

REVIEW

By Associate Professor Nelly Todorova Tincheva, Ph.D., 2.1. Philology (Text Linguistics and Discourse Analysis)

Of the dissertation on 'MULTILINGUALISM IN KOSOVO MINORITY LANGUAGES AT HOME AND SCHOOL' submitted by Jasmin Jusufi for obtaining the degree of Ph.D. in 2.1. Philology, Germanic Languages (English)

The topic of Jasmin Jusufi's dissertation associates with multilingualism as a domain of academic interest. For the last decades, that research domain has been very prominent within the general field of sociolinguistics. Thus, the topic chosen by Jusufi is timely and up-to-date; it is characterized by the complexity and academic significance necessary for obtaining a Ph.D. degree.

The specific object of investigation chosen in the dissertation is very good. Jusufi seems fully justified in claiming that the current socio-cultural communicative peculiarities in the Republic of Kosovo offer the analyst rich data and ideas for language-related research. The first factor conditioning such a premise, a factor heavily emphasized in the dissertation, is the historical uniqueness of the Republic of Kosovo's having acquired official international independence only less than two decades ago. This peculiarity of the politico-historical situation in Kosovo creates the impressive dynamicity that has recently taken over the multilingual population of the country, and Jusufi sets out to provide an up-to-date snapshot cutting through that dynamicity.

The second factor is the atypically varied language-and-ethnicity profile of Kosovo's general population. As the author declares, the Constitution of the Republic legislates that there are no less than 5 official languages in Kosovo: Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Bosnian, and Roma. Albanian and Turkish are specified in the dissertation as non-minority languages in the country. Jusufi also maintains a considerable part of the Kosovo population use and frequently code-switch between at least 2 and, most frequently, 3 of those languages.

A positive feature of the dissertation, which needs to be highlighted, is the specific and clear focus of the investigation conducted. The author clarifies at the very beginning that the main focus of analysis will fall on the town of Prizren and not on the whole of the Republic of Kosovo. That town is argued by the author to be especially salient due to its multicultural and multilingual variety and richness. Jusufi testifies that school education there is conducted in Albanian, Bosnian and/or Turkish. Albanian is additionally claimed to be used as a majority language as well an official language in administrative buildings and in the public domain as a whole. Non-Albanian minorities, Jusufi argues, would also use their mother tongues in those public domains. It is language-use peculiarities like these that lead Jusufi to characterize the town of Prizren as a 'unique language oasis' (p. 37).

As a whole, the choice of topic and object of investigation in the thesis reviewed here is very good and suggests the potentially high applicability of the results and conclusions of the present piece of research.

The dissertation is written in English. It consists of 105 pages (including the Conclusions section), a short list of References (pp. 106-109), и 38 pages of Appendices. In the 13 introductory pages, which, for some reason, are not included in a single Introduction chapter but only precede Chapter One (titled 'Literature Review'), Jusufi successfully defends his choice of research topic, formulates the main hypothesis and lists the research questions of the thesis. However, on p. 14, Jusufi states his intention to investigate 'the language landscape, culture and values' of Prizren, which is not a goal met later in the text, at least not in its 'culture and values' part. Those concepts prove too broad and general for the analysis made available in the dissertation. This is not to suggest the two concepts are not related to the topic and object of investigation here; the point is that the actual analysis provided later in the thesis does not fulfill the initial author's intention.

In a rather similar vein, the thesis rests on the frequently repeated general phrase of

‘the language situation in Prizren’ without explicitly defining what the implied parameters of the ‘situation’ are. Additionally, the research questions on p. 10 and 11 are also too broadly formulated and rather unspecific, although they can be argued to intersect in a common focus. A narrower, and better focused formulation of the research questions, it is my conviction, would have contributed greatly to the quality of Jusufi’s work.

One of the requirements for a Ph.D. thesis to qualify as sufficiently well-conducted is for it to demonstrate the author’s familiarity with major works and theoretical precepts in the relevant research area, and this dissertation completes that task. It is a strong point of the work that Jusufi cites not only the most recent advances in the sociolinguistic study of multilingualism but that he also demonstrates an awareness of much older contributions such as Bloomfield’s and Weinreich’s. Unfortunately, Weinreich’s is also one of the names quoted within the text and not listed in the (very short list in the) Reference section at the end.

I would have also rated the theoretical part of the thesis higher had it at least mentioned some of the groundbreaking works of Jan Blommaert, the Bulgarian school’s sociolinguistic contributions of, let us say, Maria Georgieva, and the internationally acknowledged investigations of the dissertations’ scientific supervisor Diana Yankova.

On the whole, the author’s employment of sources is more than adequate and done in full compliance with the requirements for proper academic conduct in this respect.

The extraction and analysis of the empirical data in the thesis is conducted in accordance with typical sociolinguistic techniques and instruments such as (1) a questionnaire, (2) an interview and (3) personal observation. Within the hierarchy of the three research techniques, the Questionnaire is postulated by the thesis’s author as primary and the Interview as a supplementary device (p. 10 and p. 53). The Questionnaire, furthermore, relies on 14 open-ended questions. In the Observation stage of data collection, Jusufi himself conducts both the

observation and the consecutive analysis of the data obtained. The data are obtained at public locations such as streets, administrative buildings, schools, etc.

As apt and adequate all those research techniques and instruments are, in my opinion, it is improper to classify them as ‘methods’ of the research conducted, as they are precisely that and nothing more - research techniques and instruments. From my perspective, the method adopted for the purposes of Jusufi’s investigation is the one normally preferred in sociolinguistic analyses: it is a quantitative one and it is adequately employed. Thus, it seems strange that at no point in the thesis does the author specify overtly and clearly the character of his method.

The author’s skill in collecting and analyzing sociolinguistic data is beyond doubt as is the authenticity of his data. Regardless of the diligence in the work done and the author’s overall academic skills in conducting research, the following remarks and questions need to be raised:

- In the ‘Analysis’ Chapter, there are a number of unsupported and general socio-cultural claims. For instance, on p. 27, we find ‘*One of the most sensitive issues when it comes to multilingualism and language choice is national identity*’, and on p. 28, ‘*Usually the creation of minorities and the language groups in a country come as a result of creation of new states*’. No source or author supporting such views are cited.
- Even in the ‘Analysis’ Chapter, a good part of text is dedicated to providing background information on the political-and-historic context of the study. Such information was already provided in earlier Chapters.
- The beginning of the actual data analysis is declared to begin as late as p. 61, and, in fact, it really starts at p. 78.
- The visual, i.e. photographic, material in the first analytical part of Chapter 4 would seem more properly placed at the end of the dissertation as an Appendix. Inserted in the actual

body of the Chapter, the photographic material seems to blur the proportion between theoretical, background information and the actual data analysis.

- The section discussing the Questionnaire shows the distribution of respondents along the gender parameter is significantly uneven (only 16% are male), which may be argued to skew the results obtained and thus undermine their general validity. The same argument can be applied to the respondents' distribution with respect to age: the overwhelming majority is 18 or 19 years old; additionally, a total of 15% did not specify their age at all. Yet another significantly unevenly covered social parameter is that of educational status as the questionnaire has been almost exclusively filled by university students.
- The section discussing the Interview contains the biographies of the respondents involved, which could have also been avoided by including the information in the Appendices section.
- The section discussing the Interview also shows a very low number of respondents and their professional profile is very narrow and specific, which may be argued to raise questions as to the data's general validity.
- The section discussing the Observation experiment correlates age, language and register (in terms of formal/ informal uses). It remains unclear as to exactly how each Observation participant's age was established by the researcher, when the researcher himself declares the participants were not informed of their inclusion in the experiment. The only age-related parameter is that of 'over/below 30 years of age' and it is not clarified (1) why that particular dividing line has been postulated and (2) why only that dividing line has been postulated.
- The section discussing the Observation experiment does not specify the way formal language is distinguished from non-formal language as representing a correlation between participants' social distance and physical communicative environment.

The contributions formulated in the Conclusion section of the dissertation are well-traced and clearly specified. I have no substantial remarks to make on that section. My only recommendation would have the contributions and conclusions better harmonized with the research questions formulated at the beginning of the thesis. In other words, I would suggest the introduction be better aligned with the last Chapter of the dissertation.

The thesis is well argued and well structured, and carried through by the strong authorial voice of Jusufi. The dissertation verifies the candidate's theoretical knowledge and analytical skills in conducting independent sociolinguistic research up to modern-day requirements for a PhD degree. Let us hope that this interesting topic will not be abandoned by the author and that the author's research interest in it will continue.

Jasmin Jusufi's accompanying documents are authentic and also represent adequately his fulfilling all modern-day requirements for a PhD degree.

In conclusion, in my opinion, the dissertation answers all requirements and Jasmin Jusufi deserves to be awarded a Ph.D. degree.

01.06.2020

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Jusufi', written over a dotted line.