

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### ABOUT THE LINKS BETWEEN PHRASEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY AT AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF LINGUISTICS

On April 7–10, an international conference of linguistics, Slavofraz 2016: Phraseologie und (naive) Psychologie, took place in Austria.

The conference venue was Graz, the second largest town in Austria and also a university town. The second oldest of the universities, Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, currently enrolls about 30,000 students, making it the second largest in Austria after the University of Vienna.

The organiser of the conference was the Institute of Slavic Studies, established in 1811, which makes it one of the oldest of the kind in German-language cultural space. Besides Russian, mainly South Slavic languages are taught, above all, for historical and geographical reasons.

It was the first time that scholars from different countries assembled under the name of Slavofraz. The idea was born in Ljubljana a few years ago, as a kind of equivalent to Europhras, the international society of phraseology. It was decided to organise the first Slavofraz in Graz as Agnieszka Bedkowska-Kopczyk and Heinrich Pfandl from the Institute of Slavic Studies agreed to take it upon themselves.

Slavofraz 2016 opened with a round table discussion, moderated by Peter Grzybek (Graz), with scholars from different countries as participants: Agnieszka Bedkowska-Kopczyk (Graz), Natalya Bragina (Moscow), Wolfgang Eismann (Graz), Valery Mokienko (St Petersburg), and Alexei Shmelev (Moscow). The main topics focused on the concepts and theories announced as keywords of the conference: how are psychology and cognitive processes connected in phraseology; what is the role of popular naïve theories and is this approach justified; where is the line between naïve and scientific etymology; relations between physiology and psychology on the example of figurative language, etc.

I would like to highlight the topic discussed by Wolfgang Eismann, professor emeritus from the University of Graz, who, on the basis of German cultural space, explained the contradictions that appear when trying to find equivalents to terms; so, for example, it is difficult to translate the German term *Völkerpsychologie*, as the English term *folk psychology* is misleading. The research object of *Völkerpsychologie* is Hegelian *Volksgeist* (another German term for which is *Volksseele*). In terms of phraseology it is supposed to mean that the psychological motivation of idioms and proverbs in different languages is common, yet the imagery is individual. Eismann also pointed to the opposing viewpoints from different periods (e.g. Kleinpaul), according to which people as such cannot understand the existence of *psyche*, and actually everything is included in the deep structures of the language, which finds the most expressive manifestation in proverbs and idioms.

During the three conference days, about 60 scholars from 16 countries took the floor. Most of the presentations took place in parallel sections. The presentations can generally be divided into two: the linguistic expression of, on the one hand, the concepts such as *psyche* (*soul*, *dusha*) or physiological processes related to feelings and emotions, and,



*Round table discussion: (from the left) Peter Grzybek, Valery Mokienko, Wolfgang Eismann, Agnieszka Bedkowska-Kopczyk, Natalya Bragina, and Alexei Shmelev. Photograph Anneli Baran 2016.*

on the other hand, that of intellectual ability, including the opposites clever/stupid, in phraseological units. An attempt was made, by drawing on linguistic corpora and other linguistic collections, to analyse, above all, the proportion of naïve psychology in figurative language units. It was repeatedly mentioned, though, that dictionaries and everyday language use are two different things. Most of today's people know nothing about the etymology of set expressions and therefore use them as everyday linguistic forms. It has been found that in different languages expressions based on emotions are interpreted quite differently, depending on age, education, gender, etc. The scholars who up to now have been studying mainly literary sources and dictionaries repeatedly stated that more attention should be paid to the usage of phraseology in everyday speech, including communication in the internet environment. Those interested in the topic can find the conference programme with abstracts at <http://slavofraz.uni-graz.at/de/konferenz/>.

The conference in Graz provided a good opportunity for the assembling and a joint seminar of the new working group, *Meteo-Prognostic Paroemias*, established last autumn. The seminar brought together researchers from Austria, Slovenia, and Estonia, whose field of studies covers weather sayings, which have their role in different languages even today. Unfortunately, there is no systematic approach to this kind of paroemias today, and terminology creation and classification are especially confusing.

The working group is aimed, above all, at advancing the studies, by assembling scholars investigating this field, organising seminars and conferences, publishing research results, etc. The next meeting of the working group will take place at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu, Estonia.

Anneli Baran

## INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ABOUT THE POWER OF WORD IN TARTU

On April 25–27, 2016, the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore of the University of Tartu and the Department of Folkloristics of the University of Helsinki organised an international symposium under the heading *Word Power*, which focused on the aspects related to magic word and, more extensively, study of word use. Traditions related to word magic and the power attributed to the word have, for many years, been in the centre of interest of several disciplines, such as folkloristics, ethnology, anthropology, theology, and linguistics. In the course of time, research focuses have changed and shifted; for example, approaches concentrating on structural elements, performativity, and more general usage context have been applied.

The symposium organised in Tartu, Estonia, was remarkable for its interdisciplinarity and comprehensiveness. The speakers were aware of the fact that, when discussing the magic word, it is pointless and also impossible to view its supernatural, empirical, social, poetic, and rhetoric facets separately, as they are closely intertwined. So the presentations highlighted the mutual impact of language, folklore, mentality, emotions, and literature in the evolution of oral traditions.

Lotte Tarkka's keynote speech about Karelian incantations and songs was convincing and well presented. Tarkka noted that in order to better understand incantations, it does not suffice to read the preserved texts but knowledge of a wider context is needed; for example, the reasons that made people use them as such. The uttering of incantations was usually caused by a concrete situation, and the incantation in turn influenced the further progress of the given situation. Curses, for instance, were used to contact supernatural forces in order to gain magical power, while on the other hand they worked as a rhetorical weapon against the listener. Tarkka pointed out that, according to belief, aggressive incantation might have exerted adverse influence even on an occasional listener. Therefore, in the case of word magic, belief, models of social intercourse, and presentation practices intertwined (and still do), and poetic speech can be both a means for organising human relationships and for channelling problems arising inside the community. Tarkka's ideas about words as influencers of the world's operating systems were linked to Eva Toulouse's presentation about the speech of Yuri Vella, a Nenets reindeer herder and poet. The speaker described how Vella, a representative of the traditionally quiet Nenets, acquired eloquence not inherent in this ethnos, and polished it to perfection, in order to forward his message as effectively as possible, in different non-traditional contexts (e.g. in communication with oil magnates or folklorists).

Two more presentations were dedicated to Nenets culture. Karina Lukin introduced Nenets narration strategies, the alteration of the third-person speech and narrating from the viewpoint of the experiencer as a means of achieving poetic convincingness. Laur Vallikivi described the changes that occurred in the Nenets' language use after their conversion to Christianity, illustrating how religious reformation often inevitably brings along the acquisition of new speaking manners.

Quite a few discussions concerned the role of silence in language use – sometimes lack of words can be rather eloquent. This topic was linked with the keyword speech of James Kapaló about hidden words. Traditionally, plenty of magic and religious knowledge has been regarded as secret; also, throughout times, states have had their secret services,

secret files, and other hidden information. In order to navigate in today's virtual world, each of us needs a secret personal password. The speaker also discussed, in light of the ideas of Foucault, Bourdieu, and other theoreticians, some critical problems associated with the communicative power of secret words.

The relationships between secret words and rituals were also discussed by Ergo-Hart Västrik on the example of the cult of Setos' Peko, and by Margaret Lyngdoh on the basis of name taboo beliefs in Khasi belief narratives in India. Elo-Hanna Seljamaa's presentation about forbidden love and child killing, based on an Estonian folksong *Mareta's Child*, is also connected with taboos and popular ways of their verbalisation.

Several speakers referred, while discussing the representative and ideological nuances of language, to the theory of speech acts. Laura Siragusa showed, on the example of Vepsian folklore, how spatial and temporal perceptions are combined with specific ways of speaking. Jonathan Roper in his keynote speech discussed vernacular theories about right and wrong name forms in traditional songs (e.g. the dilemma lord Donald *versus* lord Roland) on the basis of material collected on Newfoundland. The speaker maintained that even in the same language words do not denote the same things for all people; they can be related to different experiences; for example, words of the same domain can be connected with establishing the truth, hiding, or distorting it.

The first day ended by a film screening by Rajat Nayyar about an initiation rite in India. Once again the audience had to declare that, without explanations, what is self-evident in one culture is often incomprehensible for someone from another culture.

The second day continued with more presentations. Aleksis Moine's paper about Finnish charms was interlarded with a number of fascinating examples. Moine pointed out that healers, in order to add authority to their words, often ascribe them to supernatural beings, saying, for example, "I do not speak with my own mouth, I speak with the Creator's mouth!" In the same way, incantations might describe the accompanying activity, claiming that the healing ritual is performed with the hands of the Creator. On the one hand, such use of words adds to the power of the charm; yet, on the other, the healer evades the responsibility in case of failed treatment, referring to the Creator's will not fathomable for human beings. Kati Kallio's presentation also drew on Finnish material, dealing, based on the theories of linguistic anthropology, with the role of poetic language as carrier of ideologies, identities, and beliefs, both among the elite and common people. Kallio referred to the Lutheran reformers of the 16th century, who, in the beginning, tried to avoid the use of Kalevala-meter in hymns; yet, by the early 17th century some of its elements had already been introduced. Therefore, the verse itself was not regarded as condemnable and 'pagan' anymore; rather, it was unacceptable to use it in charms.

Frog's research explored, on the basis of Finno-Karelian long incantations, words as material objects, often described not as means of communication but rather as a tool. Also, some lore texts indicate that an incantation can be owned by only one person – as if it is a physical object. A certain transition from a word to an object can also be seen in rituals, in which the healer utters the incantation above water and the patient drinks the water as a substance enriched by the power of charm.

In conclusion it can be said that the conference achieved its purpose, enabling substantial discussions about the power of word and suitable theoretical research frameworks, comparison of research results, and outlining new perspectives.

Reet Hiimäe

## CONFERENCE ON CULINARY CULTURE AT THE ESTONIAN LITERARY MUSEUM

The project titled *Communication Styles: Developing a Cross-Cultural Theoretical and Methodological Framework*, signed between Estonian and Polish Academies of Sciences, aims at an in-depth investigation of the subtopic of folkloric creativity, namely its expression in language, and intends to describe, comparatively, the elements of communication styles in different cultures. The launch to the three-year project, lasting from 2016 until 2018, was given by a small conference on culinary culture, which took place at the Estonian Literary Museum on May 2, 2016. The conference organised within the project between Estonian and Polish Academies of Sciences and in cooperation with the Bulgarian and Belarusian Academies of Sciences focused on foodways and their expressions in communication.

The conference brought together researchers from Poland, Bulgaria, Belarus, and Estonia, who presented interdisciplinary accounts on the topic. Linguists, experts in cultural studies and folklore, ethnographers and philologists got engaged in a discussion about how food affects meaning and vice versa.

The inherent untranslatability of food-related terms was the topic of the presentation given by Dr Władysław Chłopicki, who pointed at the (often unintentional) humour in restaurant menu translation. Cognitive linguist Dr Ene Vainik followed up on a similar topic and analysed insightfully how taste terms are used in relation to emotion, in particular to describe emotions (bitter for anger, sweet for love). Tracing the etymologies of these words in Estonian, she confirmed that these are examples of metaphorical mapping from the cognitive domain of taste to that of emotion. Two papers addressed cookbooks as ideological literature: Drs Ester Bardone and Anu Kannike talked about vegetarian diet in the early 20th-century Estonia, and Liisi Laineste examined more recent cookbooks where former first ladies of the state presented Estonian cuisine to the foreign readers – complete with its fascination with mushrooming, berry picking, and other deeply rooted traditions. Dr Dorota Brzozowska's presentation touched upon the cultural meaning of food consumption, and the discussion of her paper reached an important point about the use of food in magic practices in the East and West. The Bulgarian and Belarusian presentations (by Drs Ivanka Petrova, Lidia Bohan, and Natalia Bunkevich) focused on the lived traditions and their role in present-day societies and among different immigrant groups.

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For more details on the conference programme see <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/fo/koostoo/poola/abstracts.pdf>.

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