



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: Luca Cilibrasi, PhD

Reviewed as: a supervisor an opponent

Author of the thesis: Nina Laketić

Title of the thesis: Effect of Rhythmic Structure on the Comprehensibility of Czech English

Year of submission: 2019

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):

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

Strong points of the thesis:

The thesis investigates the role of rhythm on the comprehensibility and perceived accentedness of Czech English. The thesis is excellent in several regards. First of all, the use of length manipulations to emulate one rhythm or the other in the same recording is original and it makes the experiment elegant. The description of participants is quite detailed and the connection between groups and hypotheses is well explained. The structure of the thesis is clear - everything is where one would expect it to be. The theoretical background is thorough, the analysis covers both group and individual effects. I particularly appreciated the digression on the role of rhythm as a possible/probable defining feature of humans as a species. In that section, the candidate naturally moves across disciplines beyond linguistics, such as psychology and anthropology, with a fluidity that is rather impressive for a BA student (or for anyone in general).

Weak points of the thesis:

While it may be the case that a forced choice task is the right method for this research, I do not find much explanation in the thesis of the reasons why. At page 32, the candidate states "The decision that the perception test shall be a pairwise comparison was based on a recent experiment by Trčková (2019) who studied the effect of segmental and suprasegmental manipulations on accentedness and comprehensibility, wherein the evaluative type of test proved to be rather inadequate", without explaining what made it inadequate.

In addition, the description of the statistical analysis is a bit vague. We read that the candidate used bootstrapping, and used then confidence intervals to check whether each group had scores significantly different from 0 (representing the null hypothesis). The reasons for this choice are not totally clear to me.

Finally, there seems to be an inconsistency between the critique to the concept of rhythm in language and the design of the study. While at page 21 the candidate convincingly states: "Most importantly Cauldwell hypothesises that speech is essentially functionally arrhythmic. This arrhythmicality allows for the most important elements to be highlighted and therefore enables the most effective transmission of meaning to take place", at page 24, she gives up on these critiques: "Firstly, it should be noted that rhythm (and its structure) remains to be a feature which lacks unified definition among the academic sphere and thus is open to a further discussion. However, for the purposes of this study we shall return to the concept of stress- timed and syllable-timed languages".



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

Why did you use a forced choice task and not a likert scale?

You measured reaction times but there is no mention to them in the analysis, except as a mean to exclude some of the responses. Why? Would you expect, for example, groups to take different amounts of time to perform this task, based on their proficiency?

What made you decide to use bootstrapping for the analysis?

You seemed rather critical on the distinction between stress-timed vs syllable-timed languages, but after all you rely on this distinction in your design. Can you expand on this choice?

Other comments:

Proposed grade:

excellent very good good fail

Place, date and signature of the reviewer:

Prague, 29-08-2019

Anna Chubina