



Institute of World History

Mustafa SAVOĞLU: *English as Lingua Franca in Cyprus after 2003: Questions of Identity*, MA thesis, Prague – Budapest 2017, 96p.

Supervisor's review of the thesis

The thesis by Mustafa Savoğlu deals with the highly pertinent issue of language policies and planning in the context of politically and linguistically divided Cyprus, which nevertheless undergoes a slow process of reconciliation and of building of more intense mutual contacts between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities. In this context, Mustafa develops his main research question, how the LPP has been developing since the 2003 and whether the development tends toward the Turkish-Greek bilingual Cyprus or rather to the domination of English as the shared language (*lingua franca*) across the island. The latter option seems to be the case according to Mustafa's analysis. In fact, the thesis goes a bit further as it also points out *why* English got its role of *lingua franca* and *why* the idea of bilingual Cyprus remains hard to implement. From this perspective, the thesis's question might be slightly reframed as "how it came the English has become the *lingua franca* in Cyprus". The reasons are twofold: negatively, English is the logical response to the reluctance to create, as well as practical burdens of implementing, the truly bilingual LPP; positively, English has already established itself well within the society, and is at hand for trans-community interactions.

The thesis is logically structured. The general overview of the recent Cypriot history with focus on the language division is followed by the theoretical framework that rests mainly on sociolinguistics and nationalism studies. In the main analytical part, the research question is reasonably followed in three specific domains: 1) the political discourse, 2) the civil society, and 3) the educational system.

While the overall design of the thesis is sound and the parts nicely complement each other, one has to be more critical about the individual chapters that, according to my view, are of varying quality, as regards heuristics. The chapter five on civil society is of the highest quality, as it provides a deeper insight into to intricacies of language planning and use at the micro-level of NGO that is active in the reconciliation programme. Mustafa's own experience (direct participatory observation) was of great value here. Even here, however, the sources could have been exploited more systematically. E.g. the logo of the NGO makes quite clear the centrality of English compared the other two languages, as the English name of the NGO is put in the middle and highlighted by bold type. The interpretation is largely convincing, although I would argue e.g. at page 60 that besides economic reasons (difference in salaries between southern and northern Cyprus) practical aspects might have played a role in desired language skills of hired personnel: if someone is to be hired for translating form English to Turkish and vice versa, it is quite logical the employee must be fluent in Turkish. As regards the second part of chapter five, it is not clear what the addressed population of the survey was and how the respondents were reached. If the sample corresponds to Cypriot population in general, then I would not call it civil society (which is more specific concept), but simply society at large, or population. As regards terminology, I am also not sure the people in NGO are Cypriot political elite (70). I would better talk about cultural elites or intelligentsia.



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In other chapters, the heuristics is weaker. For example in the chapter four, I wouldn't talk about the analysis of political discourse, as the chapter is mostly based on a couple of texts, some secondary literature and what seems to be common knowledge of the issue. We can rather talk about drawing contours of the political discourse. For a proper analysis of political discourse, I would expect much more substantial and systematic data analysis. Equally sketchy looks the chapter six on the language education although I admit the documents may be scarce. Even in the theoretical chapters I would expect a bit more literature on the intersection on nationalism or nation building and language. What I particularly missed is also a broader framework that would put Cypriot case in a more general and comparative perspective, with at least a cursory view at some other societies that face the issue of division according to language (Belgium), the issue of substantial language minorities and language arrangements (Swedish speaking minority in Finland), or countries where a "foreign" language works as lingua franca or even as the official language in the highly diverse society (India).

What is particularly disturbing is the often flawed way of referencing to the sources. At some places, the full references are missing and the reference is only made vaguely (e.g. the Mehmet Yaşınor's poem at page 3-4, or somewhat vague references to documents seen at the NGO). Also, often the indication of pages is missing by quotations. The web-source references are incomplete (the date of visit is not indicated, nor are more detailed specification of the source (author, title of article, name of the portal, and the date of publication)). Also the bibliography could have been done better, with at least distinguishing between the primary and the secondary sources. Also as regards the language, the thesis is not without frequent mistakes (grammar, mistyping). Some sentences and arguments are difficult to understand, such as: "Peace can only be achieved among people and/or peoples. This however, shall not be perceived as peace is always natural". (p. 52)

Despite my critical comments, the thesis definitely makes clear that Mustafa is able to design a sound and logically built research, with nice interlinking of micro and macro level, to take critical stance to his topic and to reflect smartly on the social dimension of language use. The thesis brings some interesting insights into the problem. I hope Mustafa will continue with his research, which clearly has a potential for further development in many dimensions, such as the comparative perspective, or the role of the promotion of language diversity as European cultural heritage, recently valued by EU. These may be also topics for discussion during defence.

I recommend the thesis for the successful defence, with **grade 2** (very good) in the Czech grading system and 4 in the Hungarian system.

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