


EDITORIAL

This issue of **Synergy**, the Journal of the Department of Modern Languages and Business Communication, (2/2013), continues the conversations begun at the international conference *Improving Standards of Quality in Language Education and Research*, co-organised by The Romanian Association for Quality Language Services QUEST Romania, the Department of Modern Languages of The Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE) and the European project 'ISQALE' (LLP-2011-GRU-LP-20), in the spring of 2013.

Building on synergies, this interdisciplinary forum benefited from the participation of most distinguished plenary speakers and panellists - Professor John Swales (The University of Michigan, USA), Mr. Frank Heyworth and Mrs. Ludka Kotarska, representing the international association EAQUALS (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services), Dr. Galya Mateva (OPTIMA, Bulgaria, coordinator of the 'ISQALE' project), Professor Carmen Pérez-Llantada (University of Zaragoza, Spain), Professor Rodica Mihăilă (Romanian-U.S. Fulbright Commission), Mr. Cătălin Nedin (Goethe Institut Bukarest). Experts and scholars who facilitated the exchange of expertise among the over 150 participants from 10 countries included Mrs. Valnea Bressan (the Croatian Association of Foreign Languages), Mrs. Panagiota Bourtsoukli (QLS, Greece), Mrs. Nora Menia (British Council Algeria and the 'StartUp' project), Mr. Ovidiu Ursa and Prof. Anca Colibaba (QUEST Romania), Assoc. Prof. Mirela Bardi, Prof. Corina Lascu-Cilianu, Prof. Georgeta Ghiga, Prof. Mariana Nicolae (ASE Bucharest).

Most of the articles in this issue are based on presentations delivered at the conference and reflect their authors' interest in the quality dimension of language education, professional development and academic research.

The opening section addresses the overarching theme of **Interdisciplinary and Cultural Synergies**, through Gene Tanta's article - PERFORMING VULNERABILITY TO CONTEST CYNICISM: MODELING THE POWER OF INQUIRY. Starting from a philosophical question - "How might we learn to use Socratic inquiry and Diogenic modeling to strengthen our teaching?" - the author reflects on his personal experience as a language arts teacher in both American and Romanian Universities, as well as on the effects of cross-cultural exchange during his one year stay in Romania as a Senior Fulbright Scholar.

The section **EFL and ESP Teaching and Learning** includes three articles from three different educational environments – Spain (a secondary education context), Algeria (teacher development and the English Language Centre 'StartUp' project) and Romania (ESP-teaching in Higher Education). The first one - ORAL SKILLS IN THE SPOTLIGHT: EFL IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN A SPANISH LOCAL CONTEXT, by Ana María Hornero, Pilar Mur-Dueñas and Ramón Plo – reports on the outcomes of a survey conducted among teachers and students, with a view to exploring and comparing their views on the development of oral communication skills in English. Mohamed Tahar Asses' article – TASK DIFFERENTIATION TO ENHANCE MIXED-ABILITY LEARNERS' RECEPTIVE SKILLS – builds on the author's rich experience as a teacher trainer in the Algerian context and the North-African region. It includes innovative suggestions for adapting and differentiating reading and listening tasks to suit the learners' varying abilities. In her article on SOFT SKILLS FOR THE ENGINEERING STUDENTS, Dana Sorana Urs highlights the importance of facilitating the students' developing soft skills, in addition to technical expertise. The paper proposes various tasks and video-materials that might help develop the students' self-knowledge, intuition and creativity. We can, thus, see that despite the contextual differences that have generated these studies, they reflect their authors' shared values and preoccupations for finding the best possible solutions for enhancing the learners' communication effectiveness.

The third section, **Teacher Development and Quality Assurance in Higher Education**, consists of two articles, both from the Spanish Higher Education context. The first one - TEACHING FUTURE TEACHERS WITHIN THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION FRAMEWORK, by Pilar Gonzalez-Vera – is based on a Needs Analysis survey among student-teachers (future teachers of English). The findings throw light on the respondents' perceived difficulties in various skill areas, as well as on their preferences for certain activity types, all these leading to the author's revising the Teacher Training course, in terms of both content and approach. NEW CHALLENGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE: THE PEER MENTORING PROGRAMME AT THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND GERMAN PHILOLOGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ZARAGOZA (SPAIN), by Silvia Pellicer-Ortín, comprises an in-depth analysis of the innovative peer-mentoring system developed at the University of Zaragoza (thus taking further the initial framework described in Beatriz Oria and Oana Carciu's article "Evaluation of the Peer Mentoring Project at the University of Zaragoza, Spain", published in *Synergy*, 2011). The author highlights the importance of "human interaction and networking" for fostering "human values and interpersonal competences at the university level", while consolidating high quality standards, especially in difficult times. Similarly to the articles in the previous section, also these two articles underline the key role of human values and attitudes, alongside shared ethical and educational values.

The section on **Applied Linguistics** includes four articles. The first three are in German and are based on a comparative analysis of linguistic aspects in German and Romanian. The first one - FRAGEN UND ANTWORTEN ZU EINEM GLOSSAR DER FALSCHEN FREUNDE DEUTSCH-RUMÄNISCH, by Adriana Ionescu – discusses possible criteria for selecting the most appropriate lexical items to include in a bilingual glossary of false friends. The author suggests adopting a mixed approach to glossary structuring, so as to benefit different categories of target users (e.g. linguists, language learners, language professionals). Vlad Cucu-Oancea's article EINIGE BEOBACHTUNGEN ZU HOMONYMEN UND PARONYMEN GLEICHER HERKUNFT IM DEUTSCHEN UND RUMÄNISCHEN – is based on a contrastive analysis of the mechanisms existing in German and in Romanian for adapting and assimilating Greek and Latin borrowings, from a formal and functional point of view. The discussion includes the analysis of an etymologically grounded lexical category, that of etymological doublets. The third article in this series, Maria Parasca's study EIN QUANTITATIVER VERGLEICH - RUMÄNISCH-DEUTSCH - DER FACHSPRACHEN DER RECHNUNGSLEGUNG. EINIGE ANMERKUNGEN AUS ÜBERSETZERSICHT, applies corpus linguistics methods to the comparative analysis of the Romanian and the German specialised languages of accounting, with a focus on their specific professional collocations. One of the author's aims is that of offering specialised translators a reliable tool for separating collocations from fixed phrases, and of helping them take documented decisions in the translation process, when there are several possible (partial) equivalents available.

The fourth article in this section - Zinaida-Tamara Fedot's NOUVELLES TENDANCES DANS L'EVOLUTION DE LA LANGUE RUSSE (PROLEGOMENES A L'ETUDE CONTRASTIVE DU VOCABULAIRE ECONOMIQUE) – explores the transition tendencies prevailing in current day Russian, whose vocabulary experiences a considerable enrichment through borrowings from foreign languages, esp. English. As an example of multilingualism in action, this article is written in French and focuses on comparisons between the specific processes and instruments at work in Romanian and Russian for borrowing and adapting economic terms from e.g. English.

The section **Innovative Approaches to Language Teaching and Learning through International Projects** includes two articles, both of them illustrating the relevance of innovative projects for stimulating creativity and enhancing positive language learning experiences: LEARN FOREIGN LANGUAGES THROUGH DRAMA, by Cristina Anca Colibaba, Andreea Corina Cleminte, Claudia Elena Dinu, and 'THE NARRATIVE FORMAT' FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING LANGUAGES TO CHILDREN AND ADULTS, by Traute Taeschner, Anca Colibaba, Irina Gheorghiu. Both articles reveal the importance and potential of new educational approaches to motivate learners, while also encouraging inter-generational learning.

The **Book Review** section by James Moulder, entitled *SALMAN RUSHDIE AND MULTIPLE IDENTITIES. NORTHERN IRELAND: BORDER COUNTRY. TWO BOOKS BY ROXANA MARINESCU*, with its focus on intercultural aspects from various perspectives, helps close the loop opened by cultural synergies.

In the hope that you will enjoy reading the articles in this journal, we would like to thank all the contributors, as well as our peer-reviewers. We also hope that you will find the debates initiated here inspirational and look forward to your future articles.

Laura Mureşan