

## REVIEW

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professional field 1.3. *The Pedagogy of Education in ...*

(subject area: *The Methodology of English Language Teaching*)

of the thesis "*Integrating Applied Linguistics approaches and modern competences in the ESP courses for students of Agricultural Science and Arts*"

submitted by **Bardha Gashi** for obtaining the Ph.D. degree

in the professional field 2.1. *Philology* (subject area: *Germanic Languages, English*)

After its revision, Bardha Gashi's Ph.D. thesis, entitled "*Integrating Applied Linguistics approaches and modern competences in the ESP courses for students of Agricultural Science and Arts*", comprises 195 pages and five appendices amounting to 13 pages (providing an insight into the data collection tools used in the empirical research). The main body of the thesis consists of six chapters presenting the results from the critical survey of the literature on the matter, the discussion of empirical research findings and the author's recommendations for improving the quality of education in the ESP courses at the Faculties of Agribusiness and Arts at "Haxhi Zeka" University (which is the main object of her research), as well as an updated reference list with more than 200 entries (incl. relevant documents and reference books, such as dictionaries). The revised thesis also incorporates 23 tables, 15 graphs (incl. pie-charts) and 9 figures with research data.

Bardha Gashi's Ph.D. thesis is written in English, the quality of which has been improved during the revision, thus contributing to the better understanding of her arguments (esp. when she goes into the specificity of the topic and discusses the nature of ESP teaching in the Republic of Kosovo and ESP course design at "Haxhi Zeka" University). The analysis of the revised text of the Ph.D. thesis does not reveal any instances of plagiarism, and all the previously detected problems in the referencing of published documents and the work of other scholars in the field have been duly removed.

The critical review of the literature on the topic has also been edited by the Ph.D. student in an attempt to overcome the problems identified earlier, namely overlapping/repeated passages have been taken care of, the list of abbreviations (p. xii) has been abridged to include only relevant acronyms which actually appear in the dissertation, and most significantly, an endeavour has been made to improve the cohesion and coherence of the thesis either by scraping irrelevant parts (e.g. the description of the Common European

Framework of Reference for Languages and the explanation of the six levels of language proficiency, the detailed discussion of the advantages and drawbacks of various research tools, etc.), or by inserting "missing" logical links and even whole sections to compensate for the gaps in the clarification of the theoretical tenets discussed (e.g. on pp. 13-15 a short section has been added – "1.2. THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS IN ESP" – elucidating the meaning of "*modern competences in ESP*", a key term which appears even in the title of the thesis).

As far as the empirical part of Bardha Gashi's Ph.D. thesis is concerned, as before I still hold my claim that it is a well-structured and independently conducted scientific study of a truly topical and locally significant applied linguistics problem – i.e. ESP teaching at tertiary level in Kosovo and in particular the quality of ESP courses at the Faculties of Agribusiness, Music and Film Directing at "Haxhi Zeka" University in Peja. Her research study, based on careful examination of the syllabi and the actual content of the ESP courses, as well as a comprehensive needs analysis of all the stakeholders in the educational process, and aiming at helping "*teachers perform more effectively in their target situation, i.e., ESP, to respond adequately to the requirements of the Bachelor programs, by meeting the needs of students, and increasing course attendance and learning outcomes*" (p.28), is among the most significant contributions of Bardha Gashi's Ph.D. thesis. The methodological framework is neatly designed and the methods and procedures of data collection (incl. instrument triangulation for increasing the validity of the findings) are appropriate for addressing the research problem and reveal interesting traits in the empirical data (it could only be argued that the comparison between the results of the students on the EGP placement test at the start and their performance on the ESP achievement test at the end is inapt, but it should be admitted that the conclusions drawn by Bardha Gashi are logical and they do not overgeneralise the pattern which is even intuitively felt by her, namely that students with higher level of language proficiency at the start progress better during the ESP course). Research findings are systematically discussed in the defined educational context and the inferences are pertinent and clearly drawn from the results of the data analysis: they point out to the various limitations in the ESP course content and the deficiencies in its delivery, as well as confirm the need for the introduction of preliminary language courses for students with insufficient knowledge of English to help them perform better on the ESP courses and function smoothly in the foreign tongue in their professional contexts. The recommendations which Bardha Gashi offers at the end of her thesis (CHAPTER FIVE, pp. 122-151) for improving the quality of teaching and learning on the ESP courses at the Faculty of Arts and

the Faculty of Agribusiness at “Haxhi Zeka” University are practice-oriented and could directly benefit the teachers and programme designers in the field.

Finally, it should be noted that the abstract has also been revised and it reflects the main content of the Ph.D. thesis, justifiably focusing on the empirical study.

Bardha Gashi's four publications on the topic of her research meet the Ph.D. degree conferring requirements: two of them are in the Albanian specialized philological journal "European Journal of Language and Literature Studies" (ISSN 2411-9598), the former (2017) being in co-authorship with Jasmin Jusufi (another PhD candidate at the time), whereas the latter is autonomous; the other two of Bardha Gashi's manuscripts have been published (the second one being still in print) in the Proceedings from two international conferences, namely *5th International Conference - "Compliance of the Standards in South-Eastern European Countries with the Harmonized Standards of European Union", 15-16 June, 2015 Peja, Republic of Kosovo* and *8th International Conference on Modern Approach in Humanities, 21-23 February, 2020, Rome, Italy* (again, the second one is a joint publication with Fatbardh Gashi, Associate Professor of Clarinet at “Haxhi Zeka” University).

In conclusion, on the basis of everything stated above, I recommend that **Bardha Gashi's** thesis *"Integrating Applied Linguistics approaches and modern competences in the ESP courses for students of Agricultural Science and Arts"* be positively assessed by the members of the jury and she be conferred the Ph.D. degree in the professional field 2.1. *Philology* (subject area: *Germanic Languages, English*)

10 January 2022

Signature:



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