

## Tribute

### The Road Pavers of Bulgarian Psycholinguistics

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In my student years at the beginning of 1990s at Sofia University, Bulgaria, fate led me to study with two extraordinary scholars – Prof. Dr. Miroslav Yanakiev and Prof. Dr. Encho Gerganov. Prof. Yanakiev laid the foundations of the Bulgarian psycholinguistics, introducing the statistical methods in linguistics, and as his student, Prof. Gerganov continued and further developed his ideas. I had the great good fortune to learn from them and consider myself a student of them both. Actually, my scientific academic activities were launched when I met Prof. Yanakiev and we sought as a shared task to develop the first ABC textbook in Romani for Roma children in Bulgaria in 1993. Our extensive strong cooperation continued until the end of Prof. Yanakiev’s life, and after his death, I went on working more intensively with Prof. Gerganov, seeking to develop psycholinguistic studies, research and publications with him. And if today I am known for my psycholinguist work, I owe that in significant measure to my 33 years of collaboration with Prof. Gerganov.

This tribute is dedicated to the anniversaries of the two scholars – in 2023 was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Miroslav Yanakiev and in 2024 we celebrate the 85<sup>th</sup> birthday of Encho Gerganov.

Miroslav Yanakiev (19.08.1923 – 09.11.1998), born in Sofia, was deservedly famous across the world with his works on two Slavic languages: Bulgarian and Russian. In 1943 he graduated from the First Men’s High School in Sofia and the same year he was enrolled in the Slavic philology program at Sofia University. He graduated in 1947 and immediately after his graduation he began work at the Faculty of History and Philology of the same university. He worked there until the end of his life in 1998, first as Assistant Prof., then Associate Prof. And then as Full Professor.

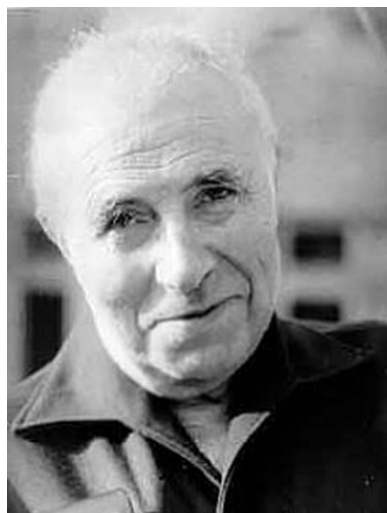
In 1963 he earned the title Associate Professor with a habilitation monograph *Българско стихознание* “Bulgarian Poetics”. In 1979 he was promoted to Full Professor after completing his monograph *Стилистиката и езиковото обучение* “Stylistics and Language Teaching”.

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Prof. Miroslav Yanakiev

<https://bnr.bg/hristobotev/post/101909557>

After his retirement in 1988 and due to our cooperation, he began to work on child bilingualism, mainly with Roma and Turkish children, and started publishing articles about the importance of the minority mother tongues for the language and cognitive development of the children. He was central in supporting my research in the field of Romani language and publishing schoolbooks for Turkish and Roma children.



Prof. Encho Gerganov NBU

Prof. Encho Gerganov was born on March 18, 1939 in the town of Stara Zagora in Bulgaria. He graduated in the field of Bulgarian Philology (specializing in linguistics and mathematical linguistics) at St. Kliment Ohridski University in Sofia. In the period 1968-1972, he was a doctoral student at the Institute of Linguistics of the ASSR in Moscow, where in 1972 he defended a dissertation entitled *Некоторые закономерности зрительного распознавания элементов текста* (Some Regularities of the Visual Recognition of Text Elements). Prof. Gerganov began his academic career at the Institute for Foreign Students in Sofia (1967-1989), where in 1977 he was granted the title Associate Professor earned with a habilitation

monograph *Психометрични методи за проверка и оценка на знанията по български език* (Psychometric Methods for Testing and Assessment of Knowledge in Bulgarian Language). In 1988 he was promoted to Full Prof. in recognition of his monograph *Памет и смисъл* (Memory and Meaning). From 1984 to 1988, Prof. Gerganov was the Institute's Deputy Rector. In the period 1989-2000, he worked at the Institute of Psychology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where from 1991 to 2000 he headed the section on cognitive psychology and research methods, and from 1991 to 1995 he was the Director of the Institute. Prof. Gerganov was Deputy Minister of Public Education (1991-1992) and Director of the National Test Center (1994-1995). Professor Encho Gerganov was one of the first professors at the New Bulgarian University (NBU) and the first head of the Cognitive Science and Psychology Department (1992–2002) there. In 2009 he was awarded the title “*Doctor Honoris Causa*” by the Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra, Slovakia.

Together with Prof. Gerganov we carried out many studies and co-authored numerous articles focused on Romani-Bulgarian and Turkish-Bulgarian bilingualism in Bulgaria. In 1999 we co-authored a monographic study: Герганов, Е. и Кючуков, Хр. (1999) *Образователни нагласи на ромите в България*. София: Тилия. (Gerganov, E. & Kyuchukov, Hr. (1999) *Educational Attitudes of Roma in Bulgaria*. Sofia: Tilia).

I am certain that with his outstanding and pioneering work and research, Prof. Gerganov brought the educational issues of minority children in Bulgaria to a higher scientific level.

Both Professors Miroslav Yanakiev and Encho Gerganov deeply dedicated their academic lives to linguistics and psycholinguistics, and with their studies, research and publications they helped to change the lives of many in Bulgaria and Europe.