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ASPECTS OF TEACHING BULGARIAN
TO BESSARABIAN BULGARIANS FROM THE TERRITORY OF PRESENT-DAY
UKRAINE

ABSTRACT

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The dissertation is 230 pages long and consists of an Introduction, Three Chapters, a Summary, a Conclusion, a Bibliography and an Appendix.

Composition of the scientific jury:

Chairman: Prof. Petya Nacheva Osenova, PhD

Members: Assoc. Prof. Vladislav Ognyanov Milanov, PhD

Assoc. Prof. Bilyana Bozhinova Todorova, PhD (Southwest University "Neofit Rilski")

Prof. Zhivka Stefanova Koleva-Zlateva (University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. Cyril and St. Methodius")

Assoc. Prof. Pavel Krejchi, PhD (Masaryk University, Brno)

The public defense of the dissertation will take place at an open meeting of the jury on 3rd October 2024 at 13.00 in Conference room 2 at the Rectorate of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

RELEVANCE OF THE DISSERTATION

The present work is based on teaching experience since 2008 in various faculties of Sofia University, where foreign students, including a significant number of Bessarabian Bulgarians, are taught. In recent years, the number of Bessarabian Bulgarians from the territory of today's Ukraine who have been accepted to study in various specialties has been growing at a great pace. The largest number of students from Bessarabian-Bulgarian backgrounds has been taught and lectured at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication (in the specialties of Journalism, Public Relations and Communication Management). The number of Bessarabian Bulgarians from Ukraine enrolled in the first course at the FJMC from 2010 to the academic year 2023/2024 is eighty peopleⁱ. Due to this reason, the research focuses on teaching Bulgarian to Bessarabian Bulgarians from Ukraine - future journalists and PR specialists.

The language situation with these students is quite complex and requires a selection of specific approaches to teaching Bulgarian. The language model is polylingual – Russian and Ukrainian are used in the public space whereas the local Bulgarian dialect, called the dialect of the Budjak Bulgarians, is spoken in the sphere of informal contacts and at home. This language combines features of the Eastern Bulgarian dialects, as well as features of the Ukrainian and Russian languages, resulting in a regional Bulgarian dialect.

Teaching Bulgarian to these students is a serious commitment, as the Bessarabian Bulgarians are preparing themselves to be people of the word – both oral and written.

ⁱ The report was issued by the Educational Department of FJMC, Sofia University.

OBJECT, SUBJECT, PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE DISSERTATION

The Object of the study is teaching Bulgarian language to Bessarabian Bulgarians. The specifics and approaches in teaching Bulgarian as a second language to the Bessarabian Bulgarians from the territory of today's Ukraine is the Subject of the study.

The aim of the study is various strategies for the successful overcoming of the language difficulties in students' speech and their motivation to be determined as well as to offer good practices in teaching, consistent with the specifics of the language situation in which the Bessarabian Bulgarians find themselves, and by evaluating their effectiveness.

The tasks through which the aim of the research will be achieved are:

1. Determining the most frequent linguistic difficulties in oral and written speech of the students.
2. Motivating the main language difficulties in relation to the negative transfer from Russian and Ukrainian.
3. Selecting strategies for overcoming the language difficulties.
4. Developing the design of Bulgarian language lessons.
5. Developing types of tasks related to language culture (spelling, tasks related to the expansion of the students' vocabulary (polysemy, phraseology, preposition, texts and style exercises, selection of texts from Bulgarian fiction, lexicalized for easy comprehension of the text).
6. Creating and conducting a survey with Bessarabian Bulgarians from the territory of Present-day Ukraine related to their self-definition and which language do they determine as their mother tongue.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is based on theoretical and practical research methods: survey, observation, questionnaire, analysis, comparison, assumption and verification. The communicative method is taken as the main one in the work. The predominant orientation of the work is practical.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The research tasks set in the paper define the structure of the Dissertation. Compositionally, the Dissertation consists of an Introduction, Three Chapters, a Conclusion and an Appendix.

The **INTRODUCTION** justifies the relevance of the study, defines the object, the subject, the goal and the tasks which are to be accomplished in order for the study to be completed.

CHAPTER ONE defines the main terms used in the study, presents the specifics of the second language acquisition (target language), the hypothesis of the intermediate language that learners create in the process of acquiring a second language, the positive and negative transfer from E1 to E2, the analysis of learners' intermediate language errors, and outlines the main reasons in relation to the migration waves in the period from the 18th century until the Liberation of Bulgaria, the contemporary strategies for the cultural and linguistic integration of the Bessarabian Bulgarians are also presented.

Section 1. clarifies that the definition of mother tongue is associated not so much with nationality as with the degree of proficiency in the language and in this sense the notion of mother tongue/native language is provisional in the early 21st century. Given the multilingual

situation in which Bessarabian Bulgarians live in Ukraine, where Russian has been the leading language until 2021, the work adopts the terms: first language (Russian and/or Ukrainian) and second language (mother tongue, Bulgarian).

The target language is that language which is the object of acquisition. In the process of acquiring the target language, an intermediate language, a third language, is produced alongside E1 and E2 and contains elements of both the target language and the learner's first language. This third language contains linguistic errors, i.e., distortions due to native language transfer from E1 onto E2. Linguistic deformations can be observed at all levels of language: phonetic, orthographic, grammatical, lexical, semantic and stylistic.

The term bilingualism is used assuming that bilinguals have mastered both the first (Russian and/or Ukrainian) and the second language (Bulgarian) as native speakers (bilingual first language acquisition). The Bulgarian language for Bessarabian Bulgarians is a heritage language - determined by their ethnolinguistic background. Bilingual acquisition of the first language is related to the simultaneous acquisition of the first and second languages from early childhood. Nonsymmetrical bilingualism implies that the linguistic environment favours the one language and the other is used primarily for everyday communication. Bessarabian Bulgarians grow up in a multilingual environment (Russian, Ukrainian and Bulgarian).

The work uses the term *teaching* to refer to the collaborative, two-way work and cooperation between teacher and learner, the unity and synthesis of teaching and learning (a two-way process). Included in the term *teaching* is the understanding of the purposeful work of the lecturer in terms of the design of the discussion sessions as well as the management of the learning process.

The Dissertation is based on the communicative method in second language teaching, in which the activity-oriented approach (semantic-pragmatic approach) occupies a prominent place, without presenting and discussing other main methods in language teaching, such as grammar-translation, direct, audiovisual and some alternative methods.

Section 2. of **Chapter 1** focuses on the specifics of second language acquisition, with an emphasis on learners' intermediate language, a unique dynamic language system with an autonomous character, made up of elements of both the target language and the learner's native language. This system is distinguished by the presence of both 'correct' and 'incorrect' speech habits, whereby a series of intermediate languages, called the learner's intermediate language continuum, is produced in the process of acquiring the target language. It is clarified that in linguistics the term *transfer* is used to denote both the positive and negative influence of the first language over the second language, whereas the term *interference* refers only to the negative influence of the first language.

In the process of second language teaching, special attention is paid to the analysis of high frequency systematic errors that are not recognized as errors by the learner. Any study of errors consists of obligatory stages: identification, classification and etiology, qualitative and quantitative analysis, and linguodidactic means of error correction. The etiology of errors examines the reasons for their occurrence: native language transfer, overgeneralization, communicative tactics, language learning tactics and previous learning experiences, as well as improper teaching (the classification is after Selinker 1972). Because of the description of the intermediate language and its errors, a prediction and diagnosis of the errors is made.

The theoretical postulates in error analysis are divided into several main points (after Ellis 2005). They refer to the learner's intermediate language (IL) and are distinguished by the following characteristics: there is no awareness of the rules that make up an ME; knowledge in an ME is systematic; an ME is incomplete and unstable, as new linguistic forms easily infiltrate it from outside through input and from within through processes such as overgeneralization; ME is transitive because the learner restructures its grammar over time; ME is variable due to random factors or depending on the timing of utterance or interlocutor planning; ME is a product of transfer from E1 as well as of overgeneralization and simplification; the learner's ME can fossilize.

Section 3. defines the terms *bilingualism* and *multilingualism*. The term *bilingualism* is used with two different meanings. According to the first, bilinguals have mastered both the first and second languages as native speakers. However, bilingualism can also be seen as a

sequence of different states of competence for the first and second languages. Multilingualism means interaction between several languages. The transfer from the second language onto the third is more tangible compared to the transfer from the first language onto the third.

Section 4. traces the main reasons for the emigration waves to the territories outside the Ottoman Empire in the North-North-East direction in the period from the 18th century to the Liberation of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian population moving was from the Eastern regions , the central Southern region, the Southeastern lands, the Northeastern region, the central Northern region and the Northwestern region. The main factors determining the emigration of the Christian population are related to the politics and the behaviour of the two conflicting political powers in the period in question, the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire. The following can be mentioned among the political factors: the impact of the wars, the influence of robber movements (Kardzhali and Daali formations, pirate raids, internal turmoil in the Ottoman Empire, Circassian and Tatar bands), the reflection of national liberation struggles, the settlement policy of the lands newly acquired from the Russian Empire.

The Bulgarian colonists managed to improve their material condition in the newly populated territories and began to build a school network which have covered all Bulgarian colonies for a decade. The schools provided rudimentary education and were unable to meet the needs of the settlers. The idea to create a central school to train administrative and teaching staff was conceived. The settlers believed that Bulgarian language would have been taught as a separate subject in future curricula. And so in 1858 the Bolgrad High School was founded.

Section 5. traces the cultural and linguistic integration of the Bessarabian Bulgarians today. Until now, the policy of preserving the Bulgarian ethnic community in Ukraine along with its traditions, identity and mother tongue has been supported by both the Bulgarian and Ukrainian sides in favour of keeping the Bessarabian community compact and authentic. However, for the Bessarabian Bulgarians, learning the literary Bulgarian language is a challenge for a number of reasons, some of which are as follows: geographic distance from Bulgaria, a predominantly Russian-speaking environment, not necessarily a full course of Bulgarian language education received at school.

In 2018, the Bulgarian and the Ukrainian ministers of Education and Science have signed a declaration to guarantee the right of individuals belonging to the Bulgarian national minority living in Ukraine to study and learn in their mother tongue. The agreement also focused on the creation of conditions for the deepening and development of mother tongue learning and mother tongue education, as well as granting educational institutions greater autonomy in deciding on issues concerning the increase in the number of hours for learning Bulgarian. The parties agreed to specify the issues of teaching and learning of Bulgarian language in secondary schools in places with a compact Bulgarian national minority in Ukraine in the preparation of the new Protocol on Cooperation and Exchange between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for the school years from 2019/2020 to 2022/2023.

According to the Protocol on Cooperation and Exchange between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for the academic years 2020/2021, 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024, the Bulgarian authorities shall annually grant places at Bulgarian state higher education institutions to citizens of Ukraine of Bulgarian origin permanently residing in Ukraine where those students can proceed with their education. For the participants of the Protocol exchange, the host country shall provide tuition fee waiver in accordance with its legislation in force, as well as accommodation in a student hostel and meals in a student canteen.

Decree No. 103 determines the conditions and the procedures for the implementation of educational activities of the Republic of Bulgaria towards foreign citizens and stateless persons who are of Bulgarian nationality or of Bulgarian origin and reside permanently or habitually on the territory of another country, as well as the admission of students, doctoral students and post-graduate students under Art. 9 of the Higher Education Act.

The summary of the issues discussed in the first chapter is as follows:

Bessarabian Bulgarians from the territory of present-day Ukraine master Bulgarian language

in the family from birth, and the majority of them learn it systematically from first grade until the end of the high school stage. At the same time, they acquire both Russian and Ukrainian from early childhood, and they continue to learn these two languages at school. Therefore, in the case of Bessarabian Bulgarians we are speaking of bilingual mastery of E1, E2 and E3 (multilingualism). The linguistic pattern is polylingual - Russian and Ukrainian are used in the public sphere, while in the sphere of informal contacts and at home, the local Bulgarian language is spoken, strongly influenced by Eastern Bulgarian dialects, Russian and Ukrainian.

It is very difficult to give a definite answer to the question which of the three languages is the first, which is the second and which is the third. The study assumes that Russian is the first language of the Bessarabian Bulgarians, since it has been the official language of the Ukrainian state until 2021; their second language is the hereditary Bulgarian, in which they communicate informally. Of course, they also learn Ukrainian in the school curriculum.

As a result of the polylingual linguistic environment in which the Bessarabian Bulgarians were born and grow up, the pattern of their intermediate Bulgarian language is complex and multi-layered. It includes elements of E1 (until 2021 - Russian), heritage Bulgarian (mother tongue, archaic - inherited from the first settlers on the territory of Ukraine) and Ukrainian (state language in Ukraine since 2021).

The passive bilingualism, i.e. receptive E2 skills (listening and reading), of the Bessarabian Bulgarians is very good to excellent. They have almost no difficulties in perceiving oral and written texts in Bulgarian. Their active bilingualism, i.e. their productive skills at E2 (speaking and writing), is strongly influenced by E1 (Russian) at all linguistic levels - phonetically, spelling, grammatically, lexically, semantically and stylistically. Consequently, the reception of Bulgarian texts is primarily characterized by positive transfer from the closely related languages (Russian and Ukrainian), while the production is characterized by negative transfer from these languages.

The intermediate Bulgarian language of the Bessarabian Bulgarians is distinguished by the following features (in the sequence defined by Rod Ellis):

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- No awareness of the rules that constitute the language (the incorrect mechanisms by which oral and written speech is organized remain unknown);
 - Knowledge is systematic;
 - Intermediate language is unstable, incomplete and permeable to new linguistic forms both externally and internally through processes of overgeneralization and simplification;
 - It is variable according to the individual's co-stratum and depending on the situation, in which it occurs,
 - It is fossilized to the extent that the use of literary-linguistic rules in the production of the Bulgarian language poses an extreme difficulty for the Bessarabian Bulgarians.

With regard to the reasons, the bilingualism of the Bessarabian Bulgarians is both integrative and instrumental insofar as, on the one hand, they integrate through their E2 into the community of Bessarabian Bulgarians in Ukraine and want to integrate into the Bulgarian linguistic environment when they become students in Bulgaria. On the other hand, they use the Bulgarian language to study and work in Bulgaria.

SECOND CHAPTER is focused on the linguistic difficulties in teaching Bulgarian to the Bessarabian Bulgarians: in the nominative system, in the verbal system, in terms of lexical coherence, and in terms of phrase and sentence syntax. Basic linguistic difficulties related to the category of definiteness, the category of tense, as well as some difficulties in understanding phraseologisms that have no equivalent in Russian are explained. Strategies for overcoming linguistic difficulties are presented.

It is noted in **section 1.** that the linguistic error has four specific aspects: linguistic (typological and grammatical), linguocognitive, linguocultural, and linguodidactic, emphasizing that from a present-day perspective, the error is a natural component of the intermediate language that differs from both the learner's first language and the second language acquired by the learner. Systematic errors are those that occur repeatedly in students' speech production during learning. Such errors are characterized by high frequency, stability and difficulty in overcoming.

The most common typological (systematic) linguistic difficulties of students, extracted from their oral and written texts are presented. The errors are shown in order to be prevented in the learning process. Examples are given for each type of frequency error. Error types are often in combination and fall into more than one category.

Section 2 examines the negative transfer from Russian and Ukrainian in relation to the expression of the categories of definiteness and tense, and makes a comparison in terms of comprehending phraseologisms with no equivalent in Russian.

In relation to definiteness in Bulgarian, the matrix of markers in referential use and in non-specific referentiality is derived, comparing the way definiteness is expressed in Bulgarian, Russian and Ukrainian, as follows: by morphological marker, by actual sentence segmentation, word order, context, narrative, intonation, etc.

With regard to the category of tense, emphasis is set on the fact that in the modern Bulgarian literary language there are nine graphemes included in the category, while in Russian and Ukrainian - three respectively. The complex system of meanings of each of the verb tenses in Bulgarian is presented in comparison with Russian and Ukrainian.

An example of linguistic intuition is given in relation to the meaning of male-female relations in phraseologisms with male and female components that have no equivalent in Russian. This is done in order to be understood how transparent their semantics is for Bessarabian Bulgarians and to what extent do they identify the meaning of each phraseologisms in proximity to its dictionary meaning. It is established on the basis of a survey whether the respondents correctly mark the connotative fields associated with the words man and woman in the mentioned phraseologisms. It is noted that due to their linguistic intuition, the students correctly identified the connotations regarding the nature of both the genders, identified the meaning of each phraseologisms close to the meaning fixed in the NPhDBL.

Section 3. introduces the strategies used in the teaching process to overcome language difficulties. Task-based language teaching and the aim of expanding learners' vocabulary are

central to the teaching. The task components and task types are outlined. The teaching approach involves presenting the frequency vocabulary, introducing the grammatical units, and providing opportunities to practice what has been learned. Last but not least, the approach implies activity on behalf of the students.

The section outlines the conceptual framework of the tasks used in teaching, with the semantic-pragmatic approach in the lead. The tasks include both the selection of key words and phrases in different thematic areas and work with authentic texts, following the notion that students' vocabulary and grammatical skills develop according to their individual needs in the process of completing communicative tasks. Exercises and tasks are based on methods of introducing, contextualizing and automating vocabulary in relation to developing learners' communicative skills. Among some of the possible ways of developing vocabulary are: familiarization with words used in the texts studied, independent extraction of meanings from the context, with visual aids, work on semantic fields, word formation, synonyms, antonyms, compound words, word combinations, idioms, as well as with the methods of contrastive semantics.

The summary of the second chapter of the dissertation is as follows:

1. Students of Bessarabian Bulgarians do not have difficulties in receptive acquisition of information from Bulgarian texts regardless of their style and genre (listening and reading).
2. They experience difficulties in production (speaking and writing) in Bulgarian.
3. Systematic typical production errors
 - 3.1. In the nominative system: gender agreement, number form, article (and in determinacy of the name, and lack of determinacy of the name), including hypercorrectness of the article.
 - 3.2. In the pronominal system: constant use of the first person pronoun in nominative case, transposition of the first person pronoun, singular in the nominative case - in place of the full accusative or dative form in the case of a duplicated complement, use of full instead of short forms of personal pronouns in the accusative and dative case, use of the personal pronoun in the dative case instead of the possessive pronoun, replacement of the full forms of relative pronouns and relative adverbs by interrogative forms.

3.3. Verb: use of the third-person instead of the first-person verb form, hypercorrectness - combination of the auxiliary verb "to be" and a full verb or omission of the auxiliary verb especially in the composition of nominative clauses, in verb tenses - use of the aorist/present tense in every position of a complex sentence instead of the perfect, plusquamperfect, imperfect tense; consistent use of attestative verb forms in situations requiring non-attestative forms.

3.4. Syntax: errors in the word order of the auxiliary verb and the short pronoun forms in the sentence; punctuation.

3.5 Vocabulary coherence, including collocations and appropriate use of prepositions.

4. The main production difficulties are a result of the negative transfer from Russian language - both in the nominative system and in the verb system.

5. Semantic-pragmatic approach in teaching

5.1. Task-based teaching

5.2. Using narrative as a means of remembering stories and memorising new information, including practice of grammar.

CHAPTER THREE presents the design of the Bulgarian language classes, the typology of the tasks included in the teaching, the curricula for the first and second year, as well as the control of the results during the semester and at the end of the academic year.

Section 1 describes the design of the Bulgarian language classes for learners with independent and fluent proficiency, with an emphasis on overcoming the complex situation of rushing through the translation from Russian and dialectal Bulgarian into literary Bulgarian and the emotional attitude towards speaking - through persuasion, basic rules related to the production of oral and written text are taught. First, that the most important thing is what is said, and then again first - the most important thing is how it is said. Second, any text must be meaningful, clear and persuasive. Third, topic selection is important. The exam format for both the first and second year offers topics tailored to the subjects studied in the Faculty, but they do not restrict students in their choice of subject in relation to which to speak/write.

In each of the four hours provided for practical Bulgarian language lessons for both the courses, the main intention is to practice all skills simultaneously - listening, speaking,

writing; grammar and vocabulary - they go in one stream to build the language matrix, without paying special attention to a particular grammar unit and to mistakes all the time, because this would slow down the process of casual learning.

The work is distributed as follows: something curious from the week (students present news that is significant for Bulgaria or worldwide), grammatical units (the focus is on their formation and usage), focus on words (polysemy, synonymy, antonymy, homonymy, paronymy, domestic and foreign vocabulary, stylistics and phraseology; collocations, prepositions and their use in the different styles of modern Bulgarian literary language, as well as their implementation in phraseologisms). The work in the last hour is devoted to the text and its meaning (texts related to current social issues, texts subject to media coverage, and texts that follow the thematic areas singled in the materials of the European Consortium for the Certification of Excellence in Modern Languages).

Texts and tasks for the students' leisure time are provided, collected in an educational anthology of Bulgarian literature, which presents major classic Bulgarian authors as well as contemporary authors. The texts by classical and contemporary authors are authentic and have been selected to specifically address the needs of foreign language teaching for an independent level of proficiency.

Section 2 focuses on task typology in Bulgarian language teaching. The tasks are divided into the following themes: spelling, grammar, punctuation, dialogue transformation; articles, verb tenses and prepositional verb forms; vocabulary and text (polysemy, phraseology, preposition, style exercises, work with texts from Bulgarian fiction).

Section 3 presents the first and second year curriculum in line with the Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The academic year work plan follows the concept that in order for a successful communication to be possible, the learner needs to have knowledge of the vocabulary, the functional grammar and the functions of the language. Understanding of the main types of verbal interaction, of different literary and non-literary texts and of the main features of different language styles and registers is of a particular

importance. Communication involves the skills of producing oral and written text in a variety of situations.

The main objective of the two-year Bulgarian language course is reaching the C1 / C2 level with the following competences: understanding spoken language without any difficulty, both in direct communication and in the media, and when spoken quickly, provided there is time to adapt to the peculiarities of pronunciation; reading any kind of written text with ease, including abstract or structurally or linguistically complex texts, such as textbooks, specialized articles and literary works; participating casually in any conversation or discussion and fluent use of idiomatic and colloquial expressions; fluently expressing and articulating shades of thought; finding a way of paraphrasing when in difficulty in order to get out of the situation skillfully without others noticing; producing a clear, smooth and stylistically appropriate text; writing complex letters, reports or articles with a clear structure so that the reader grasps and remembers the essentials; analysing and summarising professional texts or works of fiction.

Assessment during the semester consists of grammar tests, writing texts on assigned topics, information searches and collective discussion of presentations, participation in thematic class discussions, and visits to places of interest in the capital. Completion of the listed assignments during the semester accounts for approximately 40% of the annual grade.

The annual assessment (students in both courses take an exam during the summer session) is formed of two components: a written exam and an essay/presentation. First year students are given a text which checks spelling and grammar. Twenty spelling or grammar options are suggested. Students are asked to rewrite the text, choosing the option they think is correct. In second course, a text in which the internal punctuation of the sentences is absent is given. The students' task is to rewrite the text, filling in the missing punctuation marks without rearranging or editing the sentences. The sentence end marks are to remain unchanged. There are forty headings in the text.

The oral examination is in the form of a written paper/presentation on a selected topic from those discussed during the academic year or another topic of interest to the student. Each text/presentation must be original, to contain a concise clear thesis and a logical argument. If

sources are used, they must be cited after the main text (Cyrillic print sources, Latin print sources, electronic sources). The written work must be at least one A4 page, the presentation up to 10 slides. There is no genre restriction when composing a written text. The student must be able to orally present his/her text/presentation at the examination.

The summary of the **third chapter** of the dissertation is as follows:

1. In connection with the complex linguistic situation of the Bessarabian Bulgarians from the territory of present-day Ukraine and in connection with the negative linguistic transfer from Russian, Ukrainian and Eastern Bulgarian dialects inherited from their ancestors, a special design of classes (four academic hours per week) has been developed. The design is also in line with the fact that the students are studying at FJMC and their language difficulties are in the production plan. In each discussion class, the following sequence is followed in order to bring the students' oral and written speech into the literary-language norm: oral presentation of news, grammar, vocabulary and text work.
2. Types of exercises on the nominative and the verbal system in the modern Bulgarian literary language are presented.
3. Types of tasks are proposed in order to expand the vocabulary: polysemy, synonymy, antonymy, homonymy, paronymy, domestic and foreign vocabulary, stylistics and phraseology, as well as prepositions.
4. The selected texts follow the thematic areas identified in the material of the European Consortium for the Certification of Excellence in Modern Languages. The texts are accompanied by tasks designed to help students overcome the systematic linguistic errors they make and to train them to produce logically constructed argumentative texts.
5. An Anthology of Bulgarian literature has been created, in which texts by Bulgarian authors are selected- classical and contemporary Bulgarian literature, lexicalized so

that the comprehension of the text can be easier. The Anthology is intended for both discussion work and leisure reading.

6. Based on the design of the lessons, curricula for the first and second year have been developed, aligned with the competences formulated in the Common Framework of Reference for Languages. Sample essay/presentation/discussion topics for the classes are suggested
7. The format for monitoring students' performance in both grammar plan and in the plan of creating a complete text, subordinated to a certain topic is presented.

The **CONCLUSION** contains the results of a survey on the topic "Bulgarian language education of Bessarabian Bulgarians from the territory of present-day Ukraine - as foreign or native?". The survey was conducted in the period 2019/2021 and included 64 people. The age of the participants was between seventeen and fifty years. They were originally from the following locations: Kalanchak (6 people), Krinichne, Bolgrad region (4 people), Orekhovka (1 person), Bolgrad (14 people), Vaysam (1 person), Kalcheva (6 people), Tabaki, Bolgrad region (3 people), Balulad (1 person), Vaysal, Bolgrad region. (1 person), Zaliznichnoye, Bolgrad region (1 person), Kubey, Bolgrad region (3 people), Oxamitnoye (3 people), Zarya (1 person), Primorsk (1) and Nikolaev (1 person). The remaining 22 people did not indicate their place of birth. The reference questions included in the survey were as follows:

1. How do you define yourself?
2. Which language is your mother tongue?
3. Which language do you speak best?
4. In which language do you communicate in different situations?
5. How many years have you studied Bulgarian?

The aggregated results of the questionnaire present the following picture: 49 (76%) identify themselves as Bessarabian Bulgarian; 37 (56%) state that their mother tongue is dialect Bulgarian; 29 (45%) know Russian best; 30 (47%) communicate in Russian with friends and at work; 31 (54%) have studied Bulgarian for 11 years.

As it can be observed from the results of the survey, traditionally the Bessarabian Bulgarians from the territory of present-day Ukraine identify themselves as Bulgarians. The majority of them live with the self-awareness that Bulgarian is their mother tongue, however, they know Russian best and use it both in the sphere of informal communication and in the official sphere.

At present, the modern teaching of the contemporary Bulgarian literary language to Bessarabian Bulgarians from the territory of Ukraine has to take into account both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors: geographical distance from Bulgaria, linguistic interference and negative transfer from Russian, incomplete course of learning Bulgarian at times, as well as the interest of the learners. The mutual influences between the first language and the second, the mother tongue, have their realization in the observed process of the so-called second language acquisition, and at all linguistic levels - phonetic, orthographic, grammatical, lexical, semantic and stylistic.

The next part of the conclusion is dedicated to some of the advantages and challenges in working with Bessarabian Bulgarians from Ukraine. On one hand, the students have preserved some of the original Bulgarian values, probably because most of them originate from small towns and villages, where diligence, modesty, observance of decency and observance of customs as they were inherited from their ancestors who settled on the territory of Ukraine in the 18th and 19th centuries are revered. These mindset characteristics are, of course, also evident in the way they are incorporated into academic studies. On the other hand, for the majority of the foreign students, the beginning is very difficult because they are in an unfamiliar place in a city that is enormous from their point of view, far from their relatives, friends and home. At the same time, they are not oriented to university life and its rules, they have to overcome the language barrier. Some of them even "get sick" throughout their first year, suffering from nostalgia. Our first meetings give them the opportunity to talk about the things that excite them at the moment, to talk about their life so far and to make

plans for the future. All these are topics which distance them from the grief of home and the tension of the unknown, and on the other hand, the conversations take place only in Bulgarian (very good, decent or - in very rare cases - elementary level). Learning and teaching step by step is the aim in the process: to learn to listen and hear, to understand, and to record as they are about to listen to lectures on specialized subjects, write papers, and pass their exams. Then from their second year onwards, to successfully complete their internship in a media of their choice. The ultimate goal is to successfully complete their bachelor's degree with a thesis.

Teaching *ex cathedra* is not a practical option. Apart from the compulsory theory and the many tests and exercises included in the curriculum, the most interesting part is writing/speaking on a particular topic. The aim is the students to talk as much as possible. Very interesting discussions take place occasionally. Some of the topics are pre-formulated, others however they choose themselves. Texts are read, corrected, edited, discussed, and each student is free to express his or her opinion and - the hardest part - to defend it in the discussion classes. Thus, a particular kaleidoscope is created in class, through which the world as young people see it is arranged due to their interests and experience gained so far.

To paraphrase Boccaccio, it could be stated that practically useful learning places young people and what they have to say in Bulgarian (!) at the centre: all kinds of funny or sad stories and other unusual happenings.

And as they listen to each other, they enjoy themselves and find useful advice at the same time. The best classes are those in which the conversation is casual and one forgets about the classroom.

The APPENDIX contains five parts: student texts in which systematic typical errors can be found at all language levels; syllabus content for the first year curriculum; syllabus content for the second year curriculum; format of the first year annual examination and format of the second year annual examination.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

Bessarabian Bulgarians from the territory of present-day Ukraine were born, grow up and live in a complex linguistic environment in which bilingual acquisition of E1, E2 and E3 (multilingualism) occurs. The linguistic pattern is as follows - Russian and Ukrainian are used in the public sphere, while in the sphere of informal contacts and at home, the local Bulgarian language is spoken, strongly influenced by Eastern Bulgarian dialects, Russian and Ukrainian. Most Bessarabian Bulgarians learn all three languages in school.

In regards to the complex question which of the languages is the first, which - the second and which - the third for Bessarabian Bulgarians, the dissertation acknowledges that Russian is their first language, as it is the official language of the Ukrainian state until 2021, their second language is the hereditary Bulgarian (mother tongue), which they communicate in an informal environment. Of course, they have also studied Ukrainian at school and since 2021 it is the official language of the Ukrainian state.

After years of observation of the intermediate Bulgarian language of the Bessarabian Bulgarians, the following pattern has been established: their receptive skills are highly developed (they are fluent in oral and written texts), but their productive skills are obstructed insofar as their speaking and writing are strongly influenced by the grammar of Russian and Ukrainian. The negative transfer from the above languages is extremely difficult to overcome, as in most of the cases the Bulgarian intermediate language is fossilized (the probable reasons for this phenomenon can be sought in the fact that the Bessarabian Bulgarians have formed their linguistic worldview from early childhood).

1. The study traces the systematic linguistic errors in the oral and written speech of Bessarabian Bulgarians and establishes that they are at all linguistic levels: phonetic-phonological, grammatical, lexical and textual. Special attention is paid to the typical errors in production - nominative and verbal system, lexical combinability and syntax. In relation to the negative transfer from Russian and Ukrainian, the linguistic difficulties related to the category "definiteness" and the category "tense" are explained. An example is also given of how the proximity of languages does not always contribute to the correct understanding of phraseologisms.

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2. In order for the systematic errors to be reduced , the semantic-pragmatic approach is suggested as the main one: task-based teaching and the use of narration as a mean of remembering stories and memorizing new information (including grammatical information). A lesson design is developed where the emphasis is placed on the students' production with the objective of bringing their oral and written speech into the literary-linguistic norm.
 3. Multiple types of exercises on the nominative and the verbal system in the modern Bulgarian literary language have been developed, as well as various tasks aiming to expand the vocabulary (polysemy, synonymy, antonymy, homonymy, paronymy, domestic and foreign vocabulary, stylistics and phraseology, prepositions) in the context of the communicative approach.
 4. Texts with tasks are presented, the aim of which is to facilitate students in overcoming the systematic linguistic mistakes they make and also to train them to create logically constructed argumentative texts.
 5. An Anthology of Bulgarian literature with lexicalized classical and contemporary literary texts has been compiled. The Anthology is intended for both class work and leisure reading.

Based on the design of the discussion classes, curricula for the first and second year have been prepared, as well as a form to monitor the performance of students.

The Dissertation presents the results of a survey conducted with Bessarabian Bulgarians from Ukraine, according to the results of which Bessarabian Bulgarians identify themselves as Bulgarians and define Bulgarian as their mother tongue.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE CANDIDATE ON THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

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- 2. Paceva, Runevska 2022:** Paceva, M., Runevska, E. The narrative in the *activity-oriented teaching of Bulgarian as a foreign language, From word to action: narratives and representations. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference of the Faculty of Slavonic Philologies 2 - 4 May 2019*. V.1. Linguistics Readings 2022, 147-158, ISBN:978-619-7433-32-6.
- 3. Paceva, Runevska, Panova 2019:** Paceva, M., Runevska, E., Panova St. The challenge of the literary text in teaching Bulgarian to foreigners. *Bulgarian Language and Literature*, 3, 2019, 246-256, ISSN (print): 0323–9519.
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- 5. Runevska 2018:** Runevska, E. The ability to communicate in Bulgarian - pleasure and wealth. Prague. *Native Voice* 1, 2018, стр.:12 –13, ISSN 2336-5250.
- 6. Runevska 2019:** Runevska, E. The category of "definiteness" in teaching of Bulgarian as a foreign language (to Bessarabian and Tavrian Bulgarians on the territory of present-day Ukraine). In: *Bulgarian linguistic readings: proceedings of the international conference on the occasion of the 130th anniversary of the Sofia University*. "Sv. At the 130th anniversary of the Sofia State University of Sofia, the conference was held at the University of Sofia. 19–20 Novemebr 2018, Sofia: UE "St Kliment Ohridski", 2019, 186 –194, ISBN: 978-619-7433-31-9.

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