

# NEW PUBLICATION ON VERBAL AGGRESSION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

DILIANA DENCHEVA

*Uniwersytet Sofijski im. św. Klemensa Ochrydzkiego*

A review of: Kreytchova, Elena & Stalyanova, Nadezhda. *The Power of Public Speech*. Sofia: Paradigma, 2017, 221 pp. ISBN 978-954-326-312-7.

**Keywords:** *Elena Kreytchova, Nadezhda Stalyanova, public speech, verbal aggression, Bulgarian studies*

Bulgarian society still experiences certain difficulties to identify the veiled language of aggression and is not always able to find adequate mechanisms to respond to it. Sometimes it seems incapable of discovering the codes of verbal aggression, which is often followed by physical aggression. That is why it is crucial to summarize the trends, present them to the public not only at specialized scholarly forums but also to present the results to the media and to the relevant institutions. The new research *The Power of Public Speech* outlines many trends and determines the characteristics of public speech in the context of legislation, the media and public life.

For more than a decade the authors Nadezhda Stalyanova and Elena Kreytchova dedicate their scholarly interest to public speech in its many manifestations. Particular attention in their research is focused on the political and journalistic speech. Their publications are of pioneering character in Bulgarian linguistics in the linguistic approach to political speech in recent years.

The aims of the book *The Power of Public Speech* are creating a linguistic model of verbal aggression in various discourses of Bulgarian public speech, looking for similarities and universal patterns, the summary typology of verbal aggression in various spheres of public speech. The study has a fundamental character, as it examines aggression and its manifestations in public speech, as well as the consequences of linguistic aggression that often manifest themselves and escalate into physical aggression.

In the book the authors mark problems from different areas where social life is related to public speech – legislation, society development, aggression and verbal aggression, internet communication, political correctness, media policies. Here they only point out complex and interdisciplinary issues that are the subject of many scholarly studies, for example: defining linguistic aggression in the context of general aggression, considered by psychology; the Bulgarian media policy in the context of European practice and legislation; the specificity of online communication through the prism of the language netiquette – whether it is a subject to rules and legal texts, the functioning of politically correct vocabulary in contemporary Bulgarian society, etc. The book is not pretending to present a complex view, but only offers a small piece of the puzzle, which is the reflection of the power of public speech.

The chapter *Aggression and Linguistic Aggression* points out questions about human aggression that mankind has been dealing with for centuries. They are presented from different points of view – philosophy, psychology, religion. The authors examine speech aggressiveness, which is manifested not only by language acts associated with crude, cruel, violent behavior (vulgar words, swearing, licentiousness and rough jargon), but to a very high degree by the speaker's imposition on his speech or more generally – communicative behavior, denial of dialogue, inability to listen to the interlocutor. In this chapter a special attention is drawn to hate speech as one of the components of the so-called hate crimes, i.e. acts of hatred.

The chapter *Society, Public Language and Media* with its subsections *Public Sphere and Morals, Ethics Code and Media, Media – Freedom and Responsibility* is devoted to the role of the media in shaping the modern public sphere and its transformation, the communicative mechanism by which the processes of transformation are carried out. The chapter discusses media self-regulation (through the adoption of the Code of Ethics of Bulgarian Media), i.e. the mechanism for guaranteeing freedom of the media.

The chapter *Man, Media and Virtual Environment* is a direct follow-up to the previous one where the normative framework of freedom of speech and the media is studied – the Bulgarian Constitution guarantees the rights of every citizen to seek, receive and disseminate information.

The next chapter (*Internet Freedom and Hate Speech Online*) is focused on the question of where the boundary between freedom of speech and hate speech in cyberspace lies, and the role of the Internet as a medium in the diversity of viewpoints, fundamental to pluralistic society.

The chapter *Expression of Personal Opinion Online – Freedom or Limitations* examines the ways in which aggression and hate speech are regulated in public media speech. Here the authors focus on the mechanisms that online media use to limit verbal aggression from

readers and users of online media products. This is achieved through the online media policy, which is publicly disclosed.

11 Bulgarian internet forums are studied in the chapter *Internet – a Place for Free Expression or Political Correctness* through the prism of the rules of use. All of these forums accept the condition of a strict ban on using rude language, vulgarism and obscene words, ridicule, hate speech. According to the forum rules, any manifestation of aggression, racism, religious comments, hostility and intolerance shall be prohibited. The authors examine the present situation and argue whether linguistic manifestations which are contrary to the legislative texts of the Republic of Bulgaria, are and could be being effectively prohibited.

The chapter *Chained or Free Words and Thoughts* reveals the ideology of political correctness (PC). However, it is strongly emphasized that the consideration of PC outside the scope of linguistic resources is not the subject of the research. The issues shown in this chapter are complex, multidimensional and interdisciplinary. It is underlined that everything behind the notion of *political correctness* is not perceived equally by both society and researchers – humanitarians in general, in particular sociologists, political scientists, linguists. Opinions are usually polar, opposing the universal human behavior (verbal and general), based on a lack of prejudice and discrimination, to the restriction of the right to free expression, and even censorship. The study presents views of advocates of the idea of political correctness, as well as those of researchers who believe that it can be compared even with Nazism.

The chapter *Do We Eat Little Black Children? (Linguistic Expert Opinions in Two Court Cases)* examines the practical side of the issue of political correctness in two genuine cases from the practice of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination in 2016, in which the author was summoned as a linguistic expert. Both cases are related to public speech, and from linguistic perspective they combine issues related to hate speech, political correctness and human rights.

The chapter *The Power of Language Through the Prism of Hollywood and Linguistics* presents language issues perceived by linguistics and film industry. The approach deserves special attention, because it provides different frameworks and viewpoints to the problem. The authors' conclusions suggest no direct answers, but raise further questions of linguistic, social and anthropological nature.

The book *The Power of Public Speech* marks basic issues of modern society: the trends in language development that draw and will determine the development of modern civilization. The authors depict the diversity of language problems that are directly related to public life. This is the major reason behind interpreting Kreytchova and Stalyanova's book as a fundamental study.