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## Report on the XI International Congress of MAPRIAL Varna Free University, Bulgaria September 2007

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**Report on the XI International Congress of MAPRIAL  
Varna Free University, Bulgaria  
September 2007**

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This overview of the papers at the MAPRIAL XI Congress in Varna focuses on presentations in linguistic analysis. Other overviews concentrate on the presentations in other areas. There were a great many highly compelling papers dealing with linguistic analysis, including presentations by some linguists whose names will be very familiar to those who follow this discipline. The papers' topics ran the gamut from the history and development of Russian to those focusing on the analysis of contemporary Russian, as well as those looking ahead to how Russian may be changing, including current developments in colloquial language and slang. A particular reference which arose several times in different places and contexts – including in the remarks made by Evgenij Evtušenko at the poetry evening before he read some of his works – was the penetration and ubiquitous use of *как бы* in speech and informal writing (e.g., Internet bulletin boards, chat rooms, blogs, etc.). Of course, since there were many parallel sections, it was impossible to attend all of the presentations which were of interest. Many of the papers that focused more on linguistic analysis were concentrated in Sections I, V, and VII.

In the opening session, after the general welcoming addresses and a “поэтическое послание к участникам конгресса” delivered by Evtušenko, there were six plenary papers, including a truly dynamic piece by Stefana Dimitrova (Bulgaria), Принципы сопоставления сопоставительной болгарско–русской грамматики.

Section I, Новое в системно–структурном описании современного русского языка, began the next morning with a session entitled “Структурный, семантический, функциональный аспекты изучения языковых единиц разных уровней. Фонетика и фонология. Морфемика и

морфология.” The session opened with two long information-packed *doklady*, by Majja Vladimirovna Vsevolodova (Russia), Русская грамматика XXI века – грамматика языка функционирующего (наше представление о языке; задачи и перспективы), and Mikhail Epstein (U.S.), О причастиях будущего времени; these were followed by a number of shorter *soobščeniija*. Other sessions in Section I included “Лексикология. Лексическая семантика. Словообразование” and “Синтаксис. Лингвистика текста и дискурс.” Among the papers in “Синтаксис. Лингвистика текста и дискурс” was one by Leonid Iomdin (Russia), Русские конструкции малого синтаксиса, образованные вопросительными местоимениями.

Section V, Русский язык: диахрония и динамика языковых процессов, featured sessions including “Язык древнерусской книжности. Церковнославянский язык,” “Развитие русского языка на протяжении его истории. Становление и эволюция норм литературного языка,” and “Социокультурная и социолингвистическая проблематика литературной нормы. Актуальные процессы в русском языке конца XX–начала XXI столетия.” One of the *doklady* leading the latter session was a compelling study by Marina Jakovlevna Glovinskaja (Russia), Противонаправленные тенденции в русском склонении на рубеже XX и XXI веков.

Section VII, Русский язык в сопоставлении с другими языками, included sessions on “Методология межъязыковых сопоставлений. Проблемы таксономической и объяснительной топологии,” “Прикладные аспекты описания русского языка в сопоставлении с другими языками,” “Проблемы межъязыковой эквивалентности,” and “Универсальное и идиоэтническое в русском языке. Способы языковой кодировки в русском и сопоставляемых с ним языках.” These sessions dealt with a wide range of fascinating topics and problems in the area of comparative and contrastive studies of Russian with a wide variety of other languages, both Slavic (e.g., Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Serbian, and others) and non-Slavic, such as Modern Greek, English, Turkish, Hungarian, and others).

Another noteworthy presentation was the *doklad* in Section VI, Русская лексикография: тенденции развития, by Jurij Derenikovič Apresjan (Russia), Концепция активного словаря русского языка. This was scheduled concurrently with the *doklad* by Vsevolodova in Section I.

In conclusion, the level of quality and incisiveness of the papers was quite high. The Congress was enhanced by invaluable opportunities to meet with colleagues from over 45 countries, and was well worth attending.

### **Круглый стол: Русский язык и языковая идентичность**

The Roundtable on Russian Language and Self-Identity was attended by a relatively small group in terms of presenters and participants, but covered topics of vast and vital importance to those who teach Russian in the Near and Far Abroad. These ranged from the place of Russian in multiethnic societies of the Near Abroad to the ways that one might usefully define and make operational the concept of the Russian Heritage speaker in societies as diverse as India, Japan, France, and the U.S. The roundtable featured presentations from Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Japan, and the U.S., as well as participants from a broad range of countries and disciplines. Two key issues emerged: first, the role of Russian in societies such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and the policies, beliefs, and practices that support individual bilingualism and societal multilingualism in those countries. While it is commonplace to emphasize that perspectives differ depending on one's location, scholars from these countries – such as Professor Eleonora Suleimenova (Kazakh State University) and A.O. Orusbaev, Kyrgyzstan – point out that the policies and practices of the emerging post-Soviet states vary considerably, and are often driven by policy considerations broader than language itself. Nevertheless, Dr. Suleimenova pointed out in her presentation that Kazakhstan has made tremendous strides in establishing the conditions for functional bilingualism (Kazakh-Russian) among the Kazakh members of society, and that the number of Russian-Kazakh bilinguals for the Russophone element of Kazakh society is also increasing. Bill Rivers from ACTR presented extensive data on the relationship of language, prestige, psychosocial factors, and individual identity in light of the ethnic and language policies of Kazakhstan, noting the structural and theoretical difficulties that attend the management of language policies from a top-down perspective, especially in a democratic society. He discussed the fine-tuning of Kazakhstan's language education policies in light of societal reactions; in particular, the desire for all sectors to acquire English and at all levels of education, and how the Kazakh Republic has balanced this with the need to maintain and promote Kazakh-Russian and Russian-Kazakh bilingualism.

Much discussion on heritage learning followed the presentations of G.O. Nikoporets-Takigava (Japan) and S.A. Rozhkov (Bulgaria) on the Russian diasporas in their respective countries. Specifically, the range of identities and *self*-identities encompassed by the term “heritage speaker” remains problematic from the perspective of developing educational materials and programs for such speakers, to the methods of identifying them for censuses, surveys, and other governmental projects. The ability of any one person of Russian extraction to declare herself a heritage speaker of Russian without any underlying psycholinguistic reality stands as one extreme, however much it had been echoed in Soviet censuses, where it was not unknown for fully Russified minority individuals to declare their “родной язык” to be German or Karelian, when in fact the individual had only Russian. A vigorous discussion ensued, with consensus that more detailed research is required to identify typical profiles of Russian heritage speakers in different environments.

#### Section IV

Interdisciplinary by design, Section IV was one of the largest and most varied components at the Congress. Researchers in Section IV – concerned with broad issues such as language, consciousness, and identity – were also focused on the role of Russian in the vast expanse of modern intercultural communication. The sessions in Varna provided vivid proof of the vitality and breadth of contemporary Russian scholarship. A diverse group of researchers in fields ranging from cultural linguistics, semantics, and folklore to literature, art, and communication theory contributed to the vibrant intellectual exchange that characterized the sessions of Section IV.

Those who attended the September 19 afternoon session heard two extended lectures on significant changes in the evolving modern Russian world view. L.G. Babenko delivered a presentation entitled “A View of the World in the Mirror of the Dictionary,” based on research conducted jointly with colleagues at her home institution at the Ural State University. Babenko and others study the processes of categorization and conceptualization as they relate to the formation of synonyms in modern Russian. In their work on an ideographic description of Russian synonyms, she and her colleagues noted the importance of synonyms in forming a fundamental picture of modern Russian culture. N.P. Tropina, from Kherson State University in Ukraine, delivered a related presentation, “A Linguistic Picture of the Russian Ethnos: A Shift of

Stereotypes.” Tropina contends that modern stereotypes reflect today’s new “technocratic” perception of the world. Although older stereotypes persist, these are being challenged, according to Tropina’s research, by newer pictures of the world. Tropina offered a number of examples to support her point, contending that certain uses of language – “Ты отключился?” to a friend who has stopped paying attention, for example – is evidence of a new model of metaphorical nomination. Tropina’s remarks led to a lively discussion of the differences between idiosyncratic individual language use and general societal trends.

In addition to those “доклады,” the session included a number of shorter “сообщения” on conceptual developments in Russian today. Shorter presentations included a thought-provoking discussion of the multi-level nature of stereotypes in spoken language by L.B. Matevosian (Erevan State University, Armenia). Her study of stereotypes was based in part on source material from writers A. Afinogenov, A. Vampilov, and others. Research by L.P. Mukhammad, Kh. I.A. Mukhammad, and N.N. Khetagurova from the Pushkin Institute in Moscow concerned the notion of the individualized subject as an anthropological category in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts. Working from concepts developed by Ushinskii, Vygotsky, and others, the authors suggest the methodological importance of subjectivity for contemporary humanists.

Iu. I. Chakyrova from Paisii Hilendarsk University in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, presented comparative research on the concept of “truth” in Bulgarian and Russian. She offered a systematic approach by studying how both languages treat the concepts of “истина” and “правда.” According to Chakyrova, despite their obvious similarities, the two languages approach this particular semantic field quite differently in the way they relate the concepts to both the sacred and the quotidian spheres. M.S. Shishkov (St. Petersburg State University) based his presentation on the results of research into three overlapping semantic categories. He used the definition of a cultural linguistic concept offered by Zinovieva and Iurkov to identify related concepts of “искренность” (sincerity), “смирение” (meekness), and “утешение” (consolation). His description of the relationships between these concepts was based in part on textual analysis of material gathered from 118 respondents in twenty locations throughout Russia. This far-ranging session of Section IV was rounded out by my own presentation on the role of “Word and Text in Russian Conceptualism.” The written, or

Painted, word plays a distinctive role in the visual art of contemporary Russian conceptual artists. Written texts provided these modern-day visual artists with a viable solution to dilemmas they faced in late Soviet and early post-Soviet Russia.