

REVIEW

by Vladimir Lyubenov Zhobov, PhD, professor at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

on the materials submitted for participation in the competition
for the academic position of "Associate Professor"
at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

field of higher education 2. Humanities

Professional field 2.1. Philology (Modern Bulgarian Language)

In the competition for "Associate Professor", announced in the State Gazette, no. 98 of 19.11.2024 and in the web page of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Branch - Smolyan, as a candidate participates Asst. Prof. Miroslav Krasimirov Mihaylov, PhD, from the Department of Pedagogical, Humanitarian, Economic and Natural-Mathematical Sciences at the „Paisii Hilendarski“ University of Plovdiv, Branch - Smolyan.

1. General presentation of the materials received

Subject:

By Order No. RD-22-73 of 17.01.202 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU) I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at PU in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology (Modern Bulgarian Language), announced for the needs of the University Branch in Smolyan.

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition: Asst. Prof. Miroslav Krasimirov Mihaylov, Phd, from the Branch - Smolyan of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The set of materials submitted by Miroslav Mihaylov on paper is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Plovdiv University and includes the following documents:

1. application form to the Rector for admission to the competition;
2. a CV in European format;
3. a diploma of completed higher education with an acquired Master's degree with an annex;

4. a diploma for the degree "Doctor of Philosophy" (PhD);
5. a list of scientific works;
6. scientific works (copies of publications);
7. list of citations;
8. a statement of the fulfilment of the minimum national requirements;
9. annotations of the scientific works in Bulgarian and English;
10. self-assessment of contributions;
11. declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
12. certificate of length of service;
13. documentation of academic work: list of scientific supervisions of successfully defended theses;
14. a certificate for contribution to the development of education in the municipality.

The candidate Miroslav Mihaylov has submitted a total of 33 scientific works: 2 monographs, 2 books, 1 dictionary, 2 studies and 26 articles, all apart from the dissertation. The dictionary and 15 of the articles are co-authored without specifying the individual contributions of the authors. 17 scientific papers were accepted for peer review.

To avoid ambiguity in this review I have used the English translation of titles provided by the candidate in the list of annotations (no. 9 in the list of documents above).

Phonetics of the Modern Bulgarian Literary Language (with regard to the dialect state), mentioned by the candidate among the monographs, holds a different place among the publications. In the field of dialectology and onomastics the author is expected to make an original contribution by presenting new data or a new interpretation of known facts. In a work in a classical discipline such as phonetics, the author obviously sets himself the task not so much of enriching theory as of providing students of his discipline with a handbook in understandable form, of course without profanation of the scientific content. I will note here that Miroslav Mihaylov manages to strike such a balance.

2. Brief Biographical Details

Miroslav Mihaylov graduated "Bulgarian Philology" in 1999 at the Paisii Hilendarski University. In 2006 he was awarded the degree " PhD" on the basis of his dissertation entitled "The Zlatograd Dialect". Since 5.10.2001 he has been a lecturer on a permanent contract at the Branch of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" in Smolyan, successively as assistant until 2004, senior assistant until 2008, and assistant professor until now. He is a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria and the International Sociolinguistic Society, Sofia.

3. General description of the candidate's activity

The teaching activity of the candidate is extremely diverse. In consideration of the main topic of the competition I will mention here only some of the courses in which he lectures or teaches: Modern Bulgarian Language (Phonetics), Experimental Methods in Phonetics. Acoustic Features of Spoken Speech, Historical Linguistics (History of the Bulgarian Language), Dialectology. He has lectured at foreign universities: the Marie Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin, Poland, the Thracian Democritus University in Komotini, Greece and the Thracian University in Edirne, Turkey.

Under his supervision 15 diploma theses have been successfully defended and he has also supervised participants in student scientific sessions.

Assessment of the scientific activity of the candidate

The largest part of the candidate's publications pertain to the field of Bulgarian dialectology. The monograph "The Dialect of the Village of Pripek" (2022, 1.1. in the list) stands out among them. This is a complete and detailed description of a local dialect with transcribed dialect texts on the basis of personally collected material. The author has paid special attention to one of its most characteristic features – the raising of the vowel /e/ - and argues convincingly for his assertion that the change is facultative. The phonetic system of the dialect is presented in especially thorough manner. Miroslav Mihaylov is among the few dialectologists who consistently apply up-to-date objective methods of analysis. A comparison with his previous work – the dissertation on the dialect of Zlatograd, published as a book in 2016 (2.2. in the list) – is revealing in this respect. The earlier study follows an established model known from a number of publications focused on the functional relations between phonemes illustrated by minimal pairs. In the book on the dialect of Pripek he has described in details positional and facultative variants, primarily of vowels, supporting all his observations by spectrographic analysis. The author has presented exhaustively the grammar of the dialect (morphology and syntax). The presentation in these parts follows grammatical categories – voice, verb transitivity, mood (including evidential forms), types of phrases, subordination, types of sentences from pragmatic and formal point of view. In each of these parts Miroslav Mihaylov has provided abundant dialect material for the corresponding category.

There are other investigations by Miroslav Mihaylov devoted to the dialect of Zlatograd and its particular features. In the paper *The transition è > ù in Eastern Rhodope speaks as evidence of migration processes* (5.7. in the list) he convincingly argues against Ljubomir Miletich's assertion about the unity of Zlatograd and Pavlikjani dialects. In the polemical paper *The Zlatograd dialect is no longer a white spot in Bulgarian dialectology* (5.3. in the list) he delineates the territorial extent of the Zlatograd dialect.

The study *Acoustic Aspect of Vowels in the Speech of the Village of Pripek* (4.1. in the list) offers spectrographic analysis of phrases included in the monograph 1.1. The difference is the comparison with the data of Dimitar Tilkov. The paper *The vocal system in the speech of the village of Pripek as a challenge for Bulgarian dialectal and historical phonetics* (5.6. in the list), devoted to the reflexes of most important Old Bulgarian vowels in the dialect, is also to a great extent included in 1.1.

As a competent researcher of the Rhodope dialects Miroslav Mihaylov contributed to the investigation of their natural continuation in Northern Greece. In the paper *The Old Bulgarian phonetic markers in the modern Rhodopean dialects from Northern Greece - evidence of national and linguistic identity* (5.14. in the list) he has presented an analysis of the vowel ‘jery’ in the dialects of two villages to the north of the border (Pripek and Tihomir) and two in the district of Xanti (Glavki and Sminti). The choice of this feature is quite adequate, because the unmerging of *ѣ* and *у* (not the merging of the two vowels in *ѣ* at) is an undoubted archaic feature, perhaps more so than retained nasality. One of the author’s conclusions is that the most archaic phonetic features have been preserved in the mountainous region on both sides of the border.

The title of the paper *The vocabulary of Eastern Rhodope life in the work of Stanislav Sivriev* (5.4. in the list) leads the reader to believe that it is devoted to lexical problems. In view of the fact that lexemes such as “binish”, “kaba”, “zil” and other have not been analyzed in terms of meaning or geographic extent, I will agree with the author’s statement in the annotations that the paper has a “literary trend”.

In two short papers (*A spectral picture of palatal consonants in the modern Bulgarian literary language* (5.16. in the list) and *The Correlation Palatality – Non-palatality in the Bulgarian Language Regarding Its Concrete Implementation in the Pronunciation of the Verb “купя”* (5.22. in the list) Miroslav Mihaylov takes on problems of standard phonology. These papers tell the reader a lot about the candidate’s approach. He does not hesitate to question canonical statements in Bulgarian phonology. The interpretation of Bulgarian consonantal system without soft consonants is not new, but Miroslav Mihaylov seeks evidence for it not only in the intuition of native speakers and foreign language learners (especially impressive is the experience of the Korean Gwon Jin Choi in studying Russian and Bulgarian), but also on phonetic level by acoustical analysis that shows decomposition of the soft consonants into a sequence of consonant and following palatal approximant. To a great extent I share the author’s scepticism about the existence of deep structure soft consonant phonemes, though I am not fully convinced that the proof for this can only be their decomposition at phonetic level.

Miroslav Mihaylov has also contributed to the field of onomastics. In the collective study *Village Names in Smolyan* (2.2. in the list) he was trusted with the chapters “Semantic Classification of the Turkish Names” and “Dictionary of Village Names in Smolyan District”. He alone wrote the paper *Word formation patterns in the anthroponymic system of Smolyan* (5.5. in the list) in which he traces the tendencies in choosing a name and in the word formation on the basis of 4402 personal names written in the registers in the span of three decades. The paper *Slavic anthroponymy in Smolyan* (5.24. in the list) offers a comparison of personal names in two periods: 1920 – 1930 and 1970 – 1980. The religious factor and the political situation had caused dramatic changes, but having adduced data from other researchers of the historical development of the Bulgarian anthroponymy, the author reaches the conclusion that there has been a Slavic nucleus in it that has lasted for 1500 years.

The papers *Teaching verbosity in school* (5.1.) and *Motivation in learning the Bulgarian language as a consequence of the practical usefulness of the educational content* (5.2) testify to the serious attitude of Miroslav Mihaylov to teaching – both at school and university level – and his lasting interest towards teaching methods.

Contributions (scientific, applicable) and citations

Miroslav Mihaylov's contributions in Bulgarian dialectology are to be found in different directions. Among them is a full description of a language system unknown before (of the dialect of Pripek). In a number of publications he convincingly made his point that the Zlatograd dialect is a separate classificatory unit characterized by a unique combination of features. He defined its exact territorial extent by own field work and showed internal dialectal variation. He has disclaimed with a lot of evidence Miletich's idea of the historical link between the dialects of Zlatograd and Pavlikjani. The candidate applies up-to-date methods: spectrographic analysis, statistical data for the frequency of forms, inquiries with native speakers (especially interesting is the one about the triple article).

In his research in the field of onomastics Miroslav Mihaylov demonstrates the ability to work with archives and to classify personal and place names from the point view of etymology and word-formation.

All the contributions mentioned so far are provided solely by the candidate.

There are 18 citations in monographs and collective studies with peer reviewing.

4. Assessment of the personal contribution of the candidate

In this review I have only evaluated works written single-handedly by the candidate or ones in which his contribution is explicitly stated.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations

Albeit rare, there are inadvertencies. For example, in the monograph on the Pripek dialect on p. 24 *нèишты – нùишты* is given as an example of alternation in the root; on p. 90 we see “persons of the three sexes” (this could be a joke about gender ideology). In the monograph about the standard phonetics: in the theoretical introduction N.S. Trubeckoy out of place is mentioned after the 12 universal features, in fact connected to the names of Roman Jakobson, Gunar Fant and Morris Halle. On p. 71 homographs are inaccurately defined as “paronyms”.

Towards the presentation of acoustical data I have a recommendation rather than a critique: Miroslav Mihaylov believes that the advantage of his approach is the multiple measurement of formants at various points in the vowel. He should provide an explanation, or at least a hypothesis of how these formant movements affect the auditory qualities of vowels and their perception by native speakers. Should, for example, the idea of monophthongs be abandoned?

6. Personal Impressions

I know Miroslav Mihaylov personally, including from field work that we did together in the regions of Zlatograd and Xanti. I will begin by stating that he is an excellent field worker and not only because of his practical fluency in the Rhodope dialects. In his communication with dialect speakers he shows consideration and ability to establish and maintain contact in order to attain the necessary information. As a teacher and investigator he is focused and always willing to learn new things. That makes him sought-for participant in scientific projects: he has been included in 18 projects, in 4 of them as a leader.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Asst. Prof. Miroslav Krasimirov Mihaylov, PhD, meet all the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the regulations for the implementation of the LDASRB and the relevant regulations of the Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The candidate in the competition has submitted a significant number of scientific works published after the materials used in the defence of the PhD. The candidate's works contain original scientific contributions. Some of his theoretical works have practical applicability, some of them are

directly oriented to the educational field. The scientific and teaching qualification of asst. prof. Miroslav Krasimirov Mihaylov is undoubted.

The results achieved by Miroslav Mihaylov in his teaching and scientific research activities fully satisfy the minimum national requirements adopted in the regulations for the application of the law on research and development.

After complete examination of all the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific, scientifically-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it justified to give my positive assessment and to recommend the scientific jury to prepare a report-proposal to the faculty council for the election of the Asst. Prof. Miroslav Krasimirov Mihaylov, PhD for the academic position of “Associate Professor” at the "Paisii Hilendarski" University in: field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology (modern bulgarian language).

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Рецензент:

(подпис)

Prof. Vladimir Zhobov, PhD