

Ewa Donesch-Jeżo

***ENGLISH DISCOURSE STUDIES IN THE TIMES OF CHANGE:
SEVENTH BRNO CONFERENCE ON LINGUISTICS STUDIES
IN ENGLISH. A REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
CONFERENCE AT MASARYK UNIVERSITY, BRNO, THE CZECH
REPUBLIC, 12-13 SEPTEMBER 2016***

The Seventh Brno Conference on Linguistics Studies in English, entitled *English discourse studies in the times of change*, which was held in Brno on 12–13 September 2016, was organized by the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. This biennial international conference was dedicated to current trends and developments in linguistics studies with a focus on various genres and discourses. The contributions from many countries, among others, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Iran, Japan, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine, dealt with a wide range of linguistic topics, such as pragmatics of discourse, professional discourse, media discourse, variation across genres, cross-cultural variation, English as a lingua franca, learner discourse.

Keynote speakers – prominent scientists in the field of linguistics – Geoffrey K. Pullum from the University of Edinburgh, Billy Clark from Middlesex University, London; and László I. Komlósi from Széchenyi István University, Győr, delivered lectures which dealt with current problems of syntax of English.

And so, Professor G.K. Pullum in his educating and entertaining lecture raised the issue of a curious fact that a significant number of the discourse-sensitive syntactic constructions in English discussed in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* attract hostility from prescriptive usage guides and self-appointed grammar critics. This phenomenon was considered in relation to the 20th-century syntactic theory, establishing that syntax is a matter of *langue*, not purely of *parole*. Professor L.I. Komlósi in his plenary lecture proposed a revision of the view that culture has been founded on cultural conceptualizations and maintained by cultural narratives providing commonly shared interpretation patterns for individuals. He discussed the unprecedented innovation in info-communication technologies with the irreversible impact on human perception, social cognition and learning methods. The third keynote speaker, professor Billy Clark, discussed some key features of relevance-theoretic pragmatics and considered how they can contribute to accounts of the production, interpretation and evaluation of texts, and suggested ways of developing empirical investigations into these processes.

Sixty speakers from thirteen countries gave talks on various topics related to their research into English discourse. The findings of the studies of a wide variety of discourse types were presented, such as written and spoken academic discourse, discourse of websites, Facebook, blogs, talk shows, political debates, discourse of reading texts in selected textbooks and course books, and discourse of memetic communities. Here are some examples of specific topics presented at the conference: interdisciplinary variations of metadiscourse strategies in research articles; comparison of academic discourse written by professionals and graduate students; epistemic modality in linguistics thesis written by Czech students of English; disfluency markers and their functions in learner spoken discourse; English lexical collocations in textbooks for learners of English; comparison of the use of genitives in L1 and L2 English discourses; intercultural variation of research article introductions in linguistics and its pedagogical implications; humorous response tokens in talk show discourse; the interplay between the orbital, periodic and prosodic patterns in the generic structure of hard news; social networking sites and memetic communities; the iconic geometry of a linguistically effective website; multimodality in the limelight: layout of European theatres' websites; Facework and relational work in English as a *lingua franca* – a contrastive study of trip advisor responses; non-standard Arabic spelling in Facebook discourse.

These and other talks initiated extensive discussion of the presented issues, exchange of pedagogical and scientific views and experiences as well as establishing scientific contacts between academic communities in different countries. Also, this conference gave its participants an opportunity for socializing events, as well as visiting the beautiful sights of the city and familiarizing with its history and culture.