Dear Prof. Zsigri,

Thank you for your detailed review and thoughtful remarks. Below, I address the points raised:

1. **Arabic vs. English Orthographic Systems**: In my dissertation, I examined the orthographic differences between Arabic and English. Arabic orthography typically represents a one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds, while English orthography allows multiple sounds for a single letter, depending on context. These distinctions influence Arabic speakers' pronunciation of English, as they often apply Arabic letter-to-sound rules, leading to mispronunciations. Regarding diacritics, my focus was on their role in connected speech, particularly in Classical MSA and rural dialects, where they are essential for breaking consonant clusters. This phonological function is distinct from orthographic rules. The misunderstanding may stem from the use of the term "diacritics" which is commonly used by Arabic scholars to refer to short vowels in Arabic, but its usage varies among scholars of the Arabic sound system. Some works, like those by Abu-Rabia, use "diacritics," while others, such as Al-Samawi (2014), refer to them as "vowel points, vowel marks, or diacritics." Others prefer the Arabic term "harakat", transliterated directly. In my dissertation, I chose "diacritics" as it is widely recognized. And the literature emphasizes that diacritics are essential for writing and pronunciation, and refer to short vowels (e.g., fatha, kasra, damma for "a," "i," and "u") that indicate how to pronounce letters and significantly affect meaning. Thus, the term diacritics in my dissertation did not actually refer to the actual symbols in the Arabic writing system but to the inserted short vowels they signify that are inserted to break up consonant clusters.

2. **Onsets in Arabic:** The statement that "no syllable begins with a vowel in Arabic" aligns with standard phonological rules. In practice, however, Arabic words that would otherwise start with a vowel frequently begin with an inserted glottal stop, even if this is not explicitly noted in my dissertation. This is because the available references often state that the sound occurring before a cluster is a vowel and transcribe it as such in their examples. The literature I utilized for my contrastive analysis did not consistently address this phenomenon, making it challenging to provide additional evidence or claims. Consequently, my work relied on the prevailing transcription conventions and interpretations within the literature. Thus, we can claim that the statement „no syllable begins with a vowel in Arabic" is true in the light of the initial glottal stop insertion.

3. **Word-Final Clusters in MSA**: The contradiction arises from the distinction between isolated single-word utterances and connected speech. While word-final clusters can occur in an isolated single-word utterance at the syllable level – i.e. a word-final consonant cluster would appear in the coda of a word-final syllable –, in connected speech, these clusters are broken up by diacritics (i.e. inserted short vowels) if a consonant initial word should follow. In such cases the two final consonants of the first word are separated into two syllables – CC#CV – will be separated by the inserted short vowel into a C.CV .CV sequence thus resyllabifying the second member of the original word-final cluster into the onset of the newly arising syllable as in the presented the example /qab.la qa.lɪːl/. Therefore, word-final clusters are not allowed in connected speech but can appear in isolated utterances.

4. **Markedness Theory and Cluster Distribution**: In Markedness Theory, the distribution of consonant clusters in English and MSA can be explained by the idea that languages avoid more marked structures in prominent positions, such as at the beginning of words. English allows more consonants word-finally because final positions are less perceptually salient, making complex clusters less marked in that context. In contrast, MSA disallows initial clusters due to

their perceptual prominence, considering them marked, while final clusters are less marked and permitted. This aligns with the principles discussed by *Hayes (2011)*, who explains that languages favor less complex structures at the beginning of words. Additionally, *Kager (1999)* in his work on Optimality Theory explains that languages tend to place more complex structures in less prominent positions, such as at the end of words.
To contribute further to this discussion, it is important to note that the most complex structures in English, such as four-consonant final clusters (e.g., *twelfths* or *sixths*), are typically the result of morphological concatenation. These clusters arise as a result of the addition of suffixes to roots, thus making them a morphologically more complex, marked case rather than being inherent to single morphemes. This reinforces the fact that such extreme complexity is not characteristic of root-level structures in English but only results from morphological transformations.

5. **Error analysis** in pronunciation involves identifying and categorizing the specific errors learners make in producing individual segments, segment combinations – e.g. consonant clusters, or suprasegmental phenomena like stress. By analyzing these errors, instructors can locate the areas where learners face challenges, often influenced by differences between their L1 and the target language. This diagnostic process provides the foundation for tailored interventions.
For instance, I came across an article by Al-Samawi (2014) that proposed using Arabic short vowels (vowel points or diacritics) so-called (vowelization) as a therapeutic technique to address such errors, and I applied this method in my practice when teaching English to Arabic speakers. This method focuses on marked patterns and structures that are difficult for learners, such as consonant clusters and word stress. This approach has proven effective, particularly for beginner learners, by guiding them toward accurate pronunciation and minimizing phonetic and phonological issues.

6. **Diphthongs in Rural Jordanian Arabic:** The correct transcriptions, in the cases mentioned in my view, are /mukaj.jɪf/ and /law.wɪn/, where the glide serves as both the coda of the first syllable and the onset of the second. This interpretation reflects the stress on the second syllable and aligns with established conventions in the literature. Given the consistency of this transcription with numerous documented examples, I chose not to modify it.
However, I argue that Arabic dialects exhibit a greater variety of diphthongs than what is currently reflected in academic studies, highlighting the need for further exploration. Additionally, I did not delve deep into the topics of stress and vowels in general as my focus in this dissertation was limited to providing an introduction to the treatment of consonant clusters in the languages under study. This constraint was necessary to maintain the broader scope of the analysis.
Thank you again for your comments, which I have found both insightful and valuable for refining this work and helping with directing my future research.

Best Regards,
Hala Saed

References

- Al-Samawi, A. M. (2014). Vowelizing English consonant clusters with Arabic vowel points (Harakat): Does it help Arab learners to improve their pronunciation. *International Journal of English and Education*, *3*(3), 263-282.
- Hayes, B. (2011). *Introductory phonology*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Kager, R. (1999). Optimality theory. *Cambridge UP*.