



A REVIEW

of the dissertation

DOUBLETS' DYNAMISM IN THE VERBAL SYSTEM
OF CONTEMPORARY STANDARD BULGARIAN

by

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submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the educational and scientific degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Reviewer: Prof. Dr.Sc. Vladko Danailov Murdarov

Zhaneta Zlateva graduated from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" with a Bachelor's degree in Slavic Philology (2014) and a Master's degree in Russian language (2017). She was awarded Erasmus mobility grants to study at the University of Ljubljana and at Charles University in Prague. Zhaneta Zlateva works as an assistant at the Department of Modern Bulgarian Language of the Institute for Bulgarian Language at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. She was accepted as a full-time PhD student in 2015 and completed her doctoral studies with the right of defense in December 2017.

The topic chosen by Zhaneta Zlateva is extremely relevant as it has not been explored in depth with respect to Contemporary Standard Bulgarian; such a study will be undoubtedly helpful in the forthcoming work on a new academic spelling

dictionary. Therefore, the thesis and its theoretical and applied contributions are indisputably valuable.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, a theoretical account, an analysis of the excerpted material, conclusions, a bibliography and an appendix.

The introduction is very well structured and elaborates on some preliminaries, such as the choice of topic, the specification of the subject of study, clarification of the goals and objectives of the thesis, description of the research method and structure. A working hypothesis and the expected results are clearly stated.

The theoretical part of the dissertation (the first two chapters concerning the phenomenon of doublets and the relationship between norm, variation and doublets) gives a systematic overview of the existing research on doublets which puts the phenomenon under study in the broader context of language change and linguistic variation, while highlighting its relation to the theory of standard languages. The clarification of the relationship between the phenomena of variation and doublet formation, where the latter is considered as part of the former that has specific functions in the standardisation process, merits particular attention. The perusal of this part of the dissertation shows that the doctoral student has studied in depth the existing foreign research in this field, while taking into account the approach adopted in the Bulgarian literature. This is presented in great detail as it serves as a point of departure for the author in providing a motivated decision regarding the treatment of doublets in the codification documents concerned with Contemporary Standard Bulgarian.

Although doublets are found across other parts of speech, the dissertation is focused on the verbal system of Contemporary Standard Bulgarian. The study of the verbal system, however, enables the author to account for various types of doublets observed in the standard language and is therefore very appropriate.

I would like to emphasise that Zhaneta Zlateva has not limited her research to verbs included in the three existing academic spelling dictionaries, and has expanded her observations to encompass other attempts at codification (although not called so by

the author herself) in grammars from the first half of the 20th century and the *Academic Grammar*, as well as in other available spelling dictionaries. In such a way, the dissertation provides an overview of the work of Bulgarian codifiers with respect to doublets over a very long period of time.

The adopted method of research is quite relevant as it enables the author to achieve the goals and objectives of the dissertation. Particularly noteworthy is the very good organisation and presentation of the analysed material. The phenomenon of doublets is accounted for very comprehensively and the following categories are explored: phonetic doublets, which include accentual doublets (6 classes), derivational doublets (3 classes), and doublets representing competing forms of a word (3 classes). In addition, a clear distinction is made between already obsolete doublets, existing doublets and emerging doublets formed as a result of the adaptation of the language norms to the dynamism of the language system. In such a way, the author offers a thorough account of the studied phenomenon as reflected in the codification documents concerned with Contemporary Standard Bulgarian.

Zhaneta Zlateva makes a thorough presentation of the different types of doublets and indicates the attitude of codifiers with respect to doublets as reflected in the reference books – not only the official spelling dictionaries but also the literature that precedes them.

The findings of the study are well organised and show that the author approaches doublets as a specific tool in the codification practice which ensures its feasibility with a view to maintaining the flexible stability of the standard language norm; in addition, doublets are viewed as an essential resource in the intellectualisation of standard languages.

The appendix enclosed at the end of the thesis merits special attention as it represents in tabular form the excerpted doublets that illustrate each of the phenomena accounted for in the three academic dictionaries, thus successfully demonstrating the dynamism in the domain of doublets in the span of approximately half a century.

I would like to note that one of the things I was not able to find in the dissertation is an overview of the work undertaken in the *New Spelling Dictionary* (2002) and the *Official Spelling Dictionary* (2016) with respect to the graphic representation of the preference of one doublet over another adopted by the spelling dictionary codifiers in order to facilitate readers, while at the same time suggesting the future development of doublet pairs. This was the first time that such an effort was undertaken consistently in a Bulgarian dictionary and in a way that was approved by dictionary users. In addition, this approach sheds light on the codifiers' expectations regarding the development of doublets and the probability of their becoming obsolete.

In general, in view of the accurate descriptions made in the thesis, I expected the doctoral student to commit herself to a more decided opinion on the doublets preferred by the codifiers in the two spelling dictionaries, as well as to comment on their decisions and to give her take on the possibility that in some cases one of the doublets has become or may be expected to become obsolete. Instead, she has preferred to accept the codifiers' decisions as justified and for the most part consistent and in keeping with tradition and use. I also expected to see her predictions on the likely changes in future spelling dictionaries. The author states, instead, that the codification practice in the period under review offers a just representation of the linguistic trends through employing doublets in reflecting the dynamism of the norm and in making a smooth transition towards the validation of particular forms and tendencies. I justify this approach in view of the young author's caution in making judgments although a more detailed assessment would have helped establish her dissertation as a valuable reference work on language competence and would have been of help to future codifiers (one of whom would probably be the author herself.)

The dissertation abstract is in full compliance with the requirements and fully represents the main principles underlying the work as well as its contributions. Zhaneta Zlateva has authored four papers on the topic of the dissertation which are published in authoritative collections of papers and periodicals.

I should also emphasise that Zhaneta Zlateva has been too cautious in formulating the dissertation's contributions and has limited herself primarily to the ones related to her work on the theoretical assessment of doublets and their important role in a smooth reorganisation of the language system, while downplaying the observations on the dynamism of doublets in the verbal lexis under study.

My general impression is that the candidate has painstakingly gathered other authors' opinions on the topic and has attempted to present them in a well-organised system. The various types of doublets have been discussed in a similarly meticulous manner in the second part of the dissertation. The exposition is very concise, but the author's assessment of the research she has familiarised herself with and has used in forming her own opinion based on the analysis of the material, is not made explicit at all places where it would be relevant.

As mentioned above, the dissertation reveals the candidate's desire to encompass the abundant literature on the topic under study, combining it with a careful analysis of the ample material at her disposal. The meticulous analysis of a great number of verbs and verb forms (included in the appendix) shows that she has been able to provide very good organisation and analysis of the language material and to use it in drawing in-depth conclusions.

In conclusion, I confidently recommend the respected members of the Scientific Jury to award ZHANETA TODOROVA ZLATEVA the scientific and educational degree of Doctor of Philosophy for her thesis titled *Doublets' Dynamism in the Verbal System of Contemporary Standard Bulgarian*.

10 March 2020

Prof. Dr.Sc. Vladko Murdarov