

**REVIEW**  
for dissertation work  
for the acquisition of the scientific and educational degree “doctor”

**Author of the review :** Assoc. Prof. Bistra Kirilova Mizova, PhD (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Pedagogy, Department: Didactics)

**Scientific field:** Pedagogical sciences

**Professional field:** Pedagogy of training in...

**Scientific specialty:** Methodology of Teaching Bulgarian Language and Literature in the Primary Stage of Education

**University:** SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”

**Faculty:** Faculty of Education

**Department:** Didactics

**Dissertation title:** *FORMATION OF LITERARY AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCES THROUGH THE TEACHING OF CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN 1ST - 4TH GRADES.*

**Name of the PhD student:** Teodora Yankova Valeva

**Supervisor:** Prof. Neli Ivanova, DSc

**Information about the PhD student**

Teodora Yankova Valeva was born on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1981 in Burgas. In 2005 she graduated from the Faculty of Slavic Studies of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" the master's programme in Slavic Philology and in 2016 she was awarded master's degree in Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy as graduate of University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" in Burgas. Teodora Valeva's professional career and experience as a teacher at all stages of secondary school education contribute to her deep involvement with the problems of educational

theory and practice, which found natural continuation in her choice to further her interests and research as a PhD student in the field of Methodology of Teaching Bulgarian Language and Literature in Primary Education.

### **Procedure data**

Teodora Valeva was enrolled as a part-time doctoral student on 01.02. 2020 (Order № RD 20-270/ 30th January 2020). After a successfully completed procedure for preliminary discussion of the dissertation work in the primary unit - Department of Didactics of the Faculty of Pedagogy, the PhD student was admitted to defense prior to completion of the full period of the doctoral programme on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The procedure for public defense of the dissertation was initiated with decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy (Record No. 12/ 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023).

In its entirety - from enrolment to the final stage of the PhD studies – the procedure fully complies with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Conditions and the Procedures for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

### **Analysis of dissertation and abstract**

The scientific problem, chosen by Teodora Valeva, is devoted to the formation of literary and sociolinguistic competences at primary school through teaching Bulgarian language and literature and the methodological possibilities of contemporary children’s literature. The topic of the dissertation addresses a problem that is interesting and significant both in terms of research and education, but also as a social challenge. The problem area of the dissertation research, thus formulated, corresponds with the PhD student's personal and professional views that the aesthetic reception of reality through artistic imagery and symbolization in literary works is the way to involve children in the world

cultural achievements and to promote their development and flourishing as fulfilled individuals.

The dissertation has a total volume of 214 pages, of which 158 pages body text, references, comprising 99 sources and Internet sources, 7 appendices of approximately 50 pages, containing mostly samples of a diagnostic and exploratory toolkit, with which the research was implemented, as well as visualizations of artefacts from the PhD student's experimental work on the application of her original methodological model.

The work is structured in an introduction, three chapters and conclusion.

**Chapter one** outlines the conceptual framework of the research, identifying three key logically interrelated focus areas. The first one is the review and systematization of approaches to understanding and interpreting the constructs central to the problem, namely literary and sociolinguistic competences and their development within the teaching of Bulgarian language and literature. The PhD student has presented a number of approaches in the context of philological, methodological, sociolinguistic and other research on the concepts of linguistic, literary and related competences, referring to reputable Bulgarian and foreign researchers. Referring to the developments and innovations of Bulgarian researchers, a number of useful methodological solutions for the improvement of literary competences in the primary education, are highlighted and emphasized. A good balance has been achieved in the presentation and critical discussion of the cluster of constructs related to linguistic and communicative competences, and the PhD student has succeeded to give convincing arguments and thorough grounds in her analysis of their interrelatedness. The presentation is distinguished by its analytical and critical character and clear author's position on the difficulties and challenges of didactic and methodological nature that arise in the formation of literary and sociolinguistic competences due to their mutual determinacy.

*The second central point* in the first chapter is focused on the psychological and pedagogical characteristics of students in the primary educational stage. The main psychological features in relation to learning and teaching during this period are briefly, but meaningfully presented. In particular, the characteristics of middle childhood are revealed in sensorimotor, cognitive-speech and affective terms with a particular emphasis on the specifics of perceptual-representational processes, memory, and cognitive abilities. The third key focus in the theoretical part of the dissertation is on the methodological aspects of the formation of literary and sociolinguistic competencies with an accent on traditional and current approaches and strategies for stimulating and improving the abilities to perceive, conceptualize, and interpret examples of children's literature, as well as to generation of own educational works of art.

**Chapter two** outlines the design of the empirical study.

A positive impression is the comprehensive and well-structured presentation of the parameters of the object-subject field of the study, its program with a description of the main methodological and methodical components related to the goals, objectives and hypothesis of the study, research methods and procedures. The three stages of the research are clearly described:

- *Preliminary* with a focus on a survey of teachers' and parents' perceptions of the status of the two studied types of competence - literary and sociolinguistic;
- *Modelling and structure*, which is aimed at substantiation of the author's methodological model of interventions for improving literary and sociolinguistic competences in the teaching of Bulgarian Language and Literature at the primary stage;
- *Verification*, in which the methodological interventions/toolkit from the model are applied and their effects on the two dependent variables are explored (based on a system of test tasks).

Serious attention in this part of the dissertation deserves the robust and extensive work of the PhD student in presenting a comprehensive conceptual model for the development of both types of competence (pp. 80-88). The proposed model clearly highlights the main elements and interrelations between them, namely the main actors in the process, their functions, the activities in which they are involved, the specific conditions and prerequisites of the teaching of Bulgarian Language and Literature, the aspects of interrelation and synergy between the two types of competence and the possible methodological solutions/activities that will contribute to their complementarity and upgrading.

In the last **chapter three** the results obtained in all three stages of the study are consistently and systematically reported. Within the framework of the data from a survey of teachers and parents about their attitudes in the field of formation of literary and sociolinguistic competences of primary school students, conclusions and implications are drawn, which refer to the possible problems and deficits in these areas, to the commonly used methodological approaches and those for parental support in the home environment, designated to improve the state of knowledge and skills of children in the field of reception, comprehension and aesthetic appreciation of literary works, as well as in respect to speech and language. In relation to the modeling-structuring stage of the research, the PhD student has consistently argued her author's methodological solutions/tools for the simultaneous development of literary and sociolinguistic competences in primary stage of teaching of Bulgarian Language and Literature. The model constructed in this way has been subject to an expert evaluation, in which the agreement between 11 experts on the content validity of the author's model has been obtained, as each of the methodological interventions proposed in the model has been evaluated according to three different indicators for each of the two types of competence using a 4-grade ordinal scale. In respect to the verification to assess the effects of the proposed model, simple but relatively

convincing data (based on T-test for independent and related samples) on the differences found in the status of the two dependent variables (literary and sociolinguistic competence) are reported in the two groups studied, control and experimental classes of fourth graders within a classical setting with pre- and post-testing.

The submitted *abstract* complies with the requirements; it precisely and adequately reflects the dissertation in terms of structure and content. The PhD student has 5 publications on the problems of the dissertation research, as 2 of them are in refereed and/or indexed publications, which exceeds the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "PhD".

### **Scientific contributions**

In theoretical and applied terms, several key contributions of the dissertation can be outlined:

A multilevel study has been carried out, which allows outlining the deficits in and opportunities for the development of literary and sociolinguistic competences in the teaching of Bulgarian Language and Literature at the primary school stage.

The author's methodological concept for the improvement of literary and sociolinguistic competencies of students of the primary stage of primary education is suggested and robustly supported.

A technology for the implementation of the proposed methodological solutions/tools with a special focus on increasing the motivation of primary school students is scientifically approbated and verified.

**My question to the PhD student** concerns the technology for the implementation of the methodological solutions she has proposed and tested in 4th grade. In particular, does she perceive and where challenges for the

modification and adaptation of this technology for the lower grades of the primary level?

### **Conclusion**

The developed dissertation has the quality of an original scientific research and reflects the high personal and professional commitment of the PhD student to multifaceted research on the development of literary competence and sociolinguistic competence through the possibilities of children's literature. All this gives me grounds to give a positive assessment of the presented dissertation and to support the award of the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to Teodora Yankova Valeva in the professional field of 1.3. Pedagogy of training in... (Methodology of Teaching Bulgarian Language and Literature in the Primary Stage of Education).

Sofia, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Reviewer:

/Assoc. Prof. Bistra Mizova, PhD/