

# IMESS DISSERTATION

**Note: Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator (cc Chiara Amini [chiara.amini@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:chiara.amini@ucl.ac.uk) and fiona.rushworth@ucl.ac.uk)**

Please note that IMESS students are not required to use a particular set of methods (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, or comparative) in their dissertation.

<b>Student:</b>	Qianrui Hu
<b>Dissertation title:</b>	The Politicization of the Language Issue in Ukraine: the Discursive Construction of the Language, Nationalism, and Identity in Ukrainian Media

	70+	69-65	60-61	59-55	54-50	<50
	A	B	C	D	E	F
<b>Knowledge</b> <i>Knowledge of problems involved, e.g. historical and social context, specialist literature on the topic. Evidence of capacity to gather information through a wide and appropriate range of reading, and to digest and process knowledge.</i>	X					
<b>Analysis &amp; Interpretation</b> <i>Demonstrates a clear grasp of concepts. Application of appropriate methodology and understanding; willingness to apply an independent approach or interpretation recognition of alternative interpretations; Use of precise terminology and avoidance of ambiguity; avoidance of excessive generalisations or gross oversimplifications.</i>	X					
<b>Structure &amp; Argument</b> <i>Demonstrates ability to structure work with clarity, relevance and coherence. Ability to argue a case; clear evidence of analysis and logical thought; recognition of an argument's limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.</i>		X				
<b>Presentation &amp; Documentation</b> <i>Accurate and consistently presented footnotes and bibliographic references; accuracy of grammar and spelling; correct and clear presentation of charts/graphs/tables or other data. Appropriate and correct referencing throughout. Correct and contextually correct handling of quotations.</i>	X					
<b>Methodology</b> <i>Understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.</i>	X					

<b>ECTS Mark:</b>	A/70	<b>Charles Mark:</b>	A/91	<b>Marker:</b>	Jan Šír
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>			No	<b>Signed:</b>	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				<b>Date:</b>	9/15/21

## MARKING GUIDELINES

**A (UCL mark 70+) = A (Charles mark 91-100 - excellent):** *Note: marks of over 80 are given rarely and only for truly exceptional pieces of work.*  
Distinctively sophisticated and focused analysis, critical use of sources and insightful interpretation. Comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.

**B (UCL mark 69-65) = B (Charles mark 81-90 – very good)**  
**C (UCL mark 64-60) = C (Charles mark 71-80 – good):** A high level of analysis, critical use of sources and insightful interpretation. Good understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research. 65 or over equates to a B grade.

**D (UCL mark 59-55) = D (Charles mark 61-70 – satisfactory)**  
**E (UCL mark 54-50) = E (Charles mark 51-60 – sufficient):** Demonstration of a critical use of sources and ability to engage in systematic inquiry. An ability to engage in sustained research work, demonstrating methodological awareness. 55 or over equates to a D grade.

**F (UCL mark less than 50) = F (Charles mark 0-50 - insufficient):** Demonstrates failure to use sources and an inadequate ability to engage in systematic inquiry. Inadequate evidence of ability to engage in sustained research work and poor understanding of appropriate research techniques.

## Please provide substantive and detailed feedback!

### Comments, explaining strengths and weaknesses (*at least 300 words*):

The thesis is a contribution to the study of nation-building and language politics in contemporary Ukraine. Through the means of critical discourse analysis (CDA), it seeks to analyze how the language issue is discursively constructed in select Ukrainian media, both Ukrainian- and Russian-language ones.

Generally speaking, the thesis under review is above-average in terms of quality of analysis. First, it shows a good knowledge of the history and politics of Ukraine. In addition, it contains an extensive literature review. This review demonstrates a solid orientation in the theories of nationalism, author's theoretical framework of choice. Second, the thesis suggests a sound training in qualitative methods of social sciences. In methodology, the work draws on CDA. No need to stress, discourse analysis is especially difficult to employ. This is not least because it is extremely time-consuming, requiring manual processing of large amount of data, and presupposes solid proficiency in the language/s concerned, here in Ukrainian and Russian. In this respect, the student did an excellent job. Last but not least, the thesis is really well written. The narrative is easy to follow, and the text is fully understandable and flows well.

The core of the thesis—chapter 3—provides an analysis of the main discursive interpretations of the language issue as given by Ukrainian media. It is topical, factual, and flawless as regards the application of the CDA. Also the organization of the material is clear and well arranged, following an underlying logic. The study results in identification and analysis of four overarching themes generalized from media discourses about the language issue in Ukraine. The results are well grounded, and the underlying argumentation is straightforward and convincing. In my opinion, this chapter is definitely the most interesting and valuable part of the text.

At the same time, I would have four remarks to the overall concept of the thesis and its general design. I suppose the student may wish to comment on these remarks in the course of the defense.

First remark concerns the study's time span. The chronological frame covers the period from 2012 to 2019, roughly corresponding to the debate about the infamous Kivalov-Kolesnichenko language law and the subsequent attempts at its reform and replacement. This delineation would be perfectly fine, if it were not for one detail, namely the armed conflict with Russia that started in 2014, which at the same time represents a clash of identities and values. In fact, Russian-Ukrainian war served as a major catalyst for broader societal changes in Ukraine including nation-building, which also impacted the language and media. The fact that the student put both the pre-war discourse and the war discourse in one basket and treated them more or less as a static phenomenon en bloc made it difficult for him to trace the dynamics and changes that the media and related discourses have been undergoing in this critical period of Ukrainian nation-building. As a result, the focus gets a bit blurred and narrowing further down would help.

Second, I have already appreciated the analytical part, namely the flawless use of CDA and the way the topic was handled. Still, given the chosen genre—an academic thesis—I would welcome if I could get some more information on the data set—the corpus, the sample, the criteria for selection—of chosen texts. Yet it is largely missing.

Third, while I welcome that the student devoted an entire chapter (Chapter 2) to literature review, trying to position the thesis in the broader academic debate, the review largely resembles an extensive overview of existing theories of nationalism and its individual schools. It is rather general and quite superfluous, given that the author did not further use most of this information in the analytical part. I would plead for cuts here.

Fourth, the thesis certainly has all the mandatory requirements it shall have. Still, the order of some individual sections is a bit atypical. The thesis starts right away from the beginning with the historical context, whereas the very research design—including the aims and objectives—gets elaborated only in the middle of the text. I could well imagine a more reader-friendly organization of these mandatory parts.

**Specific questions you would like addressing at the oral defence (at least 2 questions):**

Elaborating on my first remark, do you see any changes in the discursive interpretations of the issue of language in the Ukrainian media after 2014?