

STATEMENT

on the dissertation of Prof. Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova, Ph.D.
on “The Dubitative on Present-Day Bulgarian”
for the degree of *Doctor of Sciences* in the field 2. *Humanities*, professional field 2.1.

Philology

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By order RD-38-425/15.07.2022 of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” I have been appointed as a member of the jury for the defence of the dissertation of Prof. Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova, Ph.D., for the degree of *Doctor of Sciences* in the professional field 2.1. *Philology*. It is clear from the presented materials and documents that Prof. Krasimira Aleksova, Ph.D., meets the minimum national requirements under Art. 26, para. 2 and 3 of Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), to the requirements of the Regulations for the application of LDASRB and the additional requirements from the Regulations for the conditions and procedures for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The work under review was prepared independently; it does not repeat the topic, nor any parts of the content of the thesis presented for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree *Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)*.

The dissertation of Prof. Krasimira Aleksova, Ph.D., is devoted to the dubitative in the modern Bulgarian language, a topic that is of interest to Bulgarian studies, linguistic typology and general linguistics, but has so far been only partially developed. Individual aspects of the meaning and uses of the dubitative have been discussed in a number of Bulgarian and foreign publications on the issues of evidentiality, but the work of Prof. Aleksova is the first comprehensive study of this phenomenon. Thus, the dissertation meets the requirement of the Regulations of St. Kliment Ohridski University to “contain theoretical generalizations and solutions to major scientific or scientifically applied problems, which correspond to contemporary achievements and represent a significant and original contribution to science”.

The 387-page work consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a list of references cited (235 titles) and a list of contributions. 389 examples are considered and 10 tables, 18 graphs and 18 diagrams are included.

The introduction provides the object and subject of the study, clearly states the aim and lists the author’s objectives. In relation to the research objectives, the methods used in the study are presented and the sources from which the empirical material was extracted are listed. The examples in the study illustrating the phenomena described are excerpted not only from available electronic corpora, but also from the author’s own recordings, as well as from various Internet sources. This selection of the linguistic material allows the tracing of current trends in the formation and uses of the dubitative. At the end of the introduction the outline of the work is indicated, which reveals the logic of the exposition, and furthermore

facilitates the reader in searching for and tracing particular aspects of the issues under consideration.

Chapter one seeks to locate the Bulgarian evidential system among the evidential systems of other languages by tracing the controversial issues in seminal publications concerning various typological classifications of evidential systems. Here Aleksova discusses the relationship between evidentiality and modality, and in the second part of the chapter she clarifies the current semantic mapping in typology and presents semantic maps of evidentiality and modality developed by scholars worldwide. After reviewing different perspectives on evidentiality and evidential systems, and after discussing the views of world-renowned typologists such as F. de Haan, Aikhenvald, and Plungian, which she critically analyses, the author convincingly points out that none of the classifications under consideration can accurately describe the Bulgarian evidential system. The analysis shows that in some of the existing classification schemes, the conclusive and the renarrative have to be merged, and furthermore, the dubitative does not find a place in any of them. One of the reasons for these weaknesses in the general descriptions of evidential systems, which are revealed if applied to the Bulgarian language, is that the Bulgarian evidential system is not very familiar to researchers, but no less important is the general theoretical understanding of the relation of modality and evidentiality. Aleksova makes a critical reading of the existing opinions, arguing that the dubitative has both an evidential and an epistemic essence. The second part of the chapter presents contemporary attempts to construct so-called semantic maps, in which the elements that make up a semantic field are graphically represented and grammaticalized differently in different languages. Here is also one of the author's major contributions not only in the field of Bulgarian linguistics, but also in the field of international typological research – the creation of a semantic map of evidentiality and epistemic modality in the Bulgarian language.

The second chapter of the dissertation reveals the semantics of the dubitative in the Bulgarian language. The first two parts clarify the content of notions often used to describe the meaning of the dubitative, namely the notions of *disbelief*, *doubt*, *untrustworthiness*, and then the notions of *evaluability*, *emotivity*, and *expressivity* are discussed. The notions thus stipulated become the basis for the analysis of the contextual uses of the dubitative in the next section. On the basis of many examples, an extremely wide range of usages is commented upon, ranging from 'unexpressive doubt' to 'angry indignation accompanied by sarcasm'. Of particular interest are the examples given of transpositive uses of the dubitative, including uses in which the speaker implicitly admits to having lied in the substrate utterance. It is noteworthy that the uses of the dubitative serve to express emotions in the negative part of the spectrum (anger, indignation, rejection). The examples are varied and analysed in detail; the full range of meanings expressed in the specific contexts is well illustrated. However, the author rightly stresses that it is not possible to describe absolutely all the semantic nuances of the dubitative because of the 'infinite variety' of its usages.

After tracing the discussions in a number of publications concerning the issues of the semantics and grammatical status of the dubitative, Aleksova motivates the view that the dubitative is one of the three indirect evidentials in Bulgarian language. The chapter also presents an empirical study of the perception of the degrees of credibility expressed by the

four evidentials. The study is not nationally representative, but it has a sufficiently large number of participants so that it can be said that the results obtained are valid for the group studied. From the analysis of the data it can be seen that the assessment of the credibility of the utterance depends on the markedness of the evidentials – the information expressed with the most unmarked member of the category – the indicative – is naturally perceived as the most credible. When comparing the perceptual credibility of an utterance with a renarrative and an utterance with a dubitative, the utterance with the renarrative is judged as more credible. Similarly, between an utterance with the conclusive and an utterance with the dubitative, the utterance with the conclusive is judged as more credible. Comparison of the perceptual credibility of utterance with renarrative and utterance with conclusive showed no significant difference. It is noteworthy, however, that according to the empirical study data, the three marked evidentials have similar credibility distance from the indicative, i.e., the credibility distance of the dubitative from the indicative is not significantly greater compared to the credibility distance of the renarrative and the conclusive. It would be good to verify this finding with other experiments and also in a nationally representative study.

The third chapter is devoted to the formal paradigm of the dubitative and is largely scientific-theoretical in nature. It analyses three phenomena on the basis of a wealth of empirical material: the presence of empty cells in the paradigm, the coincidence of forms, and the presence of variants of dubitative forms. The author offers a convincing explanation for each of these phenomena. After presenting various perspectives, Aleksova clarifies the need to distinguish terms fundamental to understanding form-matching, such as *syncretism* and *defectivity*, *bipartition* and *bideterminacy*, and advances arguments for the introduction of a new term – *formal blocking*. In connection with the variability of negative forms for the posterior tenses, the use of the terms *occasionalism* and *deviation*, necessary for understanding and accurately describing the different variants, is also discussed, and the choice of the term *deviation* is convincingly argued. Of particular importance for the theoretical understanding of the issues is the section devoted to grammaticalization, which is another of the significant contributions of the work under review. Here, after a review of different views, the author proposes a new, syntagmatic parameter of grammaticalization, thus complementing the familiar parameters from Lehmann's works. All this also makes the conclusions about the degree of grammaticalization of the dubitative convincing. A separate part of the chapter is devoted to the typological indices of the Bulgarian dubitative. Here again Aleksova reviews existing approaches, then argues and applies her view based on Gerdzhikov's research. A contributory point in the work is the calculation of typological indices of composability, analyticity, syntheticity and semantic markedness of the members of all evidential paradigms. In the last part of Chapter Three, the researcher discusses the interaction of the dubitative with other verbal categories. Both concretely and generally, Aleksova's contribution in this part is to reveal the hierarchy between verb categories, which is also graphically illustrated by Scheme 18.

Chapter Four presents the pragmatic aspects of the dubitative. The first part deals with the dubitative and reproduced speech. It is important to note here the demonstration, through the analysis of a wealth of empirical material, that there is another type of reproduced speech in Bulgarian, namely directly reproduced speech. The next section reveals the presence in

Bulgarian of different patterns of ‘partnership strategies between the dubitative and the evidential modifiers of implausibility and emotives in the expression of a negative epistemic evaluation of the transmitted foreign utterance’.

The paper concludes with a summary of the observations.

The abstract is formatted as required and conforms to the content of the paper. The contributions reflect the achievements of the research. The author has 18 publications on the topic of the thesis.

I believe that in publishing the dissertation as a book, it would benefit from including conclusions and summaries at the end of each chapter (not just the individual parts). In addition, it would be useful to read the text again to correct some technical errors left after editing (for example, Scheme 18 on p. 283 immediately following is referred to in the text as Scheme 15).

In conclusion: the thesis presented here gives a comprehensive, multifaceted picture of the dubitative as a member of the evidential category in Bulgarian. The terms used are discussed and for each of them the meaning with which it is used is indicated. On the basis of a wealth of empirical material, building on previous works which she has thoroughly analysed and commented on, the author offers convincing solutions to a number of controversial issues in the field of Bulgarian linguistics as well as in typology and general linguistics. The work does not simply describe a phenomenon in the Bulgarian language, but offers a new, in-depth look at important general theoretical problems of morphology, typology and pragmatics.

Considering the merits of the research and its contributions to the development of Bulgarian studies, morphology and typology, I confidently propose that Prof. Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova, PhD, be awarded the degree of *Doctor of Sciences* for her dissertation “The Dubitative on Present-Day Bulgarian” and I vote in favour of this resolution.

Assoc. Prof. Stefanka Abazova, Ph.D.

05.09.2022,

Sofia