**PEER REVIEW**

of a dissertation for obtaining the educational and scientific degree of ‘Doctor’

Author of the dissertation: **Maria Ivanova Todorova**, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

Dissertation topic: **TRANSLATION PROBLEMS IN DIGITAL SERVICE PRODUCTS FROM ENGLISH INTO BULGARIAN**

Field: **2.1 Philology**

Supervisors: **Prof. Dr. Alexandra Bagasheva & Prof. Dr. Petya Osenova**

Peer Reviewer: **Bilyana Bozhinova Todorova**, Department of Bulgarian language, Faculty of Philology, South-West University “Neofit Rilski”

1. **General Characteristics of the Author**

Maria Todorova is a graduate of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski”, where she first received her Bachelor's degree in English Philology (2011-2015) and later her Master's degree in Translation (with English). During her studies, she has already undergone internships under the Erasmus+ and other programmes, and has obviously combined her theoretical training well with practical training. She has relevant experience as a teaching assistant, teacher, project organiser, translator and localization specialist, as well as an assistant professor at Sofia University. She has also worked as a localization specialist, as well as a teacher and teacher trainer. This has provided her with a broad view of the problems of translation from English into Bulgarian and of learning English as a second language.

The doctoral candidate participated in the procedure with a dissertation of 166 pages, an abstract of a dissertation in Bulgarian of 40 pages (I have also received an abstract in English) and four scientific papers on the topic of the dissertation. I have also received a declaration of authorship, the result of the anti-plagiarism check of the dissertation, a list of publications, the publications themselves, and a report on the fulfilment of the minimum national requirements. It is evident from these materials that she fully meets the requirements of the law for the PhD degree.

1. **PhD Project Characteristics and its Contributions**

The dissertation is written in English and has the following structure: a table of contents, a list of abbreviations, five chapters, the reference section, which includes 128 bibliographic entries, and three appendices. The work is excellently structured, and it follows the usual pattern of the construction of the academic texts. Even the title suggests the fact that the problem to be investigated is important not only for its theoretical but also for its practical-applied value.

The first chapter presents what motivated the author to tackle this undoubtedly actual topic and points out the subject and objectives of the research, namely “what are the translation problems that occur in localization from English into Bulgarian” (p. 9). The research questions that the dissertation seeks to answer are clearly verbalized, namely what the problem points are, what they are caused by, to what extent they are unique to translation into Bulgarian, what possible solutions can be proposed, and what possible recommendations could be made to improve the quality of translation in localization.

The second chapter presents the theoretical basis of the dissertation, presenting different perspectives on the problem of localization and the need for qualitative translation in minority and minor languages as well. I find it particularly important to mention Cronin's claim about the vulnerability of minority languages to interference in majority-to-minority translation (p. 14). It seems to me that this is a very important observation - the lack of quality translation in localization, and the presence of all the errors mentioned later in the thesis, affect the target language competence of users of digital services. If one accepts the thesis of Taanonen quoted by Todorova (p. 16) about two types of users - the 'upper' class ones being able to use digital services directly in English and those from the 'lower' class using the translated services, we can speculate that poor translation may further negatively affect the Bulgarian language competence of users from the latter group. Therefore, I find the following observation shared on p. 18 very valuable, namely that “minimising the negative effects of poor translation in localization on the Bulgarian language and its users can be singled out as an important objective for all parties involved – from scholars, through trainers and language professionals, to clients”, and I fully share the author's understanding that “translation for localization is considered a type of specialised translation”and that its role should not be underestimated (p. 22, p. 30, etc.).

Chapter 3 presents a corpus of 150 localization errors encountered in 42 products, as well as a preliminary typology of translation problems in localization: 56 genre-related errors (37%), 61 errors associated with macro-structural limitations (41%) and 33 related to lack of context or context consideration in the translation environment (22%). The information is presented clearly through figures and diagrams.

The fourth chapter is the most important and contributory chapter in the study because it presents the translation errors found and some available solutions for avoiding them.

Errors related to genre and text types concern the form of address to the user, with inconsistency of address, misspelling of the polite form in pronouns, use of the plural in adjectives, and use of the past participle in the polite form being the most common. The dissertation also presents strategies for avoiding these errors, examples of which are given in various tables - in the incorrect use of pronouns in the polite form on p. 71; in the use of the plural instead of the singular in adjectives/ participles in the polite form on p. 81, etc.

Errors related to call-to-action texts and presenting in inconsistent use of the imperative in the plural and singular or rendering the imperative with deverbal nouns are also presented. For this purpose, examples are excerpted from the air ticket purchasing platforms Skyscanner, Esky and Kiwi, localized in Bulgarian. The comparison has made it possible to track the platforms, compare the errors and suggest options to avoid them. The errors of this subcategory are associated with the lack of conventions so particularly valuable is that these suggestions can also be used as a guide for future translators to avoid the various types of inaccuracies that are seen to occur frequently.

The second type of error is due to translation problems related to macro-structural limitations, and three sub-categories are formed here: variable elements in the macrostructure (asymmetries in word order in the case of numeric variables; in prepositions с and в; and in the categories of gender and number in nouns); character restrictions problems; and unit and currency conventions. What is special about this category is that there are often parameters that are non-editable because of the lack of the internalization of the source elements. Again, it should be noted that examples of the types of errors and possible solutions to avoid them are presented in tabular form.

As I have already mentioned, attention has also been paid to the problems caused by the difference in length between the English and Bulgarian texts, as in translation from English into Bulgarian, texts usually reach up to 180% of the length of the source text. Possible solutions to this type of problem are presented (pp. 115-117). The third subgroup is related to units of measurement and currencies and, consequently, the challenges that arise when there is a difference between two languages. As in the other cases, possible solutions are presented here.

The latter type of errors is due to semantic or morphosyntactic ambiguity (a result from semantic or pragmatic polysemy, heterosemy, syncretism, or synonymy in the source text) as well as due to the presence of some specific feature of the target language that is not present in the source language. It seems to me that these errors most often make it difficult for users to understand. Uses in the other categories which do not conform to standards annoy more educated users and have a bad educational effect on less educated users, but it is the latter type of inaccuracy that can be a serious test for those using the digital product.

The final chapter, which summarises the presented observations, shows the research questions and their answers in detail. The author's contributions are well described.

The abstract accurately and clearly reflects the content of the dissertation and its contributions.

**3**. **Notes and Recommendations**

My overall impression of Maria Todorova's work is excellent. It achieves a symbiosis between theoretical competence and practical knowledge of the problems of the specialists in translation. I have a few remarks regarding sporadic spelling and punctuation inaccuracies in the text of the abstract (pp. 10, 13, 16, 17, 18, etc.), but they cannot affect the overall assessment of the work. The text of the thesis and the author's research as a whole should be visible to all specialists in the field of translation, because of their great practical use.

**4. Conclusion**

On the basis of the contributions highlighted in the PhD thesis, I confidently propose to the esteemed jury to award the educational and scientific degree 'DOCTOR' in the scientific field 2.1. Philology to Maria Ivanova Todorova.

30th December 2023 Peer Reviewer: