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**18th Conference on Formal Description of Slavic Languages (FDSL 18) : 30
years of formal Slavic linguistics in Europe**

Linguistica Brunensia. 2025, vol. 73, iss. 2, pp. 158-163

ISSN 2336-4440 (online)

Stable URL (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5817/LB2025-42145>

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/digilib.83074>

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Access Date: 06. 12. 2025

Version: 20251203

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18th Conference on Formal Description of Slavic Languages (FDSL 18): 30 Years of Formal Slavic Linguistics in Europe

University of Wrocław, 22–24 September 2025

The 18th edition of the Formal Description of Slavic Languages conference (FDSL 18) was hosted by the University of Wrocław at the Faculty of Languages, Literatures and Cultures on 22–24 September 2025. The conference was organised under the auspices of the SEI Centre for Corpus and Experimental Research on Slavic Languages “Slavicus” and this was the first time that it had been held in Poland. Detailed information about the event is available on the official conference website: <https://sites.google.com/view/fdsl-18/>.

Along with its American counterpart – Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics (FASL) – FDSL is the most significant conference series dedicated to the research on Slavic languages from a formal perspective and the largest such forum in Europe. It has a well-established tradition and for three decades, it has provided a venue for formal linguists from all over the world. FDSL was established by Gerhild Zybatow and the first meeting was organized by Gerhild Zybatow, Dorothee Fehrmann and Uwe Junghanns in 1995, which made this year’s edition the 30th anniversary meeting of the FDSL community (see Radeva-Bork – Kosta 2020 for the 20th anniversary). From the very beginning, it was recognized that FDSL was a significant endeavour that would greatly contribute both to theoretical linguistics and the study of Slavic languages (see Franks 1997; Schaarschmidt 2001).

At first, the conference took place biennially and was hosted in turn by the Leipzig University and the University of Potsdam. Later, other institutions joined including the University of Nova Gorica, the Independent University of Moscow, Masaryk University in Brno, the University of Göttingen, Humboldt University of Berlin, the University of Graz and now the University of Wrocław. From 2006 to 2017, so-called “halftime” or .5 editions were organized at institutions outside Germany, but in 2018 the decision to organize the conference annually and to integrate all editions into one proper numbering system was made. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the next conference took place online only in 2021. All in all, FDSL 18 was the 23rd overall FDSL meeting.

This year in Wrocław, more than fifty researchers from across the world participated in the conference, representing major academic centres in Slavic linguistics and formal approaches to grammar, corpus methods, and experimental linguistics. As a continuing forum for the formal description of Slavic languages, FDSL 18 brought together work in generative grammar, typology, corpus linguistics, experimental methods, historical linguistics and cross-Slavic comparison.

The conference consisted of the main session and the special workshop on Formal Approaches to Historical Slavic Linguistics. The main session included contributions in the traditional areas of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. The workshop signalled a growing interest in integrating historical linguistics within the formal paradigm. The aim of the workshop was to bring together scholars



working on diachronic aspects of Slavic languages in a generative perspective. In comparison to studies on Germanic and Romance languages, formal historical Slavic linguistics has so far been relatively limited. In order to foster discussions on Slavic diachrony, the organizers encouraged contributions that adopted a formal approach to the study of phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic change in Slavic languages, language contact and its impact on language change, corpus-based approaches to diachronic variation in Slavic languages, grammaticalization and degrammaticalization, typological shifts and isolated changes versus parametric changes in Slavic and methodological developments in historical linguistics.

The program involved 5 plenary talks and 39 presentations: 11 within the workshop and 28 in the main session including 3 prerecorded presentations that were available online. The conference began with the plenary talk by Hakyung Jung (Seoul National University) who opened the workshop by exploring the loss of synthetic past tenses in Old Russian. Her contribution emphasized the relevance of formal theorizing for understanding syntactic change. Another invited speaker to present on the first day of the conference was Peter Arkadiev (University of Potsdam) who presented a typological perspective on morphological borrowing from, into and within Slavic. His broad cross-linguistic approach gave the FDSL audience an opportunity to learn about the key topics in the study of language contact. The second day was started by the talk by Berit Gehrke (Humboldt University of Berlin) who dived into the semantic distinction between states and events. Based on Slavic, Romance and Germanic data, she demonstrated that the distinction is gradual rather than categorical and suggested how her approach could help us develop more accurate models in event semantics. The day was concluded by Marko Simonović (University of Graz) who focused on a topic in language contact and challenged the view that inter-language mappings are a grammatical phenomenon. He used Croatian, Serbian, Slovene and Rusyn phonological and morphological adaptations from Slavic and non-Slavic languages as supporting evidence for his view. Finally, on the third day Marta Ruda (Jagiellonian University) presented her work in theoretical syntax based on Polish data, which concerned anti-locality as a PF effect. She discussed Cyclic Linearization, Chain Reduction and rescue by deletion. Collectively, the plenary talks reflected the conference's emphasis on bridging formal (generative) approaches to Slavic languages with historical and typological linguistics.

From an empirical perspective, the talks presented at the conference explored a wide range of phenomena in phonology (e.g., trapped liquids, voicing, palatalization and stress), morphology (e.g., verb formation, nominal suffixes, possessives, and comparative morphology), syntax (e.g., agreement phenomena, null subjects, clitics, copula constructions and complementation) and semantics (e.g., part-whole structures, aspect, polarity items, indefinites, conditionals and evidentiality). The discussed data covered every branch of the language family: West (Czech, Polish, Slovak, Upper Sorbian), East (Russian, Rusyn, Ukrainian) and South Slavic (Bulgarian, Macedonian, Slovene, Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian, Torlak and Old Church Slavonic). Contributions concerned cross-Slavic comparison as well as comparison with non-Slavic languages.



From a theoretical perspective, the adopted approaches ranged from phonological frameworks such as CVCV, Optimality Theory and Phonological Potentials Model through various approaches within formal syntax including Minimalism, Distributed Morphology and Construction Grammar to different frameworks in compositional semantics, e.g., mereology and mereotopology, event semantics and inquisitive semantics. In terms of methodology, contributions employing standard armchair linguistic approaches were complemented with papers utilizing modern corpus methods and various experimental procedures.

The choice of Wrocław, which is a city with a strong Slavic studies tradition and multilingual history, seemed to have contributed to good attendance and a collegial atmosphere. The fact that the first FDSL conference in Poland was organized by the Slavicus centre indicates that this institution appears to be positioning itself as an important hub for theoretical, corpus and experimental research on Slavic languages, which can foster international engagement.

Overall, FDSL 18 was a stimulating event, demonstrating that the formal description of Slavic languages remains a vibrant field, while methodological diversification is increasingly shaping the current research agenda. A trend that is worth noting is the growing commitment in the FDSL community to pursue research on understudied varieties of Slavic, which only recently gained attention of formal linguistics. This appears to be an exciting development in the long and inspiring tradition of FDSL.

As in the previous years, selected papers from FDSL 18 will be published with Language Science Press within the Open Slavic Linguistics book series (LangSci OSL) as *Advances in Formal Slavic Linguistics 2025*.

The next edition of the conference – FDSL 19 – will be held at the Leipzig University in 2026.

The short history of Formal Description of Slavic Languages

FDSL 1: Leipzig, 1995

FDSL 2: Potsdam, 1997

FDSL 3: Leipzig, 1999

FDSL 4: Potsdam, 2001

FDSL 5: Leipzig, 2003

FDSL 6: Potsdam, 2005

FDSL 6.5: Nova Gorica, 2006

FDSL 7: Leipzig, 2007

FDSL 7.5: Moscow, 2008

FDSL 8: Potsdam, 2009

FDSL 8.5: Brno, 2010

FDSL 9: Göttingen, 2011

FDSL 10: Leipzig, 2013

FDSL 10.5: Brno, 2014

FDSL 11: Potsdam, 2015

FDSL 12: Berlin, 2016

FDSL 12.5: Nova Gorica, 2017



- FDSL 13: Göttingen, 2018
- FDSL 14: Leipzig (online), 2021
- FDSL 15: Berlin, 2022
- FDSL 16: Graz, 2023
- FDSL 17: Brno, 2024
- FDSL 18: Wrocław, 2025

FDSL proceedings

FDSL 1: Junghanns, Uwe – Zybatow, Gerhild (eds.). 1997. *Formale Slavistik*. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert.

FDSL 2: Kosta, Peter – Frasek, Jens (eds.). 2002. *Current Approaches to Formal Slavic Linguistics: Contributions of the Second European Conference on Formal Description of Slavic Languages (FDSL II) held at Potsdam University, November 20-22, 1997*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 3 volume #1: Zybatow, Gerhild – Junghanns, Uwe – Mehlhorn, Grit – Szucsich (eds.). 2000. 3. *Europäische Konferenz "Formale Beschreibung slavischer Sprachen, Leipzig 1999"*. Leipzig: Institut für Linguistik.

FDSL 3 volume #2: Zybatow, Gerhild – Junghanns, Uwe – Mehlhorn, Grit – Szucsich (eds.). 2001. *Current Issues in Formal Slavic Linguistics*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 4: Kosta, Peter – Błaszczak, Joanna – Frasek, Jens – Geist, Ljudmila – Žygis, Marzena (eds.). 2003. *Investigations into Formal Slavic Linguistics: Contributions of the Fourth European Conference on Formal Description of Slavic Languages held at Potsdam University, November 28-30, 2001*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 5: Zybatow, Gerhild – Szucsich, Luka – Junghanns, Uwe – Meyer, Roland (eds.). 2008. *Formal Description of Slavic Languages: The Fifth Conference, Leipzig 2003*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 6: Kosta, Peter – Schürcks, Lilia (eds.). 2007. *Linguistics Investigations into Formal Description of Slavic Languages: Contributions of the Sixth European Conference held at Potsdam University, November 30-December 02, 2005*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 6.5: Marušič, Franc – Žaucer, Rok (eds.). 2008. *Studies in Formal Slavic Linguistics: Contributions from Formal Description of Slavic Languages 6.5. Held at the University of Nova Gorica, December 1-3, 2006*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 7: Zybatow, Gerhild – Junghanns, Uwe – Lenertová, Denisa – Biskup, Petr (eds.). 2009. *Studies in Formal Slavic Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics and Information Structure: Proceedings of FDSL 7, Leipzig 2007*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 7.5: Zybatow, Gerhild – Dudchuk, Philip – Minor, Serge – Pshehotskaya, Ekaterina (eds.). 2010. *Formal Studies in Slavic Linguistics: Proceedings of Formal Description of Slavic Languages 7.5*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 8: Kosta, Peter – Schürcks, Lilia (eds.). 2011. *Formalization of Grammar in Slavic Languages: Contributions of the Eighth International Conference on Formal Description of Slavic Languages – FDSL VIII 2009 University of Potsdam, December 2-5, 2009*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.



FDSL 8.5: Ziková, Markéta – Dočekal, Mojmír (eds.). 2012. *Slavic Languages in Formal Grammar: Proceedings of FDSL 8.5, Brno 2010*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 9: Junghanns, Uwe – Fehrmann, Dorothee – Lenertová, Denisa – Pitsch, Hagen (eds.). 2013. *Formal Description of Slavic Languages: The Ninth Conference: Proceedings of FDSL 9, Göttingen 2011*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 10: Zybatow, Gerhild – Biskup, Petr – Guhl, Marcel – Hurtig, Claudia – Mueller-Reichau, Olav – Yastrebova, Maria (eds.). 2016. *Slavic Grammar from a Formal Perspective: The 10th Anniversary FDSL Conference, Leipzig 2013*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 10.5: Ziková, Markéta – Čaha, Pavel – Dočekal, Mojmír (eds.). 2015. *Slavic Languages in the Perspective of Formal Grammar: Proceedings of FDSL 10.5, Brno 2014*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

FDSL 11: Radeva-Bork, Teodora – Kosta, Peter (eds.). 2020. *Current Developments in Slavic Linguistics. Twenty Years After (based on selected papers from FDSL 11)*. Berlin: Peter Lang.

FDSL 12: Lenertová, Denisa – Meyer, Roland – Šimík, Radek – Szucsich, Luka (eds.). 2018. *Advances in Formal Slavic Linguistics 2016*. Berlin: Language Science Press.

FDSL 12.5: Marušič, Franc – Mišmaš, Petra – Žaucer, Rok (eds.). 2019. *Advances in Formal Slavic Linguistics 2017*. Berlin: Language Science Press.

FDSL 13: Blümel, Andreas – Gajić, Jovana – Geist, Ljudmila – Junghanns, Uwe – Pitsch, Hagen (eds.). 2021. *Advances in Formal Slavic Linguistics 2018*. Berlin: Language Science Press.

FDSL 14: Biskup, Petr – Börner, Marcel – Mueller-Reichau, Olav – Shcherbina, Iuliia (eds.). 2023. *Advances in Formal Slavic Linguistics 2021*. Berlin: Language Science Press.

FDSL 15: Gehrke, Berit – Lenertová, Denisa – Meyer, Roland – Seres, Daria – Szucsich, Luka – Zaleska, Joanna (eds.). 2025. *Advances in Formal Slavic Linguistics 2022*. Berlin: Language Science Press.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank Uwe Junghanns and Berit Gehrke for the information on the FDSL history and their help with compiling the list of FDSL editions and proceedings. All errors are, of course, my own responsibility. I gratefully acknowledge the support of the SEI Centre for Corpus and Experimental Research on Slavic Languages “Slavicus” at the University of Wrocław.

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