



## OPINION<sup>1</sup>

from assoc. prof. Gergana Padareva-Ilieva, PhD, South-West University “Neofit Rilski”  
(*scientific position, academic degree, name, surname, educational / scientific institution*)

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) / scientific degree “Doctor of Science” in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences.

with a dissertation on the topic: “MEDIA LITERACY: UNDERSTANDING AND USING OF MEDIA TEXT IN UPPER GRADES OF HIGH SCHOOL”,

presented by Neli Ilieva, full-time / part-time / independent doctoral student in the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Prof. Andreana Eftimova, D.Sc

### I. Evaluation of the qualities of the text of dissertation

PhD student Ilieva has chosen an extremely current research topic - the question of media literacy, the use of media texts in the teaching material and the understanding of media texts by students in the upper grades of high school.

The dissertation generally follows the traditional structure of this type of text - it is conditionally divided into two large parts - theoretical and experimental, introduction, conclusion, references and appendices - 234 pages.

In the Introduction, the object of the research is clearly outlined, as well as the two main goals that the research sets: on the one hand, to present the work with media texts in the upper grades of the high school, thus establishing to what extent the educational system uses their possibilities, and on the other hand, to check how students use the media text. To achieve these goals, six specific tasks have been drawn up. It is clear that Ilieva does not intend only to publicize the results of her research in response to the set goals, but to highlight the unused possibilities of the media text in the educational process, pointing out the deficits in training that prevent from constructing media literacy.

The student's thesis is clear, and the choice of topic and the conduct of the research itself are probably based on it. The methods set out in the Introduction represent a sequence of tasks in the implementation of the stated goals. However, further reading reveals much on the methodology employed – for example, that the experimental research was conducted through questionnaire surveys, the design of which is clearly and accurately described.

The theoretical part of the research is exhaustive and analytical. In this part of the dissertation, simultaneously with the presentation of ideas, models, theories and observations on the theme, the author clarifies the important terms for her research. The interdisciplinarity of the research, set in the Introduction, is quite clearly evident in the theoretical part of the work - with an interesting socio-cultural view on the broader topic of the media and their importance in society, concretized in particular to the topic of media literacy and substantiated with considering the objectives of the dissertation and the object of the research. When examining the communicative models, the author's

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<sup>1</sup> Note: The text in italics offers reference points for evaluating the research results. Recommended volume of the opinion - 2-3 standard pages



ability to focus not on the theories per se, but on the object and purpose of the research is evident once again.

The second part of the theoretical study is a kind of chronology of media education in Europe and America from the emergence of this idea until today, but it also is a deep analysis of media education in its various aspects. Valuable and oriented quite directly to the object of research and the purpose of the dissertation are also the conclusions that the researcher makes after her theoretical observations. Along with the accomplishments of the theoretical part mentioned so far, the fact that Neli Ilieva justifies her choice of topic through the theoretical interpretations at the beginning of her dissertation cannot be overlooked. The part dedicated to the media text is an intelligent, multifaceted presentation of the text in linguistic, communicative and sociocultural terms, without, however, losing sight of the main goal and object of the current research.

In this part is presented the material Ilieva is working on to study the place and role of media texts in high school upper grades. Here it becomes clear that she examines all 27 textbooks for the 2019/2020 academic year, approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, and the difference in the year of publication of some of them is more than 10. In this way, she will observe not only the current state in the chosen school year, but also the trends in the application of media text in textbooks, which I find extremely relevant. In fact, the third chapter is a study based on extensive material - 27 textbooks - on the place and role of media texts in high school. In this part, Ilieva also touches on very important issues such as the one about Bulgarian language education in the upper high school grades, which was practically absent until recently, as well as the consequences of this absence on the students. The part represents a critical look at the role of media texts in education at the high school stage, especially for the formation of media literacy - a function that Ilieva does not find represented to a sufficient extent.

The experimental part is composed of two subsections presenting the two experiments. In the first, a survey is conducted based on five media texts on the same issue. The knowledge, skills and competences on which the study will focus are clearly and precisely formulated. Based on these same skills and competences, doctoral student Ilieva defines and justifies the criteria for selecting the media texts. Here, the method of creating the surveys, conducting them and the number of participants in the experiments are presented in detail. The texts have been analyzed with a view to the knowledge and skills of high school students, which will be examined through surveys based on these texts. Thus, doctoral student clearly justifies the choice of the texts. The six surveys are presented, with the answers given by the students listed after each question, graphically displayed and analyzed. The results of this first experiment are a kind of justification for conducting the second one - a study of the students' media literacy through a media text with a high degree of informativeness. The second experiment is presented according to a similar model - the choice of the text is justified, the methodology is described. I find appropriate the decision to comment on the results of the survey in groups of questions after each part of the text analysis. Although the text does not emphasize the quantitative analysis of the results (anyway such are reported), it clearly outlines the deficiency in media (and not only) education.

The conclusions regarding media literacy and other knowledge and competences of high school students, although not unexpected, are based on conscientious processing of the material and accurate analysis of the obtained data.

The author is aware of the main and current literature and documents on the discussed topic; she correctly refers on them both under the line (which makes reading easier) and at the end of the text. Although this could be perceived as a duplication of bibliographic information, I believe that, mainly due to the large number of documents cited in the text, this model is rather appropriate.

The text is stylistically correct and shows a high linguistic culture. However, there are some technical and separate language and other inaccuracies.

The presented abstract corresponds to the text of the dissertation work.



## II. Contributions of the dissertation research

Certainly, Neli Ilieva's experience as a high school teacher has built a critical view, the ability to analyze the current situation and, together with her PhD education, has led to this useful and interesting research of an applied nature, which reveals conscientious assessment of the observations and results.

The conclusions from the author's observations regarding the deficiency in students' knowledge based on their answers in the questionnaires are also important and of an applied nature (for example, regarding the lexical and stylistic features of the language - p. 114, etc.).

The conclusions drawn can be used by the competent authorities in order to develop programs to increase media literacy and correct deficiency in the knowledge of students at the high school stage.

## III. Notes and recommendations

Doctoral student Ilieva herself outlines the possibilities for continuing research on the topic in the *Scope and limits of the research section* in the *Introduction* to her dissertation work. Indeed, the stated tasks, remaining outside the scope of the present work, would be an interesting continuation of further research work on the subject. And it, in turn, can be extended by investigating the media literacy of younger school students.

## IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

5 publications (printed or in press) are indicated in the abstract. From the CV it is clear that Neli Ilieva participated in two international scientific conferences on the topic of the dissertation and in numerous educational forums, which are also related to the content of the dissertation work.

Doctoral student Ilieva meets all the regulatory requirements of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", as well as the minimum national requirements.

## V. Conclusion

Taking into account the presented dissertation work and scientific research I give my positive assessment and recommend to the esteemed members of the Academic Board to award Neli Ilieva the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

Jury member:

Date: 30 August 2022