

A SHORT REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Ivan Cholakov, PhD

Paisiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Faculty of Philology

on the materials submitted for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of
PhD

in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences

Area of professional qualification 1.3. Pedagogy of training in....,

Doctoral programme: Methodology of Bulgarian language studies

Author: *Nataliya Ivanova Matseva,*

part-time PhD student at Department of Bulgarian Literature and Literary Theory at the
Faculty of Philology

Subject: *Developing the Key Competence “Learning Skills” in Working with Text in
Bulgarian Language Education (Grades 5-7)*

Supervisor: *Assoc. Prof. Fani Evgenieva Boykova, PhD*

1. General overview of the submitted materials

By order No. ПД-21-541 dated 15.03.2023 г. of the Rector of Paisiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (PU) I have been appointed as a member of the doctorate committee for the defense of the following dissertation *Developing the Key Competence “Learning Skills” in Working with Text in Bulgarian Language Education (Grades 5-7)*. The author of the thesis is Nataliya Ivanova Matseva, a part-time doctoral student at the Department of Bulgarian Literature and Literary Theory at the Faculty of Philology, supervised by associate professor Dr. Fani Boykova.

The set of materials presented by Nataliya Ivanova Matseva is in accordance with art. 36 (1) of the Rulebook for Development of the Academic Staff of Plovdiv University and includes the necessary documents and references.

The dissertation consists of a text of 154 pages (introduction, four chapters and a conclusion), references and 24 appendices. The total number of pages is 208. The results are illustrated with 76 tables and figures. The research questions are stated clearly with a clear justification, the overall work demonstrates the PhD student’s understanding of the field and knowledge about the topic. The bibliographic list of 74 items includes 70 titles in Cyrillic and 4 in Latin alphabet.

2. Relevance of the topic

The PhD dissertation topic is in line with recent trends in native language teaching. Its relevance is conditioned by the dynamics of educational changes requiring the formation of key competences in the educational process, and meets the guidelines set out in the Preschool and School Education Act and in a number of other normative documents. In this regard, the scientific problem chosen for research is distinguished by both theoretical and didactic relevance since the results of the pedagogical experiments are applicable in the actual teaching.

3. Familiarity with the topic

The theoretical study is mainly presented in the first chapter of the thesis and is based on scientific concepts of the competence approach in the educational process, of the role of the key competence *Learning Skills* in the native language teaching, of the text-centric approach to the formation of the communicative competence. The questions related to systematic acquisition of the rule-based linguistic knowledge are outlined. The key competence *Learning Skills* is interpreted through the prism of different strategies depending on the objectives, exercises and tasks during the lesson. Various methods of collection, analysis, synthesis, and summarisation of the information concerning an issue for discussion are interpreted. In this study, the author aims to examine a learner-teacher interaction as a crucial factor affecting the motivation and the concentration of students in classrooms, as well as their ability to critical (self-)reflection.

An advantage of Mrs Matseva is her professional commitment to teaching Bulgarian language and literature in schools, which ensures successful integration of theory and practice. Therefore, that is undoubtedly one of the important and significant results of the research approach to the topic.

4. Research methodology

The introduction correctly explains the research topic, and describes its objectives and intended outcomes, the research methods and tools. The study aims to explore the dynamics of the competences developed in terms of the learning skills of fifth, sixth and seventh grade students over three school years. In the holding pedagogical experiment, the students are divided into groups. The teacher announces and analyses the results of each group three times: at the beginning of the school year (incoming diagnostic), at the end of the first term (intermediate evaluation of progress, assess the implementation progress made in activities towards achieving the planned results), and at the end of the school year (final evaluation). The results of the experimental study are presented in tables and graphs. The drawing conclusions are based on information, evidence and data.

5. Overview and assessment of the dissertation and its major contributions

Chapter 1 of the dissertation introduces the main aspects of modern Bulgarian language teaching among which is the development of key competences and basic skills. A competence approach in native language learning is understood as a very important method of improving the quality of the educational process in the mother tongue. It empowers the students to apply their theoretical knowledge and practical skills with regard to the different communication tasks of varying levels of complexity. To this end, the author emphasizes quite correctly the need for the elaboration of a learning task that encourages teamwork, critical thinking, creative decision-making, etc. The author considers the Key Competence “Learning Skills” basic for the realization of the pragmatic and cognitive function of the language learning, as well as successful mastery of all other key competences.

Chapter 2 aims to share a pedagogical experience which was carried out by Nataliya Matseva in the research of effective methods which would help to improve learning skills by working with text during the lesson. The methodological propositions of the Bulgarian language lessons focus on contributing to the creation, comprehension and interpretation skills of the different types of texts reflecting different fields of communication.

The author rightly believes that the texts should contain high-quality and engaging information for learners, correspond to their psychophysical qualities, have a clear narrative exposition with strong causal relationships, contain dialogical and monological forms of speech. Nataliya Matseva rightly considers that only in this way, by mastering the pragmatic components of the text, the students’ communicative competence will be improved. She also places emphasis on the different forms of assessment of students’ knowledge and skills and discusses the steps in the formation of a problem-solving stance.

Chapter 3 clearly and accurately explains the importance of the learning environment in enhancing students’ cognitive activity. A positive classroom climate is developed when the students construct peer relationships built on trust. A classroom-learning game and brainstorming techniques motivate the students in the process of acquisition of declarative and procedural knowledge. Nataliya Matseva also emphasizes the role of the teacher as an artist and skillful organizer of the learning process in Bulgarian language classes.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of strategies which have a practical value in modern education and outlines the future prospects for their successful implementation in Bulgarian language teaching. The PhD student generalizes the results of the study in tabular and graphical forms.

The dissertation presents valid claims for scientific contributions of an applied nature.

6. Assessment of the candidate's publications and track record

Nataliya Matseva has 6 publications in specialized journals and one paper in press. They, as well as the entire dissertation work, show the author's lasting interest in the present topic. Therefore, the candidate for the PhD degree meets the criterion for the number of scientific publications.

7. Synopsis

A dissertation summary consists 32 pages, including 29 pages of text, the literature cited in the summary, a list of publications in the subject area of the dissertation and a report on the scientific contributions. The synopsis reflects the content of the dissertation faithfully and its contributions accurately.

8. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

The observations, conclusions and generalizations in the dissertation have serious theoretical and practical value. Considering the research potential demonstrated by Nataliya Matseva, I would recommend her to continue and deepen her research on the topic of his dissertation, because undoubtedly, the development of key competences in native language learning has priority in its modern theoretical and applied orientation.

9. 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 Nataliya Ivanova Matseva possesses in depth theoretical knowledge and research skills in the area of **Pedagogy of training in...., Methodology of Bulgarian language studies** 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 Nataliya Ivanova Matseva in: Area of Higher Education: 1.3. Pedagogy of training in...., PhD programme: Methodology of Bulgarian language studies

30.05. 2023

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(Assoc. Prof. Ivan Cholakov, PhD)