

REVIEW

By Petya Nacheva Osenova, PhD

Professor at the Department of Bulgarian Language, Faculty of Slavic Philology,
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of the Doctoral Thesis for the award of the higher education and academic degree of '**Doctor**'

in the field of Higher Education 2. Humanities;

Professional Field 2.1. Philology;

Doctoral Programme in Romance Languages.

Author: Polina Georgieva Tabakova

Topic: The meaning of *anteriority*, in the indicative [case], in modern Spanish through the prism of comparison with the Bulgarian language.

Scientific supervisors: Assoc. Prof. Veselka Nenkova, PhD and Assoc. Prof. Krasimira Chakarova, PhD – 'Paisii Hilendarski' University of Plovdiv

1. General description of the material submitted

By Order No. PД-21-2054 of 15.11.2024 of the Rector of 'Paisii Hilendarski' University of Plovdiv, I have been appointed as a member of the Academic Board of Examiners in the procedure for the defense of a dissertation on 'The Meaning of Anteriority in the Indicative [Case] of Modern Spanish through the Prism of Comparison with the Bulgarian Language' submitted for the award of the higher education and academic degree of 'Doctor' in the field of Higher Education 2. Humanities; Professional Field 2.1. Philology; Doctoral Programme in Romance Languages.

The author of the dissertation is Polina Georgieva Tabakova - a PhD student in the Department of Romance and German Studies whose scientific supervisors are Assoc. Profs. Drs. Veselka Nenkova and Krasimira Chakarova from the Faculty of Philology of 'Paisii Hilendarski' University of Plovdiv.

The set of materials submitted by Polina Georgieva Tabakova on electronic media is in accordance with Art. 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of University of Plovdiv and includes all required documents.

The doctoral candidate has attached 7 publications related to her doctoral thesis.

2. Brief biography of the doctoral student

Polina Tabakova [(the Applicant)] graduated as a Bachelor in Bulgarian and Spanish from the P. Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (2013-2017). Immediately thereafter she qualified as a Master in Applied Linguistics (Spanish) (2017 - 2018). She later continued her educational and academic development as a full-time PhD student in the ‘Romance Languages’ programme. Her excellent command of three languages in addition to her mother tongue - Russian, English and Spanish – is worthy of note. The Applicant has received numerous awards including prizes from: two conferences for undergraduate and postgraduate students; competitions on the morphology of the modern Bulgarian language, etc.; as well as certificates of training and for results achieved. As a result, Polina Tabakova stands out as a motivated, inquisitive, and already successful, young philologist and linguist who will further develop her knowledge and skills in the future.

3. Relevance of the subject matter and appropriateness of the goals and objectives set

The present paper examines the meanings of ‘anteriority’ within the indicative [case] of modern Spanish by comparison with Bulgarian. The topic is justified as innovative precisely because of the comparative approach to the linguistic phenomena under consideration in Spanish and Bulgarian. This approach not only ensures the typological relevance of the research, but conceptualizes grammatical patterns in a new way given the specificity of the two languages. It should be borne in mind that to find intersection in the comparison of linguistic patterns used in the grammatical traditions of the two languages is not an easy task. The applicant has indeed done this brilliantly. The aim of the research is to compare the temporal systems of the Spanish and Bulgarian ‘indicative’ [case] in terms of the meaning of *anteriority*. Six tasks are presented which explore the paradigm in the indicative [case], the verb tense, the taxis, the perfectum, the aorist, as well as describing the Bulgarian translation equivalents of nine Spanish forms. In Bulgarian linguistics particularly, there are few works, as yet, devoted to the category of taxis, and the content and uses of the verb tense ‘perfect’ (past indefinite) in which these are interpreted unambiguously. That is why I consider this dissertation to be an outstanding contribution to Bulgarian linguistics.

4. Knowledge of the problem

The applicant demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of Spanish and Bulgarian grammars. This is particularly evident in Chapter Two, where the verb categories under consideration are presented in a comparative. The discussion of those terms used in the dissertation is also very compelling. In this case Polina Tabakova relies heavily on the works of Ivan Kutsarov and his functional approach to linguistic phenomena in the Bulgarian language.

5. Research methodology

The work uses, on the one hand, methods of structuralism (more precisely, the theory of ‘morphological oppositions’), and on the other, the functional-semantic approach according to A. V. Bondarko. I believe that, together with the comparative and empirical approaches taken, these starting points are suitable [bases] for achieving the aims of the research, as they allow observation of both the similar grammatical features and those that diverge in the two languages.

6. Characteristics and evaluation of the doctoral thesis

The research (242 pages) consists of an Introduction, 3 Chapters and a Conclusion. The bibliography includes over 200 references. Electronic sources and excerpt references are presented separately. This demonstrates the Applicant's rich awareness of the research topic.

The Introduction outlines the topic more broadly and philosophically by discussing types of ‘time’, and does a very good job of justifying the choice of topic. As is correct the Introduction also identifies the scope of the work.

Chapter One presents the theoretical basis of the research beginning with a presentation of the aim, object and objectives of the study. The aim is to compare the morphological paradigms of the Spanish and Bulgarian verb as it relates to ‘anteriority’. This includes consideration of a number of linguistic phenomena such as verb tense, the taxis, the perfect. The starting point, of course, is the Spanish verb paradigm. Forms and meanings that remain outside the scope of the work (posteriority forms, transpositions, etc.) are correctly discussed. The Applicant has set herself 6 tasks that are closely related to the expression of ‘anteriority’ in both languages.

The dissertation assumes that the temporal systems in Spanish and Bulgarian are a complex of three categories - verb tense, taxis and the perfect. It is noted that, despite the formal and semantic similarity, there *is* a difference in the functioning of these categories in the two languages. The Applicant delivers a critical analysis of the opinions of linguists on temporal systems, but does not slavishly follow them. The Applicant also presents some modifications of her own.

In the tradition of the Plovdiv school of thought, the Applicant relies on the principles of Bondarko's ‘functional structuralism’. In addition, she uses a number of other methods, chief among which are the comparative and empirical, as noted above. The terminological apparatus is presented and discussed in detail. The choice of forms that are directly marked [identified] as ‘anterior’ or ‘related to anteriority’ is justified. The Applicant follows Iv. Kutsarov's view of the existence of three distinct grammaticalized meanings: the resultative, the renarrative and the conclusive, with modality being inherent in the latter. I am familiar with Iv. Kutsarov's idea of ‘conclusiveness’ as part of the

system of inflections in the Bulgarian language. This, as we know, is one possible model as are the views of R. Nitsolova, Kr. Aleksova and K. Tarpomanova, who consider ‘conclusives’ as part of the ‘modalized evidential’ system of the Bulgarian language. I believe the Applicant's choice represents a sound perspective for two reasons: she knows the ideas of the Plovdiv school of thought very well and can, therefore, best apply them; there is no single ideal model for linguistic phenomena so it is useful to have more models that reflect different aspects of grammar. The asymmetric relations between the two languages are appropriately structured on the basis of the model applied by Polina Tabakova. Like R. Nitsolova, the Applicant assumes that the conclusive functions only in the domain of the anteriority (the past). My personal view is the opposite (similar to that of Michaela Moskova's in her dissertation on the conclusive in Bulgarian), i.e. that this category, whether considered a ‘mood’ or an ‘evidential’, covers the whole temporal plane, although in the plane of the non-past such uses are indeed rare. Regardless of my opinion, I fully accept Polina Tabakova's choice for the purposes of this dissertation. At the same time, I agree with her thesis that the renarrative and the conclusive emerged from the basis of the perfect.

The parallels between the two languages, described in terms of aspectuality and temporality, are interesting. I welcome the concise and clear conclusions after each chapter. I agree with the Applicant's opinion that the coordination of Bulgarian tenses has not been comprehensively written up, as it has for English and, apparently, Spanish. Therefore, the presented dissertation work offers reminding and initiating roles for Bulgarians in this respect.

Chapter Two focuses on ‘anteriority’ in the Spanish and Bulgarian verb systems. In respect of the aorist in the Bulgarian language, Polina Tabakova agrees with the opinion of Iv. Kutsarov that it expresses anteriority with respect to the time of speech and that it is the only past tense. It is also noted that, in Bulgarian, the aorist carries the marker of witnessing. This dissertation again demonstrates a brilliant ability, on the part of the Applicant, to compare the different scope of anteriority in the two languages. It is known that there is no ‘resultative correlate’ of the aorist in our language. I concur with the suggestion that the reason for the non-emergence of such a form in Bulgarian may also be due to the fact that the verb system already has grammemes to express such semantics. In this chapter reflections on the parameters in the expression of resultativity, and in modeling aspectuality versus temporality in both languages, are also valuable. The relation of anteriority to relativity is also commented on. This is seen as building on the basis of ‘temporality’. All variants in which there is a relation to anteriority - including relativity and posteriority - are outlined. The dissertation concludes that ‘relativity and posteriority lead to the emergence of modal sememes that fit into the functional-semantic content of relative posteriority’ (p. 146). I support this claim, but go further in the analysis, believing that, for example, the future tense *in the past* is a

syntactic construction similar to *исках да ходя* [*I wanted to walk*]. I also support the view that the place of the perfect in the Bulgarian temporal system is the most controversial, and that the aorist and imperfect are not pure morphological opposites due to the nature of the differences between them (anteriority ~ simultaneity and absoluteness ~ relativity). The conclusions at the end of the chapter do a very good job of systematizing the comparative observations in terms of asymmetries.

Chapter Three deals with Bulgarian functional equivalents of the Spanish verb forms related to anteriority. It is very valuable, not only from a theoretical viewpoint, but from the applied, as in translation studies. A large number of examples are discussed and analysed in a brilliant manner. The reasons for choosing one translation form over another, (according to various factors, including consideration of witnessing or non-witnessing) are given. An interesting suggestion is made by the Applicant about passive forms of the type *е писан* [*'is written'*], *е измислен* [*'is invented'*]. She thinks that such constructions can also be considered as a nominal predicate, i.e. analysed as syntactic constructions (p. 175). It would be interesting to test this thesis more thoroughly in a future work.

7. Contributions and significance of the work for science and practice

Polina Tabakova formulated five applied theoretical contributions of her work, of which four are theoretical and one is applied. The contributions to science are, briefly, the following: this is the first focused study of the temporal meaning of *anteriority* in the indicative of Spanish and Bulgarian verbs; a thorough comparative analysis is made between the two languages with the help of appropriate and time-proven theories; *anteriority* is considered in relation to other linguistic categories and in a critical perspective; and the model of the meaning under consideration in Hispanic studies is enriched. I agree with the contributions thus presented, and I would also like to summarize them in the following ways: the dissertation represents significant contributions to the fields of linguistic morphological modelling and comparativistics. The work is certainly a contribution, not only to the field of translation studies, but to the teaching of English and Spanish.

8. Assessment of the publications *in re* the dissertation work

There are seven publications submitted under this procedure. They are quite sufficient, and even exceed the minimum national requirements of NACID. Four of the publications are in the Yearbook of the National Conference for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students, two are in the Scientific Proceedings of 'Paisii Hilendarski' University of Plovdiv and one is in the Proceedings of the Union of Scientists in Plovdiv. The topics of the articles are in the fields of 'time' and 'taxis' categories in Spanish and Bulgarian. In some of them the focus is on specific expressions of these categories, including the meaning of *anteriority*, aorist and imperfect.

My recommendation to Polina Tabakova is, in the future to publish in publications beyond ‘P. Hilendarski’ University of Plovdiv, so that her ideas can find an even greater response.

9. Personal participation of the PhD student

The dissertation presented is independent and original.

10. Abstract

The abstract is presented in Bulgarian and Spanish versions. The Bulgarian version contains 32 pages, which correctly reflect the content of the dissertation work.

11. Critical comments and recommendations

I have no substantive criticisms beyond the recommendations and comments I have expressed above.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains distinct theoretical and applied results that represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), the Rules on the Implementation of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, and the relevant Regulations of ‘Paisii Hilendarski’ University of Plovdiv.

The work shows that the PhD student possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge in the field of Spanish and Bulgarian grammar, including: a comparative perspective; demonstrable mastery of terminological apparatus; critical thinking; and well developed independent scientific research skills.

Due to all the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the dissertation presented and I confidently propose to the esteemed Academic Board of Examiners that the higher education and academic degree of ‘Doctor’ be awarded to Polina Georgieva Tabakova.

28.01.2025.

Reviewer:

(signature)

Prof. Petya Osenova, PhD