PEER REVIEW

Of a dissertation for obtaining the educational and scientific degree of doctor
Author of the dissertation: Georgi Kostadinov Dzhumayov

Theme of the dissertation: Application of computer technologies in language learning
Peer Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Petya Nacheva Osenova, University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski"

The doctoral student Georgi Dzhumayov was born on July 18, 1991. He graduated from a language high school in Plovdiv, and later, while doing his Bachelor's Degree, he studied applied linguistics with English and Spanish at the University of Plovdiv "P. Hilendarski". He has a Master's Degree with the qualification of Foreign Language Teacher, and is currently studying for a second Master's Degree in Management of Education. G. Dzhumayov is a part-time Assistant Professor in English at the University of Plovdiv, as well as a teacher at the language high school in Plovdiv. It is noteworthy that the professional development of the doctoral student is closely related to learning and teaching foreign languages. For that reason, the theme of his dissertation is an integral part of his professional realization. G. Dzhumayov has numerous awards and certificates which are indicative of his aspiration for personal development and his great activity in this pursuit.

The doctoral student has presented four publications on the topic of his dissertation (and one off-topic publication). All of these were published in national editions, three of which are contributions to international conferences, and two of them are indexed in the Web of Science. Georgi Dzhumayov has already been cited twice in foreign periodicals, which shows that his scientific work is significant in an international context.

Though larger than usual (comprising 75 pages), the abstract meets all the requirements of the genre. It is comprehensive and correctly reflects the major ideas and scientific contributions of the dissertation.

The theme of the dissertation is extremely relevant in the modern digitalized world. On the one hand, the demand for staff with expertise in more than one foreign language is growing. On the other hand, growing is the need for fast and efficient training, which determines the emergence of an ever increasing number of platforms and computer support systems. Language learners need to be well-versed in new technologies, including in the context of traditional

teaching methods. Although the theme is quite voluminous and multidirectional, the presented dissertation successfully sets the intersections between the features of a language, the approaches to language teaching and the possibilities of the digital environment.

The doctoral student has used a wide variety of methods in his research which are adequate to achieving the goals and objectives set in the work. These include descriptive-comparative method (in the presentation of the new technologies and their integration with language teaching methods); synchronic-analytical method (in the analysis of the grammatical-semantic transfer of the verb tenses); survey method (when studying the attitudes of the students and their level of mastering the tense system); statistical method (when processing the results of the tests to check the level of mastering the tenses).

I consider that the tables and graphs employed are not methods, but rather ways to summarize and visualize the achieved results.

The dissertation of Georgi Dzhumayov (319 pages) contains an introduction, conclusion, 6 chapters, 5 appendices, a list of contributions and a bibliography. The list of used literature includes over 130 sources of Bulgarian and foreign authors which shows the high awareness of the dissertation regarding the great variety of publications on the individual subsections of the thesis. The dissertation focuses on language teaching drawing attention on the issue of the difficulties in learning the verb tenses in Bulgarian, English and Spanish. Two foreign languages with a rich temporal system have been selected, and one, in the case of English, with a rich temporal and aspectual system. I would like to note that the text is very-well structured logically and easy to read. The structure of each part includes its content, main discussion and a summary. The doctoral student has also provided rather appropriate ways of visualizing the results, namely, through graphs and tables.

The Introduction (pp. 7 - 21) presents correctly the topicality of the chosen theme; the motivation behind that choice; the object and the subject matter of the research; the goals and objectives related therewith; the methods used and the structure of the text.

Chapter One (pp. 22 - 45) is devoted to the role of computer technologies in language learning. It begins with discussing the more general link between language and computer, goes on through the role of technology in learning, to address some specific technologies such as computer-assisted learning, Internet-assisted learning and mobile applications. These specific technologies are presented in the perspective of their positive aspects contributing to greater

effectiveness of training. I would like to point out in this respect that computational linguistics does play a major role in teaching – not only in language teaching, but also in other areas of education – but, as a technology, it often remains hidden from the learners because they only are aware of the results of its operation.

Chapter Two, (pp. 46 - 75) focuses on students' attitudes towards the use of new technologies in language learning. There is a skillful transition from the emphasis on the role of technology to the focus on the role of man in learning through technology. Here presented is a survey designed specifically to check students' motivation and assess learning difficulties. It was carried out among 9th-grade students, in the 2018/2019 school year. Described are the survey and its evaluation. Presented are the results thereof. Extremely valuable is the applied aspect of such a study, since it provides information about the way of thinking of young people in terms of everyday life reactions. For example, the large percentage of students who use a smartphone in class due to boredom is impressive.

Chapter Tree (pp. 76 - 129) is of a major contributing nature because it describes the methods of teaching foreign languages prior to the 21st century and their upgrading with the help of new technologies. Discussed are 10 methods and their application relevant to situation in Bulgaria. Especially valuable is the description of the disadvantages and / or advantages of any given method and its present day application in the context of the new technologies. Specific education intended applications (such as Dualingo, etc.) are mentioned in connection with each method.

Chapter Four (pp. 130 - 172) is entirely linguistic. It describes the temporal systems in Bulgarian, English and Spanish in a comparative plan, some rules for translation of the tenses being derived. This is a theoretical-grammatical way of comparison. Since a comprehensive description of the temporal systems of the three languages is an extremely large topic, the doctoral student focuses on the indicative affirmative forms of verbs in the respective tenses. This section provides information on the formation of verb forms in the three languages, in terms of both similarities and differences. Detailed and well-motivated descriptions and correspondences are presented, the inter-lingual specifics being precisely identified. In the beginning, the temporal systems of the three languages are presented. Then given is the formation of the temporal forms in the plan of simultaneity, antecedence and succession. To all these forms there are corresponding applications. One wonders why the past indefinite tense in

the Bulgarian language is placed in the zone of precedence, while the English present perfect tense is placed in the zone of simultaneity (p. 152 and p. 155), given that the two tenses operate in the same way. A valuable contribution is the presented correspondences between the tenses in the three languages.

Chapter Five (pp. 173 - 240) examines the basic, transposed and modal uses of the tenses in the three discussed languages with a view to the translation rules again. The focus of the comparison is not on the model-grammatical basis that much, but rather on the practical uses of the tenses in view of the teaching objectives. All tenses in Bulgarian are studied relevant to their correspondences with the basic, transpositional and modal uses of the tenses in English and Spanish. These three types of uses are briefly defined on page 176. Observable is that not all tenses have a modal use. Such are, for example, the preterit and the future tenses. Of great value are the detailed comparisons within the specific meanings of the tenses. Particularly important for the teaching process are the correspondences in the transpositional uses which give learners more information about the possible uses of the temporal systems. In my opinion, added also could be the detail that the form of the past indefinite tense in Bulgarian may formally coincide with some other forms in the 1st and 2nd person, e.g. the renarrative of the preterit (*Ti si chel knigata*).

I consider that one of the main contributions of the thesis is that it presents teaching not only in a strictly grammatical, but also in a functional plan. Tenses, as morphological categories, are not always translated with the corresponding tenses in other languages. Very often, there are appropriate equivalents outside the category itself (cf. the Bulgarian future tense can also be translated with the construct *going to* in one of its meanings). Another difficulty is added by the facility of the tenses to express, besides their basic meaning, transpositional meanings. One shouldn't forget also the difficulties caused by the differences in the modeling of temporal systems within the same language. That is why this part of the dissertation has a great contributory value.

Chapter Six (pp. 241 - 284) presents a test study in which the degree of language competence in the use of the tenses is evaluated through translation tasks from Bulgarian into English and Spanish. Students are asked to choose between four options provided. Presented are the selected test sentences, with a description of the factors being checked through these. Statistical methods were used for the evaluation. The analyses of the results have a particularly

high added value. For instance, it becomes clear that the combined use of some tenses is difficult to learn (e.g. past perfect and past simple tense in English). Some meanings of the tenses also prove difficult (e.g. the rendering of the Bulgarian reporting present tense in English). It is interesting that the succession is mastered most successfully in both languages (English and Spanish).

The presented work has clear scientific and scientific-applied contributions. The scientific ones include: presentation of some major aspects of the potential of the computer and internet oriented means for language teaching; these technologies are considered in terms of their specific application in the different methods of language teaching with emphasis on their integration; demonstration of grammatical-semantic transfer in the use of the tenses in Bulgarian, English and Spanish, the general and specific meanings being distinguished; description of new uses that become visible in the multilingual context. The scientific-applied contributions refer to: designing and conducting experiments through surveys examining the attitudes of students to the use of new technologies in language learning and also establishing the level of learning the tenses in translation from Bulgarian to English and Spanish.

The conclusion is brief and summarizes the conclusions reached in the dissertation. In my opinion, the work could be further expanded by adding future directions for the development of the dissertation topic.

I can only express a slight criticism with regard to the claim that consistent rules have been formulated concerning the transfer of temporal meaning. Consistency is defined in logic and requires formalization and evidence.

Based on all stated above regarding the merits of the presented dissertation, I would like to say that I strongly suggest that the esteemed Jury should award Georgi Dzhumayov the scientific and educational degree of 'Doctor'.

Date .....   Peer Reviewer: ....
(signature)