

REVIEW

Reviewer: Tzvetomira Venkova, PhD, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Associate Professor in 2.1. Philology (Germanic Languages: English language – Syntax and Computational Linguistics)

Degree: PhD in Humanities, 2.1. Philology, Germanic languages (English language)

Candidate: Bardha Gashi, New Bulgarian University

Topic: *INTEGRATING APPLIED LINGUISTICS APPROACHES AND MODERN COMPETENCES IN THE ESP COURSES FOR STUDENTS OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND ARTS*

1. Significance of the research topic

The dissertation of the doctoral student Bardha Gashi is dedicated to the vital topic of introducing applied linguistics achievements to English teaching. This is interdisciplinary research, which bridges linguistic and methodological perspectives by discussing them from an interesting and in-depth general perspective. Such connection is especially important in view of the opportunities that are opening up to improve and modernize language learning. In addition, the text outlines new guidelines for enriching the research linguistic paradigm by testing it in a controlled experimental environment. The study is comprehensive and fully developed within 191 pages of text, divided into six chapters and 13 pages of appendices to it.

2. Assessment of aims and objectives

The research goals and tasks of the thesis are presented in detail in the introductory chapter. Two main goals have been established: to identify students' needs and language knowledge before starting the English language

course; as well as to analyze the course content and its delivery. The motivation for choosing the goals is well justified by emphasizing the importance of the correct assessment of the language situation in the course and its interrelation with the more general cognitive goals of the training.

I would recommend a clearer focus on the research aspect of the objectives in order to draw attention to the linguistic results presented farther in the text. The linguistic features of the empirical data are seen more visibly in the context of the questions, formulated about applied research, and in the hypotheses related to the learning situation. The linguistic emphasis is placed mainly on the specialized terminology and phraseology, as well as on the grammatical choice between different categories and syntactic variations, in view of particular communicative strategies. The statement that the typical specialized text is limited in regard to the possibilities for linguistic analysis seems unacceptable – in fact, the dissertation text farther shows the complexity and linguistically multi-layered nature of specialized texts.

In general, the set goals and specific tasks have been successfully achieved and exhaustively elaborated in the text of the dissertation.

3. Extent of understanding the current state of research and relevance of references

The dissertation shows a very thorough and detailed knowledge of the research problem.

First, the object of the research within the field of *English for specific purposes* is outlined. The main factors considered are discussed in detail, albeit the presentation is somewhat chaotic: target group of students, students' communicative needs, differences in the background of each student, teacher's roles, language content, etc. Two main approaches to the research object are further described. The first one is the *conceptual approach*, with three main aspects: *metaphor analysis*, *domain analysis* and

ontological analysis, as related to semantic and cognitive linguistic aspects of the specialized text. Furthermore, the *contextual approach* to language is properly explained in regard to its sociolinguistic and cultural aspect, as well as its language form. However, from a linguistic point of view, the contextual approach is rather a set of approaches, including sociolinguistics, functional and formal grammar, and others. Thus, it comprises several types of analysis: *sociocultural*, *discourse*, *genre* and *linguistic*. This text section would benefit from a more in-depth comparison between the different analytical approaches.

In view of the main subject of research, logically the focus is on the review of the interpretations of the concept of *English for specific purposes*. They are thoroughly and comprehensively considered in terms of basic concepts, key definitions and guiding terms. Essential opinions of leading specialists in the field are presented analytically. Absolute and variable features of specific purpose training are discussed in detail, and the distinction between them is interpreted in a comparative historiographical aspect, as well as with reference to a number of well-known authors. In particular, key areas such as *register analysis*, *rhetorical analysis*, *discourse analysis*, and *target situation analysis* are considered. In this, the author exhibits a very good knowledge of the issue, draws interesting parallels and makes convincing conceptual comparisons between theories.

The second part of the literature review, considering teacher training, students' expectations and their interaction, is also logically consistent and well-founded and presents a detailed and complete picture. The author provides a concrete analysis of the factors leading to the insufficient general training in English, which accordingly causes problems in teaching English for specific purposes. Key principles such as authentic materials, goal oriented training, students' autonomy, analysis of the shortcomings, etc. are discussed. They are presented very systematically and are accompanied by comments and argumentation. I would strongly recommend here to refer to

some of the papers of Christo Moskovsky, one of the leading experts in this field.

4. Referencing representative number of sources

It should be noted that the doctoral student cites a significant number of sources used, showing citation accuracy and analytical thought in their presentation. The citations follow the logic of the text and are usually accompanied by appropriate comments, or used to support a particular opinion. The list of cited literature contains more than a hundred titles, which are formatted according to the requirements.

5. Availability of well-grounded and detailed theoretical research model

The doctoral student follows a precise and detailed procedural plan based on an interpretive and descriptive approach. The analysis is divided into three main stages: before, during, and after the language course, which are illustrated with appropriate charts. At each of the stages the respective methodological tools are applied: placement test, online survey, observation, achievement test, sub-structured interview. In this way, the author builds a working procedural model, the stages of which are well motivated. The model combines qualitative and quantitative aspects, according to the methodology of (Mack et al. 2005).

6. Relevance of the methodology to the aims and objectives of the thesis

In accordance with the general objectives of the study, the methodology appropriately involves a sampling approach, the sample being a group of participants in the experiment, selected according to certain criteria: *a positive attitude towards the course, regular attendance, participation in the research forms*, etc. The author has managed to motivate an impressive sample of participants – 100 students, respectively from 5 different academic

programs. The text presents in detail the developed methodological materials for each program.

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

Established leading sociological methods are followed in measuring the attitudes, structuring interviews, and developing tests. In this respect, Ms. Gashi's contribution is significant, as she has presented original materials developed especially for the purposes of the study. In addition, she has made an in-depth analysis of the results of the analytical methodology of the case study by applying electronic processing.

Description of contributions:

1. Reliability of data

The empirical data are based on a significant sample of participants, personally motivated for the scientific experiment by the doctoral student. The materials of the experiment compiled by her are explained in detail.

2. Description and classification of the thesis contributions.

a) The dissertation shows that the doctoral student has a comprehensive theoretical knowledge in the field of applied linguistics and teaching English for specific purposes. The text clearly shows her ability for independent research.

b) The doctoral student has constructed a complete case study in the field of English language teaching for specific purposes and has processed it according to strict criteria. The case study is motivated and explained in

detail, and the relevant conclusions are made.

c) The dissertation presents a detailed statistical analysis of the investigated material. Basically, the analysis is presented in the Chapter four, where the results are arranged in order of the experimental tools for each of the three stages in the methodological plan. What is impressive in the stochastic processing of the results, is their precise ranking and illustration with exhaustive tables, as well as with pie, bar and line diagrams. The correlations between the individual results are also taken into account.

d) The dissertation presents systematized guidelines for improving the achievements – in the form of successive steps to each result, as well as with specific recommendations to the programs for teaching English for specific purposes.

e) The study systematizes and presents substantial linguistic parameters, arranged by grammatical categories related to morphology, syntax, text linguistics and psycholinguistics.

f) A comprehensive innovative concept for an experimental preparatory language program is presented in Chapter Five. The parameters of the program are developed entirely on the basis of the described experiment and the results of the previous chapters. The novelties are related to teacher's strategy, course materials, general structure of the course, as well as to bolstering students confidence and motivation.

g) The results of the dissertation can be used in teaching English at academic level, in compiling curricula, as well as in testing language skills. The well-systematized and richly illustrated material allows quick access for reference and specific application.

3. Level of candidate's personal participation in the contributions

The dissertation is the result of an original extensive investigation of the author. She has put a lot of effort into selecting a large representative sample of students. The results are exhaustively interpreted in view of the set research objectives.

4. Conformity between the Thesis Summary and the aims, objectives and contributions of the Thesis

The thesis and the thesis summary are in English. The thesis summary conforms with the main ideas, results and conclusions of the dissertation.

Thesis Impact

1. Assessment of the publications related to the thesis: number and types.

The doctoral student presents 4 publications on the topic of the dissertation, two of them published in an international journal (*European Journal of Language and Literature Studies*), and the others - in proceedings of international conferences in Kosovo and Italy.

2. Citations and references in the scientific literature

No data are provided.

Opinions, recommendations and notes

It is advisable for the doctoral student to specify more comprehensively the purely linguistic side of the developed language teaching program in view of grammatical and lexical features. They are undoubtedly an important factor that should not be underestimated in the preparation of the curriculum of any language course.

In addition, with regard to statistical processing, some more specific measures, such as arithmetic mean and standard deviation, can be introduced

so as to achieve better precision. Moreover, the availability of a sufficiently large study group fully allows obtaining results for these parameters.

Conclusions

In the light of the foregoing, the assessment of the thesis is highly positive and I recommend that Mrs Bardha Gashi be conferred a PhD degree in the professional field 2.1. Philology.

Date 26.06.2020

Signature:



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tzvetomira Venkova