

REVIEW

by

Assoc. Prof. Daria Karapetkova, PhD

2.1. Philology: Italian, Theory and Practice of Translation

in the procedure for awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, professional area 2.1. Philology: Italian, to candidate Desislava Angelova Davidova, New Bulgarian University, Foreign Languages and Cultures Department for her dissertation entitled *A Comparative Study of Concessive Clauses in Italian and Bulgarian* (academic supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Nelly Radanova, PhD).

Introduction to the topic and the significance of the study, and general remarks

Although Italian Studies are a field of research with a long history in Bulgaria, work in the area chosen is little and few PhD dissertations have been defended in said area. Hence, a new study focusing on an important issue that has not received wide attention in Bulgaria, such as Italian concessive clauses, is most welcome. In arguing her choice of topic, Desislava Davidova has reviewed Italian grammatical literature and highlighted its important contribution to said topic, not failing to mention Bulgarian scholars who have worked in the area, notably Assoc. Prof. Nelly Radanova. The literature review offered is succinct but offers a sufficiently good overview of the perspectives and positions the author plans to argue. The review takes account of both the logical and temporal relations between main and subordinate clauses, thus siding with the highly streamlined and greatly detailed systematic account offered by Italian grammarians. The bibliography is sufficiently rich. This covers highly reputable texts and sources fundamental to the area. I would like to devote special attention to a peculiarity here, i.e. the fact that for decades now the works that have made the greatest contribution to the study of Italian grammar have been penned by foreign authors. This accounts for why texts by scholars like Pavao Tekavčić, Miklós Fogarasi and Gyula Herczeg have been cited in Ms Davidova's dissertation.

Similar to any comparative study, this one also analyses Bulgarian perspectives of the topic of choice in depth, starting with the position adopted by Aleksandar Stoyanov Teodorov-Balan, discussing those propounded by Lyubomir Andreychin and the authoritative academic grammar

and, finally, commenting on Ruselina Nitsolova's treatment. In her review, the author ventures into commentary, highlights points of agreement and disagreement and offers clarifications, thereby arguing her choice of topic and paving the way for the analyses and comparisons to follow.

Put briefly, the dissertation submitted for review by D. Davidova may be said to fill a long-since ignored gap in comparative linguistics and lays emphasis on a very specific issue that concerns the Italian–Bulgarian language pair. The text serves as a very good illustration of the principle differences between the various theoretical treatments of subordinate clauses in grammar at large and offers a valuable perspective on a model that may potentially be applied in Bulgarian theoretical works.

Much in the spirit of traditional dissertation structure, the objectives and tasks of the text have been worded in a succinct and clear fashion and the text pursues these in exactly the manner set out in the introduction. As already mentioned, the methodology used is a comparative one and relies on an interplay between theoretical and practical aspects insofar as it serves to introduce and highlight the issues of interest to grammar pertinent to and deriving from the field of translation. Drawing on the ways in which concessive clauses have been translated in instances of Italian–Bulgarian and Bulgarian–Italian translation, the author pinpoints divergences, translation options and, hence, versions as well as differences, but also similarities, between concessive clauses in Bulgarian and Italian. It can be argued that, by working with corpora and analysing translation options, the author has achieved her objective and gone beyond a descriptive analysis to pursue a semantic functional account of concessive clauses. The concessive relationship 'is conceived as a move from a syntactic relationship to a semantic category'. The word-order aspect of the issue, i.e. the position of the subordinate clause with respect to the main clause, has also received discussion. This is often a stumbling block encountered by learners of Italian.

This is where I would like to highlight another specificity of the dissertation under review. Although it aims to treat a topic that is essentially linguistic, thanks to the translation-related spin on this topic, the text has succeeded in bringing linguistics and literature closer together in an interesting way, thereby fully living up to its claim to being a philological study.

The positions adopted by D. Davidova and the commentary offered by her, as well as the translation versions that she proposes (versions in line with her linguistic background), make for a positive impression. All of this goes to show that the dissertation under review is not a mere retelling of other scholars' achievements, as is sometimes the case, but a mature, thought-out text capable of making a contribution to the problem treated. For instance, the approach of citing examples from published translations offering a variety of translation choices with respect to concessive clauses has indeed been productive. The author makes sure to note that not all choices are correct, and rightly so, although she is decidedly careful in her wordings.

The differences present in the approaches to describing and discussing subordinate clauses lie at the root of the various terminological apparatuses used for these purposes. Indeed, the dissertation employs a number of terms derived from Italian works and translated into Bulgarian.

The corpus used by the author suffices for the purposes of the text. It has been compiled with precision and comprises both the selection of works of fiction whose translations are used and a questionnaire, which summarises commentary offered by university students and pupils. This last point is of great importance since error analysis offers information on the difficulties encountered by learners of Italian, including when these are asked to translate into their mother tongue.

List of contributions

The contributions of the dissertation have been listed correctly and, much like the body of the text proper, are presented in a neat, unobtrusive manner. It is true that this is the first full-fledged comparative study from Bulgaria on the topic at hand to discuss the Italian–Bulgarian language pair and focus on the semantics of concessive clauses. The text offers an expanded classification of concessive clauses which matches the meaning and type of concessive constructions to the fullest. The focus on the differences between concessive clauses in Italian and Bulgarian is also an important contribution.

On a more global scale, the literature review, especially in the section devoted to Bulgarian literature, underlines the advantages and disadvantages of the degree of theoretical abstraction

employed in published works, as well as the deficiencies the text aims to correct and compensate for.

The observation concerning the conjunction **anche se** when used to introduce conditional concessive clauses and its use along with the subjunctive offers an important treatment of a special case. The observation goes hand with the exclusion of said conjunction from the range of synonymous concessive conjunctions as a matter of principle. Concessive conjunctions normally require the use of the conjunctive.

If the typical rendition of this conjunction, **дори да** ('even where'), is replaced by **дори ако** ('even if'), that will make this detail all the more ostensible. If the hypothetical semantics is highlighted and related to the use of the conjunctive, the semantic distinctness of the conjunction will come to the fore. This will not only be of great value to translation practice but will also expand the range of interpretations of the semantics of the conjunction.

While this is not required for the purposes of the text, I would recommend more in-depth commentary on the nominalisation of subordinate clauses (which serve as adjuncts of concession) in the course of translation, instance 13 on p. 61 being a good example, since the argument propounded, which cites verbosity, is indeed likely to be applied in choosing between translation options.

Last but not least, the study under consideration may be of use not just to learners of Italian but also to translators because it showcases the traps that a translator may encounter and analyses translations from various perspectives, citing some options as more suitable than others and instilling in the reader strategies that would allow them to avoid the traps mentioned.

In sum, all additional contributions of the study cited demonstrate that Desislava Davidova's dissertation entitled *A Comparative Study of Concessive Clauses in Italian and Bulgarian* demonstrates the author's in-depth theoretical knowledge in her field of choice and her capacity to conduct her own scientific research.

Summary and publications

The dissertation summary faithfully reflects the contents of the dissertation, clearly singling out and stating its contributions. The candidate has presented a sufficient number of articles

published in reputable outlets.

Personal qualities of the author (where the reviewer knows the author)

Desislava Davidova and I share the same alma mater, having completed the programme in Italian Philology at the Sv. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, so we have known each other from our shared time at said university. At a later point, she continued her career in the same professional area, solidifying my excellent impressions of her when I had the chance to observe her. Diligence, precision and responsibility are the first qualities that come to mind when I think of Desislava. I have had occasion to observe this in all the cases in which we have worked together. Coupled with her solid background and competence, these ensure that the New Bulgarian University will benefit from a scholar with a bright future ahead of her, an expert and a lecturer from whom students can learn a lot.

Opinions, recommendations and notes

My notes and commentary were incorporated in the foregoing part of the text. I would like to cite a need to expand the introductory section somewhat and to make the transitions between the problems identified smoother to avoid the sensation of reading through a syllabus.

It would be fortunate if the dissertation could be published as a single volume, so that it may be used as a textbook of sorts to teach concessive clauses in Italian. If the plan is for the corpus to not form part of the volume, it would be useful to have the names of translators cited opposite the relevant examples in the volume.

Conclusion

In view of the merits of the dissertation highlighted above, the skills it shows in terms of conceptualisation and analysis and the solid background it demonstrates, I would like to confidently vote in favour of awarding Desislava Davidova the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in higher education field 2 (Humanities), professional area 2.1 (Philology).

Date: 29 September 2021

Signature: