

A SHORT REVIEW

By Associate Professor Snezha Todorova Tsoneva-Mathewson, PhD

Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

of a dissertation for granting a PhD degree in Area of Higher Education: 2. Humanities,

Professional Field: 2.1. Philology, PhD programme: Germanic Languages: English Language

Author: Polina Nikolaeva Petkova

Topic: Hedging in Academic Writing: Explorations into English and Bulgarian Research Articles

Supervisor: none

1. General description of the submitted materials

By order No. **PJ-21-233/ 06.02.2023** of the Rector of Paisiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to participate in a procedure for the defense of the dissertation on **Hedging in Academic Writing: Explorations into English and Bulgarian Research Articles** for granting a PhD degree in: Area of Higher Education: 2. Humanities, Professional Field: 2.1. Philology, PhD programme: Germanic Languages: English Language. The author of the dissertation is Polina Nikolaeva Petkova, an independent doctoral student at the English Philology Department. All the submitted documents comply with Article 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at PU, the most important among them being the dissertation itself, the extended abstract and copies of Ms. Petkova's publications.

2. Relevance of the topic

The relevance of the topic is undeniable as *hedging* is an all pervasive but rather elusive semantic and pragmatic phenomenon which researchers have tried to pin down as the results of this research could be applied in a variety of areas such as Translation Studies, Teaching English as a Foreign Language among others. Although the topic has been discussed by Bulgarian researchers such as Irena Vasileva, publications about this phenomenon in the Bulgarian language are scarce. Therefore, this dissertation fills in a gap with its scope and in-depth analysis.

3. Knowledge of the problem

Chapters 1 and 2 of the dissertation introduce previous research on *hedging* in general and *hedging in academic writing*, in particular. They reveal Ms. Petkova's thorough knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon. She has referred to over 70 publications, which have been skilfully presented, analysed and critically assessed.

4. Methodology

Chapter 3 clearly and accurately explains the selection of the data from academic articles in English and Bulgarian, as well as the methods of identification, description, and analysis of the linguistic structures via which the phenomenon of hedging is manifested. The research approach successfully combines quantitative evidence with qualitative (semantic) analysis in more than 150 pages of text from academic articles in English and Bulgarian. The attempt to apply the computer program *hedgomatic* and its subsequent rejection as an inaccurate tool for identifying hedging linguistic elements shows excellent research skills. The author accepts Ken Hyland's polypragmatic and polysemantic approach as the most suitable for the present study, as well as John Swales's ideas on written academic discourse in English. Drawing on their descriptions of hedging language elements, Polina Petkova demonstrates an ability to apply their ideas independently and accurately to her own empirical research in both English and Bulgarian.

5. Characteristic Features and Assessment of the Dissertation

Chapter 4 is the actual linguistic analysis of the texts of academic articles in English. Hedging elements and their pragmatic functions in the different sections of the academic articles are identified. The statistical results are clearly presented and interpreted in the concluding part of the chapter. Similarly, Chapter 5 presents an analysis of texts from academic articles in Bulgarian. This chapter is a serious contribution to the understanding of hedging, as it offers a study of the phenomenon in the Bulgarian written academic discourse in such depth and scale that has not been done so far. The conclusions are clearly and precisely articulated in the concluding part of the chapter. Chapter 6 also provides new insights into the phenomenon, as it presents a valuable comparative analysis of the two languages. The conclusions drawn from this analysis can be applied to the fields of translation, teaching English for specific purposes and intercultural communication. The text is written in excellent English.

5. Evaluation of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student

The study has been carried out entirely by the doctoral student. Polina Petkova has 3 publications in specialized journals. They, as well as the entire dissertation work, show the author's lasting interest in the present topic, which is also based on her many years of experience in teaching academic writing in English at the Department of English Philology at Plovdiv University.

6. Abstract

The abstract reflects the content of the dissertation work and its contributions accurately.

7. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

The observations, conclusions and generalizations in the dissertation have serious theoretical and practical value. I recommend that the dissertation research be published as a monograph, which will be a useful source of information for interested researchers.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific and applied results which represent an original contribution to scholarship and meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation, and the relevant Regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The dissertation demonstrates that the doctoral student Polina Petkova possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and research skills in the area of **Germanic languages: English language** by demonstrating an ability for independent scientific research. No plagiarism has been detected.

In view of the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research, the dissertation thesis, extended abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I therefore propose to the honorable scientific jury to award a PhD Degree to Polina Petkova in: Area of Higher Education: 2. Humanities, Professional Field: 2.1. Philology, PhD programme: Germanic Languages: English Language.

Reviewer:

10.03.2023

Associate Professor Snezha Mathewson