OUTCOMES AND PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BULGARIAN DIALECTOLOGY

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Section "Bulgarian dialectology and linguistic geography" (SBDLG) is one of the main units of the Institute for Bulgarian Language at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences with a long 50-year history. It consistently maintains the traditions of the most prominent Bulgarian linguists, including Benyo Tsonev, Lyubomir Miletich, Stefan Mladenov, Kiril Mirchev, Stoyko Stoykov, and uses the rich experience of European dialectology and linguistic-geographic schools.

The Section deals with problems related to current issues that are part of the culture of the Bulgarian nation. The study of vernacular languages at all language levels gives the opportunity to reveal a number of specific features of the Bulgarian language as the foundation of the national identity of the Bulgarian nation and as part of the cultural diversity in Europe and in the world. Archaic features of Bulgarian dialects preserved from different periods of the development of our language and their study contribute to the preservation of the Bulgarian cultural heritage. The study of vernaculars beyond the national borders is closely linked with the problems of the unity of the Bulgarian language in modern and historical aspect. Therefore, **monographic studies** continue on the Bulgarian language spoken in the entire language territory and the material was personally collected by the authors (see e.g. Luchia Antonova, who studied the Bulgarian vernaculars in the region of Gora, Republic of Albania).

One of the central tasks of the Section in recent decades has been work on the **Summary of BDA** whose next volume Morphology is about to be published.

Under the project "Integrating new practices in teaching computational linguistics", this year SBDLG worked out and published **A Map of Dialect Distribution of the Bulgarian Language**, including a summarizing study. The next stage of development of the interactive map of Bulgarian dialects was to make it accessible to everyone and also to incorporate a "live" voice, i.e. to make it "speak". This is a fact now and the map can be found on the Internet site of the IBL. Now, only one "click" on a particular area zone is enough to hear selected by the user dialect. It is heard in the original, i.e. from authentic speakers recorded on the spot. Thus, each Internet user is able to find his language type on the map of Bulgarian dialect language and enter into dialogue with his "neighbor vernaculars."

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The Map became widely known to the Bulgarian public who accepted it with great interest and high media attention.

The next large-scale task is the creation of **a map of the Bulgarian language in a new place in the world** in order to meet modern realities of the migration of Bulgarian language speakers. This is not the Bulgarian language in an old historic place of ethnic continuum, which was the subject of the "talking map", but the Bulgarian migrant population in relatively recent time. Worldwide, there are many large communities of Bulgarians in other countries - sometimes recognized as national minorities. We could provisionally and figuratively identify these communities as "little" or "new" Bulgaria abroad. Here we mean Bulgarian communities such as those in southern Ukraine, southern Moldova, Argentina, and in some US states where Bulgarian immigrants according to official and unofficial data exceed one hundred thousand people. Therefore, it is necessary to work to give the Bulgarian language a credit in bilingual and polylingual relations in international communication. Detailed studies on the linguistic situation in the countries with numerous Bulgarian population and encouraging measures on behalf of institutions to support the language (schools, libraries, associations and others) are very important. Naturally, the Bulgarian language in all its forms plays a central role in uniting the Bulgarian diaspora: literary, dialect, etc. as the most important sign of the existence of nationality. Therefore, it must be considered a priority of the Section.

Another fundamental task of SBDLG is dialectal lexicology and lexicography. **The archives of BULGARIAN DIALECT DICTIONARY**, which is almost completely digitalized, exist in the form of files and include two types of materials, the total number of which exceeds 2 million lexical units: a) from field studies and b) from printed sources. Of great importance for the creation of a dialect dictionary is the series "Bulgarian dialectology. Studies and Materials." where lexicographical contributions for different types of dialects were published in the recent past. As experts, we also appreciate the series "Studies on Bulgarian dialectology" – a collection of some of the most significant dialect studies. In addition, we continue making and publishing **descriptions of different dialects** and compiling **dictionaries** of vernacular languages ("Erkech – memory of the language", "Kamenitsa", "Koprivshtitsa", etc.). We have worked out a concept for Bulgarian Dialect Dictionary; currently we are working on the pilot edition of "Culinary dialect dictionary", which will present the differential dialect vocabulary in the thematic group "Food and beverages" as an integral part of the Bulgarian material culture. In this group, as expected, the original national specificity encounters different, often exotic, Balkan influences, which has its impact on lexis.

Furthermore, we are working **to increase the electronic database** of the Bulgarian Dialect Dictionary archive. In recent years, fieldwork was resumed and a modern trend in the Bulgarian language was established – revitalization of dialects. Young generations are no longer shy of their native dialect, they keep it and

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promote it and this is proved by the numerous Internet groups which use dialect forms and revive old words and phrases. In this sense, the Internet is becoming a new reservoir to enrich lexical material.

Several field studies have accompanied in recent years an extremely interesting research conducted in the department. It was the modern study of one of the most interesting and archaic Bulgarian dialects – the vernacular in the village of **Erkech**, Pomorie region. The exotic spiritual and material culture and the ancient dialect of Erkech in the eastern end of the Balkan Mountains have long attracted the attention of local and foreign scientists. The goal of our team was to study this dialect at the lexical level and compile a differential dialect dictionary, which had never been a task set to any colleagues of ours. The specific lexical richness of Erkech vernacular remained until recently unknown to science while Erkech represented an extremely well preserved national cultural and linguistic reserve. Informants from different generations - from the oldest (85–90 year old population) to children – keep to this day the most archaic forms and twists of the tongue, remember the ancient rites and customs that they recreate on various holidays. Our team traced dialect changes in the new intonation environment and determined the extent of diglossia and power of interference processes and phenomena. Against the backdrop of alignment and convergence occurring in varying degrees and force in the direction of literary language in different Bulgarian dialects, it is amazing to notice the tenacity and conservativeness, despite the extra linguistic circumstances, with which all generations of Erkech inhabitants have kept their native speech and obviously take pride in it.

A significant task for a team from the Section was **"Electronic model for comparative study of the Bulgarian and Slovenian language at dialect level."** It was a joint project with the Department of Slovenic Studies at the University of Ljubljana. The two teams of dialectologists carried out comparative studies within the thematic group "Domestic animals" where they found surprising lexical, word formation and phrasal matches. A similar framework could be used for other thematic groups, as well as for a comparison between other languages.

Within the framework of the large project **STUDY OF BULGARIAN DIALECTS AT DIFFERENT LANGUAGE LEVELS** the Section is currently working on several projects, including **"Research of the Bulgarian dialects in the Republic of Albania and northern Greece"** and **"Bulgarian community in Austria".** The settlements on the territory of Albania are more isolated in terms of social and economic life; this, together with the lack of training in another language in this region gives far better possibilities for preserving their authentic Bulgarian dialect speech. The topicality of the subject is obvious because the study of the Bulgarian dialects of the language continuum beyond the state borders is a natural continuation of the tradition established in SBDLG in recent decades to obtain an

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overall picture of the Bulgarian dialect language. Dialects in Gora area, although a subject of separate studies in recent years, continue to be extremely intriguing as by virtue of their specific location and because of their border situation.

The second study "Bulgarian community in Austria" is more of a sociolinguistic nature and establishes various forms of interference between two languages – Bulgarian and German. The survey results prove the existence of an intermediate (mixed) Bulgarian-German language with Bulgarian immigrants or their descendants in Austria, reflecting different degrees of permeability between the two ethno-codes.

The Section is working successfully on the international projects **"Common Slavic Linguistic Atlas"** and **"European Linguistic Atlas"** which study Bulgarian dialects in the context of other Slavic and Balkan languages.

It should be particularly noted that the Section is working in cooperation with a number of state and non-governmental organizations. The effect of our work is essential and presentation of key publications is always accompanied by various events in the electronic media and attracts public attention. This means that Bulgarian dialectology, which has always been of significant public importance, is facing the general practice. Our next tasks will be once again orientated towards Bulgarian, European and the world language situation.

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