

Review

By Associate Professor Elena Borisova Tarasheva, PhD, New Bulgarian University, Associate Professor in Research Field 2.1 Philology, Discourse Analysis (Media), for the acquisition of the academic degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Professional Field 2.1 Philology, Scope of Higher Education 2. Humanities, by the candidate Associate Professor Boris Anatolievich Naimushin, PhD.

Significance of the problem under investigation in theoretical and applied terms.

The dissertation examines the history of diplomatic translation in Bulgaria. Through a range of prosopographic data, the professional progress of the first translators for the regime established in Bulgaria in 1944 are traced. An impressive database of witness narratives, interviews, photographs, biographies and oral history has been created, on the basis of which we learn what people are attracted as translators after the professional community inherited from the previous regime is isolated. The text examines what languages they work with, how their professional path develops, what measures the state takes to improve their qualifications. Factors that make a translator undesirable in the respective community are also included in the study. Parallels are made with the development of translation in close and friendly countries, such as the USSR, the USA, Romania, Hungary and Cuba.

Precision of the aims and objectives formulated for the dissertation.

Specific emphasis is given to the description of the motivations for doing the research. On the one hand, studies of the translators' guild engaged in interstate relations, are rare in academia in our country. Wherever they exist, they are embedded in text types built for different intended purposes and pursue goals that are not relevant to translation studies. In this way, they have little to contribute to the development of a strong and cohesive community, hardly help build the creative narrative necessary to construct and manage a translation task force with a specific translation commission. The second aspect that fuels the motivation is the author's practical experience as a conference and diplomatic translator, his personal communications and the conscientiously constructed access to a real wealth of materials.

The objectives of the dissertation are presented with an understanding of research as a process and a discerning eye for the difference between aims and objectives, as the concrete steps towards the fulfilment of the aim. In connection with the aim of the research, six specific tasks are listed through which to achieve the set goal. They are determined by the historical connections between events, personalities and interactions in the specific historical period. In this sense, the work points to prosopography and micro-history, through which the author creates his presentation – in fact, a descriptive historical narrative about translators and the historical context of their activities.



Adequacy of the selected research methods to the achievement of the dissertation aims and objectives.

The method to establish how the professional community of diplomatic translators evolved can, according to the candidate, be achieved via historical narratives, comparisons between visual documents and texts, controlled interviews and critical reading of the available data.

The actual methodology is described in two places in the text – on page 8 and from page 49 to page 55. The description includes an eclectic mix of research disciplines, such as translation studies, anthropology and history, on the one hand, but also approaches – micro-historical narratives and prosopography. To increase the eclecticism, materials such as biographies, interviews, visuals are also identified as the methodological instruments of the study. The true methodological tool, critical analysis is mentioned, but no detailed description of what is to be analysed, by what criteria and how this contributes to the achievement of the purpose of the research. Thus, we know little about the way the rich material is processed to achieve the stated aims and objectives of the research.

On the positive side, we can point to the detailed description of the limitations that are imposed when working with specific materials – for example, the subjectivity in memoirs. At the highest academic level of the degree Doctor of Philosophy, awareness is important of both the opportunities and the limitations of the collected material.

Research and applied benefits from the dissertation, including unique impact on academia¹

As a candidate for the award of the highest academic degree "Doctor of Philosophy", Associate Professor Naimushin is aware of the need to create specific impact and contribute to the development of the research discipline with his work. Therefore, he classified the impactful areas in the dissertation into four groups: methodological, historiographic, empirical and specific identifications. A summary contribution of the whole project is also named.

As a methodological contribution, the innovativeness of the research object – the community of diplomatic translators - is named first. Second comes the application of prosopography - a less well-known approach in our country and around the world. The method of identifying translators through comparison of visual and textual materials is also named as also presented as impactful. In the process of work, the concept of "mass subjective perspective" has been evolved – contrary to the tendency for each participant to keep their own specific memories, which differ from those of the other participants, in massive subjective perspective, all participants tend to recall the same version of what happened.

The historiographical contribution of the dissertation is beyond any doubt. A bibliographic search returns many histories of diplomacy, but the only publications on the topic of diplomatic translation are those by the candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Boris Naimushin. Further on, prosopography, as an approach to study the dynamics and cohesiveness of a closely knit social group, is indeed rarely present in the work of Bulgarian scholars. It is even less known among philologists, which is regretful, since the approach is based on narratives, critical reading of texts and tracing the signs of the internal development of the group under the influence of various factors – all of which are inherent in linguistic research.

Among the empirical contributions are the rich multimodal database collected for the purposes of the dissertation. In fact, a large part of the dissertation is devoted to the method of collecting and

¹ Applies only to the academic degree Doctor of Philosophy.



systematising the materials. It is no coincidence that gratitude is expressed to the numerous supporters of the effort.

As another methodological contribution, the researcher names establishing the importance of the Sephardic community for the development of diplomatic translation, as well as the less expected connection with the Spanish Civil War. Even less is known about the role international brigades played for the development of translation. Numerous materials on the topic reveal this uniquely Bulgarian phenomenon. Although this bears a very oblique relation to methodologies, such findings truly contribute to the History of translation.

The researcher specifies that the abundance of names in the text should not be considered elitist and gate-keeping. Rather, he considers the names landmark specimens that shaped the development of the community and epitomised tendencies in its history. Indeed, a historical description should necessarily be replete with names. I have no doubt that some translators possess all the qualities of historical figures, especially when it comes to the history of diplomatic translation.

Assessment of the publications based on the dissertation: amount, publisher

The candidate has submitted a list of all his publications, instead of those related to the present dissertation. Among those, I counted 26 on the topic of diplomatic translation. The articles are written in Bulgarian, Russian and English. Most of them are in the refereed journal *English Studies at NBU*, edited by Associate Professor Naimushin. They cover all the topics discussed in the dissertation: translation and the international brigade movement, the specifics of translation at high-level diplomatic meetings, training translators both at the university level and as postgraduate qualifications. I find them a very good approach to airing the findings of his research before compiling the dissertation itself.

Quotes by other authors, reviews and comments in academe

Five quotes have been identified in academic journals in Bulgaria and mainly abroad. Twice the name Naimushin has been mentioned in monographic works. Especially prestigious is the mention in the Handbook on conference translation published by Routledge. Another citation is tracked in the high-impact journal *Language Cognition and Neuroscience*.

Notes and recommendations

I consider the work impactful and significant as founding a history of diplomatic translation. The collected material is impressive for its scope and diversity. However, the description of the methodology applied to it should be refined and given a more robust theoretical clarity, distinguishing among disciplines, approaches, and methods. In the crux of scientific enquiry, critical analysis is, indeed a specific methodology. But unless it includes criteria, steps, principles of contrasting and comparing, it contributes little to the credibility of the conclusions derived with the research and prevents presenting the aims as a result of the project.



Conclusion with a clearly formulated positive or negative assessment of the dissertation.

My overall assessment of the presented dissertation, and the publications on the topic, is positive. I believe that it provides a suitable basis for awarding the academic degree of "Doctor of Philosophy".

Date

ELENA
BORISSOVA
TARASHEVA

Digitally signed by
ELENA
BORISSOVA
TARASHEVA
Date: 2026.09.30
14:58:06 +03'00'

Signed