

REVIEW

of a PhD thesis

Author of the PhD thesis: Krasimira Georgieva Fuchedzhieva

Title of the PhD thesis: Semantic Aspects of Etymological Analysis of Bulgarian Verbal Lexis (Based on Material from Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary)

Reviewer: Bilyana Mihaylova, PhD, Assoc. Prof. at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

The PhD thesis consists of an introduction, an exposition (the actual etymological part), a conclusion, an appendix (a catalogue of the semantic shifts found in the study) and a bibliography.

Krasimira Fuchedzhieva's PhD thesis is an extremely thorough and professional work, exceeding the requirements for a doctoral thesis. The material upon which the doctoral candidate bases her work is impressive. Of particular importance is the use of rich dialectal material, because dialects sometimes preserve old meanings and semantic transitions that are not found in the literary language.

This work should be considered in the context of the work of compiling the *Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary*, as noted in title. Its scientific principles have been followed diligently.

Introduction

The research focuses on Bulgarian verbs from both common and dialect vocabulary, mostly polysemous and of domestic origin. The aim of the study is to establish semantic shifts based on specific lexical material, which can be

defined as regular in the Bulgarian language and in a more general typological context.

In the introductory part, the scientific principles and methodology are convincingly and consistently presented, the main theoretical positions in the field of lexical semantics are examined. However, the almost complete absence of some early and seminal works on semantics is striking. No mention is made, for example, of Michel Breal's *Essai de sémantique* (1897), considered one of the seminal works in the field. The theoretically important book by Elizabeth Traugott and Richard Dasher *Regularity in Semantic Change* (2002) is also not cited.

The work of Kr. Fuchedzhieva is most closely related to the works of Anna Zaluzniak and her team, the fruit of which is the Database of Semantic Shifts in languages of the world. As she herself states on page 60: "A similar modest attempt to systematize some regular semantic transitions in Bulgarian verbs is also made in the present work which focuses on diachronic semantic evolution." In purely practical terms, with regard to the work on the *Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary*, the detection of regular semantic-derivational processes in diachronic aspect can contribute to the semantic aspect of the etymological analysis of specific words, especially words with obscure etymology, as well as in distinguishing between ancient and later homonymic roots. The identification of such regular transitions is also important in the most general typological aspect. This leads to a reduction in hypotheticality and an increase in the reliability of etymologies.

The work of Kr. Fuchedzhieva is undoubtedly a novelty in Bulgarian linguistics, as there is a lack of a more comprehensive empirical study dedicated to the semantic aspect of etymological analysis with regard to Bulgarian linguistic material. In her work, a semantic reconstruction of the meanings of verbs is carried out, united on the one hand according to the principle of "etymological nests", and on the other according to lexical-semantic fields, which include verbs of different origins but identical in meaning.

Exposition (essential part)

The PhD thesis is admirable for its detail. The verbs under study are very carefully analysed. The lexical material of the given etymological nest is thoroughly presented. It goes into depth, providing semantic parallels in Bulgarian, in Slavic and Baltic languages, as well as in Indo-European.

The first chapter analyzes the semantic transitions of the Proto-Slavic etymological nest **per-/*pьr-/*par-*; in the second are analyzed verbs from the etymological nest of *пpаскам*. The third chapter examines the semantic evolution of various verbs, organized according to the lexical-semantic fields 'hit', 'eat', verbs related to different types of speaking (to talk a lot and trivial things, to speak indistinctly, to speak loudly, to quarrel, insult, slander, gossip).

Some fragments of the PhD candidate have a serious contribution character.

On pp. 82-83 Kr. Fuchedzhieva rightly notes that in the *Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language* the dialectal meaning of the verb *nepa* 'strike, beat' is unjustifiably defined as figurative and that the modern primary meaning of the verb should be considered as secondary, obtained as a result of the semantic transition 'strike, beat' → 'beat underwear'.

An important contribution of the first chapter is the convincing semantic explanation of the verb *пpащам*, based on the established parallel between the meanings 'hit' → 'throw' and 'throw' → 'send', without the need for complex etymological equilibria such as mediating the meanings of West Slavic languages.

In the second chapter in the analysis of Proto-Slavic **prāskāti* Fuchedzhieva rightly rejects the connection proposed by some linguists with the etymological nest **per-/*pьr-/*par-*. It is very precisely based on phonetic arguments and the impossibility of the Proto-Slavic root **per-* having the form **prā-*. The etymological analysis of the verb *пpаскам* penetrates deeply, using comparative material from other Indo-European languages, explores the history and functions of the Indo-European suffix **sk*, brings various facts related to the typology of verbs for sounds. This part of the thesis shows especially clearly the ability of the PhD candidate to handle the elements of etymological analysis.

In the last third part of the second chapter, a semantic component analysis of the verb *пращам* has been made and a number of semantic transitions in its etymological nest has been established. The PhD student strives to discover the different directions in the semantic development, to establish the different stages of the semantic evolution, to show the connections between individual meanings and the relations of derivation between them. Thus, she manages to establish the meanings that arose on the basis of the main semantic component 'to hit strongly', on the one hand, and the peripheral semantic component 'noise', on the other hand. Indicative in this regard is the semantic chain 'to hit hard' → 'stuff' → 'to eat (drink) a lot'. It should be mentioned that in the analysis of the various cases a number of semantic parallels are presented, some of which are also studied etymologically.

In the third chapter of his work, Kr. Fuchedzhieva examines verbs from the lexical-semantic fields 'hit', 'eat' and 'speak'. She chooses precisely these lexical-semantic fields, because they include a large number of verbs of different origins and are widely represented in the commonly used and dialectal verb lexis included in the *Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary*. The goal is to trace the semantic development of individual verbs, to establish the mechanisms by which it takes place, and to outline a parallelism that would confirm the regularity of each of the semantic transitions. It is in the discovery of such regular shifts in semantic evolution that the main contribution of this PhD thesis lies. It is also important that, based on the semantic aspect of the etymological analysis, the author also proposes corrections of some etymologies in the *Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary*. For some verbs, she manages to prove that the meaning 'hit' arises secondarily, which is in contrast to the opinion of Vlaić-Popović, who is sceptical about the possibility of this meaning being secondary.

Particularly interesting is the part of the dissertation which justifies in detail and with mythological material the semantic shift 'shine, shine' → 'hit'. In the Bulgarian language, this semantic transition can be observed with the verb *блъскам*, which is related to the verb *блестя*, originating from Proto-Slavic **blъščati* from the Indo-European stem **bli-ǵ-sk-*. This is a known and well attested development on Indo-European soil, as pointed out by Carl Buck in his *Dictionary of Indo-European Synonyms*, cited by Krasimira Fuchedzhieva.

I believe that the unifying link here is the phenomenon of *lightning*, which is intuitively associated with thunderbolt having a striking force. As Pierre Chantren explains in his etymological dictionary of the Greek language in the article on the adjective ἀργός 'white, shining white' in relation to the cognate formant ἀργι-, which we find in various compounds with the meaning 'quick', "we must take as a starting concept a one which expresses the brilliant whiteness of lightning and at the same time its swiftness".

Discussing the origin of lightning and its related entities, the PhD candidate is able to show that we are dealing a bidirectional shift 'shine' → 'strike' and 'strike' → 'shine', as this form is convincingly derived from the Indo-European root **melh₂*- 'grind, crush' which yields Old Icelandic *Mjollnir* 'the hammer with which the god Thor defeats the world dragon' and OBulg. *млък* 'hammer'. However, the difference between the atmospheric phenomena of lightning and thunderbolt must be kept in mind. Lightning is just the light in the sky, while thunderbolt can actually reach us and strike us.

Thus, if *млѣскам* is not simply a phonetic variation of *блѣскам*, its association with this Indo-European root seems convincing. The shift 'hit' → 'shine' is also evidenced by dialectal formations such as *молскам* 'flash', *молоскоту* 'shine blindingly', *молскавица* 'lightning'. Probably, the semantic component 'strike' has vanished, as in the inverse shift, this component has been added to the component 'light'.

There is an error in the spelling of Gk. κεραυός, the correct spelling is κεραυνός 'lightning'. The laryngeal is also misspelled in the reconstructed Indo-European root from which the form is derived.

When studying the semantic development of verbs with the meaning 'eat' (A → 'eat'), the PhD candidate successfully systematized the type of semantic evolution of the meanings, uniting them into several groups: metaphorical developments and metonymic developments, as well as a third group "meanings that arose as a result of metaphorical and metonymic development".

As a general recommendation, I would advise Krasimira Fuchedzhieva to lean on contemporary theories in Indo-European linguistics. It is clear that she follows the practices adopted by the *Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary* and uses the laryngeal theory only where she considers it absolutely necessary. But in the dictionary entries of the *Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary* mostly roots

from Pokorny's dictionary are quoted, without giving abundant material from various Indo-European languages, but only basic forms. However, the PhD student cites extensive material from Pokorny's dictionary, and in some cases these forms have long been considered unrelated. In this sense the work can be cleared of the presence of irrelevant forms.

In the part of the dissertation where the semantic development of the words for speaking is discussed, some questions arise for me.

Kr. Fuchedzhieva comments on the figurative meaning of the verb *дъвча* 'speak unintelligibly' (chew words), but mentions only in passing the other figurative meaning of this verb, related to speaking 'repeat the same thing over and over again', which is similar to the figurative meaning of the verb *преживям* 'ruminate', due undoubtedly to the monotonous repetitive movements of the mouth. The verb *меля* has the meaning 'talk a lot and empty things', which is explained according to the model 'perform some action with noise' → 'talk (a lot) empty things / nonsense'. I believe that the repetitiveness and the monotony of the noise and the movements should be taken into account in the semantic analysis.

In this part of the work, the doctoral student should to take into account Carl Buck's article *Words of Speaking and Saying in the Indo-European Languages*, published in two parts in *The American Journal of Philology*, (1915).

Languages, published in two parts in *The American Journal of Philology*, (1915).

The compiled catalog of semantic transitions is an excellent achievement. A total of 42 semantic transitions are cataloged with a different number of examples referring to each one of them. Some of the semantic transitions are chain shifts ('hit, beat' → 'beaten, hit' → 'crazy, mad' → 'go crazy'). Probably other semantic transitions could also be found, for example with the verbs of speaking and more specifically 'speak with a loud voice' there is undoubtedly also a development of the meaning to 'cry, weep' (for example with the verb *рева*).

The abstract corresponds to the content of the dissertation. The scientific contributions of the work are precisely defined. The PhD candidate has five publications on the topic, which is more than the required number.

Conclusion :

I confidently state that the PhD thesis of Krasimira Fuchedzhieva is a serious work in the field of linguistics. The study is a contribution to Bulgarian and Slavic etymology. The results of the semantic aspect of the analysis allow to supplement and revise some of the existing explanations in the *Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary* and in other sources, as well as to propose new etymologies of some of the verbs and related words.

The Catalog of Semantic Shifts prepared by the author is useful both in terms of semantic typology and in terms of practical work for the preparation of the articles for the *Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary*.

With conviction, I will vote "YES" for awarding Krasimira Fuchedzhieva the educational and scientific degree "PhD".

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