

PEER REVIEW

by Prof. Vera Tervel Marovska, DSc,
professor at the Department of Bulgarian Language
at the *Paisii Hilendarski* University of Plovdiv,
on the materials submitted
for the acquisition of the scientific degree of *Doctor of Science*
at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”;
in the Sphere of higher education 2. *Humanities*
Area of professional qualification 2.1. *Philology* (Bulgarian Language – Modern
Bulgarian Language)

Author: Prof. Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova, PhD

Dissertation Topic: *The Dubitative in Modern Bulgarian Language*

1. General overview of the submitted materials

Following Order № ПД-38-425 from 15.07.2022 of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury participating in the defense procedure of a dissertation on the topic *The Dubitative in Modern Bulgarian Language* for the acquisition of the scientific degree of *Doctor of Science*, sphere of higher education 2. *Humanities*, area of professional qualification 2.1. *Philology* (Bulgarian Language – Modern Bulgarian Language).

The author of the dissertation is Prof. Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova, PhD from the Department of Bulgarian language, Faculty of Slavic Studies, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

The set of documents submitted on paper by Prof. Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova, PhD is in accordance with art. 36 (1) of the Rulebook for Development of the Academic Staff of Sofia University and comprises the following documents:

1. an application to the Rector of Sofia University for opening a defense procedure;
2. a Europass CV;
3. preliminary defense minutes from the Department meeting;
4. doctoral dissertation abstract;
5. a declaration for originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
6. a reference form concerning the fulfillment of the minimal national requirements;
7. a list of scientific publications;

8. a dissertation;
9. copies of the scientific publications;
10. 3 sets containing documents 1 – 9 on paper;
11. 7 sets containing documents 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 on a digital source.

The doctoral candidate has attached 18 publications on the topic of the dissertation.

2. Brief autobiographical data concerning the doctoral candidate

Prof. Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova, PhD was born on 18.10.1965. She finished the *St. Seven Apostles* 7th High School in Sofia. In the period 1984 – 1988 she obtained her Master's degree in Bulgarian Philology from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". During the same period, she also specialized in *History and Theory of Culture* at the Faculty of History of Sofia University.

In 1994 she defended her doctoral thesis in sociolinguistics – *Language processes in the family (on material from the capital)*.

In 2005 she qualified as an associate professor and in 2017 as a professor at the Department of Bulgarian Language, Faculty of Slavic Studies, Sofia University.

Prof. Kr. Aleksova's career path began in 1989. Until 1997 she was a senior lecturer in Bulgarian language, Bulgarian studies and commercial correspondence at the University of National and World Economy (UNWE). From 1993 to 1995 she was a part-time assistant professor to foreign students at the Department of Bulgarian Language at Sofia University. From 1994 to 1997 she was also a part-time assistant professor to non-foreign students at the Department of Bulgarian Language. From 1997 to 2000 she was and an external lecturer and a lecturer to foreign students at UNWE. Since 1997 she has been a senior assistant professor and lecturer in Modern Bulgarian language at the Department of Bulgarian Language at Sofia University.

From 2005 to 2007 she was a lecturer in Bulgarian language and culture at the *Aix-Marseille* University in Aix-en-Provence, France.

3. Relevance of the topic and appropriateness of the set aims and objectives

The peer-reviewed dissertation is dedicated to one of the most interesting questions concerning Bulgarian verb morphology – the so-called dubitative. Its specificity is mainly determined by its mixed character, manifested in its relation both to moods and to the credibility and truth values of the information conveyed by verb forms. At the same time, the

dubitative has attracted the attention of researchers of Bulgarian morphology alongside other phenomena and the researchers' interest has almost never been concentrated on it alone. Therefore, the chosen topic can be defined as definitely fit for a dissertation.

4. Knowledge of the problem

The phenomenon of the dubitative is studied in Prof. Kr. Aleksova's research in a very versatile and thorough way and with attention to its speech realizations. The existing literature on the issues of modality, evidentiality and epistemicity has been studied and presented in the study in detail, and this in itself is a merit and contribution of the dissertation, since the reflected linguistic phenomena are not described in Bulgarian grammar in a sufficient and reliable way. The existing literature is mainly in English and French, and the interpretations therein reflect the specificity of both English and the other languages whose material is analyzed in the sources cited. There are also quite a few typological analyses which the dissertation provides information about. The bibliography contains about 220 titles (pp. 361-382 of the dissertation (D)), almost half of them in English, published in the last decade of the 20th and in the 21st c.

5. Research methods

The research methods used are relevant to the specificity of the phenomena described in the work and are naturally dependent on their diversity. They comprise scientific description and analysis of the linguistic material, including contextual emphasis; structural-semantic and functional-pragmatic analyses; statistical methods for typological inferences and predictions; semantic mapping, through which a semantic (mental) map of evidentiality and epistemicity is proposed for the Bulgarian language.

6. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation

I think that the final decision of the scientific jury, of which we are members, will not be a difficult one. We are evaluating a piece of research of undeniable quality, with a sufficiently broad scientific and methodological support, based on the most modern and authoritative works in the world. The work presents the author, Prof. Kr. Aleksova, PhD as an established scientist with indisputable capacity, who would rightfully receive the scientific degree "Doctor of Science". A more detailed characterization, some critical remarks, recommendations and doubts on my part can in no way devalue what has been said. They are the result of the fact that the subject is close to my heart and I have thought about it a great deal on various occasions.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, 4 chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references. The list of publications on the topic of the dissertation and the research findings (according to the author's own judgment) are added to the abstract. 389 examples are commented in the work. The thesis contains 10 tables, 18 graphs and 18 diagrams. The number of references is 235. The total length of the work is 387 pages.

The first chapter examines theoretically the views on evidentiality, modality and the place of the dubitative in them, views contained in various typological classifications. Chapter Two is devoted to the semantics of the dubitative – its relations to the possibility of expressing doubt and disbelief; its relation to evaluativity and emotivity; and its contextual nuances. The third chapter explores the formal features of the dubitative paradigm, the variation of some of the forms and the evaluation according to the criteria for grammaticalization. The relations between the dubitative and other verb categories are also commented on in this part. The fourth chapter describes the uses of the dubitative forms in different types of sentences, in direct and reported speech, some restrictions and neutralizations.

The theoretical views of many contemporary scholars on modality, evidentiality, and epistemicity are presented in considerable detail. In spite of the not inconsiderable differences between them, one may take as relatively representative that of Willett (Willett, Th.), according to whom evidential systems can be distinguished on the basis of 3 main types of evidence: direct evidence and two types of indirect evidence: reported and inferring. Direct evidence is visual, auditory, or other types of sensory evidence. The reported one relies on verbal re-productions of speech and can be divided into second-hand, third-hand and the so-called folklore as part of oral communication. The inferring evidence as a subtype of indirect evidence can be subdivided into evidence based on observable situations and evidence based on mental constructs (p.12-13 from the D).

According to the author, in the Bulgarian language the dubitative together with the indicative, the conclusive (inferential) and the renarrative make up a four-member evidential verbal category.

The problem of epistemicity is also important, since “the dubitative is unquestionably an epistemic grammatical device”. According to some scholars, epistemicity and evidentiality are separate semantic zones (e.g., S. Chang and Al. Timberlake) (pp. 21-22 in the D).

Epistemic modality provides characteristics of the action itself and mainly has the values of possibility and necessity.

A different hierarchy may exist, such as that proposed by Jan Nyuts, for instance. According to him, modality is of three types: dynamic, deontic and epistemic. Dynamic modality broadly comprises ability (capacities/abilities/potentials) and need (needs/necessities). Deontic modality is traditionally defined in terms of permission and obligation, and epistemic modality expresses the degree of truthfulness.

There is no consensus in the reviewed literature on the relation between evidentiality and epistemic modality – either with respect to the scope of the two concepts, or with respect to their hierarchy and the existence of a common zone between them. One account holds that evidentiality and modality are subordinate to the generalizing category of epistemicity (Boye 2010). K. Boye e.g. considers that the linguistic expression of epistemicity as a superordinate category encompasses evidentiality (direct evidence (e.g. visual, auditory or unspecified) – indirect evidence (reportive, inferential or unspecified) and epistemic modality (certainty – partial (un)certainty/probability – complete uncertainty/epistemic possibility).

The author summarizes that the dubitative, understood as the speaker's reserve towards the renarrated second-hand information, has an undeniably evidential character, “because it points to the source of information – a non-own utterance from the speaker/writer's point of view. The epistemicity conveyed by the dubitative is also beyond doubt. The speaker rejects the credibility of the renarrated third-party utterance, which is in fact, from a logical point of view ... an expression of a degree of commitment to the truth of the propositional content, and from a functional-cognitive perspective is the speaker's subjective assessment of the degree of certainty that the proposition is true” (p. 28 in the D).

Direct evidence is associated with certainty of the information conveyed, whereas indirect evidence is associated with partial (in)certainty. According to Kr. Aleksova the relation between evidentiality and epistemicity is somewhat different. “With regard to the Bulgarian language, it can be specified that directness covers the indicative (direct evidentiality), and indirectness includes 3 indirect evidentials – the conclusive, the renarrative, the dubitative” (p. 33 in the D).

In an attempt to make a semantic map of epistemic verb categories in modern Bulgarian, Kr. Aleksova differentiates two main domains – logical epistemicity and natural epistemicity. A grammaticalized device in the domain of logical epistemicity is the

presumptive, through which epistemic probability is expressed. Within natural epistemicity there are two subdomains, distinguished on the basis of the criterion direct : indirect information about the action in the utterance of the actual speaker. The subdomain of indirectness includes as separate nodes the conclusive, the renarrative, and the dubitative (p. 34 in the D).

Chapter Two, “The Semantics of the Dubitative”, begins with a logico-philosophical and psychological interpretation and an attempt to define the features of incredulity and doubt (“The Dubitative and the Expression of Incredulity and Doubt” – p. 37 in the D). Credulity and disbelief are presented by some authors as having an emotional, rational, and volitional component; according to other authors – as having an emotional-evaluative and cognitive component, and they are related to concepts such as doubt, confidence, truth, falsehood, etc. ... Mistrust may have points of contact with doubt, although they are not overlapping concepts (pp. 40-42 in the D).

The contextual realizations (semantic nuances) of the dubitative are the subject of the third section of the third chapter of the dissertation and they are extremely numerous: non-expressive doubt in the possible execution of the action in the non-own primary utterance; expressive negative evaluation of the action on the basis of the non-own information; disagreement with the non-own suggestion, insistence, order and many more. The many semantic nuances are evidence of the degree of incomplete grammaticalization of the phenomenon being described, where a semantic invariant is difficult to formulate. To put it in a different way, it would be more appropriate to start from the semantic analysis and the semantic variety of the phenomenon and continue towards generalization and unification of its semantic feature (in its capacity of a differential feature of the dubitative) rather than towards the confirmation of the variety.

The typological analysis of the phenomenon under scrutiny traces its presence and formal realization in a number of languages. According to the author, the Bulgarian language provides evidence that the dubitative can be an evidential subcategory (p. 72 in the D).

The different types of subjectivity in the semantics of the categories relevant to it are so palpable that the doctoral candidate’s only option is to acknowledge them, which alone raises questions. She admits that it is necessary “to consider the particularities of the feature of *subjectivity*, which in the case of the conclusive and the dubitative take on specific concretizations”. In the case of the conclusive, it is concretized into a subjective utterance

based on one's own deduction, conclusion, generalization, inference, whereas in the case of the dubitative, subjectivity manifests itself in a reserve towards the communicated utterance of another and a negative subjective attitude towards it. And in our view the difference between the two types of subjectivity thus described is significant, and if it is an indisputable marker for one paradigm, then it would not be a marker for the other (one has to do with the utterance's occasion, and the other is the speaker's attitude toward the action itself, like subjectivity in moods).

The description of the dubitative paradigm (pp. 18ff. in the A; pp. 118ff. in the D) begins with Iv. Kutsarov's and R. Nitsolova's explanations about the formation of its forms, which is natural, since they are the two scholars who have worked most on the phenomenon. However, the answer to the question about whose idea is right can be given only after one is certain that the question about the phenomenon of the dubitative has been solved.

Quite appropriately, the paradigm analysis begins with a theoretical and empirical description of the existing variant forms. Some of the instances raise questions for me personally. The author writes that there are no passive forms for the present and the imperfect. If we acknowledge the presence of the feature of resultativeness in the morphological forms with the passive participle, we should consider them to be perfect, but it is noted in the paradigm that perfect and pluperfect forms of the dubitative do not exist either (p. 20 of the abstract (A)). Often the decision on what the temporal form is is quite difficult (e.g., in the sentence *Toy **bil** mnogo **izdavan** avtor. Amii!* 'He **was/has been/seems to be** a very **published** author. Really!'). The decision will depend on the intonation, but it might or might not be typically dubitative.

Similar are the examples on p. 201 in the D, in which the underlined forms are qualified as aorist forms: (255) *Dnes nyakoi plachat, che Kalchev **bil izoliral** grada ot stranata. Zaradi nego rusentsi **bili zabraveni** dori ot Boga!* 'Today some lament that Kalchev **had isolated** the city from the country. Because of him the people of Ruse **were/had been forgotten** even by God!' (http://www.infotech.bg/homepages/mayor_kalchev/portret.htm) (01.04.2022); (256); *Ama dali nyama neshto za pomagane? Tya, vidite li, tolkova **se bila pretovarila*** 'But isn't there anything to do to help? She, you see, **was/had been** so **overburdened**' (BNC).

Aren't these forms perfect or pluperfect? For it is said for the aorist in p. 116 in the D that it has no passive forms. It is claimed that there are also no dubitative forms for the perfect and the pluperfect, and the examples seem to disprove this?

From a theoretical point of view, dubitative forms for the synthetic conditional (*yadwal bil*) are possible, but the fact that they do not occur in the corpus of the study should not be absolutized. These forms are extremely rare; they are lexically restricted because of their dialectal-colloquial nuance, and they are subject to neutralizations – so it is only natural that they are not speech attested; this is not yet a sign that they do not exist (p. 21 in the A).

According to the view defended in the dissertation, the reason for the lack of forms in the two particular paradigms of the dubitative described above (for the perfect and the pluperfect) is formal and could be defined by means of the work term **formal blocking** (in G. Gerdzhikov's view) (p. 180 in the D).

Interesting are some examples, such as: *Mi te, nishto ne mozheli da mu napravyat, znachi... i hich da ne sme si mislili, che shtyal bil da doydel nyakakav si etichen model!* 'Well, they couldn't do anything to him, so... and **we hadn't been to think** that some kind of ethical model **would have come**' (p. 202 in the D), in which renarrativeness seems to be expressed twice: once in the auxiliary verb (*shtyal bil da doyde*) and a second time in the full verb (*shtyal bil da doydel*). In the formation of analytic grammatical forms – especially in the case of complex ones, in the sense of longer ones – there is also a psychological tendency to emphasize, to repeat, to stress intonationally the features that are particularly important in emotional terms. This is probably also the case with *renarrativeness* and *dubitativeness* in the quoted example.

The parameters of grammaticalization, including the syntagmatic ones as defined by Chr. Lehmann, prove, and the author rightly recognizes this, that the dubitative is in the process of incomplete grammaticalization. Paradigmatic variation is sensed, and it is supposed to decrease as grammaticalization progresses. Syntagmatic variation, related to the positional variability of the elements and their fixity in the construction, is also supposed to decrease, which is not yet the case either (pp. 209-211 in the D).

The composition of the section on the relation of the dubitative to the other morphological categories of the Bulgarian verb is interesting (pp. 252-284). They actually explain the possible contamination between grammatical features, as a consequence of which the form used expresses their sum, or else it is logically reinterpreted as a sort of contextual

meaning of the dubitative. The chosen sequence adds systematicity to the description and contributes to the prediction of the so-called contextual usages, which turn out to be the result not of the influence of contextual elements but of the realized grammatical features.

7. Contributions and significance of the dissertation to science and practice

This dissertation analyzes a morphological phenomenon that has not previously been the subject of independent study in a scholarly work.

The study applies scientific descriptive and statistical methods through which it presents the spoken language at the contemporary stage, the speakers' speech preferences and their ability to perceive the semantic nuances of the linguistic phenomena they use.

The detailed description of the dubitative, epistemicity and evidentiality allows for typological descriptions and predictions.

The diverse contexts in which the studied forms are used contribute to their detailed presentation in textbooks and other resources for learning Bulgarian as a foreign language.

8. Assessment of the publications on the topic of the doctoral dissertation

The 18 publications by Prof. Kr. Aleksova, PhD are works of high research quality and have been presented at authoritative forums. They are all serious compositions whose publication has been accompanied by interest, comment and discussion. They have been published in authoritative journals, some of them indexed in international databases.

9. Personal contribution of the doctoral candidate

The dissertation and the presented scientific publications are the personal work of prof. Krasimira Alexova. Only two of the articles are co-authored.

10. Dissertation Abstract

The abstract correctly summarizes the content of the dissertation and its main contributions.

I have not found any texts in the dissertation that show signs of plagiarism.

11. Questions, critical remarks and recommendations

1. G. Gerdzhikov's treatment of the categorial characteristic of the dubitative as the fourth, the most marked grammeme of the category, based on the 2 features of *renarrativeness* and *subjectivity*, is not convincing. Actually, we see an arbitrary

combination of two categories in almost all the Bulgarian language textbooks in primary education, where the six person and number verb forms are illustrated. Examples can also be given for almost all morphological categories (two by two).

2. It is interesting what the relationship between the *dubitative* and the *admirative* is, and it would be good to explain it in more detail and in a compositionally more prominent place in the work. Also, assuming that the *bil*-forms are dubitative, can the renarrative conclusive forms be non-dubitative?
3. The abundant scholarly literature examining the relationship between evidentiality and epistemic modality (for whose presentation in this work the author is to be congratulated) is dominated by variation and diversity due to the broad semantic domain of the two concepts. In Bulgarian, however, the situation is further complicated by the fact that the bulk of the evidential varieties are grammaticalized, and the grammaticalizing unification frequently equates them in meaning with the so-called epistemicity.
4. In our view, the *neka*- and *da*-forms (p. 22 A) are legitimate analytic imperative forms, through which the systematic-structural integrity of verb morphology is preserved in Modern Bulgarian, which would have been seriously disrupted by the newly formed paradigms of the inferential and the distal taxis (or conclusive) forms.
5. The discussion of concepts such as disbelief, doubt, incredulity; and also evaluation, expressiveness, affectivity, emotionality inevitably requires the inclusion of logical-psychological and philosophical characterizations in the analysis. As a result, the contextually expressed features forming the notions of *evidentiality* and *epistemicity* become so diverse that the possibility of typifying and unifying them as a differential feature of the dubitative is destroyed.
6. It seems to me that a more consistent attempt should have been made to standardize the terminological apparatus of the study. Many scientifically interpretive theories and their proper terms are used in it, and although an attempt has been made to unify them by relying on the research positions of G. Gerdzhikov, they are also more often than not quite unconventional and this creates prerequisites for possible semantic contradictions.
7. Compositionally, the work might have benefited from being “unburdened” of scientific explanations and definitions of some of the linguistic concepts more

peripherally related to the topic (e.g. on homonymy; on the differences between evaluativeness, expressiveness, emotionality, etc.).

12. Personal impressions

Prof. Dr. Krasimira Aleksova's professional activities are related to teaching Bulgarian language – in different forms, specialties and specializations and to different students. I have known her to be one of the Sofia University colleagues who are engaged in students' scientific growth the most. Her work with the students and her standing among them present her as erudite and responsible, extremely demanding and caring for the scientific and professional growth of the talented students of Sofia University.

Certainly, Prof. Dr. Kr. Aleksova's participation in scientific meetings has always made a wonderful impression on me – with her dedication and attention to the various problems of Bulgarian grammar, on which she has worked following the scientific and methodological direction of our great linguist Georgi Gerdzhikov.

13. Recommendations for future use of the dissertation contributions and results

The peer-reviewed study has all the qualities of a serious scientific work, dedicated to a phenomenon that has been hardly studied in the Bulgarian grammatical system. It belongs to the phenomena formed in the process of qualitative changes of our language over the centuries, phenomena which distinguish it from the related Slavic languages, contribute to its uniqueness and make it similar to the Balkan languages and to Turkish. Prof. Dr. Krasimira Aleksova's research is well worth publishing, and the preparation for printing will be the final reflection on its contributions.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific and scientific-practical results which are an original contribution to science and it meets all requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Rulebook for the Application of LDASRB and the corresponding Rulebook of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The dissertation shows that the author – Prof. Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova, PhD possesses thorough theoretical knowledge and professional skills and demonstrates qualities and skills for carrying out original and innovative scientific research.

Due to the aforesaid, I hereby confidently give my **positive assessment** of the conducted research presented in the dissertation thesis, dissertation abstract, the obtained results and scientific contributions and I **recommend to the honourable scientific jury to award Prof. Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova, PhD the scientific degree “Doctor of Science”** (in the sphere of higher education 2. *Humanities*, area of professional qualification 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Language – Modern Bulgarian Language)).

10.09.2022

Sofia

Reviewer:

(Prof. V. Marovska, DSc)