

СТАНОВИЩЕ

REVIEW

By Prof. Irena Georgieva Vasileva, DLitt, New Bulgarian University, professional field 2.1. Philology, for the award of the academic degree of 'Doctor of Science' in the doctoral programme 'Theory and Practice of Translation', in professional field 2.1. Philology, with candidate Assoc. Prof. Boris Anatolyevich Naimushin, PhD.

Title of the thesis: **'Trends and Personalities in Diplomatic Translation in Bulgaria between 1944 and 1974, and some Comparisons with the USSR, the USA, Romania, Hungary and Cuba'**.

1. General description of the thesis

The doctoral thesis is devoted to a topic that has received relatively little attention both in Bulgarian translation studies and in the history of Bulgarian diplomacy – the emergence, institutionalisation and development of diplomatic translation during the first decades following the Second World War. The author focuses the study on the professional community of diplomatic translators and offers an interdisciplinary analysis that combines approaches from history, translation studies, diplomatic studies and historical anthropology. Such a research framework is undoubtedly of academic relevance, as existing publications traditionally examine diplomatic activity through the prism of political institutions and state leaders, whilst the role of translators remains on the periphery of academic interest.

One of the study's greatest strengths is its primary source base. The author demonstrates impressive use of a wide range of archival materials, memoirs, interviews, photographs, periodicals and audiovisual documents, a significant proportion of which are being introduced into academic discourse for the first time. Particularly valuable is the author's endeavour to cross-reference different types of sources in order to verify their authenticity, which significantly enhances the reliability of the reconstructions presented.

2. Structure and methodology

The methodological approach also deserves praise. The prosopographic and microhistorical approaches prove particularly well-suited to reconstructing the professional biographies of diplomatic translators. The combination of biographical analysis with archival research enables the author to move beyond the traditional institutional interpretation and to present diplomatic translation as a social practice dependent on the professional training, political loyalty, intercultural competence and personal biographies of the translators.

3. Scientific contributions

Among the academic merits, particular note should be made of the endeavour to conceptualise diplomatic translation as a specific form of interlingual mediation, distinct from conference interpreting in terms of its institutional functions and communicative characteristics. The author argues that the diplomatic interpreter acts as a trusted mediator rather than merely a language specialist, which represents an interesting contribution to translation theory and to research into diplomatic communication.



Particularly impressive is the reconstruction of specific diplomatic events, including the 15th session of the UN General Assembly in 1960. The identification of the interpreters for the various delegations and the examination of their role in both official and unofficial contacts demonstrate a high standard of archival research and analytical skills. Such microhistorical studies significantly enrich our understanding of the mechanisms of international communication during the Cold War.

4. Critical comments

Alongside its undeniable merits, the work also raises a number of methodological and conceptual questions.

Firstly, the noticeable discrepancy between the title and the actual comparative scope of the study is striking. The title promises comparisons with the USSR, the USA, Romania, Hungary and Cuba, but it is clear from the content presented that the comparative analysis focuses primarily on the USSR, Romania, Hungary and Cuba, whilst American practice remains relatively under-explored. This creates a certain discrepancy between the stated objectives and the actual content of the study.

Secondly, although the author convincingly defends the interdisciplinary nature of the work, one might have expected a more in-depth incorporation of contemporary theoretical models in translation studies. The exposition is dominated by historical and biographical analysis, whilst classical concepts such as translation norms, institutional theory of translation, the sociology of translation or the theory of mediation remain relatively under-represented. Consequently, the work is perceived primarily as a historical study of translation rather than as a contribution to the development of contemporary translation studies.

Thirdly, the concept of ‘diplomatic translation’ could be conceptualised even more precisely. The proposed working definition fulfils its practical function, but does not sufficiently clarify the boundaries between diplomatic, political, institutional and conference translation. A more in-depth theoretical analysis would allow for a more convincing distinction between these categories.

Certain reservations may also be raised regarding the formulation of the scientific contributions. Some of these represent results or empirical observations rather than scientific contributions in the strict sense of the term. For example, the reconstruction of specific biographies or the identification of individual figures undoubtedly have documentary value, but it is difficult to place them on a par with methodological innovations or the development of theoretical frameworks. A clearer distinction between scientific contributions, scientific findings and practical achievements would make the author’s self-assessment more precise.

The question of the concept of the ‘mass subjective perspective’ also remains open to debate. It is presented as a methodological innovation, but it is not sufficiently clear from the text to what extent it constitutes an independent scholarly concept and to what extent it describes already familiar mechanisms of collective memory and the construction of historical narratives. It would be useful to compare the proposed concept with established concepts from memory studies and historical epistemology.

From a structural point of view, the balance between the individual sections could also be discussed. A significant amount of space is devoted to the historical context, biographical reconstructions and individual case studies, whilst the analysis of translation strategies, linguistic choices and professional techniques remains relatively limited. This is understandable given the nature of the sources, but it



nevertheless gives the impression that the concept of ‘translation’ is sometimes overshadowed by the history of the translators.

It should also be noted that the work convincingly marks the beginning of a new direction in Bulgarian scholarship but would benefit from broader international comparisons beyond the socialist bloc. The inclusion of a more in-depth analysis of practices within Western diplomatic services would allow for a clearer delineation of the specific features of the Bulgarian model.

5. Final assessment

Notwithstanding these critical remarks, they do not detract from the overall academic value of the work presented. On the contrary, most of them can be regarded as recommendations for the future development of a study that opens up a new and promising field of research. Particularly impressive are the systematic archival work, the high standard of documentation, the interdisciplinary approach and the endeavour to restore the institutional memory of diplomatic translators in Bulgaria.

In conclusion, it can be summarized that the thesis constitutes an original, in-depth and methodologically well-founded piece of academic research with indisputable scholarly and documentary merits. Notwithstanding the critical remarks mentioned, it offers new insights into the history of diplomatic translation, introduces a significant body of new archival material and substantially broadens our understanding of the role of translators in international relations during the Cold War period. The findings can be regarded as a significant contribution both to Bulgarian translation studies and to the history of diplomacy and intercultural communication.

6. Assessment of the publications related to the doctoral thesis. Citations by other authors.

Since obtaining his habilitation in 2009, Dr. Najmishin has published six articles in academic journals which have been cited in indexed world-renowned scientific databases, and 34 (8 of which were co-authored) in non-peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes. For the most part, the publications reflect not only the author’s primary interest in the theory and practice of interpreting, but also a variety of other topics. It is noteworthy, however, that almost all publications appear in Bulgarian and Russian outlets. I would recommend that the candidate seek to engage with the wider international academic community in future.

This would help to increase the number of citations both in academic publications which are referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific databases (currently 5), as well as in peer-reviewed monographs and edited volumes (2) and in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals (10).

Nevertheless, the materials submitted by the candidate meet the minimum national scientometric requirements for the award of the scientific degree of ‘Doctor of Science’.

In conclusion, given the academic merits of the thesis, the originality of the research, the methodological competence demonstrated by the candidate and the significance of the results obtained, I consider that **the thesis fully meets the requirements for the award of the scientific degree of ‘Doctor of Science’ in the doctoral programme ‘Theory and Practice of Translation’, professional field 2.1. Philology.**



Образец за структура на становище на научен труд за придобиване на образователната и научна степен „доктор“ и научната степен „доктор на науките“ в НБУ

Приложение 5 към Наредба за развитието на академичния състав на НБУ

I therefore recommend that the distinguished members of the academic panel vote ‘in favour’ of awarding the academic and scientific degree of ‘Doctor of Science’ to Associate Professor Boris Anatolyevich Naimushin, PhD.

Date: 25.07.2026

Signature: Prof. Irena Vassileva, DLitt.

IRENA
GEORGIEVA
VASSILEVA

Digitally signed by
IRENA GEORGIEVA
VASSILEVA
Date: 2026.07.25
11:04:37 +03'00'