

1<sup>st</sup> Academic Conference  
“Areas of Finnish Studies: Language, Culture and Nation”,  
organised on the occasion of the centenary of Finnish independence  
Gdańsk, 15–16 May 2017

On 15–16 May 2017 the first Academic Conference “Areas of Finnish Studies: Language, Culture and Nation” was held at the Institute of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Gdańsk. It was organised on the occasion of the centenary of Finland’s independence by the Section for the Study of Finnish Language, Culture and Economy and second-year students of the programme called Scandinavian Studies: Finnish Language, Culture and Economy, who are also members of the active Finnish Study Circle *Routa*. The conference was held under the honorary patronage of HM prof. nadzw. dr hab. Jerzy Gwizdała, Rector of the University of Gdańsk; HE Hanna Lehtinen, Finnish Ambassador to Poland; and Grzegorz Brzostowski, Honorary Consul of Finland in Gdynia. The Organising Committee was comprised of the Head of the Section prof. nadzw. dr hab. Katarzyna Wojan (Chair), dr Katarzyna Michniewicz-Weisland, mgr Marta Noińska, mgr Lena Śląska and Sabina Lech (a second-year student of Finnish). The members of the Academic Board of the conference were: Head of the Institute of Scandinavian Studies prof. nadzw. dr hab. Maria Sibińska, Deputy Head for Research prof. nadzw. dr hab. Hieronim Chojnacki (former Head of the Institute), the Programme Director of the *Norden Centrum* Academic Foundation prof. nadzw. dr hab. Kazimierz Musiał, as well as prof. nadzw. dr hab. Hanna Dymel-Trzebiatowska. It is noteworthy that the idea to organise the conference had emerged thanks to the second-year students of Finnish, who had been inspired by the 2016 conference entitled *Memories, Experiences and Prospects: The Fortieth Anniversary of the Founding of Scandinavian Studies in Gdańsk (Minnen, erfarenheter, perspektiv. 40-årsjubileum för skandinavistiken i Gdańsk)*, where as many as two parallel paper sessions had been devoted to Finland.

The opening ceremony was led by Prof. Katarzyna Wojan, who greeted the honourable guests. The inaugural speeches were delivered by the Deputy Rector of the University of Gdańsk prof. nadzw. dr hab. Anna Machnikowska, HE Hanna Lehtinen, Finnish Ambassador to Poland, Deputy Dean for Education at the Faculty of Languages prof. nadzw. dr hab. Paweł Sitkiewicz and Head of the Institute of Scandinavian Studies prof. nadzw. dr hab. Maria Sibińska. Special words of gratitude for the sponsorship of the conference were directed towards the company

Metsä Group of Gdańsk, as represented by General Manager Ireneusz Truszkowski and Personnel Director Paulina Filiponek.

On the first day the participants conferred in four topic-based (mostly parallel) sessions. Session one was devoted to significant socio-political issues and was chaired by dr Katarzyna Michniewicz-Weisland. The first two papers, delivered in English, concerned a general outline of Finnish education at various levels, since Finnish education is often regarded as exemplary in Europe and elsewhere across the world. Prof. nadzw. dr hab. Kazimierz Musiał (University of Gdańsk), an expert on the issue, presented a brilliant paper entitled *The Finnish way of reforming higher education*. Mgr Marta Noińska (University of Gdańsk) presented a comparison entitled *A few remarks on the Finnish and Polish education systems*. Mgr Leszek Leśniewski (Economic University of Poznań) discussed economic issues in *Opportunities and challenges of human capital, social capital and R&D potential in Finland*. He presented a study whose aim was to assess the potential and the challenges of Finland's knowledge-based economy, based on the scholarisation index, voting turnout rate, crime rate, research and development spending, life expectancy and quality of marital life. Dr Maja Chacińska (University of Gdańsk), a media specialist, presented a paper *Impact of the Finnish political culture on the financing of Public Service Media Yle*. Her paper discussed the way in which political culture influences the effectiveness of Finland's public media: Yle radio and television. Mgr Tomasz Archutowski (University of Gdańsk), in his paper *Far-right populism in the Nordic countries. Explaining electoral support for Perussuomalaiset (the Finns' Party)*, discussed the populist issues in today's social policy in Finland. In his speech he attempted to answer the question of the electoral power base and voters' reasons for voting for the The Finns' Party. Marta Laskowska (University of Warsaw) presented *The Social Democratic Party of Finland and an independent state*, discussing the considerable polarisation of Finland's political scene at the time when Finland gained independence, set against the backdrop of historic political events.

A session held simultaneously to the aforementioned one was devoted to the study of literature and culture and was chaired by dr Marta Grzechnik. Prof. nadzw. dr hab. Arnold Kłoczyński (University of Gdańsk), a well-known historian, delivered a splendid presentation of the charismatic and famous Polish translator of Finnish *belles lettres* Cecylia Lewandowska, entitled *Cecilia Lewandowska and her "Finnish adventure"*. Having studied the records about Lewandowska that are archived at the Ossolineum Institute, Prof. Kłoczyński discussed her work and emphasised her considerable contribution not only to Poland's intellectual capital but also to Polish-Finnish relations in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Prof. nadzw. dr hab. Hieronim Chojnacki (University of Gdańsk), an admirer of Finnish novels, presented a masterpiece of a comparison of the literary images of war in the works by Henri Tikkanen and Veijo Meri: *Absurd, nonsense, grotesque – literary images of*

war: Henri Tikkanen (“*The Thirty Years’ War*”), Veijo Meri (“*The Manila Rope*”). The paper constituted a unique and beautiful tribute to the late dr hab. Andrzej Chojecki, a specialist in Scandinavian studies and translator of Tikkanen’s works, who died 16 years ago. Then, prof. nadzw. Hanna Dymel-Trzebiatowska (University of Gdańsk), a specialist in history and literature studies, discussed the mystique motif of inter-, para- and architextual references found in the first two volumes of Timo Parvela’s teenage fiction trilogy *The Guards of the Sampo: The Sword* (2007, Polish transl. 2011) and *Tiera* (2008, Polish transl. 2015). The conclusions of her literary interpretation were included in the paper entitled *The Magic of the Sampo. A Trans-textual Reading of “The Guards of the Sampo” by Timo Parvela*, where *The Guards of the Sampo* is treated as fantasy fiction with subtle references to classics such as J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series and *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien. Next, prof. nadzw. dr hab. Maria Sibińska (University of Gdańsk), who has considerable achievements in the area of Sámi studies in Poland, presented meanings implicit in Sámi mythology in her brilliant paper *The Son of the Sun’s Courting in the Land of the Giants. The Sami Myths of Origins in Anders Fjellner’s epic poems*. The latter two speakers presented their audience with the magical ambience of the North.

Mgr Małgorzata Gdok-Klafkowska, who has a Master’s degree in philosophy and hails from Szczecin, is fascinated by the extraordinary work by the Russian painter, writer, thinker and theatre decoration maker Nicholas Roerich (1874–1947), who painted the landscapes and sacral art of Finland. Her interesting paper, *The Finnish Episode in the Life and Art of Nicholas Roerich*, shed light on the artist’s cultural relationship with Finland, a fact largely unknown in Poland. In the end dr Piotr Klafkowski (University of Szczecin), a scholar of extraordinarily varied interests who specialises in English studies, Oriental (Tibetan) studies, Scandinavian studies and musicology, delivered an original paper *In Finland, E.T. Plays the Viola: A Few Words about the Finnish Viola Music*. He presented selected modern-day Finnish composers and their works that employ the viola as well as the activities of the Finnish Viola Society and the way the instrument is promoted on the Finnish Internet. The title of the paper refers to the two-disc album by Max Savikangas, *Extraterrestrial* (2003). The author focused mainly on Eero Hämmeenniemi’s 2001 concert, which he considers one of the most beautiful viola concerts of our time.

The next two parallel sessions concerned a variety of topics on modern language and linguistics. It is worth noting that during one of them, for the first time in the history of the University of Gdańsk, the papers and the discussion was presented in Finnish. The session was chaired by Pirkko Luoma. It began with *Smoking Men of Hotakainen, and the Metaphors of Illness (Hotakaisen tupakkamiehet ja sairauden metaforat)* by prof. dr Mika Hallila, who is a tenured professor both at the University of Warsaw and the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. Prof. Hallila presented his study of metaphorical depictions of smoking in the discourse

domains of two modern Finnish novels: *Juoksuhaudantie* (*Battle Trench Avenue*) (2002) and *Ihmisen osa* (2009) by Kari Hotakainen. Dr Iwona Piechnik (Jagiellonian University), a specialist in Romance languages who is fluent in Finnish, discussed some original and complex issues regarding the translation of the Bible, namely the language and culture-related aspects of translating the Holy Scriptures into the colloquial dialect of Helsinki, known as *stadi*. The paper was entitled *Stadin slangin pipliakieli* (*Biblical language in Helsinki slang*). She described the characteristics of the translation of Biblical texts into Helsinki slang (*Uusi Testamentti Stadin slangilla* and *Luukkaan Evankeliumi slangiks skrivattuna*) and compared them to the texts of standard Finnish translations of the Bible. Mgr Joanna Rydzewska-Siemiątkowska (University of Warsaw), who conducts research into comparative lexicology, presented her semantic analysis of deontic expressions that are typical of Finnish legal texts in a paper entitled *Deontic expressions in Finnish legal language as a subject of a research survey* (*Lakikielen velvoittavat ilmaukset kyselytutkimuksen kohteena*). *Finnish informal vocabulary in online forums* was a paper presented by dr Anna Buncler (University of Warsaw). Mgr Emmi Pollari (University of Warsaw), an experienced teacher of Finnish as a foreign language, presented *Display of empathy in teaching materials of Finnish as a foreign language* (*Empatian ilmaiseminen S2-opetusmateriaalien dialogeissa*).

The other session, also on linguistics, was chaired by a young researcher, mgr Marta Noińska. Among speakers were a few linguists from the University of Gdańsk whose research interests include a range of aspects of the Finnish language. Prof. nadzw. dr hab. Danuta Stanulewicz (University of Gdańsk), a specialist in English who studies complex semantics as encoded in various languages – including those of Native Americans – presented a paper *Adpositions in Finnish*. Dr Maciej Rataj (University of Gdańsk) presented a sociolinguistic analysis in a paper entitled *From linguistic stereotypes to reliable information: The image of Finnish in English-language social media*. Prof. nadzw. dr hab. Robert Bielecki (Adam Mickiewicz University), a Poznań-based specialist in Finno-Ugric languages and their grammars in particular, discussed a complicated grammatical topic in *Infinitive as part of the predicate in the Finnish language*. Dr Łukasz Sommer (University of Warsaw), a philosopher of culture and translator of Finnish literature, presented *Diacritics and identity: the “y” vs. “ü” controversies in Finland and Estonia*. The session concluded with *The Finno-Ugric terminology in Polish dictionaries* by prof. nadzw. dr hab. Katarzyna Wojan, who presented a detailed depiction of lexical gaps (including geographical ones) in Polish lexicography, taking a historical approach.

After the sessions filled with constructive academic discussions, the next part of the event began, namely the meeting with well-known translators and publishers of Finnish literature: Bożena Kojro (Wydawnictwo “Kojro”, Rusiec) and Sebas-

tian Musielak (Oficyna Wydawnicza "Wolny Tor", Suchy Las). The interview and discussion were chaired brilliantly by prof. nadzw. Hanna Dymel-Trzebiatowska.

The second day of the conference was devoted to interesting papers and multimedia presentations delivered by students. The session was chaired by Monika Gajlewicz, who was perfectly prepared for her role. The first speaker was Magdalena Bagińska, a second-year postgraduate student of Tourism Studies and Historical Tourism at the Faculty of History, University of Gdańsk. She shared information about her study in a paper *Finnish women and Finland in Polish women's magazines of the interwar period*. Her research shows that the image of the Finnish woman was that of a hardworking, resourceful and cognisant citizen. Second-year students of the programme in Scandinavian Studies: Finnish Language, Culture and Economy constituted the largest group of speakers. Sabina Lech presented a paper *The situation of women in Finland*. She referred to the main historical and cultural events that had an impact on women's situation in Finland, briefly described the issue of gender equality in the country and presented Minna Canth, the first feminist in Finland. Katarzyna Piękoś, a student of Finnish as well as a postgraduate student of English, and Filip Wiśniewski in *Finnish and Polish: A Brief Comparison* briefly contrasted the features of Polish and Finnish as well as outlined Finno-Ugric toponyms in Poland. In her other paper, *On the History of Finnish Literature in Poland: A Look at Translations*, Katarzyna Piękoś presented an analysis of statistical data concerning the translation of Finnish-language and Swedish-language literatures into Polish since 1853 until 2016. She mentioned the main trends in Polish translation studies and on the publishing market in different historical periods.

Miłosz Stanković, a student of Swedish and Finnish, shed light on some less-known areas of interlinguistics, thus revealing his passion for Finnish-based constructed languages, in the paper *The History and Characteristics of Constructed Languages Based on Finnish*. He claimed that Finnish is a popular "base" for new linguistic projects.

Kamil Musiałowski presented *The Sisu Motif in Finnish Literature*. He discussed *sisu* by providing examples from four canonical works of Finnish literature: *The Kalevala* (compiled by Elias Lönnrot), *Seven Brothers* by Aleksis Kivi, *Putkinotko* by Joel Lehtonen and *The Unknown Soldier* by Väinö Linna. His presentation was followed by a lively discussion.

In her paper titled concisely *Marimekko*, Agata Piech provided a brief description of the history of the well-known Finnish outfit manufacturer which is considered an alternative to fashion. The main characteristics of the company's design are simplicity, functionality and minimalism. The speaker emphasised the important connection of the brand to Finnish identity.

The session concluded with a paper by Bartłomiej Jańczak (Bachelor in Scandinavian Studies: Swedish at the University of Gdańsk and currently a student of

American Studies), who presented his passionate interest in sports in *Ice hockey in Finland*. Having stressed the status of ice hockey as the national sport of Finland, he outlined the history of the sport, the role that it plays in Finnish culture, the most significant international achievements of the Finnish national team (World Championships, European Championships, the Olympic Games etc.) and the national league; he also discussed the Finnish hockey players who have been successful in the NHL in the USA and Canada.

On the second day of the conference six other sessions of presentations by Scandinavian Studies students took place. The sessions were organised perfectly by dr Katarzyna Michniewicz-Weisland. The students of Scandinavian Studies presented 53 academic projects; in most cases they presented the most important elements of their Master's theses. Noteworthy contributions related to Finland were: *Who does Moominpappa write to? A double turn in his writing* by Monika Apanowicz and *The deployment of tanks by Finland in the Russian conflict during World War 2* by Kamila Wycinka. In the afternoon the second-year students of Norwegian organised an interesting poster session entitled *Snapshots of Scandinavian Culture*.

The conference was certainly a successful academic event. Not only was it an important forum on which scholars from several universities, but also an opportunity for translators and trainee specialists in Finnish to exchange their thoughts and ideas. It also became a significant source of motivation for students who were thus inspired to take up new challenges and start new academic projects at the University of Gdańsk.

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transl. Maciej Rataj