



## REVIEW AND OPINION

**With relation to:** competition for holding the academic position of 'Associate professor', in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, scientific specialty 2.3. Philosophy (Rhetoric);

**Reviewer:** assoc. prof. Gerasim PETRINSKI, PhD, Head of the Department of Rhetoric, Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski,' appointed member of the commission under the Rector's Directive №РД-38-81/04.02.2022, modified with Directive №РД-38-132/28.2.2022

### GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE COMPETITION

The competition has been announced in the State Gazette, issue 103 from 10.12.2021, for the Department of Rhetoric Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski'.

All procedures, provided by the Law and the statutes of the Sofia University, have been duly completed.

### CANDIDATES

For participation in the competition for associate professor in the field 2.3. Philosophy (rhetoric) documents were submitted by one candidate – Ch. Assistant Professor Donka Gencheva Petrova, PhD, full time lecturer at the Department of Rhetoric at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". For the competition the candidate has submitted the following documents:

1. Curriculum vitae;
2. Diplomas for educational degrees "Bachelor" and "Master";
3. Diploma for successfully defended educational and scientific degree "Doctor";
4. Employment contract for a full-time position "Chief assistant professor" at the Department of Rhetoric, Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski";
5. Certificate from the Human Resources Department of Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski', according to which she obtains at present the academic position 'chief assistant professor';
6. Official note from the Animus Foundation, certifying participation in 5 international research projects as an expert, researcher and trainer;
7. List of scientific publications;
8. List of publications submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position 'Associate Professor';
9. List of scientific contributions generated by the 'Authors' system;



10. Information on the fulfillment of the minimum scientific requirements for holding the academic position "Associate Professor" according to Art. 2b of the Academic Staff Development Act (ASDA);
11. List of observed citations;
12. Information on the scientific contributions of the candidate;
13. Information on the indicators under Art. 112 ASDA, para. 2 /inventory/ and the respective reference generated by the SUSI system;
14. Diploma for membership in the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria;
15. Publications for the competition;
16. Abstracts of publications in Bulgarian and English;
17. Issue of the State Gazette of December 10, 2021 with the announcement of the competition;
18. Application for admission to the competition.

The candidate Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Donka Petrova has a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in Psychology, obtained in 2002. She received a master's degree in psychology in the master's program "Diagnosis of development and counseling in children and adolescents" at the Department of Social, Organizational, Clinical and Pedagogical Psychology at the same university (2004). The candidate also has a second master's degree in the Nordic Master's program at the Department of German and Scandinavian Studies at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology at the same university (2014). In 2010 she defended her doctoral thesis in the scientific specialty 05.06.05 "Pedagogical and age psychology" with supervisor Prof. Lyuben Desev. In the period 2006-2013 she was a part-time assistant at the Department of Social, Organizational, Clinical and Pedagogical Psychology and in the Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education (currently - Faculty of Science, Education and Arts). From 2013 until now she holds full-time position as assistant professor in 2.3. Philosophy (Rhetoric) in the Department of Rhetoric.

### III. TEACHING AND PROJECT ACTIVITY. PARTICIPATION IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Donka Petrova has serious teaching experience. Her disciplines are in the field of general rhetoric ("Communication skills", "Communication skills and teamwork", "Presentation skills", "Public speech", "Non-verbal communication") and specifically in the field of the role of leadership in the communication process and the rhetorical communication. As assistant professor in rhetoric, Dr. Petrova is lecturer in various faculties of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Science, Education and Arts, Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics, etc.), as well as in the master's program "Rhetoric". Her professional experience exceeds on average for the last 5 years more than twice the required standard of 270 teaching hours per year. She has successfully supervised 8 master students in the



Rhetoric master's program. Her participation in the activities of the academic community is also noticeable – she is responsible for issues related to plagiarism.

The above teaching activity meets the formal requirements for participation in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" and significantly exceeds them. The positive feedback from students about her work should also be noted.

#### IV. RESEARCH

##### 1. Overview

The scientific research activity of the candidate receives a total of 440 points on all indicators for compliance with the minimum national requirements (Article 16 of the ASDA).

Dr. Petrova presented for participation in the competition /appendix. 10C/ the following studies:

1. 1 scientific monograph with the title *Audience - analysis and rhetorical impact* (habilitation thesis);
2. 21 articles (10-20 pages)
3. 2 studies (above 20 pages)

All articles and studies have been published in peer-reviewed journals or in reviewed collective volumes. Three of the articles are in English, two of which are co-authored. The rest of them are in Bulgarian. Her scientific activity meets the minimum scientometric requirements (a total of 220 points in group D, see Annex 12). The points obtained from citations of her scientific works also meet the minimum scientometric requirements (a total of 70 points in group E, see Annex 12). The research presented for participation in the competition is entirely in its subject field, in particular in the field of general theory of communication, non-verbal communication, pedagogical rhetoric and, of course, audience analysis.

In addition to the attached research papers in the subject area of the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor", Dr. Petrova has presented an expanded list of publications, which includes 8 additional scientific articles and one popular science publication /appendix. 10A/.

The candidate's research activity also includes participation in 20 conferences (according to the "Authors" system) in the period 2014-2022. Most of them are in the subject field of rhetoric and communication, non-verbal communication, pedagogical and academic rhetoric, research of the audience, narrative theory or are the interdisciplinary for rhetoric and psychology.

The active work on projects, editing of collective volumes and memberships in scientific communities of the candidate are also noticeable. She is a member of the editorial board of the



online scientific journal Rhetoric Online. He is the editor of two collective volumes with materials from conferences. He is a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria and the National Council for Child Protection. Her activity in the field of project development is impressive, both at the university level (internal projects under the Research Fund) and at the international level (a total of five projects of the Animus Foundation). All the listed activities are duly supported by the necessary documentary evidence.

In addition, we must mention the active public work of Dr. Petrova, who complements her profile as not only as a theorist but also as a practical specialist. She volunteered as an expert for a hotline for survivors of violence (2002-2010), as a clinical social worker at the Crisis Center (2002-2005), and as a coordinator of the National Hotline for Children 116 111 (2009-2018).

## 2. Scientific contributions

### 2.1. Habilitation monography

The monograph *Audience - Analysis and Rhetorical Impact*, presented as a habilitation thesis, is a comprehensive interdisciplinary study with visible practical applicability. It contains 376 pages and is organized correctly in 10 chapters. From a purely formal point of view we ought to note the atypical practice of the used literature is not summarized at the end of the text, but follows each chapter separately.

The main thesis of the study is that effective rhetorical influence is focused on the audience. It is this interactive factor that distinguishes the subject of rhetoric as a research field from the subject of logic and places it in the context of both the humanities and the social sciences.

The adopted methodology is interdisciplinary. It includes methods from the field of rhetoric as well as psychology, communication theory, media and social studies. The author includes in her research innovative approaches for gathering information about the audience, such as analysis of protocols ("thinking aloud"), participatory rhetoric and rhetorical ethnography.

Structurally, the monograph is clear and accurate. The first five chapters (pp. 13-223) are devoted to the general characteristics of the audience. The most important theories and classifications are considered, with an emphasis on the "New Rhetoric" of Chaim Perelman and Lucy Olbrechts-Tyteka (universal audience and particular audiences), on Lloyd Bitzer's theory of the rhetorical situation, on the dichotomies direct - indirect and homogeneous - heterogeneous audience, on typologies based on the number of participants, etc. In Chapters 3 and 4, the author proposes innovative models for audience analysis (situational, demographic, psychological and multicultural), as well as quantitative and qualitative methods for collecting information about it (pp. 86-159). Multicultural communication and multicultural differences are emphasized. This topic is particularly relevant in the context of modern globalized society. Dr. Petrova has



considered it mainly in the perspective of socio-psychological differences between different cultures (for example, the so-called "low-context" and "high-context cultures", pp. 101-105) in the tradition of authors such as E. Hall and H. Hofstede. I find this approach appropriate for the subject of the study. The author has made a valuable and extremely useful overview of the types of culture. In addition, this part of the text provides a solid basis for studying the topic in the context of other theories concerning the differences between the concepts of "culture" and "civilization", for example A. Toynbee, O. Spengler, S. Huntington, F. Braudel et al.

The second part of the monograph (chapters 6-10, pp. 223-366) is devoted to the impact on the audience and different ways to build an argument suitable for different types of audiences. Here Dr. Petrova successfully applies the results of the first part of her research. Chapters 6-8 (pp. 223-295) clearly, in detail and informatively present the basic prerequisites for conducting an effective argumentative process, i.e., the known from Aristotle *ethos* (character), *pathos* (emotional and psychological means of influence) and *logos* (logic). It should be noted that the author has given this classic paradigm an innovative and original flavor. It is rightly emphasized that the *ethos*, the *pathos*, and the *logos* are not three different argumentative strategies, but rather elements that are present in virtually every argument (p. 223). In this sense, there is no "ethetical", "pathological" and "logical" argumentation per se, but rather a "trinity" (as the author calls it). From this point of view, I would say that the popular metaphor of the "rhetorical triangle" is rather inappropriate. Character, emotion, and logic can be better represented by a Venn diagram, where effective argumentation is placed where the three circles overlap. The overview of both ancient and modern theories of these three components is accurate and sufficiently complete for the study. However, Quintilian's famous sentence that the speaker must be a "vir bonus, dicendi peritus" requires a little more attention. It is traditionally translated as "a good man experienced in speaking." However, the adjective "bonus" is much more multi-layered than it seems at first glance. It contains the idea of moral stability, noble origins, temperate behavior, education and virtue in general. The three chapters also discuss some specific types of arguments that are based primarily on one of the three components. For example, in the section on *pathos*, emotional appeals are presented (pp. 262-265). The part on the *logos* presents the more important inference processes (deduction and induction) as well as the enthymemes, rhetorical examples, and maxims based on them.

The last part of the book (Chapters 9 and 10, pp. 295-366) is devoted to an overview of rhetorical argumentative theories (Ch. Perelman, St. Tulmin, Eemeren-Grootendost, etc.) and to some modern theories on the psychological aspects of persuasion. The author defines various techniques for adapting the persuasive process to the audience (recency and primacy effects, two-sided presentation of information, etc.). With this regard, I would recommend a more precise use of the term "strength" of the argument (p. 311), which normally refers to primarily to inductive proof and indicates the number of specific examples on which the conclusion is based. Emphasis is also placed on media communication and means of (psychological) persuasion.



In my opinion, the monograph presented for the competition is persuasive and very well-founded. It also has serious practical application in rhetorical research.

## 2.2. Articles and studies

In my opinion, the contributions of Dr. Petrova, achieved in the articles and studies presented for the competition, can be divided into the following four main research fields.

The first of these fields is the analysis of the audience, to which the main monograph is dedicated. This group includes the following three studies:

1. "Focus group discussions as a means to assess training needs and gather information for audience analysis";
2. "Stereotypes and their influence in the communication between speaker and audience";
3. "Audience, negative messages, and political cynicism".

The above three articles address specific issues that significantly expand the analyzes provided in the monograph. The first of them is dedicated to a specific qualitative method for audience research and complements the methodology of Chapter 5 of the habilitation thesis. The second analyzes the important psychological phenomenon of stereotyping, as well as the distortion of the rhetorical message, produced by the attitudes. Some basic types of stereotyping, such as sexism, ethnocentrism, racism, ageism, are also presented and analyzed through the prism of the influence they can have on public speech. The third article is in the field of political rhetoric and deals with a phenomenon that is particularly typical of the Bulgarian infosphere, especially in the last thirty years. Political cynicism is analyzed, which is defined as "a lasting belief in the incompetence and immorality of politicians, political institutions and the political system as a whole", its impact on Bulgarian audiences, and its impact on hate speech and black propaganda.

The second area in which Dr. Petrova's contributions are noticeable is communication with specific and vulnerable groups. The following four studies are included here:

1. "Nonverbal communication and crisis intervention";
2. "Uncertainty reduction theory and its application in communication with people in crisis";
3. "Specifics of telephone communication with people in crisis and with representatives of vulnerable groups";
4. "Characteristics of telephone counseling of children who have survived domestic violence".

The candidate's interest in this field is evident in her doctoral thesis, but in her articles and studies the research is expanded and enriched. Various vulnerable groups are covered, such as people in emotional crisis, children and adolescents, and survivors of violence. The topic is interdisciplinary for psychology and communication sciences and has a clear practical





applicability. Some of Dr. Petrova's research in this area is the result of her direct experience as a consultant and expert as a telephone counselor. Attention is also paid to the non-verbal aspects of communication of and with the above-mentioned vulnerable groups. Of particular interest to rhetoric is the study of emotional distress, insofar as it is a standard problem faced not only by beginners but also by relatively experienced speakers. I consider Dr. Petrova's scientific activity in this field to be extremely productive, useful and fruitful.

The third group of research, which the candidate presents for participation in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor", is in the field of leadership and its role in rhetorical communication on verbal and nonverbal levels. Three works can be included in this group:

1. "Leadership and ethos (or persuasion through character)";
2. "Charismatic leadership and oratorical skill";
3. "Nonverbal expressions of power and dominance".

Undoubtedly, this is one of the most important issues in rhetoric, which is directly related to argumentation (various argumentation schemes based on ethos), as well as to stylistics and non-verbal communication. The author presents the topic of leadership, charisma and oratorical ethos through the prism of neo-charismatic theories, established since the 90s of the last century. She also focuses her interest on personal attacks (the so-called human argument), as well as on the role of nonverbal communication in expressing dominance and obedience as a way to avoid conflict. I find the material she collected to be highly informative, and her theses to be well-founded.

The fourth group of texts presented for the competition is in the field of pedagogical and academic rhetoric. This group includes three studies:

1. Specific manifestations of stereotypes in the process of interpersonal communication (in English, co-authored with J. Yankulova);
2. The Transition from Quantitative to Qualitative Research of Learning in the Educational settings communication (in English, co-authored with J. Yankulova);
3. Case Method Teaching of Developmental Theories in Educational Psychology Classes (in English, co-authored with J. Yankulova).

Communication in an educational context is reasonably presented in its various aspects and through the prism of leading theoretical models and concepts. Pedagogical and academic rhetoric is one of the most important areas in modern rhetoric, and Dr. Petrova's contributions in this area are noticeable.

In addition to the above group of research, Dr. Petrova develops some additional topics that deal with some specific aspects of rhetoric and public speech, especially in their relationship with psychology, i.e., the argumentativeness of conspiracy theories, the role of humor in rhetoric, multicultural communication. She also introduces the useful concept of the so-called "effect of the identifiable victim", which has not been the subject of analysis in Bulgaria so far and is to



some extent an application of the ideas of Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Titeka about the convincing power of "presence" (fr. *présance*) in rhetoric. She also pays attention to the Scandinavian rhetoric, to which her second master's thesis is dedicated.

## V. CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration the above mentioned materials and contributions, I am convinced that the presented academic activities and the research of the candidate Donka Petrova fully meet the requirements for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" of 2.3. Philosophy (Rhetoric) at the Department of Rhetoric, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". She has doctoral degree of 3.2. Psychology, has sufficient teaching experience, actively participates in projects and scientific conferences, has high competence in rhetoric, skills to analyze and create scientific texts, as well as high efficiency, productivity and precision in their work. She meets the minimum requirements set by ASDA and significantly exceeds them. I would strongly recommend to the esteemed jury to grant her the academic position of "Associate Professor" in 2.3. Philosophy / Rhetoric and I will undoubtedly vote in favor of her candidacy.

Sofia,

23.04.2022

/assoc. prof. Gerasim Petrinski, PhD/



