

PEER REVIEW

By Petya Nacheva Osenova, PhD, Professor at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

of the materials presented for the selection procedure
for obtaining the academic position of **‘Assistant Professor’**
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

in Higher Education Field 2. Humanities
Professional Field 2. 1. Philology
(Grammar and Historical Linguistics – English Language)

Particulars of the procedure

By Order No.ПД 38-541/17.11.2021 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" I was appointed as a Member of the Scientific Jury in the selection procedure for obtaining the academic position of ‘Assistant Professor’.

In the selection procedure for obtaining the academic position of ‘Assistant Professor’ announced in State Gazette **no.87, dated 19.10.2021**, there participated as a candidate Chief Assistant Bozhil Petrov Hristov, PhD.

The set of materials presented by the candidate includes all the necessary documents for the procedure. Chief Assistant Hristov, PhD, has met the minimum national requirements under Art.2b, Para.2 and 3 of DARSBA.

Personal information about the candidate

The professional CV of the candidate is really impressive. Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Hristov completed the Bachelor's Program in English philology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". He further completed successfully a Master's Degree and was awarded a Doctoral Degree in General and Comparative Linguistics by Oxford University, UK. The candidate has acquired a number of additional qualifications obtained through participation in international seminars and courses in languages, grammar etc. He was a Fulbright Fellow at the

University of Texas, Austin, USA. He was a lecturer in linguistics at Oxford, worked as a translator-editor, and, since 2012, he has been an Assistant at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Dr. Hristov is a member of several international organizations and committees. He has also received a number of awards for personal achievements. His studies cover also ancient and medieval languages, which gives him a very deep perspective on the current state of the languages.

I have known Dr. Hristov for several years. I have gained personal impressions of him from his participation in a number of linguistic seminars and conferences. He is an extremely erudite lecturer and a scholar with interdisciplinary interests and in-depth knowledge of both synchronic and diachronic grammars of English and Bulgarian languages. Dr. Hristov is also one of the few linguists in Bulgaria who has been working in the field of lexically oriented linguistic theories based on limitations, namely the Lexical Functional Grammar. I hope that he will be able to lay the foundations of a linguistic school in this area in Bulgaria, especially since he will be able to collaborate with me and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tsvetomira Venkova who have been working within the similar framework of Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar.

Description of the scholarly works

The candidate has submitted for the procedure one monograph; a book published on the basis of a dissertation; two chapters from monographs, three studies; three articles in research journals and three articles in collections (13 research publications altogether). Of the presented publications, only one is co-authored. I will exclude from the list of his publications, and therefore will not consider for the purposes of the present selection, the book published on the basis of the defended doctoral thesis for awarding the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor", because the dissertation was the subject of another procedure. It is needed only for the purposes of scientometrics at NCID. It is noteworthy that the

habilitation thesis was published by a prestigious publishing house abroad. It makes it possible for the candidate's ideas to reach a large number of colleagues who are interested in the discussed issues. The two chapters from books are also part of books published by prestigious foreign publishers. In addition, the candidate is a co-author of some of the most famous modern linguists in the field of Lexical Functional Grammar. Of the three studies, two are published in a prestigious foreign journal indexed in the Web of Science, and one is published in a Bulgarian comparative journal. The three scholarly articles appeared in Bulgarian journals, and of the three articles published in collections, two are in collections published by "St. Kl. Ohridski" University Publishing House, and one is published in the proceedings of the International Conference on Lexical Functional Grammar.

In my opinion, Dr. Hristov's manner of publishing in both English and Bulgarian languages is a very good practice. In this way, his scientific ideas are equally accessible to the scientific community in Bulgaria and abroad.

Scholarly contributions

The major work related to the current procedure is the habilitation one. For that reason, more attention will be paid to it. The book was written in English and has the following bibliographic features: *Bozhil Hristov, 2020, Grammaticalising the Perfect and Explanations of Language Change: Have- and Be-Perfects in the History and Structure of English and Bulgarian, Brill's Studies in Historical Linguistics, Volume: 10, ISSN (print):978-90-04-41432-7, ISSN (online):978-90-04-41432-7, ISBN:978-90-04-41432-7, Brill, Leiden, 368 pp.*

The contributions of the research are in several directions: it is a critical revision of the mechanisms behind the displacement of one auxiliary verb or another in the formation of the perfect in view not of the functional load of the element, but of the influence of language history, and hence of the contact with

related languages; it is a successful attempt at coining a common terminological apparatus and a common approach to comparative research in two unrelated languages; it provides in depth evidence from earlier historical periods of the languages in corroboration of the empirical factors for the behaviour of the auxiliary verbs compared to the functional ones; there is a balance between the functional and evolutionary approaches in tracing the factors that have influenced modern ways of forming the perfect. This research is in itself a good example of how observations on previous stages of a language should be used to clarify its current state.

The monograph consists of an introduction, nine chapters and a conclusion to the total volume of 368 pages. The Bibliography is very rich and includes over 250 works by English and Bulgarian authors who have written about the perfect in modern languages and about its origin, development and the gradual coincidence of its forms with other tense forms over time. The **first chapter** introduces the theme of the temporal systems (English and Bulgarian) in a comparative plan as well as in a temporal plan (from a synchronic and diachronic point of view). The **second chapter** sets the theoretical framework of the study. Although considerable attention has been paid to the functional approaches, the focus of the exposition is on the evolutionary approaches, thus a theoretical balance being struck in view of the prevalence of the works on the influence of the functional load of the language element. In the **chapters three** through to **six** the author has focused on the historical development of the perfect in English addressing a number of issues such as: a competition between *be* and *have* in its formation and the reasons for the disappearance of *be* which appears to be rooted not (only) in the syncretism of linguistic elements; the situation in the Old English, Middle English and New English periods; a comparison with the German language which shows that *be* has lost ground in English not so much because it is an overly marked language

element, but due to the contact with other languages and the way it developed in the oral communication. **Chapter Seven** is devoted to the development and behaviour of the perfect in the Bulgarian language. Here, too, the author gives preference to the geographical approach over the functional one in explaining the partial competition of the perfect with *have* (*имам*). **Chapter Eight** traces the history of the Bulgarian perfect in detail and again refutes the functional hypothesis. **Chapter Nine** presents a summary of the observations on the English and Bulgarian languages through the prism of diachrony. Preference has been given to the hypothesis that the current state is due to linguistic contacts which activated the semantically poor uses of the auxiliary verbs and provided an opportunity for their wider use.

The rest of the presented publications discuss in detail a number of interesting linguistic issues. I will group them as follows: the largest group are publications applying the mechanisms of the Lexical Functional Grammar, or at least of a lexically oriented approach, such as the relations within the AANN noun group in English; reviews of analyzes applying this theory, of phenomena in the Slavic languages, the case management in English, the relationship between the ellipse, coordination and agreement, the types of agreement (numbers 3, 4, 5, 10, 13); the boundaries between language levels (number 6); modern lexical processes, including the adaptation of borrowings from English into Bulgarian (numbers 7 and 8); the development of the perfect constructions in Bulgarian and English through the prism of pragmatics (number 9); the transition of functional words in the class of full words (number 11); teaching history in English language in the Bulgarian universities (number 12). In my opinion, a scholarly contribution is the fact that the candidate applies the tools of the modern language theory to English and Bulgarian data. When contrasted, there always appear additional details about the phenomenon discussed. Concerning the data of the English language, he offers

new interpretations, which is not easy in English-dominated linguistics. As far as the Bulgarian data are concerned, he is an innovator, because he offers a model different from the existing ones, although I must strongly emphasize that he takes into account the publications of other authors on the subject. The publications also contribute to the comparative linguistics and typology of languages.

The candidate has presented 24 citations. Only one of these is in a Bulgarian publication; six are in journals indexed in Scopus and / or Web Of Science; five are in foreign dissertations; two are in prestigious foreign monographs; five are in conference proceedings devoted mainly to Lexical Functional Grammar. I consider that Dr. Hristov has achieved a high citation level and has a very good record in linguistics internationally.

Teaching experience

The candidate has extensive teaching experience not only in Bulgarian but also in English environment. He has been lecturing at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" since 2011, which means over ten years of accumulated experience so far. He teaches both practical and theoretical English grammar, historical disciplines, academic English. Dr. Hristov also teaches a Master's course on the Principles of Linguistic Analysis. Previously, he also taught grammar and historical language disciplines at Oxford University (2008-2011). In my opinion, his experience as an English teacher in private language schools (2006-2008) is also an advantage.

Conclusion

Having acquainted myself with the materials and scholarly works presented by the candidate for the selection procedure, and having analyzed their significance and contributions, I definitely give my positive assessment and recommend that the Scientific Jury should choose Chief Assistant Bozhil Hristov, PhD, for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at Sofia University "St. Kliment

Ohridski" in the Higher Education Field 2. Humanities; Professional Field 2.1.
Philology (Grammar and Historical Linguistics – English Language).

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