

REVIEW
from Assoc. Prof. Milena Mutafchieva, PhD
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on scientific publications for participation in a competition for the academic
position of professor in a professional field 3.2. Psychology, published in the
State Gazette, no. 87 of 17.01.2023 for the needs and for a full-time
position in the Department "Cognitive Science and Psychology, New
Bulgarian University

with candidate associate professor Elena Petrova Andonova, PhD

I. Assessment of compliance with minimum national requirements

The candidate Associate Professor Elena Andonova, PhD meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position "associate professor" in professional field 3.2. Psychology, formulated in the Regulations on the Implementation of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act. The applicant's self-assessment report is completed comprehensively and informatively and is supported by the necessary bibliographic description of publications and citations.

II. Research activities and results

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Andonova applied for the academic position of "Professor" in the professional field 3.2. Psychology with one major habilitation monographic work:

1. Andonova, E. (2022). *Early Language Development. Grammar*. Sofia. NBU. ISBN-978-619-233-205-1.

In addition, 30 publications are presented.

1. Evaluation of the monographic work, including an assessment of the scientific contributions of the author

The monographic work presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Andonova is 144 pages long, including the appendices. It contains an introduction, 7 chapters, a conclusion, references and two appendices.

The book is a natural continuation of Elena Andonova's previous monograph describing early lexical development. In the present monograph Assoc. Andonova examines grammar and its developmental lines in early childhood, delineated on a large sample (over 500) of Bulgarian children. Additional analyses of data collected with the VERBA-2 questionnaire for assessing language development in children between 16 and 30 months are described. Interesting results on children's achievement by age, socioeconomic status of parents, the relationship of vocabulary development to grammar development, the influence of gender, and others are presented. All of these analyses are placed in the context of similar studies with other languages and cultures and attempt to find cross-linguistic and cross-cultural trends as well as general trends in children's language development.

In the introduction, Elena Andonova justifies her interest in the field of early child language development, the meaning of such studies and monographs due to the lack of data on language development in Bulgarian, and defines the aims of the monograph.

The second chapter presents a theoretical overview of different approaches to language acquisition in terms of the explanatory constructs and mechanisms underlying this process.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodologies on which the study described in the monograph is based, namely the MacArthur Bates Parent Questionnaires of Language Development. It describes its advantages, good psychometric characteristics, and presents the VERBA 2 - Language Development Questionnaire - English Adaptation for parents of children aged 16 to 30 months.

Chapter 4 presents the sample characteristics, the data collection period, exclusion criteria for certain participants from the final data analysis. The detailed description of the

criteria in question makes a very good impression, indicating a very high level of research culture.

Chapter 5 describes the analyses of age differences in the acquisition of grammatical morphemes, the use of plurals in nouns, the use of number and person morphemes in present, past and future tenses, prefixes, etc. An analysis of the development of syntax is also presented.

Chapter 6 describes the influence of various socio-demographic factors such as the mother's education, the child's gender and birth order. Chapter 7 relates the development of vocabulary and grammar in the Bulgarian sample of children.

The conclusion provides a clear and focused summary of the results and their benefits.

I will try to summarize the many contributions of the monograph in a few main ones:

- The monograph is a natural continuation of Elena Andonova's previous monograph and complements it in a thorough and different way.
- It presents a thorough analysis of the grammar of several hundred children from a Bulgarian sample, which is rare in Bulgarian publications.
- Offers a thorough theoretical overview of theories of language development that can be used by students and teachers.
- Raises important research questions for future research.
- Outlines environmental factors that have a bearing on the development of grammar, such as maternal education and birth order of the child in the family.
- Psycholinguistic publications in English are rare, let alone research with so many young children.

2. Evaluation of contributions in the other attached publications

Some of the other attached publications with which Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Andonova participated in this competition are 10 English-language publications, published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information, in 2 of the publications she is the sole author, and 8 of them are co-authored. Also presented are 19 articles published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or

published in collective volumes, of which 9 are single-authored and 10 co-authored, and one co-authored study published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information.

The attached publications clearly show the consistent research interests of the candidate, which can be summarized mainly in several areas. The main one concerns the early language development of children acquiring Bulgarian. Part of Elena Andonova's goals is to create an instrument with good psychometric characteristics for the study of early language development. I believe that the creation and approbation of psychological instruments for the study of children is of great scientific and practical importance for Bulgaria due to the lack of sufficiently available ones that are standardized according to the necessary requirements of psychometrics. Andonova's interests lie in delineating the trajectory and stages of typical language development, as well as in the study of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic comparisons, and the influence of socio-demographic factors on language development. Other areas of research have made practical contributions such as the development of an instrument to assess the academic motivation of Bulgarian students in grades 5 to 12 and the study of the needs of families with children on the autism spectrum in order to achieve better integration of these children. The lack of sufficient research and its application in practice define Elena Andonova's contributions as significant and show high methodological and theoretical competence.

The third area of research interest concerns spatial communication and cognition. Here Elena Andonova's contributions can be defined as both methodological (through the development of original experimental designs for the study of dialogic communication) and scientific, as they reveal the influence of the dialogue partner in the choice of spatial schema, in the description of routes and in the description of the mutual location and orientation of objects.

And last but not least, the original contributions to the psychology of adult linguistic information processing, where interactions between the grammatical genus of the word in English and the gender of the subject are found in various tasks such as repetition and classification, spatial perspective tasks and comparison of visual stimuli with sentences.

In summary, Assoc. Prof. Elena Andonova's contributions to the field of psycholinguistics and early childhood language development are undeniable and significant, both in terms of basic scientific research and from a methodological perspective in the development of original experimental designs.

3. Citations

Assoc. Elena Andonova lists 37 citations, all of them in scientific publications, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes.

4. Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the results in practice

Dr. Elena Andonova has participated in 2 national and 4 international projects and has been the project leader of 8 projects. The main achievements of some of the projects are the creation of an assessment tool for early language development and the study of inter-linguistic and inter-cultural differences, as well as the creation of tools for the assessment of students' motivation. Elena Andonova's extensive experience in international research teams is noteworthy. The results of the projects have been widely applied in the assessment of kindergarten readiness (Language Development Scale for children 36-42 months in the Screening Assessment of 3-year-olds) and the assessment of students' academic motivation applied in the network of schools of the "Together in Class" Foundation.

III. Teaching Activities

1. Auditorium and non-auditorium employment, work in the electronic learning module "MOODLE - NBU", providing student internships and placements, work with students and postgraduate students.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Andonova teaches a number of courses in the undergraduate psychology programs in Bulgarian and English and in the graduate programs in Developmental Psychology, Cognitive Science and Translation and Interpreting Technologies, most of the courses are in English. Elena Andonova has authored materials

uploaded to MOODLE-NBU for 13 courses and is committed to their constant updating in line with new publications in science. She has supervised numerous bachelor and master theses, as well as two successfully defended PhD students. She has co-published and presented at conferences with some of the students and has provided practicum credit to Developmental Psychology MPhil students. In addition, Elena Andonova has served on dozens of empirical thesis defense committees, undergraduate and graduate thesis defense committees, and state exam committees. She regularly participates in departmental councils, in the discussion of changes to existing programs in the department, and in the creation of new ones (undergraduate program in Psychology in English).

2. Working with Erasmus students.

Elena Andonova is a lecturer in a number of English courses, both in the BA English program (PSY104, PSYE114, PSYE315, PSYE405) and in the MA Cognitive Science (COGM101, COGM016, COGM911), which are attended by Erasmus students.

3. Evaluations from student surveys.

The average score of the students' satisfaction with the courses taught by Elena Andonova in the last 10 semesters is very good 4.36 (out of max. 5), which indicates a high overall satisfaction with her courses.

IV. Administrative and public activities

1. Participation in collective management bodies of the NBU

Elena Andonova has been a member of numerous committees of the Master's Faculty, a member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Arts, a member of the Academic Council of the NBU from 2013 to 2020, as well as the Director of the Master's Programmes in the Department. From 2016 to 2020, she was the Head of the Department of Cognitive Science and Psychology and for 10 years was the Head of the Cognitive Science Research Center.

2. Public activities

Elena Andonova has given a number of public lectures on behalf of the NBU in Bulgaria and abroad. She has organized 3 editions of the conference "Early Childhood Development: science and practice" at NBU, 10 editions of the International Summer School on Cognitive Science. In 2022, by order of the Minister of Education and Science, she was included in an inter-institutional working group for a universal approach to child development assessment. Since 2023, she has also been included in the Permanent Interagency Working Group for Planning and Coordination of Early Childhood Development Policies under the Council of Ministers. In addition, she is a member of two of the most prestigious international organisations in the field of cognitive psychology, the Cognitive Science Society and the European Society for Cognitive Psychology. It can be argued that Elena Andonova has a distinct public profile dedicated to the creation and implementation of high standard professional practices in the field of early childhood development.

3. Attracting students to the programme

I dare say that the programs of the Department of Cognitive Science and Psychology do not need to attract additional students, but I would still like to point out that Assoc. Andonova with her research excellence and thorough work with students has certainly attracted new ones, especially in the MP Cognitive Science and MP Developmental Psychology.

V. Personal impressions

I have known Elena Andonova since she joined NBU as a full professor in 1997. Since both of our research interests are in the field of early childhood development, we have worked and continue to work on many joint projects over the years, discussing and drafting changes to the MP "Developmental Psychology" together, constantly advising students together. I find her to be a colleague with enviable research capacity, extremely responsive to give professional opinion and support, very responsible and committed to academic work. Her excellent competence and high professional standards make her one

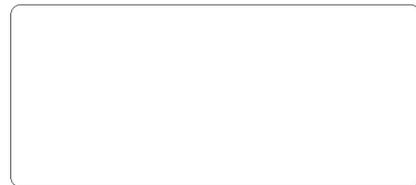
of the outstanding and highly regarded colleagues in the field of child development in Bulgaria.

VI. Comments, recommendations and observations on the activities and achievements of the candidate

None.

VII. Conclusion

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Andonova is a lecturer with great experience and outstanding research potential. I find her to be a perfectly suitable candidate to fill the position advertised in this competition. Her candidature meets the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act. I recommend the members of the esteemed jury to propose her for election to the post of Professor in Professional Field 3.2. Psychology in the Department of Cognitive Science and Psychology, Master's Faculty, NBU.



Sofia

Assoc. Prof. Milena Mutafchieva, PhD

10.02.2024