

V. MOKSLINIO GYVENIMO KRONIKA / KRONIKA ŻYCIA NAUKOWEGO

Konferencijų apžvalgos / Konferencje

TRANSDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE ABOUT THE WIDER EUROPE: EUROPEANIZATION, MULTICULTURALISM, PLURILINGUALISM AND OTHER ISSUES

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We live in the time of globalization, which, whether viewed positively or negatively, is our reality and should be not only accepted but also studied. It is an exciting and challenging time for researchers in the humanities, as it is difficult to define any sphere of life as purely national; there is an important European and global dimension to most contemporary economic, social, political, cultural, and language matters. In this respect, the conference “Towards a European Society? Transgressing Disciplinary Boundaries in European Studies Research,” organized by the Centre for European and International Studies Research of the University of Portsmouth and held there from 28–30 June, was of great interest and importance.

As the call for papers said, recent research has moved past the original narrow focus on politics and policy-making in “Brussels” to explore the manifold dimensions of the emerging European society. At the same time, researchers with an interest in the EU and the wider Europe need to cooperate even more closely across disciplinary divides to better understand what

is now frequently but loosely referred to as the “Europeanization” of Europe. To this end, the conference was aimed at fostering transdisciplinary dialogue and defining new agendas for research on the EU and the wider Europe, bringing together researchers from political science, sociology, linguistics, history, cultural studies and other fields.

The conference was a great opportunity to exchange opinions and learn new ideas, as well as an educational event of great importance, for among the participants were many outstanding scholars in different fields from different countries: Professor of Political Science Tanja A. Börzel and Professor of International Relations Thomas Risse from the Free University of Berlin; Professor of Political Science Didier Georgakakis from the Institute of Political Studies (IEP), University of Strasbourg; Professor of European Integration and Transatlantic History Kiran Klaus Patel (University of Maastricht); Professor of Politics Martin Schain (New York University); Dr. Nikolai Vukov, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Folklore Studies (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences); and many others.

There were six parallel sessions wherein the problems of political discourse and media culture, international organizations and the Europeanization of cultural policy and practice, European integration, linguistic and cultural identities, and other issues were discussed. I will concentrate on the panel called “Linguistic and cultural identities of the wider Europe: within and across borders, disciplines and practices,” in which I participated.

The panel was organized by the European Network for Intercultural Education Activities (ENIEDA) and was devoted to some key issues in the area of linguistics and intercultural studies. It was focused on approaches to understanding the emerging cultural and linguistic situation in Europe. The problems of intercultural communicative competence, overcoming ethnic stereotypes, and efficient intercultural communication, as well as globalization, mobility and migration and their impact on language and its use, were all in the centre of discussion.

On the whole there were six presentations in this panel, started by Dr. Svetlana Kurtes (University of Portsmouth), vice-president of ENIEDA and one of the panel’s conveners. In her substantial talk (*Linguistic and (inter)cultural education across European curricula: state of affairs and future perspectives*), she revisited some theoretical and practical issues in the field of linguistic and intercultural education. Focusing on the impact that linguistic and intercultural skills can potentially have on the individual and his/her academic and professional achievements, she drew attention to the recommendations proposed by relevant European institutions, particularly

the Council of Europe, for dealing with the promotion of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the member states. Putting a particular emphasis on key competences in linguistic and intercultural education, she named and characterized the main intercultural skills which should be in the focus of language teachers:

- the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other,
- cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures,
- the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one’s own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstandings and conflict situations, and
- the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships.

Based on her personal teaching experience, she outlined the ways such skills could be developed.

Dr. Igor Lakic from the University of Montenegro talked about language policy in Montenegro—its practices, challenges and directions. Starting with the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and the recommendations made therein, he characterized the linguistic situation in Montenegro, which in many respects is specific and is currently under scrutiny, given the country’s status as an EU candidate. Apart from two obviously distinctive languages—Albanian and Romani—that are protected under the Charter, some new languages arising from the former Serbo-Croatian have acquired the status of languages in official use (Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian, in addition to Alba-



nian), with Montenegrin being the official language. Romani, on the other hand, is not specifically listed in the Constitution of Montenegro, although it is protected by the authorities as a minority language. In his conclusions he discussed some recent challenges and possible future directions in the light of the new realities.

The role of media practices and products in the process of European integration and identity formation was discussed by Dr. Monika Kopytowska (University of Lodz, Poland). Treating media discourse as both socially and culturally constituted and constitutive, she examined the media's representation of immigrants and immigration (with a special emphasis on the so-called new national minorities) in Poland. Data from the mainstream nationwide printed news media were examined in terms of lexical, grammatical, stylistic, and pragmatic choices.

Dr. Monica Mosca from the University of Eastern Piedmont (Vercelli, Italy) devoted her presentation to the linguistic integra-

tion of immigrants in Italy. She pointed out that an extended notion of Europe does not simply imply an increase in the number of languages to be taken into account and the corresponding problems of mutual understanding and integration, but also the need to receive and integrate the ever-growing wave of immigrants. Analysing the problem of migrants' adoption and integration in Italy, where the official language coexists often with vital dialects, she stated the fact that migrants in Italy tend in many cases to learn the dialect first, and only then the national language, with different motivations and different degrees of success.

Dr. Alcina Sousa from the University of Madeira (Portugal) considered mobility and migration issues in the scope of their impact on language use—common patterns—and language changes in communicative practices. She gave a comprehensive account of a number of communicative situations in European Portuguese, drawing on data collected from respondents' answers to



questionnaires in Portuguese-speaking settings in which there is a strong influence of the English language upon Portuguese. She focused on lexical, syntactic and pragmatic choices.

In my presentation (*Culture-specific communicative styles and language pedagogy: with reference to Russian speakers of English as a foreign language*), I highlighted the importance of intercultural awareness in language learning and teaching and suggested some practical solutions. I argued that nowadays, anthropological and interdisciplinary approaches should be implemented not only in the study of language, but also in language teaching, as language learners should be provided with a wide scope of knowledge from all humanitarian areas including culture studies, sociology, axiology, ethnopsychology, communication theory, etc. Starting with some pragmatic failures which often occur in English/Russian dialogue and a short discussion of how culture-specific norms and values influence

communicative behaviour, I demonstrated how differences in the British and Russian mentalities impact on the culture-specific communicative styles of their speakers, and showed that knowledge of the main stylistic features might be an efficient guideline in intercultural communication. Taking into account previous studies on language and culture (e.g., Clyne 1994, Wierzbicka 2002, 2006a, 2006b, and others), cross-cultural pragmatics (Thomas 1983, 1995; Wierzbicka 1991/2003), communicative styles (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1990), and the phenomenon of (im)politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987; Leech 1983; Watts 2003; Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003; Bousfield and Locher 2008), and based on the results of an empirical study, I tried to outline the main characteristics of English vs. Russian communicative styles by explaining them through differences in cultures, communicative values and understanding of politeness. This allowed me to suggest a set of “rules” (recommendations)

for a “grammar of behaviour” for Russian students of English. (For more details about the differences in English and Russian communicative styles, see Larina 2008, 2009, 2012). The pedagogical implications of these rules were illustrated with examples from my own professional experience teaching English to university students in Russia and developing their ability to understand “what is meant by what is said”—a necessary prerequisite for successful communication in intercultural settings, whether professional, academic or general.

The panel concluded with a discussion led by Prof. Giacomo Ferrari (University of Eastern Piedmont “Amedeo Avogadro,” Vercelli, Italy), president of ENIEDA, highlighting the main points raised in the presentations and suggesting further avenues for research and development. It was followed by a keen discussion initiated by members of the audience.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words about ENIEDA (the European Network for Intercultural Education Activities) and its aims. The Network was launched on the occasion of the First International Conference on Linguistic and Intercultural Education (CLIE1), convened and hosted by the University of Alba Iulia, Romania, 27–29 November 2008. Its anchoring standpoint derives from the Preamble of the

1982 Recommendations of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers, in which they acknowledge the fact “that the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding; [and...] that it is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination” (Recommendations R (82) 18).

The members of the network share the values of plurilingualism and multiculturalism and are fully committed to promoting them within and across geographical and disciplinary borders through their pedagogical and professional interests and activities. They assume that linguistic and cultural education is instrumental in creating a competent communicator able to function effectively in intercultural settings. More information about the network and its activities can be found at <<http://www.enieda.eu>>.

ENIEDA welcomes new members who share the same interests and values.

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