

## REVIEW

**by** Assoc. Prof. Rumyana Stefanova Lyutakova, PhD

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**for** Dissertation submitted for the acquiring of the educational and scientific degree „Doctor” in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology, doctoral program: „Romance Languages” (Italian language)

**Topic of the dissertation:** „Italian Loanwords in the Bulgarian Language”

**Author:** Evgenia Kirilova Atanasova

By order No. PД-38-314/01.07.2025 issued by the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the defense of the above-mentioned dissertation, and by Meeting Minutes No. 1/07.07.2025 of the scientific jury to present a review.

### **1. General description of the materials presented**

The materials submitted by the candidate meet the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the respective Regulations for Implementation of the said Act and the Rules on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Sofia University for the acquiring of PhD degree, including the following documents::

- The full text of the dissertation;
- The dissertation abstract provided in Bulgarian and in English;
- A CV in European format;
- Order No PД-20-1065/10.06.2024 issued by the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for Enrollment in a Doctoral Program under the Independent Study Form;
- Order No PД-20-1157/25.06.2025 issued by the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for Dismissal from the Doctoral Program with the Right to Defense;

- Reference on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” pursuant to Article 2b of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, containing, for the period from the enrollment in the doctoral program (10.06.2025) until the dismissal of the doctoral student (25.06.2025), four publications in Bulgarian and Italian, two of which are in press, accompanied by official attestations.

- List of scientific contributions, covering the entire academic activity of the doctoral student, indicating for the period from 2015 to the present a total of 10 publications in Bulgarian and Italian in national and foreign editions, as well as 13 participations in national and international scientific conferences.

- A plagiarism verification report;

- Declaration of originality of the dissertation thesis.

Upon review of all the submitted documents, I concluded that they fully comply with the regulatory requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree „Doctor”. The publications presented meet the minimum national requirements for research activity.

## **2. Brief biographical information on the doctoral student**

Evgenia Kirilova Atanasova, who was born in 1984 graduated from Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski” with a Bachelor’s degree in Italian Philology in 2007, and obtained a Master’s degree in the program „Translator-Editor” at the Faculty of Slavic Philology in 2008. Since September 2010 and to the present, she has served as Assistant in Italian Philology. In June 2024 she was enrolled as a doctoral student on independent study at the Department of Romance Studies of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology. She has been working on her dissertation for several years, as evidenced by her publications and conference participations during the preceding period. She has considerable professional experience as a lecturer in Italian, participates in numerous projects, and is an active member of the Department of Romance Studies.

## **3. Relevance of the Research Topic**

The dissertation presented by Evgenia Atanasova is a substantial scholarly study devoted to Italian loanwords in the Bulgarian language – a significant topic that

has long attracted the attention of various scholars in Bulgaria. Earlier studies by L. Vankov and I. Petkanov from the mid-20th century focused on the history of Italian influence on the Bulgarian language. Later, research was also published on certain professional jargons that had adopted specialized terms from Italian. In recent years, attention has also been paid to neologisms of Italian origin as part of the international vocabulary.

The relatively few publications on this subject, precisely and thoroughly reviewed by the author, address only individual aspects of borrowing from Italian and highlight the need for a unified and systematic investigation that would also trace the current development and establish the tendencies of this process. This is what Evgenia Atanasova has achieved in her dissertation. The presented work conveys a sense of maturity and careful consideration.

#### **4. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation**

The dissertation comprises 196 pages and is very well structured and organized, following a clear logical sequence that supports the achievement of the stated objectives: from the general framework to the specific results. It consists of: an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion with identified contributions, sources used, a bibliography, and an appendix.

The introduction is relatively brief yet well-structured and entirely sufficient, presenting the subject, objectives and tasks set, the approaches applied, the relevance of the problem, the corpus, and the structure of the work. Nearly 600 lexical items are examined, and given their detailed descriptions, the number is representative for the analysis and conclusions drawn. The fact that dictionaries published after 1993 were used as the main sources for the extracted items demonstrates that the research is oriented primarily toward a synchronic perspective, providing a cross-section of the current lexical stock of Italian origin in Bulgarian. For the tracing of certain historical aspects, additional lexicographical sources have also been used. The introduction further includes, as a subsection, a comprehensive review of the Bulgarian scholarly literature on the topic under consideration - an argument both for continuity and for the long-standing necessity of a comprehensive, wide-ranging analysis of Italian loanwords in the Bulgarian language.

Chapter One is foundational with respect to the theoretical principles on which the subsequent analysis is based. The overall presentation is characterized by a sense of balance and proportion.

The key terms relevant to the research, classifications of loanwords, and the specific features of lexical borrowing discussed in the scholarly literature are presented in detail, yet without unnecessary digressions. The concepts of *borrowing / loanword* and *calque / loanshift*, *xenism*, *barbarism*, *чуждица (foreignism)*, *exotic vocabulary*, and *internationalism* are precisely defined. The mechanism of borrowing and the perspectives of various scholars on this process are traced, and the terms *adaptation*, *assimilation*, and *integration*, together with their interpretations by different authors, are clarified. Attention is also devoted to the proposed division of *necessary* and *luxury* loans. Different views and interpretations are covered accurately, while the author also articulates her own position with regard to some of them. Of particular importance is the clarification both of the meaning attached to the terms *Italianism* and *Italian loanword*, which occupy a central place in the dissertation as the object of investigation, and of the lexical items included in these categories. The etymological criteria for classifying an item as an *Italianism* are clearly distinguished (pp. 17–20). The theoretical framework established in Chapter One is further reinforced by the skillful presentation, at its conclusion, of the views of several researchers concerning the causes, specific features, and significance of lexical borrowing.

The Second Chapter, entitled “The Italian Language and Italianisms in Historical Perspective,” is written in an exceptionally engaging and compelling manner. It traces the influence of Italian culture across the centuries, inseparably linked with the linguistic influence of Italian on European languages, and more specifically on Bulgarian, primarily in an indirect way, shaped by the dynamic circumstances and intertwined contacts of the Balkans and the Mediterranean. Historical development is presented as an essential precondition for linguistic borrowing. The role of extralinguistic factors, outlined and clarified in Chapter One, is here examined in the specific context of the Italian language.

I find the description of the spheres in which Italian has left its most significant linguistic imprint - owing to Italy’s leading role in these domains (finance, art, military affairs, etc.) - to be particularly appropriate. These are precisely the areas that have determined both the history and the inventory of the lexicon of Italian origin. At this

point, Evgenia Atanasova's broad knowledge of Italian history and culture, and beyond, becomes clearly visible. The lively narrative, revealing facts and events, is enriched by fascinating stories about the "journeys" of individual words (see, for example, *банка* on p. 31, *пиано* on p. 52, etc.). Valuable and interesting specific examples of the history of certain loanwords also appear in other parts of the dissertation.

The specificity of the borrowing of Italian words into Bulgarian is carefully traced. The reasons for their indirect pathways of transmission - so characteristic of Italian influence compared to that of other languages - are explained with precision and conviction, together with the identification of linguistic intermediaries and the conditions under which this process took place. The historical overview of the Italian loanwords is of decisive importance for understanding their particular character.

Chapter Three divides the types of Italian loanwords according to two different criteria. First, a thematic classification is made - a natural continuation of the conceptual domains presented in the previous chapter - while also including entirely new words, some of which have not yet been recorded in dictionaries. Before this, certain stylistic features of Italianisms are mentioned, namely their belonging to terminologies, professional vocabulary, or colloquial speech.

The second classification concerns the grouping of Italianisms according to their pathways of transmission. This has a contributory character, as it systematizes Italian vocabulary by etymological principle, identifying the mediation of third languages in their passage into Bulgarian, resolving certain ambiguities and discrepancies in the data regarding the composition and origin of Italianisms found in various lexicographical sources. The doctoral student has successfully managed this demanding task. The route of each lexical item from Italian into Bulgarian has been carefully examined and the loanwords have been classified according to the intermediary language which, in a given historical period, exerted influence on Bulgarian. In this way, groups of words of Italian origin have been identified as having entered through the mediation of Greek, Turkish, Serbo-Croatian, Russian, French, German, and Romanian, as well as words transmitted successively through more than one intermediary language. The notion of *multiple etymology* is also introduced, which could provide the necessary explanation in cases of simultaneous borrowing from several languages. Attention is also devoted to etymological doublets, as well as to

descriptions of certain „meandering linguistic journeys”, which reveal diverse and unexpected information of various kinds (pp. 72–79). The analyses presented in this chapter are considered highly valuable and significant.

Nevertheless, I would make the following recommendations regarding this part:

- The classification could be refined by introducing a subsection 2.1 for direct borrowings, which, although limited in number, constitute a distinct category in contrast to the indirect ones already indicated in the classification;

- Ideally, in the event of publication of the work, it would be advisable to specify both the form of the etymon and its form in the intermediary language.

Chapter Four, “Semantic Assimilation of Italian Loanwords in the Bulgarian Language”, focuses on the semantic content of Italianisms and the changes it undergoes. Defined by the author as central to the dissertation, this chapter provides concrete data for each individual loan and constitutes a substantial part of the overall analysis.

The borrowed lexicon includes, on the one hand, monosemous words that have retained their nominative meanings from the source language or that have entered with one of the meanings of a polysemous Italian lexeme. On the other hand, the cases of polysemy in Bulgarian examined here are of particular interest - resulting from the gradual adoption of additional meanings of the Italian etymon, from the expansion of the original semantics, or from semantic innovations introduced either in Bulgarian or in the intermediary language. The data presented in this section could have significant practical applications in the fields of foreign language teaching and lexicography.

The detailed descriptions provided testify to painstaking work requiring great time and patience, resembling the precision of embroidery, for which Evgenia Atanasova deserves congratulations.

The conclusion formulates very well the overall findings regarding Italian influence on Bulgarian vocabulary, drawn on the basis of the comprehensive scholarly investigation. An important positive feature is the completion of each chapter with a specific summary that briefly highlights the essence of the respective analysis.

The list of references, divided into sources and bibliography, is not particularly extensive, but contains sufficient and carefully selected titles, all cited accurately in the text.

The appended annex at the end of the dissertation, illustrating the corpus on which the study is based, also deserves recognition. It additionally serves as a useful index, since for each of the listed lexical items the page numbers of their description are indicated, which facilitates orientation in the text and gives the work a reference function as well.

I wish to emphasize the very good impression created by the correct, clear, and rich - at times expressive - Bulgarian language, the impeccable spelling and punctuation, and the well-sustained and precise scholarly style in which the work is written.

#### **4. Contributions and Significance of the Dissertation for Scholarship and Practice**

I fully concur with the contributions of the dissertation defined on p. 181, and in summary I can formulate them as follows:

The dissertation itself constitutes an original scholarly contribution, as it is the first systematic, comprehensive, and independent study of Italian loanwords in the Bulgarian language. Among the undeniable contributions are:

- the coherent presentation of the theoretical principles, typologies, and terminology in the field of language borrowing;
- the well-organized presentation of the historical picture of Italian influence worldwide and, in particular, on the Bulgarian language;
- the clarification of etymological aspects and the classification of Italian vocabulary according to its pathways of transmission through specific intermediary languages;
- the detailed description of the semantic development of Italian words in the process of their entry into Bulgarian;
- the well-substantiated distribution of Italian vocabulary according to spheres of usage, which also contributes to understanding the scope of Italian influence;
- the inclusion in the analysis of neologisms of Italian origin.

The results of the study may serve both scholarly purposes and practical applications in foreign language teaching and lexicography.

On the basis of the highlighted contributions of the dissertation by Evgenia Atanasova, I strongly recommend that it be published in order to become accessible to a wider circle of readers, researchers, and students.

## **5. The dissertation abstract**

The abstract accurately, faithfully, and comprehensively reflects the content of the dissertation.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, in view of the indisputable merits and significance of the presented dissertation, as well as the personal and professional qualities of the candidate, I hereby, with full conviction, propose to the academic jury that she be awarded the educational and scientific degree „Doctor” in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology, doctoral program: „Romance Languages” (Italian language).

Sofia, 25.08.2025

Reviewer:

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