

## STATEMENT OF OPINION

by **Atanas Rosenov Atanasov, PhD, Assoc. Prof. at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"**

on the dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (Ph.D.)

Field of Higher Education: 2. Humanities,

Professional Field: 2.1. Philology,

Doctoral Programme: Germanic Languages (English Language)

**Author:** *Simona Anastasova Mateva*

**Topic:** *"Adverbials and Functional Heads: a Comparative Study of Bulgarian and English Clause Structure"*

**Supervisor:** *Prof. Iliyana Todorova Krapova, PhD – Ca' Foscari University of Venice*

### 1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral candidate

This statement of opinion has been prepared in my capacity as a member of the Scientific Jury appointed by Order No. RD-22-1436 / 20.07.2026 of the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv and a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philology (Protocol No. 278 / 14.07.2026).

The set of documents submitted by the candidate in hard copy and electronic format fully complies with Art. 36 (1) of the Academic Staff Development Regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), and the Regulations for the Implementation of DASRBA. The documentation set contains all required administrative and academic documents.

Simona Anastasova Mateva is a full-time doctoral student and a part-time lecturer at the Department of English Studies in the Faculty of Philology at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. In her capacity as a lecturer, Simona Mateva conducts practical seminars in Modern English Syntax and Practical English (Translation), successfully combining her teaching duties with the research tasks set out in her individual academic plan.

### 2. Relevance of the topic

The topic of the dissertation is devoted to a central and debated issue in contemporary comparative generative syntax – the integration, distribution, and licensing of adverbs relative to clause structure (as despite the broader title "Adverbials", the study excludes prepositional and clausal modifiers) and functional heads in Bulgarian and English. The study addresses the fundamental theoretical debate between the cartographic model of a universal hierarchy of functional heads and scope-based approaches proposing flexible adjunction. The scientific relevance of the study lies in

the comparative analysis of Bulgarian and English clause structure within the framework of contemporary generative models.

### **3. Knowledge of the topic**

The doctoral candidate demonstrates an excellent and thorough command of the state of the art in international syntactic literature. She evaluates creatively and critically the bibliographical material, comprising 183 titles. Simona Mateva operates fluently with theoretical models such as the Split INFL Hypothesis (Pollock), syntactic cartography (Cinque), Scope Theory (Ernst), the articulation of the Left Periphery (Rizzi), and clause-medial projections (Ledgeway & Lombardi), demonstrating high academic standards and independent critical thinking.

### **4. Research methodology**

The methodology employed combines generative syntactic analysis with corpus data (BNC, COCA, and BgNC) and native speaker judgments, with the corpora serving to illustrate and test structural hypotheses rather than for quantitative research. The combination of corpus data and syntactic analysis ensures a high degree of objectivity and reliability of the obtained results.

### **5. Overview and evaluation of the dissertation and its contributions**

The dissertation comprises 224 pages (212 of which constitute the main text and 12 pages represent the references) and is organized into seven chapters that systematically unfold the research logic.

The introductory chapter outlines the central research topic – the syntax of adverbials as evidence for a richly articulated functional clause structure rather than a merely peripheral grammatical category. It formulates the comparative vector between Bulgarian and English.

Chapter II establishes the conceptual framework, situating adverbs within traditional part-of-speech classifications and highlighting their limitations. Drawing upon Chomsky, Jackendoff, and Hengeveld, the candidate refines the distinction between adverbs and adverbial constructions.

Chapter III traces the historical evolution of views on adverbs from classical philosophy to generative models, outlining the transition from the traditional classification of adverbs (predicate-level, sentence-level, and subject-oriented adverbs) to syntactically licensed specifier positions.

Chapter IV presents a detailed critical analysis contrasting the Cartographic Approach and the Scope-based Approach, with the candidate convincingly defending the advantages of the cartographic model.

Chapter V constitutes the empirical and analytical core of the dissertation. Drawing on corpus data from the BNC, COCA, and the Bulgarian National Corpus, it systematically tests the applicability of Cinque's cartographic hierarchy to Bulgarian and English clause structure. It analyzes the interactions between the domain of high and low adverbs and verb movement across four verbal categories: finite lexical verbs, auxiliary verbs, active past participles, and passive past participles. To account for the identified parametric asymmetries, the candidate develops an original deriva-

tional model introducing a three-tiered system of clause-medial YP projections (following Ledge-way & Lombardi) as structural boundaries for verb movement.

Chapter VI investigates the relationship between positional polysemy and the syntactic tree across two main functional domains: T<sub>Anterior</sub>P and the microsyntax of the adverb *already* / *вече*; Asp<sub>continuative</sub>P and the adverb *still* / *все още*. It is demonstrated that the aspectual and marginal meanings of *still* / *все още* are realized within the single Asp<sub>continuative</sub>P phrase, whereas the concessive/adversative meaning projects in FocP (Focus Phrase) outside the neutral hierarchy and is obligatorily translated into Bulgarian as *(всe) наk*.

The concluding chapter synthesizes the findings regarding the applicability of Cinque's hierarchy to Bulgarian and English data, formulates the final comparative conclusions, and outlines directions for future research.

The research material is fully authentic and representative. The examples are extracted from internationally recognized corpora. The empirical sample ensures a high degree of reliability, verifiability, and complete objectivity of the formulated syntactic conclusions.

I accept as fully justified the candidate's statement of contributions, which possess a pronounced theoretical and practical character.

The dissertation holds high scientific and practical significance, as it fills a substantial gap in comparative English and Slavic linguistics. Prospects for future research include extending the cartographic model to non-declarative clauses (imperative and interrogative), adverbs in phrasal verbs, typological testing of YP, marginal meanings, and verb movement mechanisms.

## **6. Evaluation of publications and the doctoral candidate's personal contribution**

Four single-authored papers on the topic of the dissertation have been published in specialized academic volumes (including Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv – Research Papers and the "Doctoral Debuts" collection). The publications reflect key parts of the research and fully satisfy the minimum national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (Ph.D.) in Professional Field 2.1. Philology.

The results are entirely the personal achievement of the doctoral candidate. There is no evidence of plagiarism in the work.

### **Questions and remarks:**

The author introduces YP<sub>low</sub>/YP<sub>middle</sub>/YP<sub>high</sub> as "abstract boundaries" without directly observable realization (p. 144) and acknowledges that verb movement in the model is not driven by morphology or feature checking (p. 141), leaving its mechanism open (p. 198). What is the formal status and feature specification of Y<sup>0</sup>, what triggers movement to each of the three positions, and are there independent arguments for them beyond word order – stemming from the clitic cluster, ellipsis, or prosody?

In Chapter V, a certain conceptual tension is noticeable in the syntactic diagnostics: while the linear sequence *вече вероятно* ('already probably') is marked as ungrammatical in (65b, p. 111), in

(115, p. 137) it is accepted as grammatical via the hypothesis of topicalisation of *вече*. Which independent syntactic or prosodic criteria allow us to distinguish a genuine counterexample to the universal hierarchy from cases of contextually motivated topicalisation or occupancy of a position in ModifierP?

## **7. Abstract of the Dissertation (Autoreferat)**

The abstract (comprising 62 pages in Bulgarian and 31 pages in English) has been prepared in accordance with the relevant institutional regulations and accurately and adequately reflects the structure, content, corpora, analyses, and contributions of the dissertation.

## **8. Recommendations for future implementation of the dissertation contributions and results**

I recommend that the candidate prepare a standalone academic monograph based on the dissertation and publish her primary derivational models in international peer-reviewed journals with an impact factor.

## **CONCLUSION**

The dissertation contains scientific and applied research results that constitute an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), the Regulations for the Implementation of DASRBA, and the Academic Regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The dissertation demonstrates that the doctoral candidate Simona Anastasova Mateva possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the academic specialty, demonstrating the capacity to conduct independent scientific research.

In view of the above, I confidently give my POSITIVE ASSESSMENT of the conducted research and propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree 'Doctor' (PhD) to Simona Anastasova Mateva in Field of Higher Education 2. Humanities, Professional Field 2.1. Philology, Doctoral Programme 'Germanic Languages (English Language)'.

23 September 2026

**Author of the Statement of Opinion:** .....

(Assoc. Prof. Atanas Rosenov Atanasov, PhD)