



# **Pannon Egyetem – University of Pannonia**

Humántudományi Kar – Faculty of Humanities

Review of Ahmad S. Naji's doctoral dissertation on

**“Narratives in response to visual stimuli: A comparative analysis of cultural schemas and implicit motives among Hungarian and Jordanian bilinguals in EFL context”**

As the reviewer who provided feedback during the mock examination, I am pleased to assess the revised version of Ahmad Naji's dissertation. Having had the opportunity to engage with this work previously, I can attest that the author has thoughtfully addressed the critical comments raised during the mock defense, resulting in substantial improvements to the overall quality and scholarly contribution of the thesis.

The revisions have strengthened the study's conceptual foundations, the precision of its methodological design, and ensured greater coherence in its structural organization. As a result, the broader linguistic relevance of the study is now more explicitly articulated. These improvements have transformed what was already a promising study into a dissertation that makes a significant scholarly contribution.

## **General structure:**

The revised dissertation shows significant structural improvements that address all previously noted organizational issues. The author added a dedicated methodology chapter that brings together methodological elements previously scattered throughout the thesis. This new methodology section provides a comprehensive presentation of the research design. The literature review and findings sections are now properly separated, with the findings focusing solely on results, while theoretical explanations have been relocated to their respective sections. The candidate has effectively addressed the earlier recommendation: each chapter now opens with a clear introduction that states its aims and outlines the argument. These changes result in a more coherent dissertation.

I will now address the revisions made in response to specific comments pertaining to each section of the dissertation.

## **Introduction and research questions:**

The author has successfully made the introduction more concise while highlighting the research aims within a broader context of linguistics and multilingualism, which was one of the most important critical comments, as the previous version lacked a precise formulation of the significance of the research findings and their linguistic relevance. A significant improvement is the shift in focus from general EFL to specifically instructed Hungarian-English and Jordanian Arabic-English bilinguals, which better positions the research within contemporary multilingualism studies. The removal of the problematic “English as a foreign language (EFL)”

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section from the introduction represents a positive structural decision. The author has also effectively addressed the critical comment concerning the status of English as a global lingua franca versus a culture-bound language. The previously ambiguous statements regarding the general status of English, a highly complex issue, have been clarified, with the emphasis now placed on the role of English in the actual participants' language and identity profile (see Section 2.2.4).

The research objectives are now more precisely defined, particularly in section 1.3, where the study's linguistic merit is more clearly articulated through the research aim, which examines how cultural values of collectivism and individualism, together with educational contexts, interact to shape the structure, thematic focus, and rhetorical strategies of English narratives across two distinct EFL contexts. The research questions have been substantially revised to include a well-defined overarching research question, and the task-related sub-questions are more precisely formulated, utilizing more accurate technical terminology, such as “perspectivization.” The Significance of the study section (1.5) demonstrates appropriate theoretical integration, particularly through connections to Langacker's “construal” concept, which better embeds the analysis within the fundamental characteristics of language use, involving multiple perspectives, choices, and arrangement possibilities. The adoption of an inductive, open-ended investigative approach rather than strict a priori hypothesis testing appropriately reflects the methodological requirements of cultural research.

## **Literature review:**

This section has undergone substantial improvement through the removal of irrelevant parts, the addition of new subsections, and the adoption of a more logical structure. This task was not an easy undertaking, as the author had to integrate several theoretical perspectives, including construal, cultural conceptualization, the mental lexicon of bilinguals, narrative construction, the theory of cultural dimensions, and Motive Disposition Theory. The revised chapter is now considerably more coherent, demonstrates the interconnections among the various theories more convincingly, and provides more precise definitions of key concepts. Although in my earlier review I recommended a different order of presentation, the current arrangement is highly effective: beginning with the framework of Cultural Linguistics, moving on to a detailed discussion of cultural schemas, and then presenting and comparing the schemas of the two cultures, thereby placing the notion of cultural schema at the center of the analysis. The expanded treatment of cultural schemas—new to this version—establishes a much stronger integration between the theoretical foundations and the analytical tools. Section 2.2.4, as already noted, addresses a former gap by examining the specific sociocultural life situations of the participants. Finally, the author convincingly demonstrates the interplay of lexical storage, construal, and narrative construction, each of which is linked to the Jordanian and Hungarian

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cultural contexts. In its current form, the chapter now adequately justifies why the author employs the chosen analytical methods and tools in the experiments.

## **Methodology:**

The new methodology chapter is systematically structured into four distinct components: participants, research materials, data collection, and analysis. These are followed by the particularly strong section “Integrating Theoretical Foundations with Analytical Tools,” which links the various analytical methods to the linguistic theoretical frameworks—an important connection that was missing in the previous version.

## **Findings and conclusions:**

In its revised form, the presentation of results focuses exclusively on the author’s original and novel contributions, with the methodological and theoretical sections removed. In Chapter 4, the revision of Table 3 with semantic clusters and the addition of a brief accompanying analysis are welcome improvements, particularly the clarification of the link between ‘God/Allah’ and ‘relationships/family’ in Jordanian society. It was recommended to revise and standardize the terminology used for labeling categories and clusters in the analysis and to connect them more explicitly to cultural schemas. For instance, replacing ‘Autonomy and decision-making’ with ‘Independence’ is a preferable choice, while substituting ‘Love and relationship’ with ‘Kissing’ as an event schema is also appropriate. Moreover, identifying ‘Family role’ as a subtype of Role schema highlights its importance in Jordanian culture. A minor comment: ‘Societal Norms’ should be treated as a role schema, as it entails appropriate behavioral forms. Finally, the inclusion of the section ‘Divergent Construals of the Social World’ is an important addition, as it situates the results within a broader perspective of construal and conceptualization.

In analyzing the TAT picture cards, the author employs more precise conceptual categories and explicitly connects them to cultural schemas. In the discussion, it is a valuable feature that the different types of schemas are examined individually, thereby providing a more transparent structure for the comparative analyses. In the conclusion, it is also a strength that the applied linguistic relevance is addressed, specifically in relation to pedagogical implications.

## **Final remarks:**

Ahmad Naji’s doctoral dissertation is a meticulously executed and comprehensive study that offers valuable insights into cross-cultural narrative construction among Hungarian and Jordanian bilinguals. Furthermore, it establishes strong connections to the international research on bilingual conceptualization systems and also provides important implications for the paradigm of Cultural Linguistics. I therefore recommend the dissertation for public defense.

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