

R E V I E W  
on  
“THE SPECIALIZED SPANISH LANGUAGE IN THE FIELD OF DIPLOMACY AND  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS”

Dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the professional field 2.1. Philology, scientific specialty “Applied Linguistics and Stylistics (Spanish Language)”, doctoral program “Romance Languages”

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Daniela Vitanova is a graduate of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, where in 2002 she graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Spanish Philology, and in 2003 - with a master’s degree in European Integration. The same year she won a competition for an assistant professor in Spanish at the Department of Western Languages of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, where she works to this day. In 2004, she specialized at the Complutense University in Madrid, where she participated in a summer language course to improve her Spanish, as well as in an advanced course that included business Spanish and lectures on literature, history, art, and sociology.

Daniela Vitanova teaches Spanish as a second foreign language for bachelors in several faculties (Geology and Geography, Economics, Law, Faculty of Pedagogy and Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology), as well as specialized Spanish for students who enter the university with previous language knowledge - for the purpose of linguistic preparation for their future profession (law, diplomacy, economics, tourism, etc.). For the Master’s program “Applied Linguistics” at the Department of Hispanic Studies, she teaches courses on vocabulary and translation from Spanish into Bulgarian.

Daniela Vitanova’s professional experience is not limited to her teaching activities. She works as a translator and interpreter in a number of state, political and legal institutions: Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Supreme Judicial Council - Sofia. D. Vitanova translates EU regulatory documents and provides simultaneous and consecutive interpretation at conferences and workshops between Spanish and Bulgarian specialists on EU issues and the transposition of

European legislation. This activity of hers is in harmony with her research interest in the language of diplomacy, which becomes the subject of her dissertation.

This impressive professional biography is reflected in Daniela Vitanova's scientific interests: the study of specialized Spanish and its application for specific purposes. The list of her scientific publications includes 20 articles and studies published in scientific journals and collections, 15 participations in national and international conferences, and editing of grammars, teaching aids, textbooks and phrasebooks in Spanish.

Thanks to her excellent knowledge of Spanish, Daniela Vitanova has been an evaluator for the Ministry of Education and Science for several years (2015-2019) for state matriculation exams in Spanish.

As a doctoral student in independent training at the Department of "Western Languages", Daniela Hristova Vitanova prepared the doctoral thesis submitted for review with the support of her scientific supervisor, Prof. Dr. Philology Evgeniya Vucheva-Yordanova, who is a prominent specialist in the field of sociopragmatics and stylistics of the Spanish language.

The topic of the dissertation "THE SPECIALIZED SPANISH LANGUAGE IN THE FIELD OF DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS" is interesting and relevant in connection with the key role of diplomatic relations in the modern globalized world, which in recent years has been shaken by unexpected political and military conflicts. The choice of this research field is naturally motivated by the relatively scarce research on the diplomatic Spanish language, especially from the perspective of linguistics and sociopragmatics.

The dissertation, with a total volume of 226 pages, consists of an extensive introduction (pp. 8–16), 4 chapters, conclusions (pp. 209–214), a bibliography with 137 cited positions in Bulgarian, Spanish, English, Russian and French, plus 6 digital references, 409 excerpted sources, a list of publications on the topic (p. 225) and a description of the contributions of the dissertation work (p. 226).

The introduction determines the choice of the topic. Daniela Vitanova focuses on this new and very little-studied research area, drawing on her personal experience as a teacher of international relations students and a translator in the field of diplomacy.

The introductory part formulates the object, subject, goals and objectives, working hypotheses, theoretical and methodological framework and corpus of the study. The main hypothesis of the study is precisely and clearly stated: diplomatic language is implemented through persuasive communication, which aims to maintain harmonious, equal and balanced relations between states. The tasks arise from the set goal: to reveal the linguistic mechanisms of diplomatic communication through pragmatic and stylistic analysis of language means, organized according to the communicative channel: written and oral. The theoretical framework of the study has the necessary interdisciplinary character, as it is based on the theoretical approaches of general linguistics, linguistic pragmatics, stylistics, text linguistics and discourse analysis. The chosen methodology corresponds to the goals and objectives - applying the descriptive approach in characterizing diplomatic language as a specialized professional code, the method of deduction in presenting argumentation and manipulation as forms of persuasion, and the method of induction in the specific analyses of the two corpora - oral and written.

Thus, the introduction proves to be a successful compendium of the entire theoretical, methodological and experimental issues, which are to be developed in detail in the remaining parts of the text.

The first chapter (“Theoretical and conceptual framework for the description of diplomatic language”, pp. 17–64) sets the theoretical foundations of the study. Defining diplomatic language as a functional style on the border between diastratic and diaphasic varieties with specific characteristics, the author proceeds from Halliday’s classification, but also takes into account the contribution of Spanish-speaking (e.g. K. Larrea, M. Morales Lama, etc.), Russian (Bakhtin) and Bulgarian researchers (Vucheva, Shishkova, etc.). D. Vitanova justifies the need to consider separately the written and oral forms of diplomatic language, which have common but also specific formal features derived from the paradigms that organize linguistic discourse: functional style, genre, register and social relations. The characteristics of written diplomatic communication with its specific genres as a variety of the official-business style with the highest degree of formality are clearly presented in a table on p. 35. In the same way, the specificity of oral diplomatic communication is revealed in detail: oral genres are distinguished and special attention is paid to the two main variations in the implementation of this communication: formal versus semi-formal or informal (summarized in a table on p. 41).

Considerable attention in this chapter is devoted to politeness, considered within the theoretical framework of the classical statements of J. Lakoff & M. Johnson, P. Grice, P. Brown & S. Levinson, supplemented with concepts from recent decades (E. Vucheva, J. Santiago Guervós, M. Robles-Gomez, etc.). Emphasizing that in diplomatic communication politeness is of crucial importance for achieving respect and trust and maintaining harmonious relations between states and their institutions, the author dwells in more detail on positive politeness (according to Brown & Levinson 1987), aimed at preserving the public “face” of communicants as a basis for converging positions and reaching agreement. D. Vitanova points out the universal and culturally specific in international politeness, which builds the foundations of politeness as a speech tactic in diplomacy with its main characteristics - positive, codified, protocol, routine and specific to the closed sphere in which it is applied (pp. 52-53). The verbal techniques (oral and written) and non-verbal characteristics of diplomatic politeness are clearly presented in a table on p. 57, and in the further exposition their most striking linguistic markers are described in detail, illustrated with numerous examples: official diplomatic addresses, reflecting differences in hierarchy and social distance (according to Brown & Levinson), specific terminology with its diversity according to the professional field of application (diplomatic, legal, military, economic, technical, etc.), latinisms and foreign words with their corresponding functional features.

The second chapter of the dissertation (“Persuasion – the main goal of diplomatic communication”, pp. 65–106) begins with a presentation of the most essential characteristics of argumentation as the main mechanism of persuasion. The author refers to a thorough study of numerous investigations – classical and contemporary. Summarizing the leading views on argumentation, D. Vitanova postulates that the ultimate intention of this communicative strategy is to involve the addressee and influence him with the help of appropriate linguistic means to achieve a certain goal. The clarification of argumentation is carried out on a broad interdisciplinary basis: from the positions of rhetoric, logic, philosophy and psychology, sociopragmatics and textlinguistics. The types of arguments (p. 74), extracted from the classification of A. Weston (2006), are presented in detail, emphasizing that the first two dominate in diplomatic communication: authority and example. This statement is supported by quotes from speeches of some of the most significant figures in politics and diplomacy, such as King Philip VI, the presidents of Mexico, Chile, etc. (pp. 74–75). The models of argumentation from the perspective of textlinguistics (according to authors such as T. van Dijk, C. Fuentes Rodríguez, etc.) are also

summarized, based on the well-known communicative model of R. Jakobson (p. 77). The emphasis in this chapter is placed on the comparison between the two main discursive tactics: argumentation as a direct and manipulation as an indirect way of persuading the interlocutor. The hypothesis is raised that despite the negative connotations that accompany it, manipulation can be used as a positive tactic of persuasion (p. 80). To defend this view, D. Vitanova refers to the concept of the philosopher J. A. Ibáñez Martín, who distinguishes active manipulation, deliberately and tendently falsifying certain information, from manipulation, which stems from the desire for the addressees to accept or not a certain action and attitude, the latter often having an unconscious nature (p. 81). A similar position is taken by many American psychologists, who define manipulation as the most useful tool for influencing the environment and exerting influence on it. In addition, a whole galaxy of Spanish-speaking, French, Bulgarian and Russian researchers have been attracted to the discussion on the nature of manipulation, in order to reach the conclusion (in support of the hypothesis expressed by the author) that in diplomacy this communicative strategy is subtle and does not use falsification of data and abuse of the interlocutor (p. 87).

The combination of theory and empiricism finds expression in the discussion of the two main forms of manipulation, known since antiquity and also used in diplomatic language: fallacies and demagogy. Classified again according to Weston, the types of fallacies and forms of demagogy are illustrated with appropriate examples from the author's own database. The detailed discussion of manipulative techniques in the language of diplomacy is based on theoretical concepts existing in the literature, supported by an abundance of examples excerpted from the studied corpus of texts. Finally, the author comes to the conclusion that argumentation and manipulation are not contradictory: both aim to influence the addressee, but differ in the methods and intentions used depending on the communicative situation, the participants in the communication and the communicative channel (p. 99). The mechanisms of persuasion in diplomatic communication are summarized visually in a table on p. 105, which also mentions linguistic techniques for manipulation (e.g. rhetorical figures, talismanic words, euphemisms, along with grammatical devices such as passivization, nominalization, etc.), which are analyzed in detail in the next two chapters.

The third chapter ("Linguistic means in written diplomatic language", pp. 107–156) presents an in-depth analysis of the own corpus of 171 written diplomatic documents, the sources of which are described in a table on p. 108. Among them we find empirical material reflecting the

rich scientific and practical experience of the Chilean diplomat E. Jara Roncati and the Dominican ambassador M. Lama, correspondence manuals of important international institutions, web pages of embassies, ministries, etc. The richness and diversity of the various excerpted documents guarantees the representativeness of the sample and the reliability of the obtained analyses. All lexical-semantic classes are analyzed from the point of view of their form, semantics and function: adjectives in preposition to the determiner, nouns, adverbs, with special attention to those formed by the suffix *-mente*, personal verbs with their wealth of forms for tense and mood, impersonal verbs – participles, gerund, infinitive, impersonal forms and constructions. A special place is devoted to personal deixis, which plays an extremely important role in diplomatic communication. The semantic analysis highlights the dominant semes for each of the semantic-grammatical classes, and the pragmatic one – their illocutionary and perlocutionary function in the speech acts where they are used. The summary of the results supports the hypotheses raised, related to the main goal of diplomatic communication - persuasion. Nominalization, the widespread use of impersonal verb forms and impersonal constructions emphasizes the static nature of the highly formalized, official, bureaucratic and conservative diplomatic language, highlighting its aspiration towards objectivity and neutrality.

Chapter four, entitled “Linguistic Means in Oral Diplomatic Language” (pp. 157-208), is aimed at highlighting the specificity of the oral form of diplomatic communication in its two varieties: formal register and semi-formal/informal register. The impressive corpus of oral discourses consists of 52 excerpted sources published on the web pages of important international institutions or broadcast on radio and television channels, as well as on digital media. First, the formal register is analyzed: the means of expression are traced, including both references to historical facts and quotations specific to diplomatic communication, mainly related to the authority of prominent figures, and non-specific stylistic devices, such as repetitions and alliteration, euphemisms, anaphora, rhetorical questions, metaphors and metonymies. Here too, special attention is paid to metaphors in the formal register of oral diplomatic language, classified by Lakoff & Johnson according to the source and the target sphere (p. 186). The analyses prove that in the formal diplomatic register conventionalized metaphors prevail, which best correspond to the purpose of diplomatic communication – to persuade and influence.

Based on the numerous examples examined, it is established that metaphor plays a key role not only in the formal, but also in the semi-formal/informal register of oral diplomatic

communication. One of the essential markers of this communication is the use of the personal pronoun for the second person singular and plural and the apelative “amigo” as a marker of trust, solidarity and empathy between the communicants. Along with the stylistic figures (metonymy, synecdoche, litotes, irony, etc.), the studied corpus notes a number of cases of the use of pragmatic markers of colloquialism, such as *pues, bueno, verdad, sabes, no, eh*, of colloquial vocabulary and phraseology, which facilitate direct contact, but also give the utterance a more casual note, and sometimes a disrespectful tone, which can have negative consequences. At the end of this chapter, space is also devoted to the influence of social media on the professional language of diplomacy. The author notes that these media facilitate direct contact, but this often results in the use of less processed, more careless language, sometimes ironic and degrading to the addressee.

The second and third chapters of the dissertation, examining the specific linguistic means of diplomatic language based on a significant corpus of oral and written diplomatic discourses, present Daniela Vitanova as a mature researcher with a proven ability to analyze, compare, summarize, and discover the most essential in empirical data, while not losing sight of the theoretical and practical significance of the results obtained.

The conclusion (209–214) presents a summary of what has been achieved.

The description of the contributions of the dissertation is correct. The 63-page abstract faithfully reflects the content of the dissertation work.

Daniela Vitanova has published five articles on the topic of the dissertation – two of them in proceedings of annual conferences of Sofia University, and the third – in proceedings of an international conference. Over the past two years, she has also participated at four local and international scientific forums.

Based on what has been said so far, I would like to state that the text “SPECIALIZED SPANISH LANGUAGE IN THE FIELD OF DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS” in its structure and content meets all the requirements for a dissertation. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research conducted is adequately selected and reflects the most modern concepts, the analyses of the experimental data have been carried out precisely, the conclusions are convincing, and the connection between the theoretical side of the research and its practical application is emphasized everywhere. Therefore, with full conviction, I vote positively to Asst. Daniela Vitanova to be awarded the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

in the professional field: 2.1 Philologies, scientific specialty “Applied Linguistics and Stylistics (Spanish Language)”, doctoral program “Romance Languages”.

Sofia, 12.08.2025

Reviewer:

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