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: PhDr. Tomáš Gráf, Ph.D.
Reviewed as: ☒ a supervisor   ☐ an opponent
Author of the thesis: Daniela Šnýdrová
Title of the thesis: *Occurrence of speech disfluencies in teacher English of native Czech speakers and native English speakers*
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

The aim of the thesis was to compare the frequency and types of disfluencies in spontaneous spoken production of native and non-native English language teachers working in the Czech Republic. This was to be done using the data form the third task (narrative based on a sequence of pictures) of the English Teacher Corpus, which the author contributed to by providing three recordings with Czech English teachers. As per the proposal, the author was to focus on the frequency of repeats, false starts and self-corrections.

The theoretical part provides a clear and well-structured definitions of the concept of fluency and disfluency and the various types of disfluencies. The author works with relevant recent studies and manages to provide a lucid and readable introduction to the topic, in which she shows a good understanding of the concepts. The literature review focuses on research related to the author's research questions, discussing the effect of task design on speech fluency, and the frequency of disfluencies predominantly in learner language.

The methodology is clearly described, with a well-defined sample and a detailed explanation of the data collection process. The use of the English Teacher Corpus is appropriate, and the choice of a picture-description narrative task is justified. However, the description of the statistical methods, particularly the use of the log-likelihood test ought to have been described in more detail. The methodology would be strengthened by a more rigorous justification of the chosen statistical techniques and a more detailed account of how data was analyzed.

The analysis and results are presented with clarity and an effective comparison of the two datasets is achieved. The discussion section is concise but perhaps somewhat lacking in depth. The author reiterates the main findings and briefly touches on their implications for teacher training and language proficiency. However, the discussion would benefit from a more critical engagement with the data and a more thorough exploration of the implications for language pedagogy. The conclusion succinctly summarizes the findings and their implications, but it feels somewhat rushed. The thesis would benefit from a more reflective conclusion that not only summarizes the key points but also considers future research directions and the broader significance of the study.

Overall, the thesis demonstrates a good understanding of the topic and contributes meaningful findings.

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

Strong points of the thesis:

The thesis is generally well-written, with a clear and academic tone. However, there are occasional lapses in clarity and precision, particularly in the more technical sections.

The author manages to provide a convincing rationale for the study in the introduction.

In the process of writing, the author showed a very good level of diligence. She was always very well prepared for the regular consultations with the mentor, and always responded very well to any suggestions and advice arising out of them. The thesis presents a valuable contribution to the field of applied linguistics, particularly in the context of language teaching. The study addresses a relevant issue and provides insightful findings that could inform future research and practice.

Weak points of the thesis:
   – On the whole a more critical engagement with existing research would be beneficial.

- The discussion of fluency and its relationship with proficiency is well-structured, but it tends to rely heavily on secondary sources without sufficient original insight or critique.
- The data could have been described in some more detail giving, for example, the overview of the lengths of the different samples, and some speaker metadata.
- Examples are correctly numbered in the theoretical part, but in the analysis the numbering starts again, which is uncommon
- The author could have explored potential reasons behind the differences in disfluency rates more thoroughly and considered alternative explanations for the findings.
- There are several typos and language inaccuracies in the Czech resumé.

Questions to answer during the Defence and suggested points of discussion:
How do you distinguish between natural pauses in speech and disfluencies in your analysis?
You touched upon the influence of task structure on disfluency. Can you discuss in more detail how you think task structure might influence different types of disfluencies?
Could you clarify why you chose the log-likelihood test and how you determined and interpreted the p-value in your results?
How do you think your findings contribute to our understanding of language proficiency and teacher effectiveness?

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

Place, date and signature of the reviewer:
Prague,

PhDr. Tomáš Gráf, Ph.D.