

## REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vladislav Ognianov Milanov, lecturer in the history of the modern Bulgarian literary language and contemporary Bulgarian language at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"; member of the scientific jury for the procedure for filling the academic position of "associate professor" in **CONTEMPORARY BULGARIAN LANGUAGE** in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology, announced in **SG, issue 88/20.10.2023.**

According to Order No. RD No. 4379/06.12.2023, I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury, which is responsible for preparing reviews and opinions on a competition for the academic position of associate professor in contemporary Bulgarian language. Due to a change in the composition of the jury, which I will address during the public defense, a redistribution of responsibilities for the competition was necessary, and with a new order - No. RD 303/01.02.2024, I have been appointed as a **reviewer** for the same procedure – the selection of an associate professor in contemporary Bulgarian language for the needs of the Faculty of Education at Trakia University. The only candidate who has submitted documents for the procedure is Ass. Dr. Teodora Ilieva, a lecturer at the same university. I am familiar with all the documents related to the competition and firmly believe that both the laws of the country related to academic advancement and the regulations of Trakia University concerning the career development of specialists have been observed.

### **Biographical data for the candidate**

Teodora Ilieva graduated with a master's degree in Bulgarian Philology from Veliko Tarnovo University "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" in 2000. In 2015, she also completed a degree in International Economic Relations at the University of National and World Economy, and in 2021 she completed a semester-based degree in Law again at Veliko Tarnovo University. She is yet to pass her state exam in civil law sciences and graduate as a lawyer. Additionally, she holds a certificate of qualification in publishing, editing, and printing activities (1998 – 2000). Since 2018, she has been appointed as a full-time lecturer in contemporary Bulgarian language at the Faculty of Education at Trakia University. She teaches a wide range of university disciplines - **Bulgarian language and style** (to students from almost all university specialties; undergraduates and postgraduates); **phonetics and phonology of the Bulgarian language** (for students in the "Special

Education" specialty); **linguistic and stylistic editing of texts** (for students in pedagogical specialties); she has also developed other important and modern university courses such as: **grammatical and lexical innovations in oral literary speech, communicative teachings and verbal communication in PUB, linguistic editing of translated texts** (for the needs of the "English Language Teacher" CDC).

Furthermore, Teodora Ilieva's doctoral dissertation, defended in 2017 on the topic "On the Seraphim of John Chrysostom from the book Margarit with a translation by Dionysius Divni (textological and linguistic problems)," demonstrates her as a serious and in-depth researcher in Bulgarian language, shaping her profile as a linguist under the scientific guidance of one of the most prominent specialists in contemporary Bulgarian studies - Prof. Dr. Maria Spasova from Veliko Tarnovo University. I cannot overlook Ilieva's participation in the **ERASMUS** program, within which she visited the Romanian Academy of Sciences, where she worked with manuscripts from the 15th century. She has also worked within the same program at the University of Craiova, where she had the opportunity to participate in the educational process of foreign students learning Bulgarian. Another impressive aspect of Teodora Ilieva's creative biography is her participation in the **National Program "Postdoctoral Fellows and Young Scientists"** (from March to October 2021), aimed at stimulating the publication activity of young scientists.

I list all these facts from the candidate's biography not by chance. They demonstrate a contemporary researcher within their broad scientific framework and the scales of their research perspective. A scholar with such a profile is a source of pride for every Bulgarian, European, and global university. Only Teodora Ilieva's modesty prevents her from extensively presenting the boundaries of her education or using clichéd phrases like "I have worked with..." to outline an even greater depth of the profile of a contemporary researcher in contemporary Bulgarian language. And there is no need for her to display her professional competencies because they cannot go unnoticed by the professional linguistic community.

#### **Professional and scientific activity**

In the competition for associate professor in contemporary Bulgarian language, Teodora Ilieva applies with scientific publications and a monographic study, fully meeting the requirements of the Law on Academic Development. I would say that in some respects, she even exceeds these requirements. It is particularly important to emphasize that Ilieva combines in her research the most important skills for a linguistic researcher: she possesses an extremely serious training in

Bulgarian language in both its diachronic and synchronic dimensions. It hardly needs to be pointed out in a review from the 21st century that it is not possible for a modern linguistic study not to deploy methods from both approaches. This phase in science is complex and, of course, has passed through multifaceted discussions among the most talented Bulgarian linguists.

Regarding her participation in the procedure, the candidate has submitted the following scientific and scientific-practical developments:

Monograph – 1 piece.

Abstract – 1 piece.

Publications in specialized editions – 15 pieces.

Developed educational programs for students in Bachelor's and Master's degree programs – 5 pieces; specialists acquiring the qualification of "English Language Teacher" – 1 piece, which are important for such types of competitions, where the academic position is awarded to educators, that is, individuals who, in addition to their scientific competence, must also demonstrate the strength of their pedagogical abilities by guiding young people through the complex world of contemporary Bulgarian language.

I will present my observations in the review, following the sequence chosen by the author to submit them for evaluation by the scientific jury.

Monograph

1.1. The text is dedicated to one of the least researched Bulgarian linguists (aptly referred to by Ilieva as a word-creator). Stoyan Mihaylovski. His linguistic profile is unfolded in the presented monograph (V.3.) and in two publications (G.7.7. and G.7.8.). The study is conducted simultaneously in the spirit of classical works, but at the same time, Ilieva's creative signature is evident. For the first time in Bulgarian historical and contemporary linguistics, as rightfully noted by the researcher, an analysis is made of eleven of the author's published works, with some of his notes also being consulted, archived in fund 567, inventory 2 and inventory 3, arch. unit 8 and arch. unit 677. The elements of the classical systematic methodology of Bulgarian historical linguistics (orthographic, phonetic, morphological, lexical, syntactic system of the eleven texts), as I have already noted, are combined with a more flexible and modern approach that few trained linguists can apply in their analyses. Dialectological and sociolinguistic dimensions, which provide interesting data on Mihaylovski's creative nature, are deeply analyzed; particularly interesting for specialists in public speech is the commentary on the term "deputy language". For us, teachers of

political and journalistic speech, this analysis is particularly important due to its relevance, applicable in the speeches of Bulgarian politicians – ranging from speeches saturated with internationalisms to examples of the negative register of political discourse.

Other contributory points I would like to highlight are related to the following research observations and conclusions of Dr. Ilieva:

1. In the monograph, the participation of Stoyan Mihaylovski in the processes of systematizing, standardizing, and codifying the diverse and dynamic language practices in the last three decades of his life is very clearly presented, with a view to his **contributions to the development and renewal of contemporary Bulgarian literary language**.
2. By reproducing dialectal elements and "folk" syntactic constructions, the author enriches the **ideographic dictionary of the Bulgarian language**;
3. As Teodora Ilieva accurately notes, Mihaylovski stands out mainly for his ability to **create and stylize neolexemes**, using various morphological and occasional word-formation methods. This is the reason why a large part of the monograph analyzes the lexical peculiarities of the author, through which the so-called individual style is constructed and supplemented. As in any in-depth contemporary scientific study, a list of isolated **hapax legomena** (with single fixation – 185, and with up to 5 fixations – 50) is presented here.

I cannot fail to note Teodora Ilieva's boldness to undertake the analysis of the text through a particularly strong intertextuality, in which linguistic analysis often intertwines and competes with literary references and comments. Thus, Teodora Ilieva stands close to a definition that Jakobson formulated as follows: A literary scholar who disregards linguistics, and a linguist who disregards literature, is a pure anachronism. I use this reference not for anything else but to emphasize a trait that is increasingly difficult to find among contemporary researchers – the courage to formulate and defend one's own scientific thesis. Teodora Ilieva has not only done this but has exceeded expectations by asserting her own position and elaborating her analytical observations in an original manner, which places her name alongside those of established researchers in contemporary Bulgarian language and stylistics such as Venche Popova, Hristina Staneva, Hristo Parvev, Rusin Rusinov, Konstantin Popov, and others.

Allow me to provide a summary and two comments on this monograph text: in her endeavor to make her contribution more visible, Dr. Ilieva has used some terms in a way that they do not sit firmly and convincingly; of course, they carry terminological characteristics, but they create the

feeling that they are used only to enhance the scientific value of the text. This value is undeniable even without overexposing foreign words. They have been verified, and surely they will be defended as the author's choice during the public defense. I will accept her arguments, but this does not prevent me from advising her to use words available in the Bulgarian dictionary.

The second comment is related to a particular sophistication in Ilieva's style and eloquence. Here it is clear that the effect is intentional and natural for the author. She has style and can afford to "flirt" with words to avoid sounding clichéd and dry. At times, this creates a sense of mannerism in speech, but the author's in-depth conclusions quickly ground the reader and smoothly introduce them to the analyzed levels. I do not find any substantive flaws in Dr. Ilieva's analytical observations, which only reaffirms my observations that she is a well-educated linguist in the best traditions, and through much effort and perseverance, she has earned the position to be recognizable and to defend her scientific contributions.

I have one question for the author. **Does she plan to expand her work by placing her observations on the language of Stoyan Mihaylovski in dialogue with other Bulgarian writers?** In my opinion, this would more clearly situate his work within Bulgarian historical and contemporary linguistics. The parallels with Ivan Vazov's work are strong and convincing, but they can be expanded with analyses and comparisons with other creators of Bulgarian literature. Confidently, I can summarize that Dr. Ilieva's monograph is a profound and contributory study that linguistics specialists and Bulgarian studies students can use both as a terminological apparatus and as observations on Stoyan Mihaylovski's speech. And as a contemporary study, where various methods are focused on different research initiatives. I will include the monograph in the syllabus for language culture and the history of modern Bulgarian literary language for students at Sofia University with the deep conviction that contemporary philologists should strive for such types of scientific syntheses when the object of their research is a literary figure contributing to the development of the Bulgarian language.

Just as in the monograph, in her other scientific pursuits, Dr. Ilieva demonstrates resourcefulness regarding the chosen topics, precision regarding the structuring and commentary on the issue, and most importantly, the ability to work with excerpted material.

It is not at all coincidental that Teodora Ilieva directs her research gaze toward a not-so-popular "sculptor" (in Ilieva's words) of words like Dimitar Popnikolov Petkanov – brother of Konstantin Petkanov. The idiolect of the creator is unfolded, with which Dr. Ilieva has ambitiously set herself

the task of initiating a series of scientific studies on the rich literary heritage of talented Orthodox authors. In the publication (G.6.4.), the analysis focuses on poetic vocabulary, which is structured by standards/interpoetic borrowings and unconventional/occasional poetic phrases, stylistically influenced by classical rhetorical patterns and church Slavonic hymnographic models. The second group is constructed of formal and semantic repetitions, non-semantic poetic accumulations, and various types of tropes.

With a keen sense of analyzing language layers, Dr. Ilieva unveils the author's contributions to the linguo-cultural, psycholinguistic, and ethno-linguistic background through the concepts of various symbols/concepts. It is unnecessary to repeat that in these developments, her deep insight as a well-prepared specialist in contemporary Bulgarian language shines through once again. Exactly the kind of insight needed for the announced competition—modern thinking, with a very deep theoretical background, yet with the ability to build her own conceptual territories to defend. There is no dispute that this is exactly what is required when it comes to a linguist educator. Furthermore, I am deeply convinced that contemporary linguistics needs such analyses that shed light on under-researched authors who have made significant contributions to the development of the Bulgarian language. A very important professional trait of Dr. Teodora Ilieva is her ability to discover such contributory topics and to delve into them thoroughly. She is not the type of researcher who fills frameworks with empirical material; she creates a concept based on traditional and new research in linguistics while academically asserting her position as a linguist.

In the publication (G.6.3.), dedicated to the cognitive reception of Iliya Volen, lexical fields are subjected to analysis as constructs for building full-fledged images and forms, which are "crucial for decoding the linguistic nature of the writer." As Dr. Ilieva aptly notes, I. Volen's **lexicon is differentiated into two hyperplanes—macro-linguistic (fundamental and dominant): examining words according to their origin and territorial distribution—common spoken corpus, dialectalisms, foreign words (Turkishisms, Hellenisms), and micro-linguistic (individualizing the author's language and limited in quantitative aspect): examining words according to their frequency—obsolete lexicon, semantic transponders, hapaxes, and author's neologisms. Fourteen authorial neologisms have been excerpted and analyzed, enriching the Bulgarian poetic vocabulary.** Dr. Ilieva's formulation impresses with two important summaries for the competition: in-depth analysis, supported by ample illustrative material; persuasive argumentation; a scholarly style and expression that is both academic yet

accessible, clearly guiding the analyses to the readership. This is a quality that Dr. Ilieva has likely cultivated over the years; she has been educated through the eyes of her academic supervisor; she has further developed it in discussions at scientific conferences, where Teodora Ilieva's texts have always been objects of heightened interest among our scientific community, sparking lively comments among the best connoisseurs of contemporary Bulgarian language and its history. The article dedicated to Iliya Volen deeply complements the observations of Prof. Dora Koleva, who analyzes the author within the dimensions of his literary horizons. The two types of studies are in dialogue, and this is a skill that is much needed in linguistics and literary studies today. Teodora Ilieva's sense of discovering topics that unfold the potential of Bulgarian poets and writers thickens the scientific picture of their linguistic contribution, making Ilieva's research even more significant. Her texts demonstrate the power of expressive means, which makes the analysis of literary texts more objective and feasible.

Another important aspect presented in the studies submitted for review portrays Dr. Teodora Ilieva as a linguist who, in the spirit of classical traditions in Bulgarian linguistics, conducts comparative-typological and linguo-cultural studies on stable language complexes (word combinations and sentences) in the Slavic phraseological corpus. Here, one cannot fail to see the broad foundations that the author sets as the basis for her observations. She should be congratulated separately for choosing this issue, which in our contemporary times requires such thorough analyses, as contemporary language speakers increasingly lose the sense of recognizing phraseological units, likely due to the lack of interest among modern young people in history, while phraseologisms maintain the stability of their content through the memory of time. Before presenting in my review Ilieva's works dedicated to this topic, **I would like to ask her if she plans to consolidate her observations on phraseology into a larger research work to fit into the context of current searches in the field of contemporary Bulgarian language, whose object is phraseologisms** (similar works by Svetla Koeva, Diana Blagoeva, Yana Sivilova are already a fact in Bulgarian linguistics)

In these texts, the author's skills in analyzing linguistic phenomena within a broad framework—both historically and contemporaneously—are once again impressive. **Most importantly, they are deeply compared with other languages. I can categorically say that these are texts of a mature researcher; of a profound and thoughtful linguist who approaches linguistic material with respect and knowledge.** It is precisely these analyses by Dr. Ilieva that give me grounds to

argue that her observations exceed the requirements for the position of associate professor. This is also the basis for my confidence that if she is chosen for this position, the classes on contemporary Bulgarian language at Trakia University will be entrusted to a serious researcher who has a presence in Bulgarian linguistics and who will demand that pedagogue students know our language and teach it with affection to future generations. It is impossible not to see this depth of her research character also in her work with students.

I will continue my observations in the review with brief summary analyses of another group of texts that complement the professional and scientific characteristics of Dr. Teodora Ilieva. In (G.6.1.), two correlative pairs are analyzed precisely and in-depth: "cross" - "крѣст" - "крѣст," forming 17 phraseological micro-themes, and the second one is with the semantic center "крѣст" - "крѣст/снага/кнѣма" - "пояс," "поясница," "спина," "бок," forming 7 micro-themes. Dr. Ilieva's conclusions are indisputable: the cross is conceptualized and verbalized as a cyclical code in both languages and has conservative contextual combinability; competition between configurations with the supporting segment "крѣст" and with the lexical center "грѣб," as in Bulgarian, they are almost twice as numerous, while in Russian, "спина" far surpasses the distribution of "пояс" and "поясница" in phraseologisms; only in Russian folklore is the domestic symbol of the cross sung as a wooden foundation of the roof, a central support of the house; significant is the lexical disproportion between phraseologisms with the keyword "крѣст," fixed in the so-called dictionaries of the Macedonian language, and the stable expressions isolated from contemporary spoken and media discourse in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia; in contemporary Bulgarian media texts, new free and stable units with the concept "крѣст" are extremely rare, unlike Russian; syntactic structural duplicates in the phraseological field with the keyword 'крѣст' are more frequent in Bulgarian than in Russian, and so on.

In the publication (G.7.4.), which focuses on phraseological units with the initial keyword "прѣст", homonymous pairs "прѣст" - "палец," "перст" and "прѣст" - "земля" are analyzed. Here, the conclusions are motivated and thorough, supported by statistical data: etymologically, semantically, and structurally similar phraseological units in both languages with the correlatives "прѣст" - "перст" are 12% of all phraseological units in the article.

Stable expressions with the keyword "песен" are the subject of text (G.7.7.). And this text, like the others in the publications, demonstrates the author's orientation towards topics relevant to



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contemporary Bulgarian linguistics, related to the worldview, semiotics, and intersections between linguistics and literary studies. The author's observations present the song as a universal communicative code and emotional representative. The in-depth comparison outlines the conclusion that the concept of "песен" is a keyword in 17 phraseological micro-semantic spheres in Bulgarian and Russian, excerpted from large volumes of phraseological dictionaries and contemporary media texts.

Publications tracing current derivational and semantic-stylistic processes in the sphere of Bulgarian lexical and phraseological neology. Observations on these processes are of great importance for contemporary Bulgarian language and linguistics. One of the highlights is placed on neological processes in the lexical field over the past few decades. The author has developed a taxonomic list of new occasional constructions (from the period 2014–2020), fixed in media discourse (G.7.2.), which are extremely useful for specialists in public speech and contemporary Bulgarian language. As the author aptly notes, traditional/usual methods (morphemic derivation, composition, conversion, univerbalization, semantic word formation) predominate, as do occasional/unusual methods (contamination, formal-semantic lexicalization, inter-word imposition, insertion word formation, re-etymologization, re-derivation, creation, graphical word formation, etc.). The appearance of new and diverse word-formation models is natural, highlighting several (hybrid) types: composition + substantivization of participles, metaphorization + univerbalization, appellativization + etymological figure, substitution + mixing of lowercase and capital letters, etc. Word formation is a very specific part of linguistics, and specialists dealing with this issue today can be counted on one hand. Among the doyennes of Bulgarian word formation is undoubtedly Prof. Vasilka Radeva, whose research in this field remains an unsurpassed example of in-depth analysis of Bulgarian and Slavic word formation. Dr. Ilieva's analyses fit into the spirit of classical studies on word formation and expand observations through current examples and models.

In publication under No. G.7.3., the researcher's interest is directed towards semantic modification and lexical neologization as active means of renewing the contemporary Bulgarian lexical fund. 44 newly registered lexemes from the last decade are thoroughly presented, differentiated into two groups—32 semantic neologisms (resulting from primary nomination) and 12 lexical neologisms (I recommend including the correct forms of the word in plural in the conclusions).

The study under No. G.9.1. examines 60 newly adopted and newly created words with only a foreign language element-predominantly from English, but also from French, Spanish, and Greek origins. The observations of other researchers on contemporary Bulgarian language regarding the high-temporal productivity of formants are confirmed here: "digital-", "euro-", "covid," "corona," "selfie," "home," etc., as well as the constant activity of prefixoids: "e-", "anti-", "euro-", "cryo-", "crypto-", "multi-" and others, which have been included in word-forming processes for decades. The study can be cited as an example of contemporary linguistic research. The choice of topic is more than timely, and the aptly selected examples demonstrate Dr. Ilieva's commitment to current word-forming processes in contemporary Bulgarian.

The second aspect of research dedicated to processes in contemporary Bulgarian language concerning phraseology is related to trends in the development of the Bulgarian phraseological corpus. Here, Teodora Ilieva proves to be a modern-thinking linguist who follows current language processes. Furthermore, she can afford the highest professionalism, characteristic of few, through which she observes contemporary language processes, placing them within the broad framework of their historical development. A more suitable combination for a specialist in contemporary Bulgarian language could hardly be found.

In the publication under No. G.6.2., the object of analysis is new non-essential and essential phraseological expressions (of the first and second rank), created and actively disseminated in dynamic and genre-diverse journalistic texts over the past seven years. The conclusion that thematic areas to which the newly emerged phraseological expressions belong include existential, political, financial, social, domestic, and health-related topics is extremely precise. The text convincingly and consistently demonstrates that substitutive derivation is most widespread among non-essential phraseologisms. The candidate's conclusions for the academic position of associate professor are that over the past decades, the phraseological corpus has been **enriched and renewed with pronounced intensity, motivated by the proportional activation of cardinal national processes and the need for innovative, especially alternative axiological-expressive nomination.**

The texts reviewed in the review categorically lead to the generalization that the researcher is a deep specialist in contemporary Bulgarian language. The objects of her scientific interests are current topics developed in depth. The linguistic community will cite Dr. Ilieva's research because they serve as a foundation in theory and as exceptionally valuable material gathered and processed

by the discerning eye of a formed specialist in contemporary Bulgarian language. A fact that no one who respects their professional expertise and contributes to linguistics would dare to dispute. The **contributions** developed by Dr. Teodora Ilieva accurately and faithfully reflect the essence of her scientific observations. The abstract is professionally prepared and reflects the essence of her monographic research.

My **recommendations** boil down to several key points from Teodora Ilieva's overall work:

1. Precise adaptation of terminology in the developments;
2. Expanding the historical context in publications. There are not many specialists in contemporary Bulgarian language who have such a comprehensive preparation in Bulgarian language, and therefore, it should be used as a background for unfolding contemporary phenomena;
3. Publications in international journals.

### **Conclusion**

I have known Teodora Ilieva from her participation in scientific conferences in Bulgaria. Her texts always attract the attention of established specialists in the history of language and contemporary Bulgarian language. The ability of Dr. Ilieva to defend her concepts and uphold her scientific hypotheses is highly impressive. And this is a quality inherent in selected linguists.

I am deeply convinced of the scientific contributions of the candidate in the competition, and I believe that in their depth, they present to us the profile of a complete linguist who will give much to contemporary Bulgarian linguistics and who has enough authority to teach students in contemporary Bulgarian language at Trakia University. In fact, every scientific and educational institution should be proud to have such researchers and teachers in its structure. Teodora Ilieva is recognizable in our community as a profound researcher; as a teacher who does not compromise in the name of her popularity but upholds the high academic standards established in the classical spirit of our prestigious institutions, demanding from young people because she realizes how important the preparation of future primary teachers is in building knowledge of the Bulgarian language among young people. At the public defense, I will allow myself to mention an example from a chance encounter with students of Dr. Ilieva, which categorically confirms my reasoning about her teaching work.

In conclusion, I note that I will DEFINITELY vote for the election of Dr. Teodora Ilieva as an associate professor in contemporary Bulgarian language for the needs of the Pedagogical Faculty

of Trakia University. I am confident that the other members of the scientific jury will do the same, guided by their high professionalism and the horizons of their academic excellence.

February 8, 2024

Sofia

Reviewer:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vladislav Milanov