

REVIEW

on the academic output
submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for participation in a competition for the position of Associate Professor
in professional sphere 2. Humanities
professional field 2.1. Philology
(Grammar and Historical Linguistics – English Language)
Department of English and American Studies,
Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
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Member of the Academic Jury (Rector’s Decree № RD-38-541/ 17.11.2021)

A sole applicant submitted documents for entrance in the competition for the academic position Associate Professor in professional field 2.1. Philology (Grammar and Historical Linguistics – English Language), published in State Gazette, issue 87/ 19.10.2021, p. 122 – Senior Assistant Professor Bozhil Petrov Hristov, PhD.

I. Compliance of the academic output submitted by the applicant with the minimum national requirements, as stated in the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Implementation of ADASRB

In fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for professional sphere 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology, Senior Assistant Professor Bozhil Hristov, PhD submitted the following:

Regarding Group of indicators A (min. 50 points), Dr. Hristov presented a certificate for the degree Doctor of Philosophy by Jesus College, University of Oxford, having been awarded to him upon the defense of his thesis entitled *Agreement, Case Assignment and Nominal Coordination* (2012) and a certificate of recognition of the acquired degree by Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (№ C 2013-5 / 15.11.2013) – 50 points. Regarding Group of indicators B (min. 100 points), he presented a habilitation thesis – 100 points. As regards Group of indicators G (min. 200 points), the candidate submitted 12 of his publications – a total of 275 points. As regards Group of indicators D (min. 50 points), a large number of citations were listed, including citations in academic journals, referenced and indexed in

world-renowned databases of scientific information, as well as citations in monographs and collective volumes – a total of 147.5 points.

In particular, Dr. Hristov submitted for review a total of 13 publications, including 1 monograph (habilitation thesis): *Grammaticalizing the Perfect and Explanations of Language Change: Have- and Be-Perfects in the History and Structure of English and Bulgarian* (Leiden: Brill, 2020, 368 pp.), 1 monograph based on material from his doctoral thesis: *Agreement and Case Assignment in the Context of Nominal Coordination and beyond: A Lexical-Functional Grammar Account* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2021, 346 pp.), 11 other publications (2 book chapters, 3 papers in academic journals, 3 papers in conference proceedings volumes and 3 studies), including publications in academic journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information.

The full list of publications by Dr. Hristov included a total of 19 titles in the field of Modern or Historical Grammar of English and Bulgarian, and he also edited the collective volume *New Paradigms in English Studies: Language, Linguistics, Literature and Culture in Higher Education* (Sofia: Sofia University Press, 2017).

II. A brief biographical note

The education and professional career of Senior Assistant Professor Bozhil Hristov, PhD are mainly related to two universities - Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and the University of Oxford. Bozhil Hristov was awarded a Bachelor's degree in English Philology from Sofia University in 2007 and a Master's degree in General and Comparative Linguistics from the University of Oxford upon the defense of his Master's thesis on *Politeness in Requests in English and Bulgarian* (2008), and in the same year he enrolled in a full-time PhD program in General and Comparative Linguistics, with Professor Emeritus Mary Dalrymple as a research advisor. In 2012, Bozhil Hristov was awarded a Doctoral degree from Oxford University, having submitted a thesis on *Agreement, Case Assignment and Nominal Coordination* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and having satisfied all the necessary conditions.

Dr. Hristov also acquired a number of additional qualifications in his chosen field of professional development as a result of carrying out mobilities and conducting research stays at the University of Freiburg, the University of California, the University of London, Trier University, the University of Sheffield, etc.

The professional career of Dr. Hristov is also largely associated with the mentioned universities. From 2008 to 2011 he worked as a lecturer in Morphosyntax, Pragmatics, Historical Linguistics and Methods for Conducting Linguistic Research at the Faculty of Linguistics at Oxford University. In 2011 Bozhil Hristov started working as a part-time Assistant Professor at the Department of English and American Studies at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and was soon promoted to Assistant Professor (2012) and Senior Assistant Professor (2014), teaching courses in General and Academic English, English Grammar, Morphology, Historical Linguistics, History of English, Analysis of Old and Middle English Texts and Principles of Linguistic Analysis. At the same time, Dr. Hristov worked as a translator and editor with English, Bulgarian, German and Latin for various translation agencies.

Other evidence, supporting the academic achievements of Dr. Hristov can also be mentioned, such as organizing and participating in more than 20 national and international academic fora, lecturing at 4 foreign universities, participating in 4 national projects, academic tutoring of graduate students, editorial activities, membership in reputable professional organizations and committees.

III. Outline and assessment of the academic and applied output, submitted by the applicant

The monograph *Grammaticalizing the Perfect and Explanations of Language Change: Have- and Be-Perfected in the History and Structure of English and Bulgarian* (Leiden: Brill, 2020) revisits a topic that in the last and the beginning of this century has permanently been on the agenda of debates in the field of English Historical Linguistics - the grammaticalization of the Perfect. Along with the accumulation of a huge body of research on the grammaticalization of the English Perfect, some a priori statements became especially popular and turned into widely-held axiomatic assumptions, extravagantly cited in textbooks and handbooks on Historical Linguistics. One of the achievements of the present monograph is that it reviews and re-evaluates some ubiquitous statements, referring to the evolutionary models of language change, as well as some functionalist postulates, in the context of grammaticalization and reanalysis in order to confirm or reject them, and it also sheds light on some features of the mentioned Perfects, to which no due attention has been paid so far.

The present contrastive account deals with some of the main aspects of the English and Bulgarian verb systems from the diachronic perspective and avails of a usage-based model, whereby the corpus material is analyzed implementing the principles and tools of the weak, cognitively oriented version of Construction Grammar. The advantage of such a model is that the researched constructions are studied in their use, rather than as independent abstract units, lacking in communicative and cognitive grounding. As a result, the data retrieved from the corpora reveal fine-grained details regarding the gradual nature of constructional change, the different degrees of grammaticalization of the studied constructions, the micro-steps involved at different constructional levels, and the importance of context.

The monograph can be described as a detailed and in-depth analysis of networks of constructions, related through shared properties, including: constructions with a finite verb *have/ be/ become + past participle* as well as elliptical constructions from different periods in the development of the English language (Chapters 3 - 5); constructions with a finite verb *haben/ sein/ werden + past participle* from an 18th century German text (Chapter 6); constructions with a finite verb *съм + participial forms* and constructions with the Aorist and Imperfect from different periods in the development of the Bulgarian language, as well as constructions with finite verb *имам + past participle* in comparison to similar constructions from the Macedonian literary norm (Chapters 7 - 8). The mentioned constructions can express different grammatical meanings, e.g. perfect, passive, modality, etc., sometimes allowing ambiguous interpretation, and are characterized by varying degrees of grammaticalization in the initial periods of their development, which calls for an analysis of both the idiosyncratic properties that conventionally identify these constructions and the characteristic properties and features of their constituents.

The choice to analyze networks of constructions with shared or analogous properties actually determines the choice of a limited selection of texts for the tailor-made corpora used. Another consideration in the selection of excerpted sources comes from the intention of revisiting the widely accepted assumption on the role of ambiguity in the loss of certain constructions, whereby the analysis of actual texts in their entirety and the interpretation of the studied constructions in a broader context will give optimal results.

The proposed constructionally based analysis focuses on three different types of constructional change, namely changes in the frequency of the studied constructions, in their formal structure and in their grammatical function. The study of frequency changes involves changes in text frequency and productivity; the study of changes in formal structure considers a variety of morphosyntactic changes; and the analysis of functional changes presupposes changes in the functional load of the constructions, their shared properties and analogous/alternative developments. The applied nature of the present research is supplemented by the detailed appendices available online.

Chapter 9 summarizes the main conclusions of the study, which validate the author's hypothesis that in both English and Bulgarian the grammaticalization of "be/ съм" and "have/ имам" was guided by their generic, non-specific, semantically bleached meanings which easily lent themselves to further reanalysis and a greater degree of abstraction, rather than by ambiguous morphological markers or possible "functional needs"/ "functional load".

In view of the above, it can be claimed that the monograph by Dr. Bozhil Hristov on the grammaticalization of the English Perfect meets the requirements for a habilitation thesis, is an original and authentic study, and makes contributions to the field of Contrastive Linguistics.

The monograph *Agreement and Case Assignment in the Context of Nominal Coordination and beyond: A Lexical-Functional Grammar Account* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2021), based on material from Dr. Hristov's doctoral thesis, testifies to his academic interests in comparative research in the field of morphosyntax and proposes a usage-based research model, pondering on actual language use in a selected sample of corpora in English, Bulgarian and Serbian/ Croatian. The methodological framework implemented in this study, focused on agreement and case assignment, with particular reference to conjoined noun phrases, is borrowed mainly from the formal approaches characteristic of Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar and Lexical Functional Grammar. The essential conclusion is that optimal descriptive and explanatory adequacy can be achieved by means of a grammatical model, which presupposes effective interaction among various interdependent modules, regulated by the appropriate constraints, i.e. by means of a modular approach to grammar bringing together morpho-syntactic, declensional information, syntactic hierarchy, order and constituency, as well as semantics and pragmatics.

11 other publications (1 co-authored) were submitted for participation in the competition, including 2 studies of widely acclaimed contribution, published in academic journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information. These publications add to the academic achievements and contributions of Dr. Bozhil Hristov and to his reputation as a recognized researcher in the fields of General and Comparative Linguistics and Historical Linguistics. The review of these publications confirms the author's interests not only in the field of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics of English and Bulgarian,

but also in the field of comparative research, coupled with a special emphasis on the study of diachronic developments and language change. No indications of plagiarism have been found in the publications submitted at the competition.

IV. Main contributions, attested in the academic, applied and teaching activities of the candidate

The contributions in the academic output, submitted by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Bozhil Hristov for participation at the competition include the following:

Providing and proving facts, verification/ rejection of theoretical assumptions, related to the historical development and grammatical structure of English/ Bulgarian (publications 1, 9, 11). Here, I would like to highlight the proposed common theoretical framework, applied in the account of the grammaticalization of the Perfects in the history of both languages. Revisiting and rejecting the long-standing popular assumption about the decisive influence of functional load and ambiguity as the main driving forces underlying the elimination of the English Be-Perfects. Obtaining statistical evidence con the claim that legitimate cases of ambiguous morphological zero-exponence represent the critical mass for the loss of agreement and the reanalysis/ grammaticalization of Perfects and Passives in both languages. Interpreting the loss of agreement in the mentioned constructions as an outward sign and a consequence of ongoing grammaticalization. Proposing a hypothesis about the possible interrelations between the Bulgarian Perfects with "be", non-witnessed evidentials and the emergence of new Perfects with "have" in a situation of language contact.

Implementation of European and world trends and good practices in the teaching of Historical Linguistics and History of English in Bulgaria (publication 12).

Proposing innovative tools for the study of agreement and case assignment with reference to conjoined contexts and extending the scope of the proposed model to non-conjoined environments and beyond, including the tools integration in the application of the formalism of Lexical Functional Grammar to describe and explain grammatical phenomena and constructions in English and in some Slavic languages (publications 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13).

Validating important assumptions and verifying proposals related to borrowing as a historical process, to the mechanisms for nativising borrowings, and to the morphosyntactic adaptation of recent English loanwords in Bulgarian (publications 7, 8, 11).

V. Remarks and recommendations

Here, I will outline some suggestions for future research, my main recommendations concerning the presented corroborating evidence in support of the claim that the displacement of Perfect be by Perfect have was already underway in Old English and might be due to contact with Old Norse. The author's decision to study texts of Northern provenance is tactically justified, and the fact that they all reveal such displacement and advanced loss of Perfect be can indeed be interpreted as evidence of Scandinavian influence on the incipient retreat of be from the Perfect during the Old English period. From a strategic point of view,

however, it will be more useful to probe some Old Norse data, applying the principles and tools of Construction Grammar chosen by the author to the analysis of a similar selection of Old Norse-Icelandic texts. The mentioned greater frequency of have Perfects in the language of the Scandinavian invaders (p. 144 of the habilitation thesis) may well be due to the different structure of the network of actual constructions in Old Norse, cf. the presence of constructions with a finite verb hafa and the supine of transitive verbs, as well as constructions with the supine of intransitive verbs and a finite hafa. At the same time, the participles of intransitive verbs of motion, which form perfects with vera, always agree with the subject in gender, case and number in Old Norse-Icelandic texts.

It would be interesting to check in what type of clauses - main or subordinate, the studied constructions will be attested in view of the fact that the word order in subordinate clauses in both old languages retains its archaic characteristics for quite some time, including V-last word order.

VI. Conclusion

Having read carefully and thoroughly the publications, submitted for review and in accordance with the above comments and assessment, my conclusion is that the academic output of Dr. Bozhil Hristov fully meets the requirements for holding the position applied for, and therefore I support his application for the position of Associate Professor in professional field 2.1. Philology (Grammar and Historical Linguistics – English Language).

Date: 1 March 2022

Reviewer:



/Assoc. Prof. Yana Chankova, PhD/