

REVIEW

by Prof. Krasimira Aleksova D. Sc., Department of Bulgarian Language, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

for a dissertation for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “**doctor**”

by: field of higher education 2. *Humanities*

Professional direction 2.1. *Philology*

doctoral program *Modern Bulgarian Language*

Author: *Vasil Nikolov Stamenov*

Topic: “The meaning *Direct Evidentiality* in the modern Bulgarian language”

Research supervisor: *Prof. Dr. Krasimira Chakarova, University of Plovdiv “P. Hilendarski”*

1. General description of the presented materials

By order No. RD-21-680 dated 25.03.2024 of the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski” (PU), I was appointed as a member of the scientific committee responsible for the external defense procedure of the doctoral dissertation “The meaning *Direct Evidentiality* in the modern Bulgarian language” for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.1. *Philology*, doctoral program “Modern Bulgarian Language”. The author of the dissertation is Vasil Nikolov Stamenov – a full-time doctoral (PhD) student at the Department of the Bulgarian Language of PU, with scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Krasimira Chakarova from Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski”.

The submitted documents presented by Vasil Stamenov are in accordance with Art. 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU, and include the following:

- request to the Rector of PU to authorise the procedure for the defense of a dissertation work;
- CV in European format;
- protocol from the Departmental Council’s meeting reporting the readiness to open the procedure and preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- dissertation;
- abstract;
- list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- copies of the scientific publications;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents.

The doctoral student has attached 1 monograph (dissertation) and 5 articles.

2. Brief biographical data of the PhD student

Vasil Nikolov Stamenov graduated from secondary school “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” in Asenovgrad. In 2018, he completed a bachelor's program in “Bulgarian Philology”, and in 2019, a master's program in “Current Bulgarian Studies” at PU. In the period 01.03.2020 - 01.03.2023 he was a full-time doctoral (PhD) student in modern Bulgarian (Morphology) at the Department of Bulgarian Language at PU. He was a teacher of Bulgarian language and literature at the 21st

Century Academy in Plovdiv for a year, a part-time teacher of Bulgarian as a foreign language for two years at the Department for Language and Specialized Training of Foreign Students at PU, and is currently an assistant in modern Bulgarian at PU, "Lyuben Karavelov" Branch, Kardzhali.

3. Topicality and relevance of the dissertation and appropriateness of the set goals and tasks

The dissertation “The meaning *Direct Evidentiality* in the modern Bulgarian language” with author Vasil Stamenov is undoubtedly topical and of significance for the modern Bulgarian language and for Bulgarian linguistics, considering that no other full study of monograph length on the issue of the meaning of testimony in Bulgarian has been written.

The topic is relevant for contemporary linguistic research, since in the grammatical system of the Bulgarian verb the meaning *Direct Evidentiality/personally witnessed* is relevant for the semantics of the members of the paradigm, e.g. the indicative past tenses, the use of the conclusive, renarrative and dubitative, as well as the forms of the presumptive. This is one of the specific characteristics of the Bulgarian verb system, which distinguishes it from many other languages.

The set goals and tasks are logically justified and give the doctoral student the opportunity to explore thoroughly and comprehensively the research questions of the dissertation work. These goals and objectives are clearly described in the dissertation work and have been achieved.

4. Demonstrated knowledge

The doctoral student demonstrates deep knowledge of the state of the problem area in which the dissertation falls. He shows thorough knowledge of the scientific literature, which affects different aspects of the studied object. Evidence for this claim can be found not only in the First Chapter, which is purposefully devoted to the study and commentary of the opinions about *Direct Evidentiality/personally witnessed*, but also in the entire work. The literature review is not self-serving and does not constitute a listing of positions, but is a critically informed commentary on existing views from the point of view of theoretical framework the author has adopted.

5. Research methodology

In the introduction to the dissertation, V. Stamenov describes the methods applied in the research: observation, the contrastive method, surveys, summary. This is a completely appropriate combination of methods, which has allowed the author to explore his specific research questions, achieve the set goal and provide an adequate answer to the central question raised in the dissertation thoroughly and exhaustively.

6. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation

The author has unambiguously delineated the focus of his research, and the stated hypothesis in the introductory part prompts the reader to follow cohesively the argumentation and findings the author uses to prove or reject it. At the very beginning, V. Stamenov formulates the theoretical foundations of his research – structural linguistics and functional grammar. This is the

choice that informs the readers of the author's conceptual preferences and initial assumptions that grant the following arguments validity.

The dissertation is cohesively and coherently well structured, with all the necessary connections between chapters, as well as the adequate conclusions in each of them. The author has adopted the requisite neutral academic style, meeting the requirements of a dissertation in linguistics, and the exposition is distinguished by clarity and unequivocal terminology.

I think that in Table 1 on p. 87 representing the unmarkedness: markedness opposition in the features of the categories re-narration, inferentiality, relativity and testimony does not completely accurately reflect the expression of non-testimony and testimony of the conclusive and the renarrative. Both indirect evidentials, in my view, can express *Direct Evidentiality/personally witnessed* and *non-personally witnessed/non-Direct Evidentiality*, but the author emphasizes in the analyses of the table that both types of forms are equally marked for *non-personally witnessed*. G. Gerdzhikov's position and analysis from 1977, in which both *personally witnessed* and *non-personally witnessed* uses of inferential and renarrative forms are proven supports the position I have indicated. For example, the renarrative can also be used when the speaker was a witness, but renarrates someone else's utterance – *I was also there, but Ivan claims that Peter left the meeting first* (*Аз също бях там, но Иван твърди, че Петър си тръгнал пръв от събранието*). It is true that these uses are rarer than *non-personally witnessed* ones, but they should not be ignored. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the distinction between *Direct Evidentiality/personally witnessed* and *non-Direct Evidentiality/non-personally witnessed* uses is characteristic only for the tenses of the past plane in the renarrative, conclusive and dubitative. Table 2 on p. 87 should also reflect the fact that renarrative forms can have both witness and non-witness uses. In addition, indicative forms mark personally witnessed of the speaker only in the past tenses (aorist, imperfect, future in the past, pluperfect and future perfect in the past). That is why they cannot just be given with plus in the table as a uniform expression of markedness. The non-past tenses of the indicative have no relation to the opposition of *non-personally witnessed: personally witnessed*.

In my opinion, V. Stamenov's reasoning about how to interpret the case when the difference between elements consists in two distinctive features is important. It is a problem of general linguistics, to which the author offers his solution, based on the views of other scientists. Also important are the reflections on the hidden categories, which are foregrounded by the *personally witnessed* in the modern Bulgarian language. As a result of these considerations, V. Stamenov presents his own opinion on the existence of a grammaticalized expression of *personally witnessed* in the Bulgarian language through a category called by the author *receptivity*. The term is created by Kr. Chakarova, and V. Stamenov accepts and implements it. The formal expressions of the marked element are also indicated – the morpheme *-x -/-(u)(e)-*. However, in connection with the formal expression of *receptivity*, the question arises whether the absence of this witness morpheme in the non-past indicative tenses makes them *non-personally witnessed*. This is an important question, especially considering that the author starts from the view that formal markedness is an indicator of the presence of a separate morphological category.

I believe that an important part of the dissertation, well integrated, is the one in which the *personally witnessed* in the Bulgarian language is examined from a diachronic point of view. It is necessary for the author to prove his views. Here I would like to draw attention to an opinion of V. Stamenov, which seems to me important from a general theoretical point of view. The author considers disturbing the views of Gramkrelidze and Ivanov that the formant *-s-* in a diachronic aspect in Indo-European dialects means a non-present meaning, the qualification coming from not accepting the possibility that a certain marker expresses a negative meaning. It seems to me that even modern languages show the existence of such a possibility, e.g. the maximum unmarked nominative case in Latvian is marked with *-s*, the marked 3 p., Sg., Present Simple in English has a formal marker *-s*, and the unmarked, in our opinion, imperfective aspect receives a real morpheme in our language and in other Slavic languages as well. Iconicity may not always be possible in inflectional languages with a cumulation of grammatical meanings, i.e. it is not always possible for a real morpheme in the plane of expression to correspond to markedness in the plane of content. This iconicity is only an intent that is not always realized. The presence of a real morpheme in forms of the unmarked element corresponds to something else in reality – to specificity of the feature, e.g. in English it turns out to be important in the plane of expression to signal the non-participant in the communication, in Latvian – to encode the position of the subject, in Slavic languages through the real imperfective morpheme that makes the synthetic form longer, to simulate the presence of phases and stages in the action expressed by the unmarked element. Although I support a different position, I think that in his work V. Stamenov leaves the narrow outlines of *receptivity* and touches on important questions of general linguistics. I consider this to be a contribution, an expression of depth of his theoretical thinking.

Regardless of whether one accepts or rejects the existence of a separate category *receptivity* (*personally witnessed*), it is essential to clarify the formal expressions of the category *receptivity* (*personally witnessed*) in modern Bulgarian. The category *receptivity* (*personally witnessed*) status of analytical conditionals is thought provoking for me, since this mood expresses non-factuality. I accept as a personal theoretical choice the opinion of V. Stamenov that the constructions with *нека, нека да, дано и дано да* belong to the imperative mood, although I do not share this view. The forms marked with *receptivity* (*personally witnessed*) according to V. Stamenov are not only listed, but also commented on, and are also illustrated with examples.

I was very interested in non-normative forms such *ще пишех, щеше да пиша, ще бях писал, щеше да съм писал*. Although uncodified, these forms exist in communication, as V. Stamenov proves through examples from electronic sources of different types. The observations about the different frequency of the types *ще пишех* and *ще бях писал* seem important to me. I would propose to V. Stamenov to think more about the question whether the form *ще е бил изпратен* is presumptive with the omission of the particle *да*. I agree with the view of the author and other scholars before him that *-e* in *-ше* is not a grammatical marker for person. I think that *-ше* is further indivisible (as other authors also believe, e.g. V. Stankov).

I have not read any other work that deals in depth with the combination of conclusive modifiers as *май, трябва, вероятно, навярно, сигурно*, etc. with *receptivity* (*personally*

witnessed) verb forms, although this combination, according to the author, was mentioned by Iv. Kutsarov. The observations and comments of the doctoral (PhD) student are based on numerous examples from the Bulgarian National Corpus, which guarantees the representativity of the sample. I would like to propose to V. Stamenov more reflections on the problem whether it was not the expression of conclusiveness by lexical modifiers that lead to the possibility of the appearance of non-conclusive, but indicative witness forms.

One of the parts of the dissertation, which falls within the realm of my scientific interests – sociolinguistics – is dedicated to the survey conducted by V. Stamenov.

The fact that the doctoral (PhD) student not only presents the results for each sentence, but also looks for the influence of the socio-demographic factors of the respondents on their answers makes an excellent impression. Therefore, the observations about the influence of the factors educational level, gender, field of specialization and age are important. The survey made and commented on by V. Stamenov completely fits into a new field in linguistics – attitudinal linguistics. The works in this field are unique in our country and in the world. Therefore, I believe that this part of the dissertation is an important contribution on the part of the author. Taking into account the language attitudes, assessments, and opinions of native speakers is essential in modern linguistics, which reflects the natural functioning of language within a community.

All the data are interesting to me, but the answers to the sentence “На тази дата Владо Черноземски застрелял сръбския крал в Марсилия – на 9 октомври” attracted my attention because of the considerable percentage who answered *The speaker conveys the information neutrally*. The percentage is much higher than in the answers about the preceding sentence with the renarrative “Петър написал писмо на Мария”. The author comments on the fact that there are more answers about the neutrality of the speaker, but it seems to me that historical facts in this sentence are important for the choice of the respondents. The dominant choice *The speaker conveys the information neutrally* for renarrative forms about past historical events proves that in this type of renarrative usage, the speaker does not express directly credibility in his statement.

Another example, I was very interested in, is the case of the non-inferential use of the conclusive when the sentence contains facts from history – “Хан Кубрат е създад могъщ племенен съюз, наречен Стара Велика България”. In these cases, the speaker conveys common knowledge in a community that has passed into the speaker's own pool of knowledge. And he states this information as his own statement. R. Nitsolova calls these cases “weak knowledge” of the speaker (Nitsolova 2007, 2008). For this sentence, 58.4% of the respondents chose the answer that the speaker conveys the information neutrally. This proves the thesis, which I have put forward in several of my works, that in this case the conclusive expresses the integrated feature *indirect information* for both conclusive and renarrative forms. It is precisely in such uses of the conclusive that no direct relation to the credibility of the transmitted information is expressed, but it is a matter of the speaker's own statement. The same results were obtained for “А. Айнщайн е публикувал своя специална теория на относителността през 1915 г.” where we find the same use of the conclusive. The majority of respondents perceive the present historical as a neutral transmission of information (the sentence is “Св. Кирил и Методий създават глаголицата през IX век “).

The answers for the sentence “Заради жаждата съм изпил водата на един дъх” are very interesting – half of the respondents believe that an inference is being expressed, and 27% assumed that the speaker is a witness. This fully proves the thesis that the conclusive can have *personally witnessed* (and *non-personally witnessed*) uses, although it does not carry the morpheme *-x/-ue-*

Also important are the answers for the sentence “Командващият елитните ирански Бригади Ал Кудс генерал Касем Солеймани беше убит при ракетен удар по летището на Багдад, съобщи иракската държавна телевизия, цитирана от Франс прес”. The fact that 23.1% answered that the speaker was a witness proves that the journalist did a good job of assuming the position of an eyewitness without being one. The answers that the information is transmitted neutrally (45%), say that with personally witnessed past forms when transmitting news information about unobserved events with a false position of the journalist as an eyewitness, for native speakers of the Bulgarian language, credibility is not expressed directly in the speech. To a large extent, these conclusions are also confirmed in the incorrectness/correctness evaluations of the sentence “Измамници ограбиха шофьор в района на Елин Пелин”.

I also find the results for the assessment of the degree of credibility of the statement “Терористи взривили част от историческата крепост Алепо” important – most respondents give a low assessment of the credibility of the information conveyed in the renarrative form. This proves the thesis that the renarrative is also modally marked in some of its uses, and not epistemically unmarked, as R. Nitsolova believes. And the data for “Ограбиха инкасо автомобил край Перник” indicate that the credibility is high according to the respondents. This strongly supports the thesis that the past indicative tenses also express a degree of credibility (high), and this is an argument that the indicative past tenses of the modern Bulgarian language are also modal due to the expressed *personally witnessed* position. For native speakers of the Bulgarian language, the witness position of the speaker expresses credibility.

Another sentence also piqued my interest – “Тя беше момичето, което той бе търсел толкова много време, идеалната... ИСТИНСКАТА”. The uncodified use of the imperfect instead of the aorist participle is a topic not often raised in our literature. V. Stamenov's survey proves that according to some of the respondents (211 out of 700 people) this form (aorist participle) is correct, and this indicates that not only is it an established trend to frequently replace the imperfect by the aorist participle in modern communication, but also that the opposite case does not irritate the linguistic sensitivity of some of the respondents. However, most respondents chose the answer with the aorist participle instead of the imperfect participle.

Although I do not accept the author's view that there is a grammatical category of the Bulgarian verb *personally witnessed/receptivity*, coded with the morpheme *-x/-u(e)-*, this dissertation deepened my thoughts about the possibility of using a real formal expression to code a feature that is not independently grammaticalized in my opinion. And this is a scientific discussion raised by the work of V. Stamenov. It has completed a task that the author did not describe in his work, but he has realized it. My opinion, which I have also presented in previous publications, is that *-x/-u(e)-* is a pseudomorpheme that does not have real segmentation.

7. Contributions and significance of the dissertation for the advancement of science and its application in practice

- For the first time in Bulgarian linguistics, in an independent monographic study (dissertation), the meaning *personally witnessed/receptivity*, relevant to the Bulgarian verb system, is examined in depth and comprehensively.

- A favorable combination of the achievements of functional grammar and structural linguistics has been achieved, which has led to an in-depth study of the manifestations of the *personally witnessed/receptivity* in the modern Bulgarian language.

- A synchronic and diachronic approach is combined in the study of *personally witnessed/receptivity* in the Bulgarian language, which allows the author to draw significant arguments in defense of his thesis.

- Questions of a general linguistic theoretical nature have been raised – about the possibility for unmarked members of a grammatical category to have a real indicator in the plane of expression, about the possibility, as I have already indicated, to encode a grammatical feature that is not independently grammaticalized with a real morpheme, for the so-called pseudomorphemes and the segmentation of verb endings, for the express symbolization of grammatical features, matching the level of content and the level of expression, etc.

- Throughout the dissertation, a clear author's position can be seen, which is proved by theoretical reasoning, analysis and generalizations. The rich empirical material of examples from the Bulgarian National Corpus verifies the stated theses.

- Another contribution of V. Stamenov is the presentation for the first time in a separate part of the dissertation (in Chapter III) of all personally witnessed forms.

- A supporter of the functional school, V. Stamenov also paid attention to the peripheral lexical and syntactic elements serving as modifiers of personally witnessed in the modern Bulgarian language. I am not aware of such a study published before V. Stamenov's work. That is why it is a personal contribution of the author in my opinion.

- A non-representative questionnaire survey was carried out with a large number of respondents, which investigated the opinions, linguistic sense and linguistic attitudes of modern Bulgarians about *personally witnessed* and *non-personally witnessed* semantics carried by verb forms. This is the only survey that I know of on the meaning *personally witnessed* in the modern Bulgarian language. And it is a contribution to a completely new field in linguistics – attitudinal linguistics.

8. Evaluation of publications on the dissertation work

The author has submitted five publications relating to the topic of the dissertation. Their thematic scope and the issues discussed adequately present to the scientific community the positions of the author and the argumentation of his theses in the dissertation: nuclear modifiers in the semantic field of personality with an emphasis on the relatedness between *personality – personally witnessed*; reflections on the category *personally witnessed /receptivity* in the modern

Bulgarian language; functioning of peripheral *personally witnessed* modifiers in our language; the grammatical meaning *personally witnessed/receptivity* as a specific feature of the Bulgarian morphological system; examination of the narrative systems in the modern Bulgarian language in relation to the opposition *personally witnessed: non- personally witnessed*.

The publications are in Bulgarian and are in important collections and journals.

9. Personal participation of the doctoral student

The dissertation is the personal work of Vasil Stamenov. Contributions and results are his personal contribution. However, I intend to emphasize the excellent relationship between the doctoral (PhD) student and his scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Krasimira Chakarova, who guided the doctoral (PhD) student very appropriately in his scientific research.

10. Abstract

The abstract adequately presents the content, results, and achievements of the dissertation. Its quality is excellent. It is made according to the requirements of the relevant regulations.

11. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no further recommendations. In my review of the dissertation during the discussion in the the Department of Modern Bulgarian Language at the PU, I presented some recommendations that the PhD student complied with. The difference in opinions defended in the dissertation and my personal views on the issues are presented in the main part of this review.

12. Personal impressions

I know Vasil Stamenov from the master's program “Current Bulgarian Studies”, as I lead a course in sociolinguistics. Vasil Stamenov distinguished himself with very in-depth linguistic knowledge, with analytical abilities, with competences for excellent conduct of sociolinguistic empirical research, with the ability to write a scientific paper on linguistic and sociolinguistic problems and with precision in his work. I have also listened to his works at scientific conferences and I think that this is an already established young linguistic scholar.

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

I would recommend that V. Stamenov use the results of his dissertation in the teaching of Bulgarian morphology at PU in the future, which I have no doubts he will professionally engage with.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation *contains theoretical and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science* and **meet all the** requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of PU “Paisiy Hilendarski”.

The dissertation shows that the doctoral (PhD) student Vasil Nikolov Stamenov **has** in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific field 2.1. Philology, **demonstrating** qualities and skills for independently conducting scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my *positive assessment* of the conducted research, presented in the above-reviewed dissertation, abstract, the achieved results and contributions, and *offer to the honorable scientific committee to award the educational and scientific degree “doctor”* to Vasil Nikolov Stamenov in the field of higher education: 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.1. Philology, doctoral program “Modern Bulgarian Language”.

18.04.2024

Reviewer:

(signature)

Prof. Krasimira Slavcheva Aleksova D. Sc.

(*ac. dl., n. st., name, surname*)