

## **REVIEW**

From Assoc. Prof. PhD Vladislav Ognyanov Milanov - Modern Bulgarian Language  
Professor

in the Department of Bulgarian Language of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

on the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional  
field 2.1

Philology (Bulgarian Language - Applied Linguistics) promulgated by Sofia  
University

in State Gazette, issue 22 dated 16.03.2021.

By order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" I was appointed a member of the academic jury in a competition opened for the position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.1 Philology - Bulgarian language. The only candidate who submitted papers for the competition is Chief Assistant Professor PhD Venera Baicheva from the Department of Bulgarian as a Foreign Language. Unlike it is widely practised in the recent years of electing a predetermined candidate for electable positions, which is not so dangerous for academia, this competition for the election of associate professor Venera Baicheva's candidacy is not only not predetermined, but the candidate is the most appropriate and most serious one, which to great extent facilitates the scientific jury in drafting their reviews and opinions. The submitted papers for the competition fully meet the requirements under the Academic Development Act and present the candidate as a serious researcher who boldly states and defends her scientific presence in the Bulgarian academic community.

I will start my review with brief impressions of the candidate since her student years at the Faculty of Slavic Languages. Venera Baicheva stands out as an extremely competent student, with interests in the field of linguistics and Bulgarian Studies, with modern ideas and a broad view on language processes. It is not by chance that after

graduating from the Master program "Linguistics - Language System and Speech Practices" she was invited to work on a doctoral dissertation and after a difficult competition was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student in psycholinguistics at the Department of Bulgarian Language. Her research supervisor is Prof. PhD Yuliana Stoyanova - one of the few specialists in this research field in Bulgaria, who with her research outlines the development of this scientific field to the height of world scientific contributions in the field of psycholinguistics. The defense of Venera Baicheva's dissertation was more than successful, it was published as a separate monograph and all this naturally predetermines the next step. Venera Baicheva entered an assistant competition and before a competent jury managed to win recognition as a linguist and lecturer in a department, whose task is to teach foreigners in Bulgarian and when they graduate, to be the face of Sofia University and Bulgaria in their home countries. Here, I deem, is important not only the teaching as a mission, but also the vocation of the researcher and the teacher to explain the complex Bulgarian grammar so that it can be mastered by students who come from different countries and who speak different languages of diverse complexity.

Venera Baicheva's research activity extends to broad and interesting topics. It includes the elaboration of research articles on topics of foreign language learning, published in renowned referenced Bulgarian and foreign journals. All the texts attached to the competition report clearly highlight the depth of the linguistic mind, combined with the work of a professional who has first tested scientific hypotheses in his practical work in order to reach the scale of her observations and contributions.

The scientific activity of Chief Assistant PhD Baicheva also includes the compilation of textbooks and teaching aids, which are a team work of the experts from the Department of Bulgarian as a Foreign Language and in which Venera Baicheva develops theoretically key topics and exercises to help foreign students master them and in the acquiring of communicative competencies, which is not an easy task either in the exercises with Bulgarian students, or in the exercises and lectures with foreign students. The topics have been successfully selected, problems relevant to the

contemporary Bulgarian reality have been broached, and the grammar has been presented in convincing and orderly manner.

The work in a scientific team is complicated, but Venera Baicheva easily fits into the style of the teams and thus contributes to the fact that one of the smallest departments in our faculty to create a large and significant in scientific and practical terms text array, which allows foreign students to learn the Bulgarian literary language from gripping and professionally developed sources, the work of scholars from the Faculty of Slavic Languages with Sofia University. The textbooks and teaching aids presented by Venera Baicheva for the entrance in the competition are more than sufficient for participation in such a competition. They are a telling proof for her professionalism and the attitude she pours into teaching the Bulgarian language to / in front of such a complex and diverse audience.

In the competition for the position of an Associate Professor Venera Baicheva presents her main research paper - **Linguistic Aspects of Sharing Foreign Culture: (Modern Methodology and Approaches in Teaching Bulgarian as a Foreign Language)**, ISBN: 978-619-7313-15-4, Erove, Sofia , 190p. The monograph presents the author as an established scientist who is familiar with the theoretical problems of the scientific field; presents very convincingly different theories about mastering a second language as a foreign language; develops in-depth research procedures and mechanisms for mastering a foreign language. It is here that the research qualities of Baicheva stand out most as a scientist who knows many different theories well, summarizes them aptly and competently, but also develops own theoretical framework. As an experienced linguist, Venera Baicheva presents in her book the specifics of mastering the noun system of Bulgarian language, attaching special attention to the noun, adjective and numeral and their categories. The main grammatical categories of nouns and verbs are of interest. Quite naturally, the penultimate chapter of the book places as an object of scientific analysis the mastering of verb categories in the Bulgarian language. The author is not afraid of the complexity of the matter and the fact that it must be presented to foreigners. With understanding and high linguistic competence, she develops three of the most difficult to learn grammatical categories of the verb - time, type and inflection, which

even cause troubles to Bulgarian students in their study of philology. The summary in Chapter Five is a natural conclusion to this serious study and presents Venera Baicheva as a savvy specialist in several scientific fields: linguistics, foreign language teaching and methodology. Impressive is the historical overview of the important issues on the topic, as well as the observations on the current state of the procedures - in both research and education, in the teaching of Bulgarian as a foreign language. Questionnaires were used in both practical chapters, and the conclusions were drawn based on more than 250 separate answers. The author presents in detail the structural models of the surveys and the goals set in them, which objectifies the scientific contributions and makes it useful for several different areas. The obtained results are presented quantitatively and are a subject of analysis, which in its depth substantiates not only the teaching procedures, but also a number of complex theoretical issues. It is essential that Baicheva's monograph presents the typology of mistakes in the process of learning Bulgarian as a foreign language and seeks their genealogy, offering practical and theoretical models for prognosis and overcoming deviations from the language norm of students with different mother tongues, which is one of the great contributions in general of her work in teaching Bulgarian language to foreign students.

At the end of my review I cannot fail to mention the contributions of Baicheva in the compilation of textbooks in Bulgarian for secondary schools, as well as the compilation of textbooks for the needs of students abroad who study Bulgarian language. These are mostly children of Bulgarians whose parents have settled and work abroad, and it is especially important for the children to know the language of their Bulgarian parents and to learn it through well-written textbooks that present the wealth and diversity of our native language through convincing topics, through exercises that develop their communicative competencies.

In conclusion, I can summarize in the following points:

1. Venera Baicheva is a thoroughly trained linguist who knows in depth the current problems of the modern Bulgarian literary language;

2. Venera Baicheva is a broad-minded specialist who applies the theoretically acquired knowledge and her own theoretical framework of research in her applied work with foreign students, this is one of the serious applications for the transition to the next academic position;

3. Venera Baicheva works very successfully in several border areas, combining them in her work: linguistics, culturology, psycholinguistics, methodology, foreign language training; The complexity in the specifics of her interests stems from the difficult task of teaching a complex language like Bulgarian to foreigners with different knowledge, different skills and different interests;

4. Venera Baicheva successfully proposes a model for teaching in native language to foreign students and thus has her own contribution to the development of the problem of academic teaching; for the ability to train a specific audience - such as Bulgarian and foreign students;

5. Venera Baicheva shows an essential quality for the academic circles: strong respect for her teachers and ability to work in a team, as a result of which important for the teaching of the Bulgarian language as foreign textbooks and teaching aids have been published.

All the above mentioned, as well as the summaries in my review, gives me reason to vote categorically IN FAVOUR OF Dr. Venera Mateeva - Baicheva to be awarded the position of Associate Professor in the professional field 2.1 Philology (Bulgarian language - Applied Linguistics), promulgated by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in State Gazette, issue 22 dated 16.03.2021. I am convinced that the election of Chief Assistant Professor Venera Baicheva, PhD, is an important process for her career growth, but at the same time it is an extremely important contribution to the development of the Department of Bulgarian as a Foreign Language and to the teaching of Bulgarian to foreigners as one of the multilateral manifestations of The Faculty of

Slavic Languages and the Sofia University as one of its forms of presentation to the whole world.

25.07.2021

Sofia

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