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## **Differences between dialectal Interference – the case of Arabic dialects vs. English**

### **Opponent's review of Hala Saed's doctoral dissertation**

This dissertation serves as both a scholarly contribution and a practical resource for teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Jordan.

The objectives are clearly defined, and the findings substantiate the stated hypotheses. The literature reviewed is judiciously selected and directly relevant to the subject of the thesis.

Although the dissertation is about foreign language learning rather than second language acquisition, the theories discussed in Chapter Two, titled Theories of Second Language Acquisition, offer a robust theoretical framework applicable to the study of foreign language acquisition as well. The various approaches are comprehensively presented, along with their respective objectives and underlying assumptions.

Foreign language learning is conceptualized as a transitional process involving a shift from the structures and rules of one language to those of another, with an intermediary phase termed interlanguage. Chapter Three provides an in-depth examination of the sound system of Modern Standard Arabic, the pan-Arab lingua franca, the colloquial dialects spoken in Jordan, and the target accent variety of English, Received Pronunciation.

The methodology is rigorously designed, supported by an extensive dataset of recorded material, and the analysis is executed with precision.

In summary, this is a well-crafted and meticulous dissertation. I recommend its presentation for public defense.

### **Critical remarks**

The dissertation repeatedly digresses to the mapping between spelling and pronunciation in both Arabic and English, which is justifiable if whatever is stated is stated clearly. Unfortunately, it remains unclear why the diacritics for short vowels are more important in connected speech, as the author states, than in single-word utterances. While stress is related to connected speech, whether *read* is pronounced as [ri:d] or [red] — to illustrate the point with an English example — has nothing to do with it. Nevertheless, this is how the role of the diacritic system is described on p. 2: “Arabs are more reliant on their diacritics system to add vowels or stress to words, particularly in connected speech”, and on p. 43: “...in the case of connected speech, Arabs are more reliant on their diacritics system to add short vowels or stress to words”.

There is also some inconsistency between some generalizations about Arabic and the data presented. It is stated on p. 6 that “no syllable is allowed to begin with a vowel” in Arabic, but the

thesis is full of words that begin with a vowel, e.g. [isport] (p. 37), /ɪʃfu:f/ and /ɪk.fu:f/ (p. 68) or /ɪnzɪɪt/ (p. 74). Either the generalization is wrong, or those word begin with a glottal stop.

On p. 54, there is a contradiction between two consecutive sentences: “Word finally, MSA also permits both single consonants and two-consonant clusters. However, a final consonant cluster is not allowed to be pronounced even if it happens to occur in continuous speech within a syllable, for example in a phrase or a sentence the cluster will be broken when adding the diacritic (short vowels) before or after the final cluster to break the cluster and separate them to different syllables.” If all word-final clusters are broken up, then MSA does not allow final clusters.

Rural Jordanian Arabic has three more monophthongs in addition to MSA’s six: long /e:/ and /o:/ and short /e/. However, as the author claims, “These three vowels also act as allophones of the phonemes listed above used in words such as /sˈe:d/ hunting instead of /sˈaɪd/, /ro:h/ soul instead of /ru:h/” (p. 69). That may or may not be true without a detailed distributional analysis. One can only hope that the author does not confuse correspondences between two language varieties (here Modern Standard Arabic and Rural Jordanian Arabic) and allophony within a single variety. There is no such thing as allophony between different language varieties.

On p. 68, the same Rural Jordanian word is transcribed as /ɪʃfu:f/ in Table 13 and /ɪk.fu:f/ a couple of lines below it. There are some other badly transcribed words in the thesis, too, e.g. “waltz /lvð/, whilst /lvfθ/” or “distinct /ndð/, jinx /ŋkt/” (p. 59).

Not relevant to the thesis, but Punjabi is not Pakistan’s official language (p. 36). It is a regional language but not an official language. Pakistan has two official languages: Urdu and English.

### Questions for the defense

1 Every language allows onsets, but some languages disallow codas. However, both Modern Standard Arabic and English allow more consonants word-finally than word-initially. English allows up to three consonants at the beginning of words as in screen but more than three at the end as in jinxed. MSA allows two-consonant clusters word-finally but no clusters at the beginning of words. How do you explain those seemingly contradictory patterns in Markedness Theory?

2 Could you give an example of therapy is done in error analysis?

3 The only examples given in the dissertation for the /ay/ and /aw/ diphthongs in Rural Jordanian Arabic are /mukayf/ and /lawɪn/. The glides in both examples are followed by a vowel, which opens up another interpretation that the /a/ and the following glide belong to separate syllables. How do you argue for either the diphthong analysis or the syllable final vowel + syllable initial approximant analysis?



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