

EXPERT OPINION

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concerning the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor”,
Professional Field 2.1 Philology (Bulgarian Language – Stylistics)
with candidate senior assistant PhD *Yana Lyubenova Sivilova*

1. About the Competition

The present expert opinion was prepared in relation with a decision taken on 26th of May 2023 at a meeting of the Academic Jury assigned with Order № ПД 38-216 issued on 27th of April 2023 by the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski” for the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor”, Professional Field 2.1 Philology (Bulgarian Language – Stylistics), announced in “Darzhaven vestnik”, №24 from 17th of March 2023. The only candidate participating in the competition is senior assistant PhD Yana Lyubenova Sivilova. The works presented by the candidate meet the national standards of the Law of Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria and the further University requirements.

2. About the candidate

Yana Lyubenova Sivilova has been working as a senior assistant PhD at the Department of Bulgarian Language at the Faculty of Slavic Studies of Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski” from 2011 till now; from 2009 to 2011 she worked as a part-time assistant at the Department of General, Indo-European and Balkan Linguistics at the Faculty of Slavic Studies of Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”, since 2004 – 2007 she was a doctoral student. In 2009 she defended her PhD thesis entitled “Games with meaning – pun and absurdity” („Игри със значението – каламбур и абсурд“). In the period 2004 and 2005 she worked as a part-time assistant at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”; from 2002 to 2011 she worked as a translator at the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Bulgaria. In 2001 she graduated as a master of philology with the specialty “Slavic philology (profile Polish language and literature)” at Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”. She completed secondary education in 1993 at the National School for Ancient Languages and Cultures "Saint Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher" in Sofia.

3. About the Lecturing Experience

Senior assistant PhD Yana Sivilova gives lectures in stylistics and general linguistics, she conducts seminars in stylistics, lexicology, language culture, general linguistics, general and Romance linguistics at the Faculty of Slavic Studies, the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philologies and the Faculty of Primary and Preschool Pedagogy at Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”; in addition, the candidate conducts optional courses like “Archaeology of the Phrase” for students of the specialty “Bulgarian Philology” and “Divinity and Wisdom” for students at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”.

4. About the Research Activity and the Academic Publications

The scientific research interests of senior assistant PhD Yana Sivilova are in the fields of: stylistics, etymology, phraseology, folklore, children's speech, sociolinguistics. Her academic publications (more than 40) are related to them, and consist of: a monograph, a book chapter, papers in collections and academic journals. The candidate has taken part at 25 scientific conferences in Bulgaria and abroad. In the period from 2011 to 2023 she participated in 7 scientific projects, of the three of which she was the coordinator. She also attended 3 scientific specializations in Poland – in 2012, 2016 and 2017.

The academic publications presented by senior assistant PhD Yana Sivilova, at the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” are as follows: a habilitation work – a monograph, and 24 papers, 6 of which in co-authorship. She has also pointed 10 citations (8 in Bulgarian and 2 in publications abroad) of her own publications.

4.1 Habilitation work - monograph

Yana Sivilova defines her habilitation work “Archaeology of the Phrase” (Sofia: University Publishing House “St. Kliment Ohridski”, 2022, 302 pp. ISBN 978-954-07-5541-0) as a book about the origin of phrases and their use, but she presents much more in her book: some questions about the origin and the establishment of many expressions in the Bulgarian language, phrases, phraseology and paremias, also some theoretical concepts in the field of phraseology are considered, as well as various aspects of the Bulgarian language and its contacts with other languages (Greek, Turkish, Romanian, Russian, French, German, English, etc.) and cultures from different historical periods. I consider this a major contribution of the study. In the first chapter “Dimensions of the Phrase” (pp. 13 – 56) the theoretical framework is introduced: many points of view related to the definition and systematization of basic concepts, often subject of

various academic disputes, are presented. Yana Sivilova analyses the phraseological concepts of many Bulgarian and foreign scientists and clearly outlines the boundaries of her research: she accepts the term *phraseme* as the main name of the unit at the phraseological level of the language, and she also uses as synonyms *phrase*, *set phrase*, *established expression* or just *expression*. According to her, *phraseologism* is a narrower concept than *phraseme* (p. 50). In the second chapter, "Historical Map of the Phrase" (pp. 57 – 103), the origin of Bulgarian phrases is examined from the point of view of time, with a special emphasis on antiquity and the biblical text. Sources and routes for their penetration and establishment are analysed. I completely agree with the author that etymology has always attracted the attention of specialists as well as amateurs. Undoubtedly, this etymology is interesting, but it must be approached with an in-depth interdisciplinary training. Sometimes it is difficult to come to definite (and correct) conclusions about the origin of certain words, expressions and phrases, which leads to the construction of only assumptions and hypotheses. It is on the last two that Yana Sivilova often emphasizes in her monograph, although for each of her statements provides many details, presents many academic truths and arguments, which is an undeniable contribution of the monograph. The third chapter "Geographic Map of the Phrase" (pp. 104 – 175) is dedicated to the introduction and establishment of phrases in Bulgarian with a view to several languages: Greek, Turkish, Romanian, Russian (there is a division of Russian and Soviet influence), French, German and English. A number of cultural-historical prerequisites for the interaction of Bulgarian language with other languages and peoples are traced here. I entirely share the opinion that phrases are loan-translated and penetrate languages much more easily than words (p. 104). This often leads to difficulties (and to misunderstandings) in determining their national affiliation and identity. It turns out that many phrases that we consider originally Bulgarian and representing our national character, have their origin in other languages and cultures. With numerous facts from various sources (languages, literatures, religion, history, philosophy, mythology) Sivilova defends her statements – again one of the great contributions of the monograph. The finding that the phraseological system of the language is unstable and permeable to foreign influences is correct. The final, fourth chapter, "Genre Map of the Phrase" (pp. 176 – 250), examines the use of phrases. I think that this chapter of the monograph could exist as a separate book. Here the author makes an interdisciplinary review of understandings of the concept of *genre*, citing opinions of A. Devitt, M. Bakhtin, M. Chamberlain, P. Thompson, D. Duff and others. Yana Sivilova examines the function of phrases in oral and written communication, which I consider contributinal. She uses the means of stylistic analysis, seeks to highlight the differences in the use of set phrases and established expressions

in some established (novel, dialogue, narrative, news) or less frequently analysed genres (weather forecast, feuilleton). Although there are some Bulgarian studies on the use of phrasemes in some of the mentioned genres, the observation of Yana Sivilova in this chapter of the monograph are innovative. Among them, in addition to those about the place and “being” of the phrases in the dialogue, narrative, hard and soft news, I can underline those about the peculiarities of set phrases, phraseology, clichés, puns, etc. in weather forecasting as a formulaic genre (analysis based mainly on the TV forecasts of the popular presenter Emil Cholakov). The analysis of phrasemes in the poems of the poet Nikolay Kanchev, as well as in the novel "Chamkoryia" by the writer Milen Ruskov, is also innovative and contributinal. "The Archeology of the Phrase" is a thorough study that has a solid theoretical and research part and could stimulate new scientific research.

4.2 Academic Papers

The papers presented in this competition by Yana Sivilova are in the field of stylistics, etymology, phraseology, folklore and onomastics. I think that all of them are contributinal, because they have an interestingly selected topic (not only related to the Bulgarian language, but also to facts and phenomena from many other languages, literatures and cultures) and offer in-depth interpretation and analysis. The author is able to present numerous scientific facts and interpretations in an interdisciplinary, convincing and fascinating manner. I believe that these publications would be of interest not only to linguists, but to a wider audience.

5. Conclusion

In view of the above, concerning all academic publications, scholarly contribution and lecturing work of senior assistant PhD Yana Sivilova I think that there are strong grounds for my voting positive for her occupying the academic position “Associate Professor” in Professional Field 2.1 Philology (Bulgarian Language – Stylistics).

14th July 2023

Veliko Tarnovo

Associate Professor Daniela Konstantinova, PhD