



**NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

REVIEW

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**OF A DISSERTATION
FOR OBTAINING THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR**

Professional Field: 2.1. Philology (Subject Area: Germanic Languages, English)”

by the candidate JASMIN JUSUFI

TOPIC: “Multilingualism in Kosovo. Minority Languages at Home and School”

J. Jusufi’s dissertation sets as its main **research goal**, formulated in the title as well, the study of the multilingual language situation in Kosovo - the legal basis which guarantees the rights of the six nations in Kosovo, including their language rights, and the practical application of this legislation. The study also solves some **practical tasks**: examining the use of languages that are recognised as official at national and local levels (with a focus on multilingualism in the city of Prizren), as well as the attitudes and tendencies towards learning and usage of the language(s) which are spoken in the researched region by the majority of the citizens (who are Albanians) and by the minorities (Bosniaks, Turks, Roma, Serbs, Gorani) in formal situations (school, university, court, etc.) and at home. The research topic is undoubtedly of great importance for the citizens of

the young state of Kosovo, because the results of the study, as the author emphasizes, prove that the multilingualism of the inhabitants of Prizren is a “natural phenomenon”.

The **dissertation’s content** is 148 pages, of which 105 pages contain the theoretical part, the Bibliography is 4 pages and includes 38 sources, and there are eight Appendices (38 pages) which contain the Questionnaire for the survey in the four languages spoken in Prizren, the Interview Questions with the transcript of the interviews, and the Observation Sheet. The content of the dissertation is structured in five chapters: Literature Review, Multilingualism in Kosovo, Methodology, Data analysis and interpretation of findings, and Conclusion.

The doctoral student justifies **the importance of the researched problem** with the fact that it is necessary to study “multilingual societies as a phenomenon and compare the social, political and cultural implications of multilingualism in Prizren, Kosovo with other multilingual countries, particularly those in the European Union”. The analysis of the language situation in Prizren against the background of a brief historical review on the influence of the historical factor on the choice of the language, which is perceived as the language of people with higher social status – Turkish, is of special interest. The legislation of the EU on the rights of the minorities is also presented. Table 1 provides an overview of the linguistic and ethnic characteristics of most of the Balkan countries.

The **references** to theoretical studies, as well as to the EU and Kosovo legislation on multilingualism, language policy, minority rights and civil rights, quoted not always correctly by J. Jusufi, demonstrate comprehension of the conceptual framework on multilingualism issues that are necessary to achieve the dissertation’s goal.

One of the **contributions** of the dissertation is the analysis of the differences in the attitude of the ethnic groups in the town of Prizren to the learning and usage of the languages of the other ethnic groups with which they live together. This analysis is based on the results of a questionnaire completed anonymously by 221 respondents, six interviews with 12 questions conducted personally by the PhD student, and an observation.

Thus, the **research methodology** is a combination of 1) an anonymous questionnaire with 14 questions, to which the respondents (mainly students aged 18 to 30) choose one of the pre-set 2 or more answers in one of the following languages: Albanian, Bosnian or Turkish; from 2) an oral interview, during which the respondents answer 12 questions in the language in which they feel most comfortable to answer; and 3) observation. The chosen methodology contributes to the reliability and representativeness of the research and is a solid basis for indicating trends and drawing conclusions.

The theoretical basis of the research is the understanding of multilingualism as “a complex phenomenon that can be studied from different perspectives, including social and individual, sociolinguistic, educational, language policy, and psycholinguistics” (p.17). The candidate presents an overview of definitions of multilingualism and its advantages in Chapter I. Then, in Chapter II, he continues with the presentation of the relationship between language choice and identity as well as the place of multilingualism in the system of *minorities - language use - human and civil rights - language policy* from a theoretical point of view. This chapter also provides a review of the ethnic composition of the administrative district of Prizren, as well as the educational and linguistic environment. This review concludes with Mr Jusufi’s statement, which is further supported by statistics, that “the majority of the population is multilingual, or bilingual, speaking at least two of the four main languages in use” (p. 37).

Chapter Two also presents data from field work, i.e. photos of signs from public places and private businesses in Prizren. The conclusion from the collected data is that “All institutions in the municipality of Prizren have been named in all of the official languages of the municipality, including Albanian, Bosnian and Turkish” (p. 39), while all inscriptions in private places are in Albanian, which, according to the researcher, is in support of the thesis that “minorities have much higher multilingual capabilities” (p. 44). After presenting the legislation on language policy in Kosovo, J. Jusufi agrees with the OSCE’s conclusions that the implementation of the Law on

Language Use is unsatisfactory, as despite guaranteeing the use of the mother tongue in Kosovo's legislation, language rights are not always observed for technical or financial reasons.

In Chapter III, the doctoral student justifies his choice of research methods and presents some details of their application in fulfilling the research tasks. The indisputable advantage of the dissertation is the skilful implementation of these research methods, which, in their combination, contribute to the validity and reliability of the conclusions made.

The **dissertation's scientific contribution** is recapitulating the research data and thus presenting the trends in the multilingualism in Prizren and making recommendations on future actions of the Kosovo government, which "should put more effort into respecting the language regulation by offering language training for employees".

The recapitulations are based on the statistics from the various research methods (Chapter IV). The most important conclusions of the doctoral student can be presented as follows:

- Albanian, being the mother tongue of 47% of respondents, has the status of an official and dominant language in Kosovo and is the most widely used language in public and informal communication (50% of informal conversations and on a par with Turkish in conversations in the municipality and the court) of the town of Prizren;
- Since 80% of Albanian native speakers cannot speak another local language, this proves that they are less multilingual compared to respondents whose mother tongue is Bosnian or Turkish;
- Turkish has the status of the socially most prestigious language for historical reasons, and now - for providing prospects for a better future; it is used in 40% of informal conversations, although it is the mother tongue of 27% of respondents;
- Turkish native speakers are the most multilingual (p. 99), as about 60% of them can speak another local language and about 35% of the respondents declare that they can speak all three local languages;

- It is interesting to note that speaking Turkish is not necessarily a sign of Turkish identity, but rather of an urban cultural identity;
- While the majority of respondents say they are interested in learning another local language, statistics show that Albanians consider learning another local language less important, while the majority of Bosniaks and Turks consider it “very important” on a 5-level scale;
- An interesting aspect of the study is analysis of the attitude and the place of the Serbian language in Kosovo. The doctoral student examines his observations of conversations and the answers of the respondents against the background of a brief historical overview of the language situation before and after the 1999 war. Although it is one of the official languages in Kosovo, it is not used; in addition, the use of Bosnian, which is “very similar” (p. 94) to Serbian, has declined, and the 10 percent of the respondents who say they do not feel free to use their mother tongue, are Bosniaks;
- While presenting the situation of linguistic diversity and tolerance in Prizren, the doctoral student cannot but reveal trends that are contrary to democratic language legislation, namely: about 35% of respondents experience difficulties in state institutions due to the lack of knowledge of local languages by the state employees in local administration; 40% have met state officials that can not speak the language of the respondent.

In the last chapter – Conclusion, J. Jusufi summarises the language situation in Kosovo and the city of Prizren and the factors that have shaped it today, confirming his working hypothesis that the city „can serve as an example of mutual language interferences and the emergence of bilingualism and multilingualism, but also the preservation and affirmation of multilingualism” (p. 100). The positive example of the people of Prizren is reinforced by the research data, according to which “We could not notice any prejudice between communities. People consider multilingualism in Prizren a natural phenomenon that has always been around. As such, it is considered normal and

people unconsciously are part of it” (105). Having highlighted this positive background, the doctoral student also notes the trend towards lower levels of multilingualism and lower value of multilingual tradition among the younger generation and concludes that “without reciprocal learning [of local languages], in a generation or two the vibrant Balkan Ottoman-style multilingual urban space may shift towards monolingualism” (p. 92).

Another contribution of the dissertation is the appeal of the researcher to the government to take measures to implement the Law on Language Use. The researcher observes the objective academic style and bases his conclusions on sufficient representative empirical material. The research questions are skilfully selected so that to present the research topic comprehensively and impartially.

Recommendations and suggestions:

- The biographies of the interviewees (pp. 61-62) should be in a separate appendix, not in the main text of the dissertation;

- The research topic is interesting from linguistic, cultural, social and historic perspectives; that is why the study could be further expanded with a comparative analysis of multilingualism in another Balkan country (e.g. the Republic of Northern Macedonia or Bulgaria) or with the inclusion of statistics for all Balkan countries, as Turkey, Slovenia, Romania and Montenegro are excluded from this study.

The executive summary of the dissertation accurately presents the content of the dissertation.

The doctoral student Jasmin Jusufi has three publications: an article on the language situation in Kosovo, which is thematically related to the dissertation, and two methodological articles: on rising motivation in ESL classes and an analysis of ESP courses profile.

Based on the dissertation research contributions and the positive qualities highlighted above, it can be concluded that the dissertation meets the requirements for obtaining the PhD degree. Therefore, I recommend that the Scientific Jury assess the dissertation on the topic of “Multilingualism in Kosovo. Minority Languages at Home and School” positively and award the doctoral student Jasmin Jusufi with the doctoral degree in the Professional Field 2.1. Philology (Subject Area: Germanic Languages, English).

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