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4th International Congress *Applied Linguistics Today*, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology, Belgrade, Serbia, October 12-14, 2012.

The 4th International Congress Applied Linguistics Today (ALT 4) was hosted by the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade, October 12-14, 2012. Under the motto "Challenges of Modern Times" the conference explored issues in the areas of language teaching and assessment, language acquisition and processing, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, language maintenance and translation/interpretation. One underlying theme was interdisciplinary research. Another more prominent focus lay on the incorporation of new technologies in the research methodology and their use in domains such as computer assisted language learning (CALL).

The congress drew researchers from a great variety of countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Great Britain, Italy, Macedonia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain. Nearly a hundred twenty-minute papers were presented in five parallel strands and addressed such diverse topics as the "Forms of Communication in Online English Courses", the "Intertextuality in Confrontational Discourse" or "the Impact of Grammatical Differences on Simultaneous Interpreting". Unfortunately, the word limit prevents me from mentioning all the interesting presentations I attended.

The four keynote speakers addressed the various areas of interest. Zorka Kašić (University of Belgrade) gave a presentation on interdisciplinarity and forensic linguistics ("Interdisciplinarnost i dva pravca razvoja forenzičke lingvistike").

Kjersti Fløttum (University of Bergen) reported on the results of a research project investigating the "Variation of Academic Voices Across Disciplines and Cultures". Her research shows that the academic discipline (economics, linguistics, medicine) is a better determiner than the author's language (English, French, Norwegian) when it comes to explaining differences and similarities in the use of academic language in research articles.

Patricia Ashby (University of Westminster) made an exciting and convincing argument for the use of technology in educational institutions in order to use valuable class time more efficiently. In "Making the Most of the Academic Hour - The Flipped

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Classroom Effect”, Dr. Ashby elaborated on the advantages of turning our understanding of institutional learning upside down: In the “flipped classroom” content is studied outside the classroom using various forms of modern technology, e.g. previously recorded lessons. The limited class time can then be used to clarify, to interact with peers or for the teacher to give small group or one-on-one assistance.

Silvia Bernardini (University of Bologna) spoke on the very current topic of use and usefulness of “Corpora in the Classroom: Past, Present and Future Challenges”. In addition, Silvia Bernardini, Adriano Ferraresi, Maja Miličević and Tanja Samardžić provided their audience with many practical and ready-to-use tools – such as the BootCaT toolkit and “insider tricks” to deal with Cyrillic symbols – to compile and work with their own corpora in the highly popular and well-attended workshop “Create and Consult your own Specialized Web Corpus”.

Apart from being a successful academic event, the ALT 4 conference was also a very enjoyable social occasion. On the first day, Prof. Vesna Polovina set the course and greeted everyone warmly. This was followed by the presentation of a Serbian song performed by a group of students. Throughout the conference Borko Kovačević and Maja Miličević attentively looked after the well-being of all attendees.

On the first evening everyone mingled during “cocktail hour”, enjoying drinks and delicious Serbian finger food. The conference dinner took place at the famous “Dva Jelena” in the heart of Skadarlija, the Belgrade’s Bohemian Quarter. Everybody enjoyed the good company, the selection of Serbian dishes and the traditional Serbian music.

Another highlight was the excursion to Viminacium, the excavation site of a Roman town and fortress, built in the 1st century A.D. We went far back in time and admired authentic frescoes inside excavated Roman tombs.



Picture 1: Excursion to Viminacium

We also saw the remains of Emperor Hostilian who died around 251 A.D. In addition, we enjoyed a delicious Roman lunch at the “tavern”.



Picture 2: At the “Tavern”

The conference was a great chance to receive helpful feedback on one’s own research and to hear about current research conducted in the same or related fields within applied linguistics. The atmosphere was engaging, so much so, that the audience of a cancelled talk did not want to go without a presentation. Instead, they convinced Miao Wang (University of Leicester) to present her paper again, as some wanted to hear it a second time or because they had missed out on it earlier due to conflicting parallel sessions.

The conference was also a great opportunity to network. For me personally, the conference resulted in further collaboration with the University of Belgrade and another visit to the Serbian capital where I again received a very warm welcome and all the help I could wish for to conduct my research. Many thanks to the organizers and all helpers for a smooth, enjoyable and stimulating conference. I am looking forward to ALT 5!