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Conference Report: International Conference *Lexicography in the XXI Century*, Tbilisi 10-12 November 2023

The international conference *Lexicography in the XXI Century* took place at Ilia State University in Tbilisi and was organized by the Centre for Lexicography and Language Technologies. In the space of three full days, it featured three keynote lectures, 25 regular papers and a poster session with nine posters.

Conferences can be conceived of in two ways. One view of a conference is that it is a vehicle for presenting new ideas, another that it is an occasion for making new contacts and renewing existing ones. Both are important goals, but it is essential to keep a proper balance between them. That a conference is called *international* produces a certain risk in this respect. In an extreme interpretation of the former view, the audience is less important than the confirmation that one has given the presentation at an international conference. I can confirm that such conferences take place, because I found myself attending them and justifying the predicate *international*. This may serve to demonstrate research activity, but it is not very satisfactory otherwise. In an extreme interpretation of the latter view, attendance at the sessions is less important than the conversations during the breaks. I have also attended such conferences. They are often large international conferences with many parallel sessions, which makes it difficult to navigate to a good personal selection for attendance.

The organization of the programme in Tbilisi and the way the delegates shaped it ensured that we stayed well clear of either of these extremes. The absence of parallel sessions brought all participants together in one room, so that we built up a shared experience. The predicate *international* did not depend on only a few invited participants from abroad. With an almost equal share of presentations, scholars from a wide range of European and North American countries ensured a genuine international exchange. Georgian lexicographers and lexicologists took this opportunity to present their work to an international audience and engage in discussions with them. They showed that there

is every reason that in the case of Georgia, international exchange implies a bidirectional mode of communication. The particular historical and linguistic background in Georgia has resulted in specific features of lexicographic relevance that are also interesting for scholars from different backgrounds, if only because they call into question assumptions one has not consciously thought about before. The coffee breaks and the lunch breaks provided opportunities to explore these issues in more detail. If any proof was needed, they showed that a conference in presence is incomparably more fruitful than an online one.

Each day, the programme started with a keynote lecture. The three keynote lectures framed the other presentations by a well-thought selection of topics. On the first day, my presentation focused on the position of theory in lexicography and compared it to the situation in medicine, which can be thought as the prototypical example of applied science. On the second day, Lars Trap-Jensen considered the future of lexicography in view of technical advances in AI, arguing that AI will not make lexicographers redundant, but will raise the standards they are expected to meet. On the final day, Tinatin Margalidze gave an overview of the recent history, current state and future perspectives of lexicography in Georgia. As for many smaller languages, there are specific challenges involved in building adequate corpora, using the opportunities offered by electronic lexicography and promoting the teaching of dictionary use to language users as well as of dictionary-making skills to future lexicographers.

While it would be impossible to mention the topics of all regular papers and posters here and unfair to select only a few, it is worth mentioning that the authors included both established scholars and PhD students. This mix was very fortunate and stimulated the exchange of ideas, because established scholars contributed their extensive knowledge gained from experience, while PhD students often presented new ideas that do not follow traditional patterns.

In the book of abstracts, the conference is presented as the first of a series. Given the quality of the presentations and the fruitful exchange of views they triggered, it is to be hoped that the series will continue building on this experience. It is good to know that there will be a second conference, organized in Batumi.