

INSTITUTE FOR BULGARIAN LANGUAGE, BAS

Vassil Rajnov

Abstract. The paper presents the history, structure and ongoing activities of the Institute for Bulgarian Language of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Keywords: Bulgarian language, grammar, vocabulary, lexicology, lexicography, dialectology, etymology, onomastics, general and applied linguistics, corpora, phonetics, speech communication, computer modelling.

Introduction

The Institute for Bulgarian Language (IBL) is the oldest Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS). It dates back to May the 15th 1942, when the Bulgarian Dictionary Office was founded at the Presidium of the BAS. IBL is the main national centre for study and description of the Bulgarian language – its present state, history, rich variety of dialects and relations with other languages. The Institute is a central and coordinating unit which defines the national language policies and establishes contacts with foreign institutions, interested in the Bulgarian language.

Brief History

The founding of the Bulgarian Literary Society in 1869 marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of the Bulgarian philological studies. This event was called upon the necessity to assist the development and improvement of the Bulgarian literary language and to put on broad foundations the studying of the Bulgarian history and literature. In 1911 the Bulgarian Literary Society was restructured into Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The new institution started its activity by establishing an improvised Dictionary Committee, which initiated the compilation of a dictionary of the Bulgarian language. Extensive lexicographic work in the following years led to the establishment of the Bulgarian Dictionary Service at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1942. After the re-organization of the Academy, the Bulgarian Dictionary Service was renamed as Institute for Bulgarian Dictionary in 1947 and as Institute for Bulgarian Language in 1949.

Nowadays the Institute for Bulgarian Language is one of the most respectable academic institutions with great contributions to education and language competence.

Structure of IBL

The Institute consists of 9 departments, one laboratory and 3 services, which along with the theoretical language studies provide basic material for work in the field of applied linguistic. Further down a brief description of the activities of the particular divisions is provided.

The department for Modern Bulgarian Language carries out studies and supplies descriptions of the contemporary standard Bulgarian – its sound system, grammar and vocabulary. The theory and history of Modern Bulgarian are investigated, thus creating resources to enhance the linguistic competence of the society.

The department for Bulgarian Lexicology and Lexicography is the major national centre for compiling dictionaries and for training specialists in the fields of semantics, lexicology and lexicography. Its main task is the preparation of a multivolume academic explanatory Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language (DBL).

The department for History of Bulgarian Language works on the recovery and publishing with critical comments of old and mediaeval Bulgarian written records and carries out lexicological and lexicographical studies of the history of the Bulgarian language from the 9th to the 19th century.

The department for Bulgarian Dialectology and Linguistic Geography is a unique research section which carries out comprehensive studies of the language regional varieties on all levels. The linguo-geographical description of Bulgarian dialects is further used to the solution of some present-day problems of national significance.

The department for Bulgarian Etymology and Onomastics is engaged in compilation of the Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary, a fundamental publication of national significance, and the Dictionary of Bulgarian Toponyms.

The scope of the research in the department for Computer Modeling of Bulgarian Language includes: theoretical problems of the formal language description; formal semantic, morphological and syntactic analysis; information retrieval and information extraction; electronic dictionaries, and corpus linguistics.

The department for General and Applied Linguistics explores the theoretical and applied perspectives of general linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, psycholinguistics, and the philosophy of language. Current research projects are dedicated to Europeanization trends, language manifestations of mentality, theoretical and applied problems of language communication, structural and social semiotics, ethnography of communication, etc.

The laboratory of Phonetics and Speech Communication carries out studies and practical work on restoration and digitization of audio archives. Another field of activities is dedicated to Speech Recognition and Text to Speech Conversion (TTS).

The department for Ethnolinguistic and Cultural Investigation of Bulgarian Language researches the major cultural phenomena of the Bulgarian tradition and the linguistic form and cultural semantics of these phenomena. The cultural study is focused on the ways in which Bulgarian cultural concepts and stereotypes reflect on the language as well as the forms and means of verbal communication, specific for the Bulgarian society of past and present days.

The department for Contrastive Investigation carries out research of the Bulgarian language in comparison and in contrast with other Slavonic, Balkan and European languages.

The Service for Bulgarian Terminology is the only specialized research unit in the country which studies Bulgarian terminology from a linguistic point of view and where terminology theories and various methodologies for practical work are developed. The Information Service and the Library are storing unique linguistics information. The Electronic Archive collects, updates, and processes Bulgarian electronic texts for the purpose of creation and maintenance of a representative national language corpus, bilingual and multilingual corpora.

Projects and Activities

On the basis of abundant material – national archives and electronic corpora – various projects of national importance are implemented at IBL. These are mainly dictionaries of the Bulgarian language: multivolume explanatory, monolingual, bilingual, etymological, historical, spelling, phraseological, dialectological, topical, historical, corpus-based, etc., as well as atlases of Bulgarian dialects.

Beside the theoretical academic research one of the main objectives of the Institute for Bulgarian Language has been the creation of normative grammatical descriptions of the Bulgarian language. The three-volume Grammar of the Modern Bulgarian Literary Language is considered one of the most authoritative grammar descriptions of Bulgarian.

IBL is an active participant and reputable partner in various international projects such as: BALKANET – a multilingual semantic network of the Balkan Languages, EUROGLYPH – an Ideography-Based Code for European Communication, DigiCult-BG (project for digitization of national cultural heritage), and many others.

An important part of the Institute activities is dedicated to the compilation of various linguistic resources – large corpora of Bulgarian with original and translation text samples, Brown-designed and Tagged corpora of Bulgarian, etc., thus enabling comprehensive studies of linguistic phenomena. Another information source is the Institute's library to which generations of researchers have contributed for collecting its book-stock of more than 30000 books.

The services established at the Institute for Bulgarian Language contribute to the promotion of linguistic work among the public by implementing a range of services for other institutions, media, bureaus such as dictionary compilation, consultations, appraisals, etc. The Institute for Bulgarian Language founded awards in acknowledgement of the work and efforts of Bulgarian and foreign scientists.

The Institute for Bulgarian Language is publishing a number of magazines and series where the results of the work carried out at the Institute are presented. These are the magazines "Bulgarian Language", "Balkan Linguistics" as well as a number of series such as: "Proceedings of the Institute for Bulgarian Language" (since 1995 replaced by the series "Bulgarian linguistics"), "Work on Bulgarian dialectology and the history of the Bulgarian language", "Bulgarian lexicology and lexicography. Research and material."

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Author Information

Prof. Dr. **Vassil Rainov** – Director of IBL at BAS; Sofia 1113, 52 Shipchenski Prohod Blvd., bl. 17; Bulgaria
e-mail: rainov@ibl.bas.bg