



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: Dorota Waczlavová

Title of the thesis: *Linking 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

Overall evaluation of the thesis:

excellent very good average below average inadequate

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

Dorota Waczlavová's BA thesis examines linking in recordings of political debates of British and American politicians. Since spontaneous speech with a clear communicative purpose is still analyzed relatively rarely, the main objective of the thesis is to verify whether traditionally presented views on linking being very frequent in English hold in this speech genre. In the introductory chapters, the author discusses various aspects of spontaneous speech and connected speech processes, with emphasis placed on linking. After the introduction of the speech material and data annotation, results are presented using both absolute and relative bar charts. Apart from examining the effect of variety (British and American), the author focuses on the semantic status of the words, nature of the word-final sound, as well as on individual speakers. She ascribes the greatest differences between British and American English to the speakers' speaking rate.

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

Strong points of the thesis:

Processing and analyzing spontaneous speech is not an easy feat. Although the decision of linking vs. glottalization is presented as a binary one, it often feels as much more of a continuum (which the author also mentions in chapter 3). The results are overall presented in a well-structured and concise manner.

Weak points of the thesis:

The weakest aspect of the thesis is the language in general terms. This includes especially clumsy linguistic structures throughout the theoretical part; the very first sentence of the Introduction may serve as one of many examples. A natural flow of the text is frequently lacking. There are also a number of language errors (e.g., missing articles) and typos.

More approaches to categorizing connected speech processes have been proposed in the literature, and it is not always clear from which perspective the author considers them (this can be seen for instance on the treatment of consonant-to-consonant linking).

In the analytical part, the variety differences in linking are ascribed to differences in speech rate (see, e.g., page 43: "*The results showed that British speakers have a faster speech rate...*"). However, it should be pointed that this is only based on the author's perception, as no quantification of speech rate is provided; in other words, the results cannot "show" that.

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

The main aim of the thesis was to see whether the principles traditionally presented about English hold in spontaneous speech. Do they? This does not seem to be explicitly answered in the thesis.

Other comments:

Proposed grade:

excellent very good good fail

Place, date and signature of the reviewer:

Prague, August 26, 2024