

Rethinking ICL20 (Cape Town, July 2-6, 2018)

The International Congress of Linguists (ICL), the largest event in the domain, is held every five years. It enables scholars from all over the world to exchange views on urgent problems of modern linguistics, thus contributing to international academic cooperation. I was privileged to attend the 20th International Congress of Linguists in Cape Town, South Africa in July 2018. It was undoubtedly one of the brightest events in my life.

I learned about the International Congress of Linguists in spring 2017 and submitted a proposal shortly after. I had been dealing for a long time with matters of translation, cognitive linguistics, and contrastive semantics in Germanic languages and I assumed that the results of my interdisciplinary study could be of interest to my colleagues. By the end of 2017 I was happy to learn that my submission was accepted. Another six months of impatient expectation... and finally, on July 1 2018, after a 15-hour flight, my plane landed at Cape Town International Airport. The next day the participants of the Congress were welcomed at the opening ceremony.

I was quite excited by the sight of the Cape Town International Convention Centre, the venue for the Congress. This huge building, able to accommodate thousands of people, is majestic and comfortable. The scope of the Congress was tremendous, with five days of strenuous work, over 600 attendees presenting more than 460 talks, 9 plenary lectures, 10 focus lectures, and 27 sessions and workshops. The Congress Programme was published as a 30-page print and its online version appeared on 76 pages.



The main subject of the congress was 'The Dynamics of Language'. This notion includes both diachronic changes taking place in the language throughout its history and those arising due to language contacts and the effect of society. The major trends of the Congress were language contacts, multilingualism, genetic relationships of languages, language typology, corpora, psycholinguistics, language acquisition, language variation, sign languages, and others. Each of these trends was represented by a number of workshops. Because of several sessions held simultaneously, the attendees had an embarrassment of choice. Everything was of utmost interest: plenary lectures, focus lectures, talks, and, of course, discussions: discussions following the talks, discussions at lunch and coffee breaks, discussions in the rooms and on the stairs, discussions, discussions, discussions – I had a feeling that the whole world around me was turning into one communicating stream. It was somewhat strange and exciting to watch lots of people communicating on communication.

All that created a unique atmosphere of academic cooperation. It has always seemed to me that scholars arriving at a conference are to some extent just like children, they easily get to know each other and find common topics for conversation. I had a chance to meet colleagues from many countries, exchange views on issues of mutual interest, and stay in contact after the Congress.

In my case, discussions continued until late even beyond the Congress. Preferring a homestay to a hotel (which I strongly recommend to all those willing to get acquainted with the country and its people), I stayed for a week with my friends, Ronald and Hilda Bailey, an ex-lecturer and an ex-librarian of Cape Town University, now retired. These kind, amiable and well-educated people made me love Africa. My impression of it grew deeper as I participated in excursions offered during the Congress. I saw a large and beautiful country and its kind, strong, active people contributing to its prosperity. Cape Town is a large modern city and its residents are quite friendly.



I came back from the Congress with lots of impressions, photos, notes and, of course, books. These are books on linguistics, a collection of plenary reports, and a heap of books on Afrikaans and in Afrikaans. As I deal with Germanic languages I have always been interested in Afrikaans and contacts with native speakers reinforced the desire to learn it. Now I am making the first steps in this language and I enjoy it.

I am most grateful to CIPL, President of Congress Rajend Mesthrie, the Scientific Board and the Organizing Team of the Congress, who did their best to hold the event at the highest level. I remember with affection the Congress participants, my colleagues, my new friends Ron and Hilda – I really miss them all.

The Congress means a lot to me. It gave me a deeper insight into the main problems of modern linguistics. It gave me a privilege to convey my ideas to a new audience and receive a warm response and encouragement. The five days of the Congress were most

seminal and the scope of knowledge I have acquired is immense. Last but not least, the Congress gave me a new vision of Africa. The experience that I have is invaluable.

I would very much like to live it again in four years, at the next International Congress of Linguists...

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