

STATEMENT OF OPINION

regarding the doctoral dissertation of Zheni Filipova Koleva “Strategies for Expressing Politeness in Contemporary Spanish” for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 2.1. Philology in the specialty “Romance Languages” – Syntax and Pragmatics of the Spanish Language.

written by Prof. Maxim Stamenov, DSc, from the Institute for Bulgarian Language, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, member of the scientific jury appointed by Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski’s Rector’s order № ПД 38-245/19.05.2025.

Scientific advisor: Prof. Milena Borisova Popova, Ph.D., Department of Spanish, FKNF, SU.

1. Information about the dissertation

The overall volume of the dissertation is 176 pages, which includes 158 pages of main text and 18 pages of bibliography. It contains an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, contributions and a bibliography.

2. Relevance of the problem developed in the dissertation in scientific and applied terms and achieved results

The problem to which the proposed dissertation is dedicated is oriented towards the latest directions of development of discursive and socioculturally oriented pragmatics. The specific object of the study of the work is the strategies for expressing politeness in the Spanish language in two types of speech acts from J. Leach’s classification: (1) speech acts for which politeness is intrinsic, and (2) speech acts that contradict politeness. In this context, the author pays special attention to the strategies for impoliteness in speech acts incompatible with politeness from the same classification.

The relevance of the study is determined by its orientation towards the analysis of units from the upper levels in the hierarchy of the linguistic sign, the study of the interaction between both sentences and speech acts within the text, the inclusion of the presuppositional basis of utterances, and the study of the relationship between explicit and implicit information in the construction of politeness strategies for achieving certain communicative goals.

3. Orientation of the dissertation candidate on the state of the problem and the scientific literature

The author demonstrates good knowledge of the literature on the topic of the work. The bibliography to the dissertation lists a total of 196 publications by Bulgarian and foreign scientists with whom the dissertation candidate worked in the implementation of the activities related to the research and writing of her work, as well as 18 sources from which examples are excerpted and 9 links to used television interviews.

4. Content of the work

The Introduction of the dissertation presents and discusses the relevance of the topic, defines the main goal and objectives, justifies the choice of empirical material and research methodology, briefly presents the main sections.

The theoretical part of the work includes three chapters. The first presents a brief overview of the origin and development of pragmatic theory. The main trends in the development of pragmatic theory are traced, its gradual orientation from the communicative intention of the speaker to the conditions of production, the pragmatic and social dimensions of

the context. Relevant statements from modern linguistic theory are also included. A main place is given to the ideas of M. V. Escandel Vidal and T. van Dijk. The second chapter is devoted to the theory of speech acts, the evolution of their various classifications, and new aspects in the interpretation and categorization of speech acts are included, reflecting the achievements of conversational analysis and cross-cultural pragmatics. The third chapter provides a thorough discussion of politeness research. Special attention is paid to the principle, maxims and strategies of politeness, which are conceived as a framework for analyzing the structuring and maintenance of harmonious interpersonal relationships through the prism of the concepts of benefit and harm for the participants in communication. The strategies of impoliteness are also considered here, which offer an analysis of speech acts oriented towards the interruption of communication.

The empirical part of the study also consists of three chapters, distributed according to the attitude of speech acts to politeness, taking into account the classification of speech acts by J. Leach. The main criteria in the specified classification are the concepts of benefit and harm for the participants in communication. The fourth chapter focuses on speech acts in which the use of politeness strategies is optional. By their nature, they support politeness and imply benefit for the listener and harm for the speaker. Within the framework of this chapter, compliments are studied as part of the structure of dialogue and as a means of maintaining social relationships, and apologies are analyzed, which are considered as a basic and supporting speech act in dialogic unity. Finally, the expression of gratitude is analyzed as a stereotypical formula and a spontaneous reaction. The fifth chapter analyzes speech acts in which the use of politeness strategies is mandatory. This type of speech acts contradict politeness and imply benefit for the speaker and harm for the listener. Within the framework of this study, attention is paid to two types of requests. First, requests for help and service are examined, which are analyzed depending on the directness/indirectness of their formal presentation and the reaction to the request: positive reaction and cooperation, conditional acceptance, change of focus and refusal. Second, the direct and metaphorical use of requests for permission is examined. Within the framework of directive speech acts, commands are also briefly presented. The empirical analysis ends with the sixth chapter, which examines speech acts in which impoliteness strategies are used. The concept of impoliteness is explicitly introduced and interpreted and the types of impoliteness are examined.

The Conclusion presents the main conclusions from the theoretical and empirical analysis, highlighting the contributions of the dissertation.

5. Brief analytical description of the scientific and applied scientific contributions of the dissertation work

We confirm the presence of the following contributions in the work, which arise from the implementation of the tasks set in the development of the dissertation. They are oriented in two main directions - theoretical and with applied potential in teaching Spanish as a foreign language.

In the work, for the first time in our country, politeness strategies in different types of speech acts in the Spanish language are studied. The analyses are conducted according to the explicit communicative approach in the conditions of real communication. A generalized research model of the possibilities for expressing politeness is developed and presented. The strategies in this regard are described from the point of view of their internal structure, external modifiers, with a view to the formation of dialogic unity and in the context of the entire dialogue. On the basis of the model thus proposed, special attention is paid to the interpretative dimensions of language functioning, to the interpretation of statements depending on the pragmatic context. In the future, it can also be used to study the influence of sociocultural parameters of the context on politeness strategies in different languages.

The distinction is introduced between a main speech act, around which others are grouped, and one that has a supporting role as part of the preparatory strategies for the successful implementation of another speech act. The important role of the context and such concepts as positive/negative politeness, social image, etc. is noted in this regard.

The relationship between direct and indirect speech acts and between implicit and explicit information in the development of the strategies of their use is studied. Based on the analyses conducted in the dissertation, it is found that in politeness strategies with supporting speech acts, the latter can explicate part of the presuppositional basis of the main utterance and are often associated with the conditions for the successful implementation of the speech acts. It is demonstrated that politeness strategies do not, as a rule, function in the dialogic unity of stimulus and response, but within a broader dialogic context. Evidence is provided that speech acts do not occur in isolation in dialogue and can function as basic and supporting speech acts, with internally polite actions supporting those that inherently contradict politeness. The latter, in turn, can appear in support of speech acts that are aimed at interrupting communication.

The analysis of the collected corpus of examples shows that the construction of politeness strategies is determined by the internal potential of the speech act itself and by the pragmatic context. This is best seen in speech acts that contradict politeness and in which extensions and modifiers are more common, since in this way their illocutionary force is mitigated and the social image of the interlocutor is not threatened. In speech acts that are polite in nature, the use of the aforementioned linguistic means in return is optional.

Based on the proposed empirical material, it is found that the consistency and logical coherence of the lines in the dialogue reflects the complex and dynamic interaction between speech acts, the adaptation of politeness strategies depending on the parameters of the pragmatic context and the reactions of the interlocutors.

The results of the dissertation can be used in the practice of teaching Spanish as a foreign language, since mastery of politeness strategies contributes to successful social interaction in real communication with the aim of optimizing the process of communicative cooperation.

6. Assessment of publications on the dissertation: number, nature of the publications in which they were printed, citations

The doctoral candidate reports a total of six articles as publications related to the topic of the dissertation. Three of them are in collections of materials from scientific conferences, one is in a scientific journal, one in a yearbook and one in an anniversary collection. The described publications meet the minimum requirements for acquiring the scientific degree "Doctor of Philology".

7. Does the abstract correctly reflect the content of the dissertation work?

The abstract consists of 37 pages and correctly reflects the main points and scientific contributions of the dissertation work. It corresponds to its content.

8. Conclusion

Considering the above, I strongly recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury award **Zheni Filipova Koleva** the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" for her dissertation on the topic "**Strategies for Expressing Politeness in Contemporary Spanish**" in the professional field 2.1. Philology in the specialty "Romance Languages" – Syntax and Pragmatics of the Spanish Language.

25.07.2025
Sofia

Signed:



/M. Stamenov/