

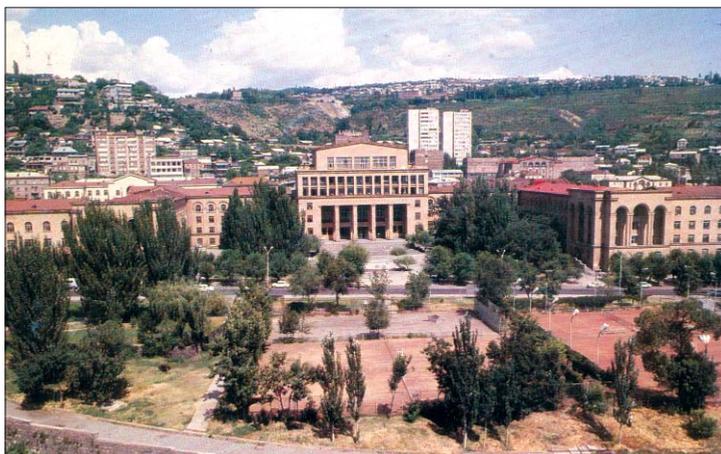
AASE-1

International Conference

English Studies:

Theory and Practice

27-30 October 2004, Yerevan



The Conference took place in the grounds of Yerevan State University, whose educational and research traditions go back to the historical Armenian Universities founded in the Middle Ages.

Seda Gasparyan

*President of AASE,
Doctor of Philology, Professor,
Head of English Philology Dpt.,
Yerevan State University*

**Dear Honourable Ambassadors,
Honoured guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Allow me to mark the beginning of this very notable and extremely pleasant occasion of launching the AASE with the words of one of the greatest Roman thinkers - Marcus Aurelius: “The universe is transformation, our life is what our thoughts make it”.

Truly, in today’s fast and changing world – controversial, full of anxieties – directed by our thoughts, we always seek to win something. Our goals vary, to a great extent, at an individual level, ranging from peace of mind for one person and lofty ambitions for another, to love, harmony and wisdom for a third.

In the constant search for perfection, which is understood so differently by every one of us, we create ideals and hope they will be guarantees for our success. And when we think that this immense globe is not only ours in the general and infinite sense, but every one’s, then each person’s position in this world acquires a different value.

Indeed, the world is changing so dramatically and it has become so sensitive to any misdeed that any effort to make it more balanced should be appreciated and encouraged.

Saying these words I have two things in mind, two things that I firmly believe in.

The first is that, despite our differences, we have much more in common, than we think we do, and the major part of what we share is the need for stability and understanding.

The second is that, provided this difference is handled wisely, it is a huge resource for genuine interest in one another, and hence for a true dialogue between individuals, cultures, nations.

I believe that if our minds are open to a dialogue, then our hearts will be open to it, too. And let me emphasize that learned minds are capable of shortening the distance caused by difference, of setting the horizon and format of dialogue, and, hopefully, for understanding as well.

The occasion, which has brought us all together here, beautifully illustrates the openness and readiness of us all to share the knowledge that each of us has accumulated in the specific field of investigation. And whatever the diversity of topics, one thing is clear to us all – we have met to speak and listen to one another.

The anticipation of the event has been great, and our vision of it is that in the polylogue of learned minds every voice will be heard individually and distinctly, at the same time adding to the polyphony of opinions and modes of thinking which, viewed as one process, is understanding.

As regards the occasion of this assembly, we see in it two aspects, which are interconnected, and which we view within the same tendency.

The first is the Conference itself, with more than 80 delegates having responded to our invitation to make their contribution to our discussions.

The second aspect, closely related to and marked by this Conference, is the establishment of the Armenian Association for the Study of English which is one of the 33 member-associations in the European Federation for the Study of English. The main aim of the Association in very general lines is to contribute to the advancement of education in our country promoting the study and understanding of the English language, literature and culture.

Thus, here we are with a new understanding and evaluation of our professional mission.

Good luck to the Conference!

Good luck to you all in your further professional achievements!

Radick Martirosyan

Rector of Yerevan State University

Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences,

Academician of Armenian National Academy of Sciences

Giving great significance to the foundation of ASSE in such a period of time when the Republic of Armenia is on its way to joining the European Community, I would like to congratulate the President and all the members of the association, the participants and guests of the Conference on the occasion and wish all the success in the fulfillment of their further work that assumes great responsibility.

The laudable fact that the association does not restrict its implications, but calls for serious scientific attitude to the study of the English language, literature and culture is clearly expressed in the Constitution of the Association, according to which only scientifically-minded specialists from higher educational and academic institutions can apply for membership. Thus, it is not surprising that the Association is led by famous linguists from Yerevan State University, Yerevan State Linguistic University after V.Brusov, Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute and other institutions of Armenia. It is doubtless that in close cooperation with the British Council in Armenia and European Federation for the Study of English this Association will achieve its major aims.

The Association not only assists the processes of expansion of international boundaries and our presentation of scientific innovations to the international society, but also establishes close contact and collaboration between specialists from different regions of Armenia.

Once again, congratulating all the participants and guests of the ASSE 1st conference, I would like to mention that YSU is always ready to welcome our colleagues from the Russian Federation, the USA and Europe who come to share their knowledge and experience with us. I hope this conference will be a good start for further effective cooperation.

Good luck to the AASE International Conference in the solution of both theoretical and practical problems concerning the study of English.

Ara Avetissyan

*Vice-rector for International Relations at YSU
Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences,
Professor*

**Dear Honorable Ambassadors,
Dear guests, colleagues and students,**

Allow me to congratulate all of you on the occasion of launching the AASE and opening its 1st International Conference “English Studies: Theory and Practice”. In my opinion, conferences of this kind aim at not only sharing knowledge and experience between professionals, but also at conducting cultural dialogues and debates.

Language is no longer a mere means of communication within a nation, but also plays an important role in developing intercultural relations. I hope that this International Conference will be a great privilege for the young specialists and students who will be given a chance to participate in it.

This possibility of establishing professional contacts and conducting cooperative work in the sphere of education and research can never be overestimated. AASE is a step forward towards the integration of our country into the large European family.

I wish you success in your work.

Thorda Abbott-Watt

*Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Ambassador of UK to Armenia*

Although I am neither a pedagogue, nor a good student, I also believe that speeches should not be long. I think it was Macbeth who said “If it be done at all, be done quickly”. He was not actually talking about making a speech but the point is the same. Those of you who teach English open a window on the world for your students. Those who learn will be better equipped for the practical demands of the 21st century. I hope that those who learn will also enjoy and benefit from the literature and culture of the language in which I grew up, because I believe that the spiritual is as important as the practical. But you also, by learning English, have another tool at your disposal which is equally important. It gives you a chance to explain Armenia to the world in a language that so many in the world speak, because Armenia has something to offer to the world as well. So, I would not want this to be thought of as a one-way process. I am very honoured to have been asked to open this conference and I am very honoured to be the Honorary President of this association for the time that I am here in Armenia. I believe that education is the key. “Upon the education of people of this country the fate of this country depends,” that was not me, that was Benjamin Disraeli who said it. But I think he got it right. Thank you.

John Evans

*Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Ambassador of the United States to Armenia*

I am delighted to be here today with all of you. I think this conference is a wonderful thing. I am particularly pleased to be here (and this is very personal) because my father for forty years was a professor of English literature in the United States, namely at the college of William and Mary, the second oldest university in the United States, founded with a Royal Charter from king William and queen Mary in 1693. So, as I remember my father and his work, I am very pleased to be here and associate his work with the work that you are doing today. I had planned to follow in my father's footsteps and study English literature. But in 1966, I made a visit to the Soviet Union, and that visit changed my life because I decided to learn languages, starting with Russian, to learn more about this part of the world and the people who populate it. Now let me just tell a little story that does not reflect well on the United States. In the 1920s, in our southern state of Texas, there was a superintendent of education who decided to ban the study of foreign languages in the schools of Texas and she was quoted as saying "If English was good enough for Jesus Christ, it is good enough for us." She may well have heard the New Testament read in church on Sunday and the beautiful language of the King James' Bible but she obviously did not get to the story of the tower of Babel. I am glad to say that her views have not prevailed and that the teaching of foreign languages is now a very big business in the United States. I still think it should be a bigger business because the teaching of languages is terribly important.

Speaking of the tower of Babel, there is a wonderful book written by the literary critic George Steiner in the 1960s entitled "After Babel", and one of the things that George Steiner reminded us of is that language, of course, is quite obviously a means of communication but it also can be used as a way of excluding others. And I think, as all of you are involved in the study of language, it is wise for everyone to think about this aspect of language, too. It can be a way of excluding another group. That is, perhaps, not its most noble calling. As we think about the English language today, I think we have to recognize that it is not one language; it is truly a family of languages. Of course, the United States inherited the English language from Great Britain in the 17th century, but it was not always a given that English would be our national language. There was a time when German was a very strong contender to be the national language of the United States. That, of course, did not happen and today English is actually the most sought after second language in teaching around the world. I think there is a need for quality teaching of English and I agree with my British colleague very much that it is not only a key to commerce and to communication but there is, indeed, a wonderful spiritual and cultural heritage which can be unlocked through the study of English. And I think that in Armenia this concept is well understood. Armenians are the inheritors themselves of a great civilization, and all great civilizations borrow from each other. So, I think, your undertaking, deepening your own knowledge, pursuing your own research, goes in a direction of building greater civilization both here and in other countries.

Again I am delighted to be here. I think this conference is a wonderful initiative. I have looked at the program and I see that it really has a quite amazing breath and scope. I congratulate the organizers of the conference. I hope all of you will take a full advantage of it. The US Embassy is very happy to assist in the development of English teaching and studies here in Armenia. One of the most important goals of our mission here is to promote a better understanding of what we might call American English, also American society, culture, values and policies. We are also very much committed to educational exchange. We are very pleased to have contributed to this conference by inviting Dr. Charles Hall, who is here in the audience today, of the university of Memphis to join your proceedings.

So, in closing, I applaud your dedication to your profession. Not only as facilitators of communication and exchange and as developers of the skills that are necessary to advance international collaboration, but also as teachers, students and scholars. At a time in history when the need for mutual understanding, and also for reflection on spiritual values, is very great, the world certainly needs you, Armenia needs you and America needs you, too. So, thank you very much for the invitation and good luck to all of you.

Andy Keedwell

*English Language Support Manager,
British Council Armenia*

I'd like to begin by saying there are many faces here I know and I recognize, but for people who don't know me, I'm Andy Keedwell, and I'm English Language Support Manager for British Council in Armenia. The first thing now I'd like to say today is that the British Council Armenia is delighted to be involved in and supporting this event. The aims of the AASE are to encourage research, to encourage teaching, to give people the opportunity to meet and to discuss. And these are aims which the British Council Armenia is delighted to support. This is actually the third event that I've been involved in this year. The two previous events were organized with Project Harmony, AELTA teachers' Association and we're delighted on this occasion to be involved in a networking event which works very much at an academic level.

My second point is really that language is a living and an everchanging organism. All of us are aware of phrases or expressions or vocabulary which we happened to learn at school or at the University in a foreign language and which we later discovered to be quite old moulded or old-fashioned. I think this is being the case with a number of teachers I worked with in Armenia and this is also very much the case with my second language, which is French. I'm afraid I can't very much comment on Armenian, the expression I can say most confidently in Armenian is "I would like three kilos of potatoes please". In terms of change, in terms of language being a living organism, all of us are very much aware that we need to keep track, to keep pace with changes in

language and the events of the next few days, very much aim at that. Firstly, by looking at language itself, by looking at its grammar, for example there are presentations on legal English and scientific English, secondly, looking at the literature within which English is expressed - and I think like the Ambassador - I've been very much impressed by the range of the themes, all the way through Bible, from Shakespeare to modern authors, including fairy tales along the way. In term of change a number of presentations will be looking at how English can be delivered effectively in the classroom, including many aspects of ESP. I would like to say thank you to the organizing committee, because all the way through I've been extremely impressed by the level of the organization of the Conference. I think this opening ceremony is a good illustration. The only person who had organizational problems this morning was me, because my taxi was late. But all the way through the preparations I've been extremely impressed by the organization which has laid down great foundations for a highly successful event. So I do hope that everyone enjoys the next three days and uses the opportunity to meet, discuss and share ideas. On behalf of the British Council thank you very much indeed.

Adolphe Haberer

*President of the Eoropean Society
for the Study of English,
Emeritus Professor, University Lumiere-Lyon*

It is a great honour and an immense pleasure for me to address the delegates of the first International Conference of the Armenian Association for the Study of English, and thus take part in the official launching of the Association. Circumstances which I deeply regret have prevented me from accepting your President's kind invitation to come to Yerevan and attend the event, and so I must content myself with conveying to all of you my very warm greetings in writing, and also my most sincere best wishes for a successful Conference, at once convivial and intellectually stimulating. Let me add that those greetings and best wishes are not only my own: they are also expressed on behalf of the Executive and the whole Board of the European Society for the Study of English. As Chair of ESSE, I was particularly pleased and proud, after the first contacts we had in Strasburg in 2002, to give some guidance to those of you who decided to bring together the Anglicists in Armenia, constitute AASE and finally, apply for ESSE membership. Your Association, as you know, was duly admitted by a vote of the EESE Board, last year in Oxford, and in early September, this year when we met in Zaragoza, we had the great pleasure to welcome your President, Prof. Seda Gasparyan, who took an active part in all of our discussions and decisions.

Now that AASE is a member of ESSE, all members of AASE belong to the community of European Anglicists. It is a very large community counting no fewer than 33 member associations for a total of merely 8.000 teachers of English in Higher Education. The members of ASSE will receive The English Messenger twice a year at

their own personal address, thanks to which they will quickly learn about our many activities. They will also quickly get into the habit of regularly accessing our Website <http://www.essenglish.org>, which is a real mine of information.

AASE is still a very young Association. May it grow and flourish in the years to come, and help establish fruitful exchanges among its members, and also between its members and the community of Anglicists across Europe! This is my most sincere wish today.

Tatiana Abelyan

*President of AELTA, Armenia TESOL,
Assist.Prof. at Yerevan State Linguistic University*

**Dear Colleagues,
Friends,**

I feel honoured to have this opportunity to greet you all at this international conference of the Armenian Association for the Study of English.

Today I am here representing AELTA, Armenia TESOL, the association of English language teachers in our country, which in 1997 became TESOL affiliate. And on behalf of AELTA, Armenia TESOL, as its President, I would like to welcome all the participants and wish this convention productive procedure in all the sessions and workshops and successful realization with a considerable input in the study of English.

AELTA and AASE are the two professional organizations which focus on the needs of our nation today to join the European, and I would say, global community by providing and maintaining quality education and applying theories and approaches to classroom context.

Since the goals of our organizations are not very different – to contribute to the advancement of education in our country, I would wish fruitful cooperation, beneficial for both associations. Let us join our efforts, get together and do things better to the benefit of our nation.

Success to the Convention!

THE CONFERENCE

a platform for productive discussion

