

REVIEW

of the dissertation of Prof. Dr. Diana Dimitrova Yankova, PhD, on "Cultural diversity and cultural identity: sociolinguistic and sociocultural practices of first-generation Bulgarian Immigrants to Canada" for the degree of Doctor of Science, field 2. Humanities, discipline 2.1. Philology

Reviewer: Prof. Stefana Petrova Dimitrova, Doctor of Science in the field of 2. Humanities, discipline 2.1. Philology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

All documentation for the defence is in order and complies with all the requirements of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The PhD candidate has 13 publications on the topic of the dissertation in prestigious domestic and foreign journals and publishing houses. A list of publications from the last 5 years is presented separately and 7 of them have been reviewed by renowned linguists, including Prof. Bistra Alexieva. Some of the publications have been cited in studies on related topics by Bulgarian and foreign linguists. The topic of the peer-reviewed dissertation does not in any way repeat the topic of the candidate's first dissertation, which is related to jurisprudence and on the basis of which Diana Yankova has published a monograph. The presented summary corresponds fully to the text of the dissertation. It accurately distinguishes the pioneering approaches of the author from the methodological endeavors of other authors. The contributions she lists do not cover all the original points in the work, which testifies to the modesty of the candidate. From a purely administrative point of view, prof. Diana Yankova meets all the conditions to be admitted to defend her dissertation for the title of Doctor of Sciences. Her thesis meets all the scientific requirements for originality and innovation in research, and I will endeavour to prove this in the following text.

Prof. Diana Yankova's research focuses on representatives of first generation of Bulgarian immigrants in Canada. This object of study is subjected to a detailed analysis and the author's attention is aimed at the sociolinguistic and sociocultural features of the immigrants. This is not one of the studies of their immigrant identity; it is the first study of its kind to apply a comprehensive analysis of the social, cultural and linguistic characteristics of the Bulgarian diaspora in Canada, including both Anglophones and Francophones. To this end, specific questions are posed: the typical features of Canadian emigration policy and its motivating force for emigration from Bulgaria; the cultural identity of Bulgarians in Canada; their ability to integrate more or less seamlessly into Canadian society; the socio-cultural experience of Bulgarians; and the linguistic features of recoding from their native Bulgarian to English or French.

The dissertation is sociolinguistic in nature, and this explains the holistic approach to the description of the material. It manifests itself in the complex interpretation of factors of various order, such as the reasons for emigration, the structure of the Bulgarian diaspora in Canada, the image of this country created in Bulgaria, analysed in two aspects - with the help of Canadian books translated into Bulgarian and through the image of Canada in the minds of Bulgarian and foreign students studying at NBU. The questions posed in this way orient the author towards the observation of the first generation of Bulgarian immigrants. It is no coincidence that informants were chosen from Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver - the cities with the highest density of the Bulgarian community. As an experienced linguist, Ms. Yankova carefully examines the language used by this community, but at the same time her observations are informed by social and cultural elements - the social integration of the immigrants and their sociocultural experiences.

Language code switching in a situation of emigration is not a new topic in linguistics. But the Bulgarian language occupies a special place in the structural typology of languages with its analyticity in the area of nominals and syntheticism in the verbal phrase, which is distinguished, among other things, by a highly branched temporal system; by the non-standard semantic load of the phonemes [x] and [sh] in the verb paradigm; by its postpositional article; by the double complement and by a number of other qualities that gave sufficient grounds to Prof. Svetomir Ivanchev to call it classical and exotic. The structural uniqueness of the Bulgarian language led Diana Yankova to introduce a new

coordinate system of observation to adequately reflect the process of code switching.

The study of such a complex object composed of human beings would be incomplete and inconclusive without the introduction of psychological coordinates. Diana Yankova draws a strict line between the feelings of the immigrants, convinced that they have successfully integrated and adapted to their host environment, on the one hand, and, on the other, the awareness of these same individuals of the fact that they are not fully accepted by Canadians. Added to this is their close relationship with their homeland. It is interesting to note the belated formation of a sense of ethnic belonging, which, among other factors, helps to unite the Bulgarians in Canada, to give them the feeling that they are representatives of a very distinct community in this country, not identical with the native people. The author aptly embraces the term hybrid identity and relates it to the concept of paradoxical identity, which, as she puts it, is "postulated in oxymoronic definitions of diasporic communities."

Canada is very different from most European countries. At least in that it was the first country to adopt multiculturalism as a state policy. This obliges the author to subject this country's multicultural model to historical scrutiny and highlight its pros and cons. The historical excursus conducted suggests interesting conclusions that largely refute some previously established views on emigration, such as William Safran's closed conceptual model based on multiple criteria that in many cases turn out to be insufficient or at least not complementary to each other. Within the overall presentation, the author critically outlines the views of a number of researchers of immigration (Kay, Milivojević, Rakusan, Šabec, Garcia, Rampton, Jørgensen, Moller, Pennycook). When Diana Yankova questions a particular theoretical scheme, she consistently analyzes its underpinning postulates to refute a number of traditional definitions of immigrants and to prove that the majority of our immigrants in Canada can be defined as transmigrants who are equally loyal to both their home and host countries. In contemporary sociology and sociolinguistics, the terms *immigrant*, *emigrant* and *transmigrant* are strictly distinguished. The author uses all three terms without offering any definition of her own, but their very use is entirely appropriate and is proof enough of the fact that the same person can be an immigrant, an emigrant and a

transmigrant. Ms Yankova argues convincingly that attachment to a particular territory cannot be taken as the basis and support of transnational communities, and that globalisation levels many of the differences and subjects social configurations to change. She is quite right to tie into a single cluster the increase in mobility, the facilitation of communication, the relationships between natives and expatriates, and among expatriates themselves, with the construction and stabilization of cultural values.

In quantitative terms, the social aspect prevails in the dissertation. The reasons for leaving Bulgaria and for choosing Canada are presented in detail, mainly the relative ease of finding a job, the differences in the status of Bulgarians in Canada and in other countries (e.g., France), the profile of the informants, referred to as respondents in the dissertation, is well outlined, with their appearance in the Bulgarian community in Canada serving as a basis. Particularly interesting are the immigrants' first impressions of life in Canada, their attitudes towards certain local social events and upheavals, e.g., their participation in the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s.

From a psychological point of view, the exact finding of the split identity of the immigrant in Canada is of great importance, see e.g., example 59 on page 182 - the Bulgarian in Canada does not feel like he belongs because he is perceived as a Bulgarian immigrant, while in Bulgaria he feels like an outsider because people find him changed. The sense of ethnicity develops gradually, in parallel with the acceptance of the idea that one will live outside one's own country - the example on page 184 leads to such a conviction. An important but not always positive role in intercultural relations is played by a number of psychological processes, e.g., stereotyping, which leads to the enslavement of prejudices and biases, the latter of which can be downplayed by intergroup contacts; ethnocentrism, associated with the belief that one's own culture is superior to others, negatively affects intercultural relations and prompts discrimination, making empty the understanding and real appreciation of the culture of others. Diana Yankova uses the term acculturation, which means adaptation to a foreign culture, associated with changes in language, customs, and beliefs and values. The issue of intercultural communication is also discussed, as well as the ability to understand and correctly use cultural differences, called cultural intelligence. As the author argues, brought to a high degree, this understanding secures successful intercultural interaction. The role

of empathy, one of the most extensively studied and researched psychological processes in recent times, is particularly highlighted, with a variety of both positive and negative outcomes in the face of great ethnic diversity. In arguing that empathy is very much in evidence, I must acknowledge that this is mainly the privilege of sociologists. Linguistically, the problem of empathy, at least in this country, still awaits its solid elaboration. The beginning was made in the works on empathy of prof. Kornelia Ilieva and now this issue is being taken up again by prof. Diana Yankova, moreover within another perspective - prof. Ilieva worked with Bulgarian linguistic material extracted from the speech of native speakers in Bulgaria, prof. Yankova brought these native speakers to a new country for them and placed them in a situation of building diglossic linguistic relations.

The linguistic part of the work is a bit more laconic, but there are many interesting and noteworthy findings and conclusions. Here the focus is on the parts of speech most amenable to code-switching, related to the morphophonological and morphosyntactic level of language. The sociolinguistic analysis focuses on the social and cultural factors causing code-switching. The linguistic practice of first-generation immigrants is represented in flux, and this is perfectly logical because they continue to live and interact with the population of their new country. The process of linguistic accommodation is stimulated by a variety of factors, including the social context, the relations between the participants in the speech acts, and the individual motivation of the speaker to adapt to the linguistic patterns of his or her partner. Depending on all these, linguistic accommodation may take the forms of convergence, divergence or compromise. In this dissertation, code-switching is seen as a heteroglossic practice of multilingual participants who do not have great linguistic skills, are not well versed in discursive strategies, lack a sense of group identity, and use both languages in specific contexts and depending on their emotional state.

The dissertation looks carefully at the differences of languages manifested at different levels in the process of the linguistic accommodation of immigrants. At the phonological level, the differences are less perceptible, and in this area the accommodation is distinguished by its convergence, which is not so typical for the other levels, especially for the related words zone. The linguistic interaction is analysed level by level and this leads to very interesting

conclusions. Thus, according to Diana Yankova (and in agreement with Viorica Marian), at the lexical level the noun stands out because names are more conceptually integrated, and at the conceptual level the verbs stand out because they are more conceptually differentiated and are more related to the sentence. I fully accept the claim of the dominance of the noun and verb at the respective levels, but I find it rather difficult to accept the explanation of this fact by the differences in the conceptual integration of the two parts of speech; some doubt can also be cast on the view of the greater coherence of the verb within the sentence. We should add here that the autosemantic or synsemantic character of any morphological set in different languages has its own specificity, and therefore explanations of a more universalising nature are not always appropriate.

The dissertation abounds with compelling examples. Great clarity is also brought by the graphic representation of the relations between the direct use of English or French and of the calqued utterances; of the code-switching of individual lexemes and whole phrases. By presenting the quantitative characteristics of these relations, the author details the reader's idea of each set delineated on the basis of some integral feature - thus, for example, in describing the use of individual lexemes, she distinguishes those pronounced according to the rules of the original language from those adapted to the phonetic system of the Bulgarian language, and goes so far as to admit that it is impossible to determine the reasons for this distinction. Personally, I would look for them in the fact that language accommodates itself in its own individual way in the brain structures of each person and shapes his or her idiolect. And the idiolect is not in itself limited to the use of the native language in a standard setting, it also dictates the use of foreign languages, and this is felt particularly keenly in the early period of the formation of the various types of bilingualism.

It is namely the aforementioned early period that is characterized by the most combinations of native and foreign language elements, and this dissertation is an example of the study of this type of compilations: *промоутваш, фитваш* etc., and also of the parallel use of foreign languages and their Bulgarian counterparts: : *те са диспърст, те са разпръснати, не са ограничени*. In this line of linguistic mix-ups are the calques: (...) *може да ти струва цял ден*.

A doctoral dissertation is always expected to provide both a precise description of the material, based on a solid and internally consistent methodology, and a theoretical understanding of the facts and processes under investigation. Both aspects are present in the analysed work. It ends with well-defined theoretical conclusions. Theoretical tenets that are borrowed from other most carefully cited authoritative writers, sound in a new way when applied to the speech behaviour of Bulgarians abroad, e.g. Gumpertz's statement that the language of the minority group should be considered within the framework of the *we-code*, and the language of the dominant group - the *they-code*, are also of a contributory character. At the same time, the author delicately offers an antithesis: even if language seems to be one aspect of marginalization, it must be acknowledged that the degree of tolerance of immigration culture in Canada is considerably higher than in Europe, since the latter is often judged as intolerant and even racist. The author's conclusions are not only in the field of sociology and linguistics. They are also linked to the psychological states of the Bulgarians observed. In particular, I would like to note the phenomenon of language fatigue of immigrants - a very complex psychological condition, the way out of which is sought by everyone who has fallen into it. A number of strategies are then born, leading to the most frequent use of the native language and to the activation of contacts with the native country.

Every linguistic and speech behaviour is related to the application of certain mechanisms to achieve one or another communicative goal. In the present dissertation the question of the functions and mechanisms of code-switching used by Bulgarians in Canada is addressed. Especially the role of communicative, social and psychological function in the conditions of bilingualism and multilingualism is emphasized. The linguistic material was collected according to a methodology developed by the author, fully consistent with the aims and objectives of the research, built within an independently constructed theoretical model. Such a model can only be proposed by an experienced and independently thinking linguist, possessing the ability of original interpretation of the linguistic corpus under analysis and having a solid theoretical background. Correct citation of authors who have worked in analogous or similar scientific fields, in-depth knowledge of the problem and linking the theoretical reasoning with the practical benefit of the findings - all

these are undoubted qualities of both the reviewed work and the overall academic production of Diana Yankova, known in the linguistic community for her individual handwriting and her interest in the undeveloped or at least underdeveloped linguistic problems.

All of the above provides a sufficient reason for me to declare that prof. Diana Dimitrova Yankova fully deserves to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Science in professional field 2.1. Philology.

20.05.2023

Signature: