**REVIEW**

**of the scientific production of Associate Professor Nelly Todorova Tincheva-Georgieva, the only participant in the competition for the academic position of “professor” in the scientific field of 2.1. Philology (Cognitive Linguistics - Text Linguistics and Discourse Analysis (English))**

**Reviewer: Prof. Stefana Petrova Dimitrova - BAS, Institute for studies of the Bulgarian language "Prof. L. Andreychin"**

The documentation for the competition is in full order and meets all the requirements of the Law on Scientific Degrees and Titles and the New Regulations on the Terms and Procedures for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Sofia University.

The scientific evolution of Nelly Tincheva since 1990 has been connected with Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“, where she started studying English philology and successfully graduated in 1995. Her interest in the English language dates back even earlier and is connected with her studies at the "Exarch Joseph I" language school in Lovech. Her initial pursuits in translation and film directing were also related to the English language. Still, ever since 1995, she has focused strictly on scientific and teaching activities and successively passed through the academic positions of Assistant, Senior and Chief Assistant, qualified as an Associate Professor and defended two dissertations - for the scientific degrees of "doctor" and of "doctor of science". Her scientific output, used for the purposes of previous academic procedures, is impressive in volume and interesting in content. Nevertheless, in accordance with the law, it will not be evaluated in this review.

Since a professor is always perceived as a complete person who has taken their own position in a scientific field, I will allow myself to note that both the teaching and research activities of Mrs. Tincheva have long enjoyed the respect of the collegium and have been officially evaluated in a number of reviews and via citations. I will also note that, despite the diverse topics she deals with, Associate Professor Tincheva is distinguished by her taking a unified linguistic position and by her displaying a marked interest in the so-called high theories, to which text linguistics, discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics belong. All courses in practical English studies, which the candidate has developed independently or in collaboration with colleagues from the department, are supplemented with in-depth theoretical knowledge.

After assuming the academic position of "Associate Professor", Nelly Tincheva has produced 38 new publications in the fields of: text structure and its evolution; conceptual metaphor; oxymetaphtonymy; political speech; imagery (or figurativeness) in language, cognition and socio-cultural activity and ecology; language games and language gaffes; discourse grammar; etc. She has also written in the field of applied linguistics, where I would include her studies on modern developments in English grammar and her sociolinguistic studies of datasets reflecting Facebook use on the political situation in our country.

Her linguistic interpretation of political discourse is connected with a terminological overview of the concepts of "genre" and "text types", as well as with the clarification she offers of the lexemes "political" and "discourse" themselves - a procedure that ensures the successful application of the cognitive principles of prototypology in the process of the concepts’ analysis. Associate Professor Tincheva provides us with a dichotomous approach to the material researched, skillfully combining quantitative observations with qualitative ones, which without fail works to bring out the type and character of certain linguistic structures from inside the text – structures on which the reception of the text by the political audience depends predominantly (see e.g. *Bulgarian perceptions of political discourse genres*). The main focus of this falls on the communicative effect of a given text, and the use of conceptual (metaphorical) structures is recognized by the author as the main mechanism of said effect. The author successfully extracts the object of her interest from the broader investigative object and focuses her attention not on the overall description of the genres, but only on individual texts that serve to illustrate these genres. Naturally, in such studies, the quantitative approach prevails. A very valuable research skill is Tincheva’s placing the two methods (quantitative and qualitative) in an unbalanced position, which fully corresponds with a principle established in linguistics and in other scientific fields, saying that the object of the study can, at least to an extent, pre-determine the research method. Another important point in Nelly Tincheva's research approach is the use of results from one type of linguistic investigation for the purposes of research within another theoretical paradigm – what I have in mind can be seen in, for example, the article *Prototypes in text-types...*, in which the results from sociolinguistic studies using basic prototype postulates are employed to systematize data on the perception of political discourse genres.

The issue of conceptual metaphorization in political discourse occupies a significant place in the candidate's research. In this regard, the article on the political slogan (*What's in a Political Slogan*?) is particularly interesting; in it, the "Source-Path-Goal" image schema is positioned within the framework of the cognitive construct controlling the creation and meaning of political discourse texts. The author has repeatedly pondered the question of the communicative and political effect of Facebook posts. In several articles and reports, she examines individual and currently semi-terminological phrases of the type of "political action" and traces their "accommodation" in the minds of actual respondents. In the materials of this series I see a rich source for future research on the question of the so-called *stereoscopic situation in communication*, i.e. a situation in which the creator of the text has access to the consciousness of the addressee, and this is carried out with the help of the conceptual structures underlying their text.

The conceptual structures underlying a text, including metaphorical conceptualization, cannot fully explain the overall textual organization - this has been declared more than once in Associate Professor Tincheva’s studies. Textual organization, this extremely complex and multi-layered structure, finds its explanation in her idea of the overlap (or lack thereof) of textual and discursive worlds. This idea runs like a red thread through many of the candidate's studies and finds its fullest development in her recently defended dissertation. It is one of the pillars of Nelly Tincheva's linguistic world, in which the theoretical and analytical compatibility of the Theory of Conceptual Metaphor, the Theory of Conceptual Integration and the Theory of Textual Worlds is recognized. In her research in the field of cognitive linguistics, her original interpretation of the dynamic relationship between background and figure is also of interest - in the hypothesis proposed by her, it is precisely thanks to this relationship and profiling that the dynamic functioning of both discursive and textual worlds takes place.

Speaking of Nelly Tincheva's research in the field of cognitivism, I actually have to admit that a strict line cannot be drawn between her purely cognitive and her other works. A confirmation to this claim is the fact that she offers a cognitive theoretical model even for teaching political writing. Nelly Tincheva looks at text and text structure as an undisputable cognitivist: she strives to apply prototypology not only to the study, but also to the teaching of text types and genres. This position of hers obliges her to build a theoretically sound hypothesis for each study and to provide it with specifically selected linguistic evidence by reflecting on the answers to questions from systematized surveys - answers provided by actual speakers of a language.

The importance of responses by actual users of a language appears more than once in the scientific works of the candidate alongside the importance of responses by students of English as a foreign one. In the monograph *Language Gaffes (Linguistic, Discursive and Cognitive Aspects of "Language Bloopers")*, the object of study is data provided by actual speakers of the English language, since it is their understanding of linguistic gaffes that can help explain from a cognitive point of view the conceptually dependent emergence of gaffes as well as their functioning. To put it more generally, this is the only way for scholars to make sense of language gaffes’ essence and their nature. This involves clarifying the motivation which leads to language gaffes and doing so from two angles – a social one and a cognitive-linguistic one. Both in this publication and in other research, Nelly Tincheva's dichotomous approach is evident, she is used to looking at things from all sides. This is also evident in the explanation she seeks for the emergence of linguistic gaffes, where she rightly argues that they can arise from both language-related cognitive structures and structures unrelated to the linguistic code. This dichotomous approach also works well for the classification of linguistic gaffes, dividing them into those arising from non-prototypical filling or non-prototypical interconnection of slots in the cognitive structure, and those arising from cognitive structure distinguished by inadequate linguistic signaling. In the second type, the so-called violation of the language code is observed. I say "the so-called violation of the rules of the code" because this process in itself is not well and unambiguously described in the linguistic literature. Dwight Bolinger, for example, claims that the native speaker cannot be wrong, and the so-called violations are only a subconscious non-acceptance of certain rules of the standard language, and are embedded in the language architectonics in the form of other, cryptotype rules. I bring up this fact not to argue with the author of the monograph, but to emphasize that even in the controversial areas of modern linguistics, she has her own clear position and defends it quite logically.

This firm position of hers is also evident in the interpretation of her research results - in her statement that the producer of the text creates linguistic gaffes at the stage of constructing cognitive structures, and not because of problems arising during their linguistic signalling. I especially appreciate this conclusion of the candidate, because it is one of the proofs of the fundamental difference between language and thinking. Similarly, I would apply that to Tincheva’s statement about the fundamental cognitive differences between linguistic gaffes according to the nature of their occurrence – in dependence on their connection or non-connection with language. And, crucially, unintentional linguistic gaffes are not seen in the monograph as distinguished by accidental inappropriateness, which leads to a refutation of the claim that language gaffes are simply linguistic errors — a claim that brings us closer to Bollinger's theoretical postulates. Nelly Tincheva also works on this issue in her own, original way - she explains differences in the salience of individual language gaffes in the process of communication through sociolinguistic data and thus once again demonstrates her ability to use different perspectives in observing the same object of investigation.

The introduction of different perspectives during observation is also evident in the article *Language gaffes and language games as "mistakes" and "bloopers"* - an article with which Nelly Tincheva skillfully picks up on the interesting topic of language games. Although this topic was raised long ago by both Ferdinand de Saussure and Ludwig Wittgenstein, it has not been developed in sufficient detail and explanation by any school of language. In our country, it was developed mainly by specialists in foreign languages - several Russians, the Spanish professor Milena Popova and others. And now Nelly Tincheva delicately joins this small group. I very much hope that, under the influence of the mentioned developments, research on Bulgarian language material, which lately abounds with interesting game data, will appear in the near future.

I want to emphasize one more important point related to Nelly Tincheva's research approach. When she moves from a descriptive to a typological level of analysis, she crosses the boundaries of the dichotomous approach and moves towards a trichotomous approach, proposing a threefold typology of linguistic gaffes. Yuri Stepanov was the first to categorically speak about the threefold observation of linguistic material in his book *In the three-dimensional space of language*. In our country, Prof. Miroslav Yanakiev also argued for the mandatory transition from dichotomy to trichotomy under strictly defined conditions. These certain conditions, according to his interpretation, apply to the study of the living spontaneous speech of native speakers of a given language. Therefore, I will again note the appropriateness of Tincheva’s choosing actual language users as respondents, since only they have language as their main tool of communication and only they could adequately evaluate language gaffes along the two scales proposed: *acceptable - unacceptable* and *funny - not funny*.

Among the author's many interesting conclusions stands out the observation that the discursive analysis of linguistic gaffes reveals how – under certain conditions in certain social situations – speakers can or are forced to try to use linguistic mechanisms that do not have a place in their daily-used personal idiolect. Here we observe a successful linking of the social and linguistic behavior of language users with their psychological state, with their sense of real or imaginary social growth. This social growth is mainly related to intentionally occurring language gaffes, which are distinguished from unintentionally occurring ones by some external features, but they still do not show fundamental cognitive differences. They also do not bring about an impression of random inappropriateness, and this, according to the author's explanation, is related to the fact that their use is conditioned by social contexts and that it results from specifics in motivation, i.e. from the discrepancy between the contextual parameters and the pragmatically defined intentions of the producer of the text. I think that here Nelly Tincheva is completely right and I would even add that, from the point of view of pragmatics, in this case, we can talk about the existence of the so-called felicity conditions for the appearance of unintentionally arising language gaffes. And when those conditions are present, one cannot speak of errors, or at least of errors in a pure form, i.e. errors obscuring the semantic center of the utterance. I find a kind of confirmation of this view of mine at several places in the monograph and particularly in the triple - linguistic, discursive and cognitive - classification of gaffes proposed in it.

In her monograph, as well as in her other works, Ms. Tincheva skillfully and creatively uses some of the most interesting ideas of prominent linguists – Langacker, Lakoff, Johnson, Fauconnier, and Forceville, among others – for a detailed analysis of gaffes in the light of prototypology and with a view of proving her thesis that the so-called “bloopers” are not located far from the zone of haphazardness and are not always equally salient in the process of communication. Gaffes are not treated by her as an extra-systemic phenomenon and can therefore be studied with the methods applied to the apparently systemic (i.e., to – ultimately – the more frequent) linguistic facts. They can be studied linguistically, discursively-pragmatically and cognitively. The communicative specificity of gaffes, and especially that of the unintentional variant, allows them to be associated for a long time with a certain author, especially if the author is some kind of a public figure. In this case, two new aspects are introduced into Tincheva’s analysis – a sociolinguistic one and a psychological one. The author's interest in the speaking person, who could have problems during the construction of cognitive structures and during their linguistic signaling, is to be noted.

According to Tincheva, the first aspect is more important. The candidate's probing into respondents’ assessment of gaffes, who prove more interested in the *funny - not-funny* scale rather than in the *acceptable - unacceptable* scale, also deserves attention. Here, too, Tincheva proves herself to be a modern-thinking linguist who is not afraid to shift her attention away from linguistic facts toward the speaker and the listener in communication, speaker and listener who are called “interpreters” in pragmatics. Only in this way can both the social and the cognitive-linguistic motivation of linguistic gaffes be explained.

Much more can be said about the monograph. However, I would like to point out what seems to me most valuable: such works show that what until recently used to be accepted as purely peripheral phenomena in language are no less interesting and informative than studies on the linguistic center. To put it more categorically, the theory of center and periphery, considered for many years indisputable, seems to be undergoing serious disruption and to be facing significant objections. Something else needs to be added. In connection with what Nelly Tincheva's book says, one unavoidably finds oneself associating it with certain statements by scientists who worked in other fields of linguistics. For example, Igor Miloslavski, who examines the syntagmatic and paradigmatic differences between words, does not see in them any basic value and defines them as a secondary factor. According to him, the semantic modification of the word leads to a transformation of the properties of the linguistic sign, and if a sign undergoes a transformation of its properties, then it becomes another sign. My reading of Nelly Tincheva's book and especially of the dynamic view to the phenomenon studied in it gives me reason to think that the book reveals essential mechanisms having a direct bearing on the transformation of linguistic signs. This is just one of the confirmations that this book, rich in illustrative material, provides many reasons for serious theoretical reflection and suggests a series of questions awaiting their detailed probing in future studies.

**Conclusion:**

**The overall teaching and research activity of the candidate, who enjoys enviable respect from her colleagues and students, is convincing proof of the fact that Associate Professor Nelly Todorova Tincheva-Georgieva, DSc, fully deserves to be awarded the academic position of Professor in 2.1. Philology (Cognitive Linguistics – Text and Discourse Analysis (English).**

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(Prof. Stefana Petrova Dimitrova)