



## REVIEW

by Prof. Dobrinka Peycheva, Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski"

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – Visual Communication)

with a dissertation on the topic: "Multimodal Stimuli and Construction of Meanings and Visual Messages. Analysis of the Communicative Tools of Traditional and Online Media through the Theory of Framing",

presented by YOTKA VALENTINOVA PANCHEVA

full-time doctoral student in the Department of Press Journalism and Book Publishing of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication at Sofia University "Kl. Ohridski"

with scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Vesselina Valkanova

### **I. Data about the doctoral student based on the submitted documentation**

From the report on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under Art. 25, para. 2 and 3 from the ZRAS of the Republic of Bulgaria for Scientific Field: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences Professional Field: 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences it was found that there is compliance with the required indicators from the doctoral candidate. There is an almost twofold excess of the required points for eligibility for the defense

Ph.D. student Yotka Valentinova Pancheva is a graduate of Sofia University. She graduated with a master's degree in "Creative Communication" in 2017-2019, after which she enrolled in the Doctoral Program: MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS - Visual Communication in a full-time degree program. again in FZHMK -2021- 2024

Currently, Yotka Pancheva is a Multimedia Designer and Content Creator  
Spark Vision AB.

She is engaged in 3D design and creation of software content for interior design:

-creation of concepts and 3D visualizations; - building content and 3D models of company product catalogs for commercial; software; Testing and supporting the improvement of software processes and user experience; Project management: communication with clients and project managers; Organization and management of the client's project implementation process; Development and implementation of marketing strategies, etc.



She has over 20 years of experience as an Art Manager of projects and communications with clients at "Public Boulevard" EOOD (2001-2021)

It is characteristic of the doctoral candidate that her work and activities closely correspond to her educational and scientific interests.

Yotka Pancheva has taken part in several international conferences – 3 within the framework of the FJMK and 2 in 2023 in Thailand and Sri Lanka:

1. Aspects of synergy between the communication theory of framing and the theories of visual communication in the construction of meanings in traditional and online media", the International Scientific Conference of the FJMK "Media Literacy: Classical and Latest Dimensions", Sofia University, FJMK, 28-29.11.2021.
2. "Typologies of visual framing in the communicative environment of media convergence", The Jubilee International Conference "Communication and Media of the 21st Century: Educational and Professional Challenges", Sofia University, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, 27-28.10.2022
3. "Non-Inclusive Journalism and Social Consequences in the Bulgarian Digital Media Communication", The 8th World Conference on Media and Mass Communication (MEDCOM 2023), Bangkok, Thailand, 16-17.03.2023
- 4 Positioning visual journalism in the age of digitalization, International Scientific Conference of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION: TRANSFORMATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE, Sofia, 26-27.10.2023
5. Visual journalism in the age of digitalization. A model of visual and media literacy pedagogy, The 3rd International Conference on Media Science and Digital Communication 2023 (MSDC 2023), Sri Lanka, 16-17.11.2023

She has 5 scientific articles in renowned Bulgarian and foreign publications

Yotka Pancheva is also an active member of ECREA - European Communication Research and Education Association.

## **2. Assessment of the qualities of the dissertation text**

The theory of framing, which somehow goes together with the theory of priming, are research territories that is relatively less reflexive in Bulgarian scientific research practice. In both Bulgarian monographs - by Prof. T. Petev and by Prof. D. Peicheva, specifically dedicated to the theories of mass communications and mass media impact, they are rather briefly presented than a special research object. But they are a current special object regarding all dimensions of the design of media messages chosen by the dissertationist especially of visual messages. Their relevance today is projected onto all traditional and online media platforms and tools, saturating their designs with more and more visual elements and not only, it is based on them.



In fact, in a global scientific plan, the relevance of the theory of framing today is strongly related to visual messages and justified by their growth. In this sense, the presented dissertation work is not only innovative from this angle but also complementary to the conceptualization of the theory of framing on a global scale.

It is pioneering for the Bulgarian communication science of mass media impact in general, with special significance for the visual mass media off and online impact. Moreover, as the Ph.D student argues, the media today are "primarily visual, as they may have been at the dawn of their appearance in the history of civilization (rock paintings, for example).

With the development of technology and the diversity of the emergence of new visual content, reading is transformed into viewing, placing itself in a subordinate position to viewing. The reading process itself is becoming a mix for which the questions of what you read or what you watch are becoming increasingly irrelevant.

The multimedia and multimodality that characterize the coverage of news stories are perhaps the most striking explication of the unfolding new transformations in media news units. Their very "noticing" as one of the initial video effects of the symbiosis between text and image is mainly due to the visual elements for retaining attention. That is why the present dissertation, which is focused on the specific elements in the theory of framing, serving to prove both media effects and message framing and conveying meaning through the interweaving of visual communication elements in the media, is indeed a comprehensive contribution, with scientific significance, which deserves to be explained and strongly emphasized.

The dissertation has all the required attributes: object, subject and goal, tasks, hypotheses, 4 separate chapters (including empirical proof of the intended and used methodology), and a conclusion in a volume of 157 pages with footnotes and a list of used literature

The subject of the dissertation is combined with the purpose of the dissertation, namely the perspective of the theory of framing in identifying the process and tools for constructing a message through the elements of visual communication. The dissertation seeks to compare the functions of visual and textual framing and to assess the synergistic process between the two modalities to expand the concept with new aspects of the process and effects of framing, which in themselves are contributions to methodologies for studying the phenomenon and expanding the theory of framing. The tasks that Pancheva has set for herself are related to "how the properties of visual and textual modalities influence perceptual and cognitive processing and the process of constructing meaning, as well as why the elements of visual communication stand out to a greater extent compared to textual elements in the perception and processing of information; they include the search for the features of the elements of



visual communication and the specification of the functions and goals that they strive to achieve; they compare how visual framing functions in comparison to textual framing and models of synergy.

The solution of the tasks, which reveal literary exhaustiveness in the dissertation's approach to the realization of the goal and is accompanied by analytical depth and comprehensiveness, contribute to the argumentation of new sides of previously existing sides of the theories, respectively of the visual impact. In this way, the new interpretations and definitions of the object and scientific research sound natural and innovative.

I distinguish my assessment of the selected methodology in the search for data that guarantees validity and reliability for the conclusions in the dissertation text with the concept of precision. The selected authors of the three studies conducted by the dissertation candidate, as well as the successful operationalization that Pancheva has made, reveal a successful academic realization, combining analyses of content from different, albeit close, scientific angles - sociological, linguistic, semiotic, visual, graphic design, etc., summarized in a common methodological framework

Pancheva starts from the concept of framing, which in sociological literature is defined as a set of concepts and theoretical perspectives on how individuals, groups, and societies organize, perceive, and communicate the social construction of a given social phenomenon, emphasizing the key role of context in shaping public perception and discourse., since how information is presented, or its frame, can have a significant impact on people's attitudes and opinions. (Douglas Wepple and Harold Lasswell) Emphasizes its establishment in sociology and the role of Irving Goffman, who describes frames as "schemes of interpretation" that allow people to discover, perceive, identify, and label events within their life experiences. She complements it with other sociological theories - the agenda-setting theory, the cultivation theory, the priming theory,

I appreciate the highly developed three chapters of the dissertation work - In them, Pancheva reveals knowledge of foreign literature, conscientious citation and reference to authors who have worked on the topic, skills for synthesis, for comparisons, for highlighting the significance and new in the research and, above all, for the sense and to highlight arguments to supplement the existing theory of framing, setting them as her main goal. I would boldly rank Pancheva next to researchers of the type of Mates and Koring Pancheva also reveals excellent skills for analyzing and critically approaching the contributions of the individual authors to whom she refers.

Taking into account the achieved goal of the doctoral student, related to the expansion of the concept of framing with new aspects in the process, and the effects of framing, and to contribute to complementing the methodologies for studying the phenomenon, I put a special aspect of the relevant content-analytical



studies conducted, which are her successful evidentiary material. And because through these studies Pancheva contributes to solving her tasks set in the dissertation work

In the first conducted content-analytical study and based on the results obtained, Pancheva analyzes the aspects of synergy between categories and signs from the theory of framing and theories of visual framing, paying attention to the role of the decomposed elements of visual communication for the theory of framing. Such a study has not been done in our country and is a contributing view of visual framing in the theory of framing, deserving high praise.

The second successfully conducted study is on the journalistic discourse of the framed message, on the depth of figurative language in the construction of linguistic content. It reveals that figures of speech – metaphor, hyperbole, and irony – which are expressed simultaneously through textual and visual means in the same article reinforce the impact, thoughts, and behavior of the audience in a certain direction. This comparative study is also valuable not only in itself but is also relevant to the set dissertation goal. The third content-analytical study on the theory of framing is associated with the specific visual framing in scientific-conspiratorial images and videos in Bulgarian propaganda publications, emphasizing the manipulative use of visual variables such as color and brightness to realize the effects of persuasion in uncertainty and fear.

I define the research conducted by Pancheva and the analyses carried out, in addition to the argumentative thesis of the dissertation research, as studies with independent contribution value. On the one hand, they are innovative for Bulgarian practice, on the other hand, they are reliable and valid for supplementing the theory of framing from additional angles to the extent that they can serve to confirm the theories. I am referring to the research of Matthes and Korhing on the content analysis of media frames, of Woods on the propaganda and debunking of conspiracy theories, of Burgers on figurative framing through hyperbole, metaphors, and irony, of Bell on the content analysis of visual images, etc.

### **3. Contributions**

1. A heuristic expansion of the concept of framing with new aspects has been achieved, which contributes to expanding the methodology for studying the phenomenon to which it refers;
2. A figuratively targeted framing has been implemented simultaneously through textual and visual forms in the same article, reinforcing the impact, thoughts, and behavior of the audience in a certain direction;
3. The topic of the existence of synergy between the theory of framing and theories of visual communication affecting visual competence is intended in the context of media literacy;
4. An own methodology for the theory of framing has been developed, taking into account the specifics of the textual and visual aspects and the validity and reliability of the data obtained;



4. Preparation, conduct and analysis of data obtained from 3 own studies, proving the success of the methodology used;

5. Extension of the concept of visual framing into multimodal framing,

6. With the proposed concept of framing, a relevant extended methodology for multimodal synergy in framing theory is explicated.

The abstract corresponds to the dissertation work

#### **4. Assessment of the contributions of the dissertation work**

Listing the contributions I have determined and as a summary, I emphasize that the dissertationist proves existing theories with new facts and arguments and confirms them, while at the same time expanding and supplementing them.

She successfully operationalizes and decomposes certain elements of the theories, revealing their additional influence and obtaining and proving new realizations.

Pancheva is correct in collecting, processing, and analyzing empirical data. She is also distinguished by an enviable publication activity on the topic of her dissertation. Each is one of the 7 publications of the doctoral candidate - contributes to the popularization of the ideas of the doctoral candidate

#### **5. Notes and recommendations**

I have no notes. The recommendations that I proposed in the preliminary discussion have been considered.

Taking into account everything said so far, I highly appreciate the achievements in the dissertation work of YOTKA VALENTINOVA PANCHEVA and define her as an already-formed scientist.

#### **6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, I declare that I will vote Yes and I recommend that the other members of the Scientific Jury at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication vote Yes for awarding the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences to YOTKA VALENTINOVA PANCHEVA from the Department of Press Journalism and Book Publishing”

Reviewer:

Prof. Dobrinka Stancheva Peycheva

24.03. 2025, Sofia