

REVIEW

by prof. Dr Pelagia Terziyska, South-West University "Neofit Rilski" on the dissertation work on the topic: „**Relationship between oral and written language impairments in bilingual students**”, for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy)

Author: **Gergana Plamenova Ilieva-Zlatareva**

Research supervisor: **Prof. DSc Tsvetanka Lukanova Tsenova**

This review was prepared on the basis of order No. ПД-38-55 dated 29.01.2024 of the rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", as well as the decision of the scientific jury on the procedure.

General presentation of the procedure and the PhD student

Gergana Ilieva-Zlatareva is a doctoral student in professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Speech Therapy) at the Speech Therapy Department at the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts of the Sofia University of St. Kliment Ohridski".

The procedure and the presented set of documents are in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Sofia University.

Bachelor's and Master's degree in speech therapy, doctoral student Zlatareva graduated from the Faculty of Education Sciences and the Arts. Her education and professional experience as a speech therapist in various institutions lead her to the next degree - an educational and scientific degree "doctor" and to the choice of the topic of the dissertation research.

Actuality of the topic

Today, we are increasingly faced with problems caused by the bilingual environment in which some children live - the bilingual children. Involved in two

different linguistic worlds, different traditions and cultures, they encounter many problems in the process of socialization and learning. This necessitates the creation of more special relationships, stimulating the child to learn without coercion, to self-expression, to the desire to communicate. The violations of the spoken and written language of the bilingual students require additional work to master the Bulgarian vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, to deal with the interference, since the two languages also differ at the phonetic level. It is important to study what difficulties bilingual children face and how they can be helped to overcome these difficulties. Therefore, the dissertation research of doctoral student Ilieva-Zlatareva is necessary and significant, worthy of attention.

Presentation of the dissertation work and evaluation of the content

The dissertation submitted for review contains a total of 166 pages, of which *146 main text* is structured in an introduction, 3 chapters and a conclusion. On 11 pages, the literature is listed, including 67 titles in Cyrillic and 37 in English, as well as 4 online sources. The application - illustrations and questionnaire to parents are located on 9 pages..

Included in the main text are 15 tables and 36 diagrams that present the results of the survey with parents of bilingual children, as well as those that present a comparative analysis of the results in terms of the level of oral and written language proficiency of bilinguals and their monolingual peers.

The introduction indicates the relevance of the chosen topic and presents the general and more specific purpose of the research, as well as tasks corresponding to the objectives. 3 hypotheses are formulated.

The literature review on the researched issues is skillfully done in the first chapter. Conceptions of different authors about the essence of language and interpretations of language are presented, as well as various theories that try to explain the process of language acquisition by the child. In an ontogenetic plan,

various reasons are described for the manifestations of individual variations in the speed and style of language acquisition, related to various factors. It is emphasized that deficits at the level of oral speech (phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) are a prerequisite for difficulties in written speech, as well as a condition for the appearance of difficulties in school in general. The issue of the manifestation of secondary language disorder in children who are exposed to social and language deprivation related to socio-psychological factors is considered in more detail. Attention is also directed to dyslexia as a disorder that contains a wide range of symptoms, directly affecting the development of literacy and school skills of each child.

Perceptions, the nature and characteristics of bilingualism and related factors are explored. An answer is given in what way and in what cases the mastery of two or more languages can affect the mastery of oral and written speech. The relationship between bilingualism, specific language disorders and developmental dyslexia is presented. Doctoral student Ilieva-Zlatareva summarizes that despite the various statements and descriptions of children's bilingualism, specialists do not have a definite opinion on how bilingualism can affect the mastery of the written language.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 present the research methodology, the analysis and the summary of the obtained results. The goal, tasks, 3 hypotheses, and subject are specified. The contingent is described and the research methods are indicated - 78 students from 2nd and 3rd grade, divided into two groups: an experimental group of 48 bilingual students and a control group of 30 monolingual students.

A brief description of the languages of the countries where the studied bilingual students live - Bulgarian, Italian, German and Romani - has been made. The methodology used includes four samples for the study of the spoken language and four samples for the study of the written language, which the doctoral student

describes in detail. All data from the test battery, which includes both oral and written language testing, are subjected to primary mathematical processing, which is reduced to individual and group scores. The results are subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis and statistical processing to prove the significance of the obtained results. Statistical processing was done using IBM SPSS Statistics and included: a comparative percentage analysis of results between groups and within groups, analysis using descriptive statistics, including. Additionally, an anamnestic method element was applied in the part of the study that required gathering more information about bilingual students from their parents and teachers.

From the obtained results, it is concluded that bilinguals do not have a complete impairment in language, but only in certain aspects especially in the written language, but it cannot be concluded that they have a language impairment or dyslexia.

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of a questionnaire of 26 parents of bilinguals living abroad and of information about bilinguals of Roma origin is made in the third chapter. The aim is to analyze the environment in which bilingual children live abroad, as well as the level of communication in their Bulgarian language. Despite the results obtained, which show a high percentage of willingness to communicate and use the Bulgarian language, many of the parents share that their children have more difficulty with the Bulgarian language which is their mother language and prefer to speak in the official language of the country.

Pedagogical specialists working with bilinguals of Roma origin indicate that the children attend relatively regular school and are willing to communicate in Bulgarian but the parents are not very involved in the educational process and there are periods of absence for these children.

Doctoral student Ilieva-Zlatareva shows significant skills in performing quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data from the study of spoken and

written language. Comparative analysis of the total score of the 4 samples on oral language showed lower scores of bilinguals than their monolingual peers. Statistical significance of the results between the two groups of children for the tasks related to verbal fluency, prepositions and synonyms is proven. Statistical significance for the results of sample 3 related to the completion of a missing last word was not found. In terms of written language, the bilinguals' scores were not much different from those for spoken language.

As a result of the research done, the doctoral student summarizes that the children from the minority groups did not learn the Bulgarian language in a natural way, due to the fact that they live in closed groups, and some of the children of the Bulgarian emigrants do not learn the Bulgarian language enough in their family environment. This means that Bulgarian is the second language for both groups of children. The comparative within-group analysis between the oral and written language of the experimental group and the control group showed that in both the experimental and the control group the writing of independent sentences on a picture and the test of verbal fluency, which is related to working memory and the semantic aspect of the language. In both groups, reading has a better success rate than oral language because, in oral language tasks, there is self-generation, which is a complex thinking activity. A positive correlation was found between oral and written language scores in the monolingual and bilingual groups, as well as a significant influence of oral language on written language. These results would be useful for subsequent future research related to the preparation of an assessment of the language and writing abilities of bilingual children.

On the basis of the overall analysis, the mistakes made by the bilingual students were typologized. This enables teachers and speech therapists to select appropriate didactic and therapeutic methods to overcome them.

Doctoral student Zlatareva makes conclusions and recommendations important for improving pedagogical practice.

Evaluation of the publications:

The publications are 4 in number and are on the topic of the dissertation work.

Abstract of the dissertation

The abstract presents the dissertation work in a summarized way. The content of the individual chapters is sufficiently informative. The author's summary conclusions, recommendations and contributions are highlighted.

Contributions:

I accept the contributions indicated by doctoral student Ilieva-Zlatareva, but I think it is good to formulate contributions 2 and 3 more briefly and to unite them, as well as contributions 4 and 5.

Recommendations and notes on the dissertation:

The described research contingent is defined by the doctoral student as the subject of research. I believe that it is necessary to correctly formulate the subject of research.

Question:

What appropriate didactic and therapeutic methods would you recommend to overcome the most common errors in the written production of second and third grade bilingual students?

CONCLUSION:

The presented dissertation work, developed by PhD student Gergana Ilieva-Zlatareva, meets the requirements that are put forward to developments for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

Based on the outlined merits of the work, the demonstrated skill for scientific research and the contributions of the author, I give a positive assessment

and propose to the honourable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Gergana Plamenova Ilieva-Zlatareva in the field of higher education: 1 Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program "Speech Therapy".

Reviewer:

13/04/2024

Prof. Dr Pelagia

Terziyska