

## REVIEW

of the Doctoral Thesis of Finka Ivanova Sirakova titled ‘Linguistic Aspects of Prepositional and Non-Prepositional Constructions in the Bulgarian Language’ for the award of the higher education and academic degree of ‘Doctor’ in Science Area 2. *Humanities*, Professional Field

2.1. *Philology (Bulgarian Language - Syntax)*

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By Order No. ПД-38-459 of 19.07.2024 of the Rector of Sofia University ‘St. Kliment Ohridski’ I was appointed a member of the Academic Board of Examiners for defence of Finka Ivanova Sirakova’s Doctoral Thesis. Procedure was followed in all its aspects. The applicant has fulfilled the necessary minimum national requirements for Science Area 2. *Humanities*, Professional Field 2.1. *Philology (Bulgarian Language - Syntax)*, and the requirements of the ‘Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act’, the ‘Rules on the Implementation of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act’, the ‘Rules on the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Academic Degrees and Filling of Academic Posts’ at Sofia University ‘St. Kliment Ohridski’.

Finka Sirakova holds a Bachelor's degree in Bulgarian Philology and a Master's in the Master's programme ‘Translator-Editor’ with a major in Greek and German. From 2021 to 2024 she has been a PhD student in the Department of Bulgarian Language at the Faculty of Slavic Philology. The applicant is an accredited translator from and into Greek and German. Interestingly, she also has a Master's degree in Tourism.

The topic of the mechanisms by which prepositions fall into certain positions in different types of phrases in Bulgarian is quite interesting. However, it is only partially developed in Bulgarian grammatical literature, and there predominantly in terms of the correct or incorrect use of such constructions. Therefore, this work, being a comprehensive study of this process is, without any doubt, a worthwhile contribution. I would like to highlight the fact that the text is very well and logically constructed, and readable. The applicant has an excellent command of grammatical terminology, demonstrates an extremely thorough awareness of literary sources, and manages to make appropriate sense of these in her work.

The abstract amounts to 51 pages. It fully meets the requirements of the genre and correctly reflects the content and contributions of the dissertation.

The list of publications by Finka Sirakova on the topic, as presented, includes three articles that have been published. Two of them are in Bulgarian journals and one in Czech. The problems of the use of prepositions in spoken language, compound prepositions, and the preposition „на“ ('of') in a contrastive aspect (compared to the corresponding preposition in Greek) are discussed.

Finka Sirakova's Doctoral Thesis 'Linguistic Aspects of Prepositional and Non-Prepositional Constructions in the Bulgarian Language' (amounting to 155 pages) consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of contributions to science, a bibliography and appendices (sample research material, lists of examples, tables). The main text amounts to 125 pages. The bibliography includes nearly 100 titles, mainly in Bulgarian, but also publications in Russian, German and Greek. This fact exemplifies the exceptional literary awareness of the PhD student.

Finka Sirakova demonstrates excellence in critically analysing existing concepts and proposing her own interpretation, supported by a solid base of argument. The applicant possesses the necessary terminological apparatus at an extremely high level. Although the work is not 'comparative' in conception, she does offer comparison of the phrases under consideration with those in German and Greek. This technique adds to the typological significance of the work and shows Finka Sirakova's multilingual linguistic preparedness.

The *Introduction* discusses the subject, object, purpose and aims of the research. The subject focuses on prepositional and non-prepositional constructions in the Bulgarian language. The object covers competing prepositional and non-prepositional phrases with differing supports - nominal, verbal, prepositional, adjectival and adverbial. The aim is to examine syntactic aspects of the phenomenon within the framework of constituent routines, by considering the subordinate relativities in and outside the constituent. These elements are presented in a very concrete and focused way. The types of phrases in which the supports are, variously, the verbal noun, verbs with definite extensions, and a compound preposition, are discussed. A hypothesis is presented according to which there are certain conditions for inducing transformation from a prepositional to a non-prepositional expression. The methods used, which represent a combination of approaches to the data, are also listed. In my opinion, the structural and empirical approaches dominate. These

are used to appropriately objectify the observations made. For the reader's convenience, a brief summary of the contents of the work is also presented here.

It is an excellent practice to provide a list of abbreviations used in the publication, for which I congratulate the applicant. Having said this, perhaps the abbreviations used to cite literary sources should only appear in the bibliography. I also offer a comment regarding the content and structuring of chapters. In the table of contents under Chapter Three, there are circa 15 subheadings. This could definitely be condensed. With regard to the presentation of the parts themselves, I will give two examples *in re* Chapter One. Chapter One itself is the 'Theoretical Overview'. One could save the text from being burdened with too many [verbose] headings as follows: instead of *Chapter One - Theoretical Overview*, make it *I. Theoretical Overview*. It is also better to have a small connecting and/or explanatory text after each heading, before the next (in this case *I.1 Word-Combination* follows).

In the first Chapter, 'Theoretical Overview', the author presents a discussion of the terms that refer to a word combination, to wit, the typology of a word combination, and subordinating syntactic relations. In fact, later in her work, Finka Sirakova continuously cites sources and presents overviews on various topics related to these. Thus, the actual survey is not only restricted to this part of the work. Thus, an otherwise very well and thoroughly written chapter lacks explicit motivation for the necessity of considering types of word combinations against various criteria and the relations within them. It is therefore useful to add a brief motivation before the sub-part 'Word-Combination'.

Chapter Two, 'Prepositional and Non-Prepositional Constructions', now focuses more specifically on the topic of the dissertation, with special attention to the definitions of preposition and prepositional behaviour. The main characteristics of the preposition are highlighted and a specific working definition is chosen to reflect the syntactic function of this part of speech. The chosen definition is that most directly relevant to the work. More varied views are proffered on so-called compound prepositions or prepositional phrases of the type „за сметка на“ ('on account of'). Here I would like to ask the following: if the preposition expresses only subordinating relations, then what is the relation in the phrase „Иван с Петър“ ('*Ivan with Peter*') in the sentence *Иван с Петър отидоха за рибa. (Ivan with Peter went fishing). (= Иван и Петър отидоха за рибa. Ivan and Peter went fishing)?*

Table 1 presents extremely useful information on variation in the typology of prepositions across different Bulgarian linguists. Table 2, which presents the combinatorics of prepositional phrases, is also very valuable. However, when excerpted material is presented, it is also good to have some concrete statistics - frequency of occurrence of a given type, etc. Of course, when and where applicable, because the nature of the problem at hand is such that, for example, while the types of prepositional phrase can be found and measured in Bulgarian text corpora, their non-prepositional equivalents would not be encountered as often or even at all. The Third Chapter, 'Trends in the Transformation of Prepositional Constructions into Non-Prepositional Constructions,' is, from my point of view, the most contributory because it examines the conditions under which the transformation from prepositional to non-prepositional phrases occurs. Of particular value is the measurement of the use of prepositional versus non-prepositional equivalents which, predictably, favours the prepositional. Here, trends in the dropout of prepositions in some constructs are also tracked.

This chapter discusses, in detail, prepositional construction in *-ne* and *-nie* verbal nouns, as well as other deverbal nouns, and in verbal and other phrases. Table 3 is very valuable, showing, as it does, the possibilities of transformation of prepositional into non-prepositional phrases, and making it evident that in quite a few cases such transformation is possible and viable. It might be better, from the point of view of completeness of description, to add prepositional constructs where those without prepositions are identified. For example, along with 'undertaking an evacuation' there should also be 'undertaking of an evacuation'.

The descriptions of the 17 types of non-prepositional constructs based on the rules of L. Andreychin are very useful. I would like to ask if the author has found other rules to add to Andreychin's and whether she was tempted to modify any of these? What is the typological difference between examples N5 and N12? What does the applicant think about these two types being systematic in Bulgarian grammar? Should they be part of the proposed descriptions? I support the study of the administrative-business style, as this is where the omission of prepositions is more frequently observed.

The conclusions drawn about the realization and/or blocking of transformation are vital observations, in the subpart, of other cases of competition when supports are action nouns, in the verb phrase, the adjective phrase, in adverbs, and in complex prepositions are also of contributory value. In the section on the verb phrase, the fact that the dissertation uses the valency frames and

meanings from Maria Popova's Concise Valency Dictionary (1987) makes a very good impression. The conditions for the realization of preposition shortening are described. These concern the following: type of preposition, semantics of the verb and the indefinite article of the subordinate noun. It comes to the important conclusions that the phenomenon is also observed in oral speech, and that "the absence of a preposition does not lead to a loss of information and therefore to problems in comprehension" (p. 94). I also find the focus on the omission of prepositions before nouns or numerals of time - months, years, seasons, etc. interesting.

In this part of the dissertation a comparative analysis of the processes of 'preposition dropping' in the Bulgarian language with those in Greek and German is presented. It is concluded that there are similarities with constructions in Greek, but no similar constructions in German. Last but not least, I must mention the section dealing with the dropping of a preposition at the end of a prepositional phrase (*on the occasion (of)*, *in relation (to)*, etc.). Tables 4 and 5 summarize those situations in which the final preposition is omitted. In the sections covering adjectives and adverbs, prepositional phrasing seems, in fact, only systematic, with no conditions for dropping explicit prepositions.

In the last short chapter, *Conclusion*, a systematic summary of the research results is presented.

The contributions made by this work are correctly identified. A total of 6 such contributions are presented. They are as follows: i) this is the first comprehensive study not only of phrases with dropped prepositions in the Bulgarian language, but also of the mechanisms and conditions under which this phenomenon occurs; ii) a thorough critical analysis of literature related to the topic over the last 40 years is made; iii) a thorough syntactic analysis, within the constructions under consideration and in their relation to external constituents, is presented; iv) the criteria proposed by L. Andreychin's rules for the omission of the preposition are validated; v) this latter phenomenon is also studied in typological terms, by means of observations of material from Greek and German; vi) the tendencies toward development of non-prepositional constructs are outlined, as related to factors such as economy of expression rather than stylistically determining factors.

The remarks I have made in no way detract from the value of the work submitted. Therefore, on the basis of everything I have said above, I confidently recommend that the Honourable Board award the higher education and academic degree of 'Doctor' to Finka Ivanova Sirakova in Science Area 2. *Humanities*, Professional Field 2.1. *Philology (Bulgarian Language -*

*Syntax*) based upon her Doctoral Thesis ‘Linguistic Aspects of Prepositional and Non-Prepositional Construct in the Bulgarian Language’.

01.10. 2024

Reviewer:

Sofia