STATEMENT

by Krasimira Angelova Chakarova, PhD,
Associate Professor at the Bulgarian Language Department of the Faculty of Philology,
Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv,
Concerning the thesis presented for the award of a Doctor of Science degree
Higher education area:
2. Humanities;
Professional field: 2.1. Philology
(research area: Modern Bulgarian Language)

Author: Konstantin Ivanov Kutsarov
Topic: Bulgarian Lexeme Classes and the Theory of Parts of Speech

1. General presentation of the DSc procedure and candidate

Pursuant to Order № R33-4369 of 23 July 2019 of the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, I have been appointed member of the scientific jury in the procedure for the defence of Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Ivanov Kutsarov's thesis entitled "Bulgarian Lexeme Classes and the Theory of Parts of Speech" towards the award of a **Doctor of Science** degree in higher education area 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology (research area: Modern Bulgarian Language). The DSc candidate has presented a full set of materials in paper (and electronic) form in conformity with the requirements stipulated in Art. 45 (4) of the Regulations on the Academic Staff Development effective at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

2. Topicality of the research

The thesis is the result of the author's lasting interest in the lexico-morphological classification of words in modern Bulgarian. There have been numerous interpretations of that subject but most of them involve contradictions or incompleteness. Therefore I cannot but commend K. Kutsarov's attempt to put forth his own original treatment of an exceptionally topical issue that is of both theoretical and practical application value. Its relevant solution would entail unravelling the controversies in the morphological and syntactic interpretation of the linguistic material.

3. Characteristics and assessment of the thesis and its contributions

The thesis consists of 369 pages and has been structured as follows: an introduction, four main chapters, conclusion, appendix (table presenting the taxonomic characteristics of the Bulgarian lexeme classes), and references. The references include 126 titles of scientific publications (including electronic publications) related to the research topic (118 in the Cyrillic and 8 in the Roman alphabet). A number of innovative ideas and novelties emerge throughout the analysis and find their accurate formulation both in the conclusion and in the thesis abstract.

The first three chapters present a "comprehensive historic review tracing the emergence and development of the theory of the parts of speech from antiquity to the present time" (pp. 4 – 5), which aims to provide the necessary "scientific criterial basis" for the creation of "an original concept of the segmentation of words in modern Bulgarian vocabulary" (p. 4). K. Kutsarov focuses his attention both on the contribution of different scholars and on individual inaccuracies in their theses, setting the benchmarks for his own concept step by step. A special place has been allocated to Russian scientists since they demonstrate "the richest conceptual variety and breadth of views. It is also important that similarly to Bulgarian, Russian is highly flective, and this fact presupposes similarity

in the application of classification criteria to both languages: mainly, the primary consideration of the morphological factor" (p. 5). In view of the large number of existing classifications of word classes in the world that would expand the scope of the historical review inordinately if analysed, the candidate's choice is justified, and his arguments convincing. However, I could not agree with the statement in the concluding part of chapter III that Iv. Kutsarov's grammar (*Theoretical Grammar of the Bulgarian Language. Morphology, 2007*) and R. Nitsolova's grammar (*Bulgarian Grammar. Morphology, 2008*) "contribute nothing to taxonomic issues" (p. 238). Although they did not offer any new concepts of "the number of parts of speech and their composition", the authors of these grammars made the traditional classification models more precise.

K. Kutsarov's skill of analysing and stratifying the empirical material, of finding unusual perspectives in the interpretation of linguistic facts is revealed to the largest extent in the last chapter of the thesis (**Chapter Four. Word Classes in Modern Bulgarian.**). It has been divided into several sub-parts, the first one of which (*The study of parts of speech on the planet of linguistics*) is too short and resembles a continuation of the introduction to the main chapter. In the next two sub-parts, the focus of attention falls on the question of the grounds of the traditional (but inaccurate) term *parts of speech*, which is successfully replaced by the notion of *lexeme classes*. Part 4.4. comments on the classification criteria: *logico-semantic*, *morphological* and *syntactic*, emphasising that the first one "is of the least significance in the classification of parts of speech in a language like Bulgarian" (p.249). An objection could be made that a conclusion like this is highly subjective. There are modern studies that convincingly demonstrate the important role of the semantic criterion in the classification of words in language (refer, for instance, to M. Lakova's 2013 monograph *Semantic Characteristics of Parts of Speech in Modern Bulgarian Literary Language*).

After the preliminary conditions of theoretical nature set forth by the author, he presents his own classification of Bulgarian lexeme classes, twelve in his opinion: *discursive*, *noun*, *numeral*, *adjective*, *verb*, *participle*, *adverb*, *preposition*, *conjunction*, *participle*, *determinative*, and *interjection*. A bewildering fact is the absence of the class of *pronouns*, whose components have been redirected to other lexical groups: discursives (e.g. *аз* [az], *ти* [ti], *той* [toy]), nouns (*себе си* [sebe si], *се* [se], *си* [si]), adjectives (*мой* [moy], *свой* [svoy], *кой* [koy], *какъв* [kakav], *някой* [nyakoy], *който* [koyto], *този* [tozi], etc.), and adverbs (*там* [tam], *къде* [kade], *някъде* [nyakade], etc.). An approach that takes into account mainly the morphological characteristics hinders the description of the specific semantic and functional features of pronominal words, one of the main means of achieving textual cohesion. Indeed, the lexical group in question is non-homogeneous but this does not obviate the possibility of attributing genuine pronouns (the so-called lexeme substitutes) to a separate class.

With regard to my impressions of the last chapter of the dissertation, I could point out that in a theoretical aspect, it exceeds the initially formulated goals since, together with the alternative classification of lexical classes, it puts forward innovative ideas related to some of the controversial issues in Bulgarian morphology (it would be sufficient to mention the delineation of new morphological categories within the paradigm of individual classes: appellativeness, animateness, state of the action, action taxis, informedness of the speaker). The analysis is characterised by remarkable thoroughness, multi-aspectuality and competence, although some of the concepts evoke objections. For instance, such is the case of the suggestion for separate morphological categories *appellativeness* (for nouns) and *animateness* (for cardinal numerals), which have a highly limited functional scope (a small number of nouns in modern Bulgarian are used in the vocative form, and the male-person cardinal numerals are only relevant in one gender).

Regardless of the objections, however, what is more important to me is the candidate's successful attempt to overcome the specific "hermeticity" of grammatical tradition by offering non-standard solutions which will undoubtedly attract the attention of future researchers.

6. Assessment of the candidate's publications and personal contribution

Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Kutsarov, PhD, is an author whose research is well known in the philological circles. He has actively participated in various scientific events and international teacher exchange programmes. He has 10 publications related to the topic of his thesis (three of them abroad), which is in conformity with the specific requirements of the Faculty of Philology.

7. Thesis abstract

The abstract (64 pages) is an adequate overview of the thesis content. It is clearly structured and provides a summary of the main results of the scientific analysis.

8. Recommendations concerning the future application of the thesis contributions and results

I believe that the thesis discussed should be made available to a wider reader audience; therefore I recommend that it be published. Should the author continue his work on this topic, I would advise him to also focus his attention on the studies related to the classification of word classes in West European linguistics. It would be interesting to learn, for instance, whether he accepts the popular view of the existence of open and closed word classes and, if so, which of the two groups he would assign the lexical classes outlined in the DSc thesis to.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the DSc thesis discussed has the features of a topical and novel scientific work, which presents an original concept of the classification of Bulgarian word classes. The author's theoretical ideas provide ample avenues for scientific discussion, the results of which would be essential to the solution of a number of controversial issues in modern Bulgarian language studies.

In view of the above-mentioned merits of the reviewed work, I have all the reasons to recommend that the honourable members of the scientific jury award the Doctor of Science degree to Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Ivanov Kutsarov, PhD.

10 October 2019   Statement prepared by:
                                    (Assoc. Prof. Krasimira Angelova Chakarova, PhD)