EXPERT OPINION

By Associate Professor Doctor Vladislav Vladkov Marinov,

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On a doctoral thesis for conferring a doctoral degree

In professional field *2.1 Philology (Bulgarian Language – Sociolinguistics)*

Doctoral thesis author: **Dimitria Angelova Marinkova**

Research supervisor: **Prof. ScD Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova**

This Expert Opinion has been written based on a decision of the Council of the Faculty of Slavic Studies, Protocol No. 03/11.03.2025, and Rector's Order РД 38-248/21.05.2025.

1. Information about the doctoral candidate

Dimitria Angelova Marinkova graduated from Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv with a bachelor's degree in Bulgarian Philology (2007) and a master's degree in Contemporary Bulgarian Studies (2015). Since 2021, she has been a full-time doctoral candidate at the Department of Bulgarian Language, Faculty of Slavic Studies of St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia. During the doctoral studies, D. Marinkova participated in 5 conferences (2 national and 3 international) and had 4 publications (1 in print) and was also a member of the scientific teams of two national projects.

2. Thesis content evaluation

The thesis (278 pages) consists of **an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references**. For the illustration of the analysed material, 26 tables, 2 charts, 2 maps, and 2 figures were used.

In the **introduction** (pp. 5-10), D. Marinkova followed established models and presented the object, subject, goal, and tasks of the research. As noted by the doctoral candidate, ***the object*** of the thesis is the language situation in the city of Plovdiv, and ***the subject*** is "its typological specifics related to the dynamics of the language diversity, socio-cultural factors, and communicative practices of the local population" (p. 5). The main ***goal*** of the research is to present and classify the language situation in the city of Plovdiv, using various data in synchronic as well as diachronic terms. Contributing to the achievement of the goal are the six ***tasks*** related to establishing the essence of the concept of *language situation* through an analysis of its components, classification of its typologizing characteristics, the relationship between the

historical development of the city, and the language formations used today. At the end of the research, a sociolinguistic analysis of various variables was made to establish their scaling in the attitudes of the informants. A variety of methods were used, such as the descriptive, comparative, historical-sociological, statistical analysis method, etc. The object, subject, goal, tasks, and applied methods thus defined show the scale of the work done by D. Marinkova and the significant effort put into writing the thesis.

The first chapter, *Language Situation*, (pp. 11 – 104), is theoretical and devoted to clarifying the essence of the concept of *language situation*, the components of a language situation, the types of language situations and their classification. Here, works by Bulgarian and foreign scholars devoted to the relations between language formations within a language community were analysed. D. Marinkova tried to correctly present different points of view regarding bilingualism and diglossia, the nature of interaction between the language formations within a language situation, as well as the results of the interaction.

In **the second chapter**, *Typological Characteristics of the Language Situation in the City of Plovdiv*, (pp. 105 – 195), D. Marinkova described the characteristics of the language situation in the city of Plovdiv based on the classification proposed by N. Mechkovskaya and V. Vinogradov. At the beginning of the chapter, the doctoral candidate presented the language and ethnic diversity in the city of Plovdiv according to various studies and data from the National Statistical Institute. In the following parts, the language situation in the city of Plovdiv was classified according to the number of languages used, the relative demographic and communicative power of the languages, the number of functionally dominant languages, the linguistic character of the languages, the degree of genetic proximity between the languages, and the legal status of the languages. From the presented data, which are also distinguished by their comprehensiveness, D. Marinkova concluded that the researched language situation was multicomponent as several languages (or their dialects) were used, disbalanced in terms of the demographic composition of Plovdiv, and hence unbalanced and unipolar due to the dominant communication role of the Bulgarian language. At the end of the chapter, in **3.5. Prestige of the languages spoken in the city of Plovdiv according to the attitudes of Plovdiv residents,** the doctoral candidate analysed the results of a survey conducted on Google Forms. According to the respondents, the Bulgarian language was distinguished by the greatest prestige, followed by Armenian, Greek, Hebrew, Turkish, and Roma in descending order. D. Marinkova's observations confirmed the conclusions made in other studies on the language situations in

some Bulgarian cities. Thus, the doctoral candidate also contributed to tracking the dynamics of the development of the language situations in major Bulgarian cities.

In **the third chapter**, *Empirical Research of Basic Sociolinguistic Variables Within the Framework of the a-Formation in Contemporary Plovdiv Language Situation (regarding the Bulgarian language)*, (pp. 156 – 251), D. Marinkova analysed data from empirical research among carriers of the Plovdiv a-norm. At the beginning of the chapter, a review of basic concepts, such as *sociolinguistic marker* and *sociolinguistic variable,* was made. Based on the data in Table 16, *Generalized Presentation of Some Basic East Bulgarian Uncodified Variants of Sociolinguistic Variables in Works by Bulgarian Scholars,* and the research by Ginka Karabelova, Observations on the Specifics of Plovdiv Urban Speech, the doctoral candidate chose to study the frequency of occurrence of ten variables. D. Marinkova concluded that the most frequent was the use of the definite articular morpheme *-тъ* in feminine nouns ending in a consonant (*есентъ, солтъ*), the use of aorist verb forms with thematic vowel -**а-/-ъ-** instead of **-о-** (*отидах/отидъх; излязах/излязъх*), as well as the reduction of wide vowels, while the least frequent was the use of a hard consonant before the definite article in singular masculine nouns (*лекарът, учителът*) or before the ending for first person singular and third person plural of first or second conjugation verbs in the present tense (*вървъ, правъ*), as well as the use of the pronominal forms *мъ, тъ, съ*. Here, the doctoral candidate correctly noted that the statistical data on the frequency of occurrence of the selected variables in the speech of Plovdiv residents were the result of the number of people included in the research, the influence of the openly visible microphone, the environment, etc., and that expanding the research or changing some of the factors may lead to different results.

The conclusion (pp. 252 – 259) summarizes the results of the research and according to some of the signs proposed by N. Mechkovskaya and V. Vinogradov to classify language situations the Plovdiv language situation can be characterized as multicomponent, demographically disbalanced, unbalanced, and diglossic (see the full list of characteristics in Table 26).

The list of references cites 141 sources in Bulgarian, English, and Russian.

At the end of this part of the opinion, I can summarize that doctoral candidate D. Marinkova has good knowledge of the research problem, worked hard to get acquainted with different points of view of Bulgarian and foreign scholars on the typology of language situations and the specifics of their components, and conducted empirical research using the methods of traditional and perceptual sociolinguistics to present the current state of the Plovdiv language

situation. My impressions of the thesis and the work of the doctoral candidate are very good, and I cannot fail to mention once again the large volume of activities carried out for the writing of the thesis.

3. Notes, recommendations, and questions

In view of the publication of the thesis, I would like to make some notes and recommendations:
 - To me, the main advantage, though also a prerequisite for criticism, is the huge amount of information on various key concepts in the thesis. It prevented D. Marinkova in the first chapter, where the main theoretical overview is, from being sufficiently categorical about which of the theses and definitions presented she accepted, and this also influenced the rest of the thesis, for example, what is meant by *first language* and is it first in chronological or functional terms? And is the first language always the native one? The interpretation of this fact will affect the interpretation of the characteristics of the language situation as well as the scaling of the language formations in the attitudes.

- With reference to the previous note, I would recommend some restructuring of data from the second and third chapters, with some theoretical parts being moved to the first chapter or the beginning of the relevant chapters, for example, the statement by A. Pachev for a strong dependence between *ethnic group* and *native language* motivates the alignment between *language* and *ethnos* when presenting the dynamics in the language situation components through demographic data from the late 19th and early 20th century, where the ethnic composition of the residents of Plovdiv was presented, but there was no data on their native language compared to the data found in the 1956, 1992, 2001, 2011, and 2021 censuses. If the quoted statement by A. Pachev came before the presentation of the statistical data, the confusion resulting from the fact that there is not always a causal relationship between self-determination and language would be avoided.

- The separate groups of bibliographical sources can be united, and the citation style can be unified. This would also lead to the elimination of errors such as Yosifova, R. (2021) (source 14 from the list of electronic sources). R. Yosifova's research dates to 1991, as can be seen from the cover of the scanned collection posted on the site containing the source. Here, the author could also consider bibliographic layout of other electronic sources according to the data from the files scanned, and not metadata from sites.

4. Abstract

The abstract (totalling 39 pages) indicates the main points of the structure and content of the doctoral thesis, as well as the contributions of D. Marinkova to the research problem.

5. Assessment of the publications and the personal contribution of the doctoral candidate

The published articles examine various aspects of the doctoral thesis and are related to the object and subject of the research. D. Marinkova successfully used the methods of sociolinguistics to complete the research and establish the typology of the language situation in the city of Plovdiv, thus contributing to the completion of information on the current state of the language situations in major Bulgarian cities. According to the attached protocol, no plagiarism was found in the thesis.

6. Conclusion

Based on what was presented in points 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, I declare my positive assessment of the reviewed thesis, Typological Characteristics of the Language Situation in the City of Plovdiv, by D. Marinkova. In my estimation, the thesis contains scientific and applied results that are an original contribution to science and meet the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the regulations for its implementation, and the relevant regulations of the University of Sofia. Therefore, I confidently propose that the esteemed jury confer a doctoral degree to D. Marinkova in professional field *2.1 Philology (Bulgarian Language – Sociolinguistics).*

29/05/2025   **Expert Opinion by**: ....

Associate Professor Vladislav Marinov. PhD