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Applied Linguistics: Current Trends and Prospects (International Conference in Sofia University, Bulgaria, 2023)

The international conference *Applied Linguistics: Current Trends and Prospects* was held on the 18th and 19th of November 2023 at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in Bulgaria. It was organized by the Department of English and American Studies at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of Sofia University and was sponsored by Sofia University Science and Research Fund, as well as the Academic Foundation for English and American Studies. The aim of the conference was twofold: to celebrate both the 135th anniversary of Sofia University and the 95th anniversary of the Department of English and American Studies at Sofia University.

The thematic focus of the *Applied Linguistics: Current Trends and Prospects* conference was related to one of the main teaching and research fields in the Department of English and American Studies, namely applied linguistics.

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The conference set itself the goal of providing a forum for the discussion of current tendencies in applied linguistics, giving priority to the field's current state, but also looking at its future. It brought together scholars from universities in both Bulgaria and abroad who were interested in exploring different aspects of applied linguistics by focusing on innovative topics and practices. The conference took a broad perspective and approached present-day applied linguistics as a discipline that no longer examines only teaching practices, but also looks at various language-related social issues. Indeed, it welcomed research initiatives that identify, analyze and offer suggestions for fixing a range of language-related social problems. The conference program consisted of eight topic strands: teaching practices; language acquisition; technology in applied linguistics; language variation and change; teaching and practicing translation/interpreting; exploring and teaching literature; language, cognition and discourse analysis; attitudes, perceptions and discourse analysis.

The first day of the conference was the 18th of November 2023. It started with an opening session in Sofia University's Aula Magna hall. On behalf of the organizers, Irena Dimova welcomed all conference delegates and declared the conference open, wishing all participants and guests interesting debates and fruitful discussions. Welcoming speeches were also delivered by professor Gergana Petkova, Dean of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, and professor Madeleine Danova, Head of the Department of English and American Studies. The opening session was followed by two plenary talks.

The first plenary talk was given by Svetlana Dimitrova-Gyuzeleva, an associate professor in pedagogy at the Foreign Languages and Cultures Department of New Bulgarian University. She has been engaged in teaching English as a foreign language, as well as in pre- and in-service teacher training, for a long time. She is also an experienced ELT materials writer, test designer and evaluator and has worked as an ELT expert for the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. The title of her plenary talk was *Developing Mediation Skills by Teaching English through Literature*. In her presentation, Svetlana Dimitrova-Gyuzeleva focused on the need to stimulate foreign language students to develop mediation skills. Drawing upon recent developments in the *Companion Volume to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2020), she presented an enriched understanding of the concept of communicative competence, involving a shift from the four language skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing to four modes of communication: reception, production, interaction and mediation.

Svetlana Dimitrova-Gyuzeleva elaborated on the term 'mediation' and then moved on to explore the possibility of employing literary texts as a means of encouraging students to develop mediation skills. In general, she argued for the need to adopt a functional, pro-active approach when teaching and learning foreign languages.

The second plenary talk was given by Alexandra Bagasheva, a professor in linguistics at the Department of English and American Studies of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", where she teaches various linguistic subjects at the BA, MA and PhD levels of higher education. Her main research interests concern the fields of word formation, cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, semantics and the epistemology of linguistics. She is a member of the editorial boards of *Contrastive Linguistics*, *Philologia* and *Yearbook of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology at Sofia University*. At the conference, Alexandra Bagasheva delivered a plenary talk entitled *Anthropological Linguistics vs. Linguistic Anthropology vs. Cultural Linguistics: What Does Apply and What is Applied?* In her talk, she looked at applied linguistics as a discipline which is redefining itself, embracing the principle of interdisciplinarity and drawing upon the research practices of neighboring fields. Using as a starting point for her analysis the interdisciplinarity of present-day applied linguistics, Alexandra Bagasheva explored the possibility of creating a university course which brings together elements from anthropological linguistics, linguistic anthropology, cultural linguistics and cognitive linguistics. She illustrated this possibility by presenting a fourth-year elective course for students of English and American Studies at Sofia University entitled *Evolving Humans – Pathways and Frameworks*. The presentation of the course involved discussing its philosophy, thematic scope and objectives.

The opening session and the two plenary talks were followed by eight panels of presentations which covered the afternoon of the 18th of November 2023 and the morning of the 19th of November 2023. The first panel was entitled *Teaching Practices* and contained four presentations. The first talk, *Team Translation as an Effective and Fun Activity in the FL Classroom*, was given by Diana Yankova and Andrei Andreev from New Bulgarian University. Their presentation focused on an interactive workshop organized for students enrolled in the translation course of the English Studies program at New Bulgarian University with the aim of increasing learners' motivation and awareness of the various challenges involved in the translation process.

The presentation also looked at the design of the workshop, the teaching materials used, as well as the general effect the interactive sessions had on the students who took part in them. The second speech, *The Woes and Wows of an Elective Course in Consecutive Interpreting. Design and Implementation Challenges*, was given by Georgi Georgiev from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". His presentation dealt with an elective course for students who are part of the European Masters in Technology for Translation and Interpreting. The speech focused on both the course design (in terms of objectives, theoretical and practical framework, teaching materials, assignments and assessment method) and practical implementation (in terms of class and homework procedures, work with course materials and feedback provision). The third presentation in this panel, *Incorporating the Acquisition of Intercultural Mediation Competence into Traditional EFL Instruction: Insights from the Bulgarian Higher Education Context*, was given by Irena Dimova from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The speaker focused on the growth of English into an international lingua franca and emphasized the need to rework traditional EFL teaching practices so as to prepare students for global communication. She argued that the development of intercultural mediation competence should be incorporated into traditional EFL instruction and proposed a pedagogical model, consisting of awareness-raising and analytic stages, which could facilitate this process. The proposed model was illustrated through pedagogical activities from a course offered in the BA degree program of English Philology at Sofia University. The fourth panelist in this session was Stella Zhivkova from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", who gave a presentation entitled *Mastering the Art of Delayed Gratification: Thoughts on an Online Textbook on Japanese Onomatopoeia*. The speaker presented an innovative web-based textbook incorporating elements of Japanese onomatopoeia and highlighted its features, which are intended to appeal to generation Z, such as being visually rich, accessible from any device, and based on short educational videos. The panelist then focused on challenges related to measuring achievement and providing assessment to students who use the textbook.

The title of the second panel was *Language Acquisition*. The first to speak in this session was Mihwa Lee from the University of Tübingen, with a presentation entitled *Learning Processes in CALL: Investigating the Relationships between Input Types, Behavioral Patterns, and Learning Outcomes*. She argued for the need to turn the focus of SLA research from

the learning product towards the learning process and presented an innovative research approach which draws upon learners' logs in an interactive CALL system and treats them as a means of studying the link between learning conditions, processes and outcomes. The next speaker in this panel was Bozhil Hristov from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In his presentation, *Modelling Agreement in Transformational and Constraint-based Syntactic Theories: Descriptive Adequacy and Suitability for Language Teacher Training*, he looked at the manner in which agreement is modeled in non-transformational, constraint-based theories like LFG and HPSG and contrasted their approach with that of early Transformational Grammar. The speaker laid emphasis on assessing the suitability of the analyzed models for the development of teacher training materials in the process of teaching English as a foreign language at tertiary level. The last speaker in this panel was Vladimir Phillipov from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". He offered a presentation entitled *Dimiter Spasov and His Work on English Phrasal Verbs – Personal Reflections and Impact*. In the first part of the presentation, the speaker described the intellectual climate in which the Anglicist scholar Dimiter Spasov lived and then added some personal recollections of Spasov as a researcher and teacher. In the second part of his talk, the panelist discussed Spasov's contribution to the study of English phrasal verbs and gave priority to exploring an overlooked prosodic element.

The third panel of the conference, *Technology in Applied Linguistics*, included four presentations. It started with the talk *Machine Detection and Human Interpretation of AI-Generated Content in Students' Submissions in a Higher Education Context*, given by Irina Kyulanova from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The panelist devoted her presentation to the process of discovering AI-written material in students' assignments at tertiary level by exploring AI-detection tools and adapted traditional antiplagiarism systems. She drew the conclusion that both methods require human analysis of the results. At the end of her talk, the speaker dwelled on the unreliability of AI-detection technology and its implications for the responsibilities of assessors in a higher education context. The author of the second speech, *Machine versus Human Translation – High-resource versus Low-resource Languages. A Case Study*, was Irena Vassileva from New Bulgarian University. She explored the products of three machine translation tools (ChatGPT, Google Translate and DeepL) and compared them to the performance of

human translators, with the ultimate goal of establishing their reliability. Drawing upon a text generated by ChatGPT and subsequently translated into Bulgarian and German – low-resource and high-resource languages, respectively – the presenter examined the performance of these three machine translation tools, laying emphasis on the lexical aspects of the translation. The next speaker was Nelly Yakimova from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", who gave a presentation entitled *Conference Interpreting and AI*. The panelist explored the possibility of using AI as a supporting tool to enhance conference interpreters' performance, noting that it can be drawn upon during all stages of the interpreting process: preparation (e.g., writing summaries of background information), the interpreting stage (e.g., providing difficult lexical items) and the follow-up stage (e.g., ensuring feedback on interpreters' work). Bringing to the fore some problems AI faces (such as rendering cultural and pragmatic content and tackling non-verbal communication), the speaker drew the conclusion that AI should currently be approached as an interpreter's efficient assistant, but it can hardly replace their work completely. The panel closed with a presentation entitled *EFL Teaching and Learning in the Post-Covid-19 Era: Responses and Challenges in the Algerian Context*, given by Youcef Messaoudi from the University of Tlemcen. At the start of his presentation, the speaker traced the shift from distance learning being a complement to face-to-face learning to it becoming a primary teaching and learning medium during the COVID-19 pandemic. The panelist then focused on the post-pandemic period and, using insights from the Algerian context, he addressed the question of how EFL institutions should transform and redefine themselves, highlighting some advantages and disadvantages of drawing upon distance learning as a permanent method of instruction.

The fourth panel was entitled *Language Variation and Change*. The first speakers in this session were Elia Calligari and Claudia Roberta Combei from the University of Pavia. In their presentation, *Vowel Analysis of the Pavese Dialect: A Case Study in Preserving and Promoting Local Linguistic Diversity*, they looked at issues related to language variation and change by exploring the Pavese dialect spoken in Marzano, Italy. Drawing upon empirical data and aiming to contribute to the preservation of linguistic diversity at a local level, they provided an account of the current state of the vowel system of this dialect, comparing it to general theoretical descriptions and highlighting recent changes and innovations. The next panelist, Jonathan McCreedy

from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", delivered a speech with the title *'So It's Not Their Language?' Northern Ireland Protestants and Their Divisive/Decisive Role in the Revitalisation of Irish*. He examined recent attempts to revitalize the Irish language, bringing to the fore the key contribution of Protestants in Northern Ireland. After exploring the obstacles they have faced in the process of learning Irish, he looked at recent calls to encourage them to start treating this language as a vital element of their cultural identity. At the end of his talk, Jonathan McCreedy also discussed the Ulster Irish dialect and its impact on Irish English at the levels of lexis and grammar, as well as code-mixing processes involving Irish and English. The third speaker was Nevena Alexieva from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", who contributed to the panel by giving a talk entitled *Degrees of Semantic Divergence of International Anglicisms from a Common English Etymon*. In her presentation, she approached the process of language change by analyzing the manner in which international Anglicisms (i.e., English words borrowed into another language) diverge semantically from their English etymons. She argued that this process is driven by the borrowing language, which creates lexical copies that soon start to differ from their English prototypes in various degrees due to processes of re-interpretation. The last speaker in this panel was Hessa Alshahrani from King Khalid University, who gave a presentation entitled *Request Emails to the Faculty by Saudi EFL Female Students*. In her talk, the panelist focused on the manner in which Saudi Arabian EFL female students make requests in formal emails to their instructors. The results showed that most students employ polite, indirect discourse using long sentences.

The fifth panel was entitled *Teaching and Practicing Translation/Interpreting*. The author of the first speech was Maria Pipeva from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In her presentation, *Teaching Literary Translation at Master's Level: Objectives and Challenges in the Contemporary Bulgarian Context*, she examined the teaching of literary translation in the Master's in Translation program at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of Sofia University. Maria Pipeva laid emphasis on the challenges involved (for example, following the prescriptions of competence frameworks for teaching translation, meeting the expectations and competence levels of students, etc.) and discussed various means of overcoming those challenges (for instance, different pedagogical activities and tools). The next panelist was Traci Speed from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",

with a speech entitled *Please See Footnote*. Her presentation was part of an ongoing project exploring the use of footnotes in Bulgarian–English literary translation. With the intention of establishing the manner in which footnote usage varies, in her speech she examined translations from a specific language into Bulgarian and English, then addressing the question of what recommendations should be given to students enrolled in translation classes. The third presenter in this panel was Boris Naimushin from New Bulgarian University, who delivered a speech entitled *'With the Aid of an Unidentified Interpreter': Putting Names to Faces on Historical Photos*. The starting point of his analysis was captions of historical photos featuring high-profile politicians involved in various important events and the fact that they tend to keep the identity of interpreters hidden. Taking this into account, in the remaining part of his presentation the speaker set himself the task of identifying the identity of several Bulgarian and foreign interpreters shown in photos of important historical meetings. The panel closed with a presentation by Fjolla Kallaba from RIT Kosovo (A.U.K) entitled *Investigating the Obstacles Encountered by EFL Students in Translating Idiomatic Expressions from English to Albanian*. Drawing upon empirical data collected from BA students in the English Department at the University of Prishtina, the speaker identified common obstacles students face when rendering idioms from English into Albanian (such as lack of equivalence in the source and target language, lexical, grammatical and structural differences between the two languages, sociocultural differences) and listed possible strategies for dealing with these issues (for instance, understanding the connotations of idioms, resorting to paraphrasing and approximation, etc.).

The sixth panel, *Exploring and Teaching Literature*, consisted of four presentations. It started with the talk *Didactics of Literature: Perspectives and Challenges*, given by Radeya Gesheva from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Her presentation focused on the teaching of Italian literature at tertiary level. She argued that since the Italian literary context has its peculiarities, it requires the application of specific approaches and the employment of specific resources. Using this as a background for her discussion, she embarked on identifying the approaches preferred by university professors in the process of teaching contemporary Italian literature. The next speaker, Shaimaa Helal from Arab Open University, delivered a presentation entitled *Syntactic Structures and Their Relations to*

the Revelation of the Early Severity of the Puritan Character. In her speech, she performed a grammatical analysis of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* by discussing the syntactic choices made when referring to Puritans. The results of her analysis brought to the fore specific syntactic structures, such as the embedding and locating of complex grammatical elements at the end of clauses in order to emphasize the severity of the Puritan character. The third presentation in this panel was given by Bozhidara Markova from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The focus of her talk, *From Jane to Bridget: Evolution of Male–Female Miscommunication through an Intertextual Lens*, fell on women's and men's communicative styles and, more specifically, the manner in which male–female (mis)communication has evolved through time. The speaker looked at these objects of analysis by exploring Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Bozhidara Markova also discussed the process of differentiating between the sexes through language, noting specific changes that took place between the points in time when these two novels were published. The last to speak in the panel was Alexandrina Ugrenova, an independent scholar who gave a speech entitled *House or Casita: The Presence of Spanish and Its Impact in Disney's Encanto (2021)*. The speaker examined the symbolic use of code-switching between two linguistic codes by focusing on the co-existence of English and Spanish in Disney's movie *Encanto*. She devoted attention to the incorporation of Spanish in specific scenes in the film, highlighting the specific functions it performs.

The seventh panel of the conference was *Language, Cognition and Discourse Analysis*. It started with the presentation *Syntactic–Semantic Interface in Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of the Complex Concept Second Language Learning*, given by Milena Levunlieva and Krasimira Hadzhieva from South-West University "Neofit Rilski". In essence, their speech explored the manner in which pre-service teachers enrolled in the program of Education Science and English as a Second Language at South-West University "Neofit Rilski" approach the concept of second language learning. Applying a cognitive framework of analysis, they delved into identifying the main metaphors underlying their informants' perceptions of this term and established that they associate it with features such as prosperity, success and effective communication. The next speaker, Emad Abdul-latif from Qatar University, gave a speech entitled *Western Discourse Analysis for Eastern Analysts*, in which he argued that the approaches and procedures of Western discourse analysis

lack relevance in contexts such as Africa, the Arab countries and East Asia and should be transformed so as to make sure they fit the sociocultural aspects of local languages and cultures. Analyzing a corpus of speeches given by Arab politicians in the period from 1970 to 2010, he suggested possible ways of adapting Western approaches and making them applicable to the analysis of local Arab discourse. The next presentation in this panel, *The Representation of Female Politicians in the Russian Press: A Study on Ėl'vira Nabiullina, Valentina Matvienko and Ėlla Pamfilova*, was given by Elena Giribaldi from the University of Pavia and the University of Bergamo. Applying the method of Critical Discourse Analysis in her talk, she looked at the depictions of three female politicians in the Russian press by exploring online publications spanning the 2011–2021 period. The preliminary results showed that motherhood, rather than femininity, tends to lie at the core of representations of female politicians in the Russian press.

The eighth and final panel of the conference was entitled *Attitudes, Perceptions and Discourse Analysis*. The first to speak in this panel was Penka Hristova from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In her investigation, *The Attitudes of Students Studying African Studies at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" towards Multilingualism*, she used a variety of tools (reading and listening comprehension tasks, discussions and a questionnaire) to collect data from students who are part of the African Studies program at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and to explore their attitudes towards the phenomenon of multilingualism. The analysis of the collected data brought to the fore the informants' positive attitudes towards multilingualism with an accompanying high motivation for foreign language learning. The last speaker in the panel was Oleksandr Kapranov from NLA University College, who gave a speech entitled *Multimodal Metonymy in Climate Change Discourse: A Case Study*. Drawing upon a corpus of status updates posted by Greenpeace UK on Facebook, he explored the employment of metonymy in social media climate change discourse. He argued that the phenomenon of metonymy should be approached as being multimodal in nature and examined the main types of metonymic relations in the analyzed corpus of data.

The eighth conference panel was followed by a closing session. The organizing committee (Irena Dimova, Maria Kolarova, Jonathan McCreedy and Georgi Georgiev, all from the Department of English and American Studies at Sofia University) expressed their thanks to the two plenary speakers and all

conference delegates who took part in the forum and contributed to the discussion of current trends and prospects in the field of applied linguistics. The organizers announced their plan to publish conference proceedings based on the presentations given during the conference and to organize follow-up events related to the thematic focus of the conference. At the end of the closing session, conference delegates expressed their gratitude for the memorable experience and provided a positive evaluation of the event, bringing to the fore its academic merits, as well as its excellent, smooth organization.

In conclusion, the *Applied Linguistics: Current Trends and Prospects* conference can be considered a successful event. The presentations that made up the conference program covered a wide range of topics such as course design, teaching materials and approaches, the process of language acquisition, the impact of new technologies on translation and interpreting, distance learning, regional and social varieties of language, issues and challenges in teaching and practicing translation/interpreting, perspectives and issues in teaching and researching literature, innovative approaches to analyzing discourse, the link between language and cognition, language attitudes and perceptions, to name but a few. This rich and varied conference program provided the participants with the opportunity to identify current trends in the field of applied linguistics and discuss future prospects. The in-depth and wide-ranging discussions during the plenary session and the eight panels, as well as the informal talks between the delegates during the two social events of the conference (musical performance by the student vocal group *Linguaccord* at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of Sofia University and a conference dinner), resulted in the establishment of a network of scholars from universities in Bulgaria and abroad who can continue exchanging ideas related to innovative approaches and practices in applied linguistics and engage in joint research projects. Hopefully the conference participants will converge again at follow-up events and a second edition of the *Applied Linguistics: Current Trends and Prospects* conference.

Lingwistyka stosowana: aktualne trendy i perspektywy (Międzynarodowa konferencja na Uniwersytecie Sofijskim, Bułgaria, 2023)

Niniejsza recenzja przedstawia relację z międzynarodowej konferencji pt. „Lingwistyka stosowana: aktualne trendy i perspektywy", która odbyła się 18 i 19 listopada 2023 roku na Uniwersytecie Sofijskim im. św. Klimenta Ochrydzkiego w Bułgarii. Konferencja została zorganizowana przez Katedrę Anglistyki i Studiów Amerykanistycznych Wydziału Filologii Klasycznej i Nowoczesnej Uniwersytetu Sofijskiego i miała na celu uczczenie zarówno 135. rocznicy powstania Uniwersytetu Sofijskiego, jak i 95. rocznicy istnienia Katedry Anglistyki i Studiów Amerykanistycznych na tym uniwersytecie. Stanowiła forum dyskusji na temat aktualnych trendów i perspektyw w dziedzinie lingwistyki stosowanej, gromadząc naukowców z uniwersytetów zarówno z Bułgarii, jak i zagranicy.

Słowa kluczowe: międzynarodowa konferencja naukowa; lingwistyka stosowana; życie naukowe; Uniwersytet Sofijski; Bułgaria

Applied Linguistics: Current Trends and Prospects (International conference in Sofia University, Bulgaria, 2023)

This review gives an account of an international conference entitled *Applied Linguistics: Current Trends and Prospects*, which took place on the 18th and 19th of November 2023 at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in Bulgaria. It was organized by the Department of English and American Studies at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of Sofia University and was aimed at celebrating both the 135th anniversary of Sofia University and the 95th anniversary of the Department of English and American Studies at Sofia University. It provided a forum for the discussion of current trends and prospects in the field of applied linguistics, bringing together scholars from universities in both Bulgaria and abroad.

Keywords: international scientific conference; applied linguistics; scientific life; Sofia University; Bulgaria

Irena Dimova (ildimova@uni-sofia.bg) – asystentka w Katedrze Anglistyki i Studiów Amerykanistycznych Wydziału Filologii Klasycznej i Nowoczesnej Uniwersytetu Sofijskiego im. Św. Klimenta Ochrydzkiego. Prowadzi zajęcia z ogólnego języka angielskiego i akademickiego, a także kursy socjolingwistyczne dotyczące angielskiego jako języka międzynarodowego oraz języka i społeczeństwa. Jej najnowsze zainteresowania badawcze dotyczą rozwoju angielskiego jako języka międzynarodowego, wzrostu jego różnorodności językowej i socjokulturowej oraz konsekwencji tego rozszerzonego zakresu języka angielskiego dla jego nauczania. Irena Dimova jest członkinią Bułgarskiego Towarzystwa Badań nad Językiem Angielskim, afiliowanego przy Europejskim Towarzystwie Badań nad Językiem Angielskim.

Irena Dimova (ildimova@uni-sofia.bg) – senior assistant professor in the Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". She teaches courses in general and academic English, as well as sociolinguistic courses in English as an international language and language and society. Her recent research interests concern the development of English as an international language, the increase in its linguistic and sociocultural variability, and the implications of this expanded scope of English for its pedagogy. Irena Dimova is a member of the Bulgarian Society for the Study of English, affiliated to the European Society for the Study of English.

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