



Euroculture Thesis Assessment Form

Name of Student: Valentine Labouheure

Thesis Title: "Feminising the French Language: A Political Debate. Analysis of the feminisation of titles and higher professions debate in French public media"

Home University: University of Palacky, Olomouc

Host University: Universidad de Deusto, Bilbao

Name of Supervisor: Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz

In this report, please consider the following, by answering the following questions. Please add a short explanation instead of simply answering yes, no or partly.

1) Content: Problem statement, method and theory:

- a) Is the topic of the thesis clearly presented and motivated?
Yes, the problems posed by the feminization of the French language are clearly presented in the introduction of the thesis. The topic seems relevant because a significant part (50%) of the French society may be seeing their rights and degree of visibility affected by the issue.
- b) Are the aims and objectives of the thesis clearly identified and explained?
The objectives of the project seem to be clearly stated in the research question. It is a bit less clear how those aims are inevitably linked to the debates in the political sphere. When considering the aims, the author refers some times to the French society at large, while other times it is particular actors (politicians, media, etc.) that come into the picture.
- c) Is there a well formulated problem statement and is it of sufficient complexity for an MA level? Briefly explain.
The research question(s) is/are rather two-pronged as the first part refers to the sociological dimension of language use, while the second one focuses on particular institutional and public actors and their impact on the debate.
- d) Has the student convincingly explained the relevance of the research?
I think the author manages to make clear the relevance and importance of the research, at least for those scholars who believe that there is a connection between language use and social transformation.
- e) Has a suitable methodology and theoretical frame been taken to solve the stated problems?
The author tries to build a coherent theoretical framework to show that there is a significant degree of continuity between language and sociological issues. Some of the ideas (e.g., Saussure's) may sound a bit outdated, but in general the author succeeds in showing that our perceptions and attitudes are largely governed by the kind of discourses we use (and the historical contexts in which they are generated).

The incorporation of discourse analysis as a method only came into the picture fairly late in the project, but it has allowed the author to explain the divergent positions of different social groups/ideologies on the issue.

- f) In case where empirical research has been conducted: is there a suitable research design and has the research been conducted adequately?

Although the author had originally intended to do some field work (interviews), eventually due to time and focus constraints she decided to concentrate on media analysis.

- g) Does the conclusion provide convincing answers/proof to the initial questions/hypotheses?

The findings of the media analysis manage to show how divided the political camps are regarding the potential feminization of the French language. The author also describes in some detail the type of arguments and discursive strategies that each of the camps use to defend their positions. Thus, the reader gets to understand some of the difficulties in changing how the French feel about their language.

- h) Does the research constitute a contribution to knowledge in this field or domain?

The author has made a significant effort to try to solve the research problem she formulated early in her project. I think she partly succeeds in explaining why changes in language use are being so difficult in France. Her interweaving of historical and ideological factors bears some interesting (although often predictable) results.

2) **Structure:**

- a) Is the thesis coherently structured in chapters and sections?

It took the author (and her supervisors) a while to decide on the structure that seemed more adequate to pursue the objectives she had formulated. For this reason, the transitions between some of the sections could have been further perfected in some cases. Yet, I think the reader can follow quite easily the thread of the discussion.

- b) Are concepts clearly introduced and explained, and critically and consistently applied?

The author has made an effort in the theoretical framework to establish how concepts such as language, society, power and identity are inextricably connected and one needs to look critically into those connections in order to figure out the kind of impact that they have on each other. This is of course of paramount importance in any approach to gender issues.

3) **Sources** (primary and secondary):

- a) Has (enough) relevant (primary and secondary) literature been adequately interpreted and integrated into the thesis?

As pointed out above, some of the secondary sources on language and society may be a bit outdated and much has been written on the narrower topic of language and gender inequality. The author has done a commendable work in identifying the written media sources that seemed most useful and illuminating for her study. One would have appreciated a bit of information about their readership, editorial line, etc.

- b) Is the bibliography/list of references complete and accurate?

A final revision of the list of references would have helped. Punctuation (and italics) is not consistently used (sometimes missing) and some of the entries seem incomplete.

4) Stylistics:

- a) Is the use of language (English) acceptable and of the required standard (i.e. no spelling mistakes and typos, range of vocabulary, grammar)?
Again, although the reader can follow the key arguments in the discussion easily, there are still errors (of spelling, punctuation, syntax of indirect questions, etc.) here and there.
- b) Are references in the text given in a coherent and consistent manner (either in-text or as footnotes)?
Generally OK, but a few inconsistencies... in use of punctuation, italics, etc.

5) Format:

- a) How is the thesis presented (i.e. consistency in lay-out, choice of fonts, headings, tables and graphs)?
It could have been improved. Some of the tables appear split between two pages and some of the headings should be moved to the beginning of the next page instead of standing on their own at the bottom of a page. A few of the headings (partial conclusions) are without number and not included in Table of Contents.
- b) Does the thesis contain all required elements (title page, declaration, table of contents, bibliography, etc.)?
Yes, it does.

6) Quality of writing process:

- a) To what degree has the student been able to work independently?
The author has required our assistance on a couple of occasions during the writing process. Her problems were mostly related to the structure of the thesis.
- b) Have recommended revisions been executed to a satisfying degree?
Yes, she has taken good note of the supervisors' advice and has come up with subsequent ideas to try to improve her work.
- c) Any other relevant comments (e.g on planning and commitment of the student).
Valentine has proved deeply committed to her project and has overcome satisfactorily the difficulties she came across.

7) Possible questions for thesis defence (only if this thesis is to be defended orally)

(National) Grade: 7

Date and place: 19 June 2017, Bilbao

Signature: