

External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of Mgr. Michael Beníšek

"Eastern Uzh varieties of North Central Romani"

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Filozofická fakulta, Ústav obecné lingvistiky

I. Brief summary of the dissertation

The dissertation is a grammatical description of several related Romani varieties spoken in and around Uzhhorod in Transcarpathian Ukraine. Based on the author's original fieldwork, the work establishes these varieties as a cluster, describing linguistic characteristics that are common to them, specifically to the exclusion of other neighboring varieties. It also addresses the points of variation within the cluster, and provides comparison with other related Romani varieties when necessary. In addition to the synchronic linguistic description, the work gives some consideration to historical language developments, specifically in the domain of phonology (Section 2.4). Particular developments that result from language contact are addressed in situ in the corresponding sections.

II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation

The work meets the standard requirements of a doctoral thesis. I evaluate the thesis with a passing grade and unreservedly recommend it for public defence. Furthermore, the thesis is clear in its aim, and thorough in successfully accomplishing this aim. The work is original and constitutes a valuable contribution to the field of Romani Linguistics.

III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects

1. Structure of the argument

[Is the argumentation lucid throughout? Is it always clear what the author is attempting to express and why he/she is doing so at specific instances in the text? Is the dissertation clearly structured? Is the dissertation aimed at achieving a clearly set objective and is the author successful in following this objective?]

The overall structure of the dissertation is transparent and consistent with the tradition established in the field - breaking up the language into formal domains, e.g. Phonology, Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Syntactic structure etc. As such, the work is a useful reference text for any linguistic typologist interested in the structures of the dialect in question, as well as for any Romani linguist curious to find specific features of this dialect. The main aim of

the dissertation - grammatical description of a cluster of varieties - is stated clearly in the introduction and is achieved with transparency throughout the body of the work. All chapters, and many sub-chapters, are introduced clearly and the text in each chapter follows through with its respective aim. Within each section the argumentation is lucid and logical, and at no point is the reader unclear about what the author is expressing and why. For example, the author presents a thorough and convincing chain of arguments for using the term “Eastern Uzh Romani Dialect”, based on the literature on the general dialectology as well as the dialectology of the region in question (Introduction).

The dissertation combines both form-to-function (e.g. Section 3.4 on verb derivation morphology; Section 5.2.2 on adjective derivational suffixes; Section 11.1.1 on functions of case markers) and function-to-form (e.g. Section 6.3 on indefinite pronouns, or Section 8.2 on non-numeric quantifiers, Chapter 10 on means of comparison and equation) approaches when describing the data, depending on which approach carries a better illustrative and explanatory weight. As such, the switching between the two approaches should not be viewed as an inconsistency, but rather as a welcome flexibility.

The work relies on meticulous exposition of variation before making any generalization (e.g. Section 3.2.2.1.1 and its subsections on perfective stem marking; Section 5.2.2 on adjective derivation; and many others). This is in line with the stated aim of describing a cluster of language varieties.

The discussion of individual phenomena is thoroughly cross-referenced with related discussions in other sections of the text, furthering the work’s value as a reference text.

The work is abundant in speech examples that illustrate the relevant points being presented or argued.

2. Formal aspects of the dissertation

The author is coherent in the use of abbreviations, footnotes and bibliographical references. The syntax, grammar and style of the work are transparent and easy to follow, and foreign terms and words are transcribed correctly and consistently. The dissertation is visually well-presented and well-formatted. The use of tables and figures is appropriate, illustrative and helpful.

There are a small handful of typos and oversights found in the text, e.g.:

p. 64-5, gloss: *phennas, kerās, phennas* AOR

p. 102 translation of example: *kadi angrušni kerd’i trastestar* ~~These shoes are made of snake’s leather.~~

p. 106 “Still, inherited derivational morphology of causatives and anticausatives is still present..”

p. 258 gloss and translation: *mijre dadeskere phrales sas kajsi bāri*
my father.GEN brother.ACC COP.PST.3 such.SPEC.F big.F
brada (Khu)LQCR

~~bread.F~~ **BEARD**

‘My father’s brother had such a big ~~bread.~~’ **BEARD** (Showing the size.)

p. 350: “...which is the ~~mōst~~ most conservative option...”

p. 385: *tu na diñal mange*

you NEG [???]AOR.2SG I.DAT (gloss of verb **give-** is missing)

p. 423:[...The identical form also serves the function of **as** a disjunctive coordinator in interrogative sentences...]

p. 459: example gloss: *vad' pal e blaka*

or from ART ~~balcony~~ **WINDOW**

p. 466: [...Like **IN** Slavic languages, the negative scalar focus particle *añi* or *ñi* ‘not even’ (see 9.6.1.2) is used as

a prepositive correlative coordinator in Eastern Uzh Romani....]

3. Use of sources and/or material

The use of primary and secondary sources is transparent. For example, all speech samples are properly and consistently transcribed and tagged with respect to the individual varieties as well as the means of elicitation. The breadth of literature evoked in the work is appropriate for its aims, and the treatment of such literature is methodologically well executed and analytically justified.

4. Personal contribution to the subject

The dissertation is based on new data which resulted from the author’s original fieldwork. It describes the hitherto un-described varieties of the Romani language, thereby making an original and well-formulated contribution to the field of Romani Linguistics.

IV. Questions for the author

1. Would you analyse the vocative *more* as a suppletive of *čha*? Or is the term ‘suppletion’ inappropriate in this case?

2. Can you propose a source of the adjective derivation suffixs *-ovist-*? North Slavic?

3. Do many peculiar/idiosyncratic functions of case markers have their source in contact languages? E.g. DAT for experiencer; external possessor; and object of “to take pleasure

in"? ABL for standard of comparison; temporal phrases with simultaneous and posterior duration. INSTR on object of verbs 'to throw', 'to meet', 'to argue', 'to speak'; in adverbial phrases "by carriage", "piece by piece", "bare-headed"; perlativ "by means of slope", "by means of road"?

4. It seems that the semantic range of preposition *važ* is heavily influenced by the semantic range of North Slavic non-spatial *za*. Could you confirm that? Or is the similarity in functions of *važ* and *za* coincidental?

5. Can adverbial modifier and an aktionsart prefix co-exist to modify a verb in the same phrase, e.g. something like *s-lejl tejl*, "s/he takes down; s/he photographs"?

I congratulate the author on a great job, wish him luck with future endeavors, and look forward to reading more of his work.

V. Conclusion

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

June 5, 2017

Anton Tenser

Anton Tenser