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APPLIED LINGUISTICS: A CHALLENGING RESEARCH DOMAIN FOR ROMANIA

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Abstract: *The outset of the "knowledge society" concept (Drucker, 1969) opened a new type of approach to academic education and research which aims the development of a global culture of innovation and effectiveness of practices. Our article emphasizes the key potentiality of applied linguistics research in Romania to face the fierce global competition and meet the increasing demand for research-driven education. The current central placement of applied linguistics research in the innovative flow of science and technology progress make it able to reconstruct academic recognition.*

Keywords: applied linguistics, research driven teaching, real-life practical solutions, knowledge society, education policy

Motto: The mystery of the Universe is its comprehensibility.

Albert Einstein

Professoriate has moved throughout the years from teaching to service and research showing the shifting priorities both within the academy and beyond. Research and publication have become the primary means by which most professors achieve academic status, and yet many academics are, in fact, drawn to the profession precisely because of their love for teaching or for service, even for making the world a better place. (Boyer, 1990:27-42) Research has become crucial for a more creative view of professoriate and for its mission of relating the academic work to the realities of contemporary life through discovery, integration, application and teaching. (*ibidem*)

The outset of the "knowledge society" concept (Drucker, 1969) opened a new type of approach to academic education and research which has no longer been considered since then, a privilege of an elite, a community and life-time activity carried out in formal and non-formal systems of schooling, to develop innovative work applications, to contribute to the continuous updating of personal and professional abilities. The change challenges of the old learning and cognitive science patterns aim the reconciliation of a global culture of innovation and effective practices all over the world with a long-term anticipation of development. The vision of the UNESCO World Report on *knowledge societies* (2005) has proven crucial for the growing interest in the development of individual and collective capacities to meet the needs of learning through innovation:

> Tomorrow's jobs will be more and more a matter of producing, exchanging and transforming information or knowledge. Our societies will be wholly engaged in assimilating a continuous flow of new knowledge. The demand

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> for learning will be greater than ever, but its expression will be different: the object will no longer be an apprenticeship in one specific type of activity, which scientific and technological progress may very well make obsolete in no time. In an innovation society, the demand for knowledge will be in terms of ever-recurring needs for re-skilling. Vocational training will itself be forced to evolve. Today, a first degree is above all a social qualification, and the culture of innovation will require even these degrees to carry a "Sell By" date, in order to combat the inertia of cognitive skills and to meet a never-ending demand for new capabilities. (UNESCO, 2005: 59)[1]

A higher commitment to research-driven teaching with its chain reactions impacts not only on professional practices and social economy but also on recognition of the academic functions for the benefit of the individual and human society.
As learning becomes increasingly valued for its instrumentality and technicality, we chose to emphasize *applied linguistics* as a key potent professional field in Romania which is able to "undertake research and articulate a public voice" (Zeleza: 2007:79-107) to shape *knowledge economy* and *knowledge society* and face the fierce global competition and its democratic deficit. University autonomy, academic freedom and social responsibility are called to ground the engagement of universities in Romania to meet their social duty of producing knowledge to facilitate material, social and cultural advancement of the society.

A comprehensive selection of contextual language research samples, provided by Michael McCarthy[2], call for the current central placement of *applied linguistic* in the innovative flow of science and technology progress for the development of new challenging professional fields in Romania which are in demand and highly paid in developed countries.
Applied Linguistics is clearly a vast enterprise, pursued across the globe[3]. Since the first pragmatic emergency application of linguistics in the WWII till the complex present day developments, the domain has prompted the re-assessment of language teaching policies and practices (Richards; Rodgers (2014:1-3), contributed to the professional diversification of modern *knowledge society* (Drucker, 1969) and it is likely to expand even more and call for further potential *linguistics* solutions applied to practical social and professional questions as the domain insights centrality proved its capacity to offer real-life contextual successful results. (Brumfit, 1983:46)

Applied Linguistics, the twenty-first century academic discipline (Grabe, 2002: 3-12) and research is developed in many universities departments of languages, linguistics and language pedagogy, in the domains of *neuroanatomy, neurology, neurophysiology, philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, speech pathology and computer science, neurobiology, anthropology, chemistry, cognitive science* and *artificial intelligence*, etc. *Psycholinguistics* and *neurolinguistic modeling* research make the process of language comprehension, linguistic memory, language production and acquisition, and language loss scientifically coherent and comprehensible for medical solutions. The neurolinguistics models make also the basis of computer simulations involving artificial neural networks (ANN). *Speech therapy* and *clinical writing* techniques help healing communication disorders by strengthening speech mechanisms and tuning auditory perceptual functions (Lass:1979); *applied language teaching* relate the science of linguistics to the art of teaching and secure the meeting of professional language skills with the demands of specialized labor market; *forensic* and *legal linguistic*

[1] http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001418/141843e.pdf
[2] Issues in Applied linguistics (2001) Cambridge University Press
[3] http://www.viviancook.uk/Writings/Papers/StartingAppLingResearch.htm

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investigation analyses and explores key theoretical and methodological issues in emergency service calls, police interviews and courtroom discourse (Coulthard, Johnson, Wright: 2007); *language engineering* or *language technology* deals with software products needed to improve human-machine interaction (Dybkjær, Hemsen: 2007), *linguistic data management* is concerned with technological infrastructure for language documentation and archiving (Thieberger, 2012**)**; *annotation* appears to be an active research and commercial language technology **(**Wilcock, 2009); *language industry and business strategy* refers to a wide range of services, like translation, editing, terminology management, internationalization, localization, proofreading, cross-cultural design, cultural assessment and project management; *psycholinguistics* considers the cognitive processes of the human language use; comparative/historical investigation of language search the social and professional evolution; language *planning policies and language standardization* influence large professional communities; comparative investigation on human and non-human language; *sociological* research on human language changing/evolution, professional communication effectiveness, etc

The real-time and problem-based substantial solutions associate to theoretical linguistic studies and draw on different supporting disciplines which contribute to the material, social and cultural advancement of the society. The qualitative case-study nature of *applied linguistics* research has played a significant role in the development of complex professional domains and brings forward the availability of the context, multiple sources of information or perspectives of observation. (Duff, 2008)

The growing complexity of the new professional domains show a considerable and pragmatic expansion of the *applied linguistics* calling for the diversification of the skills required and corresponding technology capabilities, from the desktop to corporate servers and to the cloud. Universities curricula have begun to address the new *applied linguistics* and the time has come to expand them more in recognition of the increasing new developments. (Dunne&Dunne, 2011)
We consider the advantages of productivity and effectiveness of the scholarship engagement in philological research with reference to the domain of *applied linguistics* to

- constantly improve language education standards and applicability
- achieve high literacy and intellectual wisdom for the academic graduates
- contribute to the development of learning and knowledge society
- extend economic development, social and cultural flowering and maturation

The development of academic *applied linguistic* research is backed by the very human natural need to discern the world creation, its forces and expectations that bring in the increasing status of knowledge forged by scientific investigation, “as the object of huge economic, political and cultural stakes, to the point of justifiably qualifying the societies currently emerging” (Towards knowledge societies, 2005:5). The impact of *applied linguistics* studies is given by the language centrality to life development which is acknowledged as the power of universals, the basic expression of man’s ability to transcend environment and break through the limits of his power. It is our interest in the consistent real-life applications of linguistic research that make us open to its status of *knowledge* builder.

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We consider that the science of *applied linguistics* in Romania can add value to the two concepts of *knowledge economy* and *knowledge society* through an accurate research policy direction taking interest in minimizing the gap from the developed countries and by its plenary involvement into the process of academic knowledge production and research-driven teaching.

We cannot ignore the trends in *applied linguistics* research which emerged in the 90's and incorporated many supporting academic subjects which break away from *theory* and connect *linguistics* to real-world based problems and real language use mechanisms and cognition. (Davis: 1992; Strevens, 1992; Kaplan and Widdowson: 1992)
We are committed to the acknowledgement of academics, employers, policy developers in considering the advantages of *applied linguistics* study from the perspectives of language *assessment* (usability, responsibility, fairness, etc) *contact* (shift, social, cultural, professional interaction), *learning* (skills development, use, context, attitudes, expertise) *pathology*, (neurology, psychology, genetics) *policy and planning*, (choices and decisions on language forms and functions) *technology* (confluence of language, communication and technology) , *translation and interpretation (*theory and practice*), literacy* (social, economic and cultural consequences, implications, limitations, etc) and their potential impact on the process of nowadays economic liberalization, global mobility of citizens, capital resources and knowledge and the increasing demand for skilled labor, higher education structures of research which are embedded in an extremely complex reality.
We attach weight to the potential development of applied linguistics research and study in Romania to keep abreast with the changing reality of the developing world through distinct topologies of knowledge that can be integrated into pioneering interpretations of the new insights.

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