

Examiner assessment  
by Assoc. Prof. Daria Karapetkova, PHD,  
on the doctoral dissertation entitled:  
**“Italian Loanwords in the Bulgarian Language”**  
by Assistant Professor Evgenia Atanasova  
submitted for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"  
in the professional field 2.1. Philology, Romance Languages (Italian Language)

The dissertation by Assistant Prof. Evgenia Atanasova consists of 230 standard pages and includes an introduction, a literature review on the subject, an overview of the theoretical foundations of the topic, a historical overview of Italianisms, a classification of types of Italian loanwords, an analysis of the semantic adaptation of Italian loanwords, conclusions and summaries, bibliography, and an appendix.

The aim of the dissertation is to examine “units of Italian origin that have permanently entered the Bulgarian lexical system, recorded in dictionaries published after 1989, as well as lexemes not yet officially recorded in any dictionary, but which are nevertheless freely and actively used by a large part of Bulgarian speakers.” To this end, the text successfully motivates the necessity and relevance of such a study — something that any Bulgarian Italianist could confirm not only because of the scarce bibliography on the subject but also because of the outdated and obsolete data that needs updating. Another essential foundation on which the work rightly stands is the clarification of the terminological framework. This has been accomplished concerning the Italian lexicological tradition, with traditional international definitions and classifications presented according to the criterion of necessity (with the author's explicitly stated opinion). The same has been done regarding Bulgarian linguistic literature, starting from the distinction between **loanword** and **foreign word**, and extending to terms such as **exoticism**, **barbarism**, and **internationalism**, while also highlighting the inaccuracy of the phrase “foreign word.” The nature of the term Italianism, essential to this research, is examined in detail.

Regarding the pathways and stimuli for the introduction of Italianisms into Bulgarian, I consider it particularly necessary to trace the factor of **prestige**. The historical theoretical basis of the process is well illustrated, but it is becoming increasingly defining in the current linguistic situation. I would highlight the apt examples used to illustrate **code-switching**: "*Everything is perfetto*" and "*la vita is really bella.*"

The discussion of the impact of Italianisms on third language systems and the global influence of Italian loanwords provides a necessary theoretical framework for positioning the Bulgarian case within it; therefore, its place in this part of the dissertation is fully justified. The fields of knowledge and activities in which Italianisms are most numerous and influential, historically and internationally, due to progress in these areas, have been diversely reviewed.

The pathways for the entry of Italianisms into Bulgarian have been traced based on the evidence from dictionaries published in Bulgaria over the past 30 years, many of which have not been updated in terms of etymological tracking. In my own research on similar topics, I have noticed the heightened presence of Russian as an intermediary, as evidenced in our lexicographical resources. This has led me to wonder whether the ideological factor played a role in channeling Western European vocabulary through Russian on its way to Bulgarian. Dispelling such concerns might be achieved by consulting dictionaries from the early 20th century up to the 1930s, where the perspective deserves attention due to its lack of obligatory ideological bias. In any case, I also find it necessary to argue for the choice to use dictionaries from the last three decades, as the author has stated at the beginning of the dissertation.

The chapter on the classification of Italianisms according to the communicative sphere of usage is the most oriented towards the contemporary situation and the most reference-like. It appropriately reflects both the leading role of Italian influence in these spheres and the Bulgarian culture's readiness to enrich its lexical stock within them. This chapter also has a historical-anthropological component, which adds significant value.

The part dealing with cases of preservation, shift, or expansion of the semantic scope of terms is extremely useful as it can help avoid the risk of “**false friends**” in translation — something I would highlight as a noteworthy contribution of the dissertation.

In my opinion, the author’s observations would benefit from a brief reflection on that portion of the vocabulary under review which has not yet been registered in dictionaries but is nonetheless actively used in Bulgarian speech. At the same time, I fully understand and support the omission of the painful issue of **transcription**, which has long needed centralized regulation from the Institute for the Bulgarian Language and remains gravely neglected. In this regard, it would be useful to clarify which sources the author relies on, for instance, regarding the word *gorgonzola*, which I could not find in any printed Bulgarian dictionary, as well as the word *quadriennale*, correctly cited by the author but incorrectly listed as *quadrinale* in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences’ online dictionary. I did not find the **Official Bulgarian Orthographic Dictionary** or the **BERON** website in the bibliography, whose available resources and gaps could support some of the arguments (for example, the contradictory situation regarding the formation of the plural of *tagliatelle*, *farfalle*, and similar terms).

Based on the review conducted, the author points out that “the role of the Italian language could be studied from several perspectives” and that “there are still further research fields.” Since this is undoubtedly true, the dissertation would benefit from briefly specifying what exactly is meant in this regard.

The author touches on the issue of rivalry, identified in the reference literature — mainly between French and Italian. I find this issue rich with research potential and would welcome further explanatory reflections on it in future studies, of course.

The readiness of the text is unquestionable, and I want to emphasize this clearly. My recommendations are very specific; I would call them “cosmetic” and easily applicable, and they serve only to further highlight the merits of the work, which

are already obvious. First, the formulated working hypothesis — that Italian loanwords “represent a much larger body of lexemes, some of which would hardly be assumed to be of Italian origin” — does not clarify why it aims to refute an assumption that, in any case, cannot be made “by ear” by non-specialists, while specialists are unlikely to deny it. On the other hand, the conclusions in the final part of the text could further develop its contribution by forming the basis for statistical analysis of the corpus placed alphabetically at the end of the dissertation. Grouping the data could yield numerical findings that would reinforce the dissertation’s contribution and reveal additional interesting insights.

The author’s abstract accurately reflects the content, ideas, and contributions of the work. The bibliography is solid and appropriately used.

On the basis of all the above, the clear results, and the valuable combination of theory and pragmatics in this study, I confidently give my vote for awarding Assistant Professor Evgenia Atanasova the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the professional field 2.1 Philology, Romance Languages (Italian Language).

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