

Ph.D. Thesis Evaluation Report

on the doctoral dissertation

„Language attitudes and motivation of the Tunisian youth: English language learning after the 2011 revolution”

written and submitted by RANIA SALAH

The doctoral dissertation written by Rania Salah presents the attitude and motivation of Tunisian students toward learning English as a foreign language (EFL) after 2011, the Jasmin Revolution in Tunisia. The study “aimed to explore whether Tunisian students would be more integratively or instrumentally motivated or whether their parents motivated them the most to learn English and to determine if there would be any significant differences between the learners from three educational levels (primary school, secondary education, and university)” (p.114).

The structure of the study is proportionate, well-organized, its thread can be well followed, and the title and content are consistent with each other.

The thesis contains six chapters: The First Chapter (Introduction) provides a thorough historical and geopolitical overview, placing its subject in context. The Chapter Two (Literature Review) deals in great detail with the relevant literature and aims to cover all aspects of the research topic. I was happy to find some additional study literature written in French and in Arabic since I had missed it before (for eg. Abu Zahr 2022; Al-Ash 2020; Benjamins 2015; Harat 2020; Tullon 2009 etc.)

It is also commendable, following the former review’s suggestions, that the doctoral candidate incorporated the theoretical part of A. Swaan’s book (*Words of the world: The global language system*) into a new subsection (2.2.2.) in the Literature Review Chapter: *The communication potential and Economics of English within the global language system.*

With this subsection the research findings obtained in Tunisia, which highlight the strength of instrumental motivation, gain a broader perspective as part of a global phenomenon: „English

is also the language of global commerce and trade, and the primary language of communication for many multinational corporations. Additionally, the tourism industry often relies on English as a means of communication between visitors and locals in many countries.” (p. 18.) Another new subsection (2.1.5), *English, more than a veneer*, also supports these findings.

The Chapter Three, Four and Five (Metodology, Results, Discussion), these central chapters present the methodology of the research, its results, and the conclusions drawn from it. The processing of the research results is organized, and the use of tables and graphs makes the professional, textual analysis even more illustrative.

“170 students studying English in primary and secondary education and in the university were surveyed using the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery. Besides, 9 students and 3 directors from the 3 educational institutions were selected for a semi-structured interview.”

It is important to note that the author of the study complemented the questionnaire survey with interviews, enabling a multi-perspective analysis. The conclusions are valid, and the arguments are convincing. The only questionable point is that it would be better not to conduct the research among university students in a tourism higher education institution (p. 55). It would have been better to examine other fields, given that the language of tourism is known to be English worldwide (for eg. quote above and see also authors opinion at p. 115), so the sample could positively skew towards English. It would be worth to think about how we could obtain wider, more representative data, so even more authentic results.

The last chapter, Chapter Six (Conclusions) summarizes all the researcher’s questions and also refers to the limitations of the study – for ex. “the sample was limited to one primary school, one secondary school, and one university all located in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia, the results of this study may not be completely generalizable.” I would have made this comment myself if it hadn’t already been mentioned here, as it would be worthwhile to conduct this study not only in educational institutions in the capital city. This high degree of self-reflection is commendable.

The thesis broadly meets its basic objectives. Therefore, based on the above, I consider the thesis to be acceptable for public debate.

Questions to the candidate:

- 1) How do you see the practical use, the impact of your work?
- 2) Do you plan to provide feedback to participants of the research? How do you imagine it?

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