

REVIEW

by Prof. Svetla Peneva Koeva, PhD,

Institute for Bulgarian Language “Prof. L. Andreychin” at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
of the dissertation for the awarding of *Doctor habilitatus* in the field of higher education: 2. The humanities, professional area: 2.1. Philology (Contemporary Bulgarian)

Author of the dissertation: associate professor Petya Nikolova Barkalova, PhD

Topic of the dissertation: *The Bulgarian syntactic tradition and the path of the syntactic component of grammatical knowledge*

1. General overview of the procedure and all the materials submitted for reviewing

With Rector’s Order № P33-4964 of 13.10.2020, issued by the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”, I have been appointed a member of the scientific committee in relation to the procedure for the defence of the dissertation *The Bulgarian syntactic tradition and the path of the syntactic component of grammatical knowledge*, written by associate professor Petya Nikolova Barkalova, PhD at the Department of Bulgarian at the Philology Faculty of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” for the awarding of the scientific degree *Doctor habilitatus* in the field of higher education: 2. The humanities, professional area: 2.1. Philology (Contemporary Bulgarian).

The pack of materials assoc. prof. Petya Nikolova Barkalova, PhD has presented for assessment is in full compliance with art. 45 (4) of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” and comprises the following documents: a declaration to the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” requesting the opening of a procedure for the defence of a dissertation; curriculum vitae; copy of a certificate for holding the educational and scientific degree “doctor”; minutes from the meeting for the preliminary assessment of the dissertation and the opening of the official procedure for the defence; the text of the dissertation; an abstract (summary) of the dissertation; a list of the applicant’s publications relating to the topic of the dissertation; declaration certifying the originality and authenticity of the submitted documents; and reference for compliance with the minimal national standards. Assoc. prof. Petya Nikolova Barkalova, PhD has presented 12 publications relating to the topic of the dissertation.

2. Short biodata

Associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD has intertwined her career and life with Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”: she has since 1981 been in succession an assistant professor, a chief assistant professor, a senior lecturer and an associate professor of contemporary Bulgarian syntax. She has been delivering bachelor’s degree lecture courses in the syntax of contemporary Bulgarian and history of standard Bulgarian, she has taught master’s degree courses, and also Bulgarian, Bulgarian literature and culture at Charles University in Prague and University of Bologna, Forli. She has organised various scientific forums. P. Barkalova has edited five volumes of scientific papers. She has participated in numerous international scientific projects. She has been awarded a personal prize for significant contributions for the popularisation of the Bulgarian culture and has jointly received an award for the successful completion of a scientific project.

3. Relevance and significance of the topic and adequacy of the aims and objectives

The dissertation *The Bulgarian syntactic tradition and the path of the syntactic component of grammatical knowledge* is a multiaspectual and large-scale study of the syntactic tradition from antiquity to the end of the twentieth century, even though some restrictions have been imposed in respect to given historical periods, certain works and thematic areas. The focus of the research is di-

rected towards the discovery of the “roots of grammatical knowledge” (part of the title of the first part of the dissertation) and the genesis of the definition of the concept of sentence in Bulgarian syntax. Bulgarian grammars have been the object of investigation and comparison for many scholars since the time of the National Revival to the present, but no such large-scale study has been produced, dedicated to the “construction of the Bulgarian syntactic tradition” (p. 7). The completion of the research task can only be achieved in an in-depth scientific research, in which hypotheses, analyses, comparisons and generalisations are offered with objective analyticity and with a high degree of competence. The author’s task has not been easy: on the one hand the number of the investigated textbooks, study guides and books on (Bulgarian) grammar (more specifically syntax) is imposing; their contents are diverse and, in some cases, incomparable in terms of scope, systematicity and theoretical significance; on the other hand, the author had to find her unique place amid all descriptive and comparative studies of the grammars in the last 150 years (which she has quite successfully managed to accomplish).

The objective of the research “to attain deeper understanding of the history and philosophy of the science of the sentence” (p. 7) is not only original and topical, but is also important for gaining adequate syntactic knowledge, in which the chronology and evolution of the science of syntax have been charted. We fully support the conclusion the author has reached that “the study offers sufficient argumentation in corroboration of the thesis that the Bulgarian syntactic tradition holds the key to the philosophy and history of Bulgarian linguistics” (p. 7), not because we recognise “more important” branches of linguistics, but because the understanding, analysis and description of a sufficiently high level of language patterning presuppose the understanding, analysis and description of all remaining language levels.

4. Knowledge of the problem

Associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD is one of the best specialists in the syntax of modern Bulgarian and the history of the standard Bulgarian language (more specifically in the history of the syntactic component). Numerous publications on the topic by the author bear witness to the fact that her expertise has been consolidating and expanding for years. The dissertation demonstrates excellent expert knowledge of all the grammar (and entirely syntactic) works discussed therein; delicacy of the details in which the works have been presented and analysed, and sophistication in the latter’s comparative evaluation. The bibliography section is impressive (since the references have not been consecutively numbered, we can judge from the number of pages on which the bibliography is arranged that there are about 260 references and exactly 66 grammar books).

5. Methodology of the research

In the dissertation under review both empirical and theoretical methods are used. The empirical ones include observation, comparison and description from both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. The theoretical ones encompass analysis, formal modelling and linguistic modelling. Interdisciplinary methods of research are also applied. The data have been summarised in graphs, figures and tables. This allows, on the one hand, for certain important parts of the text to be foregrounded and draw deeper attention, and on the other hand, for carrying out direct comparison and systematisation. In our opinion, the choice of methods is far from arbitrary. If anything, it shows the result of deep contemplation of the major objective of the research and all ensuing aims, as well as the immediate tasks that lead to achieving the formulated objective and the demonstrated results. It could be said that the combination of various methods of research is preconditioned by the multiple questions which the dissertation both raises and provides answers for.

6. Description and evaluation of the dissertation

The dissertation is made up of three parts (The first part contains four chapters, the second part – three and the third – two chapters), a list of the references used in the dissertation and five appendices, spanning 277 pages.

The first part of the dissertation, with the title *On the roots of grammatical meaning in search of the genesis and manifestations of the syntactic component*, is dedicated to the study of ancient grammars written in Greek and Latin and to grammatical knowledge in the periods of Old Bulgarian and Middle Bulgarian. The first chapter of the first part functions as a kind of a general introduction to the whole. In this chapter the author presents in a chronological order some of the oldest philological works (Greek and Latin), which have been preserved until the present moment, and concurs with the conclusion that syntax as a whole remains a ‘black hole’ in ancient grammars (Swigger, Walters). More precisely, there is a notable lack of systematicity in describing the syntactic component in the ancient grammatical tradition.

Associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD views grammar in the Old Bulgarian period as a bridge between literacy and literature (between the alphabet and letters). As is widely known, there are no extant grammars of Old Bulgarian from those times, and this is the reason why the author is looking for the traces of a ‘hidden’ syntax that can be detected in the rich medieval literary production – both native and translated. The posing of the question whether Konstantin-Kiril Filosof (Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher) had written a grammar is a challenge in itself. The answer to the question (until evidence has been uncovered and provided for what the “azbukarchetata” (‘alphabeters’) (p. 35) actually studied) has an essay-like and educational character. Beside the exhaustive and non-traditional referring to different statements and opinion, the author manages to convey to her readers her admiration at Old Bulgarian literature and Old Bulgarian men of letters.

The issues discussed in Chapter three of Part one go beyond the scope of the immediate topic of the dissertation (even though we can fully understand the research interest of the author). Interesting information on different issues is provided to the reader and many interdisciplinary parallels drawn. However, further tasks and aims are formulated, which can hardly be achieved or solved within the limits of the immediate research, at least because accounting for the rhythmic properties and intonation contours of a language for which there is no sound data, can be based exclusively on phrase boundaries and sentences, which is (not always) sufficient.

Chapter four is focused on grammatical knowledge in the Middle Ages, with an emphasis on the discrepancies between the everyday spoken language of laymen and the one of literary monuments. In analogy to the review offered of the Old Bulgarian epoch, an exhaustive review is here presented of the linguistic research on the syntax of both spoken Bulgarian and of literary Bulgarian in the medieval epoch.

The conclusion is once again reinforced that there is no evidence for the existence of proper grammatical descriptions at the time, rather what was studied then was the so-called practical “philologism” (the use of one or another syntactic construction in literature). Detailed reviews are offered of the work and achievements of Patriarch Evtimiy (Saint Euthymius of Tarnovo), the work „Skazanie za bukvite” (*Legend of the Letters*) by Konstantin Kostenechki and the work *The eight parts of speech* (a short popular title). The author draws the conclusion that the presented system of parts of speech and their categories constitute “a conceptual and terminological grammatical apparatus adapted for use in the Orthodox-Christian Slavic world” (pp. 110-111).

While in the first part of the dissertation a wide historical and philological context is established, in the second and third parts the true competence and skills for analysis and theoretical generalisation of the author in the fields of the history of the Bulgarian standard language and Bulgarian syntax actually shine through.

The second part of the dissertation focuses on the development of syntactic knowledge during the Revival. In chapter one it is noted that the first grammarians of the Bulgarian Revival were forced to make careful selection of elements from the Old Church Slavonic and Greek grammatical exemplars, in which the ancient models had been laid down and their medieval compilations (p. 118). The author searches for elements of syntactic description in the first printed grammars of Old Church Slavonic: the ones by Lavrentiy Zizaniy, Meletiy Smotritski and Avram Mrazovich. The description is exhaustive and the attention of the reader is turned towards certain elements for the first time. The author has applied a rather original approach in utilising formal representations (typical of contemporary formal syntax) of all the structures discussed in the grammars and the examples adduced to illustrate them, so that the basic rules of combinability can be extracted from the description/prescription provided by the grammars (p. 136). As far as Old Church Slavonic grammars are concerned, associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD reaches the conclusion that these grammars describe predominantly the use of morphological case and prescribe guidelines for correct writing and reading (p. 141).

The second chapter of the second part is dedicated to the grammar by Yuriy Venelin *Grammar of today's Bulgarian dialect*. The grammar is described in detail, where appropriate in comparison to other grammar books, and with the help of the introduced formal method of presentation, the similarities and differences of the syntactic structures are foregrounded (which in turn makes clear the exact syntactic systematisation which Yuriy Venelin offers). Associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD emphasises that fact that Yuriy Venelin offered the outlines of a planned syntactic Bulgarian-French contrastive study of verbal constructions (p. 153). Venelin's grammar is presented exhaustively and with an analytical eye, although reference to other Bulgarian scholars who have worked on the same set of issues could have been mentioned: Boyan Valchev, Vladko Murdarov, etc.

In chapter three of the second part of the dissertation, entitled *Syntactic knowledge in Revival grammars*, the following grammar books are reviewed: *Bulgarian Grammar* by Neofit Rilski and *First Bulgarian Grammar* by Ivan Bogorov. Neofit Rilski's grammar book does not have a syntactic part, but in her close reading of the text, associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD discovers implicit syntax in the educational program of Neofit Rilski. More specifically, some of the tables compiled in the Monitorial system style contain examples, which the author "translates" in formal patterns that correspond to syntactic rules (pp. 176-177), for example the linking of a preposition with a noun, pronoun and adverb.

Associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD qualifies *First Bulgarian Grammar* with the metaphors "young sprouts" of the science of the sentence and the first "crooked mirror" of Bulgarian syntax (p. 180). As is noted, in the *Grammar* the following can be recognised: a definition of the object of study of syntax, a definition of the sentence, the basic structure of the simple sentence, a definition of the principal parts of the sentence, an attempt at a classification of the subject and predicate into simple and complex, and an outline of agreement mechanisms.

The third part of the dissertation is dedicated to the Bulgarian syntactic heritage of the past 150 years and, in our opinion, it is the central part of the research. As the author herself contends, she presents two different readings of the Bulgarian syntactic tradition: a more traditional reading and a philosophical one. For the purposes of the current research, the distinctions in syntactic descriptions have been established on the basis of the offered syntactic definitions of the sentence (p. 191). The author presents a detailed chronology, organised in schools and approaches, and reviews in detail the definitions of the sentence. The presence of a tripartite syntactic definition of the sentence of the type subject – copula – predicative in a grammar is characteristic of *Aristotelians* (p. 196). According to *Cartesians*, the principal parts of the sentence are just two: subject – verb predicate. On this basis, two types of definitions are clearly identified. Even though there are significant

numbers of definitions that we can assign to one or the other of the types of definition (with more belonging to the former type), none of the two types provides a satisfactory definition of the simple sentence, since either verbal predicates are eliminated or nominal ones. The definitions under review are 65. They constitute a natural structured network encompassing the last 185 years (p. 198). Table 3, which presents a fragment from the network of syntactic definitions in a horizontal order (p. 199), and Table 4, which presents the development of the notion of subject in the syntactic tradition (p. 200), suggest that not all details from the network are included in the dissertation. The addition of the whole will undoubtedly enrich the research. It would be useful for Appendix 1 *Patrimonium* to be fleshed out with data in the missing fields.

The second chapter of the third part presents the Bulgarian syntactic tradition through the evolution of the conceptualisation of its object of study – through definitions of the simple sentence and the notions of the nature of the simple and composite sentence. The definitions of the sentence have been decomposed and subsequently their generalising part, the specifying part and the relation between them have been duly analysed. The different terms used by various authors as absolute or near synonyms are also presented. Interesting observations are put forward in the use of the formal writing out of the definitions through substitution. As the author observes, in the first twenty grammars containing a syntactic section, the definitions of the sentence can be reduced to one structural scheme with two variants: N cop N: *The eagle is a bird*, and N cop A: *Gold is not light* (p. 229). The author is the first to draw the attention to the conflict between adduced examples and a definition, which has somehow slipped undetected by scholars so far.

In observing the nature of the sentence, the author deductively constructs a formal model for the description of a select class of sentences (in this case impersonal sentences); excerpts examples (without corresponding definitions) from the corpus and arranges them in a network matrix and offers reversed chronology of the entries (p. 231). Table 8 showcases numerous illustrations, which can be further analysed in more detail.

In the dissertation a connection is established between the educational policy of the respective Ministry of Education and the publishing of Bulgarian grammars and textbooks. Such a connection undoubtedly exists, but it is probably worth mentioning that the writing of a grammar book requires extensive time and can reflect language policies from previous periods, which might have lost their validity.

7. Contributions of the dissertation to science and practice

The dissertation under assessment presents the development of the Bulgarian linguistic tradition of studying syntax in an impressive temporal scope. As a whole, the dissertation excels with its depth, interdisciplinary nature and the development of novel ideas. This provides sufficient grounds for the conclusion that the dissertation will have discernible positive effect both on the development of linguistic research in the field of Bulgarian syntax and on investigations in the history of standard Bulgarian.

8. Assessment of the publications related to the topic of the dissertation

Associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD has submitted 12 articles, relating to the topic of the dissertation, published in the period 1994 – 2020. The articles reflect different stages in the research endeavours of associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD. For this reason, some of these have interdisciplinary character; a few report on the history of Bulgarian syntax, while others are purely syntactic.

9. Personal participation of the applicant in the reviewed scientific works

The dissertation under review and all publications submitted by the applicant are the result of her individual work and authorship.

10. Abstract of the dissertation

The submitted abstract fairly and adequately presents a summary of the contents of the dissertation, the achieved results and the contributions made by the author, although the contributions have not been separately listed in a dedicated part of the abstract. The abstract is 57 pages long and contains a summary of the parts and chapters of the dissertation and a list of the author's publications relating to the topic of the dissertation.

11. Critical remarks and recommendations

Some critical remarks were outlined in Section 6. In publishing the dissertation, the author might correct the few typos.

12. Personal opinion

I have known associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD since my student years, when she was the seminar leader in the Syntax course at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". In later years I used to be her teaching assistant in syntax. We have joined publications (which fall outside the scope and topic of the problems discussed in the dissertation under review). Associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD shines not only with her profound knowledge in the field of Bulgarian syntax and the history of standard Bulgarian, but also with her creative potential, her enthusiasm to investigate and apply theoretical models and analytical methods from novel schools and approaches. Associate professor P. Barkalova, PhD played a significant role for the establishment of the generative paradigm in the study of syntax in the Bulgarian linguistic research tradition, in university studies and recently in school education as well.

13. Recommendations for the future utilisation of the results presented in the dissertation

My recommendation is that the dissertation *The Bulgarian syntactic tradition and the path of the syntactic component of grammatical knowledge* has to be published as a book, so that it could gain wider popularity and receive the evaluation it deserves by the community of linguists. The dissertation can be expanded in any number of ways: comparative analysis of the description of the parts of the sentence, the definitions and characteristic properties of subordinate sentences, etc. in different grammars in the last 150 years, but this all depends on the future research agenda of the author.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation of associate professor Petya Barkalova, PhD boasts a number of scientific and applied results which are properly viewed as genuine contributions to science and fully meet the requirements stipulated by the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for the Implementation of Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". All the materials submitted for review and the achieved results to be found in them fully satisfy the requirements stipulated by the Philology Faculty in relation to the Regulations of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The dissertation reveals that associate professor Petya Barkalova, PhD has solid theoretical knowledge and demonstrates qualities and skills for carrying out research which leads to making significant contributions.

In conclusion, with deep conviction I vouch my positive assessment for the research presented in the dissertation *The Bulgarian syntactic tradition and the path of the syntactic component of grammatical knowledge* and the abstract accompanying it, as well as for the achieved results and contributions and propose to the respected members of the scientific committee to award associate professor Petya Barkalova, PhD the scientific degree *Doctor habilitatus* in the field of higher education: 2. The humanities, professional area: 2.1. Philology (Contemporary Bulgarian).

30 November 2020

Reviewer: Prof. Svetla Koeva, PhD