

REVIEW

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

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discipline 2.1. Philology, member of the academic panel by order of the Rector of New Bulgarian University № 3-RK-195/28.04.2023.

The topic of Diana Yankova's dissertation is particularly relevant in light of the intense migration processes in recent years, which have raised a number of problems and challenges related to the politics of multiculturalism. The scientific contribution of the dissertation lies in the fact that it offers, for the first time, a systematic and in-depth research of the first-generation Bulgarian immigrants to Canada from a sociolinguistic and sociocultural point of view. The analysis is carried out within the framework of a dynamic and multifaceted model from synchronic and diachronic perspectives.

The conceptual core and the scientific methodology of the thesis correspond to the complex and multidimensional nature of the object of study, including the complex interaction between language, society and culture, as well as the interdependence of social, cognitive, linguistic, cultural and psychological dimensions of communication. The interdisciplinary epistemological approach of Diana Yankova thus approximates considerably the ontology of the phenomena analysed.

The structure of the text is predetermined by the defined goals and objectives. In her exploration of the different aspects regarding the integration of the Bulgarian diaspora in Canada, the author compares a great number of research concepts and theoretical assumptions, highlighting the most

important and relevant of them in relation to the specific empirical material. The results of the research reach a high level of abstraction and theoretical generalisation. They expand and complement existing theories. The combination of inductive and deductive approaches in the process of analysis, the presentation and critical assessment of different viewpoints, the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods allow for achieving a systematic reach and an in-depth understanding of the problems addressed, which contributes to the multidimensionality of the perspective.

In this respect, the language behaviour, the cultural identity and the social integration of the first-generation Bulgarian immigrants to Canada are analysed through the prism of complex interrelationships and mutual dependence between the aforementioned concepts and a whole range of cognitive, political, economic and psychological factors. There is an interaction and interconnection between the different systems in real communication: each one of them can be seen as a “text within the text”. Therefore, the specific characteristics of the Bulgarian diaspora are explored and easily understood in the context of Canada’s multiculturalism policy, which in turn is explored on the basis of the newest trends in studying migration processes, multilingualism and multiculturalism. The attention is focused upon such concepts of contemporary sociolinguistics as transmigration, superdiversity and polylinguaging.

It is precisely in this context that Diana Yankova aims to explore the genesis of migration processes connected to the Bulgarian community in Canada. On the one hand, the author analyses objective factors, such as Canadian multiculturalism, the economic and historical dimensions of Bulgarian sociopolitical life. On the other hand, she lays emphasis upon the cognitive and psychological aspects of migration processes. In addition to Bulgarians’ general ideas of Canada and psychological attitudes towards the country, influenced by films, personal stories, translated literary works, etc., the dissertation analyses the subsequent assessment and realisation of migrants’ expectations. The empirical data are collected, systematised and checked through surveys and semi-structured interviews conducted in two reference groups.

Furthermore, the main points in establishing the new cultural identity of Bulgarian immigrants to Canada are laid bare in the context of the editorial policy of the Toronto-based newspaper

“Bulgarian Horizons”. The outline of cognitive factors and psychological attitudes represents one of the important contributions of this dissertation. Idealized images of Canada motivate migration but they are also the reason for problems among Bulgarians in the process of their social adaptation.

The thesis pays special attention to language as a primary sign system and a key marker of national identity. The analysis brings to the fore language and sociolinguistic factors that influence code-switching. The reasons for the latter are connected with the different spheres of use of Bulgarian and English/French languages, with the representation of culture-specific items and references, with differences between the grammatical systems of the respective languages. The results of the analysis confirm the necessity of rethinking and redefining some traditional and sociolinguistic concepts in the context of contemporary multicultural societies.

Particularly interesting are the author’s conclusions regarding the hybrid cultural identity of many of the respondents, who could be defined as “transmigrants”, loyal to both the home and the host country. The conclusion that follows logically from this is that the traditional idea of belonging to a particular territory or state is not relevant in the context of modern globalization. That is why, Diana Yankova analyses the integration of the Bulgarian diaspora in Canada on the basis of a multifaceted and holistic model with an open character. This model can be used not only to outline the specific characteristics of other migrant communities, but also to explore the universal regularities of migration and their evolution in the process of globalization. The numerous publications on the topic by the author in prestigious foreign journals provide ample proof for the contributions and the scientific importance of the dissertation.

The open character of the presented model broadens the field of analysis and makes possible its elaboration and expansion in the direction of cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics through focusing on culture-specific models of the information structure of utterances, politeness strategies, the coding of different speech acts, etc. Such an approach is closely connected with the idea of the Danish scholars to redirect sociolinguistic analysis from language systems to their functioning in real communication.

As a result of the analysis of the dissertation and the publications submitted, I am fully convinced that Diana Yankova can be awarded the degree of Doctor of Science in professional field 2.1. Philology, 2. Humanities, and I vote in favour of this decision.

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Signature:

Sofia