

A Report on
International Bilingual Summer School
“South-South at Center Stage:
Representations, Relations, and Interactions Beyond the West in Arabic Studies”
28–30 August 2023
University of Münster, Germany

Introduction

This report presents an encompassing overview of the international bilingual summer school, “South-South at Center Stage: Representations, Relations, and Interactions Beyond the West in Arabic Studies,” organized by AGYA (Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities) at the University of Münster in Germany from 28 to 30 August 2023. This pivotal event united scholars, researchers, and students from diverse backgrounds, transcending linguistic and academic boundaries to explore the multifaceted dimensions of South-South relationships in Arabic Studies. It signifies a significant milestone in the ever-evolving field of research in the humanities, hosted by AGYA, and conducted in both Arabic and English. This report delves into the summer school’s profound significance, its bilingual dimension, the innovative insights contributed by participants, and the invaluable guidance extended by AGYA academic representatives. Additionally, it scrutinizes the concluding panel discussion, which not only synthesized the findings of the summer school but also laid the groundwork for forthcoming research endeavors, focused on diverse perspectives surrounding South-South relationships.

1. Bilingual Dimension

The decision to conduct the summer school in both Arabic and English was a deliberate and groundbreaking choice. This bilingual approach not only accommodated a diverse group of participants but also exemplified the inclusivity and global relevance of the South-South relationships discourse. It allowed scholars from different linguistic backgrounds to engage meaningfully, transcending language barriers and fostering cross-cultural exchange. This bilingual dimension exemplified the commitment to promoting diverse voices and ensuring that the conversation on South-South interactions remained accessible and enriching.

2. New Insights and Perspectives

One of the most notable outcomes of the summer school was the wealth of new insights that participants brought to the table. Scholars and researchers from various countries and academic backgrounds came together to explore the multifaceted nature of South-South relationships in Arabic Studies. Their diverse perspectives, shaped by their unique cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds, enriched the discourse in profound ways.

Participants delved into topics such as the influence of non-Western literary traditions on Arabic culture, the role of Arabic literature in addressing contemporary issues like migration, and the historical significance of South-South exchanges, interactions, and relationships within the boundaries of South-South encounters in literature, sociology, and history. These discussions unveiled previously uncharted territories, challenging conventional Eurocentric paradigms and revealing the dynamic interplay between Arabic culture and a multitude of other regions.

3. Guidance by AGYA Representatives and International Scholars

The involvement of AGYA representatives and scholars from Arab and European universities who acted as mentors served as a cornerstone of the summer school's success. These seasoned academics provided invaluable guidance and mentorship to participants, facilitating intellectual growth and encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue. Their expertise in Arabic and Islamic Studies, combined with their commitment to fostering young talent, ensured that the summer school was a rigorous and intellectually stimulating experience.

4. Panel Discussion and Future Research

The bilingual summer school culminated in a thought-provoking panel discussion led by AGYA representatives and scholars from the host university and other Arab and German universities. This session served as a platform to synthesize the key findings, insights, and debates that had emerged throughout the event. The panelists expertly distilled the essence of South-South relationships in Arabic Studies, highlighting the importance of this emerging field.

Crucially, the panel discussion did not mark the end but rather the beginning of future research endeavors. By opening the floor for debate on future research directions, the AGYA representatives encouraged participants to consider diverse perspectives, methodologies, and approaches to studying South-South relationships. This forward-looking approach ensures that the impact of the summer school extends far beyond its immediate duration, inspiring a new generation of scholars to explore this rich and complex field.

Conclusion

The bilingual summer school on South-South relations and interactions beyond the West in Arabic Studies, organized by AGYA, represents a pivotal moment in the academic discourse. Its bilingual dimension, the novel insights generated by participants, the guidance of AGYA academic representatives, and the forward-looking panel discussion collectively signify the significance of this event. As it continues to inspire future research endeavors that explore South-South relationships from diverse perspectives, this summer school has undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the field, bridging horizons and fostering a more inclusive and interconnected approach to scholarship.