

## PREFACE

The third issue of volume 8 of *SILC* “Exploring English Studies: Aspects of Language, Culture and the Media” features six papers dealing with different aspects of literature, applied linguistics, as well as contrastive studies and FLT.

The opening paper “Remaking Worlds: The Urban Landscape of *Dombey and Son*” by Belgin Elbir explores Dickens’s presentation of the changing urban landscape and is both a response and a critique of the processes and impact of industrialisation, urbanisation and commercialization. The main argument put forward by the author is that Dickens’s engagement with the scientific culture of the time “informs, the novel’s portrayal of the processes of change and transformation, intended to reveal, to the novel’s readers and characters alike, a historical and expanding vision of the social and natural environment that draws attention, as the plot advances, to the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life, human and non-human” (ibid.).

The issue continues with two papers providing analysis in the broader field of Pragmatics, and more specifically speech acts. The first one, “The Communicative Acts of Sympathy and Condolence in English and Bulgarian – Pragmalinguistic Aspects”, written by Deyana Peneva, dwells on the differences in the syntactic, grammatical and pragmatic structures of two particular phrases expressing condolences. The corpus for the study comprises manually collected phrases used in two sets of modern TV series, two Bulgarian and two British. The focus is on the differences in the illocutionary nature of the utterances used in Bulgarian and English.

The other paper in the same field, “Refusal Strategies Employed by Bulgarian and English Native Speakers with Higher Status Interlocutors”, is by Polina Mitkova, a PhD student at the University of Shumen, and compares the refusal strategies employed by English and Bulgarian native speakers in business settings with interlocutors of a higher status. The author analyses different formulas used in the realization of said acts and finds that refusals towards representatives of a higher status are most frequently realized through the semantic formula Reason/Explanation, followed by Regret/Apology and Negation of the proposition for English native speakers or Statement of fact for Bulgarians.

This third issue of *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT* continues with three papers in the field of education. Irina Ivanova and Gergana Gerova’s article “Bulgarian Students’ Perceptions of Issues and Challenges in Preparing for the English Language Maturity Exam” is based on a survey which provides some insights into students’ reasons for choosing the exam, their preparation, and the difficulties they experience in the language areas and skills tested in the exam.

The authors believe that identified issues should be taken into consideration by those responsible for the compilation and validation of exam papers.

Dealing with the challenges experienced by teachers in their work, in “Teaching Language and Culture with the Consideration of Ethno-Psychological Aspects of Communication”, Tatiana Pochinok, Dana Bartosh and Elena Stoyanova claim that the ethno-psychological aspects of communication (made evident through “different values, perceptions and norms of behaviour of the speakers”) are of paramount importance when teaching language. Therefore, they consider it important that Value and Language capsules be provided, i.e. culture-related texts. The authors present an overview of the research on the topic and also share some of their own observations.

The issue finishes with a paper by Olga Kryuchkova, a post-graduate student at Moscow City Pedagogical University titled “Some Aspects of Multimedia Technology as a Means of Improving the Quality of Foreign Language Teaching”. The focus of the paper is on one particular program – *iSping* and the way it is employed in the teaching of phonetics, grammar and vocabulary. The author discusses some possibilities for the application of the program in the development of e-textbooks.