Call for Papers

Language Contact in Literature: Findings, Problems and New Directions

28-29 May 2027

Institute of World Literature, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava

Confirmed keynote speakers: Haidee Kotze, Haun Saussy

Organising committee: Eugenia Kelbert, Marianna Deganutti, Lucija Mandić

Traditional models of national literatures, we increasingly understand, fail to account for the fundamentally global, transnational and multilingual nature of the literary process. Satisfactory alternatives, however, are still lacking. The rapid expansion of research on literary multilingualism has led to "uncontrolled terminological ambiguity" (Domokos and Deganutti 2023, 51; see also Anokhina & Sciarrino 2018, 13-15). At the same time, the concept of translation is applied to an ever-growing range of literary phenomena. Both tendencies, each in its own way, highlight the pressing need for a precise ontology capable of sustaining an interdisciplinary conversation on how complex linguistic scenarios manifest in literary texts. This conference addresses this need and aims to spark a new dialogue across translation theory, literary multilingualism, translanguaging, world and postcolonial literature, international literary movements and several cognate fields.

Several scholars have already proposed a view of translation, including literary translation, that draws on contact linguistics (e.g., Malamatidou 2016; Kotze 2020). Over seventy years after Uriel Weinreich first suggested that research on language contact could shed light on "the literary production of bilinguals" (1953, 12), this conference extends that perspective to literature. We look to contact linguistics for a unifying standpoint capable of bringing together the study of works shaped by language contact both at the level of communities (Thomason 2001; Matras 2009) and at the level of the individual mind (Pavlenko 2015). We thus invite contributions that span areas from minor literature, borderland, migrant and postcolonial writing to literary multilingualism, translingualism, and cross-lingual influence. Our goal is to better map the complex, multifaceted linguistic practices and processes that shape global literature, and to develop an approach that adapts language-contact perspectives for the literary context.

We welcome both theoretical contributions and case studies. Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Linguistic aspects of language contact and how they can be productively applied to literature
- The stylistics of language contact
- Historical perspectives versus contemporary literature
- Manifest and latent multilingualism as an expression of language contact
- Translation as language contact
- The role of the author's/reader's linguistic background and language history
- Challenges and limitations of a potential umbrella framework, notably in terms of particular language pairs, reconciling existing terminologies and language theories etc
- Exploration of case studies across the relevant fields
- Additional areas in literary studies where a language contact framework may apply

This is a primarily in-person event that will also be broadcast to virtual participants. Limited need-based support for travel expenses is available (please indicate in your submission whether you would like to be considered).

Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words along with a short biographical note (100 words) to languagecontactlit@gmail.com.

Submissions for the conference are open until January 15, 2027, with acceptance notifications sent to authors by January 31, 2027.

Hosted by the Translation and Language Contact in Literature IMPULZ project (SAS, www.languagecontact.sav.sk) and the "Language Contact in Literature: Europe" Research Committee of the ICLA.