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ON SOME RECENT TENDENCIES TOWARD ANALITICITY IN MODERN BULGARIAN

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Abstract: The article deals with two phenomena in Modern Bulgarian that definitely demonstrate its further development toward analyticity. The first phenomenon is the so-called ‘full definite article’ which is compulsory for masculine nouns in subject position in written language (but not in speech) and the second – the accusative form of the relative pronoun *кой* (*who*), which is falling out of use both in speech and in writing. On the basis of theoretical arguments as well as examples from actual usage and a psycholinguistic experiment the authors argue that the time has come for the respective authorities and language planners to officially change the rigid grammatical rules so that they reflect more precisely the natural development of the language. The social consequences of these processes have also been considered.

Key words: Bulgarian, analyticity, full definite article, case of the pronoun, language planning

Introduction

In Slavic studies it is generally agreed that Bulgarian demonstrates several linguistic ‘innovations’ that result in setting it typologically apart from all other Slavic languages. In its historical development Bulgarian has lost case declension in the nominal system, the verb infinitive and has developed a suffixed definite article [1]. These phenomena are often interpreted as a result of language contact realized within the Balkan Sprachbund [2]. Regardless of the reasons for such unique historical developments are, linguists unanimously agree that as a consequence Modern Bulgarian demonstrates a strong tendency towards analyticity compared to the rest of the Slavic languages.

Aims

The basic aim of this article is to focus on two phenomena, namely the status and use of the full definite article *-ѝм* on the one hand, and the variation of the forms *кой* (who - nominative) and *кого* (who - accusative) in Modern Bulgarian, on the other in order to find out what their standing in both the structure of the language and its current usage is.

Basic hypotheses

The analysis is based on the following hypotheses:

- The developments towards analyticity are still under way in Modern Bulgarian, especially in the nominal system, affecting mainly the categories of the noun and the pronoun.
- This tendency is most perceptible in spoken language, whereas the rigid rules in written language hinder the natural development of Modern Bulgarian.

Material

The analysis is based on samples of spoken and written production of Bulgarian native speakers, including examples from newspaper language and ‘erroneous’ production in everyday usage.

Analysis

The analysis includes both qualitative and quantitative methods dwelling on the systemic relations within the language system, as well as a psycho-linguistic experiment.

Discussion.

1. The discrepancy between spoken and written discourse in Modern Bulgarian concerning the use of the full definite article (henceforth FDA) and the accusative form *кого* (whom).

It is a well-known fact in general linguistics that written language is the main object of codification on the part of either prominent scholars or institutions, resulting in prescriptive grammar and spelling rules. They can be viewed as a product of language planning and language policy and often reflect the subjective linguistic assumptions of individuals or authorities, whose judgments do not necessarily correspond to the natural tendencies of language development. Once introduced and imposed on the users, these rules remain rigid and unchangeable for a long time and, as a rule, it requires a lot of efforts to overcome clashes of opinions and bring them into accordance with the natural development of the language, reflected in its actual use.

In this article we adhere to the general understanding that spoken language reflects the natural development of the language, while the rules for the written language not only lag behind speech, but, which is worse, in the case of the FDA and *кого* they hinder the natural development of the language on the systemic level thus leading to growing discrepancies between the spoken and the written mode in Modern Bulgarian.

General observations show that native speakers of Modern Bulgarian, regardless of their social or educational status, do not use the FDA and generally disregard the form *кого* replacing it by *кой* in their speech. The strict rules to be adhered to in written language in this respect can be generalized as follows:

- The FDA *-ъм* shall be used with all masculine nouns appearing as subjects, subject complements or appositions in the sentence.
- The form *кой* shall be used as a pro-form for nouns in subject position, and *кого* is the pro-form for antecedents in all non-subject positions.

One important difference needs to be made here: the two cases should be viewed somewhat separately as the Bulgarian Spelling and Pronunciation Dictionaries state that the FDA *-ъм* shall not be pronounced in speech where it should be replaced by the Short Definite Article (SDA) –а [3], whereas the basic difference between *кой* and *кого* should be retained in both (spoken and written) modes of Standard Bulgarian. This state of affairs comes to show that in the case of the FDA a certain attempt has been made to neutralize the difference between written and spoken language. Nonetheless, this does not apply to either the use of the FDA and SDA in the written language, or to the distinct use of *кой* and *кого* in both written and spoken Bulgarian.

Basic statement: The attempts to preserve the FDA and the form *кого* [4] represent anachronisms and are contrary to the natural development of Bulgarian which tends to analyticity at least as far as the nominal categories are concerned.

The status of the Full Definite Article from a systemic point of view.

1. Only the nouns of Masculine gender in Modern Bulgarian can be marked by two definite articles – the Full Definite article *-ъм* (/–ət/) and the Short definite article *-а* (/–ə/). The FDA marks the syntactic position of the subject, and the SDA marks the syntactic

position of the direct and indirect objects. Nouns of Feminine and Neuter gender are marked by one generic article regardless of their syntactic positions in the clause.

2. The FDA as opposed to the SDA are categories which present a two-member opposition only in the singular. In the plural the opposition is neutralized through the use of the generalized article *-ме*, independent of the syntactic position or the Masculine or Feminine gender of the noun. The Neuter nouns in the plural are marked by the morphological ending *-ма*.

3. The difference between the FDA and the SDA is syntactic as they mark morphologically different arguments of the verb within the clause. This idea is not new at all in the Bulgarian linguistic tradition. In the 60s Stoyanov formulates the rules for the use of the FDA stating that it is used when the defined noun functions as a subject, subject complement or apposition in the clause [5].

Much more precise is Maslov, who states that the FDA marks Nominative Case, while the SDA marks Objective Case [6].

The status of the FDA as a case marker is further illustrated by examples in passive voice, where according to the rules of written Bulgarian the formal subject must be marked by a FDA:

Магазинът е затворен. (The shop (SUB) is closed.)

Допуска се изводът, че ... (The conclusion (SUB) is drawn...)

and clauses where the Subject is marked by a SDA like:

Магазинаа е затворен. (The shop (OBJ) is closed.)

Допуска се извода, че ... (The conclusion (OBJ) is drawn...)

are considered erroneous.

4. One of the basic arguments of the FDA proponents is the claim that its use retains the logical interpretation in terms of the semantic roles 'doer' and 'recipient' in clauses with two-place predicates presented by notional verbs. As Modern Bulgarian is a language with a relatively free word order, they claim that the FDA marking of the doer secures correct interpretation of the roles of the participants in the proposition. The example below illustrates how the word order does not influence the interpretation of the propositional content due to the fact that the doer is marked by a FDA:

(1) a. *Ловецът видя лъва (The hunter (SUB) saw the lion (OBJ)).*

b. *Лъва видя ловецът. (The lion (OBJ) saw the hunter (SUB)).*

(2) a. *Лъвът видя ловеца. (The lion (SUB) saw the hunter (OBJ)).*

b. *Ловеца видя лъвът. (The hunter (OBJ) saw the lion (SUB)).*

To a certain extent it is true that in the case of the Bulgarian relatively free word order the FDA marking facilitates the correct interpretation of the clause, but here comes the question: What happens in speech, where this marking is by all means optional? How is it that Bulgarian native speakers understand each other unproblematically not only through writing but also, not surprisingly, through speech? Observations of everyday language practice demonstrate in addition that even educated Bulgarians sometimes make mistakes replacing the FDA by the SDA in written language and contrary to the codifiers' claims, again achieve understanding. What is more, what happens in propositions containing nouns of the feminine or neuter gender, where there is no choice of articles?

It seems that the answer to all those questions lies in the fact that ambiguity is abundant in every human language at various levels of the language system. The correct understanding of a proposition is commonly supported by additional pragmatic and cognitive instruments lying in the area of common sense and human experience. Let us consider the following binary propositions:

- (3) a. Камъкът уби човека. (*The stone (SUB) killed the man (OBJ).*)
 b. Камъка уби човека. (*The stone (SUB) killed the man (OBJ).*)
 c. *Човекът уби камъка. (*The man (SUB) killed the stone (OBJ).*)
 e. *Човека уби камъка. (*The man (SUB) killed the stone (OBJ).*)

(3a.) is grammatically well-formed and semantically acceptable. (3b.) does not differ from 3a. as it represents the spoken mode and shows a grammatical mistake in the use of the SDA instead of the FDA which does not in any way influence the interpretation. As for (3c.) and (3d.), neither of them is interpretable. The lack of interpretability is neither rooted in the ungrammaticality of (3d.), nor is it resolved by the grammatically correct marking of the subject position as in (3c.). It depends on our common sense and what we know about the logic of the world [7].

The fact that neither the existence nor the non-existence of the FDA for identifying the doer is relevant for the interpretation of propositions finds support in a sample of headlines taken from current Bulgarian newspaper language:

- (4) a. Известен бизнесмен удари джакпот. (*A famous businessman hit the jackpot.*)
 b. Плъх нахана дете. (*A rat bit a child.*)
 c. Един килограм месо яде мощността на крушка за 20 дни. (*A kilo of meat eats the power of a bulb in 20 days.*)
- (5) a. Елен убил германски турист. (*A deer killed a German tourist.*)
 b. Вълк, не куче, отглежда бай Станой от Кърнаре. (*A wolf, not a dog is raised by uncle Stanoj from Kurnare.*)
 c. 12 проститутки заловиха трима полицаи. (*12 prostitutes arrested three policemen.*)

All nouns in the examples above lack articles in Bulgarian, which does not cause misinterpretation for different reasons. In (4) the interpretation of the proposition lies in the formal identification of the first noun in the initial position of the sentence as the logical subject. The second group (5) is much more interesting. The initial position of the subject is taken by the object and as there are no articles to mark the subject or the object, the sentences become grammatically ambiguous. As a matter of fact, these are cases of topicalization of the rheme for stylistic purposes. Consequently, they are not ambiguous *per se* and can thus be referred to as pseudo-ambiguous. In support of this view comes the observation that most of the Bulgarians coming across such cases tend to consider them simply humorous rather than semantically ambiguous. The correct interpretation is guaranteed by knowledge lying outside the grammar rules and ambiguity is thus neutralized at the cognitive level.

From what has been said so far, we can come to the conclusion that the FDA in Modern Bulgarian takes an isolated position in the system of articles. First, it appears only in the singular and only with masculine nouns [8]. These observations lead us further on to the conclusion that the FDA presents an instance of exception and asymmetry in the grammatical system of the determiners in Modern Bulgarian. Second, the FDA is strictly syntactically dependent on the subject position of the noun in the clause. The co-existence of two forms – the full and the short definite articles which are in relation of complementary distribution raises the question as to what linguistics categories they belong to.

In order to answer this question an experiment was conducted with first-to-fourth year students majoring in English Philology and Applied Linguistics at the South-Western University of Blagoevgrad. They were given sentences to translate from English into Bulgarian, which required the use of both the FDA and the SDA. The subjects were expected to apply the rules for the use of the FDA and the SDA correctly as they had studied them in

the secondary school and had already passed their exam in Bulgarian Grammar and Spelling at the university. In the overall 2000 sentences, presenting equal proportion of simple clauses, complex and compound sentences, as well as clauses in passive voice, the FDA was replaced by the SDA in 278 cases which represent 14% overall erroneous written production distributed as follows: 18 % in simple and 19% in complex sentences respectively and 25% in passive voice.

As the data shows, the highest percentage of erroneous production is observed in the passive voice predominantly in those samples where the subject takes sentence final position:

(6) *Кога е изобретен телефона*? (*When was the telephone invented?*)

(7) *След колко време ще бъде отворен младежкия център*? (*When will the youth centre be opened?*)

The second most frequent erroneous production group includes cases presenting an attribute-subject group, subject complement or apposition, all sharing one syntactic feature: the subject is not in a clear sentence initial position or is preceded by another word.

(8) *Той си е същия идиот като преди*. (*He is the same idiot as before*).

(9) *Работлив, услужлив и любезен – такъв е нашия нов колега Иван Петров*. (*Hard-working, helpful and kind – such is our new colleague Ivan Petrov*).

(10) *Иван, градинаря, дойде рано сутринта*. (*Ivan, the gardener, came early in the morning*).

It is interesting that the percentage of errors does not depend very much on the length of the clauses as simple and complex clauses present similar rate of errors.

On the whole, the students clearly identify the subject and apply the rule for the use of the FDA with singular masculine nouns if they appear in sentence initial position only. On the basis of language evidence from everyday usage, the pronunciation rules and the experiment conducted, we can conclude the following: the full definite article in written Bulgarian is redundant. It is regularly replaced by the short definite article as a determiner *per se* for *casus generalis*. The reasons are both morphological and syntactic:

- The FDA presents an asymmetry in the morphological system of determiners. Every system strives for symmetry and one way to achieve it is either by dropping the asymmetrical element or replacing it by another, which is in conformity with the system.
- The irrelevance of the FDA for the Bulgarian native speakers can be a result of the ongoing processes toward analyticity and loss of case inflections on the syntactic level. The FDA is ambivalent: it is a case marker and a deictic category where the case marking function is predominant. The loss of inflections in the nominal categories logically affects the category of determiners as well. If the FDA is stripped of its nominative marker function, it will be replaced by the short indefinite article as a determiner proper.
- The SDA is in a process of being generalized as a determiner for the masculine singular nouns in both spoken and written Bulgarian, counter to the prescriptive rules. The problem needs brisk measures to be taken by the language planning authorities as it turns into one with social significance and a basis for stereotyping the part of the Bulgarian population who use correctly the FDA as educated and intelligent, and the rest - as unintelligent and illiterate. Such a division proves wrong and unfair checked against the rules of natural language development.
- The historical perspective on the development of Bulgarian also supports the idea of a single article. It was a fact in the complex inflectional system of the Bulgarian noun in Old and Middle Bulgarian, where the article performed only a deictic function. And it remained that way until the full definite article was introduced and its functions determined by an Act of the Bulgarian Parliament of February 1945. We believe that the

time has come to put pressure on the present-day language codifiers to bring the language to its natural condition by changing the *status quo*.

The status of the form КОГО from a systemic point of view

The opposition between the interrogative and relative pronoun forms *кой* and *кого* in Modern Bulgarian are traceable back to the outset of the Bulgarian written language. The difference between them lies in the case marking they used to reflect: *кой* is the form for the Nominative case, in other words, for the subject position, and *кого*, which initially marked the Accusative in Old Bulgarian, is generalized for all other cases in Modern Bulgarian [9]. Normative use for both their written and spoken forms insists on keeping the difference between them. As many Bulgarian linguists agree, this difference has been blurred in everyday usage for more than 20 years now although no measures have been taken to conform the norm to the usage. The disappearance of the form *кого* and the generalization of *кой* for all syntactic positions is a logical consequence of the development of Bulgarian from a synthetic to an analytic type of language. In Modern Bulgarian due to the prescriptive rules the two forms are still in a state of free variation with predominant use of *кой*.

From a systemic point of view developing syntactic means to mark the case positions, it seems redundant to retain forms such as: *на кого*, which can be interpreted as grammatical tautology – the objective case is once marked by the preposition *на*, and then again by the suffix *-го*. This redundancy is in conflict with the economy principle in language and is normally avoided by the native speakers of Bulgarian who have lost the intuition for morphological case marking. Even highly educated linguists make mistakes, correcting the form *кого* and replacing it by *кой* in structures like:

(11) *В стаята няма никого.* [10] (*There is nobody in the room.*)

Conclusions.

The two phenomena in focus are closely related as they both present instances of the natural development of Modern Bulgarian toward analyticity. This, on its part, shows that the process of transition of Bulgarian from a synthetic fusional language to an analytic one is still an ongoing process which historically initially affected the nominal system and is now continuing by including other related areas such as the system of noun determiners and pronouns.

The opposition *кой-кого* in the pronoun system is based on the same underlying principle as the opposition *-ъм: -а* in the system of the determiners as both of them reflect the case difference Nominative: Accusative. Only the prescriptive rules, concerning mainly the written language, still support their existence in Modern Bulgarian. Spoken language tends to get rid of the redundant forms: the Nominative marking *-ъм* in the system of the articles, and the Accusative form *кого* in the system of the pronouns. The basic tendency is towards leveling the forms and generalizing one which is in conformity with the general definition of analytical languages where, since the words are not marked for morphology showing their role in the sentence, word order or lexical means tend to have a lot of importance for the interpretation of the clause's propositional content.

Finally, as it becomes obvious from the discussion above, every individual (personal or institutional) effort to change the natural trends in the development of a language or to determine them is doomed. The only result can be the creation of an abyss between the written and the spoken form of a language, but who would benefit from that? Isn't it easier to change the rules following the language, than preserving rules that nobody follows?

References and notes:

[1] A non-evidential mood in the verb system has also developed.

[2] *Sprachbund* refers to the ensemble of areal features - similarities in grammar, syntax, vocabulary and phonology among languages of the Balkans, which belong to various branches of Indo-European, such as Slavic, Greek, Romance and Albanian.

[3] The issue about the discrepancy between the spoken and the written rules for the use of the FDA and SDA was put to discussion long ago. In 1982 Maslov mentions that: "A firm invasion of the short article, which has become a rule in the speech of the people who speak the standard language, has been observed of late" (Маслов 1982:152). This phenomenon has become a norm nowadays. Quoting B. Georgiev: „[...] the rule for the use of the full and the short definite articles [...] shall be observed only in the written language. It is only a spelling rule. In speech we are not obliged to follow it.” (Георгиев 2002) (the authors' translation).

[4] Стоянов, С. (1964) *Граматика на български книжовен език. Фонетика и морфология*, София: Наука и изкуство, 218.

[5] Маслов, Ю. (1982) *Граматика на българския език*. София: Наука и изкуство, 152.

[6] Граматика 1983: 113; Стоянов 1964: 213-215; Стоянов 1980:5; Маслов 1982:151-152 и др.

[7] Of course, semantic analyses on both lexical and syntactic levels will provide explicit descriptions of why sentences like (3c. & d.) are non-interpretable, but this issue lies beyond the aims of the present article.

[8] In the course of the discussion a proposal that the definite article can also be interpreted as an instance of language sexism in Bulgarian was brought to the fore. Though this view has its logical premises, we will not explore the matter here as we assume that it needs further investigations.

[9] The form КОМУ (whom) for Dative Case has been replaced regularly by Prep + *Кого* (Acc) since the early sixties (Стоянов, 1964).

[10] This happened to me several years ago, when a well-known professor edited an article of mine for a journal. (E. Boyadzhieva)

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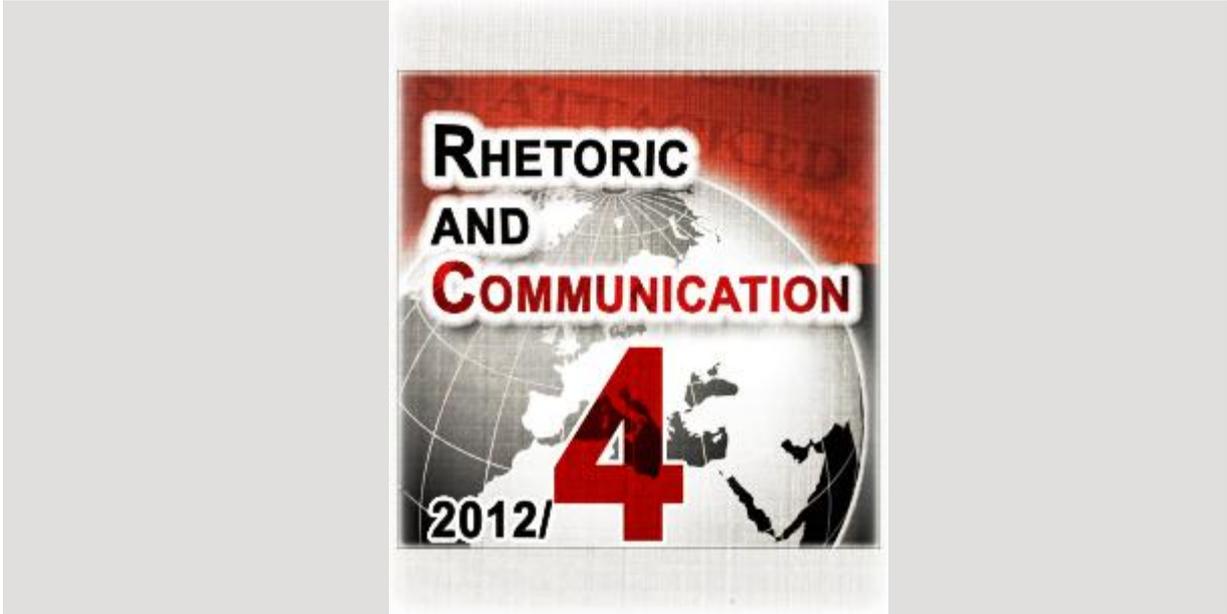
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Internet resources

Членуване - <[http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%](http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%>)>

Пълен член - <[http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9E%](http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9E%>)>

Лингвистичен форум - <<http://forum.offroad-bulgaria.com/showthread.php?t=28013&page=3>>



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