

Evidentiality in modern Bulgarian language

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Abstract. In the present study, we argue that the Bulgarian evidential system consists of four members: indicative, conclusive, renarrative, and dubitative. To achieve this objective, we analyze the meanings, forms and main uses of these four evidentials in modern Bulgarian, thereby supporting the notion that the Bulgarian evidential verb category is well-developed and rich in forms and applications. Throughout this work, we maintain the thesis that the grammaticalization of evidentiality in modern Bulgarian is not a completed process due to two main reasons: the presence of three types of negative forms for the future tenses and the penetrability observed in all composite evidential forms.

Keywords: evidentiality, indicative, renarrative, conclusive, dubitative, modern Bulgarian language

1. Introduction

Modern Bulgarian differs from other Slavic languages and the majority of Indo-European languages with the presence of an evidential verb system. Evidentiality stands out as one of the distinctive features of modern Bulgarian, along with the loss of the infinitive, supine, and cases, as well as the presence of the category of indefiniteness/definiteness. The evidentiality is multimember in the Bulgarian language - encompassing four evidentials (indicative, conclusive, renarrative, and dubitative) in all grammatical persons, numbers, tenses, and voices. The paradigm is characterized by the coincidence of forms in active and passive voice, as well as by missing members. For example, the differentiation of the forms of the conclusive and renarrative only in the 3rd person singular and plural is a reason for some foreign Bulgarian linguists or Slavists to believe that in the modern Bulgarian language there are not two different evidentials - conclusive and renarrative - but rather variants of the same evidential.

In both the Bulgarian and foreign linguistics there is not unifying theory about the meaning of the evidentials as well as about their forms. A large amount of studies on Bulgarian evidentiality have been published primarily

in Bulgaria, but there are also foreign publications (Aleksandrov 1985; Aleksova 2003; Aleksova 2023a; Aleksova 2023b; Gerdzhikov 1977; Gerdzhikov 1984; Kovsh 2007; Kozinceva 1994; Konedareva 2015; Kutsarov 2007; Makarcev 2014; Moskova 2021; Ninova 2016; Nitsolova 2007; Nitsolova 2008; Stoychev 2019; Trifonov 1905; Tarpomanova 2015; Fitneva 2001; Fitneva 2008; Guéntcheva 1993; Guéntcheva 1996a; Guéntcheva 1996b; Kehayov 2008; Smirnova 2019; Sonnenhauser 2015, and etc.). During the research we are taking into consideration the achievements of all authors, even though in the current paper we are not citing all of them, because the tasks do not include review of the opinions.

In the current paper, the object of research is the Bulgarian evidential system with a specific focus on the meanings, forms, and main uses of the four evidentials which demonstrate the richness of the Bulgarian evidentiality. We do this, because in Alexandra Aikhenvald's monograph, which is the most representative typological study on evidentiality (Aikhenvald 2004), as well as in the World Atlas of Language Structures (<https://wals.info/feature/77A#4/41.51/74.44>) Bulgarian evidentiality is inaccurately represented as a system of two members.

In the research, we use examples from electronic corpora (Bulgarian National Corpus (<http://dcl.bas.bg/bulnc/>), Bulgarian National Reference Corpus - BulTreeBank (<http://www.webclark.org/>), Corpus of Bulgarian Political and Journalistic Speech (<http://political.webclark.org/>), Bulgarian Parliamentary Corpus ParlaMint-BG 2.1 (https://www.clarin.si/noske/parlamint21.cgi/corp_info?corpname=parlamint21_bg&struct_attr_stats=1&subcorpora=1), transcripts from sessions of the National Assembly (<http://www.parliament.bg/bg/plenary>), and although not all sources are represented, the research also includes the Internet as the largest and most rapidly updated database. The main method is descriptive by presenting and analyzing the semantics, forms and main uses of the four evidentials.

2. Forms, meaning and uses of the Bulgarian evidentials

2.1. Forms, meaning and uses of the indicative

According to viewpoint presented here, the indicative is considered the most semantically unmarked evidential in modern Bulgarian. According to the views of Georgi Gerdzhikov, originator of the theory of grammatical oppositions, the indicative (referred to by the author as the *testimonial modus*) is not marked by the linguistic signs of *subjectivity* and *renarrativeness*, upon which evidentiality is built, referred to by G. Gerdzhikov as the *modus of utterance of the action (modus dicendi actionis)* (Gerdzhikov 1984). Through this evidential, the actual speaker/writer conveys in an objective manner an action that is independent of the subjective position of the utterance's author and does not report someone else's information. The main differentiation of the indicative from the other evidentials is its full paradigm of forms. In the passive voice, however, there is a coincidence of forms of the resultative and non-resultative tenses. According to the theory of grammatical oppositions, this is a result of neutralization of the sign of *resultativity*. The positive and negative forms for the 3rd person singular

Table 1. Forms of the indicative in active and passive voice

Tense	Active voice	Passive voice
Present	<i>четѐ, не четѐ</i>	<i>четен е, не е четен</i>
Perfect	<i>чел е, не е чел</i>	For present also <i>бива четен, не бива четен</i>
Aorist	<i>чѐте, не чѐте</i>	<i>беше четен, не беше четен</i> <i>биде четен, не биде четен</i>
Imperfect	<i>четеше, не четеше</i>	<i>беше четен, не беше четен</i>
Pluperfect	<i>беше чел, не беше чел</i>	For imperfect also <i>биваше четен, не биваше четен</i>
Future	<i>ще чете, няма да чете</i>	<i>ще е/бъде четен, няма да е/бъде четен</i>
Future perfect	<i>ще е/бъде чел, няма да е/бъде чел</i>	
Future in the past	<i>щеше да чете, нямаше да чете</i>	<i>щеше да е/бъде четен, нямаше да е/бъде четен</i>
Future perfect in the past	<i>щеше да е/бъде чел, нямаше да е чел</i>	

masculine of the indicative in active and passive voice can be seen in Table 1 with the verb *чета* (to read).

We should emphasize that the most essential feature of the indicative in the modern Bulgarian language is the fact that the past tenses (aorist, imperfect, pluperfect, future in the past, future perfect in the past) implicitly convey the meaning of *witnessed events*. These tenses could only be used if the actual speaker is a witness or pretends to be a witness. Some authors point out that the carrier of the meaning of the witnessed event is the morpheme *-x-/-и-* (see, e.g., Kutsarov 2007), an opinion that has its grounds. On a global scale, it is not an unprecedented fact that the direct evidential has a witness semantics in the past (see more in Aikhenvald 2004), but it is not a frequent feature of the indicative.

A specific usage in modern Bulgarian of the indicative tenses is their use in historiographical and other works of a historical nature instead of the renarrative, referred to in Bulgarian linguistic literature as the *historical present tense*, where verbs are only in the imperfective aspect, for example:

(1) През IX век България **отстоява** своята независимост и културна идентичност между Немското кралство и Византия. Тя е могъща държава, но ѝ **липсва** равнопоставеност по отношение на другите европейски държава, тоест е **изложена** на международна и културна изолация (<https://bulgarianhistory.eu/> княз-борис-1/, 25.11.2023).

‘In the 9th century, Bulgaria is defending its own independence and cultural identity from the German Kingdom and the Byzantine Empire. It is a powerful state, but lacks parity with other European countries, that is, Bulgaria is in a state of international and cultural isolation.’

Another very important use of the indicative is seen in complex sentences with a verb of utterance in the introductory sentence. These uses exist in the dependent clause with indirect speech, when the verbal form from the primary utterance is in one of the non-past tenses (present, future, perfect, future perfect). By means of the indicative forms, a more neutral conveyance of information about the action from someone else’s speech is achieved. On the other hand, the use of the renarrative in this case, combined with the meaning of the verb of utterance, introduces a nuance of distancing the speaker from the information, indicating a lack of responsibility for the credibility of the retranslated information. This distinction is evident when comparing a sentence (2) with the indicative future tense *ще си ляга* to its transformation made by us in the renarrative future tense *щял да си ляга*, as demonstrated in (3):

(2) *Байдън каза, че ще си ляга по време на реч в Ханой* (<https://www.24chasa.bg/mezhdunarodni/article/15479719>, 25.11.2023).

‘Biden said that he would go to bed during a speech in Hanoi.’
instead of

(3) *Байдън каза, че щял да си ляга по време на реч в Ханой.*

‘Biden reportedly said that he would go to bed during a speech in Hanoi.’

The use of the indicative is also observed in journalistic texts, even though the news reporter may not have witnessed the actions that they report. In this case, they take on the role of a witness, in order to imply greater reliability of the information. And this is the main task of news journalism.

(4) *Българският отбор замина за Талин за турнира на „Фед Къп“; общо 14 тенисистки от топ 100 ще участват* (<https://bgtennis.bg/702-БЪЛГАРСКИЯТ-ОТБОР-ЗАМИНА-ЗА-ТАЛИН-ЗА-ТУРНИРА-НА-„ФЕД“-К>, 25.11.2023).

‘The Bulgarian team left for Talin for Fed Cup tournament; a total of 14 tennis players from top 100 will participate.’

Once again, we would like to emphasize that the existence solely of witness uses of the indicative past tenses is one of the specific characteristics of the indicative in modern Bulgarian. Even in languages which possess an evidential category, such as Albanian (see Tarpomanova 2015), the indicative past tenses do not exhibit the sign of *witnessed event*.

2.2. Forms, meaning and uses of the conclusive

Through the conclusive (inferential) forms in modern Bulgarian, the author of the utterance conveys their own subjective inference, encompassing statements, conclusions, and generalizations. This inference may rely on traces of the action or logical relations between phenomena. According to G. Gerdzhikov, the conclusive (referred to by him as *conclusive modus*) carries the sign of *subjectivity*, but it is not marked by the sign of *renarrativeness* (Gerdzhikov 1984). And *subjectivity* and *renarrativeness* are the two signs upon which the category of the *modus of utterance of the action* is built, according to the Bulgarian

scientist (in our research the term *evidentiality* is used). In the paradigm of the conclusive in modern Bulgarian, the forms of direct tenses (oriented toward the act of communication) coincide with forms of indirect tenses (oriented toward the past reference point). Additionally, the conclusive aorist (*нисал е*) perfectly matches with the indicative perfect (*нисал е*), resulting from the emergence of the category of evidentiality. The first impulse in creating it is the transposition of the perfect in the field of the aorist to convey personal conclusion or to relay somebody else's information, serving as the primary stimulus for the establishment of evidentiality in the Bulgarian language. This is because, in the initial stage of developing the category, according to G. Gerdzhikov, there exists one direct and one indirect evidential, used for conveying both *inference* and *renarrativity* (Gerdzhikov 1984).

In the passive voice, according to the theory of grammatical oppositions, the opposition between non-resultative and resultative tenses is also neutralized. This leads to the matching of resultative and non-resultative tense forms, resulting in only two types of two forms (one for non-future and one for future tenses). The paradigm of the conclusive in active and passive voice, positive and negative forms for the 3rd person singular masculine, can be seen in Table 2. One more feature should be emphasized - the negative conclusive forms for future tenses have more than one member. In the 1st and 2nd person singular and plural, there are three competing forms: with the impersonal formant *нямало е* - *нямало е да чета*, *нямало е да четеш*, *нямало е да четете*; with conjugable verb *съм* - *нямало съм да чета*, *нямало е да съм/бъда чел*, *нямало съм да съм/бъда четен*, and formed with *не* + positive form - *не съм щял да чета*, *не си щял да четеш*, *не е щял да четете*. The existence of more than one member testifies that the process of grammaticalization of the Bulgarian evidential system is not completed.

Table 2. Forms of the conclusive in active and passive voice

Tense	Active voice	Passive voice
Present	<i>четял е, не е четял</i>	<i>бил е четен, не е бил четен</i>
Imperfect		
Aorist	<i>чел е, не е чел</i>	
Perfect	<i>бил е чел, не е бил чел</i>	<i>щял е да е/бъде четен, нямало е да е/бъде четен, не щял е да е/бъде четен</i>
Pluperfect		
Future	<i>щял е да чете, нямало е да чете / не щял е да чете</i>	
Future in the past		
Future perfect	<i>щял е да е/бъде чел, нямало е да е/бъде чел / не щял е да е/бъде чел</i>	
Future perfect in the past		

When analyzing the uses of the conclusive forms here, it is indicated whether the speaker has been a witness or not, and whether the actions are in the non-past or past perspective. When the speaker has not been a witness, the most common use of the conclusive forms is in the cases where the speaker draws a conclusion, as in (5). This example is indicative of something else as well - in historiographical texts or works in a historical context, conclusive forms are used to express common knowledge that has become part of the speaker's own knowledge, presented as their subjective statement. Ruselina Nitsolova refers to these uses as the speaker's "weak knowledge" (Nitsolova 2008, 355).

(5) *Културата ни е в сянката на политиката. Нали знаете, както е пишел в писмата си до Димчиев Димчо Дебелянов, когато е бил стенограф в Народното събрание* (Bulgarian National Reference Corpus - BNRC, <http://www.webclark.org/>).

'Our culture is in the shadow of the politics. Don't you know, as Dimcho Debelyanov wrote in his letters to Nikolay Liliev, when he was a stenographer in the National Assembly.'

The author of the utterance may not have been a firsthand witness to the events, but may be using somebody else's information to convey their own statement or generalization, as seen in Chapter XIII of *Under the Yoke*, where Boycho Ognyanov recounts his own adventures to Rada after leaving Byala Cherkva.

(6) *Клети Бойчо, ти си бил простинал по кърища и планини цяла зима... Ти си цял мъченик - каза Рада състрадателно* (Ив. Вазов - <http://www.webclark.org/Clark.html>).

'Poor Boycho, you had fallen ill while wandering the fields and mountains all winter... You are a real martyr - said Rada compassionately.'

The speaker/writer may witness the actions, but use the conclusive to emphasize personal affirmation of the facts, to show emotionally that it is their subjective, personal experience, as in (7) - *грижел се е, е помагал*:

(7) *Имаме известна разлика в годините и аз бях студентка, той вече завършил и работеше... естествено, че няма как аз да взимам колкото него в тоя етап. Грижел се е за мен и много ми е помагал* (<https://www.bg-mamma.com/?topic=1430332.15>, 25.11.2023).

'We have a certain age difference and I was a student, he had already graduated and was working... of course, I couldn't earn as much as him at that stage. He used to take care of me and help me a lot.'

According to G. Gerdzhikov, similar examples show transposition of the conclusive modus to the field of the testimonial modus (indicative).

The speaker may have physically witnessed past actions and events without being aware of their true nature, as in (8), or without even remembering them because they were not in an appropriate physical or mental state, as in (9), or because, at the relevant past moment, they were not aware of them or had forgotten them:

(8) *Извинение и за табелата на входа. Днес на Кюри пак беше такава, явно аз съм ги запълнил грешно* (<https://forum.gtsofia.info/index.php?topic=359.940;wap2>, 25.11.2023).

'Apologies also for the signboard at the entrance. Curie's was like that again today; it seems that I have remembered them incorrectly.'

(9) *Явно сме били толкова пияни - не си спомняме, че някога сме се разбирали нещо да правим* (<https://goguide.bg/22281-6826-van-cock-novata-rokenrol-banda-na-sofiia/>, 25.11.2023).

'We must have been so drunk - we don't remember ever agreeing to do something.'

Conclusive forms in interrogative sentences as in (10), in negative sentences and in subordinate clauses with a main interrogative or negative clause can express hesitancy and uncertain assumption:

(10) *И аз им се чудих защо толкова много спорят - те поставиха на карта отношенията в самото правителство. Нищо не казвам - давам го като пример, защото всеки нещо се присеща. Дали е било така или не - не знам* (<https://bntnews.bg/news/toma-bikov-db-sa-realisticchniyat-variant-za-tretiya-mandat-nuzhno-e-da-znaem-dali-nexo-ima-vrazka-s-politicheskiya-zhivot-u-nas-1220149news.html>, 25.11.2023).

'I also wondered why they argued so much - they put the relationships within the government at stake. I'm not saying it was like that, but I give it as an example because everyone remembers something. Whether it was like that or not - I don't know.'

According to our research, some of the most interesting and widely discussed uses of the conclusive are the admiratives. In these instances, the speaker draws a conclusion that surprises them because it contradicts their preconceived notions about the state of affairs, as demonstrated in (11) and (12).

(11) *Я, гледай ти, той също имал зъби!* (<https://writecraft.io/posts/63b9916fdcec902fd689f7a9>, 25.11.2023).

'Well, would you look at that, he had teeth too!'

(12) Situation: The speaker sees a photo of people, including someone they know, who will be leaving for abroad. Surprised, they exclaim: *Я гледай, и Катя щяла да заминава за чужбина!* ('Look, even Katya was supposed to go abroad!').

It is important to emphasize that, according to us, all non-past tenses (present, perfect, future, and future perfect) have solely admirative uses in the conclusive, and this is due to the specific interaction between the meaning of these tenses and the conclusive - see, for example, (12). According to R. Nitsolova, non-past tenses lack conclusive forms and uses (Nitsolova 2008). Based on our observations, the auxiliary verb *съм* is often (but not always) omitted in the admirative (see more in Aleksova 2003). This is the reason why some scientists claim that the admirative is not an expressive use of the conclusive forms but rather a transposition of the renarrative ones (Nitsolova 2008).

2.3. Forms, meaning and uses of the renarrative

Through the renarrative, the author of the actual utterance conveys somebody else's information. According to G. Gerdzhikov, the renarrative forms (referred to by the scientist as *renarrative modus*) are characterized by the sign of *renarrativeness*, but not marked of *subjectivity* (Gerdzhikov 1984). The active voice paradigm exhibits coinciding forms in direct and indirect tenses due to the neutralization of the sign of *indirectness* according to the theory of grammatical op-

Table 3. Forms of the renarrative in active and passive voice

Tense	Active voice	Passive voice
Present	<i>четял, не четял</i>	<i>бил четен, не бил четен</i>
Imperfect		
Aorist	<i>чел, не чел</i>	
Perfect	<i>бил чел, не бил чел</i>	
Pluperfect		
Future	<i>щял да чете, нямамо да чете,</i>	<i>щял да е/бъде четен, нямамо да е/бъде четен, не щял да е/бъде четен</i>
Future in the past	<i>не щял да чете</i>	
Future perfect	<i>щял да е/бъде чел, нямамо да е/бъде чел, не щял да е/бъде чел</i>	
Future perfect in the past		

positions. Additionally, in the passive voice, the opposition between resultative and non-resultative tenses is neutralized, resulting in two types of forms - for non-future and future tenses. This pattern is also observed in the conclusive (cf. Table 2 u Table 3). It is crucial to note that the negative renarrative forms of the future tenses in the active and passive voice have more than one form. The 1st and 2nd person singular and plural each have three forms: with the impersonal form *нямамо*, with a conjugable auxiliary verb *съм* - *нямамо съм да чета, нямамо съм да съм/бъда чел, нямамо съм да съм/бъда четен*, and with the negative particle *не* + positive forms - *не съм щял да чета, не съм щял да съм/бъда чел, не съм щял да съм/бъда четен*.

Here, too, when analyzing the examples, we take into account the witness or non-witness position of the speaker, as well as the non-past or past perspective of the actions. The most common use of the renarrative is in the past tenses, when the speaker has not been a witness and, therefore, conveys information obtained from someone else - see (13).

(13) *Не можел да каже точно кога щял да гоїде моментът да си тръгнат* (Bulgarian National Corpus - BNC, <http://search.dcl.bas.bg/>).

'He couldn't say exactly when the moment would come for them to leave.'

The emphasis in the utterance may be on the non-witness position of the speaker, or on the fact that someone else's speech is being transmitted, see (14).

(14) *Тогава той ми каза, че искал да отиде в Браїла, и ме помоли и аз да ида с него* (BNC).

'Then he told me that he wanted to go to Brăila and asked me to go with him.'

The renarrative forms are employed to convey anonymous information, as in (15), and are also utilized in fairytales - see (16), rumours, legends, as well as in historical works, for example (17).

(15) Според слуховете бреговете **били почервенели** от кръв (BNC).
'According to rumours, the shores were reddened with blood.'

(16) **Имало** едно време един крал, който **бил** много богат. Той **властвал** над четири слънчеви системи и двадесет светлинни години в диаметър (BNC).
'Once upon a time there was a king, who was very rich. He ruled over four solar systems and twenty light-years in diameter.'

(17) Като световната история, която като стисната стара мома знае, но не ѝ стиска ясно да каже: **имало** едно време край Памир древни българи, българи, още хонори (или хунори). **Имало** две блискоизточни държави Балгар и Балхара (BNRC).

'Like the world history, which, like a stingy old maid, knows, but does not have the courage to say clearly: Once upon a time, near the Pamir, there were ancient Bulgars, Bulgars, also known as Honors (or Hunors). There were two states in the Near East, Balgar and Balkhara.'

The speaker may witness the events but prefer to convey someone else's words about what happened, as in (18). In such cases, there is often a nuance of distrust or reservation, especially in the 1st person singular, as in (19).

(18) **Аз също видях** какво стана, но според Мария Светла първа **си тръгна**.
'I also saw what happened, but according to Maria, Svetla left first.'

(19) Според Иван аз **съм започнал** скандала.
'According to Ivan, I started argue.'

In utterances expressing distrust through lexical or paralinguistic means, it often happens that renarrative forms replace the dubitative (distrustful forms), as in (20).

(20) Я стига, **дошъл** (instead of *бил дошъл* - dubitative aorist) *преди мене*.
Какво говориш!

'Enough, he had arrived before me. What are you saying!'

One of the specific replacements of the renarrative by the conclusive is observed in indirect speech. In it, the renarrative forms from the past are often replaced by the conclusive, which in this case does not carry inferential semantics, but conveys indirect information. This aligns with that period of grammaticalization of evidentiality in Bulgarian language when there was only one indirect evidential that expressed both *inference* and *renarrativeness*, i.e., conveying indirect information from the speaker. With the conclusive forms in this case, someone else's speech is conveyed more neutrally, while the presence of a verb of utterance in the introductory sentence and a renarrative form in the dependent clause emphasizes the fact that someone else's speech is being reported. This leads to a certain disengagement of the speaker from the credibility of the conveyed information, as seen in (21).

(21) Абсолютно шокиращо Станиславова каза, че **е щяла да даде** информация за проекта, ако Георгиев просто **е поискал** информация, а **не се е позовал** на жалба от гражданин. Преди това Георгиев заяви, че **е писал** 4 писма до Станиславова заради съмнението, че тя и нейни колеги **са взели** пари от проекта за себе си неправомерно и **не е получил** ясен отговор. Той обясни, че **е попитал** как са разходвани парите по проекта и Станиславова **не е отговорила**. По-важният въпрос **е давала** ли си е пари г-жа Станиславова, настоя Георгиев (<https://www.actualno.com/sofia/lut-skandal-v-efir-plashtala-li>

si-e-sama-neppravomerno-pari-rajonna-kmetica-za-upravlenie-na-evroproekt-news_1563038.html, 26.11.2023).

‘Absolutely shockingly, Stanislavova said that she would have given information about the project, if Georgiev had simply asked for information and not referred to a complaint from a citizen. Before that, Georgiev stated that he wrote four letters to Stanislavova because of the suspicion that she and her colleagues took money from the project for themselves illegally and he did not receive a clear answer. He explained that he asked how the money of the project was spent and Stanislavova did not answer. The more important question is whether Mrs. Stanislavova gave herself money, insisted Georgiev.’

We quote a longer text to show that this substitution is quite common, and the indirect information expressed in this case by the conclusive does not make it difficult for the recipient of the utterance to understand that in the indirect speech someone else’s information is being conveyed. In (21), the coincidence between the forms of the conclusive aorist (*не се е позовал, е писал, са взели, не е получили, е попитал, не е отговорил, е гавала*) and those of the indicative perfect is evident. This leads to confusion in determining the evidential and temporal affiliation of the verb form in indirect speech. In quite a few textbooks on Bulgarian as a foreign language, it is pointed out that when transforming into indirect speech, the aorist from the direct speech is replaced by the perfect in the indirect speech. This is incorrect, because it is actually about the transformation of the indicative aorist in the direct speech into the conclusive aorist in the indirect speech.

2.4. Forms, meaning and uses of the dubitative

Through the dubitative (distrustful forms), the current author of the message utters a broad spectrum of meanings, expressing the speaker/writer’s reservations regarding the conveyed someone else’s utterance - ranging from mild doubt to distrust and complete rejection of the given information. According to G. Gerdzhikov, the dubitative is the most semantically marked modus of the utterance, because it carries both the sign of *subjectivity* and the sign of *renarrativeness* (Gerdzhikov 1984). This is the evidential, which distinguishes the Bulgarian evidential system, since in the literature on the subject, the dubitative is most often not considered as a separate subcategory, but as a usage referred to as “evidential strategy” (Aikhenvald 2004).

The paradigm of the Bulgarian dubitative lacks forms for the perfect and pluperfect, as the renarrative and conclusive forms for these tenses already include the element *бил*, which is a renarrative form of the auxiliary verb *съм*. Due to the relatively free word order of the dubitative forms, the presence of the form *бил* twice makes it difficult to determine which *бил* carries what semantic grammatical information. The same absence of forms is observed in the passive forms of all non-future tenses (present, perfect, aorist, imperfect, and pluperfect). These tenses in passive voice cannot take forms because the conclusive and the renarrative forms contain *бил*. As with the other indirect evidentials, in the dubitative, the direct and indirect tenses coincide, and in passive voice, the non-resultative and resultative tenses match. Thus, the passive voice of the dubitative exhibits only forms for future tenses (future, future perfect, future in the

Table 4. Forms of the dubitative in active and passive voice

Tense	Active voice	Passive voice
Present	<i>бил четял, не бил четял</i>	-----
Imperfect		
Aorist	<i>бил чел, не бил чел</i>	
Perfect	-----	
Pluperfect		
Future	<i>щял бил да чете, нямамо било да чете, не щял бил да чете</i>	<i>щял бил да е/бъде четен, нямамо било да е/бъде четен, не щял бил да е/бъде четен</i>
Future in the past		
Future perfect	<i>щял бил да е/бъде чел, нямамо било да е/бъде чел, не щял бил да е/бъде чел</i>	
Future perfect in the past		

past, future perfect in the past) which match (see Table 4). The negative dubitative forms of future tenses in active and passive voice have more than one form. In the 1st and 2nd person singular and plural, these forms for one member of the paradigm are three each: with the impersonal form *нямамо било* - *нямамо било да чете*, *нямамо било да е/бъде чел*, *нямамо било да е/бъде четен*, with a conjugable auxiliary verb *съм* - *нямамо съм бил да пиша*, *нямамо съм бил да съм/бъда писал*, *нямамо съм бил да съм/бъда писан*, and with the negative particle *не* + positive forms - *не съм щял бил да чета*, *не съм щял бил да съм/бъда чел*, *не съм щял бил да съм/бъда четен*.

Through the dubitative forms in modern Bulgarian, the author of the utterance can express a slight hesitation in the reliability or sincerity of the author of the primary utterance (see (22), as well as doubt about the likelihood of the fact or action in the other person's utterance to be real (see (23). The dubitative forms can convey disagreement with someone else's assessment and, as a result, distinguishing the speaker from it (see 24).

(22) *На другата страница Домусчиев рече и отсеке, че форматът на първенството няма да се промени. За подробностите Боби щял бил да каже нещо повече...* (<https://news.bg/bg-football/borislav-mihaylov-nyama-problemi-s-lit-senziraneto-na-klubovete-pokriva-se-finansov-fearpley.html>, 26.11.2023).

'On the other page, Domuschiev speaks and emphasizes that the format of the championship will not change. [According to Domuschiev,] Bobby would say something more about the details.'

(23) *Щели били да ни завладеят, да ни изтребят. Глупости, ще си лежим, ще си хапваме и ще си се [...] - кръстят се учените, че така ще се получи* (<https://www.nenovinite.com/ne/neuka/ucheni-horata-tryabva-da-rabotyat-samo-dokato-izmislyat-roboti-koito-da-rabotyat-vmesto-tyah>, 26.11.2023).

‘[It is said that but I doubt it] they would have conquered us, exterminated us. Nonsense, we will lie down, eat, and [...] - the scientists cross themselves that it will turn out that way.’

(24) Според теб Украйна **щяла била да провокира** и тогава войната щяла да е неизбежна (<https://dnes.dir.bg/comments/pp-kategorichno-podkrepyame-chlenstvoto-na-ukrayna-v-nato>, 26.11.2023).

‘According to you [but I doubt it], Ukraine would have provoked and then the war would have been inevitable.’

Through the dubitative verb forms in modern Bulgarian, the author of the utterance can express a rejection of a false statement made by someone else, which, in the opinion of the speaker/writer, constitutes an unjust accusation (see (25)).

(25) Днес някои плачат, че Калчев **бил изолирал** града от страната (https://www.infotech.bg/homepages/mayor_kalchev/portret.htm, 26.11.2023).

‘Today, some are lamenting that Kalchev had isolated the city from the country [but I reject this opinion].’

Through the dubitative, the speaker/writer can also express a negative assessment of the action in someone else’s information due to its impracticability, untimeliness, ineffectiveness, groundlessness, meaninglessness, etc. (see (26)).

(26) Сега **щели били да правят** газов пуб [sic] в Турция и предварително е ясно че няма кой да купува от там (<https://novini.bg/sviat/eu/746265>, 26.11.2023).

‘Now, they are supposedly going to build a gas pub [sic] in Turkey, and it is clear in advance that there is no one to buy from there.’

The dubitative verb forms in modern Bulgarian can be used by the speaker to express their resentment or indignation against a danger or a threat directed at them (see (27)).

(27) Преди години един ме обвини, че съм напълнила магазина със стоки и **щял бил да ме съди** (<https://www.odit.info/?s=6&i=121077&f=1>, 26.11.2023).

‘Years ago, someone accused me of filling the store with goods [but I reject this opinion], and said they would have taken me to court.’

Through the dubitative forms, the speaker/writer can express an angry indignation, even incorporating elements of sarcastic denunciation (see (28)). The use of capital letters in this example also emphasizes the strong emotional response of the writer, in conjunction with the dubitative form.

(28) НИКОЯ МЕДИЯ НЕ ЖЕЛАЕЛА ДА ГО ИЗЛЪЧИ!? ДУЕТЪТ **ЩЯЛ БИЛ ДА ИМА СВОЕТО ПРЕДСТАВЯНЕ ОБАЧЕ. В ТЕЛЕВИЗИЯ ПЛАНЕТА ПАЙНЕР!** (<https://ivo.bg/2013/01/16/кой-цар-е-но-гол-на-чалгата.ули-на-меамъ/>, 26.11.2023).

‘NO MEDIA WISHED TO BROADCAST IT!? THE DUET WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE ITS OWN PRESENTATION, HOWEVER, ON TELEVISION PLANETA PAYNER [but I don’t like that at all]!’

In our opinion, one of the most interesting, but also the rarest uses of the dubitative verb forms is when the speaker/writer conveys their own primary utterance with a dubitative. In this case, there is a distancing from the speaker/writer’s own utterance and an acknowledgment that in the primary utterance, the speaker has lied (see (29) and (30)).

(29) Казах му, че Иван **бил взел** книгата, и не му я дадох (Gerdzhikov 1977).

'I told him that Ivan had taken the book [but I lied], and I did not give it to him.'

(30) *И му разправям, че уж съм щял бил да ходя с нашите, та затова нямало било да отида с него* (author's archive) (Aleksova 2023a).

'And I told him, pretending that I was supposed to go with my parents, so that is why I was not going with him.'

Often, in modern Bulgarian, the dubitative forms are replaced by the re-narrative ones, provided that the context and intonation express doubt, distrust, or reservation towards the reliability of the primary information.

3. Conclusion

The Bulgarian evidential category, according to the view presented here, can undoubtedly be defined as epistemic. There are other opinions, for example, R. Nitsolova points out that evidentiality in our language is modalized, and only the conclusive and dubitative are modal. This view of the author is reflected in the title of her study, *Модализованная эвиденциальная система болгарского языка / Modalizovannaja jevidencial'naja sistema bolgarskogo jazyka* (The Modalized Evidential System of the Bulgarian Language) (Nitsolova 2007). Vladimir Plungian also writes that evidentiality in Balkan languages is modalized (Plungian 2011: 488). According to us, since indicative tenses express witnessed event, the conclusive expresses subjective inference, the renarrative conveys someone else's information without taking responsibility for its reliability, and the dubitative expresses reservation toward someone else's statement, it cannot be denied that the Bulgarian evidential system is modal.

According to our research, the grammaticalization of the Bulgarian evidential category is not completed, as the negative forms of the future tenses have three types of forms each (Aleksova 2023a). Furthermore, almost all composed evidential forms are permeable to pronominal clitics, particles (with or without stress), full words, detached parts, embedded words and expressions, and subordinate clauses (Aleksova 2023b).

If the terminology and classification of evidential systems by A. Aikhenvald (Aikhenvald 2004) are used, a new type C4 should be created for Bulgarian evidentiality, which would have the following members: *firsthand* (*witnessed in the past*), *inferred*, *reported*, *dubitative*.

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