Institute of Phonetics

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: doc. Mgr. Radek Skarnitzl, Ph.D.
Reviewed as: ☒ a supervisor ☐ an opponent

Author of the thesis: Emma Mitéran
Title of the thesis: *Features of Connected Speech in French-accented English*
Year of submission: 2024
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

Overall evaluation of the thesis:
☒ excellent ☐ very good ☐ average ☐ below average ☐ inadequate

Brief description of the thesis (by the supervisor, ca. 100-200 words):
Emma Mitéran's BA thesis investigates linking and other features of connected speech in French speakers of English. Since French is a language with pervasive *liaison*, the main research question concerned two hypotheses, namely positive transfer which would lead to linking in the speakers' L2 English, or the "word as a self-standing unit" hypothesis, which would result in a stronger presence of glottalization (as, for example, in Slovak or Spanish speakers of English). To answer the question, Emma obtained recordings of read and spontaneous speech from 14 French speakers residing in Prague and used auditory analysis to assess their linking in relation to several independent factors. The results revealed some predictable tendencies (e.g., the strong effect of semantic status of the vowel-initial word or of its prosodic prominence), but also some which were not expected, such as the greater proportion of linking in spontaneous speech as compared to reading. In addition, several instances of assimilation and elision were analyzed in read speech.

Review, comments and notes (ca. 100-200 words)
Strong points of the thesis:
First of all, the writing in Emma Mitéran's BA thesis is of exceptionally high quality: the stylistic aspect is outstanding, with the text being academic and, at the same time, remaining readable and vivid. The argumentation throughout the thesis is solid, with effective cross-referencing. In the introductory chapter on connected speech processes, the author has drawn on a fairly large number of sources to demonstrate a deep insight into the matter. I should emphasize that obtaining the speech samples (that is, convincing the speakers to come the faculty to be recorded) was not an easy feat, and Emma managed to obtain 14 (while the assignment stated 12). The results are presented in a systematic manner using bar plots and discussed knowledgably.

Weak points of the thesis:
I have failed to discover any major weak points. I have found one typo in the caption of Fig. 9, where Fig. 6 is referred to instead of Fig. 7.

Questions to answer during the Defence and suggested points of discussion:
In section 6.5, you describe some interesting cases, some of which feature the epenthesis of [h]. All the observed instances appear in lexical words and prosodically prominent positions in the reading. Do you think it is imaginable (or have you encountered) that this would occur in weak contexts (for instance, in *see you* [h]*again*)?

Other comments:

Proposed grade:
☒ excellent ☐ very good ☐ good ☐ fail

Place, date and signature of the reviewer:
Prague, May 30, 2024