

EVALUATION

of the application of Prof. Diana Dimitrova Yankova, PhD. for the award of the degree of Doctor of Arts in the professional field 2.1. Philology.

By Associate Professor Elena Borisova Tarasheva, PhD in Mathematical Linguistics, New Bulgarian University, habilitated in the field 2.1. Philology: Media Discourse , appointed member of the academic jury by order of the Rector of New Bulgarian University № 3-RK-195/28.04.2023

1. **Significance of the research problem in scientific and applied terms.**

The research explores the issue of multiculturalism based on exploration of the experience of Bulgarian immigrants in Canada. Considering the magnitude of migration processes in recent times, particularly those which concern Bulgarian society, the phenomenon looms large in public discourses and warrants specific attention on the part of researchers, who are summoned to engage with adaptation problems and social issues and offer solutions to the general public and to the major stakeholders in the process, such as governmental agencies. Science has often been accused of standing aloof in its own ivory tower and neglecting genuine socially significant problems. The present work engages with and offers solutions to at least three practical areas:

Firstly, it traces reasons for immigrating to Canada, and explores the structure of local immigrant communities. Knowledge of these offers good opportunities to find methods of getting across to Bulgarian communities in Canada, helping them stay in touch with their homeland, and last but not least, to allay immigrants' fears of surveillance and malign influence on their lives by secretive Bulgarian organisations. Recently we saw evidence of several inadequate efforts to connect with immigrants due to ignorance of factors established with this research, such as the apprehension of returning to the home country in view of modern developments, which would make reintegration difficult.

Secondly, the analysis of the structure and composition of the translated literature from Canada can support the processes of literary communication between the two countries as well as improve the work of book publishers. The dissemination of translated literature is a significant effort and has an impact on the formation of individuals at home and abroad, which is why it is important to do it on the basis of rigorous analyses rather than simple commercial factors. This is especially important for Canadian authors, for whom it can be said that if America spoke Spanish, Canadian literature would establish a firm hold on hearts and minds, rather than be bundled with other literatures written in English.

Thirdly, the survey of students' knowledge of Canada is an excellent example of a needs analysis preceding the design of cultural studies courses for university students. The realization that learning new

languages develops the learners' world view and enhances their abilities, while demanding extensive knowledge of the reality where the language is spoken should lead to a broader framework of language education guided precisely by learners' knowledge or lack of it; by where their curiosity or lack of it may lead.

The **readership survey** of a Bulgarian newspaper in Canada clearly raises the question who the journalistic materials are written for, what messages can be communicated to the readers and what role such a publication can play in binding the Bulgarian community together. Addressing these issues sets in motion the beginning of building media literacy. The research presented here reveals the breadth of social issues readership surveys can shed light on.

Switching from **one linguistic code to another** provides information about points of convergence and divergence between the conceptual maps of the two languages and modes of expression in the two cultures in contact. It provides extremely valuable data about the cognitive base of the two languages and the way bilinguals make use of data from both languages when they construct their messages. A classification of the reasons why borrowings from one language are used in the other helps map out the conceptual base of terms, the discursive organisation, and the linguistic means of representing reality in both languages. Such a description would be an excellent philosophical basis for anthropological descriptions, textbook presentations, and training resources for candidates to enter into direct communication with each other.

2. Justification of the aims and objectives of the dissertation.

The applicant aims to conduct an interdisciplinary study of first-generation Bulgarian immigrants to Canada. The socio-cultural analysis includes push and pull factors for immigration, degrees and mode of integration into the host society, the communicative organisation of local ethnic groups, local institutions - mainly newspapers - that mediate communication. The sociolinguistic data come from interviews, which, in addition to data on social factors, are also analysed for linguistic elements, such as the inclusion of words from the other language in the speech of the subjects, which provide evidence of similarities and differences in the conceptual base and mode of communication of the two languages.

The analytical framework includes many different investigative techniques that exploit data from a range of sources. Research methodologies from several disciplines are applied, drawing upon the theoretical bases of the respective disciplines. It is sometimes difficult to grasp the connections between fields as diverse as students' knowledge of Canada, migration waves, and book publishing. However, the candidate maintains the scholarly narrative via interim summaries that keep focus on the general purpose.

The study of Bulgarian immigrants in Canada is fairly broad and abstract as a research objective. Given the unexplored nature of the theoretical field, perhaps trying out different methodologies and drawing upon various areas of expertise is a logical approach to a pioneering exploratory study. Gathering more material is better suited to an initial stage of approaching a new area as opposed to a more focussed and in-depth study of one aspect, although the ambience can distract or confuse the reader. No more focus is achieved via the pursuit of such an abstract goal and the effort to adjudicate its achievement is brought no closer in sight.

3. Conformity between the chosen methodology and research methodology and the set aim and objectives of the dissertation.

The study shows skills in extensive literature review of various fields: from psychology to social organisation. Different types of surveys are also staged and conducted with selected respondents. Particularly impressive is the corpus of semi-structured interviews with immigrants, as well as the highly skilled qualitative data analysis. The quantitative analyses provide a basis for in-depth analysis of the phenomena, and the qualitative step-by-step synthesis of the data leads to compelling conclusions.

Sections of the research have been carried out as part of larger studies, with methodology agreed among a big research team. This demonstrates skills in team investigation and working with other scientists, whilst also pursuing own research interests.

4. Theoretical and applied contributions of the dissertation (description and evaluation), including the presence of original contributions to science.

The present work is seminal in the field of the study of Bulgarian immigrant communities in Canada. A number of studies of other communities, in other countries, have been cited, and there have been partial studies of certain aspects of the lives of immigrant communities, but no comprehensive and multi-faceted study has yet been published before Yankova's research.

The study of immigrant identities within a foreign society is a contribution to the investigation of the effect immigration has on migrants. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the interviews presents a valuable corpus that can shed light on different aspects of integrative processes. On the other hand, a purely linguistic analysis can lead to interesting data about both languages that can be used within various frameworks of language learning.

5. Assessment of the publications on the dissertation: number, nature of the publications in which they have been published.

The list of publications on the topic of multiculturalism and Canadian society includes one book, two book chapters, three edited volume collections, 14 articles in home and international journals. All collections and books have received reviews upon publication.

The Scopus database reports 2 book chapters and one article in refereed professional journals. The research article has been cited twice in prestigious journals and the book chapter - once. This exceeds the required number of publications for the award of the degree of Doctor of Arts.


6. Opinions, recommendations, and comments.

Given the advanced degree being applied for, the thesis presents a number of different studies on a topic of interest to the candidate over many years. Skills are demonstrated in corpus collection and processing, survey research, and the synthesis and verification of quantitative and qualitative data. All of these skills draw methodology from a range of disciplines, such as linguistics, critical analysis, psychology, history, and other related fields. For me, combining so many different methodologies restricts the scope of the findings for each study. It would be more interesting to probe deeply into one area and exhaust it maximally - for example, the qualitative analysis of interviews, or the classification of linguistic material according to one indicator. Of course, the candidate's choice was to present a panoramic picture of research on the issue, rather than delve into one area and methodology.

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

Taking into account the fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Arts, as well as the high quality of the research presented by the candidate, I propose the award of the degree of Doctor of Arts to the candidate Diana Yankova.

Date: June 1st 2023

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Elena Tarasheva