

## 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 "*Multilingualism in Kosovo. Minority languages at home and school*"

submitted by **Jasmin Osman Jusufi** for obtaining the Ph.D. degree

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

Jasmin Jusufi's Ph.D. thesis is entitled *Multilingualism in Kosovo. Minority languages at home and school* and it comprises 148 pages, incl. eight appendices, amounting to 38 pages. The main body of the thesis consists of five chapters presenting the results from the critical survey of the literature on the matter and the discussion of his empirical research findings, as well as a reference list with about 40 entries (incl. 5 relevant local and international documents). The thesis also incorporates 31 tables and 8 figures with empirical research data.

The Ph.D. thesis is written in English, demonstrating Jusufi's good command of academic style and language precision<sup>1</sup>, with one major exception – referencing. The problems are numerous and diverse in nature: e.g. some direct quotations lack page references (p. 19, 28, 45, 54, 56, etc.); some of the publications mentioned are entirely absent from the bibliography at the end of the thesis (e.g. Weinreich 1945, Kibbee 2008, McLaughlin 1978) or their reference entry lacks in detail (e.g. for L. Wei's article (2018) the *Applied Linguistics* volume and issue are missing, and page reference should read 9-30, not 9-20); for some references there is discrepancy between the data in the text and those in the bibliography (e.g. Lewis, 1978 on p. 26 in the text but Lewis, E.G. (1976) on p. 108; Morrison 2000 on p. 28 in the text but Morrison, K. & Lui, I. (2000) on p. 108; etc.); for others the reference in the text is a bit confusing (e.g. on p. 54 Larissa Aronin is referred to only by her initials: "According to A.L & U. Jassner (2014), ...") or the entry in the bibliography is staggeringly unconventional (e.g. **Commision, E.** (2008). EU-Multilingualism-Policy\_2008. or **Nations, U.** (2019). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948<sup>2</sup>); the alphabetical order in the reference list is not always observed (see p. 108 for instance) and sometimes in the text a quotation is totally skipped although reference has been provided (see p. 18 "From a social point of view Cenoz and Gorter describe multilingualism as X (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006)."). Such technical lapse and oversight on part of the Ph.D. student and his supervisor leave a bad taste in our mouth and spoil the good impression of the otherwise well-structured, independent and original scientific study of a truly topical and underresearched sociolinguistic problem – that of multilingualism in Kosovo, one of the

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<sup>1</sup> although there still are some problems (e.g. "don't" - p. 44, 93, 101, 105, etc.;"Apendix / Appeendix" - p. 5, 110, 118, 121-124, etc.;"Commision" - p. 106; "stu plan" - p. 83, and so on)

<sup>2</sup> the former refers to the **European Commission** and the latter to the **United Nations**

youngest states in Europe, whose population has a uniquely diverse profile in terms of language and ethnicity.

It is language legislation and the dynamicity of everyday communicative use of the languages spoken in the Republic of Kosovo (esp. those of the minority language groups) that come into focus in Jasmin Jusufi's Ph.D. thesis. Although in the title of his dissertation Jusufi professes to zoom in on the use of "*minority languages at home and school*", his study offers a much fuller picture of the "linguistic topography" and linguistic anthropology (incl. culture and values related to language use) of the region, and Prizren only turns into the epitome of this plurilinguistic and multicultural richness of Kosovo. Jusufi's attempt at elucidating the socio-political and historical prerequisites for this language phenomenon (the multilingualism in Kosovo), as well as its legislative pillars – the policy on language rights and language use in the country, as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, is also praiseworthy. Based on document analysis, Jusufi claims that 5 languages have been instituted as official in Kosovo: Albanian, Serbian, Turkish, Bosnian and Roma, and only two of those languages – Albanian and Turkish – are not minority ones. Minorities are encouraged to use their own language at all levels of communication and their rights are guaranteed by law (pp. 46-48). Empirical research data also confirm the multilingual profile of the population in Kosovo, as well as provide interesting insights into the intercultural understanding between the varied ethnic groups and their belief that it rests on their plurilinguistic communicative competence. The problems with the use of some minority languages in formal contexts relate to the lack of administrative and human capacity for implementing language rights not unwillingness to cooperate or prejudice.

Multilingualism as a sociolinguistic phenomenon (incl. its essence and benefits) has been studied profoundly by many linguists, and Jusufi demonstrates sufficient familiarity with major works in that scientific field – both older and more recent ones. However, it is also the literature review section of his thesis that leaves the impression of patchiness, incompleteness and uncritical approach to the theoretical tenets discussed, so much so that we are often offered whole strings of direct quotations which are otherwise pertinent to the argument, but are left without any critical comment. A good case in point illustrating that lack of coherence is section 2.2 *Language choice and identity*, which would have made more sense as part of Chapter I and the review of the theoretical concept of multilingualism and the clarification of terms like "code switching, code mixing and diglossia" (p. 27), whereas section 1.6 *Minorities in the Republic of Kosovo* would have been better incorporated in Chapter II, devoted to the more specific description of the language phenomenon of multilingualism in Kosovo.

Additionally, I cannot agree with Jusufi's working definition of multilingualism: "For the purpose of this study multilingualism is defined as the ability of using more than one language as an individual." (p.18). In the context of the European language policies, which lay emphasis on the preservation of language diversity, a clear distinction is made between

“**multilingualism**” and “**plurilingualism**”: the former concerns the society and the variety of local languages used by the people for everyday intercultural communication, whereas the latter is about the ability of the individual to speak several languages. In Jasmin Jusufi's Ph.D. study the research focus seems to be on the former – i.e. the language diversity underpinning communicative use and intercultural understanding between the varied ethnic groups in Kosovo and Prizren in particular (the "linguistic landscape" as Jusufi calls it, p. 24) and the language policy which institutes languages to official status and regulates their use in public domains (e.g. at school); the plurilingualistic communicative competence of the individual is taken for granted – only recorded / taken into account but not investigated further <sup>3</sup> (e.g. plurilingualism / plurilingualistic background is one of the selection criteria for the interviewees in the empirical research; it is also part of the data collected from the students who participated in the question survey /only 8% of whom claim not to know another local language – a fact that does not necessarily make them "monolingual"/). The same holds true for the observed conversations in public places (Jusufi does not collect data about who speaks what languages and when he/ she code-switches; the data only evidence the multilingual character of the communicative exchange) and the use of several languages on public buildings, street name plates and private businesses – thus the data only indirectly suggest the plurilingualistic competence of the people living in Prizren, but support the multilingual character of the society and the attempt of the people to comply with the legislative regulations or expand the reach of their business.

In spite of my criticism relating to the terminology used and to some extent the interpretation of the data collected, I am convinced that the empirical research conducted by Jusufi is among the most significant contributions of his Ph.D. thesis. The methodological framework is clearly designed and the methods and procedures of data collection (incl. instrument triangulation) are appropriate for addressing the research problem and reveal interesting traits in the empirical data (it could only be argued that the document analysis /e.g. the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo/ should be part of that the empirical study). Research findings are systematically discussed in the defined context<sup>4</sup> and the inferences are pertinent and clearly drawn from the results of the data analysis: the results confirm the multilingual profile of the people living in Prizren (taken as the epitome of Kosovo) and point to the success of intercultural communication (despite the deficiencies in the administrative and human capacities) based on the diversity of language use and cultural tolerance.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Jasmin Jusufi's Ph.D. thesis is an interdisciplinary, original and generally well-structured scientific study of an important sociolinguistic problem in the context of European language policies, incorporating empirical research, leading to

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<sup>3</sup> code switching, for example, is nowhere discussed, although one might expect that to come under study in the "languages-at-home" part of the research

<sup>4</sup> However, it is assumed that the use of minority languages "at home" was only tapped into by silently observing informal conversations in public places and through self-reporting questionnaires for university students only vaguely touching on the issue.

interesting conclusions about the "language landscape" in Kosovo. My critical comments above do not alter my belief that Jusufi makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of how multilingualism works in practice (in real life) and his Ph.D. thesis testifies to his subject knowledge and research skills.

The abstract reflects the main content of the Ph.D. thesis, and Jusufi's publications on the topic of his research meet the Ph.D. degree conferring requirements.

Therefore, on the basis of everything stated above I recommend that **Jusmin Jusufi's** thesis "*Multilingualism in Kosovo. Minority languages at home and school*" be positively assessed and he be conferred the Ph.D. degree in the professional field 2.1. *Philology* (subject area: *Germanic Languages English*).

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