

**A review of Failasofah Failasofah's Ph.D. dissertation *Foreign Language Teachers' Attitudes Towards Multilingual Pedagogy in Indonesia: an Explanatory Sequential Study***

**Reviewer:** Márta Lesznyák, *second reader*

### **General remarks**

Failasofah Failasofah's Phd dissertation focuses on foreign language teachers' attitudes to 'multilingual pedagogy' in Indonesia. All in all, the topic is worth investigating and the candidate demonstrated the ability to carry out a research project, and her research brought some new results that are important in the Indonesian context. Nevertheless, the dissertation has some shortcomings. The research topic is too broad, as a result, the paper often seems to lack focus and coherence. In addition, the empirical design is somewhat simplified as compared to the complexity of the research question.

The dissertation begins with a general Introduction that describes the context, the contextual framework and the purposes of the study. The research questions and hypotheses, the most important terms and concepts and the significance of the study are also presented in the Introduction. I would like to note here that the introduction was restructured and modified significantly when compared to the previous version of the dissertation and this has improved the overall readability and structure of the whole thesis. The introduction is followed by the review of the literature and covers concepts like multilingualism, multilingual pedagogy, translanguaging, attitudes and language policy in Indonesia. Some previous research findings are also summarized in Chapter II. Chapter III describes the methodology used in the research and Chapter IV contains the presentation of the results, which is followed by a discussion of the most important findings.

The dissertation has a balanced structure, but it is somewhat shorter than expected. This probably comes from the relatively simple research design and from the lack of in-depth analysis of the literature (see below).

Another serious weakness of the dissertation is the way it is written: even the perceived lack of focus might come partly from the lack of coherence: the author tends to shift swiftly from one topic to another without exploring concepts in detail and without explaining links and associations between different concepts. In addition, chapters, particularly, in the literature review often cover several topics that should be dealt with in separate sections. Generally, there is hardly any cross-referencing in the thesis, which makes it hard to follow and – together with the continuous shifts in topic – somewhat chaotic.

Another reason for the apparent lack of focus is the failure to thoroughly and precisely define key terms (see below in detail). This leads to a general uncertainty as to what the research is really about. Again, I must add here, that the insertion of a chapter with definitions have improved the dissertation to a large extent, but it has not completely solved the problem, as I will outline below.

### **Introduction**

As I already suggested, the Introduction has improved a lot compared to the previous version. In its present form, it gives a relatively sound overview of the general purpose of the

investigation but it is still not entirely clear for the reader what the research will be exactly about. This comes partly from the incomplete or inadequate definition of “multilingual pedagogy”, which is a key concept in the study. Although a chapter with definitions (1.7) was inserted in the dissertation, (and this move definitely contributed to a better understanding of the text), the isolated explanations of terms do not always provide enough scaffolding for the reader. In addition, the definitions are often imprecise and simplified. For example, it is questionable whether anyone could identify the concept behind the following definition:

“a set of principles used to varying degrees in different approaches depending on the teaching context, curriculum, and learners.” (p.8.)

The problem is that the definition is so general that it will not help the reader conceptualize what is the actual object of the study.

### **Literature review**

The literature review covers relevant topics, although I would think that some peripheral topics are devoted to much attention (DMM, multilingualism in Europe or in the US, cognitive advantages of bilingualism etc.) and some central topics (e.g. attitude) could have been discussed in more detail.

As multilingual pedagogy is an extremely broad concept, nearly everything that is related to language learning and bilingualism can theoretically be included in a literature review. And the author indeed tries to write about everything that seems relevant for her but she does not always explain why she chooses to discuss certain topics and how these topics are related to each other and to the research questions. In consequence, the review seems to consist of summaries of distinct pieces of literature that do not always add up to a coherent whole, in other words, there is no synthesis. The critical appraisal is also largely missing.

Chapter 2.2 has been extensively modified, extended and re-written, with the consequence of new and valuable pieces of information being added to the text. In itself, this is a positive factor, nevertheless, little effort has been made to integrate these new pieces of information into the main body of argumentation.

Chapter 2.3 is a well-written chapter in the sense that it is coherent and gives the reader a clear picture of language policy issues in Indonesia.

### **Chapter 2.4 Teachers’ attitudes**

On page 34 the author gives an example of misalignment between different aspects of attitude. (“That is to say, although a person might have a favorable attitude toward English language learning, he or she may have negative feelings about the instruction.”)

Unfortunately, the example is flawed, because it is not only the cognitive/affective dimension that changes, but the object of the attitude, too (learning → instruction). The correct example would be: A person might be aware that it is important to learn English (= cognitive aspect), but still hate learning English (= affective dimension)

A more important problem in the discussion of attitudes is that apparently the author does not make a distinction between attitudes to

- a particular language

- multilingualism
- teaching or
- a particular student.

Both from a theoretical and research methodological point of view, the distinction would be of vital importance.

On page 35, a reference is made to the Pygmalion-effect (or Rosenthal-effect). However, it is not clear from the text whether the author is aware that the Pygmalion-effect refers to how teachers' expectations towards *the students* affect their performance (and not to how teachers' attitudes to other relevant factors influence performance).

## Methodology

The methods of data collection and data analysis are appropriate. Nevertheless, there are some problems that I will describe in detail below.

In general, in a Phd-dissertation, the candidate is not supposed to give meta-level explanations or justifications of rhetorical or research methodological strategies. He/she is expected to be able to apply these strategies and methods, and the successful application proves that he/she understands them. As a result, there is no need to explain what quantitative research is, how to conduct a survey (p. 39. Section 3.1.1), what the steps of organizing an interview are or what the importance of a pilot study is (p. 46).

The questionnaire applied in the quantitative study is adequately presented in the text and in the appendices.

The number of the participants in the pilot study is 150. It was 10 in the previous version. I think it must have been a typing mistake. Nevertheless, I wonder, how it is that the sample size of the pilot was larger than the sample size of the actual study.

Cronbach alpha was calculated for the large-scale study, and it is acceptable, just like the validity of the instrument. (Thank you.)

As for reporting the results of mathematical statistical analysis, the candidate is still not fully competent in using the appropriate language and does not always follow accepted traditions of the research community. There are several types of t-tests and as I already suggested you must always use the full name of the t-test, which must have been **independent samples t-test** in your research (and not paired-samples t-tests or one-sample tests). As these types of t-tests are used in different settings and they are not interchangeable, it is important that you explicitly indicate which type you used.

Moreover, I am glad that factor analysis was carried out, but again, reporting its results shows series flaws. It is not only factor loadings that you are supposed to show, but the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy, the results of the Bartlett's test of sphericity and explained variances, too. Failure to do so results in the loss of credibility. In other words, editors or readers will doubt your competence, or, in worst case scenario, the trustworthiness of the research. There are very good guidelines on the internet on writing-up/reporting statistical finding, please, consult them before submitting papers.

## **Results**

The Results chapter begins with the demographic characterization of the sample, which is too long compared to its importance in the study.

As for the results of the quantitative survey, a technical problem is that, in my opinion, the item with the lowest mean is a reverse item, so I am not sure whether that is truly the item with the lowest mean. (This is the item referring to native-like proficiency).

The results of the quantitative survey suggest that every respondent has a highly positive attitude towards multilingual pedagogy and there are no differences between the subjects. This implies that everything is fine in relation to multilingual pedagogy in Indonesia (or at least, in the province studied). Do you agree with that? What could have led to this overly positive outcome?

The findings of the interview look more interesting and useful than the quantitative results. A methodological issue that arises is why the quantitative research was carried out first and not the qualitative one. The interviews could have provided useful information on how to design a survey. One problem with the interview findings is that they suggest that the interviews covered an extremely broad field, basically everything that is related to language teaching (classroom aspects, policy aspects etc.). And here again, we are back to “lack of focus”.

## **Discussion**

In this chapter, the candidate is expected to analyse and interpret her results and provide us with an overall picture of Indonesian teachers’ attitudes to multilingual pedagogy. In addition, the most important findings should be highlighted and they should be related to previous research results. What we see, instead, in the “Discussion” is some interpretation of the findings, then a description of a related research. Most of the time, no associations are made between the two research projects, but sometimes new concepts are defined (e.g. scaffolding). A positive exception is the comparison with Smith’s (2010) study on page 76.

A further problem arises when the candidate uses research results on teachers’ attitudes to draw conclusions on students’ future learning experiences and outcomes (see p. 73). Unfortunately, teachers’ positive attitudes will not guarantee students’ success.

The section on Indonesian language policy (5.3.2) is somewhat puzzling because the term language policy is often used to refer to regulation on teaching foreign language at schools, which is definitely part of a country’s language policy but it is not equal to it.

Another problem is that many interview findings sound like experiences of teachers (e.g. with government organized training), rather than attitudes. Experiences certainly shape attitudes, but they are not the same, as a result, they should be discussed separately and their connections should be examined, too.

Section 5.3.4 (Teacher knowledge about multilingualism) is probably the most valuable part of the discussion and the dissertation. I think it is extremely useful that gaps in teachers’ knowledge were identified and that the study shed light on how teachers misunderstand multilingual pedagogy. The findings on translanguaging are especially informative. Relying on these findings teacher education could definitely be improved in Indonesia.

**Presentation:** The dissertation is written in lingua franca English. The formatting of dissertation fulfils the requirements.

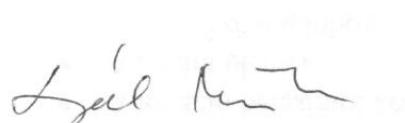
## Conclusion

In conclusion, the candidate demonstrated the ability to carry out independent research. Her study brought original research results that can contribute to multilingual development in Indonesia. In consequence, I recommend that the dissertation is presented at the oral defence. If the oral defence is successful, I recommend the award of a Phd-degree to the candidate.

## Questions:

- 1) Scaffolding is first discussed in the chapter on translanguaging. Could you explain how scaffolding and translanguaging are related? (It is not made clear in the paper why scaffolding is relevant in the Translanguaging chapter).
- 2) How could you explain that no statistically significant differences were found between the sub-groups in their attitudes to multilingual pedagogy?

Szeged, 2021. 05. 13.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Szabolcs Mihály".