

Opinion

by Assoc. Prof. Bilyana Mihaylova, PhD

regarding the competition for the academic position associate professor in the field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Language – Stylistics), announces in State Gazette, issue. 24/17.03.2023

Chief Assistant Professor Yana Lyubenova Sivilova, PhD, is the only candidate in the announced competition for associate professor in the scientific field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Language – Stylistics) for the needs of the Department of Bulgarian Language at the Faculty of Slavic Languages, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Yana Sivilova has a rich and diverse teaching activity, which she carries out successfully thanks to her exceptional erudition and her ability to present the material systematically, accurately and intriguingly, which I know well as her colleague. She prepares her lecture and seminar courses with great depth and dedication. Dr. Sivilova succeeds in presenting her students with complex questions from various linguistic disciplines, arousing their interest thanks to her lively and exciting presentation style. She is a demanding teacher who succeeds in teaching her students the difficult notions and theoretical concepts in the field of linguistics.

Yana Sivilova's scientific interests are multifaceted. Her publications are in the fields of stylistics, etymology, phraseology, folklore, children's speech and sociolinguistics. She participated in a number of scientific projects and conferences.

She participates in the competition for associate professor with 25 publications – one monograph and 24 articles.

Yana Sivilova has a sufficient number of citations that meet the requirements for holding the academic position "associate professor".

Since the monograph *Archeology of the Phraseme* (Sofia: UP "St. Kl. Ohridski", 2022) is of primary importance among Dr. Sivilova's publications, here I will focus mainly on it. Telling the biographies of specific expressions, the author aspires to attract the attention of a wide range of readers to Bulgarian phraseology, to make it more attractive and accessible, to provoke, as she writes, "a more conscious use of the phraseme".

The first chapter defines the volume of study of phraseology. The approach used by Yana Sivilova in defining stable word combinations by comparison with the word and the sentence is traditional for Bulgarian science. However, the opening of the phraseology to wider wholes through the commentaries on the reproducible texts is noteworthy. This idea is successfully illustrated in the last chapter of the book, where special attention is paid to the limited variability and the possibilities for improvisation in a formulaic genre – weather forecasting.

When defining the object of phraseology, special attention was paid to another specific category – phrasemes with limited distribution (so-called catchy phrases, fashion expressions), which do not have a denotative meaning, but are reproduced in speech to evoke the emotion, accompanying the situation that gave rise to them.

The second chapter of the book, *A Historical Map of the Phraseme*, is devoted to a study of the etymology of phrasemes. Thanks to a semantic typology, a number of regularities in the semantic development of words can be established. However, semantic evolution, more than any other kind of linguistic change, is subject to unpredictable circumstances.

The study of the origin of phraseologisms is a laborious task, much more complex than the study of the origin of words. It requires enormous patience on the part of the researcher, great erudition in the field of cultural history, anthropology, in the science of language. Yana Sivilova possesses everything necessary to lead us on this journey into the history of phraseologies.

First of all, she presents the specifics in the methods of philologists and folklorists when researching the origin of phraseology, shows the advantages and errors of each approach, illustrating them with concrete examples. The author emphasizes that the lack of strict scientific criteria creates enormous difficulties for philologists in the study of the origin of phraseological units. Therefore, the fallacies here are more than the convincing hypotheses, and the proposed etymologies are rather folk etymologies.

The author believes that in explaining the semantic evolution of phraseologisms the folklorists' hypotheses are more convincing. The study of folklore material, of myths, stories and parables preserved over the centuries, of rituals and beliefs, does indeed provide researchers with a key to the history of people's thinking in older times, as well as an opportunity for a more reliable interpretation of the history of phraseologisms.

Y. Sivilova believes that indisputable achievements in folkloristics are those interpretations that explain the origin of phraseologisms on the basis of pre-logical thinking. Particularly interesting and convincing in this sense is the study of the expressions *плюли си в устама*, literally 'spit in their mouths' and *нося вода в рещето* literally 'carry water in a sieve'.

The researcher draws a kind of historical map of the origin of phrasemes. She examines them in two groups: those originating in antiquity and those originating in the biblical text. She shows that some of Aesop's fables, which have left traces in phraseology to this day, have ancient (possibly even Mesopotamian) origins.

The third chapter, *Geographical map of the phraseme*, traces the borrowing of expressions in Bulgarian from Balkan and European languages, focusing on the actual calques from English and tracing the ways of penetration of neologisms among word groups (syntagmas).

A special contribution here is the study of Renaissance texts translated from Russian, French, German and English, which are compared with the original works and give an opportunity to outline some specifics of the phraseological system of the Renaissance period, to be compared with contemporary trends in the same area.

The last chapter of the book – *Genre map of the Phraseme*, explores the functions of phrasemes in the phatic communication, journalism, poetry. They are considered as primary genres and their place in polyphonic (complex) wholes is analyzed.

Particularly interesting is the study related to the place of phrasemes in M. Ruskov's novel "Chamkoria". Their role in outlining many of the postmodern trends underlying the text

has been outlined here. In the punny world of the modern man, a special place is occupied by the phraseme and the anecdote, and the "quoting man" remains captive to the concrete, which he cannot transcend. The overlay of phrasemes, clichés and jokes, witty comments reflect a faceted consciousness that does not know hierarchies and is closed in its immediate environment, from which it vainly seeks a way out.

Yana Sivilova's book is the first study of its kind in Bulgarian linguistics. It represents a synthesis of the knowledge and theories in the field of phraseology, which have been applied empirically in the study of the origin of numerous phraseological units discussed in the work. It is remarkable that the author manages to illustrate different approaches: making a historical and geographical map of phraseology, the study of a modern literary text and the living media language in such a formulaic genre as weather forecasting.

Yana Sivilova's articles are divided into two major thematic circles: stylistics and the origin of phrasemes. Papers 2 to 11 are devoted to stylistics and in this sense are significant for the present competition. Their in-depth stylistic analysis has various aspects related to literary history, rhetoric, philosophy, psychoanalysis, mythology, anthropology and folklore. All these aspects are subject to a rigorous linguistic approach. The analyses of contemporary works offered by Yana Sivilova can serve in the teaching of students in stylistics. Particularly interesting from this point of view is the article "Once more on Eros, Thanatos and Agape", exploring V. Georgiev's short story "Death is Debauchery", which fills with a Sofiote plot the specific narrative approach formed in the tradition of Latin American magical realism.

In conclusion, I would like to express my high appreciation for the teaching and research activities of Dr. Yana Sivilova. Based on the above and given the fact that all legal requirements have been met, I am convinced to vote "FOR" awarding Yana Lyubenova Sivilova the academic position of associate professor in professional field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Language – Stylistics).

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