

Opinion

of the doctoral dissertation submitted for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor"

Topic: Techniques for Expanding Simple Groups Containing a Noun Component

Author: Malina Stoycheva

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ruska Stancheva

Structure and Topic of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography, which demonstrates the PhD student's thorough familiarity with the key research on the topic she has investigated. The work is 170 pages in length.

The well-chosen topic of the reviewed work deserves particular emphasis — it is undoubtedly suitable for a dissertation, given the absence of any comprehensive study on the techniques for expanding phrases containing a noun component in the Bulgarian language. The dissertation is developed within the framework of dependency theory and is grounded in the theoretical positions set out in the collective work *Normative Grammar of the Bulgarian Language*. The PhD student adheres to the terminology introduced in the *Normative Grammar* and draws on the grammatical analyses in that work of simple syntactic groups with a noun as a member.

The dissertation examines the expansion techniques for nine simple groups, in five of which the noun is the head, and in the remaining four ($\text{Num} \rightarrow \text{N}$, $\text{A} \rightarrow \text{N}$, $\text{Pr} \rightarrow \text{N}$, and $\text{Inc} \rightarrow \text{N}$) it is a dependent component. The analysis draws on language material extracted from the Bulgarian National Corpus, which, with its volume of over 1.2 billion words, is a reliable source of information on how lexemes function in contemporary Bulgarian.

The dissertation includes a substantial theoretical section presented in Chapters One and Two. The development of these two chapters demonstrates the PhD student's in-depth knowledge of contemporary syntactic theories such as constituency grammar and dependency grammar. The conceptions of the noun phrase category and its related notions in Bulgarian linguistics are examined in detail. Classifications of noun phrases in Western linguistics and of their corresponding word combinations in Bulgarian linguistics are presented, with due attention given to the distinction between these terms and the term "simple syntactic group" used in the work. Chapter Two examines the views of leading proponents of the dependency approach followed in the work, clearly highlighting the differences between it and constituency grammar. Considerable space is devoted to its advantages, with a well-argued justification for adopting this particular approach in the dissertation. The characteristics of the five structural types of simple groups with a noun as head, and their corresponding noun phrases, are examined thoroughly. Noteworthy is the skillful integration of existing views on the properties of noun phrases with the research approach of the dissertation, which operates within a different theoretical framework and employs different terminology.

The most important part of the dissertation is Chapter Three, which presents the results of the analysis of expansion techniques for simple groups containing a noun in Bulgarian. When examining groups with a noun as head — which are comparable to noun phrases — the PhD student also pays attention to a number of observations existing in the scientific literature on the techniques of expanding these phrases.

The analysis of the expanded groups is carried out with great detail and precision, taking into account several criteria. The primary criterion concerns the position occupied by the modifiers (to the left, in the middle, or to the right) within the respective simple group. Also considered are the grammatical classes to which the modifier lexemes belong, as well as additional factors such as word order features, semantic properties of the members of the simple group, and others.

In the course of the research, M. Stoycheva encounters a number of debated questions that do not yet have a definitive answer — namely, the boundaries of the category of compound lexical unit and the criteria for distinguishing it from the simple group $N \rightarrow N$, as well as the question of which are the head members of the $N \rightarrow N$ and $Num \rightarrow N$ groups. On each of these questions, the PhD student presents numerous arguments in support of each of the existing positions, demonstrating her thorough familiarity with the issues discussed, and the decisions she makes are well motivated in light of the formal criteria she follows. It should also be noted that the analysis of the expanded groups reveals the PhD student's undoubted potential for research work. The analysis requires decisions on numerous problematic cases allowing for dual interpretation, which she handles very well.

The study of expansion techniques for simple groups containing nouns in the dissertation yields results that may be considered contributions to the field. I will highlight the following, which I consider most significant:

1. The expansion techniques for simple groups with a noun component are described in detail, and a considerable number of expanded groups are identified — a significant result that enriches knowledge of the simple groups studied in the *Normative Grammar of the Bulgarian Language*. It may be considered that the PhD student has fully achieved her goals and tasks within the theoretical framework she employs. Furthermore, given the potential correspondence between simple groups with a noun as head and noun phrases, another important result of the work may be noted: the expansion techniques identified therein are also valuable and useful for enriching knowledge of expanded noun phrases.
2. The most widely represented expansion techniques for each of the analyzed types of simple groups have been identified, and in the concluding section important generalizations are drawn concerning which types of modifiers appear in expanded groups, the positions in which each of them most frequently occurs, and the number of techniques in each of the positions studied. These generalizations are grounded in language material extracted from a corpus of enormous size — the Bulgarian National Corpus — which is a prerequisite for their reliability.
3. A number of restrictions on the expansion of certain simple groups have been identified, blocking the possibility of lexemes from specific grammatical classes appearing in certain positions within them. Factors have also been identified that block the recursive left-expansion with an adjective of the simple group $N \rightarrow A$.

Some theoretical positions in the dissertation raise questions relating primarily to the theoretical framework followed by the PhD student. A few inaccuracies are also observed, of which I will note only one: the insufficiently precise distinction between the terms *modifier* and *dependent member of a simple group* (p. 8), formulated in such a way that the difference between them remains unclear. Some mutually inconsistent analyses of examples are also noted. These remarks, however, do not alter the overall positive assessment of the work.

Assessment of the Abstract

The abstract submitted by the PhD student accurately reflects the content of the dissertation and its contributions.

Publications Related to the Dissertation

PhD student M. Stoycheva has 3 publications on the topic of the dissertation, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Bulgarian Language*.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above, I consider that the doctoral dissertation of M. Stoycheva, *Techniques for Expanding Simple Groups Containing a Noun Component*, represents a serious and thorough work with clear scholarly contributions. I therefore confidently recommend that the esteemed scientific jury vote in favour of awarding the educational and scientific degree of Doctor to Malina Stoycheva.

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Author of the opinion:

Prof. Sia Kolkovska