

## NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE BULGARIAN HUMANITIES

*(Tasheva, Iveta. Medical Humanities. Subject Matter, Terminology, Translation. Sofia, 2022)*

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Iveta Tasheva is among the few specialists in Bulgaria who are developing the field of medical humanities. It can even be argued that she was the first to offer a theoretical text in this field, which in other countries is already often an integral part of the education of students of both the humanities and the medical field. Based on my experience not only in the field of literary translation, but also in specialized translation, I can say that in Bulgaria, two of the areas in which there is the greatest shortage of good, specialized translators, are medicine and law. Part of the reason for that is that there are few translators who can boast the added value of a specialized education in these areas. It is therefore commendable when a practitioner of Dr. Tasheva's competence turns to the theoretical field to offer her expertise in the service of resolving various and specific translation issues – something that has been done in this necessary and highly specialized book.

Prof. Tasheva is a leading Bulgarian cardiologist who is also one of the most cited professionals due to her numerous medical articles published in the most renowned specialized journals. For the purposes of the book, they have been used in a way which demonstrates good practices for translating medical terminology. In addition, she is also the author of texts that look into issues that bridge medicine and philosophy, literary studies and translation studies, in order to outline the boundaries of the aforementioned field of medical humanities. The latter have also been published in referenced journals.

The book *Medical Humanities. Subject Matter, Terminology, Translation*<sup>1</sup> is Iveta Tasheva's habilitation thesis and it consists of a theoretical part and a practical part. The first part outlines the issues that medical humanities deals with and comments on various and important cases from the translation of medical terminology, while the second part demonstrates how medical texts should be translated in practice, in this case specifically from the field of cardiology. This second part can serve as a practical guide, as the side-by-side placement of the articles in Bulgarian and

English allows the reader to easily compare the concepts in the two languages, as the approach adopted by the medical specialist is illustrated.

Iveta Tasheva's work is extremely timely for several reasons. It could prompt a discussion about the role and responsibility of translators of medical terminology, as a similar discussion— as Dr. Tasheva notes— has been taking place around the world, but not in Bulgaria. Secondly, it lays the foundations for medical humanities in Bulgaria. And thirdly, it demonstrates impressive interdisciplinarity, which shows that there are more points of contact between different scientific and humanitarian disciplines than we are predisposed to thinking, and that the future of science, in particular of each of its separate branches, lies in dialogue and openness. We often label different things as “interdisciplinary”, but for this work this description is truly defining and points to the way that knowledge should strive to follow.

Another merit of the work is the balance between theory, historicism and applicability. The work skillfully defines the areas of medical humanities, outlines the transfer of knowledge as one of the paths that modern medicine should take, examines patient-doctor relationships, and seeks the place of translators in this chain. Also from the theoretical field is her focus on the relationship between medicine and literature, as well as the extremely important review of transhumanism, made in line with the search for the directions facing medicine. That review, marked by the theme of the future, is important not only because of the issues outlined, but also because they are all addressed from the perspective of an actively practicing physician. This fact accounts for much greater credibility and gravity.

Historicism is represented through the review of the genesis of medical terms, the role of Greek and Latin in this process, the transformations that took place over time and the role of English as a lingua franca for modern medicine. Special attention has been paid to suffixes and roots, spelling, as well as terms such as “crisis” and their development since Antiquity through various temporal and philosophical contexts to their meanings in present-day medicine.

The applicability of the work is evident not only in the already mentioned practical part, but also in the author's excellent outlining of the pitfalls and challenges that the translator of medical texts faces. Another merit of this study is the focus on the role of context in determining the use of one term instead of another, the subject matter of registers and genres of medical texts, specific medical jargon and the idea of its versatility, metaphors of medical origin, false friends, the translation of abbreviations, comparisons, eponyms. Here, her work abounds with many examples in different languages, with examples of translatability or untranslatability, while all of this is grounded in the awareness that the text is targeted at a Bulgarian audience – one of the great merits of the work.

In general, the entire study skillfully balances between viewing translation as translation of knowledge, as part of intercultural communication, on the one hand, and interlingual translation, on the other, focusing on a range of cases related to

terminological inconsistencies, the presence of different classifications of terms in different cultures, the goal of achieving unambiguity in medical translation, the coining of new terms, including during the pandemic. Valuable observations are also made on the specific work of translators, using surveys with active translators who do not have specialized medical education but who perform translation of medical texts for a leading agency.

As already pointed out, Iveta Tasheva's *Medical Humanities. Subject Matter, Terminology, Translation* is a pioneering work in many aspects and from now on will be the groundwork on which the development of medical humanities in Bulgaria will be based, as well as that of translation studies, when its focus is medical terminology. This makes the text an important and useful work not only for philologists and humanities scholars, but also for medical professionals. Its role in identifying points of contact between the different spheres of humanities and life sciences is also significant, thus illustrating the benefit of overcoming the limitations one's own field imposes, regardless of which segment of knowledge that may be. Last but not least, the work is also important in addressing the current subject matter of redefining the doctor-patient relationships. And finally, as already pointed out, its role as a practical tool in translating medical terms, especially in the field of cardiology, is essential.

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#### **NOTES**

1. Tasheva, I., *Medical Humanities. Subject Matter, Terminology, Translation*. Sofia, 2022 [in Bulgarian].

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