

## **OPINION STATEMENT**

**for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching in... (Methodology of English Language Teaching) in the Department of Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, promulgated in State Gazette, Issue No. 96 of 17. 11. 2023**

candidate: Senior Assistant Professor Tsvetanka Tsoleva Dilkova, PhD

Opinion prepared by:

**Assoc. Prof. Elena Slavcheva Savova, Ph.D., Professional Field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching...(Methodology of German Language Teaching), Department of Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”**

The documents submitted by the candidate, Senior Assistant Professor Tsvetanka Dilkova, PhD for participation in the competition for the position of Associate Professor in professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching in... (Methodology of English Language Teaching), demonstrate compliance with the relevant national minimum requirements for the academic position of ‘Associate Professor’ (Annex to Article 1a(1) of the Regulations on the Implementation of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act) and the requirements of the Regulations for the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Academic Degrees and for the Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

Sixteen publications were submitted for the purposes of the competition - a habilitation thesis (monograph), a published book based on the candidate’s doctoral thesis, as well as articles in scientific collections and journals.

The monograph, entitled *The Linguocultural Aspect in Modern English Textbooks*, published by St. Kliment Ohridski University Press (2023), contributes to the development of linguoculturology - a scientific paradigm that originates from the unity of language, material and spiritual culture and linguistic personality, and enriches the development of this unity in foreign language classes. The author draws on one of the specific aims of foreign language

education in general and specialised education, namely encouraging learners to become aware of their own national identity in conditions of linguistic and cultural diversity (Regulation 5 of 2016, Appendix 2), and the need to enable learners to describe in the target-language their distinctive culture to speakers of other languages when developing communication skills. In this background, the candidate focuses her research on the treatment of linguocultural phenomena in the development of the general linguocultural competence of Bulgarian students. To this end, she has analysed three language education systems approved by the Ministry of Education for use in the eighth and ninth grade of Bulgarian schools.

The monograph is clearly and logically structured. Through a diachronic overview, the author has demonstrated the development of the English language in the background of historical and social processes in English-speaking countries, as well as the contemporary significance of English as a native language, as a lingua franca and as a global language. She argues that developing cultural competence should prepare learners to communicate in culturally diverse environments, going beyond the 'inner circle' of those speaking English as a first language. On this basis, she has examined the various types of English language teaching methods for different purposes and has highlighted the significance of linguocultural education in this context. The candidate has outlined the main categories on which the linguocultural approach is based (among which, alongside the familiar 'realia', 'linguocultural unit' is of particular interest). She has also laid down a theoretical framework as well as criteria for the analysis of language education systems focusing on the linguocultural aspect and its role in the development of the linguistic personality. The analysis is based on the above theoretical foundations and on clear criteria - the quantitative presence of culturally specific information (on the native culture and the culture of the countries whose language is being studied), linguocultural themes and their integration in building language knowledge and developing speech skills. She has identified the need for increased didactic exploitation of linguocultural material related to Bulgaria and has provided suggestions for its inclusion in teaching materials. The candidate has demonstrated the didactic benefits of the linguocultural approach in developing the communicative competence of the linguistic personality, in interaction with the individual and collective image of the picture of the world. The work demonstrates the author's competence in the field of English-speaking country linguistics, the history of the English language, sociolinguistics, modern techniques and trends in the methodology of foreign language teaching, as well as her solid knowledge and use of normative documents regulating foreign language teaching in the system of Bulgarian general education. The monograph also contributes to a rethinking of the intercultural paradigm and provides reasons for a new look at

the familiar theoretical models of intercultural competence and the descriptions in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of the terms ‘intercultural awareness’, ‘intercultural skills’, ‘sociocultural competence’ (2001) and the skills of handling ‘multicultural repertoire’ (including cultural self-reflection) (2018). It opens up opportunities for further research connected to the development of these skills.

The book ‘Learning Strategies based on Translation in English Language Teaching for Chemical Engineering Majors - Methodological Projections’ contributes to the study of the relationship between autonomy and strategic competence of students majoring in chemical engineering on the one hand, and the role of translation in their English language studies, on the other. The study demonstrates very good theoretical competence and organisation, implementation and evaluation skills for pedagogical experiments, including the extraction and interpretation of data on phenomena that are difficult to observe and generalize, such as the strategic behaviour of foreign language learners.

The articles submitted for the purposes of the competition have been published in prestigious scientific collections or series, such as Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski editions, the *i-Continuing Learning* journal and the *Philology* journal. They expand on and examine in depth various aspects of the problems addressed in the monograph. The issues reviewed include, for example, the similarities and differences in the acquisition of native, second and foreign languages, interlanguage relations, interlingual transfer, cognitive processes in translation, the positive role of native language and translation in the acquisition of a common, multilingual, communicative competence. Several of the publications provide practical ideas in aid of foreign language teachers. Such is the case, for example, with the article dedicated to the functions of dictation and the various techniques for its application. A number of publications deal with current linguistic didactic topics, such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and differentiated instruction. Of particular value are the articles devoted to the social, historical and cultural development of the English language and its contemporary role as a global language. Some texts draw attention to the need for linguocultural education and its implementation in the teaching systems applied in Bulgarian schools. In this field the author has identified not only positive developments but also the need for improvement, and has proposed constructive solutions.

The following scientific contributions of the candidate can be outlined on the presented publications:

1. Enhanced theoretical knowledge and methodological concepts in the field of linguodidactology and linguoculturology.

2. Presentation of the opportunities provided by English language teaching systems at A1 and A2 level, used in the secondary level of Bulgarian education, for the development of linguocultural competence, with practical useful recommendations for their expansion.
3. Enhanced theoretical knowledge in the field of strategic competence in learning and communicating in English for specific purposes.
4. Demonstration of the rationale and methodological opportunities for the effective use of native language and translation in teaching English for Specific Purposes.
5. A successfully tested model of learning is proposed to optimize the cognitive and metacognitive activity of students learning English for Specific Purposes (in chemical engineering programmes).

The academic activity of Senior Assistant Professor Tsvetanka Dilkova, PhD is evidenced by a number of participations at conferences of non-habilitated lecturers at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology and at the Jubilee Scientific Forums of the Department of Methodology of Language Teaching and the Department of Turkic Studies at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

The influence of the candidate's scientific works is evident from the significant number of citations in scientific publications.

Senior Assistant Professor Tsvetanka Dilkova, PhD has broad teaching experience and the necessary classroom and extracurricular teaching hours, including lectures on the methodology of teaching English, teacher training, current pedagogical practice and internship. She also has excellent administrative experience. I know her as a reliable, competent, sensitive and considerate colleague.

The scientific and professional qualities of Senior Assistant Professor Tsvetanka Dilkova, PhD are sufficient grounds for me to support her application for the scientific title of Associate Professor in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching... (Methodology of English Language Teaching).

Sofia, 18. 03. 2024

Assoc. Prof. Elena Savova, PhD