

REVIEW

**by Dr. Penka Petkova Kozhuharova - Professor
at the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen**

on a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
in: field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences
professional direction 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching in...,
doctoral program "*Methodology of teaching Bulgarian language and literature*"

Author: *Ralitsa Zhivkova Koleva*

Topic: "*Comics and literary education of bilingual students in 4th grade*"

Supervisor: *Prof. Dr. Habil. Margarita Todorova Terzieva -
University "Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov", Burgas*

1. General description of the submitted materials

By order No. RD-21-634 dated 19.03.2024 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure the procedure for defending a dissertation on the topic: "Comics and literary education of bilingual students in 4th grade" for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional direction 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching in..., doctoral program Methodology of teaching Bulgarian language and literature. The author of the dissertation is Ralitsa Zhivkova Koleva - a part-time doctoral student at the Department of Elementary School Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy, with a supervisor Prof. Dr. Habil. Margarita Todorova Terzieva from the University "Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov", Burgas. The set of materials presented by the doctoral student on paper carrier is in accordance with Article 36 (1) of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of PU, including the following documents:

- a request to the Rector of PU to initiate the procedure for defending a dissertation;
- autobiography in European format;
- protocol from the departmental council related to the presentation of readiness to initiate the procedure and preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- dissertation;
- abstract in Bulgarian and English;
- list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;

- copies of scientific publications;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
- reference to compliance with the minimum national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in: field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional direction 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching in...

The doctoral student has attached 13 publications on the topic of the dissertation.

2. Brief biographical data about the PhD student

Ralitsa Zhivkova Koleva graduated as an Integrated Master at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" with a degree in Bulgarian Philology (with a qualification as a teacher) in 1999. Subsequently, she completed two master's programmes at the university: the Language and Literary Development in Preschool and Primary School Age (2014-2017) and the Master's Programme in Applied Psychology (2017-2018). Since 2019 she is enrolled as a part-time PhD student at the Department of Primary School Pedagogy of the Faculty of Pedagogy of PU.

The doctoral student works successively as a teacher of Bulgarian language and literature and as a teacher at the primary stage of primary education. At present she holds the position of deputy director for educational activities at the ObU „Pencho Slaveykov“.

3. Relevance of the theme and appropriateness of the set goals and objectives

Mastering the grammatical basis of the contemporary Bulgarian language by bilingual children is a continuous process that requires gradualness and repetition. Upon entering school, a significant portion of these children are more likely to be monolingual rather than bilingual. In order to systematically master the second language and its regularities, it is necessary for them to be trained in modelled and minimized speech. It has been established that children of Roma origin acquire elementary concepts related to orientation in two-dimensional space, relationships between objects, and temporal sequence at a lower level. The most difficult interference for students to overcome is morphological interference. This state in the development of children's speech can provoke difficulties in comprehending educational content and influence students' cognitive motivation. Familiarization with specific language elements is accomplished through sensory knowledge, and then through the reproduction of words and sentences. This implies that the new educational material should be conceptualized through various content and types of exercises that have a practical-applied character aimed at developing children's communicative skills. In the learning process, exercises focused on

understanding the text read by bilingual students need to be introduced.

In this context, the formulated theme and its specification in the object and subject of the dissertation work are significant, properly evaluated, and clearly defined.

With the aim of resolving the research problem, the doctoral student sets the goal to "<...> develop didactic tools based on working with comics, which will facilitate the perception of literary works and contribute to achieving better results in literary education of bilingual students." (p. 4). The set tasks are linked to the subject, the goal, and the stages of the study.

4. Understanding of the Problem

The doctoral student is familiar with the state of the researched problem and evaluates creatively the literary sources. The theoretical analysis stands out with a high level of systematization and generalization, scientific argumentation, criticality, and exploration of dependencies in the derived variables and studied processes. The doctoral student demonstrates reflexivity towards the results of significant theoretical and empirical studies in the field of language education for bilingual children and strives for relevant interpretations for the application of comics in literature education to support their research theses.

5. Research Methodology

The research methodology is correctly established and implemented. The formulated goal is adequate to the researched problem, and the set tasks contribute to its achievement. The developed model of research methodology successfully combines qualitative and quantitative methods in a purposeful, sequential, and systematic interconnectedness among them. The methods used to gather information are directly related to the hypotheses of the empirical study. The research traces the students' capabilities for perceiving literary works, reading with comprehension literary texts, and the ability to produce connected speech through the application of comic techniques. It is assumed that this will improve students' motivation for cognitive activity and increase their interest in reading. The null and alternative hypotheses are correctly formulated.

The methods of empirical research include: a pedagogical experiment in four stages, in which an author's methodology is piloted; a survey method and a test to track the motivation and level of literary and language competencies of students in the diagnostic and control stages. The sample is justified and formed correctly. The obtained empirical material undergoes adequate mathematical-statistical analysis, the results of which are deeply analysed and

interpreted.

6. Characterization and Evaluation of the Dissertation

The presented dissertation consists of 211 pages, distributed into an introduction, exposition in three chapters, conclusion, and appendices. The exposition within the adopted structure is logically coherent and corresponds to the formulated research problem. The text is illustrated with 56 figures, 23 tables, and 12 diagrams. The list of used literary sources consists of 137 titles.

In the introduction, the motives for choosing the topic are substantiated. The aim and tasks of the dissertation work are correctly formulated, the working hypotheses, its organization, and stages of implementation are indicated.

In the first chapter, an interdisciplinary analysis of theoretical frameworks for comics as a literary and educational phenomenon is performed. Its essence, historical development, and periodization are presented. Classifications of comics are systematized, and its genre diversity in the context of literature and art for children is noted. The specificity of applying comics at the primary school age is evaluated. Its significance in literature education under conditions of bilingualism is justified.

The second chapter justifies the methodology of empirical research, which represents a logical system of theoretical-empirical methods, adequately developed and substantiated according to the object, subject, goal, tasks, and hypotheses of the study. The criteria and indicators of the study, which are comparable to the expected results at the curriculum level, are described in detail. The application of a pedagogical experiment is justified, which undergoes a series of procedures and stages to ensure a high degree of validity and reliability of the obtained results. The methodological model reveals the connection between literature education, comics, and education in conditions of bilingualism to stimulate the development of speech and thinking activity, imagination, and creativity. The possibility for students to work individually and in groups, taking into account their needs and abilities, in the development of educational projects contributes to the development of their key competencies.

Seventy students from the fourth grade of the "Pencho Slaveykov" Primary School, Plovdiv, differentiated into experimental and control groups, are included in the pedagogical experiment. The organization and stages of the study are described.

In the third chapter, an analysis of the results of the conducted pedagogical experiment is performed. The statistical analysis of the outgoing diagnostics proves the first hypothesis, which suggests that if bilingual students master literary works through the developed

technological model for working with comics, a higher level of comprehension in reading and development of Bulgarian speech compared to the results of classical education will be achieved. The results of the test confirm the second hypothesis, which states that if bilingual students use comics in literature education, their motivation for learning will increase. The third alternative hypothesis, which suggests that working with comics will contribute to lasting reading habits, is rejected. The doctoral student rightfully notes that this hypothesis cannot be confirmed for the time during which the experimental research was conducted.

In the conclusion, arguments are presented which, together with the conclusions drawn in the process of analysis, confirm the scientific validity and practical applicability of the presented model for working with comics in literature education of bilingual students in the fourth grade.

The language and style of the development correspond to the literary norm and scientific terminology.

7. Contributions and Significance of the Development for Science and Practice

I accept the formulated contributions, which objectively reflect the achievements of the doctoral candidate:

Scientific Contributions:

- The theoretical aspect explores the affirmation of comics as an art form. Classifications of comics have been systematized, taking into account its genre diversity and the age characteristics of readers.
- Based on the detailed analytical review, new scientific knowledge has been synthesized regarding its educational potential as a means of literary education.
- Comparative aspects present current and innovative practices for the application of comics in the educational process.
- The specifics of literary education through comics at the initial stage and its characteristics in conditions of mass bilingualism have been clarified. Based on this, conclusions about the effectiveness of its application have been formulated, and directions for change and development have been outlined.

Scientific-Applied Contributions:

- An interactive teaching model has been developed, tested, and implemented for mastering literary competencies by bilingual children, based on working with comics.

- Educational resources have been created for teachers instructing students of Roma origin, which enhance the effectiveness of the literature classes.

8. Assessment of Publications on the Dissertation Work

The list of publications shows that the entire research process has been made public. Thirteen articles on the topic of the doctoral thesis have been developed, published in specialized journals, and presented at scientific forums. They exceed the minimum national requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree of "doctor." All publications reveal the defended theses in the reviewed work and authentically present individual stages of work on it.

9. Personal Contribution of the Doctoral Candidate

The presented documents and publications of Ralitsa Koleva demonstrate her undeniable personal contribution to the development of the dissertation work. The professional qualifications and many years of teaching experience of the doctoral candidate are the basis for independently conducting scientific-pedagogical research, as well as for testing the obtained results in the educational process. I have no doubts about plagiarism in the scientific work and publications.

10. Abstract

The presented abstract consists of 37 pages, developed in accordance with the requirements and correctly reflects the structure and content of the work, focusing on the most important points, results, and conclusions of the study.

11. Critical Remarks and Recommendations

During the statistical analysis of the results, the third alternative hypothesis related to the assumption of forming reading habits in students was rejected. In connection with this, the following question is posed to the doctoral candidate: What significant variables, identified in the research process, need to be considered and supported when applying comics in the literary education of bilingual children to cultivate sustainable reading habits with comprehension?

12. Personal Impressions

I do not personally know the doctoral candidate, but my impressions from the materials

presented for review are that she possesses the necessary professional competencies, personal qualities, and research precision to develop, apply, methodically justify, and disseminate innovative practices for working with bilingual children.

13. Recommendations for Future Use of Dissertation Contributions and Results

In her future work, the doctoral candidate could apply the results of the study and the research approach both in real processes of literary education of bilingual children and in developing methodological tools to assist pedagogical specialists working with children of Roma origin, both in primary and lower secondary stages of basic education.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation *contains scientific, scientific-applied, and applied results that represent an original contribution to science* and meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulation for the Implementation of LDASRB, and the corresponding Regulation of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski."

The dissertation shows that the doctoral candidate Ralitsa Zhivkova Koleva *possesses* in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty "Methodology of Teaching Bulgarian Language and Literature" and *demonstrates* qualities and skills for independently conducting scientific research.

Based on the above, I confidently give my *positive assessment* of the conducted research, presented by the reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and *I propose to the esteemed academic jury to award the educational and scientific degree of "doctor"* to *Ralitsa Zhivkova Koleva* in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional direction 1.3. Teaching Pedagogy in ..., doctoral program Methodology of Teaching Bulgarian Language and Literature.

08.05.2024

Reviewer:

Prof. Penka Kozhuharova, PhD