REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Vesela Kirilova Slavova, PhD

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professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching…

of a **doctoral thesis**

submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a PhD degree

PhD Programme: *Methodology of Modern languages teaching*

area of higher education: *1. Education Sciences*

professional filed: 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching …

scientific specialty: Methodology of Modern languages teaching

PhD candidate: Lilyana Todorova - Ruskova

topic of thesis: An e-portfolio based formative assessment model in English for Special
Purposes Teaching

thesis supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Svetlana Dimitrova – Guzeleva, PhD

This review has been written in accordance with the requirements of the existing Law on the
Development of the Academic Staff, the Regulations for its Application and the Ordinance on
the Development of the Academic Staff of the NBU.

1. Scientific and applied significance of the research.

The doctoral thesis of Liliana Todorova - Ruskova focuses on important pedagogical
topic, as well as a significant research problem related to new trends in the assessment of
students' achievements in accordance with the Operational Plan for the implementation of the
Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria. The formative
assessment model based on e-portfolio implementation in teaching English for special
purposes is an undeniable research problem, which provides a major educational tool for

successful language teaching, assessment of learning achievements, as well as improving the learners' motivation. The creation and effective implementation of technological tools in foreign language teaching context have been discussed and developed in a number of European and national documents and directives. Main trends in the assessment of acquiring knowledge and skills have been outlined after having examined the need and importance of the e-portfolio for assessment in higher education. A lack of scientific researches in the field of formative assessment through the use of an e-portfolio in English for special purposes teaching for students in Economics in Bulgaria was found. Some weaknesses in the qualitative assessment tool's usage have also been considered. In this context, the relevance and importance of the research problem stated in doctoral thesis have been found, which is aimed at examining the possibilities of using e-portfolio in order to develop formative assessment, but also critical thinking, independent learning and building improved metacognitive skills.

2. Display of clearly stated research aims and objectives.

The aims of the study are stated clearly, and releavantly, which is a prove of excellent knowledge of trends in modern language teaching, the main characteristics of English for special purposes, of the concept of communicative competence and the communicative approach. Using e-portfolio to track learning supports formative assessment to improve future learning outcomes and satisfy set educational goals and increase academic performances, commitment, motivation and autonomy of students learning English for special purposes.

3. Assessment of the extent to which the PhD candidate is familiar with the research problem and the relevant existing literature.

PhD candidate Liliana Todorova - Ruskova carries out significant research of literary sources (94 cited authors, of which 80 foreign and 14 Bulgarian, as well as 5 official documents) and has done an impressive critical analysis of modern trends and characteristics of the use of e-portfolios described and discussed in foreign and Bulgarian scientific literature.

4. Correctness in citing a representative number of authors.

There has not been found incorrect or inaccurate citation of specified authors in Liliana Todorova-Ruskova's doctoral thesis.

5. Development of a sound and well-justified theoretical model of the research.

The theoretical and methodological reasons for developing the research model in the PhD student's doctoral thesis have been provided from detailed examination of English for special purposes teaching features, as well as the role of information and communication technologies in educational process. The theoretical models of communicative competence and communicative approach in foreign language learning have been examined. The functions and models for e-learning, the methodological foundations of computer-assisted language learning, the learning theories that influence the implementation of information and communication technologies in foreign language learning and the building of digital competence have been also analyzed. On the basis of collected by the European Commission data for Bulgaria cited in doctoral thesis regarding the implementation of digital technologies in the economy and society and new tenedencies for improvement of the curricula in higher education, the creation of a new pedagogical model of teaching, learning and formative assessment have been justified, and oriented to the learner-centered approach.

6. Compliance of the research methodology and research methods with the set aims and objectives.

The doctoral thesis focuses on the e-portfolio as a formative assessment tool, reviewing and analyzing the definitions, functions and classifications of the technological tools according to scientific publications. The possibilities and shortcomings of the implementation of e-portfolio in learning process have been studied and systematized, as well as the processes and concepts related to the use of e-portfolio for formative assessment, such as reflection, self-assessment, mutual assessment, feedback, autonomy and motivation. As a result of the ongoing changes in teaching and learning a foreign language, and in the evaluation of students' achievements, new trends in the methodology of foreign language learning have been determined, with an emphasis on learner-centered models and based on the communicative approach and the principles of constructivism in teaching. In the context of changing educational reality, a new pedagogical model of assessment has been developed by PhD candidate Lilyana Todorova – Ruskova, where students' needs have been

considered, as well as the validity and reliability of measuring students' progress, development of their metacognitive skills, and optimization of the effectiveness and objectivity of assessment.

The methodology and design of the formative assessment model developed by the PhD candidate have been based on English for Special Purposes curriculum, which has been determined and analyzed through detailed description of activities and tasks, selection of learning resources, as well as procedures and criteria for assessing communicative competence of students. The research developed by PhD candidate has been aimed at approval of formative assessment model by means of a pedagogical experiment. Two target groups have been created and new methodology of teaching has been applied. The results obtained have shown a statistically significant development of written communication skills and language competence of students. For research purposes, a number of methods and tools for data collection have been selected, such as preliminary and control testing of the two target groups, a survey aimed at investigating students' attitudes towards formative assessment and the use of digital tools of the experiment's participants, a corpus of the author's developed teaching materials related to learning tasks, a corpus of tasks completed by students for ongoing assessment, as well as a set of criteria for self-assessment and mutual assessment by students. Descriptors have been formulated by PhD candidate as an effective tool for measuring executive skills at the intermediate and final stage of the experiment designed for reflective assessment on the four skills. At the end of the pedagogical experiment, a final survey was conducted to assess the effectiveness of e-portfolio in formative assessment using a comparative analysis of student satisfaction with traditional and alternative assessment approaches.

7. Manifestation of author's own contribution to the collection and analysis of the empirical data.

I consider the collection and analysis of empirical data was carried out personally by PhD candidate Lilyana Todorova - Ruskova, testifing to scientific accuracy, criticality and credibility. All this mentioned above prove the validity of her analyses, conclusions reached and contributions to scientific researches.

8. Description of the contributions:

8. 1. Brief description of the nature and assessment of the reliability of the materials on which the PhD thesis contributions are based.

I consider the contributions declared by Liliana Todorova-Ruskova in her doctoral thesis are her personal scientific achievement. This is also proven by her publications, which have been written in the field of the topic of doctoral thesis. The topic is relevant and can be accepted as a contribution to the Bulgarian pedagogical science and the methodology of foreign language teaching. Doctoral thesis a wealth of research information from the point of view of the research done and the proposed results.

8.2.   Description and classification of the PhD candidate's contributions.

The attached reference for the contributions in doctoral thesis correctly and reliably reflects the scientific results achieved by PhD candidate Liliana Todorova - Ruskova. The abstract objectively reflects the author's scientific achievements. I accept the declared contributions, which have been classified as follows:

• On the basis of critical theoretical analysis of the scientific publications on the researched issues, Lilyana Todorova – Ruskova has studied all tendencies in the application of e-portfolio and carried out a research project on the formative assessment in English for special purposes teaching.

• The author has developed and approved a methodological model for e-portfolio formative assessment tool for English for special purposes teaching, which has had the potential to increase teaching quality, students' achievements, as well as their motivation and learning autonomy.

• A significant contribution to the methodology of foreign language teaching has been the development of a methodological database in English and Bulgarian, containing 20 types of descriptors, formulated as performance skills for self-assessment of language competence in teaching specialized English for students in Economics.

• PhD candidate Lilyana Todorova – Ruskova has created a database of specialized learning platforms and sites for creating or using authentic learning resources for teaching English for special purposes to students in Economics.

• An important practical contribution has been the developed by PhD candidate set of criteria for evaluating functional, technical and pedagogical aspects of tools for foreign language e-learning in higher education, adapted on the basis of the framework developed by Anstey and Watson, where there have been criteria measuring compliance in relating to course design and supporting various aspects of learning process.

• A significant contribution to the methodology of foreign language teaching has been the elaboration of a corpus of authentic learning materials and tasks, aimed at practicing target language skills related to professional area in order to maintain the students' interest and motivation, relevant both for students and for all language teachers.

An important practical contribution has been the created by the author media library containing digital resources specially designed and selected for English for special purposes teaching. Digital resources are by authenticity, interactivity, adaptability and portability of the content, which would have a particularly great impact in teaching.

• The author has made recommendations of a contributing nature for the wider application of the e-portfolio on a larger scale in the higher school where she teaches to increase the quality of formative assessment and improve the academic achievements of students, in accordance with the UNSS Digitalization strategy.

8.3. Assessment of the degree of personal participation of the author in the contributions.

I consider that Lilyana Todorova-Ruskova has planned, organized and effectuated the pedagogical experiment, as well as her personal participation in analysis of achieved results. The database of teaching and learning resources and digital tools created by her has an undeniable practical value for educational practice of foreign language teaching and contributes to the enrichment of teaching and learning experience. The developed methodological tool in English and Bulgarian, containing 20 descriptors for self-assessment of language competence in teaching specialized English for students in Economics, has obviously been the author's work.

8.4. Assessment of the PhD thesis summary and its compliance with the main points and contributions of the PhD thesis.

The summary of the PhD candidate's accurately and correctly comply with main ideas and contributions in doctoral thesis.

Impact of the PhD thesis on other scientists and researchers.

1. Evaluation of the publications on the PhD thesis: number, type of journals in which they have been published.

   The publications presented by PhD candidate are 5 and comply with the doctoral thesis topic, and have been published in national and international scientific editions. With these publications, the doctoral student popularized the main ideas and scientific achievements in the dissertation work.

2. References and citations by other authors; published scientific reviews, etc.

The materials submitted do not indicate the use and citation of doctoral thesis by other authors. No reviews have been indicated in the scientific publications.

Author's personal qualities (if the reviewer knows the author).

I do not personally know PhD candidate Lilyana Todorova-Ruskova, but I have only an excellent opinion of the submitted doctoral thesis.

Opinions, recommendations and notes.

I believe that the doctoral thesis meets all the requirements for the award of a PhD degree, therefore it would be difficult to point out weaknesses, as well as give recommendations. My only recommendation is PhD candidate Lilyana Todorova - Ruskova should continue her future researches and practical activities in the field of foreign language teaching methodology and more specifically in teaching English for special purposes for students in Economics.

Conclusion.

The doctoral thesis of PhD candidate Lilyana Todorova – Ruskova an authentic, independent and in-depth study. On the basis of the evaluations given by me according to the individual

criteria, the review has been written in accordance with the requirements of the existing Law on the Development of the Academic Staff, the Regulations for its Application and the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff of the New Bulgarian University.

On the basis of the indicated scientific and practical contributions, I give a **positive assessment** of the doctoral thesis and I support the award of Liliana Todorova - Ruskova the PhD degree "doctor" in scientific specialty "Methodology of Modern languages teaching", Professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching ...

Date: 09.04.23   Signature: ………..

Assoc. Prof. Vesela Slavova, PhD