

Dissertation Review

Linguistic and Cultural Markers of National Identity in the Language of Young Bessarabian Bulgarians

Dissertation author: Tsvetelina Tsvetanova-Tsaneva

The reviewed dissertation explores the national identity of young Bulgarians living in Moldova and Ukraine, who have settled based on specific linguo-cultural markers. It is a topical issue which has not been studied until now, and holds both linguistic and cultural significance. The dissertation contains an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, contributions, a bibliography and appendices.

Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva meets the minimum national requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree referred to in Article 26, Paragraphs (2) and (3) of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act.

In Chapter 1, the study begins with a wide theoretical framework, which includes concepts and ideas from the fields of sociology, sociolinguistics, linguoculturology and ethnolinguistics. These concepts relate directly to the formation of national identity and the ways it is reflected in language.

Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva demonstrates deep knowledge of the issues at hand. She explores in detail the concept of identity and the various types of identity (individual and collective, regional and local, social, professional, religious, ethnic, national). She pays close attention to the concept of national identity and its relation to the concepts of nationalism and nation, as well as its relation to language. She also explores the dynamic between language and culture, presenting different notions in that regard.

Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva gives special attention to the cultural component of the semantic structure of words. This issue is important because it also determines the type of methodology she creates to analyse the linguistic and cultural markers of national identity.

The candidate also discusses the concepts of linguistic view of the world and linguistic persona, which are crucial for determining national identity from the perspective of linguoculturology. Furthermore, Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva poses an important question about the role of language in forming national identity, presenting different ideas from the fields of sociology and sociolinguistics, some of which relate directly to her dissertation topic. She also presents various concepts from the field of ethnolinguistics. Especially significant, considering the dissertation topic, are the ethnolinguistic notions of identity, which involve the sociocultural impact on ethnic groups.

In Chapter 2, Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva points to specific characteristics of the multilingual environment, which help form the linguistic persona of young besarabian Bulgarians. She analyses the particularities of their national identity within a state of multilingualism. She also presents the main aspects that frame her research: ways to perceive concepts of national specificity, the native land as a value in the minds of young Bulgarians, the

meaning of national identity in their value system. A research model for the linguocultural markers of their national identity is being demonstrated.

In Chapter 3, Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva explains in detail her methodology and the tools she uses. The methodology is successful and reliable with regard to the drawn conclusions about the national identity of young Bulgarians. The candidate uses a survey, in which she includes several groups of questions. She has also conducted oral interviews.

The survey content is varied and appropriate for its intended purpose. The most important component is the task for interpreting concepts from the Bulgarian concept sphere using the associative experiments method. The survey also includes writing an essay on the subject of "My Homeland".

The prepared surveys ensure objectivity of information about the linguistic and cultural markers of the national identity of young Bulgarians. The survey results are processed using statistical methods (statistics software such as SPSS 16.0 and others); textual analysis of the created texts is also applied. In this chapter, the candidate also explores the impact of a number of factors in forming the identity of the respondents.

Chapter 4 contains the results of the research, presented in detail, on the linguistic and cultural markers of national identity of the young Bulgarians. The candidate analyses associative meanings, which certain concepts evoke in the respondents. The survey includes 18 concepts (such as mother, home, balkan (mountain), evening, man, friend, fate, head, winter, morning, homeland, father, river and others). These concepts are important for the Bulgarian linguistic view of the world and that probably explains why they were selected, even though the candidate does not explicitly point out the selection criteria.

A smart decision has been to determine the core of each concept, accounting for the frequency of each association the respondents make. Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva compares these associations with the meanings of their corresponding word stimuli in the multi-volume Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language and the lexical semantic network BulNet. The descriptions of these meanings could be more precise by using just one source.

Based on the comparison, Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva establishes the degree of familiarity the respondents demonstrate toward the concepts chosen for analysis. She ascertains that the associative meanings of these concepts do not deviate from their orthodox context in the Bulgarian linguistic view of the world. Proceeding further, Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva reaches the important conclusion that in terms of world view young Bulgarians in Moldova do not distinguish themselves from native speakers of Bulgarian within Bulgaria.

The candidate chooses a clever approach in analysing the exhibited familiarity of the young respondents to certain pictures and images of cultural and geographic sites, food and Bulgarian state symbols, and based on it makes further inferences regarding their national identity. The gathered data is subject to a precise statistical analysis, using multiple statistical software programs, which ensures objectivity of the results.

Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva also studies the self-identification of the young respondents in terms of their identity, and establishes that for them most important are the individual (80%) and cultural (76.9%) identity, while national identity is important for 47.5%. Quite useful are also the

studies into other indicators: the respondents' evaluation of other ethnicities, determining the significance of the homeland, determining the positive and negative qualities the respondents associate with Bulgarians, determining the place of Bulgaria in relation to other countries. The candidate carries out a detailed analysis of the respondents' "My Homeland" essays which makes it clear the concept of homeland is of special importance to them.

Based on the presented data, she reaches the following conclusions. Bulgarians in Moldova and Ukraine are conscious of their Bulgarian ethnicity, even though they live in a multilingual environment (p. 195). The analysed essays substantiate the important inference that even though Moldova is the homeland of the young respondents, their nationality is Bulgarian (p. 200).

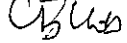
The candidate makes significant effort to study the national identity of young Bulgarians in Moldova and Ukraine and its linguistic and cultural markers, all of which add to the paper's theoretical contributions to the field of linguistics, as well as in a wider cultural sense. Another contribution is the developed methodology for assessing the national identity of young Bulgarians.

The candidate has enough publications (6) on the topic of the dissertation.

The abstract reflects accurately the content of the dissertation.

On this basis of positive merits exhibited in the dissertation, I confidently offer my recommendation to the Honourable Scientific Council to award Tsvetelina Tsvetanova-Tsaneva with a doctoral degree.

12.01.2022

Reviewer: 
Prof. S. Kolkovska