Vladimir Phillipov

**S T A T E M E N T**

of Professor Dr. Litt. Stefana Petrova Dimitrova

Related to the Ph D dissertation of Vladimir Filipov Valov on the topic of *Some Aspects of Intonational Typology* submitted for the conferral of the academic title of “doctor” according to 2.1. Philology, Ph D Programme “Germanic Languages” (Phonetics and Phonology of the English Language)

The dissertation of Vladimir Filipov Valov dedicated to the analysis of aspects of intonational typology is instructive, interesting and consonant with the increasing interest in contemporary linguistics both concerning typology and the intonation contour of the utterance. Neither the topic of intonation nor the issues of the typological peculiarities of the languages is new, yet the interpretations of both trends have undergone an extremely dynamic development. They have gone through many theoretical battles and presently have been united in an original way by the content trend in modern philosophical and linguistic mentalism. This complex sinusoidal trajectory of the development in the doctorand’s area of linguistic research is well familiar to him, and although he humbly pledges to cover only some of its aspects, the topic is given a clear presentation. That is why it is only logical to find both the views of Yurij Venelin, outlined in his *Grammar of the Contemporary Bulgarian Spoken Variant,* appraised by the author of the dissertation as pioneer work in Bulgarian intonology, and the highly complex discussion of Olga Yokoyama, the authoress of one of the most recent books on cognitive models of discourse. The dissertation’s bibliography is detailed, and I can discern in it a selectivity where authors of high calibre had something to say in linguistics. Suffice it to mention Edward Sapir and Dwight Bolinger, the two who most vehemently opposed to the domination of morphological typologies in linguistic description, or the already-mentioned Olga Yokoyama, who does not hesitate to say that no school should be sought in her work because, as she rightly claims, “the school is mine”. The conceptual framework of the work organically intertwines the view of T. Nikolaeva that intonation is a carrier of the hidden memory of language, and as a result of such a quality, it manifests purely grammatical categories of the most basic type.

A piece of linguistic research can be acclaimed as being substantial provided, first and foremost, it works with a clearly defined terminological code. If the dissertation’s text is to be used as a basis, then this is the understanding of Vladimir Filipov. It is this outstanding quality that the dissertation under review displays: the author’s terminology is explained starting from the title and going to the terminological frameworks of the different schools and the revealing of the overlapping (full or partial) of the terminological nominations used by them. Suffice it to mention the example of the clarification of the terms *systems of tone* and *systems of tonality and tonicity* through the description of their functional characteristics – the former create interpersonal relations, the latter – textual meaning. It all boils down to establishing the viewpoint that intonation is an exponent of grammatical relations. This is the starting point for the treatment of its status in the analysis of levels of linguistic analysis. It is convincingly argued that intonational meanings combine with lexico-grammatical ones. At this point one can easily discern Benveniste’s view that in the analysis of any linguistic level meaning, similarly to Medusa’s head, emerges from the waves and bewitches anybody who happens to see it. Indeed, in this connection, Vladimir Filipov quotes Roman Jakobson that “Language without meaning is meaningless“. This is why I would recommend to the author in future work on this issue to familiarize himself with the work of A. P. Zhuravlyov “Phonetic Meaning” [in Russian]. Some of the ideas voiced in it can be apt additions to the hybrid analysis proposed in the work; it can successfully be applied to the analysis of multilayered linguistic phenomena of especially complex character. I have something very concrete in mind – in the above-mentioned book, influenced strongly by the works of Eric Lenneberg, I discern a “premonition” of the facts used as a foundation of Halliday and Greaves’ hypothesis of the interpersonal relations generated by the systems of tone.

Turning to the language phenomena of complex character, the author does not fail to point out that intonation is a special language vehicle. He terms it special because he sees its two aspects – it is “both a rich and poor phonological means for the expression of semantic relations functioning on the level of grammar“. In fact, it is here that Vladimir Filipov sees the strong point of his approach and defines it as “a minimal step forwards in comparison with the sterility of a purely phonological or purely semantic approach“. In this small step in the author’s opinion, but not in my opinion, there is something I particularly cherish: this is the endeavor to set up a theoretical (sic!) establishment of a two-case model by taking into consideration Pierrehumbert’s high and low targets of intonation.

While accepting as very promising the hybrid model put forward by Vladimir Filipov, I have some reservations about his idea of filling in (or more precisely – increasing) of the lacking link between intonation and discourse in the theory of Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP). Such a proposal is substantiated in the author’s opinion by many famous linguists, including Halliday, that both intonation and FSP are language universals. I myself have some grave doubts concerning the universal nature of FSP, and I have voiced them many a time; somewhat later I have found similar misgivings in the works of T. Nikolaeva. However, this is a matter of linguistic conviction and its final validation belongs to the future. Yet, it must be admitted that FSP is widely present in the languages (at least in the languages of the SAE) and its use in the hybrid model is not to be denigrated. In fact, it will be incorrect to dwell on this issue unless Brazil’s terms, and those of the Birmingham School, key and termination, are introduced. The latter were neither nominally nor conceptually used by the Praguians. Indeed, here what is of particular importance to me is the concept of *key* for it presupposes choice which the communicators must make in a certain speech act. In this process they have to perform in their linguistic conscience the process, known in the Theory of Relevance as bridging. I am particularly fond of the fact that in the text given for review I can find echoes of ideas shared by linguists deeply respected by me, the latter have fallen outside the treatment of the author, e.g, the ideas of Robert Channon (an adherent of Perlmutter and Postal’s Relational Grammar) for spanning a bridge above the so-called chộmeur and that of Maxim Stamenov for the functional peculiarities of language conscience. To sum it up, the dissertation of Vladimir Filipov can be included in the series of contemporary research in which the authors – in one way or another – are part of contemporary research work whereby scholars, making use of the achievements of different theories, are trying to provide answers to the task, posited by Wallace Chafe for contemporary and future linguistics in his paper at the World Congress of Linguistics (Berlin, 1986): to look and ultimately come to understand what is taking place in the brain of the speaker and the perceiver of speech. This task can be solved not just on the basis of numerous concrete observations, which we, the linguists of the older generation believed and moved in the magic circle of descriptions of the type of the so-called Intonation Contours of Bryzgunova. The rechannelling of its theoretical rationalization started in the USA right with the works of Bolinger, who, in his unique metaphorical language, compared the movement of stress to a canoo that submerges into the waves and emerges at the most unexpected place, and in Slavic linguistics Tatyana Nikolaeva’s book *Frazovoe udarenie v slavyanskih yazykah.* Nowadays, in the time of synergetic research, it is only natural to look for theoretical dominants and their antipodes – the theoretically neutral starting points. The author of the dissertation joins such pursuits and motivates the use of one of the variants of case grammar – Relational Grammar -- with the fact that it gives a theoretically neutral starting point reduced to the treatment of grammatical relations as non-defined primitives. The clearly defined theoretical framework of the author becomes obvious from those part of the dissertation that are defined by him as simply informative, e.g. Chapter ІІІ Introduction to Typology and Intonational Analysis. Even while rendering others’ theses, he pursues his main objective to prove that intonation can be isolated from the semantically *par excellence* category of case which, in its turn, brings to the theoretical contradiction between its treatment and the definition of the phonetic level as the lowest in the structuration of the linguistic levels. The ultimate goal of the work is subordinated to the idea that intonation can be treated as a case marker with high functional load; this, on its turn, requires that the approach to its description be inevitably holistic, with primacy being indisputably given to semantics.

In conclusion, I can say that the author has very successfully dealt with the objectives he has set in his research. His work can be distinguished by a high degree of independent work both theoretically and stylistically, with a high level of informativeness and the valuable quality evoke thoughts on the part of the reader related to their own linguistic position. The resumé corresponds fully with the text of the dissertation, the latter also well reflecting the previous publications of the doctorand in the domain. All this gives me the right to say that Vladimir Filipov Valov fully deserves to be conferred the academic degree of “doctor” and appeal to the esteemed members of the jury to appraise positively in their vote his efforts.

Sofia, 02=08=2019. Signed by:

(Professor Dr Litt. Stefana Petrova Dimitrova)