

A Well-Kept Tradition: The English Department's Student Conference

Once again, on 12 June 2017, the end-of-year conference crowned the efforts of the students in the Department of English Language and Literature. Elisheva Barkon, the Department Chair, and Lyn Barzilai, the Conference Organizer, opened the conference, each in a personal manner.

The conference started with the linguistics session. Chaila Wiseman, Dana Thawkho, Michael Litvinov, Noa Eliyahu and Danna Choresh participated in a panel on "Bilingualism and Bilingual Education" with Shireen Majdalani as their moderator. Each presented their bilingual experience as a strong determiner for choosing the topic of their seminar papers. They explained the nature of their topics, discussing the role of motivation in EFL learning, attitudes towards the Arabic language among second generation immigrants from Arabic-speaking countries, preserving social identity as a minority group, first language attrition among Russian speakers in Israel, linguistic identity among immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, and the visual representation of the Circassian language in the linguistic landscape of Kfar Kama. Then they considered the impact of their research on their perceptions of bilingualism. Sharing the panel's concern and experiencing similar realities, the audience generated a lively question-and-answer period in response to the moving presentations.



A literary session followed the linguistic panel. Students of the British Survey II course delivered their short papers on "Animal Motifs in British Poetry from the Renaissance to the Victorian Era." Daria Krehova chaired the panel and Danielle Daffan focused on Donne's "The Flea," Mysam Nassar on Blake's "The Lamb" and "The Tyger," Merna Shehadeh on Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark" and Laëtitia Maarek on Tennyson's "The Eagle."



Thereafter, Vicki Nadtochayev exemplified that even in their first year, students can contribute to the annual conference. She gave an interpretation of the narrative perspective in Graham Green's "I Spy," reflecting on its judicious choice to clarify the change in emotions of the protagonist, an adolescent boy unexpectedly spying on his father, himself a spy caught by secret agents.



Danielle Daffan and Laëtitia Maarek followed with their survey of the process in the Perceptions of Space in Literature seminar course, from the formal presentation and the practical application of theories, through the various research stages to the compilation of an annotated bibliography, writing a substantial introduction and the supporting paragraphs with the inclusion of theoretical material before the thought-provoking conclusion.



Laëtitia went on discussing "Spatial Features Enlightening the Challenge to Personal Subjectivity in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*." Defining the novel as a dystopia, she explored the world in which Offred, the protagonist, evolves. Minimized spatial specificities reflect the erasure of

individual identity for the benefit of a society governed by roles. Spatial depiction, starting with Offred's name, clothing, body, room, outside environment and interaction with it, highlights the prevailing lack of freedom. As references to spatial theories prove, the mapping of Offred's world and life affect her subjectivity and ability to form an opinion of her circumstances, preventing her from rebelling against them.



Danielle Daffan then explored “Eva Hoffman’s Perception of Space and Its Impact on her Identity in *Lost in Translation*.” Drawing on her own experience of immigration, Danielle addressed the spatial characteristics of the author’s physical and emotional voyages in the three chapters that make up the autobiographical account – “Paradise,” “Exile,” and “The New World.” Each chapter presents the acuity with which she describes her existence and adjustment to reality, from the language barrier, through culture dissimilarity, to gaps between the old and the new, including her names and memories. Her attempt to formulate her identity in a new country with a new language reveals its connection to her perceptions of space, which a discussion of several spatial theories emphasized.



Before the lunch break, second-year students handed out certificates of appreciation to Lyn Barzilai and Danielle Schaub, as they both retire at the end of the academic year.



After the lunch break, the audience reconvened to attend the education session. Reut Dray examined “The Use of L1 Writing Strategies in L2 Writing.” She explained that non-native speakers use L1 to reduce cognitive overload with respect to grammar and vocabulary deficiencies, to brainstorm and organize their ideas better. She focused on the difference between low-proficiency and high-proficiency writers, concluding that teachers should apply different teaching strategies with each group.



Einat Zucker-Albert then lectured on “The Role of Grammar in EFL Instruction.” After summarizing theories advocating the need to teach grammar, she focused on the importance of effective grammar teaching for the sake of comprehensibility and positive reception in given contexts. She then reviewed several approaches to teaching grammar. Considering the impact of effective grammar teaching, she also distinguished between covert and overt grammar teaching, acquisition and learning.



Yael Sover then examined “The Adoption of a Growth Mindset as a Motivational Process,” the idea she developed for an online content-based unit based on Carol S. Dweck’s theory that, when faced with obstacles, children with a growth mindset improve their performance by reviewing and readjusting their strategies. She designed a four- to six-lesson individual unit to encourage a heterogeneous 9th-grade class to learn and grow, to face challenges and not to fear mistakes. The lessons include: 1. Finding out how learning takes place in the brain; 2. Playing games designed to exercise the brain and answer meta-cognitive questions about the process; 3. Reviewing modal verbs (mostly those used for giving advice); 4. Choosing a challenge from a list and writing 90-110 words of advice including use of modals and the thinking strategies mentioned during the previous lessons.



Adi Gal-Hoppel presented her action research on “Implementing an Organizational Skills Program” based on her experience with at-risk students in grade 11. Suffering from severe learning disabilities, ADHD, emotional and organizational problems, and imperfect organizational skills, they take no interest in their studies, coming unequipped to class. She explained how she raised their sense of responsibility by implementing an organizational skills program, using the format of specific instruction regarding organizational skills, and reinforcing it with self-management techniques. The students responded positively to her efforts, stating that no one so far had ever seen their needs.



Last but not least, the students of the Rhetorical Skills course presented poems on the nobility of teaching by acclaimed Slam Poetry champion Taylor Mali.



The students included Nitsan Shaked, Aniko Dekel, Nomi Klein, Hadas Cohen, Muna Abu Bachar, Rotem Cohen, Manar Mansour, Dorit Kagnovich, Bian Daher, Addi Arazi, Merav Ben Meir, Maria Zaytzev, David Efrat, Danielle Malka, Vicki Nadtochayev and Kesia Dorachi. Some of the photographs taken give a good idea of the combination of reading and performing.



Dorit, Bian and Manar



Hadas, Nitsan and Aniko



Merav and Maria



Addi and Danielle



David, Kesia and Vicki



Muna, Nomi and Rotem

The presentations rounded off the annual event in a lively fashion, causing the audience to laugh repeatedly at Taylor Mali's humor.

Photos and adapted text by Danielle Schaub