

REVIEW

**by Prof. Diana Georgieva Blagoeva-Stefanova, PhD
for the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the
professional field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Language – Stylistics), announced in the
State Gazette, issue 24 of March 17, 2023.**

1. Information about the competition

The present review has been prepared in accordance with the Order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" RD 38-216 dated April 27, 2023, and the decision of the scientific jury dated May 26, 2023.

The competition for the position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Language – Stylistics) was announced in the State Gazette, issue 24 dated March 17, 2023, for the needs of the Department of Bulgarian Language at the Faculty of Slavic Philology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The candidate in the competition is Assoc. Prof. Yana Lyubenova Sivilova, PhD. The examination of the submitted documentation shows that the procedure complies with the requirements of the Law on the Development of Scientific Research and the Regulations of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" governing its implementation.

2. Candidate Information

Yana Sivilova graduated with a degree in "Slavic Philology" (Polish Language profile) from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 2001. From 2004 to 2007, she was a regular doctoral student at the Department of General, Indo-European, and Balkan Linguistics, Faculty of Slavic Philology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In 2009, she obtained the scientific and educational degree of PhD after successfully defending her dissertation on the topic of "Wordplay and Absurdity – Games with Meaning". From 2002 to 2011, she worked as a translator in the state administration, Ministry of Youth and Sports, and Road Infrastructure Agency. She was an honorary assistant at the Faculty of Philosophy (2004-2005) and the Faculty of Slavic Philology (2009-2011) at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In 2011, she joined as a full-time lecturer at the Department of Bulgarian Language, Faculty of Slavic Philology, and in December of the same year, she assumed the position of an assistant professor. She has participated in three short-term specializations at universities in Poland.

3. Candidate's Research Publications

For participation in the competition, Y. Sivilova presents 1 monograph and 24 articles published in scientific journals and collections. Six of the presented articles are co-authored. The articles are in Bulgarian (19), English (4), and Russian (1), with 3 of them published in international scientific publications. In terms of content and volume, the research publications correspond to the profile of the announced competition.

4. Research Activity and Contributions of the Candidate

Y. Sivilova's research interests and contributions primarily lie in the fields of stylistics, phraseology, and lexicology. The central focus of the candidate's submitted research publications is the monograph titled "Archaeology of the Phrase," Sofia, University Publishing

House "St. Kliment Ohridski," 302 pages. ISSN (online): 978-954-07-5541-0, ISBN: 978-954-07-5541-0. The main objectives of the research include investigating the origin of Bulgarian phrasemes¹ (conducted on a substantial corpus of over 400 phraseological units) and analyzing the functioning of phrasemes in literary and non-literary texts. The work represents a comprehensive and detailed study, the first of its kind in Bulgarian linguistics, focused on the mentioned research fields, and contributes to both phraseology and stylistics.

The monograph consists of an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter (pages 13-56) establishes the theoretical framework of the research. As indicated by its title, it focuses on the "dimensions of the phrase" outlined through a comparison of phrasemes with other units of the linguistic system, such as words and sentences, as well as other stable verbal complexes, such as proverbs, sayings, sentences, "laf" (лаф) (explored as a new paremiological genre based on the research of B. Dichev), and clichés, along with reproducible supra-phraseological units. Various existing views on the essence of the phraseme are competently and eruditely commented upon, drawing on Bulgarian and foreign scientific literature. In accordance with the tradition in Bulgarian phraseological research, the main features of the phraseme are derived: reproducibility, relative structural stability, conventionality, irregularity, and restrictiveness, with the recognition that some phrasemes are characterized by figurativeness (or idiomaticity) and expressiveness. The identification of these features provides the basis for the author to include not only phraseologisms but also proverbs, sayings, and clichés within the scope of analysis in the monograph, as well as (without specific agreement) verbal paraphrases and some other types of collocations. Considering the research objectives, such a broader approach is fully justified.

The next three chapters are dedicated to mapping phraseology in historical, geographical, and genre aspects. The chapter "Historical Map of the Phrase" (pp. 57-103) examines issues related to determining the etymology of phraseological units, a task that linguists face serious difficulties with due to the lack of strict scientific criteria. Various approaches to studying the origins of phrasemes are commented upon, emphasizing the need to combine philological and folkloristic methods and to incorporate extralinguistic data to avoid uncertain hypotheses and folk etymologies that are widespread in existing scientific literature. The author convincingly demonstrates the usefulness of combining methods from these two scientific fields through the analysis of specific empirical material in this chapter and the following one.

The focus in the first chapter (without claiming exhaustiveness) is primarily on two types of phraseological units with an international character, originating respectively from antiquity (mainly associated with mythology and the works of ancient writers and philosophers) and from biblical texts. To trace the penetration of the first type of phrasemes into the Bulgarian language, several Bulgarian Revival textual sources have been examined, including "The Fish Primer" by P. Beron, the translated "Instructive Speeches of the Ancient Philosophers" from French, and the translation of Aesop's fables from Ancient Greek by R. Popovich. The author establishes that phraseology deriving from the Aesopian tradition has ancient roots (reaching back to Mesopotamian civilization) and enters the Bulgarian language both orally and in written form,

¹ The author adheres to the term "phraseme" as a counterpart to the terms designating units from other linguistic levels – phoneme, morpheme, lexeme, etc. (although she also uses other synonymous terms in her research), and defines the concept of "phraseologism" as narrower than the concept of "phraseme".

but in the mid-19th century, it is still not widely used in literature. Although phraseology of biblical origin has been extensively studied in scientific literature for various languages, including Bulgarian, there are still many unexplored areas. The author's contribution lies in the detailed tracing of the history of the biblical phrase "ritam sreshtu ruzhena" (kick against the pricks). The paths of its infiltration and establishment in the Bulgarian language through translations of the Bible at different times and other literary sources are examined, seeking parallels with other Slavic and non-Slavic languages.

In the second chapter of the monograph titled "Geographical Map of Phrases," issues related to foreign language influences in the formation of Bulgarian phraseological system are examined. In separate sections of this chapter, the borrowing and calquing of phraseological units from leading European languages (French, German, English, Russian) and neighboring languages (Greek, Turkish) are investigated. Attention is also given to established Bulgarian-Romanian parallels and some Balkanisms in phraseology, taking into account the specific historical and socio-cultural context that determines interlinguistic interactions during respective periods of language development. A synthesized yet highly informative summary of previous studies by various authors on the discussed topics is presented. Hypotheses regarding the etymology of certain phrases, widely debated in the scientific literature, are commented upon, with a revision of views on certain etymologies and the proposal of new interpretations (notably interesting are the observations by Y. Sivilova on the origin of the phraseme "gonia Mihalya", which is extensively examined, including a comparison with phrases from other languages, and discussed in article number 19 in the publication list). The outlined picture of foreign language influences on Bulgarian phraseology leads the author to make an important conclusion that "the level of phraseology is more permeable and less stable than the lexical level", and the tendency for widespread adoption of phrases is clearly manifested in the Bulgarian language (p. 174). The reasons for this phenomenon are also sought (with one of the possible reasons being figurativeness, which facilitates the adaptation of phrasemes originated in one language to other cultures).

It is worth noting the effectiveness of the approach employed in the monograph in studying calquing as one of the main paths for constructing the Bulgarian phraseological system during the Revival period. The author analyzes a corpus of phrasemes used in the texts of several translated Bulgarian Revival works (including translations of "The Adventures of Telemachus" by N. Mikhailovski, "The Lame Devil" by A. Shopov, "Queen Rayna of Bulgaria" by E. Muteva, "Taras Bulba" and "Robbers" by N. Bonchev, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by D. Mutev), comparing them with the respective foreign language originals as well as expressions used in original Bulgarian works from that period. This comparison allows for interesting observations and conclusions regarding the formation and dynamics of the Bulgarian phraseological system during the mentioned period (although this research direction is not among the main objectives of the monographic study).

A particularly noteworthy aspect in this chapter (as well as in publication number 19) is the extensive investigation of phraseological calques from English, as their penetration has been particularly active in recent decades and is emerging as one of the most relevant neologistic phenomena in the contemporary language. The role of media, translations of popular literature, film subtitles, and online publications in the penetration and dissemination of new calqued expressions from English is identified. Emphasis is placed on the strong expressiveness,

semantic blur, and ephemeral nature of these new expressions, whose usage in many cases is associated with linguistic fashion.

The issue of data uncertainty in determining the etymology of phrases has been repeatedly emphasized in the monograph, posing serious challenges for researchers. Indeed, despite the application of various criteria for identifying phraseological calques, it is often difficult to provide a definitive answer as to whether certain cross-linguistic correspondences in phraseology are due to foreign language influences or parallel developments in the independent evolution of languages. For example, the interpretation of the phrase “stapka po stapka” 'step by step' as a new phraseological calque from English (p. 166) can be considered controversial. The expression is not a neologism; it has been documented since the period of the Bulgarian Revival (it has been used, for instance, in the magazine "Chitalishte" from 1873). It can be found in the works of Ivan Vazov, Stoyan Zaimov, Konstantin Velichkov, as well as in numerous sources from the 20th century. Further research is needed to determine its origin accurately.

The final chapter of the monograph (pp. 104-250) maps the genre dimensions of the phrase and its functioning in oral and written communication. According to the author, the formulaic nature of phrasemes justifies considering them as primary genres. The chapter employs stylistic analysis to identify the characteristics of using fixed expressions in genres such as dialogue, novel, narrative, news, feuilleton, meteorological forecast, etc., some of which are well-established and familiar, while others (like weather forecasts) are newer and less extensively studied. Based on the analysis of recordings of spoken language, the author concludes that phrasemes are used to express understanding, empathy, and solidarity, serving to ensure coherence in dialogue. In individual utterances, in combination with other stylistic devices, they enhance expression and create a secondary organization of the message. In narratives, they facilitate the automatization of speech, the expression of evaluation, and the creation of a communal perspective by involving the listener. Special attention is devoted to the use of phrasemes in meteorological forecasts, considered as a formulaic genre. Empirical material for the study is sourced from television appearances of the popular meteorologist E. Cholakov in the recent past, which are characterized by pronounced disruption and gamification of speech through the abandonment of traditional fixed combinations typical of the genre, the introduction of various rhetorical figures, conversational elements, puns, playful transformation of phrasemes, etc. According to the author, this almost complete cycle is achieved - from the disruption of the formula in the orally created formulaic genre by specialists to the creation of new clichés conveying uniform messages.

The chapter also highlights the specific functions of phrasemes in certain media texts such as soft and hard news and feuilleton. The functioning of phrasemes in poetic works (based on the analysis of poems by M. Basheva, N. Kanchev, G. Gospodinov) and in the novel (through detailed observations of M. Ruskov's work "Chamkoria") is traced. The generalization is made that phrasemes have a secondary function in the construction of lyrical and novelistic narratives. In poetry, they undergo modifications to introduce new meanings, while in the novel, they primarily serve as techniques for stylization and narrative.

Y. Sivilova's monograph is a multi-layered work that addresses not only the origin and stylistic dimensions of Bulgarian phrasemes but also various aspects of phraseological theory, contact linguistics, language history, and neology. In light of current data, the work revises some existing views and offers original solutions while providing directions for further research. It is

also important to note that the results of the research could successfully serve the purposes of university education in phraseology and stylistics.

The other publications of Y. Sivilova, submitted for participation in the competition, are grouped into four thematic fields.

Publications No. 2-11 address various issues related to **stylistics**. Articles No. 10 and 11 further develop and enrich the problems discussed in the fourth chapter of the monograph "Archaeology of the Phrase", focusing on the peculiarities of phraseological units' functioning in the genres of feuilleton and weather forecast, respectively. Two of the articles examine some stylistic and functional features of proverbs. Article No. 3 comments on the role of including proper names in the structure of proverbs and identifies ways of semantizing the name through sound symbolism or the meaning of the motivating base. Article No. 8 discusses the possibilities of proverbs as a cognitive tool based on comparing a current situation with a known event from the past or a popular folklore plot. Articles No. 4 and 9 examine certain aspects of expressing irony in different types of texts and communicative situations. Publications No. 6 and 7 offer an analysis of narrative and specific techniques for its construction in the prose works of two Bulgarian authors (M. Penkov and V. Georgiev). In article No. 2, the author focuses on rhetorical evidence, examining the specifics of rhetorical argumentation in the speeches of Queen Elizabeth II, while in No. 5, she comments on certain stylistic features of film translation.

Contributions in the field of **phraseology** are found in articles No. 12-20, which further develop some aspects related to the issues discussed in the second and third chapters of the monograph "Archaeology of the Phrase" and offer hypotheses on the etymology of various phraseological units. Article No. 21 discusses the concept of stereotype based on the theses of the Lublin Ethnolinguistic School, along with the advantages of considering the phraseological unit as a stereotypical combination of words.

Contributions in the field of **etymology** and **lexicology** can be found in publications No. 24 and 25, which examine various ways of naming and self-naming certain ethnic (or ethno-religious) communities on the Balkan Peninsula. The etymology of individual names is sought, noting that interpretations of the origins of ethnonyms are often uncertain and rely on folk etymology. Several models for the formation of autonyms and exonyms are distinguished. Observations are made on the results of the process known as secondary lexicalization, in which some of the corresponding ethnonyms acquire new figurative meanings or undergo connotative shifts (usually with negative connotations). Analyzed cases of semantic transfers in ethnonyms or the inclusion of ethnonyms in phraseological units serve as linguistic expressions of stereotyping associated with the opposition of "own" and "foreign".

Two of the publications (No. 22 and 23) fall within the field of **folklore**. They examine an international plot realized in a tale about the foolish woman, which is compared with certain ritual practices in an attempt to reconstruct and analyze its initial semantics.

The candidate has been a member of the team for several research projects carried out at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Since 2021, she has been leading the research project "Bulgarian Speech – a Journal for Linguistics and Language Culture". She has participated in 25 international scientific conferences in Bulgaria and abroad, presenting papers in the fields of cognitive linguistics, semantics, stylistics, phraseology, and folklore. Her publications have been cited 10 times in Bulgarian and foreign scientific journals.

5. Teaching Activity

Y. Sivilova has extensive teaching experience. She has taught lecture courses in stylistics and general linguistics, as well as seminar sessions on stylistics, lexicology, language culture, general linguistics, general and Romance linguistics at three faculties of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (Faculty of Slavic Studies, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Faculty of Philosophy). She also conducts classes in elective disciplines such as "Phrase Archaeology" (Faculty of Slavic Studies) and "Divinity and Wisdom" (Faculty of Philosophy).

6. Conclusion

The review of the documentation submitted for participation in the competition shows that the candidate meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Academic Degrees and the Occupancy of Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The reviewed works are characterized by originality, detail, and depth, contribute to the field, and present the candidate in the competition as an established specialist in the field of stylistics and phraseology of the contemporary Bulgarian language. Y. Sivilova possesses undisputed qualities as a competent and experienced university lecturer. All of this gives me a solid basis to provide a positive evaluation of the discussed candidacy and to vote "FOR" the selection of Yana Lyubenova Sivilova for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Language – Stylistics).

June 25, 2023
Sofia

Reviewer:
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