



OPINION

from Assoc. Prof. Svetla Tsankova, PhD, University of National and World Economy
(*scientific position, academic degree, name, surname, educational / scientific institution*)

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – Media Language and Style) with a dissertation on the topic: *'Language-Based Reform Policies and their Effect on Bulgarian Media: Reconstruction of Culturally-Sensitive Language Resources on the Basis of Media Practices'* presented by Aleksandar Miglenov Georgiev, full-time doctoral student at the Department of Press Journalism and Book Publishing of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication with supervisor: Prof. Andreana Eftimova, D.Sc.

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

The dissertation paper of the doctoral candidate Aleksandar Georgiev on the following topic: *Language-Based Reform Policies and their Effect on Bulgarian Media: Reconstruction of Culturally-Sensitive Language Resources on the Basis of Media Practices* explores the very relevant and significant issue of media language and how it has been transformed in the period from 2011 to 2024. In his introduction, the author states that 'Changes in our reality usually affect language but at the same time the changes in language influence and shape our perception of the world, of the people around us and our collective existence as a society.' It is for this reason precisely that the language-based reform policies are of particular significance because they affect the way in which the media presents topics related to various communities and groups of people who need to be treated with respect even in terms of the language we use to speak about them.

The precise, well thought-through and detailed structure of the dissertation paper is impressive and it enables the author to communicate the content of the research in a logical and consistent way: first, he makes an in-depth analysis of the theoretical literature on the topic of the role of language in the process of construction of reality and social identity, and then he turns his attention to how the media affects reality and the role of media in the formation of policies, finally getting to the presentation of his empirical study of the effect that the language reform policies have had on an impressive number of texts in the media. The author's hypothesis is that 'although slowly, media language is adapting to the recommended politically correct language' and in the course of his study, he manages to prove it in a convincing way. According to him, it is precisely political correctness that is viewed as a strategy for



the transformation of social opinions through language and that the language of political correctness is a counterpoint to hate speech.

The first three chapters of the dissertation paper showcase the in-depth and exhaustive study of the theoretical resources. The author presents and analyzes different philosophical and sociolinguistic approaches to the topic of the relationship between language and reality of a number of distinguished researchers, focusing on the potential of language to create, but also to transform social order. Special attention is paid to the problem of social identity and the role of media in how it is formed and presented, of the cultural and social context in which the processes of formation of policies of identity take place and the dynamics of media representations. Aleksandar Georgiev emphasized the tendency to overrepresent or underrepresent certain social groups and identities in the media which, without any doubt, affects the formation of public opinions, highlighting that language is a key instrument because new ideologies are expressed and enforced through it. On the basis of the analyzed theoretical sources, the author came to the conclusion that every language policy is ideologically tinted and that language is not a mere reflection of reality but rather it shapes reality.

In Chapter Four, the author presented the system of methods used in the study which is based on the content analysis and the critical discourse analysis whereby in Chapter Five Aleksandar Georgiev managed to research the impressive number of 37,732 media texts from 9 sources in the period from 2011 to 2024. There is a convincing reasoning behind the choice of the three types of identity traced throughout the analyzed texts: ethnic identity; gender identity; and sexual identity. The author analyzed in great detail and with excellent precision and competence several important trends: the use of hate speech which often is specifically targeted; the stereotypical presentation of specific ethnic groups; the domination of negative news referring to these groups; the decreasing use of feminatives; the gradual adoption by the media of some language-based reform policies in the presentation of the LGBT community. On the basis of his research, Aleksandar Georgiev reached the convincing conclusion that the language-based reform policies are of great significance because ‘...they reflect different policies working for the inclusion of various groups of people or, quite the opposite, they further highlight the existing divisions, and instill stereotypes and discrimination.’

The high quality of the exposition and the excellent linguistic competence of the author also deserve a mention. The abstract corresponds excellently with the dissertation paper and presents in a rather convincing way the results achieved in the course of the academic research.

II. Contributions of the dissertation research

The scientific contributions referred to by the doctoral candidate are clearly and accurately formulated. I should also mention the excellent skills of the author to perform a critical analysis of the theoretical



sources and the competent study of the different linguistic practices in the media discourse. The achieved results may be used both by researchers and university teachers, and for media purposes.

III. Notes and recommendations

I hereby give my recommendation for the publication of Aleksandar Georgiev's dissertation paper as a monography.

IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The 5 scientific publications mentioned in connection with the topic of this dissertation paper prove the exceptional dedication of the doctoral candidate in the presentation of the research that he did: Aleksandar Georgiev has, for all intents and purposes, gone well beyond the requirements of the Rules for the conditions and procedures for acquiring an academic degree and occupying an academic position at the University of Sofia 'St. Kliment Ohridski' for the approbation and disclosure of the results of the research in accordance with Section 5, point 5, and has met the minimum national requirements under Section 63, paragraph 1, point 4 and Section 69, paragraph 3.

V. Conclusion

The dissertation paper presents a highly competent scientific study showing in-depth understanding of the theoretical literature on the topic and excellent skills for critical analysis; the author has used diverse research methods to make a precise analysis of an impressive number of media texts leading to results of remarkable depth presented with a strikingly good linguistic competence. Hence my high evaluation of the dissertation paper on the topic of *Language-Based Reform Policies and their Effect on Bulgarian Media: Reconstruction of Culturally Sensitive Linguistic Resources on the Basis of Media Practices* and to express my positive opinion of the work of the doctoral candidate Aleksandar Miglenov Georgiev who, in my opinion, should be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – Media Language and Style).

Jury member: Assoc. Prof. Svetla Tsankova

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