

# THE STUDY OF ENGLISH AT SOFIA UNIVERSITY: NINETY YEARS ON THE MOVE. ENGLISH LINGUISTICS

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English as a foreign language was introduced at the University of Sofia in 1906 as an optional subject when **Constantine Stephanov** (1879–1940) was appointed the first lector in this language. In 1923 Stephanov, who was to continue his duties as lector in English, was also elected Privatdozent to teach English language and literature within the Germanic Studies Department. This marked the emergence of English studies as a theoretical discipline at Sofia University. The next step was taken in 1928 when English Philology became a degree subject with Stephanov in charge already as a regular Dozent. He was promoted to full professorship in 1935, a couple of years before he retired because of poor health.

Stephanov's linguistic output accounts for roughly half of his scholarly publications, most of them appearing in the Yearbook of the University of Sofia in the 20s and the 30s of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. The first one is a monograph of over one hundred pages entitled *The Two Elements in the English language* (1921). It deals with the Germanic and Latin/French 'elements', the merger of which, according to the author, shapes the language and gives it its character. This is actually an introduction to the history of the English language. It gives the usual background information starting with the situation on the British Isles before the settlement of the Germanic tribes down to modern times. English is placed in the context of the Indo-European language family; the main features of Old English and its various dialects are described and the major grammatical and phonetic developments are outlined. Special attention is paid to the vocabulary and the system of affixation, and the tendency towards shortening of words. The presentation is not always very systematic, there are omissions and

inaccuracies, impressionistic and naive statements (e.g. directly attributing grammatical and phonetic features of the language to the national character of its speakers). Three years later, in 1924, Stephanov published a sequel to *The Two Elements*. It partly rewrites sections of the previous work, supplying more detailed and precise information, partly adds new sections to some of its chapters. Taken together, the two parts of this work amount to a textbook in the history of the English language to meet the needs of the first university students of English in Bulgaria.

*The Critical Turn in the History of English: An Anglo-Bulgarian Parallel* (1924) is the inaugural lecture Stephanov read on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1923, two months after he was appointed Privatdozent. “The critical turn” in the title refers to the Norman Conquest and its linguistic consequences but the author starts his story much earlier, constantly drawing parallels between the history of the English and the Bulgarian languages. At the time of King Alfred, Great Bulgaria too went through an early golden age of letters under King Simeon, who was equally successful as warrior and scholar and patron of learning. Stephanov describes the linguistic situation in both countries through the centuries, pointing to similarities in the position, spread and social functions of the languages of the invaders and of the local population. At times, Stephanov indulges in value judgements and his opinions are strongly biased. According to him, while the English vocabulary is enriched with more vocal, euphonious and cultured Latin/French words, the foreign influence on Bulgarian is degrading and degenerating.

*English Slang* (1927) would be better entitled “Popular, colloquial and sub-standard speech in the literary works of Shakespeare, George Eliot and G. B. Shaw”. Stephanov’s interpretation of *slang* covers a wide range of phenomena: colloquial speech, vulgarisms, cant, professional jargon, etc. His position on the relationship between popular speech and the standard literary language and the give and take between the two is sound and fully acceptable for the modern reader. The author does not side with extreme prescriptivists and purists. In the collection and analysis of his data, Stephanov is, understandably, far from the sophistication of modern sociolinguistics. He does not ask himself the question to what extent can literary texts (fiction and drama) be taken as truly representative of the language at large.

Stephanov is the author of one more study on a linguistic topic entitled *English Speech in America: Has It Become an Independent Language?* (1931). It deals with the geographical variation of English and its two main national variants – British and American – and the issue of their status.

Constantine Stephanov's scholarly publications in the field of English studies are all written in Bulgarian and are supplied with extensive English summaries. Writing for Bulgarians about things English, Stephanov preferred to do this in Bulgarian. He probably had in mind a readership wider than the few university students of English. Stephanov is also the author of the first English-Bulgarian (1908) and Bulgarian-English (1914) dictionaries, an English-Bulgarian phrase-book (1908), and a teach-yourself English pocket-book (1921). With his academic output and the courses he taught in language and literature, C. Stephanov prepared the way for the next generation of scholars and teachers.

As soon as English became a degree subject at the University of Sofia, another lecturer – **Roussi Roussev** (1900–1988) – was appointed to help Constantine Stephanov teach the basic courses. At Sofia University, Roussev taught English, Anglo-Saxon and Middle and Modern English Grammar, as well as English and American literature. His linguistic studies include contrastive analyses (a couple of articles on English-Bulgarian parallels, a book of English proverbs with their Bulgarian equivalents, parts of the first English-Bulgarian contrastive grammar (1956) and articles on the transcription of names, orthography, English borrowings, the linguistic situation in Ireland and some problems of the Bulgarian language. Roussev is among the most active and authoritative Bulgarian lexicographers: he is co-author, compiler or editor of most of the English-Bulgarian and Bulgarian-English dictionaries published and re-published from the 1940s onwards.

The appointment of **Marco Minkoff** (1909–1987) at the University of Sofia in 1939 marks the beginning of a new period in the history of English Studies in Bulgaria. It is characterized by the establishment of high standards of research and teaching of English, comparable to those anywhere in Europe. Prof. Minkoff became the first head of the separate and independent Department of English Philology, a position he held almost until his retirement. An all-round philologist, initially he

taught all the core courses in language and literature. In a short period of time, however, he focussed his work on literature and Renaissance drama in particular, while the teaching of linguistic disciplines and the other literary periods was gradually taken over by other newly appointed members of the department.

Although Mincoff's reputation and international recognition rests primarily on his literary scholarship and criticism, his considerable contribution to linguistics should not be underestimated. It is often forgotten that he started his academic career as a linguist. Mincoff's doctoral dissertation (1933), on which he worked as an Alexander von Humboldt scholar in Berlin, deals with the semantic development of Anglo-Saxon expressions of power and might. Already here we see a solid and down to earth approach to the problems and the empirical evidence for their investigation. Making use of the semantic field theory, the author traces the subtle contextually dependent shades of meaning and the systematic oppositions between the lexical items. In the late 30s and the early 40s, he also published an article on the dating of the Lindisfarne gloss (1938) and a paper on the Gothic word-stock in the Germanic languages (1943). He returned to a linguistic topic with a diachronic study of the analytical trends in English and Bulgarian in a typologically oriented article (1957).

Mincoff's solid training and early research in the diachronic study of English and the Germanic languages also shows in his *English Historical Grammar* (1955, revised ed. 1967). This book is a highly reliable source for the study of Old and Middle English forms and the most likely mechanisms of their change, placing them in the context of the dialect variation in the respective period. Mincoff's conservative position, resisting some of the fashionable linguistic theories appearing in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, anticipates the contemporary understanding of the relationship between dynamic synchronic variation and diachronic change. For the needs of the university course in the history of English, Mincoff also compiled a reader of Old and Middle English texts (1953, 1965) provided with two useful glossaries with etymologies including some Bulgarian parallels.

Mincoff's *Historical Grammar* was just one of the university textbooks in linguistic disciplines which he managed to produce within

a short period of time in the early 50s. These include *English Phonetics* (1950, 1963) and *An English Grammar* (1953), covering the theoretical linguistic courses in English studies taught at that time. Far from being fragmentary lecture notes, they offer systematic and detailed discussion of the facts and problems in the respective field of scholarship. They are original writings based on the author's own research, observation and interpretation of an impressive volume of empirical data. The book on phonetics is specifically geared to the needs of Bulgarian learners of English, making a comparison of the phonological systems of the two languages and pointing out the problem areas. Mincoff's *English Grammar* first appeared in a mimeographed edition in three parts (1950–1953), the first of them dealing with English Phonetics and later appearing as a separate book. The *Grammar* proper (morphology and syntax) had a second revised edition in letter-press printing (1958). Like the other textbooks, the *Grammar* does not make an easy reading as the text is very dense and packed with information. The main source of theoretical ideas and empirical material Mincoff finds in O. Jespersen's *Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles* (1909–1949), a landmark in both descriptive and theoretical linguistics. Mincoff adopts from there the three-level hierarchy of phrase structure and the treatment of nexus-constructions. Mincoff's text, however, never strikes you as derivative: whatever he says is the result of his own conviction and evaluation. The *Grammar* contains sporadic comparison with Bulgarian, highlighting some of the contrasts with English. In the *Introduction* the author hints at the danger of transfer and interference from the native language and he obviously believes in the usefulness of contrastive analysis and raising the learner's awareness of those issues.

C. Stephanov, R. Roussev and M. Mincoff can truly be called the pioneers of university English studies in Bulgaria. For obvious reasons they received their university education abroad, in the USA, Britain and Germany. In their teaching and research they covered both major subdivisions – language and literature – of English Philology, as was customary to refer to the academic discipline in this part of the world. C. Stephanov made the first steps and put English studies on the map of university education in Bulgaria, while under M. Mincoff, English studies in Sofia reached high European standards. In this they were

helped all along by R. Roussey, who had a very long teaching career that continued long after his official retirement. The present author has memories of him teaching in the small seminar rooms in the attic of the University, an old man speaking English with a heavy accent and an impressive command of English vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. There is no living memory of C. Stephanov nowadays and practically no continuity in terms of scholarship. There are, however, a few people around who have had the privilege of being students and colleagues of Prof. Mincoff.

New members of staff were recruited in the English Department in the early 50s and they were to play a central role in the next decades. This marked the beginning of a process of specialization which in the subsequent periods was becoming increasingly narrow. The important figures of this generation in linguistics were Jana Molhova, Maria Rankova and Dimiter Spasov. Most of the lecturers during this period, including the specialists in literature, were actively involved in lexicography and were responsible for the appearance in the fifties and sixties of the authoritative English-Bulgarian and Bulgarian-English dictionaries under the editorship of M. Mincoff. This generation of lecturers (we should add the names of Th. Atanasova, Ts. Ivanova, I. Harlakova, B. Boyadzhieva, E. Stankova, P. Bulyova, N. Levkova) taught various aspects of English language skills and produced the necessary teaching materials. They were highly admired and respected by their students who achieved a proficiency that often impressed the rest of the world.

Professor **Jana Molhova** (1922–2002), who joined the staff of the Department in 1951, became the key figure in English theoretical linguistics at that time. A graduate of Sofia University, she specialized in England and the USA. She showed keen interest in new developments in the field and combined the European (mainly Russian and Prague School) with the Anglo-American trends as the basis of her research and teaching. She took over the courses of Modern English Morphology and Syntax and introduced the course in Lexicology, for which she wrote a textbook (1959).

In the course of time her scholarly interests expanded, ranging from problems of the philosophy of language and semiotics to applied

linguistics and including areas such as grammar, word-formation, contrastive analysis and typology, semantics and lexicology, phraseology, stylistics, language contacts and pragmatics. In most of these areas her work has been pioneering for English studies in the country. J. Molhova's publications have had a considerable impact, introducing new methodological ideas and analytical procedures developed by the structuralists and, later on, the generativists. At the same time she always insisted on the interrelation between the various linguistic levels, grammar and lexical semantics in particular.

A group of her articles deals with the relationship between language and thinking, linguistic relativity, the sign character of language, the definition and the motivation of the word. Another series comprises critical introductions to the theories of E. Sapir and B. L. Wharf, of L. Bloomfield and N. Chomsky and their followers. J. Molhova's major publications centre on the grammatical categories of the noun in English, definiteness/ indefiniteness, and transitivity of the verb. Special mention is due to her books on the article (1970) and on the grammatical categories and the word-formative patterns of the noun (1986), both of them in comparison with Bulgarian.

Having retired from the University of Sofia as Professor and Head of the English Department in 1988, J. Molhova continued to teach at other institutions. She helped establish the new English Department at the University of Shoumen, becoming its first chair in 1991 and in 1996 moved on to the University of Blagoevgrad where she also taught full time. In this way she started a tradition maintained by the following generation of helping the development of the younger English departments at other universities in the country. A lively and probing intellect, Prof. Molhova exerted an important formative influence on generations of students and younger scholars, whom she encouraged to dedicate themselves to serious research in an open-minded and enthusiastic way.

Associate Professor **Maria Rankova** (1914–1989) joined the Department in 1951 and soon became a key figure in the teaching of the practical course and authored about twenty textbooks. Her *English Grammar* (1959), written in collaboration with Tsvetana Ivanova, proved indispensable for any serious study of the language. She is also co-author

of the first *English-Bulgarian Contrastive Grammar* (1956) and an active lexicographer. M. Rankova's participation in the first *English by Television* programme (1966–1968) and its sequels was a guarantee of their high quality. Her preoccupation with activities connected with the practical language prevented her from devoting enough time to theoretical pursuits, but when she turned to the study of the history of English in the sixties she made a noticeable contribution to the subject. Her diachronic studies centre on the development of analytic constructions with the auxiliary *do* investigated in two monographs (1964, 1966). Exploring an impressive amount of empirical material, Rankova places this important process in the wider context of the structural changes of the period and their functional significance. Her studies of the adverbial positions in English and Bulgarian (1967) and on the word order of interrogative sentences in the two languages (1976) were also significant achievements in the field of contrastive linguistics. She is also the author of a popular book on the origin and development of the English language (1971). In a couple of articles published in the journal *English Language Teaching* (1959, 1968), M. Rankova described the ELT situation in the country after World War II and the English by TV project. In the early sixties M. Rankova taught the theoretical course in phonetics and from 1965 was entrusted with the lectures in historical grammar, which she continued giving until her retirement in 1974.

An outstanding figure in the practical language teaching and an excellent linguist is Associate Professor **Dimitër Spasov** (1923–1983). His focus was on the grammatical structure of English and for the needs of his students he produced about a dozen books, covering all areas presenting difficulties for foreign learners such as the uses of the articles and of prepositions and the categories of the verb. These books are supplied with carefully prepared exercises based on years of teaching experience and analysis of learners' errors. His linguistic observations are based on and illustrated with authentic language material from his own vast personal corpora manually collected mainly from works of fiction and BBC radio broadcasts. Highly responsible in what he was doing, when in doubt, he would check the intuitions of native speakers, who were not easily available in those days. D. Spasov is the author of a remarkable book on *English Phrasal Verbs* (1966), which went



through a number of revised and enlarged editions. This is arguably the first dictionary of its kind worldwide. It is not by chance that this publication has won the acclaim of scholars such as D. Bolinger, L. Lipka and V. Zvegintsev. The first edition of the book contains a 50-page long theoretical study of English phrasal verbs, omitted in subsequent editions, presumably to provide more space for the enlarged dictionary part and improve its layout. The dictionary itself is unilingual: the multiple meanings of the phrasal verbs are explained in English and provided with illustrative examples. Some of the later editions are supplied with a very useful Bulgarian-English index offering translation equivalents thus expanding the possible uses of the dictionary. D. Spasov's other writings include: *English Articles: A Practical Course with Exercises* (1967) and *The Verb in the Structure of English: A Practical Course for Advanced Students* (1972). The second of these remains to this day the best systematic description of English verbal categories produced in this country. In collaboration with colleagues in the Department, he wrote a reference book on *English Prepositions* (1964, with Bulyova) and *English Spelling* (1968, with Danchev). Spasov's absolute dedication to his teaching and research and his loving interest in the English language could not fail to deeply impress his many students and set an attractive example for them to follow.

**Andrei Danchev** (1933–1996) joined the Department in 1964 as a postgraduate student in English Historical Linguistics. PhD students were a rare phenomenon in those days. They were treated as members of the teaching staff and the expectation was that they would continue their career at the same institution. Thus, soon and well before he was awarded the degree of Candidate of Sciences (the equivalent of a PhD, named in this way after the Russian/Soviet example) in 1969 and before he was appointed Assistant Professor, Danchev was involved in teaching. The topic of his dissertation was semantico-syntactic: *The syntactic functions of the preposition MID in Old English Poetry and Prose*, most of it already published. Historical linguistics remained central in his research although he developed many other interests as well. Historical phonology figured prominently among his research topics but he also made theoretical contributions to the study of language change, language contact, the interplay between synchrony and diachrony. His

most important papers are included in a posthumous collection entitled *Linguistic Interfaces* (2013), edited by M. Kovatcheva, who also wrote a very perceptive and detailed 50-page evaluation of Danchev's linguistic contribution.

Danchev's career at Sofia University was dramatically interrupted in 1975 when he was forced to leave the Department (together with several other colleagues), the only reason for this being his family background which from the point of view of the authorities of the totalitarian regime was deemed unreliable. Danchev had to accept a job with the Centre for Foreign Language Teaching at the Institute of Foreign Students (IFS) in Sofia, an establishment whose task was to teach Bulgarian as a foreign language to the numerous students who came to Bulgaria mainly from Third World countries, but also English and other languages to adult Bulgarians who were given the chance to undergo a few months' intensive training. This demotion could have totally ruined the career and even the whole life of a less strong a person. Instead, in the new circumstances Danchev developed new interests in applied linguistics and foreign language teaching, contrastive linguistics and translation theory. Paradoxically, it was during the years of his banishment from the University that Danchev developed broad international links and made his name well-known and respected in the linguistic circles both in historical linguistics and contrastive analysis. In spite of the authorities' resentment, the English Department continued uninterruptedly to cooperate with him in all professional and academic pursuits. During the fifteen years at the IFS Danchev founded a Bulgarian school in applied and contrastive linguistics, mentoring and encouraging a large number of researchers and language teachers. He evolved his original Expanded Model of Contrastive Analysis. It integrates systemic description with the analysis of productive language use and learners' errors, the use of translation corpora and aspects of translation theory, and insists on the reversal (even more than once) of the direction of the analysis. His ideas were synthesized in the manuscript *Contrastive Linguistics: Theory and Methodology*, which was published after his death (2001).

To this period belong a series of books written under his supervision and editorship: *English for Bulgarians* (1983), *Lexical Minimum of English for Bulgarian Learners* (1980), *Error Analysis. Bulgarian Learners of*

*English* (1988) and *Linguistic Problems of Translation (English & Bulgarian)* (1986), as well as a series of conferences on applied and contrastive linguistics organized jointly with the University of Veliko Tarnovo. Another example of the way in which Danchev worked to bridge the gap between theory and practice is provided by his book *Bulgarian Transcription of English Names. Theory and Practice* (1979, 2010). In addition to the comprehensive reference section, it contains a theoretical part of over 100 pages, discussing the theoretical foundations for interlingual transcription and the specific English-Bulgarian issues. This book helped to bring some order into the chaos of the existing practice of transcription and transliteration. The transliteration of Bulgarian names into English was tackled in another book this time authored by a team headed by Danchev (1989).

It was not until 1990 that Danchev was able to return to the University of Sofia, where he soon became Professor, Head of the English Department, Dean of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology and Vice-Rector of the University. In spite of the vicissitudes of life, Danchev's development as a scholar was remarkably steady and successful. Throughout his career he showed an exceptional stamina, a sense of purpose and a talent for organization and leadership. A considerable part of his work appeared in prestigious international journals and collections. A versatile scholar of considerable erudition and original thinking, he made valuable contributions to a number of fields. Perhaps the most important characteristic of his work, in addition to his thoroughness and objectivity, was his ability to see connections and underlying similarities based on the same cognitive mechanisms in processes which to most seem unrelated. He was "blessed with the power of perceiving unity in diversity," as Kovatcheva aptly puts it in her review of his work. The lasting value of his linguistic contributions is proved by the numerous recent citations of many of his works in highly prestigious publications.

**Bistra Alexieva** (1932–2015), another prominent English language specialist, joined the Department in 1966. Her first important linguistic publication, co-authored with A. Danchev (1973/1974), was a study on the choice between the Bulgarian imperfect and aorist in the translation of the English past simple tense. This work served as a model for

many contrastive studies in this country in the following period. Prof. Alexieva's main areas of research were focused on cross-linguistic and cross-cultural asymmetries, differences in the explicitness/implicitness characteristics of English and Bulgarian texts, the different degrees of compression of predication, differences between English and Bulgarian in the language-and-culture specific application of metaphoric and metonymic models. The linguistic categories explored by B. Alexieva include existential constructions, modality, evidentiality, conditionals, constructions expressing auditory perception, reflexive passives, secondary predication, information structure of the text. Her book *Interlingual Asymetry. Implication and Explicitation in English and Bulgarian* (2010) is a selection of her linguistic contributions. A discipline whose establishment and development in this country owes a lot to B. Alexieva is the theory of translation and interpreting where she pioneered a number of courses, original for Bulgaria. Her research was presented mainly at international congresses and conferences and appeared in specialized international journals and academic publishers such as John Benjamins and Routledge. Among her topics here are: levels of semantic analysis in translation, the functioning of a translated text in relation to the recipient's capacity to process it (knowledge, experience and cognitive and experiential models), the notions of adequacy and equivalence, channel capacity, intertextuality, listenability, etc. B. Alexieva is also the author of a university textbook on the theory and practice of interpreting (2010) and two books of readings on translation theory. She has encouraged and helped a number of students of English and linguistics and younger researchers. Bistra Alexieva served as a long-standing member and chairperson of national institutions such as the Higher Attestation Commission and the Specialized Academic Committee on Linguistics, where she always insisted on high academic standards. She also served as Dean of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology.

**Tanya Kmetova** (1937–2018) was another linguist, who, like A. Danchev, had to leave the Department and take a position at IFS to return later on to the University of Sofia. She did research on the (non-) observance of the sequence of tenses rule as a means of expressing modality and evidentiality, but throughout her career most of her

efforts went into the teaching and practicing of translation/conference interpreting at top international level.

**Tsvetan Iliev** spent a relatively short spell of time working in the department between 1966 and his untimely death in 1972. He is the author of a *Comparative Study of the Bulgarian Past Imperfect Tense and the English Past Progressive Tense* (1973), published in the Yearbook of the University of Sofia.

Donka Minkova joined the Department in 1970 and was on its staff for about a dozen years. During that time she taught English historical grammar and wrote her PhD dissertation on the schwa loss in Middle English. Much of her dissertation went into her first book, *The History of Final Vowels in English: The Sound of Muting*, published by Mouton de Gruyter in 1991. In the early 1980s she won a teaching position at UCLA where she has had a brilliant academic career, becoming a member of the international elite of experts in the history of the Germanic languages and English. In 2016 she returned to Bulgaria to receive the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa, awarded to her by the University of Sofia.

A new generation of linguists – Maya Pencheva, Nevena Alexieva, Christo Stamenov and Julian Konstantinov – made their first steps in the early seventies working as Prof. J. Molhova's assistants in the courses on Contemporary English morphology, syntax, lexicology and semantics, eventually taking over the lecture courses. Soon they were joined by the somewhat younger Milena Savova, Mira Kovatcheva and Andrei Stoevsky. Of these, J. Konstantinov eventually changed his academic specialization and affiliation from linguistics to social anthropology, working in Bulgaria and Scandinavia and successfully exploring the indigenous population in the Arctic, while M. Savova emigrated to the USA. Most of the others still teach or are active in linguistics after their retirement.

Most of the linguistic publications during the late 70s and the 80s appeared in the *Bulleting for Contrastive Studies* (1977), the precursor to the journal *Contrastive Linguistics*, and a series of volumes of articles presenting the research done by members of the department, oddly enough appearing under three different titles: *English Studies* (1980), *University of Sofia English Papers*, vol. 2 (1983) and vol. 3 (1987), and *English Papers*, vol. 4 (1991).

In the initial stages of her academic carrier **Maya Pencheva's** research was focused on English word-formation. Her first dissertation was on verbs resulting from conversion and to this period belongs another study of hers on minor means of word-formation (back-formation, shortening and blending). These topics were incorporated in a later and more comprehensive book on English vocabulary (2004). At the same time M. Pencheva showed interest in gender and animacy in a more theoretical perspective. This was developed later in her second dissertation becoming the basis for one of her most successful and much quoted books *Man in Language. Language in Man* (original Bulgarian title *Chovekât v ezika. Ezikât v choveka*, 1998/2001). Drawing material from a large number of languages, Pencheva explores the self-reflection of man in human consciousness, language and mythology. Special attention is paid to animacy as a diachronic semantic constant, its role in language development and its links with typology. Language typology is the topic of another of M. Pencheva's major works: *Language Universals and Typology. From Description to Explanation* (2006). In it she introduces the paradigm of content typology developed by G. A. Klimov and places it in the wider context of other typological schools, developing its methodology and theoretical framework and bridging the gap between formal and content typology. One of her contributions here is the idea of hypertypes based on actant orientation. An outcome of M. Pencheva's interest in cognitive linguistics is her dictionary (2011) of the terminology of this influential school where she offers definitions of the various concepts and their Bulgarian equivalents. Together with A. Bagasheva she compiled a comprehensive English-Bulgarian and a Bulgarian-English Dictionary. Prof. Pencheva has supervised numerous PhD students and has acted as reviewer/examiner of a vast number of promotion procedures and habilitations. She has served as Head of the English Department, Dean of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philologies, Vice-Rector of the University of Sofia and member and chair of the Specialized Academic Committee on Linguistics.

**Nevena Alexieva's** main area of research is English borrowings and their adaptation in Bulgarian. That includes their derivational characteristics, gender assignment, synchronic, diachronic and cognitive aspects of borrowing. She developed the idea of borrowing as a kind

of copying of the source form. She has also published on the activo-passive use of verbs and on extraposed constructions. N. Alexieva's most important achievement is her participation in an international project on the study of Anglicisms in European languages and her authorship of the sections on Bulgarian in *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms* and its companion volume *An Annotated Bibliography of European Anglicisms*, both edited by M. Görlach (2001, 2002) and published by Oxford University Press.

**Christo Stamenov** wrote his PhD dissertation during the 70s on the semantico-syntactic properties of constructions with the preposition *with* in Modern English, combining ideas and methodology of European structuralism, Fillmore's case grammar and generative semantics. He has published a number of articles on a variety of topics such as definiteness/indefiniteness, reflexivity, tag-questions, language contacts, translation, and word-formation, often in comparison with Bulgarian. He put a lot of time and effort in editing the *Annotated Bibliography* of the journal *Contrastive Linguistics* (2009) and the translation into English of a major *Bulgarian Grammar* (Nicolova 2017) published in Germany. C. Stamenov has served on the editorial boards of the journals *Contrastive Linguistics* (2006–) and *Foreign Language Teaching/Chuzhdoezikovo obuchenie* (1993–2012). He is co-editor of the volumes *Seventy Years of English and American Studies in Bulgaria* (2000) and *Peregrinations of the Text. Reading, Translation, Rewriting. Essays in Honour of Alexander Shurbanov* (2013). C. Stamenov served as Chair of the Bulgarian Society for British Studies and member of the board of the European Society for the Study of English (1998–2002).

During the time he worked at the English Department of Sofia University, **Julian Konstantinov** wrote a dissertation on root and epistemic modality in English and Bulgarian (the modal verbs *can* and *may* and Bulgarian *moga*) and published papers on verbs of perception, the basic and special functions of the Present Simple Tense, functional styles, a model of the linguistic sign. In his work he shows a predisposition towards a more abstract philosophical and semiotic approach to the topics he tackles.

**Mira Kovatcheva** belongs to the line of experts in the history of English, who are equally at home with both the diachronic and

synchronic aspects of the language, which, she insists, should never be separated. In her teaching obligations she succeeded A. Danchev, whom she recognizes as her most important teacher. For her, historical linguistics is a gateway to general linguistics and theoretical issues such as grammaticalization (the grammaticalization of the object in the history of English and its typological significance; Bg. *deto* “where” > “that”), language contacts (and in this connection changes in the functions of Bulgarian adjectives), creativity in language. Each of her studies on a specific topic is related to some theoretical problem and in tackling it, she often explores Bulgarian material as well. M. Kovatcheva’s interest in creativity has led her to the exploration of slang and, more generally, spontaneous spoken language. The latter is the topic of her most ambitious work so far, the book *Spontaneous Spoken Language and Linguistic Theory* (2012). In it she explores the characteristics of spontaneous language and the methods of its description and analysis. One of the interesting subtopics here is the peculiar word class of ideophones, well represented in Bulgarian. The second part of the book links the problems of spontaneous speech with the development of a modern interdisciplinary theory of language, inspired by cognitive science and semiotics. Together with Michael Holman, Mira Kovatcheva is the author of the internationally most successful textbook of Bulgarian (1993, 4<sup>th</sup> edition under a new title 2011). Some 10 years ago the book had already sold 40,000 copies worldwide. It has attracted the attention of laymen and specialists alike: it is quoted in the *Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics*, edited by Keith Brown (2005), as well as by professional linguists.

A brief interpolation on the international links of the department is in order here, prompted by the above-mentioned textbook in Bulgarian, one of the results of the co-operation between the Department and the University of Leeds, UK. Despite difficulties and limitations during a long period after World War II, the Department has managed to overcome at least partly the isolation between East and West. Over the years we have been visited by scholars like Geoffrey Leech, Eugeniu Coseriu, Jan Firbas, Robert De Beaugrande, David Crystal, Peter Roach, Jim Miller, Manfred Görlach, Angela Downing, Bas Aarts, Ingo Plag, Pavol Štekauer, to name but a few. The collective membership in ESSE



(The European Society for the Study of English), the participation in the Erasmus program and the joint project with the University of Albany, the USA, have also contributed in this respect.

Before moving to the United States **Milena Savova** completed her PhD dissertation on English Past Participles as pre-posed attributes and their Bulgarian functional equivalents. She has published articles on the invariant meaning of past participles, on the semantic structure of past participles of denominal converted verbs, impersonal constructions denoting natural phenomena, and on redundancy and interpreting.

One of the colleagues who have spent all their working life at Sofia University is **Andrei Stoevsky**. The first ten years of his career were marked by both bureaucratic and ideological hurdles, but he feels lucky to have had the chance to start teaching theoretical linguistics early on in his career and to have done so for more than 30 years. His writings cover a wide range of topics. They may be grouped in several areas: issues of general linguistics, the main categories of the verb, the English cultural influence on Bulgarian (the Bulgarian political lexicon and problems of political lexicography), and sociolinguistics. In a couple of articles, with a methodology very similar to what came to be known as linguistic landscaping, A. Stoevsky explores the presence of English in the public space of Sofia and the home environment. The theoretical issues he tackles include: lexical addition in the elicitation of grammatical meanings, an integrational approach in linguistics (2007), neutralization (2007) and transposition (2013). To the second group of topics belong tense meaning and pragmatics, the perfect and aspectuality. A number of his papers have been presented at highly selective international forums on pragmatics. His paper on nonsexist language and androcentrism is quoted in *Journal of Pragmatics* by Keith Allen, among others. A. Stoevsky has also published on corpus linguistics, issues of Bulgarian grammar and English-language grammars of Bulgarian. He has been invited to act as editorial reviewer of important linguistic publications abroad.

**Palma Zlateva** worked at the department between 1985 and 1998, when she moved to the University of Leeds, first as lector in Bulgarian and then, as lecturer in translation studies, starting an MA program in translation there. She obtained her PhD degree from the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute for Foreign Languages with a dissertation on

text cohesion by means of “pro-words” (substitute words) in English, Bulgarian and Russian. One of her most important achievements is the editorship and translation of a volume published by Routledge with an introduction by André Lefevere (1993), a selection of Bulgarian and Russian contributions to translation theory.

**Sashka Hristova** is another linguist with special interests in translation. She eventually gave up her academic career to become a practicing translator/interpreter at the then new European institutions. During the time she worked at the Department, in the early 90’s she wrote a dissertation and published on the pragmatics and the semantics of *well* and its translation equivalents in Bulgarian.

Other linguists who worked for shorter periods of time at the Sofia University English Department are D. Dokov and L. Bosilkov but their major work was done elsewhere. We should also add the names of university lecturers whose link with linguistics is mainly as teachers at various times of practical English classes or translation: **E. Krasteva, B. Trenev, N. Levkova, R. Atanasova, M. Raicheva, E. Barneva, Ts. Penevski, I. Kazakova, L. Pishatalova.**

Some of the participants in the applied linguistics boom inspired by A. Danchev at IFS later came over to the University of Sofia during the 90s, thus enriching the English Department with their different expertise and teaching experience. The first to do this was K. Rangelova, followed by L. Grozdanova and M. Georgieva. **Krassimira Rangelova** is now based in the USA. During the time she worked at the English Department she published a book entitled *Language Learning. A Process View. Applications of the Cognitive Approach to Learning to Second Language Instruction* (2005), and participated very actively in the development of a modern testing system in TEFL for the needs of Sofia University. She is co-author of dictionaries and active author of textbooks and other teaching materials.

**Lilyana Grozdanova** became a full-time lecturer at the University of Sofia in 1995 as an already well-established specialist in English linguistics. At Sofia University, L. Grozdanova became Doctor of Sciences and Full Professor. Throughout her entire academic career her research interests have been divided between theoretical and applied linguistics and the related areas of FLT methods and psycholinguistics.

The theoretical issues she has tackled include quantification, negation and presuppositions and aspects of typology and universals, as well as cognitive theories. In a more applied perspective she has worked on contrastive and error analysis and interlanguage studies. She is also interested in the processes of second language acquisition, the activation of background knowledge and the structuring of second language vocabulary. Her ideas on language teaching are put forward in her book *Fresh Ideas in ELT* (2003). In another book, *V mrezhata na ezika* [In the Network of Language] (2005), she explores the systemic relations in language with a view to building up the linguistic and analytical competence of language students. The general points and conclusions are supported by original analyses of linguistic material from the sphere of the cognitive operation of comparison. L. Grozdanova has also produced university textbooks in Syntax (2015) and Analytical Grammar (2011, co-author A. Bagasheva) and a large number of FLT textbooks for various levels and age groups. She is the author of the only bilingual (Bulgarian-English) dictionary of Bulgarian slang, published in the USA in 2010, and has explored the English and Turkish elements in present-day Bulgarian slang.

**Maria Georgieva** (1948–2016), like L. Grozdanova, came to the English Department of Sofia University in 1995, after years at IFS, followed by a shorter period at the New Bulgarian University (NBU) in Sofia. During her IFS period she wrote her PhD dissertation on modal verbs in English and Bulgarian, applying Danchev's expanded model of contrastive analysis. The next topic attracting her attention was politeness in the Bulgarian-English interlanguage, leading her into the area of intercultural pragmatics. Her interests also included aspects of sociolinguistics, second language acquisition, communication strategies, corpus-based approaches to ELT, English as an international language in the globalization era, and Canadian studies. She is the author of a number of publications appearing in Bulgaria and abroad including in some prestigious venues. Her ideas about the present-day situation of English as an international language are developed from a sociolinguistic perspective in her book *Global English in Bulgarian Context* (2011) and have been taken up by some of the younger colleagues from the Department. M. Georgieva is also the editor or co-editor of several volumes of

essays, among them *Spaces, Gaps, Borders* (2005) and *Globalization in English Studies* (2010). She wrote a number of FLT textbooks for primary and secondary schools. At various times Prof. M. Georgieva served as Head of the English Department and Vice-Rector at IFS, Head of the Department of Modern and Applied Linguistics at NBU and of the English Department of Sofia University.

**Snezhina Dimitrova** is currently our expert in English phonetics and phonology. She succeeded in this position from Ekaterina Dimova, a highly competent and meticulous university teacher, who has worked on intonation in its relation to expressing grammatical information and emotions and on interlingual transcription. Other phoneticians of the present generation are **Tatyana Kostadinova** and **Vladimir Phillipov**. T. Kostadinova divided her interests between phonetics (experimental studies of vowel production by Bulgarian learners) and translation, and the Department finally lost her when she accepted a job at the European institutions. V. Phillipov has worked on intonation, including papers presented at big international forums. He has also published on episodes in the history of linguistics, placing them in the wider context of intellectual climate at the time. Assoc. Prof. S. Dimitrova has produced original research on the prosodic aspects of English and Bulgarian, especially rhythm, published in the most prestigious specialized international journals. The results of this research represent the gist of the respective chapter of her book *English Pronunciation for Bulgarians* (2003). Another proof of the high quality of this university textbook is the fact that a world-famous phonetician like Prof. P. Roach is engaged as a consultant of this publication. S. Dimitrova is also interested in variation in spoken language and pronunciation. Another phonetician is **Mitko Sabev**, who has also been involved in the teaching of General Linguistics and the History of English. He has published on grammaticalization, the parts of speech, the affinities of the word classes of prepositions and verbs, and vowel reduction. He is currently working on a PhD dissertation on unstressed vocalism at the University of Oxford (UK).

**Rositsa Ishpekova** teaches semantics, metaphors in language and thinking, language and culture. Her PhD dissertation is a contrastive study of English and Bulgarian phraseological units based on

metaphorical uses of zoonyms. This was followed by studies on the idiomatic uses of body-part terms in the two languages. Assoc. Prof. R. Ishpekova works in the paradigm of cognitive linguistics and cognitive metaphor and metonymy in particular. She moved on to the study of text and the language of the media, the result of which is her book *Policing the Naughty Newbies* (2012) with the longer but more revealing subtitle “Conceptual metaphors and discourse strategies in *The Financial Times*’ coverage of corruption- and organized crime-related events in Bulgaria”.

Text and discourse, especially political discourse, are also central in the work of Assoc. Prof. **Nelly Tincheva**, who teaches text linguistics, discourse analysis, and English for academic purposes. The topic of her dissertation is the mental schema source-path-goal in political speeches in two languages and three cultures: English, American and Bulgarian. The topic is further developed in her book *Political Speeches. A Cognitive Perspective on Text and Structure* (2012). N. Tincheva has also published on malapropisms and produced various FLT materials.

**Nelly Yakimova** teaches translation studies and related disciplines. Her research interests are in the field of pragmatics and the practical aspects of translation and conference interpreting. She obtained her PhD degree from the University of Lancaster (UK) with a dissertation on the speech act of complimenting. N. Yakimova has published on compliment responses, intensity and markedness, assessing quality and self-monitoring and self-correction in conference interpreting.

**Rumyana Blagoeva**’s PhD dissertation is a corpus-based contrastive study of some of the cohesive devices in the Bulgarian-English interlanguage of advanced learners. Her interest in computer linguistics and interlanguage studies has found another realization in her participation in a project based at the University of Louvain resulting in *The International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE). Its first version was published on CD-ROM in 2002 and an expanded version with a built-in concordance ICLEv2 appeared in 2009. The Bulgarian presence in big international projects where only a selection of languages is included (cf. the above-mentioned contribution of N. Alexieva’s to the European project on Anglicisms) is a proof to the high quality of English studies in Bulgaria.

**Alexandra Bagasheva** joined the Department in 1997 initially as a post-graduate student producing a PhD dissertation on a theoretical topic – “The linguistic encoding of events in the light of cognitive semantics”. She has wide interests in cognitive linguistics, derivational morphology (especially composition as a word-formation process), linguistic anthropology, the origin and evolution of language. The thesis for her habilitation as Associate Professor was later developed into a book entitled *Reflections on Compound Verbs and Compounding* (2012). It deals in an original way with a neglected and controversial issue in English word-formation studies. She has published widely abroad and at home and has taken part in and organized a number of international events and projects in the field of morphology and cognitive linguistics. She has been involved in editing volumes of essays, guest-editing special issues and serving on the editorial boards of international linguistic journals. Bagasheva is also the author or co-author of university textbooks, teaching materials and dictionaries.

**Emilia Slavova's** PhD dissertation topic was *Politeness across Cultures: Theoretical Aspects, Cultural Differences, Intercultural Communication*. As part of her PhD thesis, she specialised at the University of Oxford. Further to her politeness research, she is interested in the present-day position of English as a global language, globalization, multiculturalism, plurilingualism and cultural diversity. She is co-editor of the volume *New Paradigms in English Studies* (2017).

One of the main topics in **Irena Dimova's** research is the construction of gender identity through emotive means of expression and communicative practices, focussing on socio-cultural specificities. She has written a PhD dissertation and has published a number of articles on this. She is also interested in English as an international language and its globalization and in speakers'/learners' attitudes towards Anglicization and the choice of a language norm in teaching, investigating these by sociolinguistic methods.

**Maria Kolarova's** interests so far have been focussed on English word-formation in comparison with Bulgarian. Her PhD dissertation is a contrastive study of *Verb-centred Compound Nouns in English and Bulgarian*, which served as the basis for a book with the same title (2015). In it she offers a detailed description and classification of synthetic compounds

in the two languages based on a large corpus of material, adopting a wider interpretation of this category of compounds and applying new approaches to the study of the Bulgarian data.

**Tzvetomira Venkova** came to the Department in 2010 to teach syntax and computational linguistics. In addition to these her research interests include theory-based linguistic historiography, sociolinguistics and contrastive linguistics. She had had the opportunity to work with some of the leading experts in Bulgarian studies before joining the English Department. Assoc. Prof. Tz. Venkova has a large number of publications in Bulgaria and abroad, among them two monographs. Her book *The Unexpressed Object in English and Bulgarian* (2007) applies the formal model of Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar to aspects of the description of English and Bulgarian. Venkova has participated in a number of international projects. She has been awarded various grants among them an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship.

**Bozhil Hristov** joined the department in 2011. He teaches History of English, General Linguistics and Morphology. A graduate of the Sofia University English Department, he has two higher degrees from the University of Oxford: a Master's degree with a thesis on "Politeness in Requests in English and Bulgarian" and a doctoral degree in General Linguistics and Comparative Philology. The latter he acquired with a thesis on the topic "Agreement, Case Assignment and Nominal Coordination", worked out in the framework of Lexical-Functional Grammar. He has specialized in a number of universities in Britain, the USA and Germany. B. Hristov has published on a variety of topics, including in outlets such as *Journal of Linguistics*, and is a regular participant in important international conferences.

One important development that started in 2007 was the establishment of a full-time taught Master's Programme in Translation, run jointly with the Department of Romance Studies at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology. The Programme offers four language combinations and aims to equip students with the scholarly knowledge and practical skills in the field of translation, including those related to the specifics of the local and international market of translation services and IT resources. All courses, which range across various professional fields, as well as the Translation Internship, allow students to get

practical training in a real-life working environment and by working with experienced professionals. The establishment of the programme came as a response to the prominent role played by translation and interpretation in the career opportunities for today's language students. Since its establishment, the programme has proved to be the preferred choice of postgraduate education and specialization for both graduates in English Philology from the Department and ones with a non-language or philological background. The Programme has invariably managed to keep the highest standards of education and training, proof of which is that almost from its inception it has been awarded the quality label EMT (European Master's in Translation) granted by the European Commission. From the above mentioned colleagues, some are teaching courses in this Master's: Christo Stamenov, Vladimir Phillipov and Lika Pishtalova. Other courses are taught by colleagues from the Department whose specialisms lie in cultural and literary studies: Evgenia Pancheva, Tatyana Stoicheva, Zelma Catalan, Maria Pipeva, Kornelia Slavova, Maria Dimitrova.

Apart from the colleagues presented above, there are several graduates whose successful careers at universities abroad were launched after they obtained their first degree in English Philology at the Department. They are Prof. Tania Kuteva (Düsseldorf University), Prof. Mila Dimitrova-Valchanova (The Norwegian University of Science and Technology), Dr. Christo Moskovsky (The University of Newcastle, Australia).

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Throughout the 90-year long history of English studies at Sofia University we observe a great variety of research topics and approaches that, on the whole, follow the world trends and tendencies in linguistics. From the late Romantic nationalism of the first professor of English (especially obvious in his non-academic activities), and a solid Neogrammarian approach and Jespersenian influences, we move on to American and European structuralism, transformational generative grammar, and cognitivism. The linguists at the Department of English at Sofia University have also seen it as one of their missions to build bridges between East and West, between the Bulgarian/Slavic and English-speaking linguistic traditions. At the same time the focus has been shifting



from the structure to the uses of language to encompass the study of text, discourse, media, social and cultural aspects of language and to a more inter- and transdisciplinary approach in the age of globalization, new information technologies and superdiversity. Instead of a strong commitment to one or another of the fashionable schools, we often see a preference for a healthy eclecticism, interest in and attention to the facts of language and its use. We can only wish the new generation of university teachers and scholars to keep up the good traditions and to meet the challenges of the dynamic times we are living in.