

REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. Irena Georgieva Vassileva, New Bulgarian University, scientific field 2.1. Philology, for the degree of Doctor of Science, doctoral programme "General and Comparative Linguistics", NBU, professional field - 2.1. Philology, member of the academic panel by order of the Rector of New Bulgarian University № 3-RK-194/28.04.2023 of the dissertation by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Katya Issa on '**Bulgarian Language South of the Equator. (Sociolinguistic Study of the Language of the Bulgarian Immigrant Community in Sydney, Australia)**'.

Significance of the research topic in scientific and applied terms.

The researched question is extremely important, since the subject under consideration has not been studied **at all**, and in this sense the thesis is pioneering for Bulgarian linguistics and Bulgarian sociolinguistics in particular. At the same time, we are witnessing a process of continuous emigration of Bulgarians abroad, but most studies of what is happening to their language deal with European countries and to some extent to North America (USA and Canada), while the southern hemisphere is ignored.

Justification of the objectives and tasks in the dissertation.

The goals and objectives are clearly and precisely formulated both in terms of the content and scope of the analysis, its results, and their application.

Knowledge of the state of the problem and relevance of the literature used.

The candidate is obviously well acquainted with the scientific literature on the problem, since in the process of analysis, as well as in the theoretical review, she relies on a large number of authors. The approach to working with the sources is critical and demonstrates the author's ability to extract the essentials from the available publications in accordance with the specific needs of the research.

Accuracy in citing a representative number of authors.

Citations and references in the text are correct. The number of sources according to the bibliography is large enough and the publications correspond to the topic, purpose and tasks of the research.

Presence of a substantiated and developed theoretical model of the study.

The research is theoretically based on the sociolinguistic "method of the so-called *included observation*, used in the classical for Bulgarian sociolinguistics and dialectology work "Velikotarnovskiya ezik" (Videnov, Baychev 1999)" (Abstract, p. 6). This choice is adequately justified as the most suitable for the purposes of the study, since it excludes the observer effect. Other tools such as surveys and interviews are also used. All of them make it possible to collect

data on the demographic profile of the surveyed persons and on their attitude towards the Bulgarian language and its use in Australia. In general, however, the goal of the study is approached from a multifaceted perspective, namely: an overview of the emigration history of Bulgarians to Australia, their distribution by place of residence on this large continent, the difference with immigrants in countries closer to our country. Again, in a descriptive, but also extremely critical way, Bulgaria's policies towards immigrants are examined, and especially the role of the Ministry of Education and Science and the teaching materials it has proposed for teaching the children of immigrants at Bulgarian Sunday schools.

Correspondence between the chosen research methodology and the set aims and objectives of the dissertation.

The choice of this combination of approaches provides a comprehensive scope of the parameters that influence the state of the Bulgarian language and its status in the Bulgarian immigrant community in Australia and in particular - in the city of Sydney. Of course, as the author has rightly pointed out several times, the study does not pretend to be *quantitatively comprehensive*, but to present an in-depth *qualitative analysis* of the ongoing processes. Thus, the realization of the main goal of the work is ensured, namely: "to propose a methodology for tracking changes in the native language of Bulgarian immigrants around the world from a theoretical aspect. From a practical aspect, the realization of this methodology is demonstrated through a study of the Bulgarian language situation in the city of Sydney, Australia." (Abstract, p. 4.)

Scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation (description and evaluation), including the presence of an original contribution to science.

1. Brief description of the essence and assessment of the credibility of the material on which the contributions of the dissertation are based.

The materials that serve as the basis of the analysis in the study consist of the results obtained through the various applied methods (listed above). In addition, the results are presented in an easy-to-understand manner through a number of examples and illustrative material in the appendices, thus facilitating comprehension. I should note here that, judging by my own experience, working with records is extremely difficult and time-consuming, especially when working with code-switching informants, so Katya Issa has achieved a lot in this sense.

2. Description of the candidate's contributions and their classification.

The contributions of the dissertation are clearly and accurately described by the author at the end of the dissertation (pages 615 – 616). I find it unnecessary to repeat them here, as I agree with all but one, namely the redefinition of terms related to code-switching in language contact situations (under number 8). On this topic and its terminological system, there are countless publications, at least in English. Thus, the bibliography does not include some theoretically fundamental publications related to the topic of code-switching, such as:

Myers-Scotton, Carol. 1993. *Social Motivation for Code-Switching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.; Myers-Scotton, Carol. 1997. *Duelling Languages: Grammatical Structure in Codeswitching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.; Myers-Scotton, Carol. 2003. "Code-Switching: Evidence for Both Flexibility and Rigidity in Language." In

Bilingualism: Beyond Basic Principles, edited by Jean-Marc Dewaele, Alex Housen, and Li Wei, 189–203. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters

Apart from that, the research is carried out extremely precisely, it is theoretically grounded and coherent, with attention to detail, approaching the problem from many possible perspectives.

I would also like to highlight a few moments that made a particularly strong positive impression on me in the text as a whole. First of all, the unusual use of the first person singular for Bulgarian academic texts. This makes the text sound as a journey diary of a well-thought-out journey, a journey through time and space, a journey of searching for the Bulgarian language in distant Australia. Secondly, there is the sincerely emotional tone of the text, where the author looks for ways and insists on the preservation of the native language in the generations of immigrants. And last, but by no means least, the author's extremely critical, justified and supported by a number of partly absurd examples, attitude towards the teaching materials used to teach the children of the immigrants in the Bulgarian Sunday schools. This criticism is constructive in the sense that specific strategies are offered to overcome the problems.

3. Assessment of the degree of personal involvement of the author in the contributions.

Although she draws on an existing methodology for problem analysis, the candidate skilfully uses it to support her own analyses and conclusions. Going into the smallest details of the data demonstrates that the author has put a lot of effort and worked independently.

4. Assessment of the correspondence between the extended abstract and the main points and contributions of the dissertation.

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

Assessment of publications on the dissertation: number, nature of the publications in which they have been published.

30 publications are listed, most of which relate to aspects of the dissertation. Some of the publications are in international editions, and the rest - in collections published in Bulgaria after their presentation at conferences. This demonstrates interest in the topic developed by the candidate in recent years, as well as her high publication activity. The candidate is a member of professional organizations and has delivered lectures and seminars at foreign universities on various programs.

Citations by other authors, reviews in the academic press, etc.

The candidate has listed nine citations, almost all of them by Bulgarian authors.

Personal qualities of the author.

I have known Katya Issa for many years as one of the founders of the International Sociolinguistic Society and its very active member not only in the organizational but also in the scientific aspect. As a researcher, she demonstrates thoroughness, criticality and diverse interests, primarily related to the teaching of the Bulgarian language to foreigners. I cannot fail to mention her work as a translator from and into Arabic to help the refugees in Bulgaria and, respectively, the Bulgarian institutions involved with them.

Recommendations and comments.

The used method of the so-called included observation to date would be inconsistent with the requirements for disclosure of personal information, regardless of the fact that the identity of the participants remains undisclosed. I recommend that the author, in further research, secure declarations of consent for the use of recordings, even if they are signed post-factum.

In addition, I recommend the publication of important parts of the research in international refereed and indexed journals, as the topic would be of interest to a much wider audience than the Bulgarian one.

Regarding the above criticism of a lack of leading English-language sources, I would recommend, albeit immodestly, the following publication and more specifically the sources cited in it: Yankova, Diana, Irena Vassileva (2013) Functions and Mechanisms of Code-switching in Bulgarian Canadians. In: Etudes Canadiennes / Canadian Studies. Revue interdisciplinaire des etudes canadiennes en France. N° 74. 103-121., freely available at ResearchGate.

Conclusion with a clearly formulated positive or negative evaluation of the dissertation.

My overall assessment of the dissertation, the abstract and the publications by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Katya Issa is positive. She has proved to be an established scholar and practitioner in her field. The dissertation contains both theoretical and applied contributions to the practice of teaching Bulgarian to children of Bulgarian immigrants abroad and the approaches to creating appropriate materials for their education. The structure and content of the submitted dissertation and abstract fully comply with the requirements of the relevant legislation and its implementing regulations at SU. This gives me grounds to propose that the degree of Doctor of Science be awarded to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Katya Issa in professional field *2.1. Philology*.

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