

STATEMENT

on the dissertation *The Artistic Texts in the Bulgarian Language Education for Medical Professionals* by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teodora Dimitrova Valova, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Science in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. (Methodology of Bulgarian Language Teaching)

One of the current issues in science and education is related to the present and future of humanities, which, as is well known, has become increasingly narrow in recent decades. It is about scientific fields such as philology, history, religion, etc., whose research result is the spiritual existence of man, the world of ideas and aesthetic values. In this regard, the dissertation work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teodora Dimitrova Valova *Artistic Texts in the Teaching of Bulgarian Language for Medics*, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Science, represents a serious and thorough interdisciplinary work on the contact zones and intersections between pedagogy, the humanities (linguistics) and a natural science such as medicine.

The study systematizes respectable theoretical and empirical studies that the author realized during the language training in Bulgarian for foreigners in the medical specialists of the Bulgarian higher education. Valova justifies the necessity of introducing a new pedagogical model for the language training of medical students, which, on the basis of the classical practice - learning spoken language to be accompanied by the acquisition of a variety of situationally developed texts, proposes the introduction of the artistic text (literature), which, along with the variety of life situations, contains in its classical models the examples of the action of national memory and culture, i.e. through literature the understanding of the

ideological and emotional world of the Bulgarian, of the essence of historical and social processes is expanded.

Compositionally, the thesis consists of: Introduction, Theoretical framework of the study; four parts (Chapter One. *Artistic texts in the communicative organization of learning*; Chapter Two. *Theoretical and applied aspects of the use of artistic texts in the teaching of Bulgarian language for medical students*; Chapter Three. *Design of the experimental pedagogical research. Model for the formation of communicative competences in Bulgarian language teaching for medical students*; Chapter Four. *Analysis of the results of the experimental study*); Conclusions and implications; Bibliography and Appendices. The total volume of the text part of the dissertation is 480 pages. The study is original: no plagiarism has been found. Publications on the subject are sufficient and correspond to the content of the study.

Valova highlights the main objectives of the thesis in the Introduction. The focus of the study, as stated on page 6, is on "the influence of artistic texts on the development of communicative competence of medical students, for professional communication in health care practice in a broader aspect, influenced to a very large extent by humanistic rhetoric and transhumanism." The author also outlines the theoretical framework of the study by commenting on the working concepts and categories, the nature of communication and the types of competence are revealed - communicative competence - prerequisites for u The principles of communication between doctor and patient are highlighted, which at another level reflect degrees of actionable imagery and traditional concepts. In this regard, the teaching of Bulgarian language to foreign medical citizens - Valova assumes, requires the search and application of various approaches through which to realize the pedagogical goals. The use of literary texts from Bulgarian literature, the author believes, aids reception by

shortening the distance between the foreign citizen and the Bulgarian. In the Introduction the object and subject of the dissertation are formulated, the aim is defined: "to define, to create, to scientifically justify and to practically approbate an experimental pedagogical model contributing to the formation and development of communicative competence for professional communication in medical students, which is applicable in the teaching of Bulgarian language to health professionals from other countries" (p.18).

In the first chapter *Artistic Texts in the Communicative Organization of Learning* on the basis of previously studied and summarized material - in diachronic and synchronic terms, Valova presents a synthesis of theoretical concepts relevant to the pedagogical approaches used in foreign language teaching. The nature of communication, the processes of exchange of textual messages from the point of view of pedagogical theory as well as from the generally valid positions of cultural studies and humanities knowledge are studied with particular attention. Against this background, the category of communicative competence is discussed both in its European understanding (review of European documents) and in terms of Bulgarian practice. With erudition and proficiency the methods of teaching with literary texts are clarified, with an emphasis on the different well-established approaches for their full reception: behaviorism (grammar-translation method, conscious-comparative method), constructivism (communicative method, text-based learning, medical humanities).

It is of interest the author's interpretation of the link between teaching/learning the language in which medical knowledge is acquired and thanks to which diagnostic and therapeutic activity is realized. The doctor-patient dialogue creates a situation in which, along with the professional knowledge and skills of the doctor, an important condition is his communicative competence, i.e. knowledge of the language, with the patient's characteristic imagery and mental attitudes. In fact, Valova also

reveals one of the principles of regulated professions - knowledge of the language of the country in which the regulated profession is practised. According to the normative documents, the Bulgarian language is obligatory for the specialists studying and practicing medical professions in our country, due to the nature of the diagnostic and therapeutic activity in the importance of the realization of communicative situations between the medic and the patient. As shown in the dissertation, in order to be at a high contemporary level, the teaching of Bulgarian language to foreign medical students, along with the traditional pedagogical approaches - listening, understanding, reproduction, requires the development and implementation of a new pedagogical model that would also offer the acquisition of national cultural concepts, imagery and stereotypes found in the literary texts of Bulgarian literature.

More controversial is the notion of "medical humanities" as a type of science interpreted in the dissertation. Indeed, there has been an immediate link between literature and medicine for centuries, and since antiquity. It is known that thanks to mythological constructs in classical works the names of various disease states were justified. For example, the classical tragedies *Oedipus Rex* and *Electra* were used by Sigmund Freud to define characteristic states in psychoanalysis. Also, one of the world's masters of narrative, Anton Chekhov, was a physician. Bulgarian literati and writers were also medics: Dr. Petar Beron, Nikola Piccolo, Ivan Bogorov, Nikola Furnadjiev, Valeri Petrov, Georgi Mishev, etc., and Dimitar Dimov, as is well known, graduated in veterinary medicine and became a professor of vertebrate anatomy. So it is more appropriate to speak of a close relationship between literature and medicine, mainly because of the common interest in man. But also about the differences, which are also essential. Metaphor is an essential tool in the construction of artistic texts, in the realization of artistic communication. While the exact meaning of the word is determinant for the

exercise of the profession of the medic. Polysemy can denote the breadth of culture, but diagnostic-therapeutic activity is characterized by concreteness in the theoretical-categorical use of words. It is another matter that the study of the Bulgarian language by foreign medical students through Valova's proposed approach of incorporating literary texts enriches the content characteristics of the formed communicative competence with the additional meanings of the nature of national character and way of life.

The second chapter of the dissertation - *Theoretical and Applied Aspects of the Use of Fiction Texts in the Teaching of Bulgarian Language to Medical Students*, is organized on the systematization of the author's observations on the approaches and practical implementations of teaching Bulgarian as a second language. The broader context, which is built on the development of higher education at home and abroad, is justified by highlighting the trend towards internationalization. Against this background, the place and importance of MU-Pleven, the development of modern programmes and the organisation of medical training with an emphasis on foreign language training - the introduction of programmes in English and the study of Bulgarian as a second language.

Valova summarizes didactic, methodological and practical issues related to the study of Bulgarian language at MU-Pleven in English and Bulgarian-speaking programs. The organization of the courses, the distribution of the material by modules, the set and achieved results are described in detail. The traditional model of teaching a foreign language is presented with the illumination of a series of problems and shortcomings. A new pedagogical model is also formulated, arguing for a new approach to language acquisition through the introduction of literary texts explicating sociocultural stereotypes and attitudes. This model, especially suitable for medical professionals, forms more immediate communicative competence and facilitates dialogue in the implementation of diagnostic and therapeutic

activities.

Chapter Three, *Design of Experimental Pedagogical Research*, is of a different nature. A model for the formation of communicative competences in Bulgarian language teaching for medical students". In contrast to the first two parts of the dissertation, which present a synthesis of theoretical propositions, here, in chapter three, the realized empirical studies are presented, on the basis of which, as Valova points out, the introduction of a new pedagogical model for the formation of communicative competence in medical students is motivated. The research toolkit is specified: questionnaires, didactic testing, reading comprehension, the use of similes and metaphors, the distinction of variants of medical language registers, statistical procedures for processing the results, experimental bases and the sample of the study. On the other hand, the dissertator's observations of the formation of communication competence in foreign medical students through the application of a new pedagogical model based on Bulgarian literary texts are also summarized. I will also note Valova's observations on the synchronization between second language learning with the different levels of literary text, which creates a high degree of linguistic cognition, also related to the acquisition of characteristic national-specific cultural semantics.

In this part of the dissertation, a detailed empirical model of a teaching strategy based on a three-stage introduction and interpretation of literary works in order to form communicative competence in foreign medical students is also portrayed. Works by Yordan Yovkov, Elin Pelin, Pencho Slaveykov, Zdravka Evtimova, Georgi Gospodinov, Milen Ruskov, Yordan Radichkov, Elitsa Georgieva are presented. I believe that the model has its merits. What remains unclear, however, is the criterion by which the artistic texts were selected. It cannot be an argument only that it creates empathy through them, because empathy of emotions is a characteristic feature of

literature in general. Since the main thesis of Prof. Valova for the inclusion of the fictional texts of Bulgarian literature is based on their defining character for our national culture and thinking, it is not clear why there are no classic texts by Ivan Vazov, Emilian Stanev, Dimitar Talev or Nikolai Haytov? The fiction of Dimitar Tomov, as well as that of Diane Enev, is very interesting - as a sureness and mastery of the plasticity of the Bulgarian language. Also, why, when in the field of poetry Bulgarian literature reaches the world peaks, are not presented the genius poems of Botev, Yavorov, Vaptsarov? If we are talking about the present stage - could texts by Boris Hristov, Ivan Metodiev, Boyan Angelov, Ivan Esensky or Niki Komedvenska be included? I think that dramaturgy - especially comedy - also reveals typical Bulgarian ideas and circumstances that can help to form communicative competence on the basis of the national historical and cultural events.

As a summary of the experiments conducted with students and patients, Chapter 4 of the dissertation, *Analysis of the Experimental Results*, is organized. The observations and conclusions of the experimental work carried out are systematized. The testimonies certify the validity of the developed three-stage pedagogical model in teaching Bulgarian language to foreign medical students, based on the inclusion and active use of literary texts.

The last part of the dissertation *Conclusions and implications* summarizes and systematizes the main features of the realized respectable theoretical and applied research activity. And outlines the productivity of the developed and tested pedagogical model of teaching Bulgarian language to foreign medical students.

The Abstract submitted to the documents fully meets the content and composition characteristics of the dissertation.

In conclusion. The dissertation work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teodora Petrova Valova *Artistic Texts in Bulgarian Language Education for Medical Professionals* is a serious and thorough scientific research with outstanding contributions. The author studies and systematizes voluminous theoretical and empirical material in relation to the clarification of the issues related to the teaching of Bulgarian language to foreign medical students. Valova reaches generalizations valid for the approaches of teaching and learning the second language in general, to the principles in the formation of communicative competence, based also on the acquisition of national cultural gems, of notions, myths and images. The presented model of second language teaching with the outlined three reception levels is applied. I believe that this study has high scientific qualities and practical values in the field of pedagogical sciences and is characterized by its contribution. This is the reason to propose to the distinguished members of the Scientific Jury to award the science degree *Doctor of Science* to Dr. Teodora Petrova Valova in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching...(Methodology of Teaching Bulgarian Language).

Jury member:

(Prof. DSc Vanya Dobрева)