

**REVIEW**  
**of the dissertation work**  
*Techniques for expanding*  
*simple groups with a noun in their composition*  
by  
**Malina Georgieva Stoycheva,**  
**full-time doctoral student**  
**in Professional field 2.1. Philology / Bulgarian language**  
**Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ruska Stancheva**

This review was prepared in accordance with Order No. RD-09-17 / 31.03.2026 of the Director of the Institute for Bulgarian Language "Prof. Lyubomir Andreychin" for launching a procedure for the defense of the dissertation work of Malina Georgieva Stoycheva.

I received the following materials: the text of the dissertation, the text of the abstract (in Bulgarian and in English), copies of the doctoral student's diplomas, copies of the certificates, publications on the topic of the dissertation, a review of the credits received during the period of study, a declaration of the originality and authenticity of the dissertation.

***Information on the student***

Malina Georgieva Stoycheva graduated in Bulgarian Philology (with a B.A.) and Linguistics (with a M.A. in "Linguistics - Language System and Speech Practices") at Sofia University. She has fulfilled the minimum national requirements with her three publications on the topic of her dissertation.

***General information about the dissertation***

The text of the dissertation consists of 170 pages, including: a list of references (76 works), a list of sources (two sources), a declaration of the originality of the work, and contributions of the dissertation.

***Review***

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The introduction defines the object and subject of the study – the noun group (noun phrase), along

with the methodological framework for the analysis – dependency grammar, with a focus on the techniques for expanding simple syntactic groups with a noun in their composition.

**Chapter 1** presents an overview of some views in the literature on the nature of the noun phrase along with a number of classifications. The development of the concept of a noun phrase in syntax is traced from early models (dependent and constituent) to modern theories. Key concepts such as main member (or head), modifier, hierarchical structure are defined. The main terminological differences in the definition of the concept according to researchers working in different theoretical paradigms are clarified. The main principles in the analysis and classification of noun phrases are summarized. Here, the framework for distinguishing between the simple (syntactic) noun group and the compound lexical unit is outlined for the first time to define (and limit) the scope of the study (this is also among the contributions of the dissertation). A critical review of the criteria for distinguishing compound lexical units and syntactic phrases with a noun as the main member has also been made, with two accepted criteria – a definite article or changes in the form of the first noun and a modifier between the two nouns.

### *Comments*

The topic of the dissertation is not easy to handle, mainly because there are numerous studies on the noun phrase, a considerable amount of empirical material and a variety of theoretical contributions. A part of the studies is summarized here – probably both for practical reasons (some of them are used later in the analysis of noun phrases and techniques for expansion and for the argumentation of the analysis), and because it is impossible to summarize in relative completeness the vast literature on the topic. Hence a certain heterogeneity in the selection of the (17) classifications is observed – in relation to the language, the type of the structures, e.g. the cited work by M. Almaleh deals only with the NN groups, though it is important here, since the NN group is among those that are given more critical review in the description and the analysis).

The review includes some works on the noun phrase in other Slavic languages (in addition to Bulgarian), although the emphasis is on English and Bulgarian noun phrases. Inaccuracies with the more general presentation of noun phrases in Slavic languages are observed (Russian examples should be given in Cyrillic, regardless of how their representation in the commented study; Bulgarian is also a Slavic language, but the nouns are not inflected for case, cases (within the noun phrase) are expressed with prepositional phrases (most often), as well as with some adjectives – thus, they should be defined as phrases expressing possessive

relations, or possessive phrases or phrases expressing possession in these examples, and not as phrases in the genitive case).

**Chapter 2** presents in more detail the theoretical approach followed in the dissertation, namely – the dependency grammar. A couple of dependency frameworks are presented in brief, including the structural syntax of L. Tenier (1958), the *Meaning – Text* theory and language dependency (2015) of I. Melchuk, the word grammar of R. Hudson (2006) and the “universal dependencies” (UD) framework. A comparison with the constituent approach is also given. A focus is on the binary relation between a main and a subordinate element/member (a dependent) in the dependency theory. The functional difference between the main member (head) and the governing member is also defined – the syntactic structure is built by dependency relations between words, one of which is a governor, with each word in the sentence (except the main member) depending on another word. The discussion revolves around the main concepts of the governing element, the dependent element, hierarchy of connections and (syntactic) valency.

The dissertation also briefly discusses some advantages and disadvantages of the approach according to researchers working in the framework – an advantage is the elegance of the description of structures in languages with free word order (according to P. Osenova), while the description (and analysis) of coordination, as well as headedness of the group are considered disadvantages by some researchers (Melchuk's solution for grouping can be viewed as a “bridging” mechanism to constituent analysis).

This chapter also proposes a typology of the simple groups with a noun as the main member. The structural features of five simple groups with a noun as the main member (and an adjective, noun, adverb, numeral and preposition as a dependent) are examined in order to outline the dependencies between the constituents and the grammatical mechanisms through which the dependency is realized – coordination, control, application and prepositional linking. The word order, the forms of the elements of the phrase, the restrictions on compatibility, etc. are also discussed, along with approaches in the literature regarding the main member and the realization of its relations with the dependent.

### *Comments*

Although the functional-generative description of P. Sgall (and Hajičová, Panevová, etc.) is mentioned, I think that it merits some more attention, because it combines to some extent mechanisms from the two main approaches to syntactic description, while also achieving a very adequate practical implementation – the Prague Dependency Treebank.

**Chapter 3** presents the expansion techniques for nine simple (syntactic) groups with a noun as the main member and as a dependent. Simple noun groups can be expanded in three positions – to the left, in the middle and to the right. The examples are extracted from the Bulgarian National Corpus.

In each group, the extensions to the left are first analyzed, then the extensions in the middle of the simple group, and finally – those to the right. The discussion on the group with two nouns and the group with a numeral and a noun contains analysis of the criteria for determining the main member of the group. An essential part of the analysis is that the numeral can be analyzed as the main member.

This chapter also describes the so-called extended noun group, consisting of at least three constituents – a main member, a dependent and a modifier to one of the members (i.e. a simple noun group + a modifier). Both criteria for a given lexical item to extend the corresponding simple group – word order and position (the modifier of a simple group cannot be a main member within the simple group) are discussed, along with the recursion mechanisms.

The first five simple groups have a noun as the main member (N A (adjective), N N, N Adv (adverb), N Num (numeral), and N Pr (preposition)), while in the remaining four groups (Num N, A N, Pr N, Inc (interjection) N) the noun is a dependent.

There are interesting moments in the description and analysis of N N group and the groups with a numeral and with an interjection. Unlike other dependent approaches (namely, the Universal Dependencies' one), here the preposition is the main member of the simple group.

The subsection on the N N group deals with the criteria for distinguishing between a simple group and a compound lexical unit – article on the first noun and the possibility of inserting a modifier between the two components (examples are also commented on). The criteria for determining the main member in the N N group are presented (with a review of the views on the issue and the proposed criteria and motivations): an article on one of the nouns (most often the first noun), a preposition phrase (most often the second noun is governed by a preposition), and agreement with the predicate.

Numerals (cardinal ones, as well as много 'many', малко 'few', николко lit. 'not at all', колко 'how many', etc.) are analyzed as main members of a simple group (this approach is well argued through the formal criteria outlined in the *Normative Grammar of the Bulgarian Language*). The author leaves open the question of the main member, since the criteria that she cites following other literature on the topic do not point to a single and consistent solution.

*Comment*

The ambivalent attitude towards numerals is also reflected in the analysis of the simple groups with a noun as the main member (N Num), which is expanded with another simple group with a numeral as the main member (being expanded with (another) noun) (*височина два метра* lit. 'height two meters', *чакането четири години* lit. 'waiting four years' etc., but *височина (от) два метра* lit. 'height (of) two meters', *чакането (от) четири години* lit. 'waiting (of) four years'; *чакането (с) години* lit. 'waiting (with) years', *годините чакане* lit. 'years-the waiting'). I think that the description here can benefit from bridging to constituency, i.e. explicitly defining an expansion with a simple group with a numeral as the main member. Since one of the indisputable advantages of dependency analysis is precisely in the binary nature of the relation, here the factor of adjacency is probably no longer significant.

The simple group with interjection as the main member behaves relatively consistently. As expected, since these are predicative units, the techniques of extension in the middle are more than with the other simple groups, and the positions of extensions are more diverse. Since these are still predicative units (even to a higher degree than adjectives, for example), I am not convinced that they are an indisputable part of the grouping with a noun as a member of the group.

Due to the enormous volume of empirical material for these syntactic groups (in some accounts, the structure of the noun phrase largely repeats the structure of the sentence), a comprehensive quantitative analysis is not possible (or rather, it would be irrelevant, since for such an analysis statistical methods must be applied relatively to the type and the volume of the data). However, some reviews of the data and comments on a sample of the empirical material, which is excerpted for the purposes of observations and conclusions, would have been sufficient with some structures (especially if relatively rare).

Some observations are left without further analysis; they could form the basis of a separate study (e.g. for the definite adjective in groups with postfixed extended adverbs, connected without a preposition). Short adjectival (possessive) pronouns extend only a definite noun (or a group with a definite article), with some exceptions with kinship nouns (*дъщеря ми* lit. 'daughter my', *чичо ми* lit. 'uncle my', *леля ми* lit. 'aunt my'; but *сина ми* lit. 'son-the my').

A list of abbreviations is missing. It would be good to have an appendix with basic (or even rarer and more interesting) examples from the corpus data, as well as possible schematic representations of the syntactic analysis.

The conclusion very concisely outlines the conclusions that have been made in the individual parts of Chapter Three. The fewest extension techniques occur on the left where mainly adjectives and adverbs are found. In the middle and to the right, the techniques used are much more diverse. This is even more true for prepositional techniques, since each simple group can be expanded to the right in more than one way.

***Question***

Could the author propose some explanation for this imbalance of expansion techniques (and ultimately of the elements with which the main member is expanded to the left and to the right)?

The presented dissertation work is distinguished by an undeniable scientific contribution towards the presentation of the noun phrase in the Bulgarian language within the framework of the dependency grammar. Indeed, as the dissertation candidate points out, the analysis of the extension techniques can serve to supplement the formal syntactic description of the structural relations in simple syntactic groups, developed in the *Normative Grammar of the Bulgarian Language*. The text has been successfully approbated in the three articles, published in the *Bulgarian Language* journal.

The presented dissertation proves the competence of the dissertation candidate and her skills to critically analyze and apply scientific research methods. Based on this, I confidently propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Malina Georgieva Stoycheva the scientific and educational degree of "doctor".

Reviewer: .....

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tsvetana Dimitrova)