

**Report on the 5th International Conference on Foreign
Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics and the
International Forum on Slavic Studies – FLTAL,
Burch University, Sarajevo, May 7–9, 2015**

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The international conference hosted by the International Burch University in Sarajevo celebrated a jubilee of sorts in 2015 – this private university has hosted an academic event for the fifth year in a row, which, if not the biggest linguistic event in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region, is surely among the biggest.

The Fifth International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics and the International Forum on Slavic Studies were held from May 7–9 on the campus of the International Burch University in Sarajevo, which, besides its organisational strengths, regularly displays its capacities in accommodating such a large conference (over 300 presenters and numerous visitors and guests in the field of linguistics and language teaching). The plenary speakers also attracted a large number of academics this year, mainly professors of linguistics and English language teachers. The main sessions were reserved for: Adele Goldberg, Professor of Linguistics at Princeton University; Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Indiana; Lourdes Ortega, Professor of Second Language Acquisition at Georgetown University; Lydia White, Professor of Linguistics at McGill University in Canada; Michael Ullman, Professor of Neuroscience at Georgetown University; Nina Spada, Professor of Second Language Education at the University of Toronto; and Paul Kei Matsuda, Professor of Second Language Writing at Arizona State University. Unfortunately, a visit and lecture by Professor George Lakoff from the University of California at Berkeley that was announced for the second time were not realised for the same reason as last year (illness); however, during a conversation with Professor Azamat Akbarov, I learned that Burch University still has a strong desire to bring Professor Lakoff to Bosnia and Herzegovina and that this visit will likely happen – if not at one of the conferences, then as part of a special seminar on cognitive linguistics to be arranged with the professor.

The conference was officially opened by the Conference Chairman, Professor Akbarov, the Rector of Burch University, Professor Mehmed Uzunoğlu, ministers, presidents of associations for applied linguistics, rectors of other universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the ambassadors of Serbia, Slovenia, the United Kingdom and the United States to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first plenary lecture was held by Professor Lourdes Ortega on the topic of “Second Language Acquisition as Late

Bilingualism/Multilingualism”, in which she presented the necessity of reconceptualising second language acquisition, which is traditionally compared to child first language acquisition (a subordinating comparison). Recent research has shown that we cannot in any way equate the early acquisition of L1 with the late acquisition of L2 because age and language experience are no longer a valid factor in the research. The human mind is “prepared” to acquire two languages, just as it is possible for it to acquire one. Ortega also describes bilingualism as the “Galápagos Islands of Language Acquisition” and calls for a redefining of the topic and goals of research and SLA as late bilingualism.

Professor Adele Goldberg talked about the acquisition of rules of expression, and in particular the right formulation of expressions, and she explained that learners of one language categorise their input into patterns, that they also expect certain formulations in language, and that children usually overgeneralise at the beginning stages of language acquisition, after which they “recover” by making constructions more clear in usage.

The topics of the sessions (60 in total) were organised by the narrow field of research and by the language of the presentations, in accordance with this year's theme of the International Forum on Slavic Studies. These include: Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Language Acquisition and Learning, and Language Teaching Methodology. Edin Dupanović from the University of Bihać presented his research on a semantic comparison of English and Bosnian consanguineal kinship terminologies, which showed a different approach in the degrees of kinship distance (*uncle* has more distinct terms in Bosnian as opposed to just one in English), and he suggested certain changes in the near future in the Bosnian language (disappearance of specific terms, which is a tendency noticed in the last century). In his view, these changes might be somewhat positive for Bosnian speakers' acquisition of English. Jovan Eranović from the University of Sarajevo spoke about verbal markers in African-American English, while Nadira Aljović from the University of Zenica presented the topic of “Aspects of English Unaccusative Verbs”, where she spoke of verbs of this kind that appear to be intransitive but that share certain qualities with transitive verbs. Nizama Muhamedagić talked about conceptual metaphors in the American Declaration of Independence, and Nurbanu Korkmaz and Tuba Aydinoğlu from the University of Hacettepe and Mustafa Kemal in Turkey presented their analysis of the perception of anger metaphors in Turkish through comics, touching upon, among other issues, research conducted by Professor Forceville on the same topic. One interesting aspect of this research is that the presenters focused on cultural differences in viewing these visual products, but they did not discuss the metaphoric domain (visual metaphors), which would also have produced significant conclusions for linguistics. Simone dalla Chiesa from the University of Milan spoke about the case marker *de* in Japanese and the problem of type of case in expressions with the copula. Many presentations offered a highly applicable insight into language teaching and second language acquisition, a consideration which was reflected in the choice of the plenary talks as well.

The main plenary sessions were concluded by Professor Ullman, who presented a talk on language, memory and the brain, and the role of brain systems for learning and memorisation in the first and second languages. Applied linguists and teachers present who might not have been overly proficient in the field of neurology were introduced to the concepts of declarative and procedural memory, that is, the arbitrary pieces of information and their mutual relations as opposed to possible motor functions. The dysfunction of one system can increase the functionality of another, and the speaker presented numerous research results (some of which he had reached himself in collaboration with other scholars), which showed a close relationship between type of memory and growth and development in human beings.

As was the case in previous years, Burch University of Sarajevo will provide an opportunity to review the numerous papers given at the sessions later in the form of a volume of selected conference presentations to be published in winter (the presenters received session information on the spot in the conference programme and collected abstracts); indeed, the organiser has also established itself as a valuable academic institution when it comes to representing Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region as a significant linguistic area. Last year, Professor Azamat Akbarov initiated the creation of the Association of Applied Linguistics in Bosnia and Herzegovina – AALBiH, which is the first and so far the only umbrella organisation in a country which has been divided for decades in a political, economic, and even linguistic sense and which therefore has been unable to give expression to a unique linguistic, educational, and academic landscape. Besides this accomplishment, after intense lobbying for months and the effort of the professors involved, the Association, which is also a member of the *Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée* – AILA, has successfully fought for the host role of the World Congress for Applied Linguistics, which will be held in 2020 in Sarajevo as the representative of Europe. These are all important steps in regaining the former glory of linguistics and language teaching once enjoyed by Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. We now aim to make the sort of progress we once achieved in sport, progress that culminated in global recognition for the entire country after the Winter Olympic Games in Sarajevo in 1984.

The conference was closed with an award ceremony for plenary speakers and distinguished presenters as well as a concert given by young musicians and choirs from Sarajevo. International visitors who represented countries ranging from Japan to Ireland at this year's FLTAL had the opportunity to spend the following day on a special trip to Počitelj and Mostar, discovering the natural beauty and sights of Herzegovina, which for many made the unique experience of their academic visit to the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina complete.