

ACADEMIC OPINION

by **Assoc. Prof. Yuliana Ivanova Chakarova, PhD**
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on the materials submitted for the competition
regarding the appointment of the academic position of “**Professor**”
at **Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv**

Area of higher education: 2. Humanities

Professional field: 2.1. Philology

Academic area of specialization: Bulgarian language (Modern Bulgarian language)

In the competition for the appointment of the academic position of “Professor” announced in State Gazette, Issue 96 / 17.11.2023 г. and on a webpage of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv for the needs of the Department of Bulgarian language at the Faculty of Languages and Literature, the only applicant is **Assoc. Prof. DSc Konstantin Ivanov Kutsarov** who for many years has held a tenure position in the same department.

1. General description of the submitted materials

By Order № ПД-21-384 / 16.02.2024 of the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (PU) I was appointed a member of the Academic Jury for provision of the procedure regarding the appointment of the academic position of “**Professor**” at PU, Area of higher education: 2. Humanities; Professional field: 2.1. Philology; Academic area of specialization: Bulgarian language (Modern Bulgarian language) **announced for the needs of the Department of Bulgarian language at the Faculty of Languages and Literature.**

According to the provided professional CV Konstantin Kutsarov graduated with a degree in Bulgarian Philology from the University of Plovdiv in 1993, after which he worked as a part-time lecturer in Bulgarian for foreign students at the Agricultural University of Plovdiv (1993–1995). From 1995 to 1998 he was a doctoral student at the Department of Bulgarian and defended his PhD thesis in 2000. He consecutively held the positions of expert philologist (1999–2001), Assistant Professor (2001–2003), Senior Assistant Professor (2003–2005) and Chief Assistant Professor (2005–2010) at the Department of Bulgarian language of PU and in 2010 he was appointed Associate Professor at PU. In 2019 he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science. During the period 2015–2019 he served as Vice Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Literature of the University of Plovdiv and in 2019 was elected Dean of the Faculty. In 2023 he was re-elected for his second term as Dean. As it can be seen, his work as a professional has always been connected with the field of Bulgarian language.

The set of materials submitted by Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Kutsarov, DSc, is in compliance with the University of Plovdiv’s Regulations on the implementation of the Development of academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and contains the necessary information among which the most important documents are: Information about compliance with the minimum national requirements

according to Art. 29 of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and Art. 60 of the Regulations on the implementation of the respective Act; List of academic publications of the applicant submitted for the competition; Self-assessment of contributions of the academic research of the applicant; Summaries of the publications submitted for the procedure; List of citations of applicant's publications with full bibliographic information about the cited and citing works, etc.

For the competition the applicant has submitted a total of **6 academic research publications**, amongst which 3 monographs and 3 articles.

2. General evaluation of the applicant's academic research

The research materials submitted by Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Kutsarov, DSc, for the procedure demonstrate his **profound interests, extensive knowledge and professional competence in the field of Bulgarian language**. The set of materials includes 3 monographs and this fact illustrates his serious scholarly activity: 1 published monograph submitted as the main habilitation work for the competition that deals with the theoretical aspects of the vocative form in Bulgarian (*Теоретични аспекти на звателната форма. Морфологична категория апелативност*, Пловдив, 2024); 1 published monograph based on his doctoral thesis for the awarding of the DSc degree (*Българските лексемни класове и учението за частите на речта*, София, 2022) and 1 monograph based on his doctoral thesis for the awarding of the PhD degree (*Следходността в българския език*, Пловдив, 2010). In addition to that, the applicant has submitted 3 research articles all of which are in the field of his second doctorate and the monograph based on it: one of them is published in a collection of papers from an international conference at Sofia University and the other two – in the respected edition Academic research papers of the Faculty of Languages and Literature at the University of Plovdiv („Научни трудове на ПУ – Филология“).

The main habilitation work for the competition deals with the vocative form in Bulgarian which proves to be stable and vital and has been actively used for over ten centuries. This makes the form and its functioning very interesting for analyzing also from the point of view of Pragmatics, Psycholinguistics and Cognitive Linguistics which provide reliable frameworks in the modern anthropocentric linguistic paradigm. However, as we know, before this analysis it is important that the traditional linguistics provides a strict classification of all that is available in a language and only after that to seek answers to the question of *how* the language inventory is used in building and interpretation of the utterances and, even most importantly, cognitive exploration of the reasons *why* it functions in a certain way. This initial answer in the framework of the traditional linguistics is provided in the monograph in question. It offers theoretical analysis of a fragment of the language system that hasn't been classified so far in a scholarly adequate way.

The objectives of the research are undoubtedly **appropriate** in the light the fact that the answers sought have only been partially given in linguistics so far. The first objective is to confirm with arguments the claim that vocative is not a case in Bulgarian. On the road to this goal it's logical to start here as only after mid 20th century Bulgarian language grammarians more categorically accept the obvious fact that there is no systematically expressed morphological category of case in Bulgarian. This respectively affects the vocative forms. The second objective is to systematically represent the status of these forms as a member of a morphological category: if they are not a case, then what are they?

Reaching the first objective is sought in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. Chapter 1 traces in detail the functioning and change of the vocative forms in Old Bulgarian and Middle Bulgarian language

periods, as well as its description in academic sources. Chapter 2 describes noun categories in the grammar books of the Revival period, focusing on the case category and respectively on the vocative forms, and Chapter 3 outlines the reflection of the same problems in the systemic grammar books of the modern Bulgarian language period. They can be characterized as an annotated history of the development of Bulgarian academic linguistic thought (along with appropriate comments provided by K. Kutsarov and where needed – with critical arguments). The author follows his recognized style – his comments are extensive, logical and as detailed as needed. The main idea uniting the analytical part is that the vocative forms and case forms have different genesis (for instance, on pp. 10, 40, 85, 97). The general arguments are the following facts: definitions of the vocative never include a question appropriate to determine the alleged case; the development processes of the forms has its own specifics and is not parallel to the disintegration of the case system (p. 16). It's been highlighted that Bulgarian scholars – authors of grammar books – couldn't easily overcome the stereotype claiming that there is a case grammatical category in Bulgarian and thus – characterized the vocative as one of the cases. The study clearly shows breaking of this stereotype as late as mid 20th century and the emerging of the idea about a new morphological category. K. Kutsarov states that at the beginning it was named after one of its members – the marked member called *vocative*.

The author's view on the vocative as part of a morphological category of the substantive is offered in Chapter 4 of the monographic study (pp. 111 – 123). It is shorter compared to the other chapters which are, to some extent, the background of the general claim about the morphological category called *appellativeness*. But it has to be noted that K. Kutsarov, in his typical concise style, provided all of the essential details about the vocative forms as part of the respective morphological category including their functioning in contemporary Bulgarian. Thus he achieved the second objective of the research. Similar ideas are outlined in his monograph dealing with the lexeme classes (pp. 258 – 261).

Of special interest to me are some points that I would like to address here. They concern statements about the semantics and the syntactic functions of the vocative. It seems to me that it would be interesting if the study elaborated on them a bit more. Of course, the author has carefully outlined the theoretical perimeter of his research but I believe that even research in descriptive linguistics framework can't totally omit general outlining of functions of a language unit, otherwise the *theoretical description* of its nature and semantics wouldn't be comprehensive. In fact, the author himself mentions some aspects of functioning of the vocative but it seems this could be done in more detail. For instance, it would be interesting if the study outlines more precisely the conditions of the similar functioning of the vocative and the imperative. The sources usually mention their collocations, and this is also shown in the monograph under review. But there are other examples without the imperative form where the vocative undertakes a similar function with the help of various linguistic and non-linguistic factors: intonation, gestures, context... It would also be interesting to have some more details from syntactic point of view about the claim that *vocative forms function as the subject* of the sentence (p. 115). The popular point of view is that vocative's role in a sentence is direct address and its syntactic position is independent from other parts of the sentence. Here it would be interesting to outline the conditions when it happens, the relation between the subject and predicate in such sentences, etc. For instance, I find the examples such as: *Госпожице Кара, бихме искали да ни предложите вариант* very interesting since it turns out that the vocative is the subject of the subordinate clause yet it's divided from it by the main clause. This role could easily be changed with just a slight modification, e.g. when the second verb refers to the same person as the first one:

Госпожице Кара, бихме искали да Ви предложим вариант. And yet another case that needs more elaboration is the functioning of the vocative as apposition. The study only mentions the collocation of the vocative with 2nd person singular of the verb (*Ах ти, щуравелке!*), but nothing has been said about similar cases with a personal noun, such as: *Мими, чаровнице, ще дойдеш ли?*

In spite of these comments, I find that the general objectives of the work have been achieved. K. Kutsarov has done it consistently, with strong logics, proving with arguments the existence of another morphological category of the substantive called *appellativeness* which contains two grammatical members: *vocative ~ non-vocative*. Such systematic distinction with the use of non-controversial terminology has been offered in Bulgarian language theory for the first time.

As the candidate states in his self assessment, his most significant accomplishment is his study of Bulgarian lexical categories. This is done in his doctorate for obtaining the degree of DSc and later in his monograph based on the respective doctorate: *Българските лексемни класове и учението за частите на речта*, София, 2022. The work offers numerous innovative ideas and an optimized system of the parts of speech (the author prefers the more correct term *lexeme classes*) thus enriching the theory as well as the practice in this knowledge field of Bulgarian language. The research brings a fresh perspective to the old unified classification model that has existed for a long time in Bulgarian linguistics. K. Kutsarov called this model is “rigid and conservative” (p. 5). This was obvious to all working in the field: unlike classifications in other linguistic schools such as Russian (in which, besides the various conceptual models mentioned by K. Kutsarov, there are even newer ones analyzing the same material within the framework of cognitive linguistics). Therefore, this new approach was long needed and expected. The study offers restructuring of the existing paradigm of the parts of speech, outlining 12 lexeme classes while strictly adhering to the chosen reasoned criteria.

As a conclusion, it has to be underlined that K. Kutsarov’s research is relevant for development and upgrading of the achievements of Bulgarian and Slavic linguistics. In general, his works are marked by originality, innovation and important contributions to the field of his research. The scholarly barometer used by him to detect unsolved moments of the structural description of Bulgarian language, as well as the researcher’s courage to look for and give original ideas and non-traditional answers, are impressive. His style – informative and laconic at the same time – is also undoubtedly admirable.

3. Critical remarks and recommendations

My recommendation is that Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Kutsarov continues to develop his academic research potential. Our academic collegial community is also expecting other original ideas provided by him that would enrich the theoretical scenery of Bulgarian as well as Slavic Linguistics.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials submitted by Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Ivanov Kutsarov, DSc, **comply with all of the requirements** of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Regulations on the implementation of the respective Act and the respective Regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The candidate has submitted sufficient number of research papers that haven’t been used for previous academic procedures. They offer theoretical and applied contributions in the fields of Bulgarian language studies and theoretical linguistics. The works could also be applied in teaching. I

use them myself as theoretical basis and a reference point of comparison in my Russian Theoretical Grammar lectures with students at the Faculty of Languages and Literature.

K. Kutsarov's professional qualification is **undoubted**. The reported results of his teaching and research not only fully comply with the minimal national requirements but exceed them in many of the points.

After familiarization with the materials submitted for the procedure and evaluating them in terms of their academic relevance I have all of the reasons to give my **positive assessment and recommendation** to the honorable academic jury to present to the Faculty Council the suggestion of appointing **Assoc. Prof. DSc Kontantin Ivanov Kutsarov the academic position of "Professor" at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv** in the area of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology, Academic area of specialization: Bulgarian language (Modern Bulgarian language).

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Author of the Academic Opinion:

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