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Ref: assessment review for Dr. habil. Mgr. Ildikó Vančo, PhD

Reviewer: Dr. Erika-Mária Tódor, professor, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania

Opponent opinion

Dr. habil. Ildikó Vančo, associate professor at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra,
Faculty of Central European Studies

I have known Dr. habil. Mgr. Ildikó Vančo, PhD, associate professor at the Faculty of Central European Studies at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra for more than two decades. First, my interest was aroused by her publications related to the topic of bilingualism and research data on the linguistic peculiarities of Hungarians living in Slovakia. Then later (in 2005-2006) I had the opportunity to meet her and get acquainted with her at conferences. Based on our professional discussions, further professional collaborations have been established, so we have worked together in several (more precisely 5) international research groups which aimed at comparing the teaching of the official state language in the case of Hungarian minority communities living in different neighbouring countries. Knowing her work well, in 2017 I asked her to give a plenary presentation at the International Conference on Linguistic Landscape and Linguistic Diversity¹.

Ildikó Vančo's professional personality is many-sided, her work shows openness to interdisciplinary, the interpretation of socio-cultural and social contexts of linguistic phenomena, and the striving for the functional, developmental application of new research results. In light of

¹ <http://csik.sapientia.ro/en/news/linguistic-landscape-and-linguistic-diversity-conference>

all this, in what follows, I will reflect separately on her teaching activities, research activities, science-management and science communication activities, based on reading through the documentation of the professorial application (inauguration procedure) which was put to my disposal.

Teaching activities

Ildikó Vančo has been working at the University of Nitra since 2003. The subjects she has introduced and taught (for example: Methodology of teaching Hungarian, Hungarian-Slovak bilingualism in Slovakia, Basics of bilingualism, Nationality and ethnic groups in Slovakia, Psycho-linguistics, Contrastive linguistics, etc.) are closely related to her field of research and publications. The motivating role of her work is faithfully reflected by the large number dissertations she has supervised at BA and MA levels (87), as well as by the 3 PhD research and academic degrees that have deepened some of her sub-research areas in the field of language discrimination and prejudice, speech perception and comprehension. At the same time, her motivating personality as a teacher is reflected by the four university notes and textbooks that Ildikó Vančo has been effectively using related to the subjects she has been teaching.

Her pedagogical activities also include educational organization tasks, such as the management of the study program entitled Hungarian-Slovak Bilingual Mediator, but she has taken an active role in talent management programs, supporting various scientific student conferences and movements, and promoting student mobilities.

Research activities

The central topic of Ildikó Vančo's research area is the issue of Hungarian-Slovak bilingualism, of which she researches several sub-fields, such as the mapping of the peculiarities of minority mother tongue education, with special regard to the operation of language ideologies in the case of Hungarian language teaching. An important finding in this regard is the fact that the Central European educational programs she examines (in Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria) aim at the metalanguage interpretation and norm-centered acquisition of the language system, which can have a negative effect on the language behaviour or even the social perception of individuals who socialize in this context of minority bilingualism. In several of her studies, Ildikó Vančo emphasizes the importance of harmony between the declared communicative approach and the practical implementation and content regulation.

The other linguistic dimension of bilingualism is teaching Slovakian, i.e. the official state language of the country, the qualitative acquisition of which, in the author's view, provides an opportunity for individuals belonging to the minority community to live wholesome lives. In developing this communication skill, Ildikó Vančo emphasizes the validation of the cognitive-functional approach in several of her studies. As her research data prove, the formation of the conscious language behaviour in Slovak-Hungarian bilinguals should start at the basics, and this is nothing more than the development of mother tongue perception skills and the conscious,

parallel, complementary or even contrasting development of official state language speech perception skills, as these represent the peculiarities of language production.

Bilingual existence, due to its contact phenomena, results in specific language version. A further research area of Ildikó Vančo's is the assessment of the Hungarian language variations in Slovakia and the mapping of the related language ideologies. In interpreting the phenomenon, she operates with the theoretical background of pluricentric languages. The researcher's conclusions prove the positive perception of the Hungarian language version in Slovakia among Hungarian university students, so based on her data it can be stated that this language version plays an identity-forming role in the minority bilingual community and is also an expression of regional identity.

Speech perception is the basis of language competencies developed in both languages. Ildikó Vančo's research points out that speech perception deficiencies (their acoustic, phonetic and phonological levels) lead to difficulties in comprehension, consequently integrated development of basic skills is important.

On the whole, Ildikó Vančo's research data illustrate the peculiar mosaic (puzzle-like) nature of bilingual existence through substantial examinations of its components. Thus, the special image of bilingual existence is summarized in Ildikó Vančo's work, in which the psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and language pedagogical, as well as comparative linguistic aspects of minority bilingualism are also present.

Science-management and science communication activities

Previously, I summarized Ildikó Vančo's main areas of research and some of her research results. It is important to emphasize that the mentioned research results represent also the output of several, a total of 21 international and national research projects, in which the candidate became involved both as a project manager and as a member. In addition, Ildikó actively participated in several scientific and professional committees, editorial boards of professional journals, volume editing, scientific committees of conferences. The impact of her work is supported not only by her prestigious citation index or by the professional scientific lectures that she has delivered, but also by international scientific recognitions, such as the Arany János Medal of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Hungarian Linguist Award. She is a prestigious, tireless organizer of international conferences, and with her activities as an expert in linguistics she has strengthened the work of several professional committees and forums.

Looking at Ildikó Vančo as a researcher and education organizer, we can acclaim a person who works responsibly and with dedication for her community, who pursues research not as an objective in itself, but as an opportunity for development, innovation and self-reflection. Her community developing individuality mirrors the need for lifelong learning, an individuality who is open to international research and development collaborations, while at the same time providing an example and teaching respect for local language culture. Ildikó Vančo's work does not reflect a solitary research activity, but points out a linguist who thinks in a research network and is able to build research teams along research topics.

In light of this, I express my full support and recommend Ildikó Vančo for the position of full-professor at Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra, which she deserves for her excellence in research, teaching, academic leadership and international cooperation.

Therefore, I strongly recommend that the inauguration process for the appointment of dr. habil. Ildikó Vančo PhD as full-professor should be opened and she should be appointed professor in the field of study *Foreign languages and cultures*.

With best regards,

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