

## REVIEW

submitted in fulfilment of the procedure for the selection of a full *Professor*  
in the professional field of *Philology 2.1.* with a specialty in *Bulgarian*  
*Language*  
announced in *State Gazette* Issue No. 29/12.04.2022

Candidate for the academic position: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ruska Sabeva  
Stancheva

Reviewer: Prof. Dr.Sc. Vladko Danailov Murdarov

An only applicant for the position, Ruska Stancheva graduated from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski in 1982 with a major in Slavic Philology. In 1994 she defended her dissertation titled *The Contribution of Bulgarian Linguists to the Establishment of Literary Lexis in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Issues in Codification Practice)* (original title: *Приносът на българските езиковеди в изграждането на книжовната лексика през 20. век (Проблеми на кодификаторската практика)*) at the Institute for Bulgarian Language. In 2005 she was promoted to Associate Professor at the Department of Modern Bulgarian Language of the Institute after winning a competition for the position.

In fulfilment of the requirements of the procedure, the applicant has submitted for review two monographs – *The Codification Practice of the First Bulgarian Academic Grammars* (original title: *Кодификаторската практика на първите български научни граматики*, 2021), which she describes as her habilitation thesis, and *Codification and Linguistic Attitudes* (original title: *Кодификацията в контекста на езиковите нагласи*, 2021) – both published by the Prof. M. Drinov Academic Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The candidate has also submitted for review 9 studies, as well as 4 articles and conference papers published in refereed journals and proceedings indexed in renowned international citation databases: 6 of them are joint papers and 3 of them present results of a collective project coordinated by the applicant. 2 of the 9 studies are published in refereed indexed journals. In addition, Ruska Stancheva has submitted another 25 articles and conference papers (6 of which describe joint research) published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or in edited collective volumes. The list of the candidate's works does not include the spelling dictionaries and the Ministry-approved Bulgarian language textbooks co-authored by her.

The candidate's habilitation monograph *The Codification Practice of the First Bulgarian Academic Grammars* deals with the history of Bulgarian grammatical thought, the codification of the standard language and Bulgarian grammar norms. The work offers an analysis of both the cultural-historical and the linguistic context of the emergence of the six academic grammars published

between 1936 and 1944. One of the contributions of the study is the tracing of the transition from a Neogrammarian to a functional approach that may be observed in these grammars, emphasising on the shift from a diachronic to a synchronic perspective. The theoretical approach adopted by the applicant contributes significantly to the clarification of the principles for the interpretation of linguistic facts and the codification practice. As emphasised by the candidate, the principles adopted by the authors of codification practices in general had a norm-supporting function. Their treatment of grammatical means was largely dependent on the adopted approach – whereas the Newgrammarian school suggested that normative recommendations were primarily the exception, the functional-structural approach (established later on) was inclined to describe the functional differences between various grammatical devices with a view to their feasibility. An important observation is that the description of grammatical norms with respect to some verb categories shows a high degree of stability, while the normative complex established for nouns is characterised by a greater degree of grammatical variation in some respects. The account illustrates that codification is a continuous, ongoing process, a statement that provides a segue to the author's other works. Another topic dealt with in the monograph is the reconstruction of balanced individual and collective language attitudes observed in the period between the two world wars. Finally, this work provides a nice summary of some of the candidate's earlier studies that complement the conclusions expounded herein. It is worth stressing that this monograph makes a distinct linguistic contribution.

Ruska Stancheva's second monograph, *Codification and Linguistic Attitudes*, originates from the project *A Study of Public Attitudes and Value Orientations towards the Standard Bulgarian Language as a Factor in the Codification of Language Norms* (original title: *Изследване на обществените нагласи и ценностните ориентации към българския книжовен език като фактор за кодификацията на нормите му*), which was coordinated by her. The monograph represents research into the establishment of correlations between language attitudes and codification within the framework of the theory of standard languages. The monograph brings together various mutually complementing topics that paint the overall picture of language attitudes. It contributes to establishing some characteristics of the standard language such as the hierarchy of its functions, the degree of obligatoriness of linguistic norms, the characteristic features of current codification and the demographic parameters determining language attitudes. The theoretical framework of the study rests on the candidate's understanding of language attitudes as an indicator of the representation of the communicative and the symbolic functions of the standard language and the fact that these attitudes show a high level of consistency. The author establishes that the attitude of *language loyalty* is mostly tied to the language's discriminative function. The monograph deals with spoken language's influence on written language, a topic that requires a balanced approach to the revision of codified norms as any change related to language innovation needs to be evaluated in relation to other norms, in a way that would enable researchers to reconsider the relationship among various rules since a

codifying decision regarding a given norm may affect the status of another one. In addition, Ruska Stancheva has studied the demographic factors that determine language attitudes, demonstrating that present day codification is balanced and supports the unifying function of the standard language; as a result, all the generations of Bulgarians identify with the existing standard and exhibit language loyalty. Moreover, there is no conflict among language attitudes stemming from the ongoing processes of internationalisation of the standard language. The author demonstrates that the most pronounced positive attitudes are the ones related to the symbolic functions of the standard language. I would like to stress that this monograph makes both scientific and applied contributions and may serve as a prerequisite for future work on the grammatical description of the standard language and the explicit formulation of its norms. This applies equally to the conclusions that changes in the current codified norms would generally be received negatively by Bulgarian speakers and that existing purist sentiments regarding any proposed changes must necessarily be taken into account.

The additional papers submitted by the candidate also present contributions to the study of the codification of standard language norms. An important observation emerging from her work is that a main structural feature of the grammatical system of the standard language is the profound process of intellectualisation and the fact that it has become impervious to dialectal influences very quickly. Her research on the dynamics of certain grammatical norms (such as the use of the long and the short definite articles, the *whom* (*кого*) forms and the adverbial participle) have helped the advancement of the current understanding of these norms and represent important conclusions about language norms' contemporary state. Thus, for instance, the author argues that there is a well-defined balance between native speakers' opinions and linguistic behaviour with respect to the use of the long and the short definite articles. The pronounced divergence from the norm regarding the use of *кого* (*whom*) is due to the weakening of these forms' functional value in the grammatical system, while the deviations in the use of adverbial participles stem from the speakers' judgement of their insufficient familiarity with the relevant rules and the infrequent use of these forms in the written language. The results obtained in the individual studies justify certain codification decisions; it is worth noting that with regard to each of the examined norms the author has taken into account the speakers' familiarity and proficiency and the role of demographic factors such as their education, economic status and occupation. A couple of her studies are focused on the attitudes of native speakers towards the obligatoriness of standard language norms in electronic communication, where a clear distinction is made between formal and informal written communication. The role of school education as a factor in the formation of individuals' language attitudes is also studied by the candidate.

Ruska Stancheva's research interests in the field of Bulgarian grammar are likewise reflected in part of her studies, most of which are the result of her involvement as a principal investigator in the project *A Normative Grammar of*

*the Bulgarian Language* (original title: *Нормативна граматика на българския език*). Normative grammar is defined as a kind of grammatical description employing the theoretical framework of functional grammar. The adopted approach justifies the independent, autonomous description of the form and meaning of language means. Using this approach, the candidate offers a definition of the different types of doublets and the functions of the standard language norms and proves the assumption that the emergence of doublets is one of the main sources for the intellectualisation of the standard language. Another contribution of the applicant is the proposed typology of grammatical norms where deviations in the written language use are observed, as well as the adopted systematic approach to the most frequent deviations. Her relevant studies demonstrate the application of a strictly formal approach to the analysis of morphological and syntactic phenomena. This formal approach is used in the development of verb classifications, as well as in the application of the techniques of syntactic connotation and syntactic accommodation to the description of various simple syntactic groups in the course of the creation of a normative grammar of the Bulgarian language.

Some of the earlier research of the candidate is related to her participation in the project *Comparative Syntax of Slavic Languages in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* supervised by Stanisław Karolak.

Ruska Stancheva's scientific publications have been cited in peer-reviewed monographs and collective volumes (23), as well as in non-peer-reviewed journals (36). The total number of citations of her works is 59, including reviews of some of her publications. 3 of her articles have been cited in the WoS-indexed journal *Bulgarian Language and Literature* (*Български език и литература*); 2 studies and 1 article have been cited in the SCOPUS-indexed journal *Slavia Meridionalis*, 5 studies and 18 articles have been cited in the ERIH+-indexed *Bulgarian Language Journal* (*Български език*).

The candidate's works cited add up to 30 items; most of them have been cited more than once. The applicant's bibliography lists only publications that are relevant to this selection procedure.

The above facts prove Ruska Stancheva as a mature linguist with extensive experience, who has attained profound conclusions and generalisations on numerous issues and has made a significant contribution through her research into the history of Bulgarian grammatical thought, the theory of standard languages and Bulgarian grammar. A significant fact worth noting is that throughout her career she has consistently pursued a particular line of research, her interests remaining constant, to be deservedly crowned by her recent in-depth comprehensive publications.

A careful review of the candidate's publications will undoubtedly show that individual inaccuracies have been made in some of them, which is to be expected given the fact that they reflect her evolution as a researcher over a period of nearly twenty years. (I have had the opportunity to comment on some of them in my capacity as reviewer of previous large-scale studies in which Assoc. Prof. Ruska Stancheva was involved either as a participant or as project leader.) The results obtained from her research are, however, profoundly

substantial, as attested by the fact that her works have been cited nearly 60 times in various Bulgarian and foreign publications.

The above observations allow me to recommend in full confidence that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ruska Sabeva Stancheva be awarded the academic title of *Professor in Bulgarian Language* in the professional field of *Philology 2.1*.

01.08.2022

Prof. Dr. Sc. Vladko Murdarov