measures since the early 1980s (Bunta & Ingram, 2007; Dauer, 1983; Lea, 1974; Grabe, 2002; Grabe, Gut, et al., 1999; Grabe & Low, 2002; Grabe, Post, & Watson, 1999; Pointon, 1980; Ramus, Dupoux, & Mehler, 2003; Roach, 1982). Granted, the notion of syllable versus stress timing is valid, but the underlying structure may not be what Abercrombie (1967) and Pike (1945) proposed.

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8. There are still a number of imprecisions as well as style and mechanical issues. For example, on page 24, the use of the word “handy” is colloquial. On page 26, clarification for “expanded vowel quality” would be useful. I am assuming it means a more clearly/prototypically produced exemplar, but I cannot be sure. The way it is worded, it can be confused by some with duration (specifically referring to the term “expanded”). Also on page 26, polysyllabic should be lower case. On page 29, “Vowel enclosed in diamonds” should have the initial word in its plural form. Please note that this is **not an exhaustive list**, and there are other examples that would warrant attention, so I recommend a careful final editing of the document.