

OPINION

by Prof. Aleksandra Božidarova Bagasheva, Ph.D., Department of “English and American Studies”, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”, professor in 2.1. Philology (General linguistics – Cognitive Linguistics and Word formation – (English)) for the obtaining of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the filed: 1.3. “Pedagogy of...”; scientific specialty: “Methodology of English language teaching”, with candidate Gabriela Brane Nedelkoska – doctoral student with individual curriculum in the doctoral program “Methodology of modern language teaching”, who has submitted a dissertation, titled “Vocabulary learning strategies used by university students in an ESP context”

Gabriela Brane Nedelkoska has chosen as the focus of her research a highly topical and inexhaustible theme with a wide margin for genuine contributions (of both theoretical and practical nature), considering all the factors that influence the acquisition of vocabulary (whether that of a mother language naturally acquired through developmental socialization in early childhood or that of a second or foreign in different forms of educational context and in varying age ranges). Gabriela limited her interests to “Learning strategies for acquiring vocabulary, used by students studying English for specific purposes”. The research topic is of both local and global significance, as universal factors with context-specific modifications play a role in teaching models and strategies for acquiring English vocabulary in the context of foreign language teaching for specific purposes. The investigated problem has a high degree of theoretical significance, as the study of specialized foreign language vocabulary is related to the ethnocultural context, the context of the specialized field, the level of motivation of the students, personal and institutional characteristics, teaching methods, metacognitive skills, etc.

Elaborating and illuminating the model of the interdependence of the complex of conditioning factors has a theoretical resonance. From the perspective of immediate applications, the proposed teaching model and the creation of a suitable, stimulating environment and effective habits for the independent acquisition of specialized foreign vocabulary would have immediate benefits for the teacher; the students, the enhancement of their transferable skills and the educational institution.

The goals and objectives of the dissertation are clearly stated and justified by the need for an individual approach to learners, in which efforts are directed to the creation of autonomous and self-controlled learners with clearly understood and consciously adopted effective learning strategies for acquiring specialized English vocabulary in English. Although I do not agree with the postulate that "lack of appropriate vocabulary prevents students from mastering the language at a higher level", the development of strategies and the activation of metacognitive skills for students are undoubtedly far more important than learning a fixed number of lexical units.

In this sense, for the immediate purposes of the research, the doctoral student chose the study of the influence of individual characteristics (parameterized for the purpose of the research into gender, psychological type of personality, type of teacher, learning style, language configuration, level of language command and beliefs about the acquisition of language and in particular the vocabulary of a foreign language) for the selection and

effectiveness of the preferred strategies for the acquisition of specialized English vocabulary. Specifically, the doctoral student postulates the following hypotheses:

1. The individual differences with a direct influence on the selection of the number and type of learning strategies (in the context of foreign language teaching for specific purposes) are: gender, configuration of the languages that the student speaks, level of command of the target language, learner's style, personality type, and beliefs about the essence of vocabulary learning;
2. There is a positive relationship between the choice and the number of learning strategies used and the amount of vocabulary acquired;
3. The educational context has a direct influence on the choice of strategy for acquiring vocabulary;
4. Foreign language learners use different strategies for acquiring vocabulary in the context of learning general English and English for specific purposes;
5. The preferred strategies for lexical acquisition in the context of learning English for specific purposes are characterized with different degrees of effectiveness.

To prove her hypotheses, the doctoral student chooses the following research methods for the first four hypotheses:

- 1) Collection of quantitative data;
- 2) Descriptive analysis of the collected data; and for the last one
- 3) Collection of qualitative data through lexical tests, self-assessment questionnaires and interviews;
- 4) Interpretation of the collected data.

For the purposes of the research, the doctoral student also conducted experiments (specifically focused and dedicated experiments for the effectiveness of each separate strategy), which can be combined under the umbrella of a single training experiment for the particular groups of students who participated in the experiment.

Given the mixed nature of the chosen methodological apparatuses, they fully correspond to the goals of the dissertation work and the specific research questions formulated in it.

The results from the conducted research (which include the use of many standardized measuring instruments and their statistical processing), as well as the focused and fully orchestrated introduction of the concept of strategy in the course, the established and promoted interrelationship of different types of strategies and their practical use within the framework of the teaching module (which constituted the targeted experiment with students within the framework of a language for specific purposes English course) led the doctoral student to the following conclusions: (within the framework of the experiment with all the variables and the established parameters of the specific context) the highest degree of effectiveness display the strategies for memory development, followed by the social, cognitive, compensatory and metacognitive strategies. The effectiveness of different strategies is directly related to the learning context and is different when learning general English and English for specific purposes. Most strongly influenced by this parameter are the strategies for memory development, social and metacognitive strategies. A statistically significant difference is established also in the effectiveness of freely Among the conclusion the following stands out: "ESP learners benefit more from using memory and metacognitive strategies, as well as

spontaneous use of the strategies, while social strategies are more favourable for the EGP learners.”

The final conclusion of the experiment and the analysis of all the collected data can be summarized as follows: the cultivation and development of competence for the successful and effective use of different types of strategies for achieving better results in learning a foreign language is of exceptional importance and should be laid down as basic component with permanent character in programs for teaching in English as a foreign language.

On the basis of the results achieved and the conclusions drawn, it can be summarized that the direct results of the dissertation are: confirmation of the tendencies, established in the research of various scholars, for statistically significant differences between the types of strategies, their free choice and directed, targeted use, the contextual conditioning of the processes in terms of teaching and learning (general English or English for specific purposes) and other similar familiar tendencies. The immediate practical benefits from the research (through the completion of the experiment) are the creation in the group of students the prerequisites for the development of high competence for applying various strategies and the consolidation of the requisite skills for autonomous language learners.

The approach is slightly superficial and lacks theoretical scope and depth and the introduction of the concepts and theories, which are used as the basis for the development of the research, is sparing and shallow. Some of the theoretical constructs and concepts are not used further in the dissertation and appear redundant in the introductory part, while the motivation for the decision of which measuring instruments to use in the research is not sufficiently substantiated. The relationship between the psychological personality type and the type of learner remains unclear.

The text is written in fluent English, in the requisite academic register, and all the genre requirements for the construction of an academic text have been observed. Despite this, the systematicity of errors when using the full article is noticeable. Of course, other errors are also observed, but they do not affect communication. As a whole, the text is characterized by a high level of readability, with a good structure and balanced content in the respective parts. The presentation of the instruments used in appendices is helpful and makes the research even more convincing. Against the background of the multitude of illustrative and informative appendices, the lack of a list of used abbreviations is noticeable.

The sources in the bibliography correspond to the thematic field of the research, even if they are not the most up-to-date in the research area.

Regarding the other requirements for a successful defense, all the required documents and evidence for the scientific and teaching activities of the doctoral student have been submitted and are at the disposal of the members of the jury.

In the curriculum vitae, the publications of the doctoral student are presented confusingly. Among the publications the list contains conference participation, short summaries of ongoing research and real publications. It is not clear why the following titles have been included in the list of publications: 1) "Technology-based vocabulary learning strategies", at the International Conference "100 years of foreign language education at UNWE: the outlook for tomorrow", University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria, 30-31 October 2020 (only conference program & certificate of attendance available) and 2) "Vocabulary learning strategies used by university students in an ESP context, presentation at

Online International Doctoral Research Conference in Education 2020, Centre for Educational Research (CERES), Liverpool John Moores University, UK, Wednesday 8th July 2020 (09:00 – 19:00), Podcast available at: <https://youtu.be/oUPuAIYCcbI> (conference programme & certificate of attendance) (with only a podcast available)?

The publications presented for the purposes of the defense procedure number five, exceeding by the two the legally required minimum, all of which correspond to the topic of the dissertation. Three of the publications are in international editions and in English (one is co-authored), and one is in Macedonian. I do not include the short message "PhD data collection challenges due to the Covid-19 crisis - a report", because due to its nature I do not consider it a publication. The thematic publications present to a wider audience some of the issues discussed in the dissertation.

On the basis of everything highlighted here, and in view of the fact that this is the first comprehensive study of such length for the candidate, I express my positive assessment of the work of Gabriela Brane Nedelkoska and call on the esteemed jury to award Gabriela Brane Nedelkoska the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of: 1.3. "Pedagogy of..."; scientific specialty: "Methodology of teaching English".

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Signature: