



FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University

Department of English and ELT Methodology

A Review of a Final Thesis
submitted to the Department of English and ELT Methodology,
Faculty of Arts, Charles University

Name and titles of the reviewer: Dr. Eva Maria Luef

Reviewed as: a supervisor an opponent

Author of the thesis: Radim Friedel

Title of the thesis:

Teachers of English: L1 and L2 Articulation Rate Correspondence

Year of submission: 2023

Submitted as: a bachelor's thesis a master's thesis

Level of expertise:

excellent very good average below average inadequate

Factual errors:

almost none appropriate to the scope of the thesis frequent less serious serious

Chosen methodology:

original and appropriate appropriate barely adequate inadequate

Results:

original original and derivative non-trivial compilation cited from sources copied

Scope of the thesis:

too large appropriate to the topic adequate inadequate

Bibliography (number and selection of titles):

above average (scope or rigor) average below average inadequate

Typographical and formal level:

excellent very good average below average inadequate

Language:

excellent very good average below average inadequate

Typos:

almost none appropriate to the scope of the thesis numerous



Brief description of the thesis (by the supervisor, ca. 100-200 words):

The thesis investigated articulation rate in teachers of English at Czech high schools. Two hypotheses were pursued: articulation rate is slower in L2 English than in L1 Czech, and a stable pattern of utterance-final lengthening is present in both languages. Data was collected from a corpus of teacher English; sociolinguistic variables enhanced the speech data. Mr Friedel opted for an innovative way to measure articulation rate – he focussed on “runs” rather than phones. Results are interesting and well analyzed/ described. The thesis lacks a real theoretical background in which readers become familiar with the notion of articulation rate and its significance in (first and) second language research. Therefore, the research questions of the thesis are not well framed and can be confusing at times.

Review, comments and notes (ca. 100-200 words)

Strong points of the thesis:

- Data collection and analyses
- Language and writing

Weak points of the thesis:

Introductory part, i.e., theoretical background

Questions to answer during the Defence and suggested points of discussion:

1. Please elaborate on the notion of “runs”. What are the advantages as compared to analyzing intonation phrases?
2. Please explain how the traditional approach of measuring phones fares in comparison with the approach of measuring runs. Do you think these methods yield different results? Why?

Other comments:

Theoretical Background

A discussion of the significance of what articulation rate is missing here. The theoretical background takes the readers immediately *in medias res* and discusses different approaches to measuring articulation rate.

A large part of the theoretical background deals with sociolinguistic variation. As this is not the focus of the present study, I wonder if this isn't superfluous.

Readers would have appreciated an introduction to articulation rate in first and second language research, what it means for psycholinguistic processes or what it can tell us about language proficiency, why it is important to study it, what its role in linguistic research is, etc. Instead, we are presented with different measurements and sociolinguistic factors and we never really find out why one should even be interested in articulation rates of different languages. Mr Friedel needs to convince his readers that his topic is relevant and important in modern second language research.

p. 17: “and then concluded that the two languages share a feature called the *phrase-final lengthening*”
→ phrase-final lengthening has long been known to affect all languages, i.e. it is a universal feature of spoken language. I don't understand how Dankovičová can reach the conclusion that:

“this finding was observed on reading tasks only and warrants a broader study.”



A more thorough review of utterance-final lengthening using different sources (not only one thesis) would have been helpful for the present thesis. Especially in light of the fact that Mr Friedel's thesis set out to study phrase-final lengthening (as stated in the second hypothesis). This would also have avoided the relative 'surprise' in the Conclusion that "there is a general trend of slowing down towards the end of an intonation phrase".

The theoretical background ends rather abruptly and does not lead the reader to the hypotheses that are coming. In fact, at this point it seems that the thesis will deal with sociolinguistic variation in articulation rate in Czech, when, in fact, this will only be a very small part of the thesis.

Ad Methods

This part is well done. The description of the analyses is generally good. I was wondering if the phones were measured within each run. Isn't it possible that some people stretch specific phones and that will influence the duration of the run, even though number of phones is constant? How did you deal with stretched-out vowels, for instance?

Ad Analysis

This section should be entitled "Results".

I like the cautious phrasing, e.g. on p. 27

"The number of runs collected from an approximately 2-minute recording, however, does not suffice to determine the causes safely either, as many factors (such as the chosen topic, emphasis in pronunciation, or laughter) could influence the swiftness of speech production or run length within a short and limited time frame."

Graphs and tables are informative and well done.

The Conclusion is good. The acknowledgement that the thesis cannot conclusively prove anything is a reasonable statement. What Mr Friedel has done is important and interesting work, however, the scope of the study was small and many confounding factors were not taken into account. Mentioning the caveats of one's work is good scientific practice.

Minor

- It seems odd to me to include first names in citations, e.g., p. 8 "Another advantage of AR, according to Calbert Graham, lies in providing a more reliable measure"
- P. 9: the two parentheses should be merged
- The citation belongs to the previous sentence, e.g., p. 11: "... compounding. (Trouvain, 2001) Volin's choice..."
- Avoid phrases like "the author decided" (p. 19)
- The language can be difficult to understand at times, e.g., p. 19 "Stemming from a result-based body of theory, the thesis aims to reexamine these theories inductively"
- The reference list is quite short.
- The Praat annotation from the Appendix would have fit well in the Methods section. Mr. Friedel has invested a lot of effort into making complex annotations.



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Proposed grade:

excellent very good good fail

Place, date and signature of the reviewer:

Prague, 23.8.2023

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Lena", is written on the page.