

## **Opponent Review of Hala Saed's PhD Dissertation:**

### **Differences between dialectal interference - the case of Arabic dialects vs. English. A contrastive analysis of the interference of Jordanian urban and rural consonant clusters with English as a foreign language**

In her dissertation, Hala Saed examined the characteristics of consonant cluster pronunciation of urban and rural Jordanian speakers in English as a foreign language. The novelty of the research lies in the fact that it examines the effects of Jordanian Arabic dialects to English pronunciation thus providing useful information for Jordanian EFL students on learning English pronunciation, and also provides new theoretical information on how L1 influences the pronunciation of L2. The theoretical foundation of the research and its methodology and analyses show that the author is quite an expert in phonology, phonetics, and English language pedagogy.

The dissertation provides a detailed analysis of the examined topic, it is easy to comprehend for the average reader, although the theoretical chapters are quite long compared to the others. It consists of seven chapters, references, and five appendices. The first chapter defines the key terminology of the research, and summarize the aims and most important questions and present the hypotheses. This chapter is also a short summary of the theoretical background and the methodology.

The second chapter presents the three theories of L2 acquisition on the basis of which the author carried out the examinations. These three theories are the following: Contrastive Analysis (CA), Error Analysis (EA) and Markedness Theory. In the course of the presentation, the author not only explains the theories, but also presents their criticism. In addition, we can learn about the factors affecting the learning of pronunciation like accent, motivation and exposure, attitude, instruction, personality, and mother tongue influence. The chapter ends with a literature summary about the production of English consonant clusters in different languages (like Korean, Chinese, Punjabi etc.).

The third chapter introduces us into the sound systems of the compared languages. It presents the consonants, consonant clusters, vowels and syllable structure rules of English, Modern Standard Arabic, and Jordanian dialects: urban, rural, and Bedouin. There is only a little information in the literature about the latter. The chapter presents the differences between the sound systems and consonant clusters of languages and dialects in a logical way. Although the presentation is detailed, it would be useful to summarize together, in one figure the vowel system, and in one table the consonant system of all languages.

One thing I miss from the theoretical chapters is the literature background of why the author expected a difference in pronunciation between men and women. And why exactly did she expect what she writes in the hypothesis H3c? H3c: Gender has a

significant impact on the frequency of pronunciation errors of English among Jordanian speakers, and male speakers are expected to commit more English pronunciation errors than females do.

The fourth chapter presents the methodology. The author uses both subjective and objective methods to assess participants' pronunciation of English, so her results are valid. On the one hand, a native English speaker judges the correctness of the pronunciation of the sound samples, and on the other hand, she also performs an acoustic phonetic analysis using Praat software. The number of participants is not large but sufficient for the study. However, we do not know from Methods how much English they knew, what other languages they spoke, what their motivation and attitude towards English was. These are important factors for pronunciation, as discussed earlier in the theoretical chapter.

The fifth chapter is called Results. It is structured as if it were a individual paper, because it starts with a theoretical introduction, briefly presents the methodology that we have already read about in the previous chapter, and then begins to present the results. The methodological parts should be moved to the fourth chapter, Methodology, where the exact linguistic material and the characteristics of the participants should be described in more detail. It is true that this was based on a linguistic background questionnaire, but it is still data on the participants rather than the result of the analysis. It is then worth including the data obtained here as a criterion for the results of the analysis.

The errors were presented by group, and it would be interesting to know whether many errors by a few participants give these numbers, or whether all participants made a few errors. It is an important question how many participants' pronunciations are actually the basis for the error numbers. (Although I found it later in the appendix, it should have been indicated in the text here anyway.)

My question for the annotation with Praat: why does the 'si' appear in the annotation? This marked section is always the closure section of a plosive, i.e. part of the speech sound. I know this was not measured, but it can be misleading for those studying the figures.

On first reading it was not clear to me what the statistical analysis analysed. I eventually found the data for each speaker in Appendix 5. Were these compared in the statistical analysis? These tables are an important part of the analysis and should be in the Results chapter instead of the Appendix.

Chapter six contains a general discussion. It is clear, logical and explains the results well. However, I regret the fact that the author does not go back in detail to the questions and hypotheses formulated at the beginning of the thesis and does not examine whether the hypotheses have been confirmed. This would be an important formal element of a scientific work.

Chapter seven provides EFL teachers with advice on pronunciation teaching, which is an important strength of the thesis and demonstrates the social utility of the research.

To sum up, Hala Saed's dissertation is a work that fills a gap in the literature and the practical applicability of its findings is unquestionable. The author has a good knowledge of the phonetic, phonological and pedagogical background of the analysed phenomena. The methodology is well documented, the analyses are detailed and the conclusions logical. I was able to find only a few gaps, but most of the information was available in the appendix.

I recommend that the dissertation be submitted for public discussion.

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