

REVIEW

of

Doctoral Thesis titled:

FORMATION OF SOCIOCULTURAL AND COMMUNICATIVE SPEECH COMPETENCE IN THE PROCESS OF BULGARIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN GRADES 1 – 4

For the award of the academic and scientific degree of Doctor

In the professional area of 1.3 Pedagogy of teaching and learning...
(Bulgarian Language and Literature Teaching and Learning Methodology in
Elementary Education)

Author of the dissertation: Irena Hristova Raykova

1. Information on the doctorate, the doctoral thesis, the dissertation abstract and publications

1.1. Doctoral candidate:

The biography of Irena Hristova Raykova is a demonstration of persistence, continued interest in educational theory, sensitivity to the relevant problems of educational practice and a flair for the new.

Raykova graduates Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” as a master in elementary education and develops further her qualification in the area of early foreign language and IT teaching and learning in elementary school. What follows is an impressive number of courses and specialized programs in the UK and France

laying the foundations for her realization as an educator from eTweening to a head teacher, as she is today.

Since 2019 Irena Raykova has been a doctoral student at the Faculty of Education at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

1.2. Doctorate:

Following a discussion and ensuring its compliance with all the requirements, the Didactics Department commends the doctoral thesis for a defense before the Faculty Council at the Faculty of Education.

1.3. The dissertation, abstract and presented publications:

The dissertation comprises the impressive 328 pages, 282 of which main body including 42 figures, 44 tables, and 40 images. The referenced literature comprises 125 source items, out of which, according to their relevance to the topic, 109 are in Cyrillic and 16 are in Latin. The 13 appendices are also valuable.

The conceptual formulation of the research problem, enviably consistent and profuse in detail at points, strives to outline, on the one hand, the theoretical boundaries of the problem – the competence approach in education (from terminology specifications to regulatory documentation); and, on the other hand, all starting points leading to the methodological aspects of its implementation in the context of teaching and learning *Bulgarian Language and Literature* in elementary education. The in-depth knowledge of approaches and interpretations allows the author to draw basic lines of interpretation and to outline her own viewpoint, thus laying the foundation of the empirical study design.

The study itself took place between 1 Feb 2019 and 31 May 2021 with the ambitious aim of “creating, justifying and testing of an educational model for the

formation of sociocultural and communicative speech competence, applicable in both face-to-face and distance learning”. (Dissertation, p.8).

The total number of subjects in the dissertation research is the overwhelming 579, where 136 are school students, 314 – schoolteachers, and 129 - parents.

The empirical sample comprises subjects from 47 schools: 12 capital schools, 17 secondary regional schools, 15 primary regional schools, 2 elementary regional schools, and 1 school outside the territory of the country (The Bulgarian School in Edinburgh, Great Britain). The schools are located in 14 out of the 28 administrative regions of Bulgaria. (Sofia-City, the regions of Sofia, Pleven, Shumen, Montana, Dobrich, Haskovo, Smolyan, Plovdiv, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Kyustendil, Sliven, and Pazardzhik).

The main research intention is to carry out a study in four stages – preliminary, ascertaining, formative and conclusive whereby the main stage according to the research aim is conducted both in face-to-face and in a distance-learning mode. Instruments have been designed for each stage providing for the reliable data collection and, thus, for the attainment of the intermittent research goals. This has provided the author with the opportunity to outline the real state of the problem in a way to make adequate decisions for overcoming the established deficits.

The key focus of the work is the empirical model created for the purposes of developing Sociocultural and Communicative Speech Competences comprising four modules: motivation and speech, attention and speech, thinking and speech, and memory and speech. Based on these modules for developing sociocultural and communicative competences, the research offers some innovative, provocative and working methodological ideas. The model possesses all the characteristics of an original product, bravely justified and described in a lot of detail. Worthy of respect is the author’s attempt to support her hypotheses by using and summarizing the data collected by different instruments and from a significant number of subjects.

Considering this abundance of ideas and data, on the one hand, and, on the other, the remarkable fairness and integrity on the part of the author, not questionable in any way, certain points in the work raise some questions. Such may arise, for example, in terms of the hypotheses (p.8):

“Hypothesis 1: If adequate methodological instruments are applied, this will contribute to the formation and development of the elementary school students’ sociocultural and communicative speech competence.”

“Hypothesis 2: The purposeful development of cognitive processes (thinking, memory, attention, motivation) will contribute to the development of elementary school students’ sociocultural and communicative speech competence.”

The extent to which these statements bear the characteristics of hypotheses is arguable. In my opinion, the reference here of motivation to cognitive processes is also subject to discussion.

A careful reading may highlight other arguable theses as well. Apart from these considerations, the submitted dissertational project is a well-planned, conscientiously elaborated and creative one of undoubted practical value.

The thesis abstract comprising 76 pages faithfully and accurately reflects the main content of the dissertation work. The key findings at the different stages of the research and problems related to them are presented before the academic community in 6 publications, 3 of which are papers in referenced and indexed editions, thus meeting and exceeding the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor.

2. Scientific implications:

On the level of theory and practice, several fundamental implications of the work are identifiable:

The conducted large-scale research outlines a relatively complete picture of the state of the problem in the Bulgarian educational practice.

A creative and original model has been constructed by the author for the formation and development of sociocultural and communicative speech competence by elementary school students.

A technology for implementing the proposed methodological ideas has been designed and tested.

3. Conclusion:

The foregoing gives me every reason to support positively the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor to Irena Hristova Raykova in the professional area of 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching and learning ... (Bulgarian Language and Literature Teaching Methodology in Elementary Education).

15 May 2023

Sofia

Reviewer:

/Prof. Dr. Vasya Delibaltova/