



CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE
LABORATOIRE DE LANGUES ET CIVILISATIONS A TRADITION ORALE
LACITO - UMR 7 107

7, rue Guy Môquet - Bât.23 - 94800 Villejuif
Tel. 0033 1 49 58 37 78 Fax. 0033 1 49 58 37 79

Evangelia Adamou, PhD

Senior researcher at the French Center for Scientific Research

tel. 0033 1 49 58 37 66

e-mail: evangelia.adamou@cnrs.fr

External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of

Michael Beníšek

"Eastern Uzh varieties of North Central Romani"

Submitted in 2017 at the *Department of Linguistics, Charles University*

I. Brief summary of the dissertation

Michael Beníšek's doctoral thesis presents a full grammatical description of the Eastern Uzh varieties of North Central Romani spoken in the Transcarpathian region in Ukraine. The thesis is 497 pages-long. It is based on original linguistic data, collected through a translation questionnaire and recordings of naturalistic speech.

II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation

The thesis is offering a precious contribution to Romani studies with first-hand data from under-described Romani varieties from Transcarpathia, Ukraine. The main goal of the thesis is a synchronic description of these varieties. The

description, from phonology to syntax, is conducted with great skill. Quite impressively the author also takes into consideration historical developments and influences from current- and past-contact languages, such as Ukrainian, Russian, Slovak/Czech, and Hungarian.

III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects

1. Structure of the argument

The thesis is structured in thirteen chapters, starting with a very useful introduction to the sociolinguistic background and the premisses of the work (chapter 1). The author then presents the phonology (chapter 2), with special attention to the historical developments. Chapters 3-10 are dedicated to the analysis of the various parts of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs). The noun phrase and the prepositional phrase are presented in chapter 11 and syntax around the verb in chapter 12. Finally, the complex clauses are discussed in chapter 13. We regret that there is no conclusion or final discussion. Bibliographical references are 9-pages long, which is rather limited for a doctoral dissertation, mainly covering the literature in the field of Romani studies.

The candidate explicitly states that his work is in line with Dixon's basic linguistic theory, informed by the functional-typological literature, and the Romani linguistics literature (p. 25). The candidate's goal is to provide a modern grammatical analysis of the Romani data and discuss them when appropriate in a historical perspective. This goal is clearly attained.

2. Formal aspects of the dissertation

The thesis is written in English. The writing is clear, fluent, and engaging. The candidate provides detailed glosses (although mainly in synthetic form), together with the transcriptions and translations. A distinction between the elicited and spontaneous data would have been welcome.

3. Use of sources and/or material

The manuscript employs a methodology consistent with the theoretical orientation that informs the investigation and the goals of the thesis. Data

collection is based on the *Linguistic Questionnaire for the Documentation of Central European Romani*, which consists of 1,500 sentences, supplemented by recordings of spontaneous speech. In the introduction, the author presents the data collection in detail, conducted in five different localities among various speakers. Four varieties are represented by approximately 7 to 9 hours of recordings and one variety (i.e., Shakhta) by more than 100 hours of recordings, of which only a part is analyzed. I would have appreciated to find a table summarizing the demographic characteristics of the sample and the amount of data that each consultant contributed. All the elicited data are archived, which is excellent.

The thesis demonstrates strong scholarly grounding, in particular as far as the Romani literature is concerned. In the description of the Romani data, the claims are insightful and clearly grounded in the analysis of the evidence. Naturally, the Eastern Uzh Romani data do not always allow the author to contribute to discussions in Romani linguistics, e.g., about tense p. 65.

The description is informed not only by the Romani linguistics literature, but also by theoretical studies. Indeed, references to general linguistics studies offer the basis for terminological choices, concepts, and frameworks (e.g., Diessel 1999, for demonstratives, p. 235; Givon 1990 for complementation, p. 418; Shibatani 1976 for deverbal derivation, p. 106).

4. *Personal contribution to the subject*

Without any doubt, the findings in this thesis deliver new insights in relation to the field of Romani linguistics. They also partake to the language documentation efforts currently undertaken more generally in descriptive linguistics. Moreover, the Romani material can be of interest to typologists and general linguists as it is explained in great detail and using general terminology, glosses, transcriptions, and concepts.

However, the author offers little confrontation of the Romani data with the typological findings and the theoretical frames mentioned. For example, when the author discusses the Romani evidence in relation to the accessibility hierarchy in Keenan and Comrie (1977), cf. p. 450, he does not provide a brief summary to this

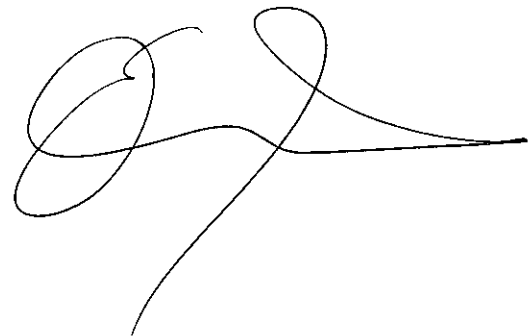
literature that would introduce the reader to the topic and help understand the relevance of the Romani data. Moreover, the author does not explain how this theoretical proposal relates to the Romani data (i.e., Is the use of resumptive pronouns in roles lower than subject and object in accordance or contrary to the hierarchy? How is this observation relevant since in the paragraph below the author adds data that show that animate subjects and objects can also be relativized using a resumptive pronoun?).

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, the doctoral dissertation submitted by Michael Benfšek meets the standards required of a doctoral dissertation in that it offers an original empirical contribution. I recommend the submitted dissertation with the tentative grade of pass.

May 31, 2017

Evangelia Adamou

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.