

REVIEW

of submissions to a competitive procedure for academic tenure as ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, announced by Sv. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia by notice published in *State Gazette*, No. 21/15.03.2022

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Daria Karapetkova, PhD

Candidate: **Iveta Tasheva**, MD

Background of the candidate:

Dr. Iveta Tasheva is among the very few experts in Bulgaria exploring the field of medical humanities. One can even claim that she was the first to propose a theoretical study in that sphere, which in other countries is often an integral part of the educational curriculum for students of both the humanities and medical science. Based upon my experience not only in literary translation but also in the translation of more specialised academic texts, I can safely say that in Bulgaria, two of the areas where the shortage of highly competent specialised translators is most acute are medicine and law. Part of the reason for that is the scarcity of translators who can boast any added value as a result of some specialised training in the respective fields. It is therefore commendable to have a practitioner of Dr. Tasheva's magnitude delve in the domain of theory to offer her expertise in the service of resolving many and quite specific translation challenges – something that she has managed to achieve in her submission.

As one of the leading Bulgarian cardiologists, in support of her participation in the competition, Dr. Iveta Tasheva has submitted a number of medical articles published in some of the most prestigious professional journals enjoying extremely high quotability. For the purposes of the competition, however, they are selected in such a way, so as to demonstrate good practices of translation of medical

terminology. In addition to that, she has also authored papers that take a closer look into the kind of subject matter that provides a bridge between medicine and philosophy, medicine and literary theory, including the theory of translation, thus helping delineate the boundaries of the already mentioned medical humanities. The latter works have also been published in referenced journals.

I personally know Dr Tasheva from her work with the Master's Programme in Translation and Editing, where she is teaching a course in translation of medical terminology that – I can say this with full confidence – will improve the qualification of future translators of medical texts. The course has been most enthusiastically received by her students.

In this competition, Dr. Tasheva is the only candidate. She not only satisfies all minimum requirements for the position but also exceeds them by far.

Description of submissions

In my review, I will focus primarily on Iveta Tasheva's habilitation work, as the submission of one is a crucial requirement for the granting of tenure. Entitled '*Medical Humanities. Subject Matter, Terminology, Translation*', the work has been published in a book form by *Ciela Publishing House*. It has both a theoretical and an applied part. The former identifies the topics comprised within the subject matter of medical humanities and comments on numerous and important cases regarding the translation of medical terminology, while the latter demonstrates how medical texts – in this case, in the field of cardiology specifically – are to be translated in practical terms. That second part can serve as a practical guide since the side-by-side positioning of the articles in Bulgarian and English allows the reader to check the terminological equivalence between the two, while illustrating the approach of the medical professional to the task of translating the text.

I will start by making a most general observation: the timing of Dr. Iveta Tasheva's work is extremely fortunate for several reasons. Firstly, it can prompt a discussion about the role and responsibility of translators of medical terminology that – as Dr. Tasheva aptly points out – has been going on elsewhere around the world but not in Bulgaria. Secondly, it lays the foundations for medical humanities in Bulgaria. And thirdly, it demonstrates impressive interdisciplinarity, which shows that there are more points of contact between different scientific and humanities disciplines than we have been inclined to think, and that the future of science in general, and of each particular area of academic pursuit, lies in openness and dialogue. We often use 'interdisciplinary' as a label for various things, but it characterises the reviewed work extremely well and points the way that scientific knowledge should aspire to follow.

Another merit of the reviewed work is the balance between theory, historicism and applied research. Dr. Tasheva's submission aptly defines the areas of medical humanities, outlining the transfer of knowledge as one of the pathways that modern medicine should follow; it also examines the patient–doctor relationships while seeking to establish the place of the translator along the chain of interaction. Also in the sphere of theory is her focus on the relationships between medicine and literature, as well as her extremely important review of transhumanism made in the context of attempting to figure out the choice of directions facing modern medicine. That review, marked by the theme of the future, is important not only because of the issues it outlines, but also because of the fact that all of them are addressed from the perspective of a practicing physician – a fact that gives them extra credibility and gravity.

The historicist approach is represented by a review of the genesis of medical concepts and terms, the role of Greek and Latin in the process, the transformations

that took place in the course of time, the role of English as the *Lingua Franca* of present-day medicine. Special attention has been paid to suffixes and roots, orthography, as well as terms such as ‘crisis’ and their evolution from Antiquity across various temporal and philosophical contexts to their current meanings in present-day medicine.

The applied aspect of her work can be found not only in the already mentioned practical part but also in the superior manner in which she has identified the pitfalls and challenges facing a translator of medical texts. To her credit, she has focused on the role of context in determining the use of one term or another, the issue of stylistic register and genre in medical literature, the specific medical jargon and the idea of its universality; metaphors of medical origin, false friends, the translation of acronyms, similes and eponyms. Here her work abounds in numerous examples in different languages, as well as examples of translatability vs. untranslatability, all of this in the awareness that the text is addressed to a Bulgarian reading audience, which is one of the work’s greatest merits.

In summary, the entire study strikes the right balance between regarding translation, on the one hand, as transfer of knowledge, as part of the intercultural communication, and, on the other, as an interlinguistic transformation. In doing that, the author has referred to a range of cases related to terminological discrepancies; the existence of different classifications of concepts in different cultures, the aspiration for unambiguity in medical translation; the coinage of new terms, including during the Covid-19 pandemic. Valuable observations have been made on the specificities of a translator’s work, using surveys of active translators with no specialised medical training who nonetheless perform medical translation work for a leading translation agency.

Main contributions

As I already pointed out, the submission ‘*Medical Humanities. Subject Matter, Terminology, Translation*’ is in many respects a ground-breaking, pioneering work that will provide the foundation on which the medical humanities, as well as the theory of translation – as far as medical terminology is concerned – will develop in Bulgaria from now on. This makes Dr. Tasheva’s work important and useful not only for linguists and humanities scholars, but also for medical professionals. It also plays an important role in identifying the points of contact between different spheres of the humanities and the natural sciences, thus highlighting the benefit of overcoming the tendency for academic disciplines to become confined each to its own field, irrespective of which field of human knowledge that may be. Last but not least, this is an important work also in the context of the important task of redefining the doctor–patient relationship. And finally, as was already pointed out, it will play a significant role as a practical tool for translation of medical terms, especially in the sphere of cardiology.

Conclusion:

Having considered the merits of the submissions and the new directions of academic endeavour that they help explore, the high quotability of Dr. Iveta Tasheva’s works, her emblematic presence in the field of medicine, as well as her superior teaching style and ability, it is with great conviction that I recommend that she be granted tenure as Associate Professor with the University of Sofia.

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