



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:** Eva Maria Luef, Dr. doc.

**Reviewed as:**  a supervisor  an opponent

**Author of the thesis:** Nela Bradíková

**Title of the thesis:** Duration of stressed and unstressed syllables in British and American political debates

**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



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

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

Please see below.

***Strong points of the thesis:***

The analyses were well thought through and conducted, and present interesting findings. Even though the general outcome was predicted from the start (stressed vowels being longer), it is interesting to see a new study with a new set of speakers replicating previous findings. The analyses were well done, the write-up of the results was good.

***Weak points of the thesis:***

The findings are not supported by statistics.

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

1. Please elaborate on the rationale to include monophthongs and diphthongs in your analyses. If you excluded diphthongs, would the general trend of your results be the same?
2. Explain briefly how you dealt with co-articulation during annotations.

***Other comments:***

The introduction is well written and summarizes a large range of literature in the field of speech rhythm classification. Ms Bradikova correctly points out certain flaws with the traditional isochrony thinking and presents more recent viewpoints. I would have liked to see a more nuanced description of English varieties in this regard, especially since a dialectal comparison is at the heart of the analyses. Varieties may differ greatly, not only in English but also in German and possibly other languages mentioned as traditionally "stress-timed".

There are figures which show stress-timing and syllable-timing as a continuum and place individual languages somewhere along the continuum. I have seen different versions of such a figure in different pieces of literature (i.e., types of scatterplots). It would have been informative to include such a figure in the introduction of the thesis.

Ad Methods - I was wondering how easy it was to separate the vowels from consonants nearby. For instance, in Figure 1, how much co-articulation was there in "on" and how easy was it to determine the duration of the <o>? Phonetically reduced forms of, e.g., "in", "and", and "the" must have shown large degrees of co-articulation. A few words on the annotation challenges would have been appreciated.

I was impressed by the number of words and vowels analyzed for the study (as shown in Table 1). The standardization outlined on page 33 was clever.

Figure 4 looks like there could be a difference between stress/unstressed in American English. The findings of IQR differences are interesting. And the finding of multi-syllabic vs. mono-syllabic words is



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also very intriguing. It seems plausible that the difference results from the fact that the mono-syllabic words often show significant phonetic reduction in speech (e.g., the, in...). Figure 7 and the AVD findings are interesting, and so are Figure 8 and the accompanying findings.

The analysis of the outliers was a great idea. Figure 14 made me realize that monophthongs and diphthongs were lumped together in the analyses. This is OK, but I wonder if the results would be the same if only monophthongs had been included. It is no surprise that the longest recorded vowels were diphthongs.

**Minor comments:**

- The figures are well done, look good, and are informative.

**Proposed grade:**

excellent  very good  good  fail

(grade 1-2)

Place, date and signature of the reviewer:

*Prague,*  
*August 26, 2024*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Lent", is written in a cursive style.