

REVIEW

for the dissertation

LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL MARKERS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE LANGUAGE OF YOUNG BESARABIAN BULGARIANS

for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in
professional field: 2.1 Philology (General and Comparative Linguistics)

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Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Habil Julaiana Stoyanova

The study of the Bulgarian diaspora from the point of view of linguistic and cultural markers of national identity is a topical issue that requires a broad interdisciplinary approach: from the standpoint of general linguistics, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, semiotics, anthropology, ethnolinguistics and linguistics.

In order for a researcher to qualify in such a vast scientific field, which many times exceeds the philological profile, many years of serious efforts are needed, which Tsvetelina Petkova Tsvetanova-Tsaneva has made before enrolling as a doctoral student at the Department of General, Indo-European and Balkan Languages of Sofia University. This is evidenced by the six publications on the dissertation, which were published before 2018. But since I know the several transformations of the text that I am currently evaluating, I can confidently confirm the growth of its author during her doctoral studies at the Department of General, Indo-European and Balkan Linguistics, especially regarding the theoretical and methodological basis of the study. Certainly, the credit for this goes to her research supervisors Assoc. Prof. Dr. E. Tarpomanova and Assoc. Prof. Vl. Milanov, as well as the entire scientific college that supported her in her professional growth.

The general structure of the dissertation is harmonious, taking into account both the requirements of the genre and the specifics of the developed issues. It consists of an introduction, 4 chapters, a conclusion, a description of the contributions, a list of cited literature and 3 appendices. More than 130 sources in Bulgarian, Russian and English are cited.

The introduction presents accurately and in a clear sequence the object, subject, goal and tasks of the research, focusing in detail on the research methods - substantive and statistical. The

main thesis, which is to be proved by author's own research, is formulated here: that the national identity of the young people from our diaspora, born in Moldova or Ukraine, is Bulgarian, although in the conditions of a homeland different from Bulgaria.

The first chapter ("Analysis of the state of the problem", pp. 7-65) presents the main theoretical approaches to the concept of identity - ethnic, national and cultural, considering it in a historical context and in terms of its contemporary understandings. The views of leading foreign (von Humboldt, фон Хумболт, E. Sapira B. Worf, E. Ericson, VI. Vorobyof, F. Palmer, M. Byram, H. Giles, V. Maslovaq etc.) and Bulgarian authors (P. Hristova, N. Aretov, M. Smov, T. Nedelcheva, etc.) are analyzed. After clarifying the connection between language and culture, which underlies the new interdisciplinary field of linguoculturology, Tsv. Tsvetanova proceeds to the most essential characteristics of the linguistic personality and the ways of its construction, following theorists such as A. Giddens, P. Bourdieu and others.

In order to discuss the different and contradictory views of the relationship between language, society and individuality, the author needs to clarify such basic concepts as speech acts and discourse, which are the basis of discursive analysis, ethnomethodology and ethnolinguistics. This affects the text coherence in this part, but is useful for readers who are not narrow specialists in contemporary linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The theoretical chapter ends with an overview of Bulgarian research related to linguoculturology, and with motivation of author's own theoretical platform, derived from the work of V. Avramova (2007). The choice falls on the cited book of Avramova not only because it offers an overview of the Bulgarian language picture of the world, but also because it contains "concepts that are particularly common in Bulgarian folklore traditions, literature, paremiological fund". Some of these concepts Tsv. Tsvetanova included in the questionnaire she used in her research of young Bessarabian Bulgarians.

We have read dissertations in which the theoretical part exceeds that of the empirical one, which shifts the emphasis from author's own research to the demonstration of high erudition. Tsvetelina Tsvetanova manages to build a good theoretical and methodological basis of her research in about one third of the total volume of the text, and to develop in the other two thirds a detailed description of the series of experiments: to set out the hypotheses to be tested; to substantiate the selection of test stimuli and procedures; to present the way of collecting the

primary empirical material; to conduct the quantitative and qualitative analyzes of the data and to draw conclusions from that data.

The second chapter ("Model for the study of linguistic and cultural markers of the national identity of young Bulgarians born abroad", pp. 66-93) is devoted to finding the most adequate methodology for studying the national identity of young Bulgarians in Ukraine and Moldova, who live in a situation of multilingualism. In the model for analyzing the projection of national identity in the language, the notion of concept turns out to be crucial. A significant part of this chapter is devoted to clarifying this notion. It is considered both from the standpoint of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology. Tracing different understandings of the concept, albeit comprehensively, requires more precise textual structuring. For example, the contemporary summary of the views on *concept* by Slavyanova in a 2016 publication was followed by a description of Askoldov's positions presented in an article from the first third of the last century - 1928 (p. 79). Although some parts of the text give the impression of listing other people's opinions without the necessary discussion, this chapter in general outlines an adequate basis for planning the author's own research. Based on the review of the literature, Tsv. Tsvetanova-Tsaneva presents her working definition of the notion of *concept*, influenced by the standpoint of leading Russian researchers (Stepanov, Vorobyov, etc.), and offers an "Algorithm for studying linguo-cultural markers of national identity of young Bulgarians born in Moldova and Ukraine" (Pp. 91-93).

The third chapter ("Research Methods and Tools", pp. 95-108) contains detailed information about the author's own research methodology. It presents the ways of selection of concepts (18 words and 28 visual stimuli) included in the associative experiment; the elaboration of questionnaire for testing the ethnic self-determination of the respondents; and the analysis of essays of 500 words on the topic "My homeland" with the same purpose. The respondents' group consists of 40 students from Taraclia University under the age of 25 and 41 students from Moldova and Ukraine between the ages of 15 and 18.

The processing of the data obtained from the application of the developed research tools is carried out by methods adequate to the empirical material: statistical procedures for determining the frequency of connections in the associative experiment, as well as for comparing the answers of the respondents and ensuring the reliability of the sample; textual analysis of the spontaneous statements of the respondents; the so-called content analysis of essays, in which

both statistical and content interpretations are applied; and linguo-cultural analysis, which “makes it possible to reveal the meanings, knowledge and use of cultural units and concepts in the consciousness of the Bulgarian linguistic personality” (p. 101). The methods mentioned mistakenly include the semi-structured interview and the oral history method, which are actually intended for data collection and not for data processing.

The second stage of the research consists of a field study of the informants through oral interviews in order to reveal the circumstances under which the Bulgarian language personality of young people of Bulgarian ethnic origin in a foreign language situation is formed. The analysis of the interviews reveals the factors for the formation of the identity of the Bulgarian language personality abroad. These factors (summarized and illustrated in FIG. 3.1) include the fields of cultural history, public policy, social field of communication, education, family environment, reading fiction and searching for information on the Internet (p. 107).

The fourth chapter ("Analysis of the results of the survey conducted with young Bulgarians from Moldova", pp. 109-211) presents a detailed report of the results of the survey. This chapter contains the most important contributions of the dissertation, which I will not comment specifically, as they are clearly explained at the end of the dissertation.

First, the data from the free associative experiment are presented. The 18 words stimuli are included in a model whose center is the Bulgarian conceptosphere, and the individual concepts are grouped in areas such as space, time, human relations, etc. The associations for each of the stimuli are summarized in associative nests, illustrated in tables and figures, taking into account the frequency of responses. The interpretations of the associations are given according to their place in the Bulgarian picture of the world. The individual associations are compared with the lexical meanings of a given word stimulus in order to determine the degree of familiarity of the concept in relationship to the lexical and corpus usage in the Bulgarian language.

As the comparisons made rarely show significant discrepancies between their associations and the vocabulary meanings of the given words stimuli, according to the author this is proof of the Bulgarian national identity of young people born abroad.

I accept this argument, although in my opinion the comparison with data from the existing associative dictionaries of the Bulgarian language would be more convincing. The conclusion that emerges from the analysis of associative reactions is that young Bulgarians in

Moldova have a worldview and mentality like all native speakers of the Bulgarian language within Bulgaria (p. 165).

The associations of paintings and photographs are analyzed not only in terms of their symbolic meaning, but are processed with a special statistical program that allows to calculate the so-called recognizability of concepts.

The results lead to the conclusion that the concepts that are transmitted through everyday life and are part of everyday culture are better known among the Bulgarian diaspora than those that are learned by young people mainly through educational institutions or through real contact when visiting Bulgaria.

The results of the applied sociolinguistic methodology for self-determination of the identity of the respondents speak very convincingly about their Bulgarian self-consciousness, and since according to the applied statistical procedure the respondents are a representative sample, it can be said with 95% certainty that it is very important for all young Bulgarians in Moldova or Ukraine to identify themselves as Bulgarians. The sociolinguistic survey also proves that young Bulgarians in Moldova and Ukraine hold on to their Bulgarian ethnicity - despite the limited use of the Bulgarian language in a multilingual situation and despite a clearly declared homeland other than Bulgaria.

For me personally, the answers to the question "What does my national identity bring me?" were quite curious. The answers establish that for the young Bulgarians in Ukraina and Moldova, the national identity is related to happiness - 84.2%, but also to the realization in life - 69.2%, to the opportunities that one receives - 60.5%, to economic success - 55.3%, to ambition - 52.6% and (lastly) with prestige - 43.6% (p. 197).

The analyses of the nominations of the concept of homeland in the essays of young Bulgarians in Moldova give particularly interesting results. These analyses are among the most serious achievements of the dissertation thesis. The nominations are classified in 12 lexicosemantic groups, with the pronouns predominating quantitatively (35.98%), followed by epithets or evaluative adjectives - (14.46%), the noun *homeland* - (10.47%), nominations related to gender and family 10.11%), nominations related to nature (9.59%), etc.

The content analysis of the language units reveals the excellent ability of Tsvetelina Tsvetanova to interpret, compare and summarize the linguistic expressions, for example by distinguishing a group of idealizing nominations with romantic connotations (*paradise, great*

place, sacred / holy / place), assigning to this group adjectives in excellent degree as well, e.g.: *most personal* (place in the heart), *warmest* (memories).

After an in-depth presentation of the nominations classified in separate lexicosemantic lines, the author reaffirms the conclusion drawn by previous empirical data: "... the concept of homeland in the minds of young Bulgarians in Moldova and Ukraine is of particular importance. The Bulgarian national identity is not only not in conflict with the idea of a homeland different from Bulgaria, but also carries an archaic, product of education in the community, reverence for the homeland "(p. 210).

The analyzes of the empirical data in the fourth chapter are performed precisely and with high professionalism, and the summaries and conclusions are undoubtedly contributing. Tsvetelina Tsvetanova-Tsaneva is well prepared to comment on the semantic, semiotic and ethnolinguistic connections between the concepts in the experiment for verbal associations, as well as on the data from the sociolinguistic aspects of the survey. Linguistic, text-linguistic and content analysis of essays commenting on the concept of homeland are especially valuable. With numerous figures, diagrams and tables, the the text is perfectly illustrated, and the statistical processing of primary data convinces the reader of the scientific objectivity of the conclusions.

The abstract of 53 pages accurately reflects the content of the dissertation.

Tsvetelina Tsvetanova-Tsaneva has published 6 Papers on the topic of the dissertation, in the Yearbook of the University of Ruse "A. Kanchev ", in paper collections and in scientific journals. She has participated in 6 regional and national scientific forums.

In conclusion, I would like to say that "Linguistic and cultural markers of national identity in the language of young Bessarabian Bulgarians" is a mature work that enriches the knowledge of the scientific community about the attitudes of Bessarabian Bulgarians to the language and culture of their ancestral homeland.

The contributions of the research have both applied and fundamentally scientific nature and the author has correctly distinguished them in order to highlight their significance.

I would also like to emphasize the fact that the model for studying linguistic and cultural markers of national identity, created by the author, can be applied to Bulgarians born in Bulgaria as well, which means a look into the future. I hope that Tsvetelina Tsvetanova herself will continue her further scientific development by comparing the results of the research of these two target groups.

Finally, I would like to point out the fact that the language of the dissertation, without deviating from the requirement for scientific precision and clarity, is fascinating and even emotionally marked in places. However, a more precise edition of the text is needed - in case the author decides to publish it as a book.

My conclusion is that the study "LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL MARKERS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE LANGUAGE OF YOUNG BESARABIAN BULGARIANS" meets all the necessary criteria for a doctoral dissertation.

That gives me reason to vote with full conviction for the award of Tsvetelina Petkova Tsvetanova-Tsaneva to the scientific and educational degree "Doctor of Philology" in the professional field: 2.1 Philology (General and Comparative Linguistics).

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Prof. Dr. Habil Julaiana Stoyanova