

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Russana Beyleri (Ph.D), specialist in Albanian Studies at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

for Yllka Imeri's doctoral thesis

„Vocal system of the Albanian subdialect in the Preshevo Valley“

Yllka Imeri was registered as extramural doctoral student at the Department of General, Indo-European and Balkan Linguistics on June 20th 2019. At registration she presented a detailed plan of her future thesis and demonstrated serious ground work on some parts. Still she took her time to acquire knowledge in the fields of Indo-European Linguistics and Balkan Studies in particular, under the supervision of assoc. prof. dr. Bilyana Mihaylova.

First chapter introduces a general description of Preshevo and Bujanovac municipalities in Southern Serbia populated predominantly with Albanian population. This fact in itself naturally included the sociolinguistic aspect of language contacts in the study as well as implies the important social function of the present work for the scholarly prestige of the Albanian as minority language as well as for the raise of the educational status of the Albanian population in this area.

First chapter also introduces the methodology of work as well as describes the objectives of phonetic experiments and the respondent groups subject to those experiments. Yllka Imeri's dissertation augments two linguistic fields – dialectology and phonetics. Albanian dialectology may be qualified as well developed in theory and practically as field work. Phonetics on the other side more rarely attracts the young scholars. Yllka Imeri has manifested scientific vision and foresight when choosing her sphere of scientific interest, because this choice alone provides her with broader natural options for individual affirmation and freedom of research. During her doctoral studies she was directed towards Indo-European studies, which presents another excellent opportunity for future work. Thus I am pleased to read about the historical phonetic development of the two Albanian dialects – Tosk and Gheg from the Proto Albanian Language (p. 50-60) which by all means carries weight in her thesis.

The original part of the dissertation is dedicated to the experimental phonetics which means contemporary acoustic analysis. The candidate

reports the outcomes of her field work with respondents from Bujanovac and Preshevo, carried out by the Praat software. This by all means is an interesting and innovative initiative, given the fact that such studies have not been done in the area by now. Chapter two gives an account of the results in Bujanovac, chapter three – in Preshevo. The theoretical side of the work is well-grounded, properly explained and motivated. The choice of respondents has been duly motivated. Words with highest frequency of vowels in the speech of each respondent have been underlined and analyzed. Sonograms of the respective words are attached as well as formant analysis of the distinctive sounds. Chapter four contains comparative analysis and conclusions.

My recommendation to the candidate is to insist on closer contacts with Tirana University where the only modern acoustic phonetic laboratory functions at present under the supervision of prof. dr. Aljula Jubani. I am slightly surprised that this has not happened, at least not sufficiently, by now, because it will further validate the achievements and will provide better access to technology. The untimely death of prof. Giovanni Belushi in Italy interrupted traditions in the other albanological center where such activities were carried out under his direction. The lack of specialist in experimental phonetics I believe will affirm naturally the doctoral student in the field if she continues her researches and adequately reaches for cooperation and support. Given the high social scholarly proactivity of the candidate, I believe it will happen. Regardless of her young age at registration she had already published a short monograph in English focused on the language of the rap music. This work deals with phonetics as well. The candidate has several publications in the field of the dissertation and few others in dialectology which do not touch phonetics. Their titles prompt her interest and aspiration to reflect the modern trends and the interests of the broad public. Yllka Imeri is active in university teaching in several Kosovo Universities. She is a regular assistant professor at Gjakova University and since 2022 a part-time assistant at Mitrovica University. Yllka Imeri participates in the editorial board of several magazines. She has demonstrated artistic creative talents as well – her poetry collection “Enigma” was first published in Albanian in Tirana and then translated into Greek.

Yllka Imeri’s scholarly imprint is fast and expeditious. She answers to professional correspondence immediately, reviews and edits, translates and

takes suggestion with easiness and promptness. No doubt this style is a plus in her scholarly career.

The Bulgarian translation of a major part of her dissertation is an important contribution to the internationalization and popularization of Albanian Studies abroad, which is a widely declared goal by all affected institutions.

In conclusion: Yllka Imeri's doctoral thesis "Vocal system of the Albanian subdialect in the Preshevo Valley" demonstrates linguistic competence and scholarly preparation. It may be seen as unifying linguistic event of the Albanian Studies. I am convinced that the candidate deserves to be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scholarly field 2.1. Philology.

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