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A DIACHRONIC COGNITIVE-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE BULGARIAN DISJUNCTIVE CONJUNCTIONS *ИЛИ*, *ТУ*, *Я*, *БИЛО* AND *ХА*: FROM THE 19TH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

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ДИАХРОНЕН КОГНИТИВНО-СЕМАНТИЧЕН АНАЛИЗ НА БЪЛГАРСКИТЕ РАЗДЕЛИТЕЛНИ СЪЮЗИ *ИЛИ*, *ТУ*, *Я*, *БИЛО* И *ХА*: ОТ 19. ВЕК ДО ДНЕС

The study presents a diachronic cognitive-semantic analysis of Bulgarian disjunctive conjunctions (*или*, *ту*, *я*, *било*, *ха*) across 19th- and 21st-century literary texts. The research categorizes the use of the investigated conjunctions according to the cognitive operations they encode. The results reveal processes of functional homogenization and subjectification in the inventory of disjunctive conjunctions. The core coordinator *или* has nearly doubled in frequency, absorbing roles previously held by specialized markers. Conversely, correlative conjunctions like *ту – ту*, *я – я* and *ха – ха* have noticeably declined. Another finding is the surge of Approximation uses of *или*, signaling a shift from the prototypical Choice operation toward the verbalization of imprecise mental estimation. This evolution reflects a streamlining of the Bulgarian disjunctive system toward the Standard Average European profile.

Keywords: *Bulgarian disjunctive conjunctions, cognitive-semantic analysis, functional homogenization, subjectification, Standard Average European (SAE)*

1. Introduction

Disjunction is a basic linguistic category enabling speakers to express alternation between two or more entities or states of affairs. Conjunctions are among the primary formal means of encoding this semantic relation in Indo-European languages. Most languages within this family possess a single core disjunctive coordinator – such as *or* in English, *oder* in German, or *ou* in Portuguese – which is typically supplemented by a set of less frequent alternative conjunctions that, while also capable of expressing disjunction, may simultaneously introduce additional semantic nuance, as illustrated by the correlative *whether – or* in English, or *beziehungsweise* in German. Bulgarian conforms to this typological pattern: its core disjunctive coordinator is *или* (*ili*) ‘or’, yet the language additionally features a range of alternative, frequently correlative, disjunctive conjunctions, including *ли – ли* (*li – li*) ‘or’, *дали – или* (*dali – ili*) ‘whether – or’, *било – било* (*bilo – bilo*) ‘be it – or’, *било че – било че* (*bilo che – bilo che*) ‘whether – or’, *ту – ту* (*tu – tu*) ‘now – now’, *я – я* (*ya – ya*) ‘either ... or’, *кое – кое* (*koe – кое*) ‘or’, *а – а* (*a – a*) ‘now – now’, *ха – ха* (*ha – ha*) ‘now – now’, *бе – бе* (*be – be*) ‘now – now’, and *бре – бре* (*bre – bre*) ‘now – now’ (Nitsolova 1993: 463). Despite the apparent breadth of this inventory, the actual frequency with which several of these conjunctions occur across the various registers of contemporary Bulgarian

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remains an open question. Nitsolova herself observes that certain items on this list are found predominantly in colloquial registers (ibid.: 463), suggesting that their occurrence in writing is significantly rarer than in everyday colloquial speech. In fact, the distribution and frequency of Bulgarian disjunctive conjunctions have to date received no systematic quantitative treatment, in either written or spoken corpora¹. This gap gives rise to the central question motivating the present study: has the use of Bulgarian disjunctive conjunctions changed in the recent past, and if so, in what manner? Furthermore, disjunctive conjunctions have been observed to encode a range of semantically and pragmatically distinct meanings. Yet, the inventory of meanings expressed by their Bulgarian counterparts likewise remains without a quantitative treatment grounded in contemporary theoretical frameworks. The present study aims to address both of these deficiencies.

2. Research Design and Objectives

The present study investigates the functional semantics and distributional behavior of the Bulgarian disjunctive conjunctions *или*, *ту – ту*, *я – я*, *било – било*, and *ха – ха*. Building upon earlier research on additive constructions (Stankov 2023), the article analyzes how markers of alternative relations operate in contemporary written Bulgarian and contrasts the findings with data from the late 19th century. The study pursues two principal objectives. First, it seeks to determine which functional meanings each of the investigated conjunctions encodes and which are more dominant, using the classification framework introduced by Sklyarova (2015; 2021) in her study of English disjunctive conjunctions. Secondly, the paper aims to determine the direction of the diachronic development of the investigated disjunctive conjunctions over approximately 130 years and to examine how their frequency and meaning distributions have evolved.

To achieve these goals, the usage and frequency of the selected conjunctions were analyzed across two distinct corpora, totaling approximately 200,000 word tokens. To ensure statistical comparability, each corpus consists of 100,000 tokens. The corpora are structured as follows:

1. *Contemporary Literary Corpus*: Comprising contemporary short stories and excerpts from novels published between 2018 and 2022. This corpus represents the contemporary period.
2. *Historical Literary Corpus*: This corpus serves as a diachronic benchmark and is comprised of two foundational works of Bulgarian literature from the late 19th century: *Бай Ганьо* ('Bay Ganyo') by Aleko Konstantinov and the first part of *Под игото* ('Under the Yoke') by Ivan Vazov. Due to the 100,000-token limit established for comparative balance, only the first volume and a small section of the second volume of the novel were included.

By utilizing these datasets, the study provides a quantitative basis for assessing the competition between the core coordinator *или* and more expressive correlative markers (such as *я – я* or *ту – ту*), particularly as they transition from the varied landscape of the National Revival period to the more standardized linguistic norms of the modern era.

3. Theoretical framework

Building on the classificatory framework advanced by Sklyarova (2015; 2021), the present investigation employs her taxonomy of disjunctive conjunction meanings. Her framework delineates distinct pragmatic-semantic categories grounded in their underlying cognitive operations:

3.1. Choice

Choosing between two or more mutually exclusive alternatives is the prototypical cognitive operation associated with disjunctive conjunctions (Sklyarova 2021: 4). From a cognitive perspective, this

¹ Tsonev (2014) offers a comprehensive examination of the use of coordinating conjunctions in spoken Bulgarian which includes the disjunctive group, but it appears to approach the issue from a qualitative rather than quantitative perspective.

operation involves the human mind weighing different options to determine a course of action or a truth value. While she focuses on English conjunctions like *or*, the same category can be applied to Bulgarian *или*, as in (1):

(1) – *Добре. Какъв вестник да издаваме – за правителството ли, **или** опозиция?*

– *Dobre. Kakav vestnik da izdavame – za pravitelstvoto li, **ili** opozitsiya?*

– ‘Fine. What kind of newspaper should we publish – for the government **or** the opposition?’

(Konstantinov 1895; emphasis added)

In (1), the interlocutor is explicitly asked to choose between two alternatives. The provided options are mutually exclusive; choosing one means rejecting the other. In Bulgarian, the use of the correlative construction *или – или* further emphasizes the mutual exclusivity of the provided options, cf:

(2) – *Нашия вестник ще кръстим **или** България за нас, **или** Народно величие. Изберете си едно от двете.*

– *Nashiya vestnik shte krastim **ili** Balgariya za nas, **ili** Narodno velichie. Izberete si edno ot dvete.*

– ‘We will name our newspaper **either** Bulgaria for Us **or** National Greatness. Choose one of the two’ (Konstantinov 1895; emphasis added)

3.2. Deficient knowledge

This category describes a situation where the alternative relation, expressed by the disjunctive conjunction, exists not in the objective reality, but solely within the mind of the speaker due to a lack of information. The available alternatives are still mutually exclusive, but they represent speculations about the actual state of affairs rather than real options, as is the case with the category **Choice**. This type of meaning is often accompanied by parenthetical modal words that signal uncertainty, such as *може би* (*mozhe bi*) ‘maybe’, *вероятно* (*veroyatno*) ‘probably’ or *сигурно* (*sigurno*) ‘perhaps’, or by other grammatical structures that signal speculation. Cf. (3):

(3) *Марко се престори спокоен и ги сметна: той ги увери, че нищо не намерил на двора, че вероятно някоя котка **или** куче е бутнало тухлите, а глупавата Пена надала врява.*

*Marko se prestori spokoен i gi smetna: toy gi uveri, che nishto ne nameril na dvora, che veroyatno nyakoya kotka **ili** kuche e butnalo tuhlyte, a glupavata Pena nadala vryava.*

‘Marko pretended to be calm and dismissed them: he assured them that he had found nothing in the yard, that probably some cat **or** dog had knocked over the bricks, and foolish Pena had raised an outcry.’ (Vazov 1894; emphasis added)

3.3. Alternation

Sklyarova’s category *Alternation* refers to a specific type of situation where different events, actions, or states of affairs occur successively and repeatedly over time. Unlike the **Choice** category, where only one option is selected, and the others are discarded, in **Alternation**, all presented options actually occur, but at different times. The category often implies a habitual or recurring change. It is sometimes accompanied by adverbs denoting time, such as *от време на време* (*ot vreme na vreme*) ‘from time to time’, *понякога* (*ponyakoga*) ‘sometimes’, *често* (*chesto*) ‘often’. A great example of a conjunction encoding this meaning category in Bulgarian is the correlative *ту – ту*. Cf. (4):

(4) *Неведнъж е бъркал той в кесиите на разни славянски комитети **ту** като „от Батак“, **ту** като „емигрант“.*

*Nevednazh e barkal toy v kesiite na razni slavyanski komiteti **tu** като „ot Batak“, **tu** като „emi-grant“.*

‘More than once, he had dipped into the purses of various Slavic committees, **now** as “from Batak”, **now** as an “emigrant”.’ (Konstantinov 1895; emphasis added)



Essentially, the category Alternation encompasses alternatives that, while mutually exclusive at any given moment, are realized in succession over time. Within this cognitive framework, the options are not viewed as competing choices but as recurring states of affairs that manifest in a sequential, repetitive cycle.

3.4. Distribution

The Distribution category is used when an alternative relation describes a set of entities or phenomena that are dispersed across different points in space, groups, or circumstances. Unlike the prototypical **Choice** (where only one option is selected), in **Distribution**, all mentioned alternatives are realized, but they are distributed among different subjects or locations. All linked elements exist in reality simultaneously, but they are attached to different referents. Unlike **Alternation**, which expresses states of affairs occurring at different times, **Distribution** involves states of affairs that are realized at the same time but in different places or for different entities. Cf. (5):

- (5) *Победители и победени – всички се затекоха към баща си да се тъжат или оправят.*
Pobediteli i pobedeni – vsichki se zatekoha kam bashta si da se tazhat ili opravyat.
 ‘Victors and vanquished – all ran to their father to complain **or** to settle matters.’ (Vazov 1894; emphasis added)

3.5. Motivation

The Motivation category involves a situation in which the conjunction links two unequal alternatives. One is encouraged by the speaker (hence the name Motivation), while the other is presented as a negative consequence that will occur, if the first alternative does not materialize. The desired action or state of affairs that the speaker seeks to achieve is often expressed in the imperative mood, and the negative consequence often follows the disjunctive conjunction in the present or future tense. Cf. (6):

- (6) – *Прочети или в гърлото ти ще бръкна с ножа! – викна заптието.*
 – *Procheti ili v garloto ti shte brakna s nozha! – vikna zaptieto.*
 – ‘Read it, **or** I will stick the knife in your throat! – shouted the gendarme’. (Vazov 1894; emphasis added)

Unlike the **Choice** category, which often represents a neutral inquiry into preferences or a prompt to select one of two equal alternatives, the Motivation category is encountered in situations where the second option is usually a threat intended to force the first.

3.6. Enumeration

Enumeration occurs when the inherent alternative meaning of a disjunctive conjunction is neutralized, allowing it to function as a tool for listing entities. In this context, the disjunctive conjunction no longer conjoins mutually exclusive options and instead signals that the items or states of affairs are being presented as part of a group. Since they are not mutually exclusive, they can occur simultaneously and at the same place. Sklyarova is quick to note, however, that the **Enumeration** function does not fully neutralize the distinction between disjunctive and copulative conjunctions because “the usage of *or* implies the continuation of enumeration while *and* indicates its completion” (Sklyarova 2021: 7). Cf. (7):

- (7) – *Не е нужно – каза решително Кочо, – краят е известен: ще го държат за нозете и ще плачат, додето им даде няколко рубли или някоя рекомендация до друга жертва, или някое ходатайство...*
 – *Ne e nuzhno – kaza reshitelno Kocho, – krayat e izvesten: shte go darzhat za nozete i shte plach-at, dodeto im dade nyakolko rubli ili nyakoya rekomendatsiya do druga zhertva, ili nyakoe hodataystvo...*

– ‘It is not necessary – said Kocho decisively, – the end is known: they will hold him by the feet and cry until he gives them a few rubles, **or** a recommendation to another victim, **or** some intercession...’ (Konstantinov 1895; emphasis added)

3.7. Approximation

According to Sklyarova, **Approximation** involves the inexact description of reality. It occurs when a speaker cannot or does not wish to provide a precise description of an object, action, or state of affairs. The speaker uses the disjunctive conjunction to set the limits of a range of values that a metric can take (e.g., two or three apples) or to set an indefinite limit to this range by using a lexical item denoting an indefinite quantity, e.g., *18 or older*. Cf. (8):

(8) – *Каже Нечо трескавица, та ми дойде на ума, а, пази боже, в Кримската война аз и Иван Бошнаков отивахме за Босна, помня като днес: беше ден или два до Никулден; над Пирот замръкнахме, когато избухна една страшна буря, ала каква буря!*

– *Kazhe Necho treskavitsa, ta mi doyde na uma, a, pazi bozhe, v Krimskata vojna az i Ivan Boshnakov otivahme za Bosna, pomnya kato dnes: beshe den ili dva do Nikulden; nad Pirot zamraknahme, kogato izbuhna edna strashna burya, ala kakva burya!*

– ‘Necho mentioned a thunder, and it reminds me, God forbid, during the Crimean War, Ivan Boshnakov and I were going to Bosnia, I remember it like it was today: it was a day **or** two before Saint Nicholas’ Day; we were overtaken by night above Pirot when a terrible storm broke out, and what a storm it was!’ (Vazov 1894; emphasis added)

In Bulgarian, this category of meaning is commonly found in set expressions of approximation like *рано или късно* (rano ili kasno) ‘sooner or later’, *така или иначе* (taka ili inache) ‘one way or another’, *за добро или лошо* (za dobro ili losho) ‘for good or bad’. Cf. (9):

(9) *А брожението расте всеки ден и тука, и наоколо: рано или късно въстание ще има.*

A brozhenieto расте всеки ден i tuka, i naokolo: rano ili kasno vastanie shte ima.

‘And the unrest grows by the day, both here and in the region: sooner **or** later, there will be an uprising.’ (Vazov 1894; emphasis added)

3.8. Addition

Sklyarova’s category **Addition** represents the mental operation whereby the disjunctive conjunction introduces supplementary information that the speaker did not intend in advance. The conjunction adds a word, phrase, or entire sentence to the previous discourse, often to correct or clarify previously made statements. In writing, the item introduced through the disjunctive conjunction is commonly separated from the rest of the sentence through a comma, indicating a short pause on behalf of the speaker that is used for reflection on what has been said. Cf. (10):

(10) *Оттук тръгваха всички невинни истории, за да обикалят целия град и да се повърнат пак живо и здраво в колосален размер, или пък обратно: влазяха тук сламки и излязяха планини.*

Ottuk travgaha vsichki nevinni istoriyki, za da obikalyat tseliya grad i da se povarnat pak zhivo i zdravo v kolosalen razmer, ili pak obratno: vlazyaha tuk slamki i izlzyaha planini.

‘From here all the innocent little stories started, only to go around the whole town and return safe, sound and colossal, **or** the reverse: they entered here as tiny as straws and came out as big as mountains.’ (Vazov 1894; emphasis added)

4. Analytical procedure

Following the establishment of the theoretical framework for analyzing Bulgarian disjunctive conjunctions, this section delineates the specific analytical procedures employed in the study. The procedure commenced with the manual extraction of all sentences containing the target disjunctive conjunctions

from the two selected corpora. These data were compiled into a dedicated database for systematic review. Each instance of conjunction usage was subsequently categorized according to Sklyarova's classification of cognitive operations. The resulting frequencies were quantified and tabulated separately for each corpus: Table 1 below presents the data derived from the contemporary literary corpus. In contrast, Table 2 details the findings from the historical literary corpus. The semantic analysis of each sentence was conducted manually to ensure precise interpretation and classification. In instances of ambiguity, the categorization was cross-verified using the LLMs Gemini 3 by Google and Claude Sonnet 4.6 by Anthropic. Furthermore, these computational tools assisted in conceptualizing Sklyarova's categories, evaluating and describing the study's data and results, and stylistically refining the final manuscript.

5. Empirical Findings and Discussion

5.1. The conjunction *или* (ili)

Semantically, the core disjunctive conjunction *или* (cf. Pashov 1999: 249) emerges as the most neutral among the investigated disjunctive conjunctions. It is widely used across all cognitive process categories examined in the study and is the most frequently occurring disjunctive conjunction in the analyzed corpora. Notably, its frequency in the contemporary corpus (237) nearly doubles that in the historical corpus (123; cf. Table 1 and Table 2). This marked increase suggests an ongoing process of neutralization within the Bulgarian disjunctive conjunction inventory, in which *или* gains ground at the expense of other members of this class. This pattern is corroborated by the observed decline in frequency among the other investigated conjunctions.

Interestingly, the **Choice** operation is not the most frequently encoded function of *или* in either corpus, and notably, its frequency declines in modern texts (9.3% of occurrences) compared to historical ones (14.6%). Instead, **Enumeration** dominates the use of *или* in both corpora (24.4% in the historical corpus and 26.6% in the modern corpus), suggesting that *или* functions as a listing tool as readily as it expresses a strict choice.

The most substantial diachronic change in the cognitive operations encoded by *или* concerns **Approximation**. While this operation accounts for only 7.3% of the conjunction's occurrences in the historical corpus, it rises to 24.1% in the contemporary corpus – a significant increase that points to a growing tendency to employ the core disjunctive conjunction for expressing inexact quantities. This shift may reflect a broader process of subjectification, which Traugott (2017: 12) defines as “a shift toward meanings that are based more in the speaker's perspective than earlier ones.” The observed decline in the frequency of the original **Choice** operation encoded by *или* with a simultaneous increase in the more subjective **Approximation** operation aligns well with this process.

In the realm of literature in particular a possible reason for the expansion of the **Approximation** category could have to do with the fact that the 19th-century corpus (comprised of works by Vazov and Konstantinov) often employs a “God's eye” narrator, i.e. an omniscient perspective that describes events with relative certainty and objective detail. However, modern and contemporary literature leans more heavily into subjective realism, interior monologues, and limited third-person perspectives (cf. Genette 1980: 189; Stanzel 1984: 4 f.). In these modern registers, the narrator is often intentionally unreliable or humanized. In this environment expressing **Approximation** through *или* could be a stylistic tool to mimic the natural limitations of human memory and perception. The statistical surge found in the data may reflect this broader literary shift toward cognitive realism, where the truth of a number is less important than the impression of the narrator.

Two other cognitive operations involving the subjective representation of information in the speaker's mind remain relatively stable across both corpora. **Deficient Knowledge** remains a major category, employed when speakers express uncertainty about reality (21.1% historical vs. 20.3% contemporary) while **Addition** continues to serve retrospective refinement or correction (18.7% historical vs. 15.6% contemporary). By contrast, **Motivation** – closely associated with the original Choice operation – is virtually absent from the contemporary corpus. This observation warrants caution, however, as **Motivation** appears with nearly equally extreme rarity in the historical corpus. Moreover, **Motivation** is not unat-

tested in contemporary Bulgarian, suggesting that its absence from the corpora reflects stylistic factors rather than genuine language change.

5.2. The conjunction *my – my* (tu–tu)

In both corpora, the correlative conjunction *my – my* was found to encode the operation of **Alternation** exclusively. Unlike the core coordinator *или*, which is spread across all eight different cognitive categories, *my – my* serves a single, dedicated purpose: describing events that are mutually exclusive at a specific moment but occur repeatedly and in sequence over time. In addition, unlike *или*, in all of its occurrences in the corpora, this conjunction is used as a correlative, which allows it to create a rhythmic structure in the sentence, partitioning the timeline into distinct, repeating phases. While there are no observable changes with regard to the cognitive operations *my – my* encodes, its frequency appears to have reduced substantially over the investigated period (22 occurrences in the historical corpus vs. 9 in the contemporary one). When regarded in the context of the substantial frequency gain of *или*, this decline could be viewed as another indication that the semantic space once reserved for specialized alternation markers is increasingly being occupied by the more general *или*. However, in view of the low relative frequency of the *my–my* marker and the finite dimensions of the corpora used for the study, any definitive diachronic conclusions must be considered tentative; a more extensive dataset would be required to verify whether this decline represents a systemic shift or a marginal statistical fluctuation.

5.3. The conjunction *я – я* (ya – ya)

The correlative conjunction *я – я* exhibits greater functional diversity than *my – my* across cognitive operations, yet its scarcity limits the possibility of establishing definitive patterns of usage. In the historical corpus, it encodes **Enumeration** and **Approximation**, whereas in the contemporary corpus it appears only with **Alternation**. This suggests that *я – я* does not have a fixed cognitive role in the way other specialized markers like *my – my* do. Instead, it appears to function as a stylistic variant, employed flexibly alongside other markers and especially the neutral conjunction *или* according to authorial choice. The marked scarcity of *я – я* within the contemporary literary corpus suggests a process of intensifying register-restriction. It appears that the marker has retreated from formal and narrative prose, becoming increasingly confined to the informal-colloquial pole of the linguistic continuum. This is consistent with Nitsolova's (1993: 463) observation that some Bulgarian correlative disjunctive conjunctions are characteristic of informal, everyday speech.

5.4. The conjunction *било – било* (bilo – bilo)

The correlative disjunctive conjunction *било – било* is even rarer than *my – my* and *я – я*. In the contemporary corpus, it appears only once, and notably not as a pure correlative but in combination with *или* as the second element of the construction. In the historical corpus it was observed four times, always as a correlative conjunction. While in the older texts the conjunction encodes **Deficient Knowledge** and **Approximation**, in the modern corpus it was encountered in the function of **Enumeration**. Although the conjunction's low frequency limits detailed analysis of its semantic development, its overall decline aligns with broader patterns observed in the Bulgarian disjunctive conjunction inventory.

5.5. The conjunction *ха – ха* (ha – ha)

The correlative conjunction *ха – ха* mirrors *my – my* in specializing in a single cognitive operation – **Distribution** – yet differs by remaining entirely unattested in the contemporary corpus while occurring only four times in the historical corpus. Like *я – я*, *ха – ха* is found predominantly in colloquial registers, a factor likely explaining its absence from contemporary literary texts. These patterns suggest that *ха – ха* is evolving into an archaic expressive marker. Its distribution exemplifies the broader pattern of linguistic contraction within the inventory of Bulgarian disjunctive conjunctions, reflecting a systematic shift away from stylistically marked and exotic members toward a more streamlined, functional core. Nevertheless, given the limited frequency of correlative conjunctions such as *ха – ха* and *я – я*, a more comprehensive analysis drawing on a larger corpus of contemporary texts – potentially spanning diverse

stylistic registers – could confirm and, if necessary, strengthen the findings of the present study and refine the observations presented here.

6. Conclusion

The present investigation attempted to categorize the cognitive operations encoded by several Bulgarian disjunctive conjunctions using Sklyarova's cognitive-linguistic framework and to trace their development from the 19th to the 21st century. The results reveal an ongoing process of reorganization in the Bulgarian disjunctive system, characterized by three primary trends: functional homogenization, subjectification, and stylistic contraction. Perhaps the most prominent finding of this study concerns the frequency of the analyzed conjunctions. While *или* was observed to be used significantly more frequently in contemporary works than in 19th-century prose, its counterparts have all experienced a decline in usage frequency. This suggests that *или* is evolving into a semantically underspecified, all-purpose marker that is absorbing the functions previously held by more specialized conjunctions. In this respect, Bulgarian appears to follow a trajectory common to Standard Average European languages, which tend toward consolidating a single core conjunction for each type of conjunctive relation: for instance, English employs *and* for additive relations, *or* for disjunctive relations, and *but* for adversative relations (cf. Mauri 2008).

Furthermore, the data shows a shift in the mental operations expressed by *или*. While **Enumeration** remains the most frequent category in both periods, the category of **Approximation** has surged significantly. This transition signals a subjectification of the conjunction, in which the narrator moves away from describing objective choices toward expressing internal cognitive states, such as imprecise estimations and linguistic hedging. In contrast to the rise of *или*, specialized correlative markers – *my – ty*, *я – я*, *било – било*, and *ха – ха* – have seen a sharp quantitative decline. *Ty – my* remains the only marker with total functional stability, dedicated exclusively to Alternation, though its frequency has dropped by over 50%. *Я – я* and *било – било* are becoming marginal, showing signs of functional instability as they are gradually squeezed out of the literary standard and become register-restricted. *Ха – ха*, a marker for **Distribution** relatively common in the investigated 19th-century prose, is moving toward obsolescence in the contemporary period. While an investigation of a larger corpus of Bulgarian texts remains necessary to solidify the findings of this study, based on the current data it appears that the Bulgarian disjunctive system is moving toward a more streamlined and efficient model. The 19th-century system, rich with stylistically marked and semantically specialized markers, is being reduced in favor of the highly flexible coordinator *или*.

Table 1: Frequency of occurrence of the investigated conjunctions in the contemporary corpus

	Choice	Deficient knowledge	Alternation	Distribution	Motivation	Enumeration	Approximation	Addition	Total
или	22 (9.3%)	48 (20.3%)	8 (3.4%)	2 (0.8%)	0	63 (26.6%)	57 (24.1%)	37 (15.6)	237
ту	0	0	9 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	9
я	0	0	2 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	2
било	0	0	0	0	0	1 (100%)	0	0	1
ха	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2: Frequency of occurrence of the investigated conjunctions in the historical corpus

	Choice	Deficient knowledge	Alternation	Distribution	Motivation	Enumeration	Approximation	Addition	Total
или	18 (14.6%)	26 (21.1%)	11 (8.9%)	4 (3.3%)	2 (1.6%)	30 (24.4%)	9 (7.3%)	23 (18.7%)	123
ту	0	0	22 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	22



я	0	0	0	0	0	4 (66.6%)	2 (33.3%)	0	6
било	0	2 (50%)	0	0	0	0	2 (50%)	0	4
ха	0	0	0	4 (100%)	0	0	0	0	4

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