

REVIEW

Of the PhD thesis **Multilingualism in Kosovo. Minority Languages at Home and at School**, by Jasmin Jusufi, Doctoral Candidate in 2.1 Philology.

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Fundamental and applied significance of the research topic

The topic of Jasmin Jusufi's research is Multilingualism in his native Kosovo. How speaking a foreign language impacts social relations in a region severely shaken by ethnic clashes is as serious an issue as can be for a member of the academic community in Kosovo. Collating opinions from different ethnic groups implements the principle of respect for the ethnic and national self-identification of each person. Therefore, the candidate engages with multilingualism as a human right in the very approach to his research.

Inviting respondents to reflect on their own experience as members of a multi-lingual society is a viable method of raising awareness of the significance that language has in cross-cultural communication. By using interviews in his research, Jusufi does not merely pay lip-service to this instrument for bringing communities together and breeding tolerance and mutual respect, but in effect makes it the founding principle of his research. Thus, research methods project the basic values of tolerance and equality, which is the *raison-d'etre* of applied science.

The responses to one of the questions in his poll point to the answer that people learn the language of their close neighbours "out of respect for the community they inhabit" (p.83). This strategy has been recommended in major EC directives, which makes the efforts of the candidate worthwhile and a step in the right direction.



Linguistics was for a long time restricted to non-political issues, quandaries that have no relation whatsoever to real life in human communities. This unfortunate trend may be attributed to the desire to be academically elevated above problems and controversies. Luckily, Jusifi has engaged with a very political issue and is searching solutions with academic precision, impartial analysis and determination to show why people choose to learn the language of their neighbours and how this reflects on socializing and communication. In effect, this is the best type of applied science, in service of war-struck communities which have just stepped on the route to nation building and healing wounds from past conflicts.

Consequently, the research perfectly satisfies the criterion for social significance and applicability.

Justifiability of the aims and objectives

The aims of the research have been formulated fairly broadly: what people think of the multilingual situation in Prizren. It transpires from the literature review that multilingualism is seen in terms of several factors: shaping people's identity, determining social communication and structuring the society of a country that suffered a war and has not been officially recognized by several governments. The semi-structured interviews elicit information concerning personal perceptions of identity formation, the questionnaire provides data about the scale of the attitudes towards foreign languages and the visual anthropology sheds light on which language is preferred for public notice boards.

Unfortunately, no objectives have been formulated and the reader can only guess which small steps would lead up to accomplishing the big goal. Inasmuch as the research is exploratory, leaving the hypothesis to evolve in the course of the research is permissible, however, a dissertation should signpost the direction the moves are taking.

Adequacy of the chosen methodology for achieving the goals

Three different types of methods have been employed towards achieving the aim: visual anthropology, semi-structured interviews, and a questionnaire. All of them have been borrowed from anthropology and sociology and their implementation is particularly adequate with a view of the social nature of the problem of multilingualism.

The use of visual anthropology is the most impressive methodological achievement of the candidate, in my opinion. It reveals which languages are preferred for hairdressers' studios, offices, and other public buildings. The potential exists for follow up interviews why these languages have been chosen, do they serve the purpose of attracting the right type of customer etc. The visual images might have been analysed for what surrounds the signages, the analysis may have probed deeper – but this methodology



will hopefully be brought to perfection in following studies, because it obviously works and yields good results.

The interviews are a more typical instrument of sociolinguistic research. The account of the responses is exhaustive and quite objective, but probably somewhat verbose – since no guiding principle structures the presentation. Important sociolinguistic data, such as the ethnicity of each interviewee, turn up as late as the conclusions, while they can be expected at the outset of the research design, with an explanation of the selection and sampling precisely for these parameters. The method of analysis has not been specified and we do not know whether semantic clusters are established, key words or another methodological procedure. However, important information is gleaned and even though the sampling of the respondents is not properly presented in the thesis, it is adequate enough to yield ample data.

The questionnaire is distributed among 200 respondents. Once again, it is not clear how the respondents have been selected to conclude about the representativeness of the sample. No attempt is made at calculating statistical measures, such as standard deviation, which would reinforce the strength of the numerical data. Some of the questions may appear leading, e.g. *Is there whatsoever prejudice towards your community in terms of language use and vice versa?* (p.121). Finally, the candidate manages to make his conclusions and it becomes quite clear what languages are spoken in Prizren and how people feel about it, even though the validity of the arguments still begs the question.

In summary, an array of adequate and quite innovative methods has been used and despite a certain statistical naiveness in their application, they yield the necessary data.

Publishing record

Jusufi has presented three publications. One is included in the proceedings of the 13th International Conference on Social Studies in Vienna in 2017. Another paper is published in the Yearbook of the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures at the NBU, which deals with the problem of multilingualism treated in his thesis. The third one is in the proceedings of a conference on English for Specific Purposes in Turkey. Jusufi's profile in *Research Gate* quotes one citation of his presentation in Vienna. The index given for him there is 0.7, which is a promising result for a doctoral student who has just started his research career.

Assessment

Based on the following facts:

- the research focuses on a significant issue,
- the topic selection indicates confidence and aptitude for academic pursuits,
- a range of adequate instruments have been employed, some of which are innovative and quite exclusive,



- the text is well-written and complies with the requirements of the genre
- several follow up developments can be seen from this project
- practical results have been planned with the research

I recommend the work for a very good grade and the candidate - to be awarded the doctoral degree.

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Signature 