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- 1 Today's social challenges such as economic growth, employability or knowledge transfer seem to be out of the scope of Applied Linguistics, as an area of study and research. This selection of papers adopts an innovative approach in setting out to demonstrate the opposite – Applied Linguistics can bring significant contribution to today's core societal challenges. Throughout its twelve chapters, this volume argues for the huge potential of Applied Linguistics to serve as a bridge and build complex connections and mutually beneficial collaborations between academia and the non-academic community in a number of key research domains, such as health sciences, artificial intelligence or bio-medicine, to mention a few. As the articles adopt diverse approaches (theoretical, quantitative and qualitative) and cut across key areas of enquiry in current Applied Linguistics research, the book can appeal to a wide range of readers (scholars, students, as well as policy makers, education providers and curriculum developers).
- 2 In the paper entitled “*Applied Linguistics at the Interface between scholarly research and society*”, which serves as introduction to the book, **Ana Bocanegra Valle** endeavours to

explore the three key areas of inquiry – knowledge transfer, internationalisation and employability. The first area of inquiry addressed, *knowledge transfer*, is seen as a two-way exchange process whose impact and benefits are multi-layered in that it can be accomplished across many different levels – local, regional, national, transnational and international. Furthermore, the wide range of channels through which knowledge and technology are shared and transferred from research institutions to industry and vice versa are pinpointed. The second area of inquiry which the volume is concerned with is *internationalisation*. The latter is viewed as an overarching driver for higher education institutions, in line with Hudzik’s notion of comprehensive internationalisation, “the means by which higher education institutions respond to widening and more complex expectations to connect globally across all missions to better serve students, clientele, and society in a twenty-first century context” (Hudzik 2015:1). The added value of this paper lies in the broad perspective it adopts on internationalisation as encompassing also staff and academics, instead of being limited to students only. The third area of enquiry addressed in this paper is *social challenges*, among which *employability* is given a special attention. *Employability*, meaning “having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful” (Dacre Pool & Sewell 2007: 280). In the closing section of this paper, Bocanegra Valle (2020: 12) claims that “Applied Linguistics can positively contribute to the development of the knowledge and skills required in employment-related contexts” by providing the necessary indicators to education stakeholders and policy makers in order for them to reduce disparities between the training offered and job market needs. This would involve aligning graduates’ transversal skills with those sought and valued by employers, thereby enhancing social projection in higher education. This introductory paper definitely sets the tone of the whole work by positing that Applied Linguistics is at the heart of the core societal challenges.

- 3 Further to addressing the above-mentioned issues, the volume puts forward the intricate connections between them and the twelve chapters in this volume are organised accordingly. Thus, the book is divided into three parts, each containing four chapters targeting one of the three areas of enquiry – knowledge transfer, internationalisation and employability.
- 4 To begin with, part one, with its four chapters, addresses knowledge transfer dynamics and puts forward the diverse opportunities that knowledge transfer can open up for Applied Linguistics researchers. The significant contribution of linguistics in such key areas of research as artificial intelligence (AI) and bio-medicine is given very interesting attention by **Ricardo Mairal-Usón** and **Pamela Faber** in “*Linguistic Research in the 21st Century: Looking Beyond*”. The paper seeks to unveil the vast opportunities and perspectives open to linguistic research at the crossroads with computational science, health sciences and biology. As is argued, linguists are crucial in incorporating world knowledge into AI and NLP (Natural Language Processing) systems, since information processing applications deal with natural language. Thus, a close collaboration between linguists and computer scientists could enhance human-computer interaction, make NLP systems and applications more intelligent, and data storage and mining more accurate and efficient, so as to bring improvements in everyday life (travel safety, medical records, public and private administration, architectural design, engineering, etc.). In the field of health sciences, linguists could carry out research in close collaboration with neurobiologists to work out mechanisms for enhancing diagnosis

and treatment of a number of diseases and disorders that are linked to language deficits (e.g. dyslexia, autism, etc.). The chapter also addresses neurodegenerative diseases which are defined as the greatest medical challenge of the 21st century. A particular attention is given to Alzheimer's disease (involving memory disorder and a severe language impairment) and oncological brain tumour resection in speech areas of the brain. Finally, in the field of biology, two lines of research are addressed, one tracing the origins of language and the other, targeting the origin of evolutionary novelties. A close collaboration of biologists and linguists could lead to a model of human biology which would account for the appearance of language and human cultures on the one hand, and on the other – help find empirical evidence of homologous organs of language, though perhaps with different, non-linguistic functions and forms, present in the brains of other animals. Furthermore, research conducted from the perspective of evolutionary developmental biology may very well provide valuable insights into diagnoses and treatments of language disorders. The starting point for this study was the premise that despite the proliferation of linguistic theories in the 20th century, there have been great disparities between academic and professional worlds, with significant advances in the former and a minimal impact on the latter. Drawing on this premise, the authors argue for a more central position of linguistics in research agendas that address key social issues as defined in two official documents: *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and *The Development of Sustainable Goals* adopted by heads of state and government at a special United Nations summit in 2015.

- 5 A study of the application of information technologies to the writing and editing of texts in both a mother tongue and a foreign language is presented by **Sven Tarp** in the article entitled “*Integrated Writing Assistants and Their Possible Consequences for Foreign-Language Writing and Learning*”. This study is a deep reflection on the relationship between new disruptive technologies and lexicography and ways in which the former impact the latter in its four main dimensions, namely, the presentation, compilation, usage and financing of lexicographical products. Four major transformations are discussed: from *printed* to *digital* dictionary, from *standardised* to *personalised*, from *stand-alone* dictionary to *integrated* dictionary (i.e., dictionaries integrated into other information and learning tools) and finally from the *dictionary as such* to *lexicographical data* for different uses. With the advent of information technologies, AI and NLP systems and tools have become increasingly prevalent in our daily life. Sven Tarp contends that this tendency is irreversible and argues for the absolute need to adapt to this reality by integrating these new tools and systems into our daily life. It is shown that this challenge can be addressed by developing *integrated information* tools. The chapter focuses on the example of *digital writing assistants*, combining dictionaries and corpora and designed to speed up the writing and editing processes and help learners of a foreign language. Writing assistants are integrated into text-processing programmes and work on different digital devices, such as laptops, smartphones or tablets. Their key functionalities, such as detecting and correcting mistakes, predicting and suggesting completion of words, translative assistance, just to mention a few, are detailed in this chapter. Sections 5-7 provide a detailed description of the usage and functionalities (foreign language learning and writing, text production and revision) of Write Assistant, an integrated information tool developed by the Danish high-tech company Ordbogen A/S (a provider of language services and online dictionaries). Further to discussing the perspectives of development of this tool, the challenges in

terms of a new dictionary design adapted to Write Assistant are outlined. The author quite rightly questions the consequences of the continuous use of such tools on users' language learning abilities and writing skills. The need to consider new distribution of tasks between man and machine and addressing undesirable consequences is also underlined. There is a concern with maintaining the role of technology as assisting and not taking over or replacing man. The detailed analyses and explanations provided in this chapter, will be of utmost interest to lexicographers, dictionary users, but also specialists in mother-tongue and second-language didactics.

- 6 Following on these aspects, **Jonás Fouz-González** warns against the all technology approach in language learning in *"Using the English File Pronunciation App for Pronunciation Training: The Learners' Views"*. Drawing on Healey's claim (1999, cited in Levy/Stockwell 2006: 191) that "technology alone does not create language learning any more than dropping a learner into the middle of a large library does", Jonás Fouz-González advocates for the need for carefully designing the use of technology in language learning based on sound research and pedagogical foundations. Thus, an important distinction is made between the availability of information and mastery of a foreign language (FL). Indeed, technological developments have transformed the way information and knowledge are stored and mined and today learners have access to an extensive array of resources. However, those resources should not be brought into classrooms or put at learners' disposal unless they truly contribute to and facilitate language learning. In this respect, the chapter focuses on pronunciation, as a competence for which the use of technology can be most beneficial and examines the ways in which technology can enhance pronunciation training in the classroom or outside it. In this study, Fouz-González offers an interesting perspective, in that not only does he explore the potential of technological tools in language learning, but he also enquires into learners' willingness to use apps for autonomous pronunciation training and language learning in general, outside the classroom. The students' recommendations to improve the training offered by the app gathered and presented in this study, represent a real added-value. The findings of this study can be of interest to learners, teachers as well as app developers.
- 7 In the concluding chapter of part one, **Carmen Sancho Guinda** addresses the notion of entrepreneurship as a key lifelong learning competency fostered by the Bologna Process in many European countries. In *"The Discourse of Engineering Students' Entrepreneurial Proposals at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid"*, the key role of the two intricately linked terms, entrepreneurship and innovation is studied in the context of higher education. An emphasis is put on the four transversal skills underlying the notions of innovation and entrepreneurship, namely: creativity, critical thinking, motivation and autonomy. This study focuses on the students' output of the very first stage of the Actúa-UPM contest, a competition of business ideas among different schools so as to detect participants' communicative needs, their capacity to communicate ideas succinctly and thereby establish the bases for a permanent collaboration between language and content teachers. This is a small-scale corpus-driven study with a qualitative approach carried out within the framework of the Mater's course in Industrial Design Engineering. It evaluates UPM students' proposal writing strategies: whether they promote their innovations with an explicit sales pitched tone or whether they use implicit persuasive strategies. To analyse the type of communication required as well as the register and tone adopted by students, Sancho Guinda draws on three persuasive strategies from Classical Rhetoric (namely logos,

ethos, pathos) for her analysis of discursive features. The findings of the study point to the predominance of stylistic hybridity or promotional interlanguage as the entrepreneurial discourse of the UPM proposals included features of engineering writing, academic writing and computer-mediated communication. With this study the author makes the case for a close collaboration between content and language teachers in co-teaching the discourse of the discipline. To this end, applied linguists and professionals from sciences and technologies could cooperate by bringing together their respective expertise in order to help students improve their writing and communication skills.

- 8 The second part brings together four chapters that make internationalisation the core of the discussions. Interestingly, however, though the four studies target mobility programmes, they contend that a study abroad experience alone does not guarantee linguistic and cultural gains. They call for a new perspective on internationalisation, one which would address more students and also take forms other than a period of time spent at a foreign country.
- 9 To meet today's globalised and interconnected world's demands, universities increasingly focus on internationalisation, a topic which is taken up in the next four chapters. Hence, **Elspeth Jones's** study on "*The Role of Languages in Transformational Internationalisation*" places internationalisation at the core of its inquiries and examines the potential benefits and outcomes of student mobility. In doing so, the chapter adopts a shift in perspective by calling for a broader view on internationalisation, that of *inclusive internationalisation*, which extends beyond students' mobility programmes and includes all stakeholders (students, staff and society at large) by involving them in purposeful engagement with cultural others in their own localities. Jones addresses the possibility of delivering internationalised curricula at students' home universities to mitigate the fact that only the minority of students can actually benefit from mobility programmes. Furthermore, the study focuses on the *transformational* outcomes of internationalisation, by advocating the need to measure the qualitative outcomes of international mobility, that is, what mobility students and staff have gained from their experience (in particular in terms of personal, transferable and employability skills development), instead of simply counting the number of participants involved in such programmes. Beyond linguistic and intercultural competence developed through internationalisation efforts, two other important sets of outcomes are put forward: namely improved academic achievement and a significant gain in interpersonal and transferable employability skills. The treatment of internationalisation in this chapter is interesting, as it is associated with another key social challenge – employability. Jones claims that a clearer and more direct articulation of the impact of international experiences would facilitate graduate employability, thus linking internationalisation and employability, two key areas of inquiry addressed in the present volume.
- 10 Finally, this chapter examines the extent to which transformational internationalisation and languages are intertwined. Internationalisation experience can indeed transform mindsets in important ways, as the efforts needed to think and speak in a different language can help develop intercultural communicative competence, challenging one's beliefs and assumptions and thereby bringing about the transformation of mindsets. Most importantly, it is argued that in order for all students to benefit from the potential offered by international experiences, a more inclusive

approach to internationalisation must be adapted by implementing *interculturalisation* at home.

- 11 In line with the concerns addressed in the previous study, chapter six discusses the current challenges posed by internationalisation efforts, among which, the difficulties faced by mobility students to engage in meaningful interactions with native speakers in the study abroad contexts. In light of these concerns, in the study entitled “*Service-Learning and Social Networks in Study Abroad Contexts: Engaging international students in the Host Communities*”, **Carmen Carracelas-Juncal** argues for the need to adapt host country curriculum to the current needs and challenges of study abroad students. She holds that the integration of service-learning into study-abroad curriculum can be a means of providing students with opportunities to engage with frequent and meaningful interactions with native speakers and thereby giving them the opportunity to become valued members of locally established social networks. Furthermore, she points to the key role of home institution involvement to guarantee better outcomes of the mobility programme by delivering pre-departure and abroad follow-up components (preparation in intercultural strategies, post-study abroad debriefing sessions). In the section entitled “Abroad is less abroad than it once was”, Carracelas-Juncal endeavours to sketch the current study-abroad reality and pinpoints a number of obstacles to achieving the hoped-for study abroad immersion experience, such as staying connected with home, speaking the home language with family, making friends with peers from the home country, thanks to technologies and virtual social networks, or the use of English as a lingua franca among international students. The findings of the research highlight the need for promoting more frequent and meaningful contact with native speakers to enhance study abroad students’ language and culture attainments.
- 12 In “*Constructing and Reconstructing Attitudes towards Language Learning in Study Abroad*” **Vasi Mocanu** and **Enric Llorca** focus on language learning opportunities carried by mobility programmes. It is a common belief that study abroad programmes provide a good environment for language learning. However, as Kinginger (2011) points out, studying abroad is not a magic formula for language learning *per se*. He puts forward the importance of programmes that foster observation, participation, and reflection by the students about the sociolinguistic context. In line with these recommendations, this chapter draws on a research project whose aim was to investigate the ways in which attitudes towards languages and language learning are constructed and reconstructed by European students during a study abroad period. The project included a total of 465 international students enrolled in three different universities: Finland, Romania, and Catalonia (Spain). However, the qualitative analysis presented in the study derives from a smaller pool of 155 participants, who were given Likert-scale questionnaires. Those questionnaires were administered at the beginning and at the end of the study abroad programmes and were organised around three main themes: identity, prospects of future mobility, and language attitudinal factors. The results of the study show that the motivation and the degree of investment of the participants in each language might be correlated with the perceived economic value of the languages. Hence, a significantly higher importance is assigned to English as compared to other local languages considered in the study (e.g. Romanian or Catalan). Finally, as the study shows, there is a clear disparity between expectations and reality, which entails a significant decrease in motivation of study abroad students to learn the local languages.

- 13 A different stance on internationalisation is taken by **Oana Maria Carciu** and **Laura-Mihaela Muresan** in *“There Are So Many Dimensions of Internationalization”*. This study, which concludes the second part of the book, focuses on English, as a lingua franca, and its central role in mediating the production and transfer of knowledge, as well as its impact in the process of internationalisation. This chapter contributes to the understanding of how academics perceive the impact of internationalisation across the three key themes: teaching, learning and research activities. These three aspects were the focus of the semi-structured interviews conducted with academics and discussed in this chapter in light of the respondents’ perception of opportunities and challenges related to internationalisation. The study is based on a qualitative, single-case study research, involving ten interviews of academics from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies in Romania. The recorded and transcribed interviews were analysed using Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software, *ATLAS.ti 8/2/0* and revealed the respondents’ (academic staff) complex and nuanced understanding of internationalisation as a multi-dimensional phenomenon offering opportunities for international and local students to exchange experience and socialise, and for the academic staff – to carry out joint research programmes.
- 14 The third and last part of this volume comprises four chapters which cover some of the current challenges faced by today’s society and to which, as the authors suggest, Applied Linguistics can contribute positively. In *“Pronunciation and International Employability”* **Martha C. Pennington** addresses the issue of linguistic stereotyping and argues that pronunciation can be a major factor in employability. Pronunciation can impede communication in terms of intelligibility, but as is made clear by the author, besides being crucial to intelligibility and comprehensibility, pronunciation is important in that it can be used by listeners to make value judgments and profile a person in terms of intelligence, education, social class or origin. This is eloquently illustrated by the examples given in the paper, which clearly show how pronunciation-related features like pitch, intonation, voice quality, speed and pacing can cause communication difficulties and decrease comprehensibility with a negative impact upon job-related performance. Though pronunciation difficulties can occur in any context, in job-related communication, this issue can be particularly critical as it can affect speakers’ employability in specific countries and types of work (e.g. pronunciation of numbers in sales or medicine). Considering today’s discussions that support English as a lingua franca for international communication purposes, particularly within the framework of multilingual educational policies in Europe, Pennington’s discussion on accent and linguistic stereotyping may appear controversial as, so she claims, “[a]n accent which is accepted in one setting or for certain kinds of work can make a person unemployable in another setting or for other kinds of work, even if the person is understandable and highly qualified, for the fact that the accent is unfamiliar or is negatively valued, stereotyped or stigmatized” (page 234). Section 6 is particularly interesting as it presents some compensatory strategies (focusing on sound in context, attending to intonation, and eliminating stereotyped features) that can make a difference in the way speakers are perceived.
- 15 Following on from this, **Troy B. Wiwczarowski** and **Mária Czeller** explore the *“Disparities Between Foreign Language Skills Taught in Higher Education and Job Market Needs”* and endeavour to offer suggestions for remedying them through cooperation. Drawing on the example of the job market of the Hungarian city of Debrecen, the

authors advocate the need for higher education institutions to provide students with marketable skills, those sought for by employers. Soft skills are pinpointed as being more important than academic qualifications and as constituting the basic demand of employers along with solid IT and foreign language skills. An interesting treatment of the question of authenticity, or rather its lack, is carried out when it comes to using authentic documents and texts in both the teaching and testing of language skills. Based on Widdowson's (1978) and Bachmann's (1990) conceptualisation of authenticity, two levels of authenticity are addressed: *situation authenticity*, which refers to the extent to which the task is an accurate representation of some language activity which occurs naturally in everyday life and *interactional authenticity*, which denotes the interface between test task and test taker, and reflects the attempt to use situations and tasks which are likely to be familiar and relevant to the intended test taker at the given level. The authors urge universities to forge connections with local and regional employers to conduct needs assessments and identify and meet the skills expected by prospective employers.

- 16 On a different note, the last two chapters address the phenomenon of immigration and the role of women in the professions, two social challenges that are gaining ground. First, **Penny MacDonald** and **Llum Bracho** investigate university students' attitudes towards immigration in "*What Do Young People Think of the Phenomenon of Immigration? A Corpus-Based Study of University Students' Ideas and Attitudes as Expressed in EFL Classes*". The study draws on a corpus of 150 university students, including two different sub corpora – productions of Spanish and visiting Erasmus students. The aim of the study is to analyse the written compositions collected from students learning English as a foreign language at a technical university on the topic of immigration to analyse the attitudes to the phenomenon of immigration. While analysing attitudes to immigration, many variables are to be considered: among others, economic situation of the receiving country, levels of unemployment, religion and identity, country of origin of migrants. The research findings revealed some notable differences concerning the attitudes found in certain groups and thereby put into light the need to investigate gender differences, as well as societal, individual and media influences on attitudes to immigration, especially among young people.
- 17 Finally, in a concluding study entitled "*Multimodal Women Engineers' Identity Construction*", **Silvia Molina-Plaza** and **Samira Allani** explore the ways in which linguistic and visual semiotic resources are deployed to represent women engineers in their professional identities. In particular, the chapter examines the multimodal communicative strategies adopted by The Women's Engineering Society (WES) to overcome different levels of barriers women face in engineering, foster gender diversity and inclusion. This multimodal rhetorical strategy is based on simultaneously tapping into different semiotic modes and resources, such as verbal, visual, audio or video. By introducing multimodal analysis, this chapter aims to present women engineers as competent professionals and construct their professional identity. Section 3 provides an interesting analysis. It starts by analysing the design features contributing to the creation of web messages through verbal and visual elements; next, it discusses the hierarchy of themes present across the WES homepage, then, the topic of role models for women engineers is discussed in the Role Models section; finally, the chapter discusses the cases of two female engineers, a leading physicist and a mechanical engineer.

- 18 To conclude, the studies developed across the twelve chapters in this volume endeavour to reveal that Applied Linguistics is at the intersection of today's societal needs, demands and challenges, and that it is the role of universities and higher education programmes to build fruitful collaborations with the specialists of other disciplines as well as with non-academic communities in order to keep up with such challenges.
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