

# STATEMENT

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Regarding the procedure of acquiring the Associate Professor academic rank in  
**2. Humanitarian Sciences,**  
**2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Language: Applied Linguistics),**

As announced in State Gazette, Issue 22, on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2021 and published on the web page of  
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

Candidate: VENERA GEORGIEVA MATEEVA-BAYCHEVA, PhD, Head Assistant Professor

## 1. Overview of the procedure and the candidate

By Order № RD38 – 240, dated May 17<sup>th</sup> 2021, of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (in brief, SU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury participating in the procedure concerning the acquisition of the academic rank of **Associate Professor at SU** in the higher education area **2. Humanitarian Sciences**, professional field **2.1 Philology (Bulgarian Language: Applied Linguistics)**, announced to fulfill the needs of *Bulgarian as a Foreign Language* Department, Faculty of Slavic Philology. The sole participant in the competition is Head Assist. Prof. PhD Venera Georgieva Mateeva-Baycheva from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

The set of digital documents presented by Ms. Venera Mateeva-Baycheva, PhD, is complete and in accordance with the Rules for Development of the Academic Staff of Sofia University.

The texts with which the candidate participates in the procedure include: 1 monograph – a habilitation work, 1 book published on the basis of a defended PhD thesis and 12 articles, conference papers and reviews in collected thematic works and academic journals which differ from those presented for the purposes of the PhD acquisition procedure. 3 articles have been published in scientific works, refereed and indexed in WEB OF SCIENCE. 9 articles, conference papers and reviews have been published by non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or by edited collected works: 7 of these are independently authored and 2 are co-authored. In general, the publications belong to the sphere of applied linguistics: foreign language education, child language ontogenesis, comparative and general linguistic studies.

Ms. Venera Mateeva-Baycheva, PhD, has presented 7 citations based on reviews she has made: 3 of them in scientific works refereed and indexed in worldwide databases and 4 in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals.

The information in the author’s reference form manifests that the candidate complies with the minimum national requirements for acquisition of the Associate Professor rank as well as with the normative requirements of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

## 2. Overview of the candidate’s scientific research

In 2004, Ms. Venera Mateeva-Baycheva majored in *Bulgarian Philology* at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and a year later she acquired her MA degree in linguistics. In 2013, she defended her doctoral thesis at the *Bulgarian Language* Department of SU. She has a big teaching experience: in the beginning, it was for language schools and the National School for Ancient

Languages and Cultures which she had graduated from and after acquiring her MA degree she returned there as a teacher working for two years. Since 2014, the candidate has been a part-time lecturer for the *Bulgarian as a Foreign Language* Department at the Faculty of Slavic Philology of SU. In 2015, she became a full-time lecturer at the department following a head assistant professor procedure. Ms. Mateeva-Baycheva has lectures and seminars with both foreign and Bulgarian students. She supervises the MA degree program “Language and Cultural Space” and teaches general and specialized Bulgarian language courses.

Ms. Mateeva-Baycheva co-authors 3 textbooks on Bulgarian as a foreign language, used in general and specialized Bulgarian language courses at SU, and 2 textbooks on Bulgarian as a native language answering the needs of education in Bulgaria. She has written 4 curricula on Bulgarian as a foreign language for foreign students and 3 curricula on specialized Bulgarian concerning referent translators, gender and language, and the syntactic interference between related languages. She has co-authored tests on Bulgarian for all levels stipulated in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. She has been Director of a project regarding the preparation of a thematic multi-language dictionary for the purposes of teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language. Ms. Mateeva-Baycheva has also participated in three other projects, also having to do with teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language.

The candidate’s teaching and methodological activities testify to her excellent knowledge, rich scientific experience and high professionalism in both teaching and the scientific and methodological preparation of her work with foreign students and Bulgarian students studying Bulgarian language at SU.

Ms. Venera Mateeva-Baycheva, PhD, is scientifically qualified and professionally interested in applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, syntax and lexicology of Bulgarian, as well as in the teaching methodology concerning studying Bulgarian as a foreign language and Bulgarian as a native language.

The main monograph participating in the procedure is the book *Linguistic Aspects of Sharing a Foreign Culture (Contemporary Methods and Procedures in Teaching Bulgarian as a Foreign Language)*. The monograph features a theoretical section and an applied linguistic section, which focus on the problems related to teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language.

The theoretical framework of the study incorporates a broad overview of the scientific research, both fundamental and contemporary, interested in foreign language teaching and the author successfully proves that studying a language does not amount to solely mastering lexis and grammar since it is a process involving a plethora of other factors. That is why the author seeks to broaden her theoretical observations by citing studies not only from the field of linguistics in general, but also from the sphere of psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and generative grammar, since they describe the vast theoretical framework related to studying a foreign language, which is interdisciplinary in itself.

The author presents and discusses various methods and approaches which are now popular in foreign language teaching but focuses in detail on one of them in order to construct her applied linguistic section. The author is right to claim that error analysis, alongside other basic scientific methods, is among the most fundamental approaches to foreign language education research. Error analysis has long been part of teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language, the recent decades witnessing the development of its theoretical framework in studies such as the monograph discussed here. Error analysis allows for making conclusions concerning the process of mastering a second language in view of spoken and written errors and contemporary applied linguistics regards errors as an important source of information in teaching (Mateeva-Baycheva, 2021, pp. 43-44).

In the applied linguistic section of the monograph, the author discusses the tests of a selected group of foreign students, identifying and systematizing the errors related to verbal and nominal categories, and making conclusions and suggestions concerning methodological and didactic approaches to be incorporated in textbooks and in Bulgarian as a foreign language classes so that we are able to prevent against the most common errors and the difficulties in learning Bulgarian as a foreign language. The idea of applying structural, formal models having to do with visualizing a specific usage of grammar, as well as the inclusion of stimulus words functioning as contextual indicators of this usage, is not a novel one. It was incorporated in the practice of teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language many years ago. Such models can be seen in the textbooks on Bulgarian as a foreign language but this is sporadic and random, depending on how the author of the textbook has envisioned it, whereas Ms. Mateeva-Baycheva believes, and I fully support her, that it would be advisable to prepare long-established structural models to be included in textbooks and Bulgarian as a foreign language classes in order to achieve better results. This is actually the major claim and objective of the applied linguistic part of the habilitation work.

The last chapter of the monograph discusses the dynamics of the theories on teaching and studying foreign languages and systematizes the main issues which Bulgarian linguists face in this respect.

Ms. Venera Mateeva-Baycheva's monograph is a continuation and an integral part of contemporary studies on the development of theoretical and methodological research of the approaches and methods concerning the mastery of Bulgarian as a foreign language. It is a significant theoretical and applied study in the field of teaching methods relative to teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language.

The monograph demonstrates the author's rich bibliographic knowledge. The book *On Complex Constructions in Child Language. An Ontogenesis Model of the Compound Sentence in Bulgarian*, based on the author's defended PhD thesis, also boasts a good theoretical grounding. In both books, the candidate shows her excellent skills to conduct scientific research in the sphere of linguistics.

In the future, the application of *Error Analysis* in teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language necessitates serious theoretical and practical work: a detailed description and classification of errors on the basis of different parameters and with respect to the student's first language (Russian speakers commit typical errors, Greek speakers make other types of errors, Turkish speakers make a third type of errors, etc.), the preparation of a strategy to use specific language exercises depending on all important factors and so on.

Ms. Mateeva-Baycheva demonstrates her interest in error analysis in teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language in most publications in which she focuses on the interference in the usage of the verb *be*, the difficulties in studying the Bulgarian pronominal system, the grammatical forms of the predicate in polite expressions. In another article, in view of the mastery of Bulgarian pronouns, the author suggests structural models which can be used in teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language so that more effective results can be achieved.

I am impressed by Ms. Mateeva-Baycheva's accurate and clear language which does not obstruct comprehension or load the text with excessive terminology. The author clearly presents the various scientific statements.

The major scientific contribution of the monograph is related to its detailed overview and comparison of the contemporary theoretical research of West-European linguistic schools and Russian and Bulgarian linguistics interested in scientific formulations, ideas and procedures having to do with foreign language teaching. The candidate systematizes fundamental terminology in foreign language teaching methodology. The scientific contribution of the applied linguistic part is evident in the identification and classification of the most frequent errors and the construction of a

strategy to overcome the errors in the usage of verbs and nouns in speech and writing committed by foreigners studying Bulgarian. The author has correctly presented her scientific contribution in the texts with which she participates in the procedure.

The citations show that the candidate is well known in Bulgarian scientific circles. She not only complies with the minimum national requirements for acquiring the academic rank of Associate Professor but she also exceeds them.

### **5. Critical remarks and suggestions**

I would not say that my comments are critical because I would rather make a few suggestions to Ms. Mateeva-Baycheva. I advise her to pay attention to the works of Yordan Penchev, Petya Barkalova, Svetla Koeva since they have their significant place in Bulgarian syntax, not only as regards Generative Grammar.

The monograph's results can serve as a basis on which Ms. Mateeva-Baycheva may build up her research on other grammatical categories and phenomena related to teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language.

## **CONCLUSION**

Having in mind the candidate's scientific works, their importance, and their scientific, scientifically applicable, applied, and methodological contribution, I believe it is justified to suggest that VENERA GEORGIEVA MATEEVA-BAYCHEVA acquires the academic rank of Associate Professor in the scientific area **2. Humanitarian Sciences, 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Language: Applied Linguistics)**.

July 26<sup>th</sup> 2021

**Author of the statement:** .....

Assoc. Prof. PhD Petya Nestorova