

## ABOUT SOME ASPECTS OF THE LANGUAGE BEHAVIOR OF THE PROTESTING BULGARIAN IN 2013<sup>1</sup>

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***Abstract:** The language of the protesting Bulgarian from 2013 is one of direct suggestion, which is specific key to the hidden meaning of words, acting beyond their conceptual shell. It is unique in its realization because the collective tradition and the author's interpretation meet, intertwine and penetrate into each other there. Highlights of the most essential sides, features and ingredients of the behavioural system of the contemporary protesting Bulgarian from 2013 allow you to trace the dynamics of its image.*

***Keywords:** language, behavior, protesting Bulgarian, communication, strategies, aggression*

### INTRODUCTION

Protests as a common event in our most recent history offer a model of public behaviour and communication. Democracy requires dialogue, and in order to have dialogue, it is necessary to have different opinions. With a particular social role, a specific language and a non-standard behaviour, the protestors of 2013 openly demonstrate active citizenship. As a social and cultural phenomenon, language expresses the mentality, knowledge, behavioural attitudes and the moral and ethical views of the individuals who use it. In this way, a specific type of linguistic persona has emerged in the public environment of Bulgaria – the one of the protesting Bulgarian.

The image of the contemporary protesting Bulgarian has complex and multipole nature, which encompasses their thinking, language and behaviour. The way their personality is expressed creates both positive and negative trends in their profile as active participants in the contemporary social and political life of the country.

As a phenomenon with different aspects and expanded, a multi-layer structure and functions as well as being the main means of communication and information transfer, language also expresses various communication behaviours – strategies, goals, motives and actions and the methods of their realisation – phenomena referring to pragmalinguistics. According to V.I. Karasik, linguistic pragmatics involves concepts and theories, which refer to the speech act itself in specific communication rather than to the particular language units (Karasik, 2002).

### EXPOSITION

When analyzing the linguistic behavior of the protesting Bulgarian through their protest slogans we apply J.L. Austin's speech act theory because its principles correspond most effectively to the objectives of this study. We accept Austin's assertion that "the utterance of some words often and even usually has a subsequent impact (effect) on the feelings, thoughts or actions of the audience, listener or other people and this effect can be well-thought-of, deliberate and purposeful" (Austin 1986:88). Austin calls the realization of this speech act **perlocution** and points out that "with the help of the perlocutionary acts the speaker can exert certain effects such as persuading, forcing, threatening, astonishing or misleading on the listener (Austin 1986:88). According to the same theory, the utterance itself is called **locution** while **illocution** refers to its

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communicative force and to its direction that reveals towards what type of communication the utterance is oriented. This is the level of information (meaning) and the impact the utterance with reference to the addressee.

With reference to this, the words, phrases or sentences in a slogan are meant for someone with the idea of changing something, e.g. a state, mood, belief, behaviour, to a certain direction and with a specific goal, in other words there is **speech** and an **act**. Therefore, the organisation of the words in the particular text is also significant. What is important is the idea and the means through which it is implemented. A considerable number of the slogans are directives – a type of imperative utterances that attempt to get the addressee to carry out an action. Their semantic structure is characterised by the presence of **verbs that incite, command, order, threaten, etc.** – *Get lost!; Go away or I will treat you with RAID<sup>1</sup>!; Plevnocchio<sup>2</sup>, go home! The citizens strike back!; We already have our sights on you!; imperative verb forms – Take a hike!; Honour is more expensive than money – leave honourably!; Occupy the parliament!; verbs that provoke action combined with “let” in the imperative to express strong desire and volition – Let us overthrow the Turkish government right now! Let us save Bulgaria – every day is fatal!; language constructions calling for actions – When the country is down on its knees people must stand up!; Protest loudly, react smartly!*

The semantics of the used language units reveals the motives, behaviors, and goals of the protestors. It should be noted that the meanings of many of the used verbs are pejorative – *write off (delete, clean up, kill, destroy, waste), rip off something/someone (strip someone of something, demolish, knock down), steal, lie, do not have, kill, separate, fail, make dirty (smudge, blacken one's name, tarnish), as well the homonyms something/somebody is killing me / kill somebody*. Slogans express problems that are of great importance for our contemporary society.

**Different forms of address** strengthen the expressiveness of speech by naming directly or indirectly but very figuratively the addressee (Mr. President, Mr. Mestan, you fellow politicians, Plevnocchio, you Trash, Bashi - bazouk<sup>3</sup>, Mareshki). The direct address requires from the addressee a specific, individual reaction. Protestors not only call for immediate actions but they also find it important to seek dialogue, assistance and cooperation.

The Bulgarians from the summer of 2013 protested not only with impressive slogans but also with protesting babies and children, pets, street or pedigreed dogs with slogans hung on their necks: *Resignation!; I don't eat rubbish – you would be long gone otherwise!; I stand in front of party headquarters – 30lv per day + 2 sausages (+50 leva<sup>4</sup> for my boss)*. Slogans in the style and layout of obituaries and memorial cards – *In hateful memory of... /40 happy days without the party of pumpkins<sup>5</sup> (GERB<sup>6</sup>), the party of idiots (Ataka<sup>7</sup>), party of hatred (DPS<sup>8</sup>)* convey unambiguous messages.

Many of the protests are accompanied by dances and rhythmic music. Through the catch phrase #DANSwithme<sup>9</sup> (turned into a leitmotiv) Bulgarian protesters demonstrate **wit, ingenuity and good will** and manage to incorporate them in the language of their actions and demands. The protest meeting is the place where the accumulated energy of the society is released. The street becomes a symbol of the place where Bulgarian people share with the other/the others their active citizenship. Nowadays the street undergoes various transformations, it experiences its own suspense, it speaks the verbal language as well as the body language. It turns into theatrical

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<sup>1</sup> Popular insecticide.

<sup>2</sup> The former President of Bulgaria, Rosen Plevneliev.

<sup>3</sup> From Turkish, irregular soldiers of the Ottoman army notorious for being violently brutal and undisciplined, thus giving the term its second, colloquial meaning of “undisciplined bandit”. An offensive word for people of Turkish origin in Bulgaria.

<sup>4</sup> The Bulgarian currency, BGN.

<sup>5</sup> Pumpkin has an offensive meaning in Bulgarian meaning a stupid person.

<sup>6</sup> A conservative, populist Bulgarian political party.

<sup>7</sup> A Bulgarian nationalist party led by Volen Siderov.

<sup>8</sup> The Bulgarian abbreviation of MRF (Movement for Rights and Freedoms) - a political party defending the interests of the ethnic Turkish population in Bulgaria.

<sup>9</sup> DANS is the abbreviation of the State Agency for National Security in Bulgarian.

scenario ready for a performance and into a concert hall (for different concerts – piano, drums, whistles, vuvuzela horns, guitars, etc.) The street is the stage of the **carnival Bulgarian**. Since ancient times they have put on the Kukeri<sup>1</sup> masks to scare away the evil. Nowadays these traditional rituals have a “new Bulgarian” name – performances. Art is the other language, the metaphoric and symbolic one, which looks for “chosen” addressees with whom to communicate. Is the life of the Bulgarian people a performance – who chooses the stage, the actors and the audience? Journalists comment on the protests: “A new idea every day. The imagination is unleashed. Every rally becomes a performance without losing sight of the protestors’ demands. Children draw their future at Orlov Most, babies stare under slogans put on their strollers, dogs carry witty posters, every day young people play different humorous roles by wearing everything from straitjackets to prison uniforms. Comic brides get married to BSP<sup>2</sup>, DPS and “Ataka” while real newlyweds hold Bulgarian national flags in front of the Council of Ministers (Stoilova 2013). Because the language of protests is **proactive and provoking**, it participates in the common street “act”. This is a game with rules through which goals are achieved and functions are performed.

The expressive stylistics of the political slogans most often attacks the addressees with words conveying **aggression, hatred and insult**.

In recent years, there has been a tendency for Bulgarians not to worry about publicly displaying and expressing disrespect, daring challenge, and even rudeness in the various forms of their formal and informal communication. The reasons behind such behaviours are explained mainly by issues related to personality identification and the social and political context in the country. The cases of deliberate verbal and non-verbal aggression in the public environment have increased. People have started to use rude and obscene language, which contains mainly profanities such as swear and curse words – hate speech has aggressively entered our society. This notion had been defined differently and had had various shades of meaning – *racial hatred, group defamation, and offensive language* until the late 1980s when the term *hate speech* was accepted. In his study Nenad Zhivanovsky defines hate speech as “any phenomenon that calls for violence, hatred and discrimination against a person or group, most often on the basis of their racial, religious or sexual affiliation” (Zhivanovsky 2015:17). In protest slogans, texts convey hatred due to lack of trust and tolerance towards the ruling political parties and class, respectively to the characteristics of the political figures (as a collective political subject).

Evidence of the systematic and well-thought-of use of hate speech among protesters is the deliberate, everyday linguistic behaviour that purposefully and methodically demonstrates disrespect, neglect, superiority, i.e. this is a deliberately developed speech strategy. Another strategic motive for using language aggression is the so-called “weapon of the weaker”. The opposition ruler (politician) / subordinate (protestor) is created. Hate speech (the weapon) becomes the unifying factor of the weaker people against the stronger ones.

Hate speech is also revealed in the way political slogans look like. The creative imagination of the protestors has created original formats and layouts where form and content speak the same language – there are texts which imitate ballots papers, warnings on cigarette boxes, posters with photos of ministers, party leaders and other key figures from the political and social life of the country, against whom the protests are directed. Slogans also speak with their colour choices – red is preferred for more vibrant and expressive imagery. Its symbolism can be understood differently – belonging to a particular political party, a signal for attracting attention, a symbol of aggression, blood, or a challenge.

Studied from a behavioural perspective, the language of political slogans reveals richness of forms and strategies, necessity of a more specific pathos and rhetoric, and intention of being attacking, persuasive and proactive, for example: *Parliament (the 42<sup>nd</sup>) – Seriously damages you and the others around you!*; *Oligarchy kills!* (analogous to the warning signs on cigarette boxes); *How should I look at you?* (a slogan with a picture of Vassil Levsky<sup>3</sup>); *The lord of stupidity: The*

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<sup>1</sup> *Elaborately costumed Bulgarian people who perform traditional rituals, intended to scare away evil spirits.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Bulgarian Socialist Party*

<sup>3</sup> *A Bulgarian revolutionary and one of the greatest national heroes, symbol of purity.*

*fellowship of the impudent: Starring: (photos of politicians); Donations for Peevski (a photo of a piggy bank); In hateful memory of .../40 happy days without... the party of pumpkins (GERB), the party of idiots (Ataka), party of hatred (DPS) (posters in the style and layout of an obituary); One oligarch at home is enough! (a photo of a cat); You trash, you ruined my walk! (a slogan on the neck of a dog); I don't eat rubbish, otherwise you'll be long gone! (a slogan on the neck of a dog); **Buying and selling Berekov<sup>1</sup> is a crime!** (made and distributed as a ballot paper).*

Most often the language of hatred uses direct aggressive or insulting words: *Repent, you nits!*; *Peevski<sup>2</sup> + Tsvetan Vasilev = **The pig with moustache***; *Volen, a pig and a slave to DPS!*; *Arrogant idiots!*; *You are trash!*; *When the disgusted don't vote the disgusting rule!*, etc. In addition, language of hatred can function by applying various stylistic figures of speech and tropes that imply different communicative types of meaning. Most often, these include metaphors, irony, and rhetorical questions, for example:

>**Metaphor** – *Borisov, pull up your pants! We are sick of political prostitutes!*; *Why don't politicians emigrate from Bulgaria? Why there is brain but not asshole drain? Out of 240 parliament members, 120 are political buoys<sup>3</sup> and 120 are coffins for those who happily drowned in MPs' groundswell for their country.;*

>**Rhetorical questions** — *Sergo, the Lord of the Catharsis; Do you want to rob me too?;* *Oresharski, where is your puppet master?;* *I am asking if there is authority that can give a life sentence to you too?<sup>4</sup>;*

>**Irony** – *Mr. Mestan, in order to be verbally exact – march out of here!*; *Duduk<sup>5</sup>, why were you fired from bTV?The rubbish – in the trash bin!*; *Turn pigs into pork chops not into politicians!* *SerGAY<sup>6</sup>, come out of the closet- we will understand. It is the 21<sup>st</sup> century after all!*; *SerGAY, I love you! I am better than Monica<sup>7</sup>!*

During the summer of 2013, the aggressive behaviour of the protesters escalated not only physically but also verbally. It expressed challenge, uncontrolled temper, expansiveness, intolerance as well as acrimony, hostility, deliberate desire to disgrace and ruin the politicians' reputation: *You are inadequate!*; *Sergo, Volen and Mestan<sup>8</sup> – pumpkins<sup>9</sup> from the same garden!*; *I protest against the past, present and future politicians! You are a disgrace! Resignation and imprisonment!*; *You are unhinged!*; *Throw garbage separately – BSP, DPS and Ataka<sup>10</sup>!*; *The rubbish – in the trash bin! (GERB, BSP, DPS and Ataka<sup>11</sup>); Do you want to depend on SILLerov<sup>12</sup>!*; *I want to manage my life, not to be ruled by animals!*; *Resignation of the SPITTLE coalition<sup>13</sup>!*; *Red leeches – didn't you have enough?; Psychologically SILLerov<sup>14</sup>!*; *Make way! I'm bringing Volen's pill<sup>15</sup>!*; *Throwing away your rubbish is good manners – especially when it is in the Parliament!*; *It's time the ward assistants come /Siderov/; Stanishev, you are not responsible for the mistakes of mother nature – you are their product!*; *Aferim, Effendi<sup>16</sup>!*; *Kremlin doormats, this is Europe!*; *Stanishev and Oresharski – clothes moths pestering the Bulgaria homes!*

<sup>1</sup> A politician who founded a party and entered in coalition with other parties to win a seat in the EU Parliament.

<sup>2</sup> A politician who is often depicted as or compared with a pig due to his obesity.

<sup>3</sup> Offensive word meaning empty-headed.

<sup>4</sup> A paraphrase of a line from a popular song called Kukla (Bulgarian for doll) from that period.

<sup>5</sup> A traditional Bulgarian wind instrument, an offensive word meaning cocksucker, someone who plays the skin flute.

<sup>6</sup> Sergey Stanishev, the leader of the Bulgarian Socialist party during that period.

<sup>7</sup> Sergey Stanishev's wife, Monica Stanisheva.

<sup>8</sup> The names of the leaders of the political parties represented in the Parliament during this period.

<sup>9</sup> Pumpkin has an offensive meaning in Bulgarian meaning a stupid person. In this slogan the implication is that the three political leaders are the same although their parties support different ideas.

<sup>10</sup> Some of the political parties represented in the Parliament during this period.

<sup>11</sup> See 22.

<sup>12</sup> This refers to V. Siderov, leader of the political party Ataka, who is often criticised for his extreme ideas and comments.

<sup>13</sup> Reference to the The Triple Coalition, ruling Bulgaria from 2005 to 2007.

<sup>14</sup> See 24

<sup>15</sup> See 24.

<sup>16</sup> "Bravo, Sir!" from Turkish. The words are used in Bulgarian language too, but their meaning is offensive and pejorative. In this case they refer to the politicians from Turkish origin who are members of DPS.

The corpus of texts clearly illustrates the fact that the language of protests lacks censorship and internal regulation of the speech etiquette when the purpose is to express disrespect, contempt, disgust and loathing. There is free expression of ideas. Contrary to the expectations of seeking assistance, there is no intent of establishing dialogue or connection between the sender and the recipient of the utterances. There are sent messages – open or encoded ones, which most often contain direct or indirect insults and the addressees are not expected to respond to them. *Rubbish* is a frequently used qualification and the implication is “waste, something unnecessary that must be thrown away”. In addition, numerous animal lexemes are used to enhance the expressiveness and impact of the offensive qualifications, namely *animals, leeches, nits, clothes moths, pig*, etc. What is more, the protesting Bulgarian chooses to use qualifications referring to intelligence and ethics - *You are **unhinged!**; You are **inadequate!**; You are not intelligent enough to rule us!* The slogans, which contain obscene words and content, provoke and challenge with the expressed shamelessness, arrogant boldness, impudence, indecency and demonstrative use of vulgar stylistic register: *Oresharski, do you have **balls?**; **Fuck you!**; All political **whores** – out of this parliament!; Excuse me, can I **fuck you?** I'll apologise later! – *Sergo, the Lord of the Catharsis!*; *Look at your **ass** !; Borisov, **pull up your pants!** We are sick of political **prostitutes!**; Ataka holds **the balls** of **BSP and DPS** – shame!; **Fuck you in the mouth, red trash!**; *You turned parliamentarism too into toilet paper – but you won't clean Dogan's **ass** with it!*;**

## CONCLUSION

In the context of protests, the strategy of hate speech is as follows: the protestors' hatred robs them of their nature and identification; it modifies their personality and affirms stereotypes and prejudices that are destructive for the personality. The strategy and methodology of protests are based on **hostility** and **aggression**. They send a signal that there is a problem and finding its solution does not involve sanctioning of free speech, which is the only form of manifestation, but recognising the problem. When the language of protests escalates into the **language of hatred**, it reproduces the negative stereotypes in the society and becomes an element of the environment, which forms the beliefs and attitudes of the individuals. The various communication strategies used by the protesting Bulgarians reveal their **ingenuity and creativity** in the different approaches to the topic that unites them, namely the resignation of the ruling politicians.

The analytical observations of the linguistic behaviour of the protesting Bulgarian lead to certain conclusions about their characteristics, the nature of their linguistic personality and status in the public linguistic practice under the conditions of the specific, situational, linguistic context. In times of protests, the **negativism, separation and aggression** in society are evident.

It can be concluded that the Bulgarian citizens **lack certain aspects of civic education and culture of behaviour**. And they are expressed with the help of adequate language. This different form of the civic language signals that behind words there are various anti-values, beliefs, moral and ethical imperatives.

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