

REVIEW STATEMENT

by **Assoc. Prof. Antoaneta Stefanova Dzhelyova, PhD**,

associate professor at the Department of General Linguistics and History of the Bulgarian
Language,

Faculty of Philology,

Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv,

on the materials submitted

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of *doctor*

in the Sphere of higher education 2. *Humanities*

Area of professional qualification 2.1. *Philology*

Doctoral Programme: Contemporary Bulgarian Language

Author: **Vasil Nikolov Stamenov**

Dissertation Topic: **The Meaning of Evidentiality in the Contemporary Bulgarian
Language**

Supervisor: **Assoc. Prof. Krasimira Angelova Chakarova, PhD** (Department of Bulgarian
Language, Faculty of Philology, *Paisii Hilendarski* University of Plovdiv)

1. General overview of the submitted materials

Following Order № ПД–21–680 from 25.03.2024 г. of the Rector of the *Paisii Hilendarski* University of Plovdiv (PU) I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury participating in the defense procedure of a doctoral thesis on the subject *The Meaning of Evidentiality in the Contemporary Bulgarian Language* for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of *doctor*, sphere of higher education 2. Humanities, area of professional qualification 2.1. *Philology*, Doctoral Programme: *Contemporary Bulgarian language*.

Vasil Nikolov Stamenov is a full-time doctoral candidate at the Department of Bulgarian Language, Faculty of Philology, *Paisii Hilendarski* University of Plovdiv. The candidate's supervisor is Assoc. Prof. Krasimira Angelova Chakarova, PhD.

In accordance with art. 36 (1) of the Rulebook for Development of the Academic Staff of Plovdiv University the doctoral candidate has submitted the full set of documents for the defense procedure for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of *doctor*:

1. an application to the Rector of the University of Plovdiv;
2. a Europass CV;
3. preliminary defense minutes from the extended 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 on the subject of the doctoral dissertation;
8. a doctoral dissertation;
9. copies of the scientific publications.

The doctoral candidate has submitted 5 articles related to the topic of his dissertation.

2. Brief autobiographical data concerning the doctoral candidate

Vasil N. Stamenov was born on 11.12.1995 in Asenovgrad, where he finished primary and secondary school. From 2014 until 2018 he studied Bulgarian Philology at the *Paisii Hilendarski* University of Plovdiv and obtained a Bachelor's degree. Afterwards he continued his education at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Plovdiv in the Master's degree programme "Current Bulgarian Studies". As of March 1st, 2020 he has been a doctoral student at the Department of Bulgarian Language with Assoc. Prof. Kr. Chakarova, PhD as his research supervisor. Throughout his studies he has been an active member of the *Prof. B. Simeonov* Linguistics Club at the Faculty of Philology. He takes part in the events organized by the Linguistic Club and the Faculty of Philology. In 2017 he won the second prize in the XIX Students' Olympiad of Contemporary Bulgarian Language Morphology. In 2019 at the XXI National Research Conference for undergraduate and postgraduate students "The World is an Open Book" he won first prize. In 2020 he participated in the 8th International Conference of Young Scientists – Plovdiv 2020, where he was awarded first prize.

From September 2021 to 2023 he was a part-time lecturer in Bulgarian at the Department of Language and Specialized Training of Foreign Students at the *Paisii Hilendarski* University of Plovdiv. Since September 1st, 2023 he has been an assistant professor of Contemporary Bulgarian Language at the *L. Karavelov* Affiliate college in Kardzhali.

3. Relevance of the topic

The subject choice is relevant. It is predetermined by the author's objective to offer his own interpretation of the meaning of evidentiality, which has been the subject of long-standing discussions.

4. Knowledge of the problem

The author shows an excellent knowledge of the publications on the subject in the Bulgarian linguistic literature, as well as of the key foreign studies dealing with the issue. The systematization of the previous research shows the doctoral student's ability to comprehend various concepts in depth and to derive his own theses in accordance with them.

5. Research methods

The chosen research model of Functional Semantic Grammar (FSG) and its core notion of a Functional Semantic Field (FSP) allow for the identification of the interaction between lexical, lexico-grammatical, grammatical and word-formation markers representing the linguistic phenomenon of *evidentiality*. The conducted theoretical overview traces the expression of evidentiality in diachrony, but the focus is on the synchronic plane.

The FSG methods are combined with a contemporary sociolinguistic approach by conducting a direct survey on the reception of evidentiality by native speakers of contemporary Bulgarian. The participants were diverse in age, education and gender, a distinction was made between philologists and non-philologists. The results are illustrated graphically in diagrams. The overview of the previous leading theoretical achievements on the subject in foreign and Bulgarian linguistic research and the author's hypotheses formed thereon are verified in the sociolinguistic survey.

6. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, references and an appendix. The Introduction clearly defines and states the research subject matter and the object of study, the methods, aims and objectives.

Of the two possible approaches to examine the theoretical concepts – chronological and issue-oriented – the PhD student chooses the chronological approach. However, he incessantly looks for consistency and connections in the interpretation of the various authors.

Chapter One examines the key contemporary research on the category of evidentiality, the status of the indicative and its ability to express the meaning of evidentiality.

The first section of Chapter Two seeks the emergence and development of the idea of the meaning of evidentiality in Revival grammars. The contributions of certain Revival grammarians are pointed out – that of the anonymous reviewer of G. Mirkovich's grammar of 1860, who detected evidentiality in the imperfect, and that of S. Radulov – who found evidentiality in the aorist. The perception of *h* as an independent morpheme (D, p. 28) and the identification of the thematic vowels as bearers of grammatical meaning are noted by V. Stamenov as an asset of the Revival grammarians, which has long been neglected in studies of Bulgarian by both foreign and Bulgarian linguists.

The second part of Chapter Two reviews opinions on evidentiality in the period from the Liberation to the mid-20th century. The doctoral student successfully navigates around the unsettled terminological apparatus and concepts of various researchers. He searches for correspondence between the terms used by the authors: *perceived – non-perceived tense* (Yu.

Trifonov, 1896), *definite – indefinite verb forms* (B. Tsonev) and the grammatical phenomenon of evidentiality – non-evidentiality.

What is in the foreground – next to the opinions of S. Ivanchev and A. Aleksandrov, who define the morpheme *-h/-sh(e)-* as a marker of evidentiality – is the content analysis of the opinions of Bulgarian and foreign linguists on the issue at hand. The numerous quotations provided by the dissertation's author enable the reader to verify the doctoral student's analysis.

In the review of the most recent studies on evidentiality, the variety of conceptions of Bulgarian researchers like R. Nitsolova, G. Gerdzhikov, P. Pashov, St. Stoyanov, Yu. Maslov, E. I. Dyomina, A. Aleksandrov, Y. Penchev, V. Stankov, I. Kutsarov, Kr. Alexova, V. Marovska, E. Tarpomanova, K. Kutsarov, Kr. Chakarova, S. Stoychev is presented. In their analyses, evidentiality is taken: as a grammeme of different grammatical categories – evidentiality, modus of the utterance, awareness of the speaker, taxis, or as an independent category; as a grammeme participating in different grammatical categories; as a marked or unmarked member, as a participant in different types of oppositions – privative or equipollent. Different opinions are pointed out about the structure of evidentiality and the type of categories in which it participates – morphological or textual.

After reviewing previous research B. Stamenov states his own understanding of evidentiality. He accepts I. Kutsarov's hypothesis of the differentiation of a morphological category of *conspicuity*. However, as far as naming the category is concerned, he uses K. Chakarova's term *receptivity* in order to comply with the requirement that the name of the grammatical category must express superordinate semantics with respect to the semantics of the grammemes representing it. The morphological category of receptivity is binary and contrasts the grammemes evidentiality : non-evidentiality (the principal meaning of the unmarked member being distancing). The grammeme of evidentiality marked with the morpheme *-h/-sh(e)-* is in a privative opposition with the unmarked non-evidentiality. According to Stamenov, evidentiality manifests itself through the following grammemes: aorist, imperfect, pluperfect, futurum praeteriti, futurum exactum praeteriti, the analytic conditional, the analytic relative non-inferential imperative. All grammatical formations that do not contain the inflection *-h/-sh(e)-* are non-witness ones according to the doctoral student (see p. 81, 90).

As specific features of evidentiality the doctoral student identifies the smaller number of grammemes for expressing evidential compared to the ones expressing non-evidential meaning and the presence of more than one distinctive feature of the marked grammeme. Stamenov substantiates the existence of the category with its specific features by comparing it

content-wise and form-wise with other morphological categories with which it is analogous both in terms of formal-grammatical asymmetry and in terms of the presence of more than one differential feature.

In Chapter Three, the focus is on the expression of personal semantics of aorist forms for the 1st person singular of the type *pisah* ‘I wrote’, *chetoh* ‘I read’ and the development of the evidential meaning of the morpheme *-h-/-sh(e)-*. The changes of the boundaries between the morphemes as a result of phonetic laws and the resulting formal and content transformations related to the *h* morpheme and to the function of the vowels *o* and *e* after the root are examined. The main concepts of I. Lekov, I. Dobrev, T. Slavova, G. Rikov, G. Ganeva on the question of the functions of the *h* morpheme and the thematic vowels of the aorist are presented. As far as the two opposing views on the nature of the *s/h/sh* morpheme – whether it means precedence or it does not – are concerned, the PhD student assumes that *h* in the Old Bulgarian language system is a marker for precedence within the category of tense (D, p. 102).

Stamenov formulates the hypothesis “that in a certain period of the language’s development *-h-/-sh(e)-* expressed two different meanings (absolute precedence and dependent taxis) within two independent morphological categories”. The appearance of a marker of relativity in the imperfect stem frees *h* from the expression of the meaning of dependent taxis/relativity and allows “the morpheme *-h-/-sh(e)-* to be transformed into a witness marker” (D, p. 102). The addition of the *h* morpheme to the aorist and imperfect stems, and of the *l* morpheme in the same position initially to the aorist stem and later to the imperfect one, requires further investigation and elaboration of the relationships and differences between both stems as well as between the *s/h* and *l* morphemes. I believe that the chapter should be supplemented with the observations of Anna-Maria Totomanova, as presented in *Kam istoriya na balgarskata temporalna sistema (Iz istoriyata na balgarskiya ezik. Sbornik statii. Sofia, 2009)*.

The doctoral student’s hypothesis is based on the concepts presented by different authors, but is not substantiated by examples. The organization of this chapter needs to be improved to avoid inconsistencies throughout the thesis.

Chapter Four provides a formal and content-based characterization of evidentiality. All evidential forms in contemporary Bulgarian are presented: the past tense forms, the present relative tense forms, the future relative tense forms (positive and negative), the active and the passive voice forms, the non-resultative and the resultative forms, the indicative, the imperative and the conditional forms. Attention is paid to the aorist of *sam* ‘to be’ – *bidoh, bide.../ne bidoh, ne bide...* and their specific use in liturgical texts (D, p. 108), as well as to the forms of the

auxiliary verb *bivam* and their use only in analytic structures. Of particular interest is the systematization of the analytic imperative relative forms generated with the particles *neka*, *da*, *dano*, and the imperfect of the auxiliary verb or of the main verb. Through them the development of other grammatical phenomena in the Bulgarian language and the formation of various synthetic and analytic structures can be traced.

In the same chapter, non-normative evidential forms of posteriority of the type *shte pisheh*, *shteshe da pisha*, *shte byah pisal*, *shteshe da sam pisal* are discussed. Particular attention should be paid to the forms with the invariable component *shteshe* – *shteshe da pisha*, *shteshe da pishem*, *shteshe da pishesh*, *shteshe da pishete*, *shteshe da pishe*, *shteshe da pishat*, which in my opinion are typical for the Western Bulgarian regions and indicate a certain stage of grammaticalization.

In Chapter Four the anonymous survey is presented, which traces the reception of the meaning of evidentiality by the speakers of the contemporary Bulgarian language on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. The number of participants in the survey is impressive – 700. The results of the survey confirm the author's thesis about the expression of evidentiality by the aorist, the imperfect and the pluperfect (see D, p. 200).

Chapter Five examines the peripheral modifiers of evidentiality: the active use of the verbs *nablyudavam* 'observe', *gledam* 'look', *vizhdam* 'see', and the colloquial verb *skivam* in the imperative *skivai* in combination with present forms; parenthetical clauses with the aforementioned verbs or synonymous verbs; lexical modifiers as *zarna/zarvam/sazra/saziram* 'glimpse', *sazertsavam* 'contemplate', and *vziram se* 'gaze'; the compound nominal predicates *ochevidets sam* 'I am an eyewitness', *svidetel sam* 'I was a witness'.

The conclusion succinctly and purposefully summarizes the most essential points in V. Stamenov's work.

7. Assessment of the publications and personal contributions of the doctoral candidate

The presented 5 publications show different stages of the development of the research topic. The consistency of the author's hypotheses, the doctoral student's proficiency in handling the theoretical apparatus and his excellent linguistic training are noteworthy.

The thesis is of academic and applied value because the established paradigm of evidential forms can be used when teaching Bulgarian.

The check with the Strikeplagiarism software shows that there are no signs of plagiarism.

8. Abstract

The abstract accurately summarizes the content of the dissertation and conforms to the volume and formatting standards.

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

Some occasional errors and omissions need to be addressed before the text is published.

In section 5.2 on syntactic peripheral modifiers, I assume that a typographical error was made in the phrase “compound nominal verbal predicates”, where the conjunction *and* is missing (see p. 208).

In the analysis of compound verbal predicates, examples are given with the phase verbs *zapochvam* ‘begin’ and *prodalzhavam* ‘continue’, but no information is provided about *spiram* ‘stop’ – e.g. *spiram da gledam kakvo pravish* ‘stop looking at what you are doing’ (see p. 209).

If examples with complex verbal predicates with modal verbs are deliberately omitted, it is advisable to explain the reason for the omission.

I recommend that the paradigm of evidential forms be supplemented with examples.

CONCLUSION

In the presented work, the set aims and objectives outlined in the Introduction are successfully fulfilled. The dissertation holds the necessary scholarly merits. It shows the author’s sound theoretical knowledge, his capacity to analyze in depth, and his ability to organize and conduct sociolinguistic research. The dissertation is of practical significance because the paradigm of evidential forms derived in it can be used when teaching Bulgarian to foreigners. The obtained results contribute to contemporary Bulgarian studies.

The presented dissertation 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 *Paisii Hilendarski* University of Plovdiv.

Due to the aforesaid, I hereby give my positive assessment of the conducted research presented in the dissertation thesis *The Meaning of Evidentiality in the Contemporary Bulgarian Language*, as well as in the dissertation abstract and the research articles.

I recommend to the honourable scientific jury to award Vasil Nikolov Stamenov the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in the sphere of higher education 2. Humanities, area of professional qualification 2.1. Philology, doctoral programme: *Contemporary Bulgarian Language*.

13.05.2024

Reviewer:

(Assoc. Prof. A. Dzhelyova, PhD)