

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pavlina Grigorova Kancheva
(Medical University – Sofia, Department of Language Training and Sports,
member of the Scientific Jury with order No. RD-38-174/21.03.2025,
of the dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
and its accompanying materials on the topic:
"Typological characteristics of the language situation in the city of Plovdiv"
by Dimitria Angelova Marinkova,
a full-time doctoral student in the professional field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian language
Sociolinguistics) at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",
Faculty of Slavic Philology, Department of Bulgarian Language, Sofia, 2025.
Scientific supervisor: Prof. Krasimira Aleksova, D.Sc.,
for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

The dissertation is 278 pages long. It consists of an Introduction, three chapters, Conclusion, Literature, Publications on the topic of the dissertation, Scientific contributions of the dissertation.

In the **Introduction**, Dimitria Marikova presents the parameters of her dissertation work: object of study – the linguistic situation in the city of Plovdiv, subject of study – its typological features, taking into account the dynamics of linguistic diversity, sociocultural factors, communicative practices and the historical development of the city. The main goal of the work is to investigate and classify the language situation in the city of Plovdiv by significant typological features. Six tasks have been formulated to achieve the goal. The author presents the methodology of her research as based on a combination of theoretical and empirical methods and approaches, about which she provides brief information and briefly presents the structure of the work.

In the **first chapter**, entitled "Basic concepts and terms necessary for defining the concept of language situation from a sociolinguistic perspective", the doctoral candidate provides a detailed literature review of the understandings, mainly in Bulgarian linguistics, of issues significant for sociolinguistics, such as: the relations between the national language, the official language and the literary language; the essence of the concept of literary language from the point of view of the theory of literary languages; the differential features of the literary language, the concepts of literary norm and codification from a sociolinguistic aspect; sociolinguistic interpretation of the forms of existence of the Bulgarian language. Marinkova points out that regarding the concept of "language situation" she adheres to the model of M. Videnov and B. Baychev, developed by them in joint and individual works in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and more specifically to the so-called "language triglossia", described by M. Videnov in 1990. The literature review also covers other concepts discussed in Bulgarian sociolinguistics – urban speech, mesolect, acrolect, koine; the question of the relationship between the concepts of diglossia and bilingualism in relation to different types of language situations. Citing Videnov, the doctoral student includes in her review the ideas about diglossia of Charles Ferguson and Joshua Fishman. Also based on the works of M. Videnov, Marinkova presents the concept of language situation in its discursive essence from the second half of the 20th century, when the ideas of a number of Russian scholars such as Schweitzer, Nikolsky, Avrorin, etc. were popular in our country. Regarding the language situation, Marinkova also presents the ideas of other significant Bulgarian works - an article by T. Boyadzhiev (2008); two articles by Kr. Aleksova (2014, 2015), etc. Regarding the typological characteristics of the language situation in the city of Plovdiv, Marinkova declares a preference for the classification criteria of V. Vinogradov and N.B. Mechkovskaya, presenting them in detail, incl. in tabular form. For the completeness of the presentation, the doctoral student presents a number of studies by Bulgarian authors dedicated to the language situations in individual settlements of Bulgaria, as well as studies of the language situation in other countries or regions around the world. The literature review covers a significant number of sources and presents the main views and achievements of Bulgarian sociolinguistics in a true and thorough manner.

In the **second chapter**, titled "Typological Characteristics of the Language Situation in the City of Plovdiv", the the doctoral student begins her presentation with a literary review of historical, demographic, ethnological and culturological data on the development of the city during the Renaissance and after the Liberation in order to present chronologically the existing ethnic and ethnolinguistic diversity, the number of languages used and the dynamics in their relationships as a basis for analyzing the contemporary language situation of Plovdiv. To carry out the analysis of the language situation in the city in recent times, Marinkova applies qualitative, quantitative and evaluative typological features (according to V. Vinogradov and N. B. Mechkovskaya). She comments on the language situation in the city according to the characteristics of "degree of linguistic diversity" and "degree of ethnolinguistic diversity" and "relative demographic power of languages", using statistical data (according to the latest population censuses of 2001, 2011, and 2021) for "mother tongue", considered in the dissertation as the main indicator of linguistic diversity. To study the contemporary language situation in Plovdiv according to the characteristics of "relative communicative power of language formations" and "number of functionally dominant languages", Marinkova conducted an anonymous non-representative survey. The study of the language situation in Plovdiv according to the characteristics of "linguistic character of languages" and "degree of genetic proximity between languages" is based on the genealogical and morphological classification of languages. Regarding the attribute "legal status of languages", the doctoral student points out that it is determined by the constitutional regulation of their relations. In the course of the presentation, conclusions were also drawn regarding the typological characteristics of the language situation in the city of Plovdiv, which are fundamental to the topic of the dissertation. The conclusions are logically sound and adequate to the data provided. At the end of the second chapter of the dissertation, a survey of the attitudes of Plovdiv residents towards the languages in the city's linguistic environment is included, including their opinion on the prestige of these languages in comparison with Bulgarian. In essence, this is a study of language attitudes. Sociolinguistics is very interested in this type of research. The results of the study of attitudes are presented in an appropriate manner through graphics and with extensive commentary.

In the **third chapter**, entitled "Empirical study of basic sociolinguistic variables within the a-formation in the contemporary Plovdiv language situation (with a view to the Bulgarian language)", the subject of study is uncoded variants of sociolinguistic variables, which are basic and representative of the speech behavior of Plovdiv residents. As the theoretical basis of this study, Marinkova adopts the concepts of "sociolinguistic variable" and "sociolinguistic marker". Regarding the first concept, she cites the ideas of Kr. Aleksova (2016), including the comments that Aleksova makes on the theory of U. Labov. Regarding the second concept – sociolinguistic marker, Marinkova refers to M. Videnov (1998), but also cites Aleksova's (2016) comparison between the views of U. Labov and M. Videnov. Based on these key ideas, Marinkova implemented an original solution to prepare a generalized overview of sociolinguistic variables with variants characteristic of Eastern Bulgarian speech and differing from the codified norm, by extracting data from works by Bulgarian scientists and systematizing them in a table. The work of G. Karabelova (1995) remains outside the table, which the doctoral student examines separately in detail. For her empirical study, Marinkova extracted 12 sociolinguistic variables, which were applied to the study of the speech of 69 informants, represented by their socio-demographic characteristics. The study was conducted using the well-known and applied in Bulgarian sociolinguistics methods of included observation and reading of text in front of the so-called "open" (obvious) microphone, which provides information about contextual styles. The results of the study - data on the variation of the codified and uncoded versions of the sociolinguistic variables are presented in detail for each variable through descriptions and in tabular form, after which the summarized results are given.

In the **Conclusion**, Marinkova provides a summary of the typological characteristics of the language situation in the city of Plovdiv in tabular form and formulates the general conclusions of the study. The conclusions are verified by the clearly presented methodology for collecting and analyzing the empirical material in the second and third chapters of the dissertation and by the strict

adherence to established scientific theories in contemporary sociolinguistics, presented in the first chapter.

In the **Literature**, the sources used are divided according to their genre characteristics with separate numbering, which I find to be a bad solution, as it makes it difficult to provide bibliographic references for the authors and to estimate the total number of works cited.

An Abstract is presented in the materials attached to the dissertation, which corresponds to the content of the dissertation. 4 publications (one of them in print) are also presented, which are on the topic of the dissertation and the scientific contributions of the dissertation, highlighted by the doctoral student, with which I agree in substance.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the following:

1. Dimitria Marinkova's dissertation is dedicated to the linguistic situation of the city of Plovdiv - a scientific problem that has long been awaiting a comprehensive and in-depth sociolinguistic study. In addition, the dissertation deals with the typology of a large urban terrain, which has been less studied in our country. In view of this, I find the dissertation to be an innovative scientific achievement.
2. The doctoral student successfully combines theoretical and empirical methods through a thorough analysis of scientific literature, on which she not only relies, but also extracts data from it to achieve the goals of her research.
3. Literary sources from various scientific fields – general linguistics, sociolinguistics, history, demographic statistics, etc., have been thoroughly researched and cited completely correctly according to the rules. I find the insertion of online links to some of the cited works in the text to be a good solution. It is positive that preference and emphasis are given to the works of a large number of Bulgarian scientists.
4. The presentation demonstrates the doctoral student's good scientific knowledge and broad general culture, successfully applied in the development of the dissertation topic.
5. As a critical note, I would like to express my dissatisfaction with the unnecessary, in my opinion, extremely detailed retelling of a large number of scientific works and recommend that the next presentation of the text of the dissertation achieve a more compact and targeted presentation. The scientific contributions of the dissertation, listed by the doctoral student, which can be reduced to 4-5, should also be edited in the same spirit.
6. In view of the author's innovative methodological approaches and the value of the conclusions, I recommend that Dimitria Marinkova's dissertation, after appropriate editing, be published as a monograph.

As a result of all the above, I express my firm belief that the dissertation work of Dimitria Angelova Marinkova, a full-time doctoral student in the professional field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Language – Sociolinguistics) at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Slavic Philology, Department of Bulgarian Language, possesses the necessary qualities and as a member of the Scientific jury I confidently vote “YES” for awarding Dimitria Angelova Marinkova the educational and scientific degree “doctor”.

DATE: 31.05.2025

SIGNATURE:
(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pavlina Kancheva)