

PEER REVIEW

of the dissertation of Prof. Dr. Krasimira Slavcheva Alexova
on the subject *Dubitative in the Bulgarian Language*
for obtaining the academic degree of 'Doctor of Philosophy'
professional field 2. 1. *Philology*

Specialty *Bulgarian Language. Modern Bulgarian Language*

Peer Reviewer: Petya Nacheva Osenova, PhD, professor at Sofia University "St. Kliment
Ohridski"

Particulars of the procedure

By Order No.ПД-38-425/15.07.2022 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" I was appointed as a Member of the Scientific Jury for the defense of the dissertation work of Prof. Dr. Krasimira Alexova.

The set of materials presented by the candidate includes all necessary documents for the selection procedure. Prof. Krasimira Alexova has fully and correctly fulfilled the minimum national requirements under Art.2b, Para.2 and 3 of DASRBA.

Complied with have been all the requirements of DASRBA, of the Regulations for the implementation of DASRBA, of the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring academic degrees and occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kl. Ohridski". The check with the Anti-Plagiarism system showed that the work of Prof. Alexova is original and authored by her. The abstract (79 pages) correctly reflects the content of the dissertation.

Particulars of the candidate

Professor Alexova graduated in Bulgarian Philology from Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski". She started working at the Department of Bulgarian Language in 1993. She defended her doctoral dissertation in Sociolinguistics in 1994, and was later elected as an Associate Professor and Professor. Prof. Alexova has vast experience in teaching various disciplines to Bulgarian and foreign students in Bachelor and Master programs: Bulgarian for foreigners,

morphology, typology of languages, theory of markedness, sociolinguistics and many others. In the period 2005 - 2007, Prof. Alexova was a lecturer in Bulgarian Language and Culture at the University of Provence Aix-Marseille I, Aix-en-Provence, France. She is a member of the Executive Committee of the International Sociolinguistic Society INSOLISO, Sofia, and of the Bulgarian Society for Measurement and Evaluation in Education. Prof. Alexova is an excellent teacher and scholar. She has conducted an extremely impressive research and project activity. This is evident from her publication activity, from her participation in a large number of university, national and international projects and forums, conferences, round tables and seminars.

Description and contributions of the doctoral work

The doctoral dissertation of prof. Alexova *The Dubitative in the Bulgarian Language* comprises 387 pages and cites 235 sources. This is a really substantial piece of work that shows Prof. Alexova's rich knowledge on the subject matter, as well as her skills in presenting her own model of the phenomenon under consideration and defending it in a convincing manner.

The choice of the topic is superbly motivated by the fact that there is no comprehensive work that examines the evidentiality "dubitative" in its entirety. In addition, the category of evidentials has been given rather different and often contradictory interpretations concerning the name and status of the category itself, the number of its constituent members, the internal relationships between the members, the origin of the category, and its relation to other grammatical categories. Prof. Alexova touches on all these questions and offers solutions through the prism of a focus on the dubitative. A particularly valuable point is the treatment of the dubitative in the Bulgarian language in a typological plan: considered have been the linguistic specifics of the dubitative and revised have been the comparisons made between this category and similar or analogous phenomena in other languages. The source literature on the topic has not been organized in a separate chapter, but has been presented in relation to the subtopics concerning the dubitative within the entire work. I believe that such an approach is fully justified given the multifaceted nature of the subject. The text correctly specifies what falls within the scope of the subject of the dissertation and what does not.

The work consists of an Introduction, four chapters, and a Conclusion. A list of 18 publications on the subject has been presented, of which only one is in print. There are publications in foreign editions, some of which indexed in Scopus. Impressive is the variety of forums and

journals where the papers were published, which increases the influence of Prof. Alexova's research output on the scientific community. All presented publications concern the subject of the dissertation. The presented contributions are 12 in number and I believe that they are correctly defined in terms of the new solutions from a typological, structural, inter-categorical, semantic and pragmatic point of view.

In the **Introduction** to her work, Prof. Alexova clearly and precisely defines the object, subject and purpose of her dissertation. The object of the work is the dubitative in the Bulgarian language. The subject is: the meaning of the dubitative, its forms and uses, including from a typological and pragmatic point of view. The purpose is to thoroughly examine the phenomenon from the perspective of grammar, typology and pragmatics. The specific tasks are also defined in great detail. A great variety of methods were used (analytical, functional-pragmatic, statistical, comparative, structural-semantic, etc.). Empirical databases and surveys were used to verify the working hypotheses. Therefore, to the list of methods I would explicitly add the following ones: the corpus method and the survey method. It was noted by the author herself that 10 tables, 18 graphs and 18 diagrams were employed in the work.

Chapter One, "The Dubitative, Evidentiality, and Modality," explores the position of the phenomenon within evidentiality and modality. In subsection one, a detailed critical analysis of the existing classifications of evidentials is made leading to the same conclusion, namely, there is no unified opinion on the invariant of evidentiality and, accordingly, the subcategory of dubitative itself is nonexistent failing to fit into the considered theoretical frameworks. The other contentious issue is the relationship between evidentiality and epistemic modality which includes also the speaker's commitment to the proposition. Four major theses have been considered: the two categories are independent of each other; evidentiality is part of the epistemic modality; the two categories partially overlap; they are subordinate to their general category of *epistemicity*. The second subsection examines the position of the dubitative, however, using the approach of semantic maps which is a new perspective on the phenomenon in Bulgarian linguistics. The author advocates the view that the Bulgarian evidential system is modal / modalized. The following terms have been proposed for the two types of modality (which actually correspond to the notions of modality and evidentiality): logical epistemicity (necessity and probability (wherein the presumptive is included)) and natural epistemicity (conclusive, renarrative, dubitative) within the epistemic modality. Scheme 10 (p. 35) presents the author's ideas in graphic form. In this sense,

this part of the work is not only a synopsis of the literature on the matter, but also a starting point for the analysis of the phenomenon further in the text.

Chapter Two, “Semantics of the Dubitative”, examines the dubitative as expressing doubt and unreliability, evaluation and emotion, and also analyzes its contextual uses, the theses being quite diverse. The author does not deny the broad understanding of the expression of doubt, and yet she adopts the narrow one, namely, the speaker's distrust only of someone else's statement and not of their own which, according to her, is a transposed usage. Theories of trust and distrust have been examined, and the problem of truth has been considered in short. In the second subsection, evaluation has been interpreted as the basis for the emergence of emotionality, which, in turn, is a linguistic expression of emotionality

Throughout the work, sought have been the relationships between the concepts, such as proximity, exclusion, overlapping, etc. In my opinion, Prof. Alexova has delineated the directions of the main problems in philosophical and linguistic terms. This inter-disciplinary character of her approach is particularly valuable both in terms of completeness of analysis and future use by colleagues in the humanities. The third subsection presents the contextual uses of the dubitative. The author is right to note that it is impossible to enumerate all such uses due to the generative power of language. It is noteworthy that the whole spectrum of gradational uses has been truly represented, ranging from non-expressive use to emotionally charged attitude. To me, these are also different language strategies on the part of the speaker. The fourth subsection traces also the typological aspects. Special emphasis has been laid on Eichenwald's classification and the assumptions concerning the existence of dubitative in the Turkish language. A key question is whether the dubitative is considered as an independent evidential, or only as an evidential strategy. Prof. Alexova disagrees with the positioning of the Bulgarian dubitative in a simplified two-member evidential category of type A1 or A2, whereas, in fact, it is a four-member one. Moreover, according to her, the Bulgarian dubitative does not express general doubt, but mistrust of someone else's primary statement. The last subsection examines the views on the dubitative in the Bulgarian evidential system. It turns out that the publications on the matter are not that numerous. Summarized have been the main ideas concerning the dubitative: a variant of the restatement form, a restatement of the inferential forms, an independent subcategory, a quasi evidentiality. Clearly demarcated has been prof. Alexova's opinion which considers the dubitative as a separate subcategory within the 4-member category of evidentiality. The author accepts G. Gerdzhikov's

position that the invariant is characterized by the features [+ restatement] and [+ subjectivity]. Preferred has been the term '*reservedness*' of the speaker towards someone else's message to the term '*mistrust*' (p. 92). Attention has also been paid to the perception of evidentials in terms of subjectivity and restatement. For this purpose, a survey was conducted among 171 students from humanities majors. It has been proved that there is a hierarchy among the evidentials on the basis of credibility. In this hierarchy, the indicative is perceived as the most reliable, the relationships between the other three evidentials being more complex.

I can make one general recommendation concerning the text: prior to its publication, underscored should be the summarizing paragraphs in the rather hierarchical content of the text. It is a good idea to include brief summaries after each subsection within a chapter, and then after the text of the chapter itself. Such brief summaries would facilitate and give a better orientation to the reader in the complex matter.

Chapter Three, "Formal Paradigm of the Dubitative," presents the forms of this subcategory, as well as its coincidences with other forms, the dysfunctionality of the paradigm, and the like. Presented also have been the typological indices of the dubitative. The author disagrees with the direction of development of the dubitative from the forms of the renarrative with the addition of the past perfect active participle of the verb *be* (as Nitsolova suggests). She defends the thesis that the forms of the dubitative are formed from the conclusive forms by restating the auxiliary verb (as Gerdzhikov sees the case). The reasons for this conclusion are that in this way ensured is the balance between the form and the semantics of the subcategory, i.e. it is formed from a subjective form and then added is the reservation of the speaker towards the information related from another source. I personally, adhere to Nitsolova's view that the dubitative is formed from a restatement with the help of an additional formant (i.e., it changes non-subjectivity into subjectivity connected with the expression of doubt concerning the related information), however, I accept the convincing arguments in favour of the other point of view.

Valuable is the analysis of the variability of expression within the subcategory. It has been proved that the forms with *neka da* and *da* are not part of the subcategory, as well as those with *dano (da)*. Contributing is the idea, as well as its detailed elaboration, that "the variability in the inferential and restatement paradigms" is "a source of the variability of the dubitative forms" (p. 127). One recommendation, when checking examples in corpora, is to identify whether the text is original or translated. On page 133, almost all examples are found in translated fiction. On the

other hand, quite a few competing options have been considered: in passive voice, by variation of the auxiliary verb (*sam* and *bada*), as well as a combination between them; for 1st and 2nd person in negative dubitative for the tenses expressing subsequent actions. Further, bi-participle matches and defects in the form have been discussed in detail.

Throughout the work, Prof. Alexova thoroughly motivates the use of linguistic terms in the context of her research, which is a very good practice and is recommended in any scholarly text. Such terms are e.g. '*syncretism*', '*deviation*', '*occasionalism*'; listed have been the uses of the dubitative in each tense and noted have been the trends in the frequency of use – e.g. the present dubitative is more common than the past imperfect tense wherefrom it was derived. Attention is paid to the grammaticalization of dubitative forms according to the theory of Kr. Lehmann in syntagmatic terms: structural scope, cohesion, variation. Proven has been the penetrability (though not arbitrary) of elements in dubitative forms, including as positional variants. This fact shows that the syntagmatic cohesion in these forms is not so great. Further, discussed have been the typological indices in the dubitative. This represents a quantitative assessment of the subcategory under consideration. The analysis was conducted on the dubitative paradigms rather than corpora, which is a logical decision given the low frequency of the category in the electronic corpora. The approach of G. Gerdzhikov has been presented. Chart 8 on page 236 shows that the dubitative is actually the evidential with the fewest forms. Within the dubitative itself, more statistics have been presented, such as degree of analyticity and synthesis. Valuable are the observations that "The frequency of use of the three variants is directly related to the degree of compositionality, i.e., the higher the compositionality, the less frequent the use" (p. 242). Indicated has been the position of the dubitative among the other evidentials. The relationships between the dubitative and other grammatical categories are presented in the light of G. Gerdzhikov's views. Two types of interrelationships have been considered: interrelationship (dubitative, 1st p. and sg.) and interaction (dubitative and other verb categories).

I am of the opinion that chapters 2 and 3 are a great contribution to our linguistics. They outline in detail the semantics and formation of the dubitative in the context of the other evidentials as well.

Chapter four, "Pragmatic aspects of the dubitative" refers to the use of the dubitative in reproduced speech, both in dialogue mode and in transformed original speech, quoted, indirect, semi-direct, including directly reproduced speech. Considered have been also partnership

strategies between the dubitative and other evidential modifiers for implausibility/emotion, including in the different sentences (predominantly communicative), i.e. in the text in general. This part is also extremely valuable since it focuses on the transformative power of the dubitative in the speech strategies of communicators. It can serve as a basis for future research on the role of the dubitative in pragmatics and its specific branches, such as speech acts, politeness theory, and discourse analysis among others.

The **Conclusion** presents the main results of the research, such as: the dubitative is one of the three indirect evidentials in a 4-member evidential system; it is the most semantically loaded evidential (marked by the features of restatement and subjectivity), being, at the same time, the evidential with the highest degree of compositionality. The individual chapters/parts of the work are presented in a summarized form. In my view, the work would further benefit if possible directions for future research were outlined more explicitly.

Conclusion

Taking into consideration the high scientific qualities of the presented dissertation work and its significance for Bulgarian Studies and Bulgarian Linguistics, I will confidently vote for awarding the scientific degree of "Doctor of Philosophy" to Prof. Dr. Krasimira Slavcheva Alexova in professional field 2.1 *Philology*, specialty *Bulgarian Language. Modern Bulgarian language*.

10.08.2022

Peer Reviewer: