

The detailed comments Dr. Ferenc Bunta provided on reviewing my final dissertation are much appreciated. The following responses are available respectively:

Answer to the specific Comments

3. Answer to the insufficient theoretical motivation for the study.

The purpose of the study was mainly practical. It was meant to identify pronunciation difficulties experienced by Iranian learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and to check whether there would be any point in developing separate teaching materials for monolingual (Persian) EFL learners and for early bilingual Azerbaijani/Persian EFL learners. My use of theories was eclectic: I borrowed from several frameworks in so far as they helped formulating expectations. The most helpful framework was PAM, which, in principle, generates clear hypotheses about learning difficulties in foreign language learning. Most of the difficulties that I predicted on the basis of PAM were confirmed by my experimental results. I realize that the same expectations could have been formulated on the basis of a simple comparison of the vowel systems of American English, Persian and Azerbaijani, without involving the PAM model, but it was still gratifying to say that the same-category vowels as they were identified in the PAM results were indeed the vowel contrasts that were compromised in the perceptual representation and in the acoustics of the EFL learners' AE vowel production. What I did not expect is that both the monolingual and the bilingual learners were found to have virtually the same – Persian-inspired – AE vowel perception and production. It is as if the bilinguals' first language (Azerbaijani) was simply by-passed or overruled by the use of Persian as the medium of instruction in the Iranian educational context.

4. Answer to adding a “statistical considerations” (4.4 on pp. 49-50) that reads more like a response to a criticism than part of the narrative.

This is true. The statistical considerations were added because a reviewer insisted that this is an indispensable ingredient of any method section. The alternative would have been to discuss statistical choices and motivations of techniques used “on the fly” in the results sections. This might have made for a better narrative. In the end the choice seems more or less arbitrary, as long as the choices made are accounted for explicitly.

6.1. Answer to the Stress-timed versus syllable-timed languages, Pages 15 – 16

I never meant to say that the all syllables in a syllable timed language are of exactly equal duration, or that the stress-to-stress intervals in a stressed-timed language are exactly isochronous. I just present the theoretical ideal of the extremes of the syllable-time to stress-time CONTINUUM. That is why I write: “in a STRICTLY syllable-timed language ...” and “in a STRICTLY stressed-timed language...” Note also that I describe syllable timing as the property that all syllables in a language have “ROUGHLY equal length”.

6.2.

Regarding the agreement of the reviewer that the continuum from more syllable-timed to more stress-timed languages exists, but a more nuanced approach would have been welcome, yes, the reviewer is right. The constraints on in syllable structures in syllable-timed languages are too narrowly formulated on p16. These are meant as statistical regularities that can be violated. Again, the idea here was to describe the extremes of the continuum, leaving the more nuanced hybrids to the imagination of the reader.

6.3.

Regarding the statement: “In English, only the two shortest vowels, /ɪ/ and schwa (/ə/), are permitted in unstressed syllables, while full vowels and diphthongs can only occur in stressed syllables,” “Relatively unstressed” is also relatively stressed. “Is the glass half full or half empty?” The choice depends on the specific theory of stress one believes in. I believe in a theory that says that English has three levels of word stress: strong stress, medium stress, and no stress. Other theories distinguish primary and secondary stresses on the one hand and unstressed (even unstressable) syllables on the other. Medium (or secondary) stress also counts as stress. In this view, words like “window” have a strong stress followed by a medium stress. I disagree with the reviewer that the second syllable of “window” can be reduced, if at least the reviewer means that the second syllable can be pronounced as a schwa or [ɪ]. In my experience this is not an option. A syllable with medium stress cannot be reduced: the canonical full vowel will remain identifiable for what it is. In fact, “window” rhymes with “rainbow” (but “father” does NOT rhyme with “mother,” “brother” or “sister” – even though these four words have the same final rhyme **but in an unstressed syllable**). The acid test for rhyming is that the rhyming parts of the

STRESSED syllables (plus anything that follows after the stress) should match. Since “window” rhymes with “rainbow” it follows that the final syllables in both words are stressed (not primary stress but stressed nevertheless).

Words that rhyme with rainbow - WordHippo

<https://www.wordhippo.com> › what-is

What rhymes with rainbow? Here are 3000 rhyming words you can use. ... solo · window · dado · draino · fellow · mellow · minnow · shadow · shallow · yellow.

In terms of metrical phonology, the two syllables in “window” are feet. A foot must always have a stressed syllable, so window (and words similar to it) must have two stressed syllables (of different levels, i.e. one strong, one weak). “Father” on the other hand has just one foot, with a stressed and an unstressed syllable.

7. Answer to using some terms such as “undesirable accent”, “We”

“Undesirable” will be deleted in future use of the text. Two chapters in the dissertation have been published or submitted as co-authored journal articles. Two more co-authored articles are in preparations. That explains the incorrect use of “we” in the dissertation. It should have been replaced by “I” more thoroughly.

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