

**SOFIA UNIVERSITY „ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI“**

**FACULTY OF SLAVIC STUDIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF BULGARIAN LANGUAGE**

## **ABSTRACT**

**for awarding the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“,  
Professional Field 2.1 Philology (Bulgarian Language – Sociolinguistics)**

**on the topic:**

**Typological Characteristics of the Language Situation in  
the City of Plovdiv**

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**Sofia**

**2025**

The dissertation was examined and recommended for public defense by the Department of Bulgarian Language at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ on February 25, 2025.

The dissertation comprises a total of 278 pages, of which 259 are the main scientific text, including 26 tables, 2 graphs, 2 maps, 2 figures, and 16 pages of bibliography.

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The defense of the dissertation will take place on 26.06.2025, at 13:00 hrs, in Room № 1, Rectorate at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **I. Object, Subject, Objectives, Goals, and Methods of the Research**

#### **1. Object of the Research**

The dissertation is devoted to the typological characteristics of the language situation in the city of Plovdiv, considered as a complex system of historically conditioned and socially determined linguistic interactions. The object of the research is the language situation in the city, and the subject – its typological features, related to the dynamics of linguistic diversity, sociocultural factors, and the communicative practices of the local population. The historical development that determines the changes in the urban language situation and influences its current state is also taken into account.

Plovdiv is one of the oldest cities in Europe, with a rich historical, cultural, and ethnolinguistic background that significantly influences the formation of its language situation. The diversity of ethnic groups, the historical contacts among different cultures, and the social changes over the centuries contribute to the multilingual character of the urban environment. The language situation in Plovdiv is the result of a complex interaction between the official Bulgarian language and the languages of various ethnic and social groups, considering both historical processes and the dynamics of contemporary communication. The research aims to analyze these interactions through a systematic review of historical and contemporary data, paying special attention to the prestige of different languages as perceived by the residents of Plovdiv, as well as to diglossia and bilingualism.

#### **2. Aims and objectives of the study**

The main aim of the dissertation is to investigate and classify the linguistic situation in Plovdiv according to several significant typological features, tracing its historical development and analyzing the contemporary factors influencing its typological characteristics.

To accomplish this goal, the dissertation sets itself several main tasks.

The first task is subordinated to the need to define the notion of „linguistic situation“ in the context of the variety of sociolinguistic views on its essence and on the scope of the elements that enter into it. This task implies analyzing basic concepts and classifications of types of linguistic situations.

The adoption of a definition of the concept of „language situation“ as a basic element of the theoretical basis of the present dissertation requires that other concepts and terms related to „language situation“ and necessary for the characterization and typology according to certain features of the contemporary language situation in the city of Plovdiv, e.g. structural forms of language existence, national language, official language, literary language, literary norm and its codification, dialect, mesolect, be presented and analyzed from a sociolinguistic point of view. Videnov (1990), etc. This forms the second main task of the dissertation.

The third task of the present study is to trace the historical development of the linguistic situation in Plovdiv and the influence of various historical, social, and demographic factors on it. This would contribute to clarifying the questions of how these factors have influenced the dynamics of the typological features of the linguistic situation in the city over time and how it has come to its current state.

The fourth task, which can be defined as a leading one, is to investigate and analyze the typological characteristics of the linguistic situation in the city, applying selected typological criteria established in sociolinguistics: the degree of linguistic and ethnolinguistic diversity, the relative demographic power of languages, their communicative role, their linguistic features and their legal status.

The fifth task involves a study of the attitudes of contemporary residents of the city of Plovdiv towards the prestige of the languages of the historically settled ethnic groups. The implementation of this task is carried out through a non-representative survey.

The sixth task of the dissertation is to carry out an empirical study with regard to the Bulgarian language of the main uncodified variants of sociolinguistic variables, which, according to the observations and informants' records, are the most widespread in the Plovdiv urban linguistic situation and this sense are representative of it.

### **3. Methods of collection and processing of the empirical material**

In order to achieve a comprehensive and objective analysis of the linguistic situation in Plovdiv, the dissertation research is based on a combination of theoretical and empirical methods and approaches. Among the leading approaches is the analysis of the scientific literature, mainly (but not only) of major sociolinguistic studies devoted to the language situation and to related linguistic phenomena and concepts, as well as publications related to the typology of language situations according to significant classification criteria.

The typological method is applied to the classification of the linguistic situation in Plovdiv on the basis of criteria established in sociolinguistics.

The historical-sociological method makes it possible to trace the demographic and historical changes that have influenced the development of the specific characteristics of the language situation in the city.

The methods used to collect empirical material include:

- Extraction of empirical sociological and demographic data on the population of the city. The population of Plovdiv, its ethnic composition, and the mother tongue (a term used in official censuses) of the city's inhabitants for the period from the first recorded census of Plovdiv to the 2021 census;

- a non-representative survey of the city's inhabitants to ascertain attitudes towards the different ethnic languages that are part of the city's contemporary linguistic situation; - recordings of informal speech with a relatively low degree of attention of the informant to his speech behaviour despite the apparent

microphone, the so-called in sociolinguistics „observer's paradox“ (see Labov 1972a, 1972b; Videnov 1982, 1990; Angelov 1999) in this case being overcome to some extent by t. The so-called „involved“ observation (see Videnov 1990) (acquaintances, relatives, friends are recorded), as well as informants' speech recordings under increased attention to one's speech behavior, not only due to the obvious microphone, but also due to the task of reading a short written text. In this case, speech in two types of situations, differing according to the factor „degree of regulation of attention relative to own speech“, which are defined by W. Labov as „stylistic differences“ (Angelov 1999: 45-46).

The main methods of treatment of the empirical material that were used in the dissertation are as follows:

Основните методи на обработка на емпиричния материал, които са използвани в дисертационния труд, са следните:

- Statistical processing and sociolinguistic analysis of empirical data from the population censuses conducted in the city of Plovdiv, enabling the identification of patterns and trends in the local linguistic landscape;
- Statistical processing and sociolinguistic analysis of data from a non-representative survey, aimed at examining public attitudes toward various ethnic languages within the contemporary language situation in Plovdiv;
- Sociolinguistic analysis of empirical material derived from speech recordings of informants from Plovdiv.

The selection criteria and profiles of the informants are presented in Chapter Three of the dissertation.

## **Brief Overview of the Dissertation**

### **Chapter One**

#### **Linguistic Situation (pp. 11–104)**

The first chapter of the dissertation presents the theoretical foundations for studying the main object of the research. It is structured as follows:

1. Key concepts and terms necessary for defining the notion of linguistic situation from a sociolinguistic perspective
2. The essence of the concept „linguistic situation“
3. Typological classifications of linguistic situations
4. Major studies dedicated to the linguistic situation in Bulgaria or in specific settlements
5. Selected studies on the linguistic situation in other countries or regions

Chapter One focuses on the definition of the notion of linguistic situation and the typological classifications of linguistic situations, as well as on the historical context of the formation of this notion in sociolinguistics. The aim is to clarify the nature of the notion of linguistic situation and its role in the study of sociolinguistic interactions by tracing the development of views on it in the scientific literature and highlighting its key features. In relation to this goal, the tasks we aim to realize are to present the main definitions of the notion of linguistic situation and to trace the development of the understanding of the scope of this notion chronologically. In this way, the theoretical framework for further analyses related to the historical factors that influenced the formation of the linguistic situation in the city of Plovdiv and the typological characteristics that distinguish it today within the linguistic situation of Bulgaria is established.

Socially determined speech variation, which is observed in different cities, is one of the most frequently studied objects in Bulgarian sociolinguistics in the theoretical aspect (Videnov 1982, 1990, 2000) and empirical perspective (Baichev, Videnov 1989; Videnov 1993, 1998; Grigorova 1991, Bachvarova

1996, Kanevska-Nikolova 1998; Angelov 1999, Alexova 2000, Dimitrova 2004, Alexieva 2008, Kancheva 2008, Apostolova 2020, etc.). In previous sociolinguistic field studies, the focus has been mainly on the variation of linguistic formations (structural forms of existence of a language) or of individual elements of these formations (i.e. on the dynamics of their elements within a linguistic system) in Bulgarian language communication and less often on the variation of linguistic systems (different languages or dialects) in localities or communities in Bulgaria characterized by bilingualism (e.g. Angelov, Marshall 2006, Kyuchukov 2007, Marinov 2009, etc.). In Bulgarian sociolinguistics, empirical research has focused mainly on stratification variation, linked to the socio-demographic heterogeneity of society, and less often on situational variation, directly linked to the parameters of the communicative act (e.g. the degree of concentration of the speaker's attention on his speech, the degree of formality or preparedness of the communicative act, etc.).

In a few works (e.g., Angelov 1999), the analysis of variation is based on both stratification factors and factors related to contextual style (in the sense in which W. Labov uses the term „contextual style“) (as cited in Alexova 2009: 79).

Before examining the notion of linguistic situation from a sociolinguistic perspective, Chapter One turns to some basic concepts and terms in order to provide conceptual clarity to enable a deeper understanding of the dynamics of linguistic processes in the urban linguistic situation. The subsections of Chapter One of the dissertation deal with concepts such as national language, official language, literary language, literary norm, codification, mesolect, dialect, diglossia, bilingualism, etc., which are significant from a sociolinguistic point of view for clarifying the notion of language situation.

The concept of literary language occupies a central place in linguistic terminology, and there are numerous definitions without a single universally accepted definition.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the national language represents a set of forms in which the language exists (Videnov 2000: 140), referred to by M. Videnov as *language formations*. According to the scholar, the emergence of the *national literary language* formation marks the beginning of the decline of traditional territorial dialects. Industrialization and the associated concentration of populations from different dialectal regions have led to the disappearance of numerous dialectal features, which gradually give way to the literary formation (Videnov 2000: 155). The literary language, dialects, and supradialectal formations are viewed as varieties of the national language by D. Ivanova (Ivanova 2017: 24).

There is a rich scholarly literature on the nature and distinctive characteristics of literary language. Since a detailed review of the various opinions is not the direct task of this dissertation, only basic views are presented.

Chapter One of the study discusses the notion of norm, which is necessary to examine not only because there are certain differences in the views of individual scholars, but also because sociolinguistic interpretation is significant for the purposes of the study, which seeks to investigate the linguistic situation in the city of Plovdiv. Without examining the notion of literary norm, it is not possible to formulate the sociolinguistic variables whose variants are established by taking into account the existing literary norm (language standard) and by comparing it. For this reason, the first subpart of Chapter One includes Bulgarian sociolinguists' views on this notion.

After some basic issues related to the literary language, its norms and codification have been discussed, with an emphasis on the sociolinguistic view of them, the sociolinguistic interpretation of the forms of existence of a language, the sociolinguistic view of Bulgarian territorial dialects, the essence of the concept of mesolect, the relation between the concepts of diglossia and bilingualism are also presented in Part One of the dissertation.

An examination of dialects reveals their role as the basis for linguistic diversity. Plovdiv is the centre of many migratory waves, which include people from different regions of Bulgaria. This creates conditions for interaction between Eastern and Western dialect features. For example, differences in Javanese inflection and vocal synchronism may be reflected in the speech practice of the inhabitants, influencing their choice between local and literary norms.

The dialectal basis of urban speech in Plovdiv is a key element in understanding the contemporary linguistic situation. It shows how regional features of the Bulgarian language interact and adapt in the context of a multicultural and multilingual city. This interaction between dialectal and literary norms not only highlights the richness of linguistic diversity in Plovdiv but also contributes to the formation of the city's unique linguistic identity.

According to Mihail Videnov, the term „mesolect“ (from Greek μέσος, meaning middle) is usually used to describe the situation in modern Bulgarian cities. It is used to refer to those interdialects which have a more special sociolinguistic status, i.e., stand between the literary formation (its colloquial variant) and dialects. According to Videnov, it can be assumed that the term „mesolect“ is synonymous with „supradialect“. The convenience, according to the author, lies in the fact that it can be contrasted with the term „acrolect“ (from Greek ακρος, meaning high). According to Videnov, during the Renaissance, when there was not yet an established literary formation, certain regions in northeastern Bulgaria emanated their own acrolectus, which were essentially urban speeches carried by the emerging stratum of spiritual leaders. As Videnov stresses, when there is an established literary formation, the acrolect has the status of a mesolect. The author thinks that the term „interdialect“ is not very suitable for sociolinguistic research because it does not emphasize supradialectality with its etymology and suggests that it is some kind of intermediate dialect on the level of other traditional territorial dialects (Videnov 2000: 159).

In addition to the concepts of mesolect and urban speech, Mihail Videnov also examines the related terms *acrolect* (from Greek – „high“), which, according to Videnov, characterized urban speech during the Bulgarian National Revival, and *koiné* (from Greek – „common“). The scholar emphasizes that nowadays in Bulgaria it is not appropriate to speak of *koinés*, as the relevant forms are in fact inter-dialectal convergences with the status of mesolects (Videnov 2000: 159–160).

Sociolinguistics actively investigates situations in which a language is perceived by its speakers as having a higher status than another, as well as cases where a particular variety of a language is regarded as more prestigious compared to another. Such instances of the hierarchical organization of languages or language forms based on social perception are defined by sociolinguists as situations of *diglossia*.

At first glance, *diglossia* (of Greek origin) and *bilingualism* (of Latin origin) seem to denote the same phenomenon – the use of two languages – but sociolinguistics draws a clear distinction between the two. *Bilingualism* refers to the competence in two languages, while *diglossia* describes a situation in which two (or more) languages are hierarchically ranked in terms of status or prestige, or two varieties of the same language are socially stratified. In such cases, there exists a form of subordination between them as perceived by the language community (Aleksova 2014 – online source).

After examining the basic concepts that are necessary for defining the notion of linguistic situation from a sociolinguistic point of view, Part I of the dissertation examines the nature of the term linguistic situation in diachronic and synchronic terms.

According to Mikhail Videnov, the term „linguistic situation“ has long existed in Western European science. M. Videnov points out that already in the Middle Ages, colonizing countries were interested in the languages, dialects, and pathos of the conquered countries and peoples in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Information about the languages of the indigenous populations was useful and was taken into account when forming pioneering decisions towards a given country (Videnov 2000: 195).

In more recent times, the linguistic situation has become an object of study by linguists in relation to the determination of language policy in a given country. According to M. Videnov, in the nineteenth century, linguistics already had a methodology for studying the language situation (Videnov 2000: 195).

The linguistic situation is one of the basic concepts in the modern theory of literary languages. Research on its individual aspects is ongoing, and they are closely related to the concrete linguistic reality in different societies (Videnov 2019: 60).

Angel Pachev, in his book „A Little Encyclopedia of Sociolinguistics“, defines the notion of „linguistic situation“ as „a particular type of interaction between languages and their forms of existence in the social life of any people at a given stage of their historical development“ (Pachev 1993: 74).

On the other hand, Mihail Videnov uses the term „linguistic formations“ and in his work „Introduction to Sociolinguistics“ defines the notion of „linguistic situation“ as a set of languages and dialects in a given state association, region or area, and even in a separate locality, their social and functional distribution, also related to language policy. The author stresses that the linguistic situation is not a static phenomenon, and the definition must necessarily reflect that internal dynamics within and between formations are included. When considering the problems related to the language situation of a given locality in a given period, it is necessary to include in the scope of the concept the formations of all languages that coexist and interact in a given ethnic community or in a given administrative-territorial association (Videnov 2000:199).

According to Todor Boyadzhiev in his article „The Language Situation in Bulgaria in Historical and Contemporary Perspective and the European Language Policy“, the language situation is the state and use of language in its different

varieties - literary language, dialects, social speeches, and slang. It is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that changes according to historical, social, and cultural conditions. In different periods, the linguistic situation has been influenced by processes such as industrialization, migration, and globalization, which have intensified the interaction between different forms of the national language (Boyadzhiev 2008: 1).

According to the author, the written language plays a fundamental role in the consolidation of society, serving not only as a means of communication but also as a symbol of national identity. It is important to maintain and develop it through a targeted language policy that includes its standardisation and the regulation of its relations with other forms of language, including minority languages (Boyadzhiev 2008: 1).

In Krasimira Aleksova's article „The language situation in Sofia against the background of the language situation in Bulgaria (on data on ethnolinguistic diversity)“, the author notes that the term „language situation“ is initially defined as a set of data on the number, type and character of languages, dialects and their speakers, passes through adding the emphasis on the functioning of language formations in a given community, their interactions, hierarchy and stratification, and reaches the addition of public attitudes about the prestige of language(s) and the different structural and non-structural forms of their existence, without forgetting the language politics of the respective association (Aleksova 2015).

The concept of „linguistic situation“ in the presented dissertation also covers the issues related to the generation of tensions in the functioning of different linguistic formations existing in a given territory - be it a country, a smaller or larger region, a locality, etc. These tensions are determined by a multitude of factors that arise from the interaction between different languages and between the forms of existence of each language. Most often, these factors are based on the difference in social status between speakers of different

languages or dialects, as well as the language policy being pursued (Aleksova 2015).

The primary objective of the study is to identify and classify the linguistic situation in the city of Plovdiv according to significant typological criteria. The classification parameters proposed by Viktor Vinogradov and Nina Mechkovskaya are regarded as the most suitable for characterizing the linguistic landscape of Plovdiv. By applying the models outlined by Vinogradov and Mechkovskaya, the research traces the historical development of the linguistic situation in Plovdiv and examines its impact on the current state of language use in the city.

In the dictionary entry „Linguistic Situation“ (LJC 1990), Viktor Vinogradov outlines the distinguishing features that serve as the basis for constructing a typology of linguistic situations.

In his encyclopedic article, Vinogradov presents three types of criteria that underlie the typological classification of various linguistic situations: quantitative, qualitative, and evaluative.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, N. Mechkovskaya defines the linguistic situation as a multifaceted and multi-parametric phenomenon. She notes that the features relevant to characterizing linguistic situations are diverse and not hierarchical. Mechkovskaya emphasizes that a unified, multi-feature classification of the entire range of linguistic situations across the world is unlikely to be possible; however, an overview can be carried out based on a number of typologically significant criteria.

Mechkovskaya proposes a systematic approach to characterizing linguistic situations, identifying eight key parameters: the degree of linguistic and ethno-linguistic diversity; the relative demographic and communicative strength of the languages; their legal status; the degree of genetic relatedness among the languages; the ethnic origins of the language; and society's perception of the prestige of the languages in use.

The typological models proposed for analyzing linguistic situations are applied in this study, which examines the contemporary linguistic landscape of the city of Plovdiv.

The linguistic situation in various regions and countries is a common subject of investigation by numerous linguists, particularly in states characterized by a diversity of languages spoken by different ethnic groups. Chapter One of the dissertation reviews key studies conducted by Bulgarian sociolinguists, as well as selected research focusing on linguistic situations in other countries or regions.

The research conducted by Bulgarian sociolinguists on the linguistic situation in Bulgaria focuses on the analysis of sociolinguistic markers, the influence of social groups, regional and dialectal variation, as well as language attitudes (Videnov 1982, 1990, 1993, 2000; Baychev & Videnov 1989, 1998; Grigorova 1991; Bachvarova 1996; Kanevska-Nikolova 1998; Angelov 1999; Aleksova 2000; Dimitrova 2004; Aleksieva 2008; Kuncheva 2008; Apostolova 2012, 2020). These works offer a multi-layered approach to examining language behavior across different urban and social environments.

The linguistic situation in various regions and countries is a frequent subject of study among many linguists, particularly in states where linguistic diversity is prominent due to the presence of multiple ethnic groups.

A substantial body of literature examines linguistic situations in different regions and countries. Linguists and sociolinguists place particular emphasis on nations and territories characterized by multilingualism among diverse ethnic communities.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **TYPOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION IN THE CITY OF PLOVDIV**

In **Chapter Two** of the dissertation (pp. 105–195), the linguistic situation in the city of Plovdiv is analyzed through the application of key typological classification criteria, which can be grouped into quantitative, qualitative, and evaluative categories. These include the degree of linguistic and ethno-linguistic diversity, the relative demographic and communicative strength of the languages, the number of functionally dominant languages, the linguistic nature of the so-called idioms, the degree of genetic and typological relatedness among the languages, their legal status, as well as the prestige of individual linguistic entities and their representation in contemporary Plovdiv as perceived by the city's residents.

Through a historical perspective on these criteria and a comparative analysis, it is possible to address the question of whether there is a dynamic shift in the relationships between languages and linguistic formations in Plovdiv, and to determine whether ethno-linguistic diversity in the city is increasing or decreasing.

To achieve this objective, data from the National Statistical Institute (NSI) have been used, including census results and voluntary self-identification by ethnic affiliation and mother tongue, as well as information from the NSI's digital library (<http://www.nsi.bg/>).

Chapter Two presents brief historical data regarding the demographic characteristics of the city of Plovdiv, with a focus on changes in the demographic composition, ethnic groups, and the evolving representation of these groups over the years.

As one of the oldest and most significant cities in Bulgaria, Plovdiv serves as an example of a complex linguistic situation shaped by cultural, historical, and social processes. Over the centuries, the city has developed as a crossroads of

diverse cultures, which is reflected in its multilingualism and the richness of its linguistic environment (Shishkov 2016:71).

During the Bulgarian National Revival, the foundations of national identity were laid in Plovdiv, with the Bulgarian language being established as a key element of that identity. During this period, the language began to undergo standardization under the influence of the literary tradition and the social need for cultural revival. Nevertheless, dialects—particularly those of the Rhodope and Thracian regions—continued to play an important role in everyday communication.

Following the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, the city underwent significant demographic changes. Migration from rural areas to urban centers, including Plovdiv, is considered a major factor contributing to certain transformations in the city's linguistic situation.

Historical data from the Revival period and the post-Liberation era suggest that the diversity of ethnic groups and changes in their population size have led to notable linguistic dynamics. Plovdiv emerged as a multilingual city, where various languages are spoken within different communities, highlighting its role as a commercial and cultural bridge between East and West. Linguistic diversity is a natural outcome of the city's economic activity and social interaction, which together shape its rich cultural environment.

Plovdiv's rich historical heritage is one of the key factors behind its present-day ethnic diversity.

The historical development of the city's ethnic communities—Bulgarians, Turks, Roma, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews—is examined in Chapter Two, with particular attention given to demographic changes and their territorial distribution across the city.

In Chapter Two of the dissertation, the contemporary linguistic situation in the city of Plovdiv is analyzed through the application of the qualitative,

quantitative, and evaluative typological criteria proposed by Viktor Vinogradov and Nina Mechkovskaya.

The first part of the analysis presents the linguistic and ethno-linguistic diversity in Plovdiv by identifying the number and distribution of linguistic entities in the city. The discussion focuses on whether the linguistic situation is monocomponent, where a single language dominates entirely, or polycomponent, involving the coexistence of multiple languages.

The relationship between linguistic and ethno-linguistic diversity is examined, and the analysis explores whether Plovdiv displays a monolingual monocomponent situation or a multicomponent (bilingual or multilingual) context in which various ethnic groups maintain their languages. In doing so, the study investigates whether ethno-linguistic diversity in the city is increasing or declining.

In this section, the demographic strength of the languages is examined through an analysis of the numerical dominance of certain languages and their influence on their social roles. The analysis is based on the distinction between demographically balanced situations, where several languages have approximately the same number of speakers using them as a first language, and demographically unbalanced situations, in which one language has a clear numerical superiority in terms of native speakers.

In parallel, the communicative strength of the languages spoken within the territory of Plovdiv is also explored. The study analyzes the domains of public life in which different languages are used and assesses whether these languages fulfill equivalent communicative functions.

Among the qualitative typological criteria used to analyze the linguistic situation in Plovdiv is the linguistic nature of the so-called idioms described by Vinogradov—specifically, whether they represent variants of the same language or whether more than one distinct language is present.

In this context, the current section examines the genetic relatedness of the languages spoken by the local population of Plovdiv, taking into account whether these languages are related (genetically linked) or unrelated (without a common origin).

The functional equivalence of the languages, as another qualitative criterion, is analyzed through the legal status of the languages spoken by members of different ethnic groups in Plovdiv. The focus is on whether these languages enjoy equal legal (including constitutional) status or whether there are differences in their official recognition.

Chapter Two also investigates the origin of the dominant language within Plovdiv's linguistic situation, determining whether it is locally rooted or introduced (imported). This enables the application of yet another typological criterion to describe the city's linguistic context. Based on this criterion, a distinction is made between endoglossic situations, where the dominant language is the native language of the local population (considering the historically complex ethnic composition of Plovdiv), and exoglossic situations, in which the dominant language has been introduced from outside and is used as a prestige language.

In addition to the quantitative and qualitative criteria, the analysis includes evaluative characteristics of the linguistic situation in Plovdiv. This section explores the prestige associated with the languages spoken in the city and assesses whether a diglossic situation is present, where one language is perceived as more prestigious, or a non-diglossic situation, in which the languages enjoy roughly equal prestige according to the language attitudes of surveyed Plovdiv residents.

An important aspect of the analysis is the linguistic loyalty of Plovdiv's inhabitants—the degree of attachment to their native language and attitudes toward foreign languages. For this purpose, data from a Google Forms survey were analyzed, examining residents' perceptions of the prestige of various languages in the city.

This comprehensive framework forms the basis for a more detailed examination of each criterion used to typologize the linguistic situation in Plovdiv, with the analyses grounded in specific empirical (including statistical) data.

**THIRD CHAPTER**  
**AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF BASIC SOCIAL LINGUISTIC CHANGES**  
**IN THE FRAMEWORK OF A-FORMATION IN THE**  
**CONTEMPORARY PLOVDIVIAN LANGUAGE SITUATION**  
**(Concerning the Bulgarian language)**

The primary focus of Chapter Three of the dissertation (pp. 196–251) is on those non-codified variants of sociolinguistic variables which, according to our empirical research, are the most widely distributed and relatively resistant to suppression when speakers become more self-aware of their speech. In this sense, they are considered fundamental and representative of the speech behavior of Plovdiv residents, whose language use reflects various colloquial realizations of the so-called *a-formation* (see Videnov 2000: 161).

To carry out the task of investigating these variants, the concepts of *sociolinguistic variable* and *sociolinguistic marker* are first discussed, as they provide the theoretical foundation for the research. Following this, the dissertation presents empirical studies on the most characteristic non-codified variants of sociolinguistic variables within the framework of the *a-formation* in the contemporary urban linguistic situation in Plovdiv, concerning the Bulgarian language.

The selection of the empirically studied core sociolinguistic variables within the *A-type a-formation* in the city of Plovdiv was based on: theoretical and empirical studies in Bulgarian sociolinguistics that examine variants of sociolinguistic variables; previous research on the colloquial speech of Plovdiv residents; and analysis of speech recordings collected from informants in Plovdiv specifically for this dissertation.

Among the speakers exhibiting the Plovdiv-type *a-formation*, several distinct groups can be identified. These include, for example, representatives of the local philological intelligentsia, whose oral speech most closely aligns with codified norms, as for this group, the standard language serves as a tool for

professional fulfillment; representatives of the non-philological intelligentsia, whose speech may display a slightly greater divergence from the codified language in comparison with the previous group; and other social strata in Plovdiv, whose speech can be classified under particular graduated realizations of the *a-formation*.

Using speech recordings of Plovdiv residents, this study examines the extent to which the individual analyzed idiolects belonging to the *a-formation* in the city approximate the codified literary norm. To that end, specific data were extracted concerning the realization of either codified or non-codified variants of six phonetic, two accentological, and four morphological (including phonomorphological) sociolinguistic variables.

The following non-codified variants of sociolinguistic markers are identified as phonetic features within the *A-type a-formation* in the urban linguistic context of Plovdiv concerning the Bulgarian language:

- Reduction of unreduced E in И.
- Softening of consonant sounds before front vowels.
- Ekavi imperfect = aorist forms of the verb to be - *бех, бешу, бешу, бехми, бехми, беха* (based on the study of G. Karabelova (see Karabelova 1995).
- Forms for the past imperfect tense with an ekave pronunciation - *четèх, непèх* (based on the study of G. Karabelova 1995).
- Hardness of the consonant before the ending in the 1st l., singular and 3rd l., plural, present tense, mostly in the 2nd conjugation, e.g., *сп`ят (спят), раб`отът (работят)*.

As significant accentological uncoded variants of sociolinguistic markers within the *a-formation* are presented here, aorist forms and forms of the aorist active participle with the accent on the aorist vowel (mostly in uninflected aorist forms and aorist participles).

As phonomorphological (morphological) uncoded variants of sociolinguistic variables, the following main speech features can be indicated:

- Definite forms with the stressed article – **ТѢ** - of feminine singular nouns ending in a consonant.
- Aorist forms with the thematic vowel -**Ѣ** - instead of - **О** -.
- Particles for forming the future tense **ША, ШѢ**, instead of **ше**
- Use of the pronominal forms **мѣ, тѣ, сѣ**

The selected non-codified variants of sociolinguistic variables are traced in the speech of individuals who were born and reside in the city of Plovdiv, as well as in the speech of informants born in the eastern parts of the Bulgarian linguistic territory near Plovdiv, as defined by the Yat isogloss zone, but who have been living in Plovdiv for more than 20 years. This duration is considered sufficiently long for adaptation to the urban speech of Plovdiv to have taken place. For this reason, all these informants are grouped into a single category. The decision is also justified by the observed similarities in their speech, reflected in the presence of a relatively consistent set of non-codified variants of the studied sociolinguistic variables.

The total number of informants in this empirical study is 69 individuals.

<sup>1</sup> Among them are representatives of Plovdiv's intelligentsia with higher education, as well as members of the younger generation of Plovdiv residents, who are currently studying at school or university. In the analysis of each idiolect, the key socio-demographic characteristics of each interviewee have been recorded.

The significant socio-demographic characteristics of the informants for the present empirical study: gender, age, place of birth (in Plovdiv, or the areas near the city, falling within the eastern parts of the Bulgarian language territory according to the Yat isogloss), permanent residence in Plovdiv (including those not born in Plovdiv, but in the nearby areas, but residing in the city for more than 20 years) and educational level, are predetermined, but the individuals themselves

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to Eng. Gancho Ganev and Marieta Eseva for their assistance in collecting the empirical material.

are randomly selected. This indicates that the selection of informants is carried out using the method of random purposive selection. The indicated socio-demographic characteristics of the informants are perceived from the perspective of sociolinguistic and statistical analysis as independent variables, influencing the studied sociolinguistic variables, which in turn represent dependent variables.

On the basis of observations and analysis of the oral speech of 69 informants from the city of Plovdiv, representatives of the A-formation (A-type), it can be concluded that, as non-codified variants of sociolinguistic variables of the marker type in spoken communication—even in the presence of the microphone effect, which presupposes increased self-monitoring of one's own speech—the following features are observed: reduction of unstressed *E* to *И*; palatalization of consonants before front vowels; use of the stressed definite article form *-ТѢ* with nouns ending in a consonant; aorist forms with the thematic vowel *-А-* or *-Ѣ-* instead of *-О-*; stress shift onto the aorist vowel in non-prefixed aorist forms; use of the future tense particle *ѹа* or *ѹѣ* instead of *ѹе*; and, more rarely, the use of a hard consonant instead of a soft one before the 1st person singular and 3rd person plural present-tense endings of verbs from the first and second conjugation, as well as before the definite article in certain masculine singular nouns.

Empirical data provide grounds to say that in the speech of 69 informants from the city of Plovdiv, native speakers of Bulgarian as a first language, the most stable uncoded variants, which are least subject to suppression and which appear with increased attention to one's speech in both contextual styles, are: nouns of feminine gender, singular, ending in a consonant sound, with the definite article *-ТѢ* under stress, and secondly, aorist forms with the thematic vowel *-А-*/*-Ѣ-* instead of *-О-*.

The reduction of unstressed *E* to *И*, characteristic of Eastern dialects, is also present in the speech of our informants from the a-formation, as this uncoded

variant of a sociolinguistic variable shows a different degree of representation in the sociolinguistic groups represented in the study – the lowest within the studied informants with higher education up to 30 years of age (in 14.29% of them), slightly higher among informants between 30 and 45 years of age (in 38.7% of them), even higher in the group of informants who are pupils and students (in 50% of them) and highest in the group of informants between 60 and 80 years of age (in 62.5% of them). These data indicate an increase in the occurrence of the uncodified variant, which is primarily influenced by age as a demographic factor, while also considering the impact of educational level. It can also be said that the reduction of unstressed *E* to *I* is a marker characteristic of the speech of the studied individuals, which, however, in comparison with the definite article -*ТБ* under stress nouns from the genitive singular ending in a consonant sound and with the aorist forms with thematic vowel -*A/-Б-* instead of -*O-* shows a lower degree of representation in the speech of the informants in the two contextual styles. And this also allows the view, valid for the 69 idiolects studied, that the reduction of *E* to *I* is relatively more subject to suppression in the presence of an open microphone than the two uncodified variants of sociolinguistic variables mentioned above.

Even less frequently attested in the speech of our informants are the palatalization of consonants before the front vowels *E* and *I*, and the shift of stress onto the aorist vowel in non-prefixed aorist forms. Although these features are characteristic of the Plovdiv urban linguistic setting, in the present empirical study of the speech of the 69 A-formation (A-type) informants, they appear to be more susceptible according to the recording data to restriction within both contextual styles, which imply more careful speech behavior due to the presence of an open microphone. These are generalized findings valid for the studied group of speakers, while it is undoubtedly the case that other factors may exert influence, factors which could not be accounted for on the basis of the available recordings.

The uncoded variants involving a hard consonant before the ending for the 1st person singular and 3rd person plural present tense of verbs from the first and second conjugation, as well as before the definite article of masculine singular nouns, appear with considerable rarity in the recordings of the idiolects of the 69 informants. These variants are more typical of Western Bulgarian dialects and mesolects, and their presence in the speech of Plovdiv residents, representatives of the local intelligentsia, is not unexpected. In our view, the current distribution of this uncoded variant of a sociolinguistic variable in the Plovdiv urban environment warrants a more extensive empirical investigation.

A richer base of empirical material is also required to trace the stratification of the non-codified variants of the clitic pronouns *mb*, *mb*, *cb*, which were not attested in our recordings but are undoubtedly present in the speech of Plovdiv residents from the A-formation in situations of spontaneous, everyday communication.

The study of non-codified variants in the speech behavior of residents of the city of Plovdiv, who belong to the A-formation, reveals the presence of stable non-codified forms that are difficult to suppress even under conditions of increased attention to speech. Particularly prominent are the stressed definite article forms with *-mb* used with feminine singular nouns ending in a consonant, as well as aorist forms with the thematic vowel *-A-* or *-B-* instead of *-O-*. Next in terms of frequency in the recorded idiolects is the reduction of unstressed „*E*“ to „*I*“. In contrast to these three non-codified variants of sociolinguistic variables, the palatalization of consonants before the front vowels *E* and *I*, and the shift of stress onto the aorist vowel in non-prefixed aorist forms show a low degree of presence in the speech of the studied individuals across both contextual styles.

## **CONCLUSION**

The final section of the study systematizes and analyzes the results obtained through the methods and research approaches used.

The study of the contemporary linguistic situation in Plovdiv reveals a complex network of historical and social factors that have influenced, and continue to influence, the specificity of its typological characteristics. The analyses conducted show that the official Bulgarian language occupies a central place in the city's linguistic situation, but it coexists with a multitude of other languages, which is a reflection of the city's ethnic and cultural multiplicity. Plovdiv.

The dissertation focuses on the typological characteristics of the contemporary urban linguistic situation, which are derived on the basis of sociolinguistically significant classification features. By combining theoretical analysis and empirical research, the study identifies the main factors that determine the linguistic dynamics in Plovdiv. Plovdiv, as well as some significant sociolinguistic variables whose non-linguistic variants are characteristic of the colloquial speech of its inhabitants.

The present study demonstrates that the Plovdiv linguistic situation, both diachronically and synchronically, is not static but is characterized by constant dynamics, determined by the interaction of numerous social, demographic, cultural, and historical factors.

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## **Scientific Contributions of the Dissertation**

1. For the first time, the language situation in the city of Plovdiv is presented and analyzed based on sociolinguistically significant quantitative, qualitative, and evaluative indicators. This constitutes a contribution to Bulgarian macro-sociolinguistics.
2. A substantiated analysis of the typological characteristics of the contemporary language situation in Plovdiv during the first two decades of the 21st century has been carried out. The analyses and conclusions are grounded in empirical data (including representative statistical classifications) concerning the ethnic, linguistic, and ethno-linguistic diversity of the city. These data enable the presentation of the relative demographic strength of the languages shaping the contemporary profile of Plovdiv, and facilitate the identification of trends related to ethno-linguistic diversity.
3. The main typological features of the modern language situation in Plovdiv are examined in the context of the typological characteristics of the Bulgarian language situation as a whole, as well as in comparison with the contemporary language situation in Sofia.
4. The language situation in Plovdiv is analyzed for the first time from the perspective of the following typological indicators: „relative communicative strength of the languages,“, number of functionally dominant languages,“, linguistic character of the languages,“, degree of genetic proximity between the languages, “and „legal status of the languages.“This framework enables the extraction of significant typological features of the urban language situation.
5. Based on data from a non-representative survey, the evaluations of Plovdiv residents regarding the extent of presence of different ethnic languages in the contemporary linguistic space of the city are analyzed. Additionally,

respondents' attitudes toward the prestige of ethnic languages traditionally present in Plovdiv's language situation are discussed.

6. The historical development of the language situation in Plovdiv is investigated through the typological indicators „degree of linguistic diversity,“ „degree of ethno-linguistic diversity, “and „relative demographic strength of the languages.“ This approach makes it possible to trace and analyze changes in the urban language situation in Plovdiv from the first censuses of the city's population to the present day.
7. Based on specific empirical data, variants of key sociolinguistic variables (within the framework of the literary-colloquial language continuum) that are widely used in the spoken communication of Plovdiv residents whose first language is Bulgarian are examined. In this sense, they are representative of the contemporary language situation in the city.

### **Publications Related to the Dissertation Topic**

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