

REVIEW

Reviewer: Prof. Diana Yankova, PhD, Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures, New Bulgarian University, Sofia

Regarding: The selection procedure for the academic position of „associate professor“ at the Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", professional field 2.1. „Philology“, discipline „Grammar and Historical Linguistics – English language“, promulgated in State Gazette, issue 87, 19.10.2021.

Brief information about the applicant

The only applicant is Dr. Bozhil Petrov Hristov. He obtained a BA in English Philology in 2007 from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and an MA in General Linguistics and Comparative Philology in 2008 from Jesus college, the University of Oxford, UK. In 2012 he successfully defended his PhD thesis on "Agreement, Case Assignment and Nominal Coordination" at Jesus College, University of Oxford and was admitted to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in professional field 2.1. "Philology", "General and Comparative Linguistics".

His professional career began in 2005 as a translator and lecturer at the Letera Language Center, the Cosmopolitan Language Center, and the Sofita Translation Agency. From 2008 to 2011 he was a lecturer at various colleges at the University of Oxford, UK, teaching morphosyntax, pragmatics and historical linguistics, grammar, historical linguistics and linguistic research methodology. Since October 2011 he has held a position at the Department of English and American Studies at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" first as a part-time lecturer, and since 2021 as a full-time lecturer.

The applicant has additional qualifications in linguistics, late Modern English, ancient Indo-European languages, German language and culture, acquired in summer schools organized by reputable universities in Greece, Germany, USA and Great Britain.

Dr. Bozhil Hristov has won an impressive number of scientific scholarships: scholarship for academic excellence from Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" (2003-2007), memorial scholarship for linguistic research in the name of "Prof. Andrey Danchev" from the Department of English and American Studies at Sofia University and the International Foundation "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" (2006-2007), scholarship from the Open Society Foundation, Chevening / Foreign Office of the United Kingdom and Oxford to study for a master's degree in General and Comparative Linguistics at the University of Oxford (2007-2008), scholarship from Jesus College, Oxford, and the University of Trier, Germany, to attend a summer course in German language and culture at the University of Trier (2007-2008), Scatcherd European Scholarship at Oxford University - to pursue doctoral studies in General and Comparative Linguistics (2008-2011), funding from the University of Oxford Vice-Chancellor's Fund for Writing a Doctoral Dissertation (2011), a Fulbright Fellowship for Research and Teaching at the Department of Linguistics, University of Texas at Austin, USA (2018). Bozhil Hristov has also received prestigious awards, such as one from Jesus College, Oxford for an award in the master's program in "General and Comparative Linguistics" (2008),

and an award for best young academic from the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" (2017).

Dr. Hristov is member of the Executive Committee of the International Association of Lexical Functional Grammar (since 2019); third-year course leader in English Philology at Sofia University (since 2013); member of the Supervisory Board of the Academic Foundation for English and American Studies (since 2018). He is supervisor and reviewer of master's theses (in the field of English and Bulgarian morphosyntax and comparative linguistics); organizer of a circle for reading, translation and analysis of old texts (later it grew into an optional and elective course); participant in conducting university entrance exams and state exams at Sofia University. It should be noted that he is also a reviewer for the Fulbright Program, the Journal of Linguistics, Cambridge, UK and the SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics, Slovakia. He has presented papers at a number of academic conferences (Edinburgh, UK; London, UK; York, UK; Debrecen, Hungary; Hong Kong; Leeds, UK; University of Essex, UK; Ottawa, Canada; Durham, UK), has lectured at universities in Europe and the USA (Salamanca, Spain; Roehampton University, UK; Cologne University, Germany; University of Texas, Austin, USA).

Fulfillment of the requirements for holding the academic position

The documents submitted by the applicant clearly show that he fulfills and exceeds the quantitative and qualitative requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor". Dr. Hristov meets the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Art. 1a, para. 1 of the Rules of Procedure for Application of the Act.

Evaluation of teaching activities

Dr. Bozhil Hristov has over 15 years of teaching experience, 11 of them at the Department of English and American Studies, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". He has lectures and seminars with undergraduate students in practical English, practical grammar, morphology, historical linguistics, history of English, analysis of Old English and Middle English texts and teaches the course Principles of Linguistic Analysis to MA students, majoring in English. His additional teaching and research activities include participation in the development of an e-learning project for MA "Language and Culture" programme, as well as in the BA programmes of the department, organizing student circles, lecturing and advising graduate and doctoral students at the University of Texas, USA, performing the function of third-year course leader, collaborating with students and doctoral students on research projects, developing materials for university entrance exams and state exams, etc. Dr. Hristov actively participates in the regular teaching as well as in additional activities of the department and should be highly commended.

Characteristics of the presented scientific papers / publications

For the current selection procedure, Dr. Hristov has submitted a total of 13 publications, including a monograph in English "Grammaticalizing the Perfect and Explanations of Language Change: Have- and Be-Perfects in the History and Structure of English and Bulgarian", a book published on the basis of his PhD thesis entitled "Agreement and Case Assignment in the

Context of Nominal Coordination and Beyond: A Lexical-Functional Grammar Account”, two chapters in books, nine articles in scientific journals and conference proceedings, most of which are published in authoritative publications, e.g. OUP, or indexed in global databases, such as Scopus or Web of Science. I believe that the presented academic output is sufficient for participation in the selection procedure and corresponds to the professional field and the academic discipline of the position.

The main monograph submitted for this selection procedure is "Grammaticalizing the Perfect and explanations of language change" published by Brill, 2020. From the title of the monograph, it is clear that the author's interest is strongly inclined to theoretically illuminate the category of "perfectivity" as a general linguistic phenomenon. On the one hand, he discusses the processes of grammaticalization in English and Bulgarian, and on the other - theories of language change. The specific analysis of the linguistic material is used not only for comparison, but also traces the diachronic development of the perfect forms in both languages. What is of importance here is that in the history of English the perfect with verb *be* gives way to *have*, and in Bulgarian - on the contrary, the perfect with *умам* is historically limited. This fact extends the range of Dr. Hristov's research to the area of linguistic typology.

Evidence of what the author has achieved by this impressive number of research tasks is the publication of the monograph in the prestigious Dutch academic publishing house Brill, where the manuscripts are approved by world-renowned experts.

The monograph comprises 8 chapters and a Conclusion. In the first theoretical chapters, Dr. Hristov raises the principal issue of the role of the functional load for language change. These are the teleological explanations that until recently dominated historical linguistics. The author speaks out against the exclusively internal systemic reasons for language change, such as preserving the formal contrast (p. 31). Instead, by analyzing examples from English, German and Bulgarian, he defends the thesis of the "invisible hand". The essence of this mechanism is sociolinguistic and focuses on the specific context in which a contrast is preserved or neutralized. The process of consolidating one or another option in a society cannot be predicted, since it is a sum of individual decisions. In total, however, the initiator of change remains "invisible". According to Keller (p. 13), the mechanism of the invisible hand is "unintended causal effect of an intentional human action". The author's conclusion is that despite the different prerequisites of the two approaches, in the end their results are comparable (p. 31).

The main contribution of the monograph is the precise analysis of over 400 examples in Chapters 4, 5, 7 and 8. The examples are from Old and Middle English, Modern English, as well as from Bulgarian in comparison with Macedonian and Russian, where possible.

Since one of the conclusions from the historical English material is that the displacement of *be* from *have* does not allow for possible ambiguities (i.e. the functional explanation is not valid), Dr. Hristov also mentions the scenario with possible Scandinavian influence. In connection with this comment (p. 144), I would like to point out that such a shift is also associated with reinterpretation, as well as in the processes of grammaticalization. Furthermore, if we consider the Middle English period, it is not convincing to refer to

bilingualism in the northern regions, since bilingualism disappears in the second generation of immigrants.

Chapter 6 presents a brief history of the perfect in German, where *be* as an auxiliary verb is preserved. Chapter 8 is dedicated to a detailed analysis of examples from the Trojan Parable (14th century), Trojan Damascene (17th century) and Slavonic Bulgarian History (18th century). B. Hristov's conclusion is that the perfect with *have* does not show a noticeable degree of grammaticalization in the studied texts (p. 323).

An definite achievement of the monograph is the combination of precise micro-level analysis with the principles of linguistic change. In some places, the existing analyses seem to be rightly reinterpreted and thus contribute to elucidation of phenomena at the macro level, namely: how the perfect forms with *have* and *be* are arranged in the grammatical systems of the languages in question. I agree with the contributions listed by the author in the Conclusion section (pp. 329-330): concerning the appearance in English of the passive form with *get*, the discovery of the various tendencies for the loss of morphological markers depending on context (passive or perfect construction), the role of marking in syntactic ambiguity. It is interesting to note that the differences between English and Bulgarian can be deduced from the fact that in the Slavic languages there is an active past participle, while in the Germanic ones there is no such form.

The Conclusion emphasizes the extreme complexity of the factors influencing the processes of grammaticalization. In this sense, the study is evidence of the unproductiveness of linguistic approaches that rely too much on superficial parallels. While from a cognitive point of view there is a paradigmatic connection between the verbs *have* and *be* (cf. Benveniste, 1971 Problems in general linguistics), the categories that contain them acquire their functions against a network of other relevant constructions.

This monograph attests to the fact that Dr. Hristov is an erudite linguist who firmly follows the linguistic evidence and meticulously sifts and critiques the literature on the subject. The number of cited sources is remarkable - over 300 titles by Bulgarian, Slavic and Western authors.

The book "Agreement and Case Assignment in the Context of Nominal Coordination and Beyond: A Lexical-Functional Grammar Account", published in 2021, is in its main part an updated and expanded version of the applicant's doctoral dissertation. The research is carried out within the framework of Lexical Functional Grammar. It can be seen that even here the comparison of English and Bulgarian yields very good results. The Bulgarian material in Chapter 4 Ellipsis and closest-conjunct agreement supports Dr. Hristov's proposed extension of the boundaries of the descriptive grammatical model (see also the 2014 article Ellipsis and single conjunct agreement). It should be emphasized that before him the model of Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG) was not applied to a Bulgarian corpus. This probably explains some inappropriate translations of English terms in the extensive summary in Bulgarian at the end of the book (p. 312 - свойства for "features").

Since concord and index are theoretical constructs, and not inherent features of the so-called controller and, accordingly, of coordination (which are also theoretical constructs), the concept of "свойство" is not particularly adequate to the content of the terms; perhaps

translation as характеристики would be more appropriate. On page 343, the word "признак" is used as a synonym for "свойства", but it is rather synonymous with "характеристика".

It also seems that while "реципрочни глаголи" is possible, "реципрочни лексеми" (p. 344) sounds awkward as a phrase. The problems that arise when translating terms is quite a common phenomenon and can hardly be solved by a single linguist.

The mastered intricacies of the LFG approach allow Dr. Hristov to write an extensive review on the application of this approach to the description of the Slavic languages (LFG and Slavic languages). The following topics have been covered:

- Lexical categories and the morphology-syntax interface
- Concord and index features and mismatched nouns
- Agreement and case assignment in a constraint-based setting
- Constituent structure, the encoding of grammatical functions and information structure
- Passives and related constructions
- Pro-drop, subjectless and impersonal constructions
- Copular constructions
- Clitics and clitic placement
- Negation and negative concord
- Distance distributivity
- Issues in coordination
- Anaphoric control

Although the study is an overview, it is also a contribution on the topic. First of all, these are the analyses of the examples in Bulgarian, adduced for comparison with isomorphic structures in other Slavic languages. In addition, a comparison is made between the Lexical Functional Grammar approach and other approaches (cf. the LFG analysis section in the context of other frameworks).

The same applies to the chapter "Impersonal Constructions", which will be included in the *Oxford Guide to the Slavonic Languages*. It can be said that a characteristic feature of B. Hristov's research is the combination of precise formal analysis of specific examples with a fine sense of the nuances of the meaning and the role of context.

In the articles "Verbal and nominal uses of interjections and particles in contemporary colloquial Bulgarian" and "The role of pragmatics and context in the development of perfect constructions with съм (sâm, 'be') and имам (imam, 'have') in English and Bulgarian" Dr. Hristov focuses precisely on pragmatics.

The applicant's academic publications show consistency and systematicity in the interrelated linguistic fields in which Dr. Hristov situates his research, and his contributions are to be found in the analysis of the development of perfect constructions and verbal and (predicative) adjectival uses of interjections and particles in English and Bulgarian, the typology of grammatical categories in both languages, the application of lexical functional grammar in agreement and case assignment, as well as in the description and interpretation of grammatical phenomena in English and Slavic languages, and the teaching of the history of the English language based on world trends in the field.

Dr. Hristov demonstrates serious interests in the field of his specialization, impressive publications in authoritative journals and publishing houses, rich experience as a lecturer in Bulgaria and abroad. I highly assess his academic contributions, related to historical linguistics, comparative studies of English and Bulgarian grammar, grammatical adaptation of new borrowings in Bulgarian from English, and improving the teaching of historical linguistics at university.

Conclusion

All critical comments and recommendations in no way underestimate the immense work of the applicant in his teaching, his research and the results achieved. Based on Dr. Bozhil Petrov Hristov's accomplishments, I wholeheartedly recommend to the esteemed Academic Council that Bozhil Hristov be selected for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.1. "Philology", "Grammar and Historical Linguistics – English".

08.02.2022

Prof. Diana Yankova, PhD