

## **External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of Jane Jovanov**

### **“Optimizing Language Teaching and Learning Materials: A Different Approach to Advanced Language Teaching and Learning”**

**Submitted in 2019 at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University**

#### **I. Brief summary of the dissertation**

The doctoral candidate Jane Jovanov presents a theoretical model for creating e-textbooks for teaching foreign languages at advanced levels based on linguaculturology, the theory of intercultural communication, the theory of linguistic personality and language consciousness and several other theories. In the first chapter he discusses the concept of culture, its role in the world and the interaction between language and culture. He also elaborates on the concepts of nation and national, national and language identity, and describes the relation between language and nation. The second chapter is devoted to the explanation and description of linguaculturology and the importance of intertwining the teaching of language with teaching the culture of the target language community. In the next chapter the candidate discusses communicative language teaching approaches to language learning and the role of authentic materials, especially for advanced language learners. He also dwells on the importance of motivation and emotion in language learning and proceeds to explain the multimodal method as the basis for a new kind of textbooks for language learning. The fourth chapter deals with the effects of the technological development on every sphere of human life, including education, the changing roles of teachers and learners, the appearance of electronic books and their advantages and the possibility the technology offers for creating electronic textbooks that provide more options for teaching and learning. The candidate also presents a theoretical framework for creating e-textbooks for language learning at advanced levels with the aim of developing learners linguacultural competence.

#### **II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation**

The importance of including a cultural component in language teaching has been understood for a long time and many language teaching methods have tried to incorporate culture in language teaching materials. Linguaculturology raises this issue to a higher level. However, as a fairly new discipline, it is still developing its theoretical foundations and practical implications. In this doctoral dissertation, the candidate presents his arguments for using linguaculturology as a starting point for creating language teaching materials for advanced learners and gives a theoretical framework for its application. Even though it is only a theoretical proposal, it is a step forward in applying the premises and assertions of linguaculturology. As such, it announces the beginning of a new approach to language teaching and learning, the value of which may only be seen after it has been developed into a complete methodological proposal

and has been tried out with language learners in different contexts. It is still early to predict the success or failure of this approach, but progress happens only when new ideas are given a chance to develop, grow and prove themselves. Therefore, the value of this dissertation thesis lies in its attempt to provide a theoretical background and to propose a practical application of linguacultorology in language teaching and learning.

### **III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects**

#### **1. Structure of the argument**

The dissertation has a clear structure and is organized well. The headings and subheadings clearly indicate the focus and aim of each section. The ideas are expressed clearly and are connected in coherent paragraphs. The ideas flow smoothly and the whole text enables easy reading. All concepts are clearly and thoroughly explained, usually with several definitions from different sources accompanied by explanations by the author.

#### **2. Formal aspects of the dissertation**

The dissertation is well-presented and graphically well-formatted. The writing style is at an academic level. It is clear and concise, and grammatically correct. The abbreviations are defined in brackets at first mention and used consistently thereafter. The footnotes are formatted correctly. The references in the text and the bibliography follow the prescribed style.

#### **3. Use of sources and/or material**

The candidate has used a large body of relevant literature which shows that he has consulted and cited authors who are prominent experts in the areas discussed in the dissertation. Both the primary and secondary sources are referenced appropriately in the text and in the bibliography.

#### **4. Personal contribution to the subject**

The dissertation represents an original work which makes a valuable contribution to the field of language teaching and learning. The candidate has used the primary and secondary resources as a foundation and support for his proposal of a new way of language learning at advanced levels. The proposed theoretical model is original and is based on the candidate's beliefs about the importance of integrating language and culture for achieving full mastery of a foreign language as well as his views on how this aim can best be achieved.

### **IV. Questions for the author**

The candidate could not present an example of an e-textbook for learning foreign languages because of technical and other demands, but I am sure that he has a clear picture of what this textbook would look like and how everything could be

accomplished. I have questions related to methodological and practical applications of his proposal.

#### 1. Methodological questions:

We saw an example of a topic and texts that could be used with advanced learners. However, since the e-textbook is intended for teaching language and culture at the same time, I would like to know what activities can be used with this and other topics:

- What activities should come before and after reading the texts?
- How can listening skills be developed and what type of activities can be used?
- What kind of writing and speaking activities can be used and when?
- How will students focus on vocabulary and grammatical aspects?
- How will learners develop their communicative competence?
- How will they be assessed?

#### 2. Practical questions:

The candidate states that the material will be taken from various sources from the Internet for which purpose 25-50 native teachers will be necessary to update the textbook constantly.

- Who will create these e-textbooks? If they are created by publishing companies, the material has to be written by authors employed by the companies as they do not use materials from the Internet. If they do, they have to pay a lot of money for authors' rights. For the same reason, they cannot use Facebook or Twitter posts.
- Moreover, the candidate says that the learners themselves can suggest texts which will be reviewed by the teacher before being included in the materials. Does this mean that the teachers who are responsible for creating the books need to be these learners' teachers?
- If these textbooks are to be created by teachers themselves, how can schools find so many teachers to work on the creation and updating the materials? Who will pay for authors' rights for materials that are not freely available?

## V. Conclusion

In my opinion, the dissertation meets the standards of a doctoral dissertation and I recommend it for a public defense.

I recommend the submitted dissertation with the tentative grade of pass.

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