IADA Workshop

(Inter)faces of dialogue: Constructing identity through language use

5 – 7 June 2014

Transilvania University of Braşov (Romania)

The topic of the latest IADA workshop – *(Inter)faces of dialogue: Constructing identity through language use* – that was organized at *Transilvania* University of Braşov (Romania), between 5-7 June 2014, started from the premise that there are various ways people talk, dress or behave and, in doing so, they are displaying various identities. There are multiple identities – some of them are wanted, while some others are unwanted – and a speaker faces a dilemma to choose the best identity for a certain situation and this "browsing" of identities may be achieved through dialogue. In approaching the topic of this workshop, we start from the idea that humans are dialogic beings, users and learners of language in various contexts. While acting and reacting in ever-changing environments (interpersonal or institutional), people try "to achieve more or less effectively certain purposes in dialogic interaction" (Weigand 2008: 3).

The academic interest for social relationships and the way they are organized in dialogues can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century, once Malinowski first suggested in 1923 that humans share "phatic communion". Scholars in interpersonal communication, social psychology and sociology have ever since highlighted that the concept of identity is important for studying the organization of social life.

Individuals use language to construct an identity (or a set of identities) for themselves, while communities use language as a means of identifying their members and of establishing boundaries. Once an individual adheres to a group or a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998), (s)he will adopt (and sometimes adapt) the existing linguistic conventions of that group.

The papers presented at this workshop looked at the ways in which identity is created and reflected in dialogic action games. There were 56 individual and co-authored presentations that explored topics in the following areas:

- Construction of personal and group identity
- Construction of identity through mass-media
- Construction of identity in computer-mediated communication

- Identity construction and humour
- Names and naming practices
- Construction of identity in literary texts
- Construction of cultural identity in minority languages
- Identity and representation

The presenters came from Europe (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Poland, UK), from the Americas (Brazil, Canada, Mexico, USA) and even from Asia (Singapore, Taiwan).

The workshop also included 4 plenary presentations which were delivered by Edda WEIGAND (University of Münster, Germany) – *Identity as a dialogic concept*, Jean-Michel ELOY (Université de Picardie Jules Verne, France) – *Obscur éclat de la notion d'identité*, Billy CLARK (Middlesex University, London, UK) – *Implicature, influence and intertextuality*, and Bálint Péter FURKÓ (Károli Gáspár University, Hungary) – *From Mediatized Political Discourse to The Hobbit: The Role of Pragmatic Markers in the Construction of Dialogues*. In their speeches, the plenary speakers started from the idea that identity has been investigated from different perspectives and there are therefore numerous ways of interpreting this concept, trying to give their own view on *identity* and to demonstrate the dialogic nature of the concept.

In the end of the workshop, the organizers invited participants at a round table in order to draw some conclusions after two days of intensive and thought-provoking discussions. The main conclusion was that humans are cultural and dialogic beings who are always in contact, creating and being influenced by an ever-changing environment. Since there are many selves, there will always be various identities, which are fluid, dynamic, changing at every moment.