

REMAINING RELEVANT: MODERN LANGUAGE STUDIES TODAY

Abstracts

Panel I

Margery Vibe Skagen

How can literature complement other disciplines in the study of ageing?

Over the last three decades, the multidisciplinary study of ageing, “the new gerontology,” has developed into a separate academic field, in which features of late life are now considered not only in the perspective of medicine and psychiatry, but also within the process of history, society, culture, and politics. “Humanistic gerontology” and “cultural gerontology” have long challenged dehumanization in health care and medicine by applying methods and concepts from the humanities. “Narrative gerontology” represents a specialization of the discipline, which focuses on the biographical dimensions and subjective experience of growing old as a way of redefining the meaning of ageing and improving not only the care of the elderly, but also their self-understanding, empowerment and public image. With the works of among others Kathleen Woodward, Margaret Morgenroth Gullette, Mike Hepsworth and Anne M. Wyatt-Brown, “literary gerontology” has become a recognized field of study.

Parallel to the recent “proliferation of novels about old age,” ageing has also emerged as a critical perspective for literary scholars, sometimes using interdisciplinary approaches, as Helen Small in her ground breaking *The Long Life*. Using literature for causes outside of literature has implications for the way we think literature relates to the world. Humanistic gerontology has often used literary texts for their representativity, in the same way as early feminist studies tended to rely on the “image of women approach.” In literary studies, the word use will often be negatively associated with an instrumental, uninformed conception of literary texts, which disregards their “literarity.” How can literary research complement medical and psychiatric approaches to ageing without limiting itself to representational realism? This paper will address questions related to the uses of literature, and exemplify the potential of literary criticism to investigate ageing as a fundamental dimension of human existence.

Lillian Jorunn Helle

Society and senescence at the Russian *fin de siècle*: The case of the aging Lev Tolstoy

“Ageing and literature” has become a vital research area, representing an interdisciplinary approach to the constructions of senescence in our society. A large number of studies exist focusing on the topic within an American and Western-European literary context. But little, if almost anything, has been published from the perspective of Russian literature, situating my project *On Endings and Old age in the old Tolstoy* into an underdeveloped, but highly relevant field.

Typical for the intellectual atmosphere of Lev Tolstoy’s later years were the death-denying and youth-promoting aspirations of the Russian *fin de siècle*. Utopists and avantgardists from the most divergent ideological and aesthetical camps were obsessed with ideas of creating the perfect immortal and forever young human being. Two preeminent thinkers of this period promoted, though, quite another understanding of death and of the significance

of old age: the writer Lev Tolstoy, who became a cultural icon as “the great elder” and the biologist Ilya Mechnikov (who in 1904 coined the term gerontology). For these two old age, not youth was the most essential part of our existence, an evaluation that clearly dissolves traditionally negative stereotypes regarding the late stages of life. Mechnikov, however, saw modern medicine as the solution to a good ageing while Tolstoy identified good ageing with spiritual investigations and self-discovery, two different approaches to senescence that are no less prevalent to day. In my paper I will have a closer look Tolstoy’s insistence on old age as a unique arena for his ongoing search for the self, as this is reflected in his late works. This quest to some extent takes the form of a traditional narrative, with continuity and coherence. But more often than not, it turns into digressing and ambivalent anti-narratives, disrupting and ridiculing the notion of a forward striding course of events. Tolstoy’s manner of writing therefore implies a constant oscillation between attempts at closure and moments of openness. This is an oscillation that amongst other things undermines the author’s seeking for an essential selfhood and a transhistorical truth making his old life script, in all its anachronistic strangeness, both pertinent and challenging for modern readers.

Gunn Inger Sture

Memory and ageing in Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*

Marcel Proust’s work *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*) has been the subject of many previous studies, and themes such as memory and time have been examined closely. However, the theme of ageing has not received much attention despite its pertinence in relation to time and memory. This presentation will examine how metaphors of memory and time in *la Recherche* can help us understand how Proust views the ageing mind. To Proust, the metaphor is intrinsically related to memory and time. It forms the basis for the involuntary memory which is the means by which one can recapture lost time. In exploring the links between metaphors, memory and ageing, this presentation will draw upon theories of conceptual metaphor set forth by George Lakoff, Mark Johnson and Mark Turner. They see metaphor as something more than a linguistic expression – according to their theories, we understand and conceptualise the world around us through metaphors. This can be related to Proust’s own view of the metaphor as a means of discovering the truth or the essence of things and ideas.

Panel II: Investigating pupils’ language ability

Research Group for Language Testing and Assessment

Angela Hasselgreen

A national test of English reading: do our items test the abilities we think they do?

All schoolchildren in Norway are subject to national tests of English reading at the start of 5th and 8th grade. The construct of English reading is defined in the test, based on elements of the school curriculum, as various aspects of reading comprehension (involving finding specific information and main points in texts of varying length, and inferencing), as well as understanding vocabulary and grammar in context.

The test items are designed to cover all these features of the construct, with each item being mainly associated with a particular feature. Moreover, the way test results are to be interpreted by teachers assumes a progression in the difficulty of items targeting specific features, based on the levels of processing in Khalifa and Weir’s (2009) model of reading.

The study presented in this paper aims to establish:

- a) The extent to which the actual difficulty of items, based on test data, reflects the predicted difficulty based on linking content features to our model of reading
- b) The implication of this for the current interpretation of test scores.

Barbara Blair, Eli Moe and Kari Telstad Sundet

Social science reading in schools for second language pupils: are goals and textbooks pitched at the right level?

The Norwegian compulsory education reform of 2006 specified five basic skills for learning in school, work and social life: oral, reading, writing and digital skills, plus numeracy. These skills are considered fundamental to learning in all subjects, as well as a prerequisite if pupils are to demonstrate their subject competence. Thus, language skills are required in order to learn, for instance, history. By implication, history teachers are required to facilitate their pupils' development of general language skills and acquisition of subject-related academic language.

The aim of this presentation is to compare the reading constructs described in the social science curriculum goals for the 4th, 7th and 10th grades, with the CEFR reading level necessary for reading textbooks in this subject.

Six social science textbooks have been analysed. These include two textbooks for the 4th grade, two for the 6th grade and two for the 10th grade. Six raters who are well acquainted with the CEFR have assessed these books to identify the CEFR level required in order to read and learn from them. A rating scheme based on the Dutch CEFR Construct Project (Alderson, J. C. et al, 2006) was used. The language employed in the textbooks was analysed with respect to such key criteria as vocabulary, grammatical complexity, language functions and text length.

The initial findings indicate that the CEFR level in reading competence that is required to cope with the language in the textbooks studied corresponds with the reading constructs specified in the social science curriculum goals.

Eli Moe and Kari Telstad Sundet

What can we learn about pupils' language ability from large scale data sets?

Data collected from only a small number of people, can tell us something about those persons. It would however be difficult to generalise on the basis of such a data set. The focus of this paper is information collected in large scale data sets from Norwegian schools. We will refer to two different types of data: a) data from an electronic corpus, Coryl, consisting of texts written by pupils aged approximately 12/13, and 15/16 years, and b) data from the National tests of English for pupils in the 5th and 8th grade.

The corpus includes nearly 300 texts, or 129 425 words. The corpus is tagged for 27 categories of error, as well as features such as age, gender and level on the Common European Framework.

The data from the National tests of English includes items measuring reading, grammar and vocabulary. Each year between 50,000 and 60,000 pupils sit for the test in each of the grades.

The aim of the paper is to illustrate how findings from the different data sets can potentially offer useful information to present-day society, particularly to researchers, schools and teachers. We will discuss what some of the findings may imply and how these could be relevant for different stakeholders.

Panel III

Vanessa Etondi

African feminism in three novels by Léonora Miano

The Mboasu is a fictional country of Equatorial Africa. Its social context is completely deconstructed and destroyed, degraded by poor self-esteem and devoured by the worst corruption. Yet, Leonora Miano, a contemporary writer from Cameroon, develops another current and actual theme: the social conception, perception, status and role of the female individual in sub-Saharan Africa. Since pre-colonial to post-colonial era, the woman has held more or less important positions. Nevertheless, she is often left out of history. This obliterated aspect is the one presented in *L'Intérieur de la nuit*, *Contours du jour qui vient* and *La Saison de l'ombre*. Hence, Miano is giving her readers the opportunity to study both the notions of African feminism and women's writing. To identify the various manifestations of African feminism through female characters, we have chosen existentialism as an ideological framework. As a theoretical framework, feminism as developed by Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva seem very appropriate to analyze feminist issues, although the fictional social context presented here is African.

Laura Sætveit Miles

Why 'women writers'?

In this talk I will present a brief historical overview of about fifty years of shifting pros and cons of using the category of 'women writers'. Where does that history bring us to in 2016? Far from being passé or outdated, the category of women writers remains controversial, and many would say, needed more than ever. Some modern poets and novelists do not want to be categorized as women, apart from men, while still others point to evidence of continuing patterns of misogyny against women writers in publishing practices, prize fields, and reviews. Implicit and explicit gender biases control literary traditions in ways few of us would like to admit – but in ways critics must map in order to fully understand how those traditions are unfolding. While I will concentrate on English-language literature, I hope to initiate a conversation about sexism, power, and voice in literature from around the world. I will argue that the question of women writers shapes what we read, how we read, and how we teach the next generation of readers. But how should we speak of it?

Panel IV

Esmira Nahhri

Autentisiteten av førslamsk poesi

En av de mest kompliserte problemstillingene i tidlig arabisk poesi er problemet angående autentisitet (*qaḍīyyat al-intihāl*) av tidlig arabisk poesi som ble samlet inn av arabiske filologer på det 7. -8. århundre. Debatten om autentisitet startet allerede i Omayyad tiden (661-750). Middelalderske filologer i 8.- 9. århundre var klar over forskjellen mellom førslamsk og etter islamske poesi, den førslamske poesien ble skapt og overbåret fra generasjon til generasjon i muntlig form og den etter islamske var i ført videre i skriftlig form. I sine verk diskuterte de mye angående spørsmål om samling av og nedskrivning av poesi, samtidig også om autentisitet og overbæring av muntlig poesi.

I vestlig arabistikk ble problemet om autentisitet av førslamsk arabisk poesi reist av den tyske forsker B. Ahlwardt i det 19. århundre. I det 20-århundre oppsto det igjen sterk

polemikk etter utgivelsen av boken *Fī al-adab al-jāhili* av den egyptiske forfatteren Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1926) og artikkelen av den engelske forskeren D. S. Margoliouth *The Origins of Arabic Poetry* i (1925) om autenticitet av *jāhili* poesien. I disse studiene framsettes ideen om at hele den førislamske poesien er falsifisert av *rāwīer*, grammatikere og filologer senere i 8. og 9. århundret.

Debatten om autenticitet har bevist at førislamsk- og tidlig arabisk poesi krever mer nøye og grundige tilnærminger basert på nye vitenskapelige metoder. I den følgende artikkel vil jeg diskutere og utforske *qaṣīda lāmiyya* (*li-qaṣīda*) som tilskrives den førislamske jødiske poeten al-Samaw'al ibn al-ʿĀdiyā'. Dette diktet har tradisjonelt blitt betraktet som et perfekt eksempel på klassisk *fakhr* (selvlovprisning) og vurdert sterkt av middelalderske filologer på grunn av poetiske og retoriske kvaliteter. Autenticiteten av *qaṣīda* har ikke blitt betvilt frem til nå av nåtidens forskere og vi vil her diskutere noen faktorer som etter vår mening gir oss grunn til å sette autenticitet av *lāmiyya* under tvil og vise at diktet ikke kan betraktes som pålitelig og autentisk for al-Samaw'al ibn al-ʿĀdiyā'.

Ludmila Torlakova

How we use figurative language

“Discourse (speech, *kalām*) situates the branches of knowledge in their proper places (*manāzilahā*), arranges them in their proper order (*marātibahā*), reveals their structure (*ṣuwarihā*), gathers together their various fruits (*thamarihā*), discloses their secrets (*sarā'irihā*), and shows their hidden content (*ḍamā'irihā*). By means of it God Most High has distinguished man (*al-ʿinsān*) from the other animals (*al-ḥayawān*). ...” With these highly ornate and undeniably beautiful lines of rhymed prose ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī begins his treatise on rhetoric known as *The Secrets of Eloquence*. The noblest discourse, according to al-Jurjānī, is that which is clearest. The fulfilment of this requirement or the lack of it, is not a function merely of words, “for words (*ʿalfāz*) do not make sense (or mean) until they are constructed in a certain way, and arranged ... in one pattern rather than another.”¹

When expressing ourselves, whether in speaking or writing, we construct our discourse according to a specific pattern suited to what we want to communicate. Then we create with little effort new concepts or combine old ones in different, seemingly unexpected ways. As Albert Katz puts it, this “creative interplay of language and thought is particularly evident in figurative language.” Through figurative language speakers and writers communicate “meanings that differ in various ways from what they literally say.” People use figurative language for reasons of politeness, to avoid responsibility for the import of what is communicated, to express ideas that are difficult to communicate using literal language, and to express thoughts in a compact and vivid manner. The most common forms of figurative language, often referred to as “tropes” or “figures of speech,” are *metaphor*, *simile*; *metonymy*; *idioms*; *proverbs*; *irony*; *hyperbole* among others.

In the present paper I present the short story “The Martyr” by the Egyptian writer Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, which was formerly included in the curriculum for Master in Arabic. The focus of the analysis will be twofold. The first aim will be to discuss how to present to graduate students in Arabic the author’s use of different figurative devices. The second will be to elucidate how al-Ḥakīm employs many interwoven figures of speech in order to narrate the tale of the Devil, when he wanted to repent and become a true follower of God. I shall track the imagined “path” of Lucifer to his “goal,” the means to achieve that goal, the “impediments” on the road to God, the “emotions” that rage “inside the Devil” and the final solution of the problem he created. Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm’s language is relatively easy when it comes to vocabulary, but the rhetorical repetitions and parallel phrases typical in Arabic, as

¹ ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (died 1078 AD) is a “literary critic whose work constitutes a penetrating approach to the structure of expressive language in general and to poetic imagery in particular.” (K. Abu Deeb, p. 3)

well as a number of idioms and unexpected comparisons pose difficulties. Moreover the different forms of figurative language and its different dimensions that “reflect particular mental mappings” cause even more problems. All these issues will be addressed and some solutions will be suggested.

Panel V

Margrete Dyvik Cardona

“Poverty’s agent”

In an effort to ascertain to whom or what Colombian newspapers assign notions of responsibility, cause or blame when they address the topic of poverty, I will give an account of the verbs that appear with the word “pobreza” as syntactic and semantic argument. Specifically, I examine the agent, or highest argument, of the different verbs in detail, since the agent is the initiator of the verbal action and thus has the potential of accepting responsibility or blame for the action described. My hope is that my findings will show how linguistic research can be vital for solving current social challenges.

Margje Post

Is prosody worth studying?

In dialect descriptions, prosodic features usually play a minor role, if mentioned at all. However, this does not mean that these suprasegmental features, such as rhythm and intonation, are irrelevant in communication.

On the contrary, many people mention prosodic features among the keys they use to identify a speaker’s regional provenance. Consequently, being part of a “regional “accents,” prosodic features carry social meaning. Recently, linguists have started studying the social meaning of Russian regionally coloured speech, among them our own PhD student Benedikte F. Vardøy. However, before it is possible to study their social connotations, the regional differences themselves need to be identified. Among those in Russian we find the quality and relative length of unstressed vowels, which we are currently studying in the speech of Perm.

Intonational differences also have pragmatic meanings. Every student of Russian learns that the difference between statement and polar question can be expressed by intonation only. However, intonation also expresses more subtle pragmatic differences. In a recent study, Volskaja (2013) reports of a difference in timing of the pitch peak in questions in the speech of young and older speakers of Russian, leading to misunderstandings, because a late peak has a non-neutral meaning for older people, but not for youngsters. My own study of a typically Northern Russian intonation contour suggests that it is mainly used for a specific subtype of polar questions, mentioned in studies of dialects of other languages. This subtype is expressed in Standard Russian as well, but its intonation has not yet been properly studied. In describing regional intonation, researchers often lack a robust intonational model for the standard language to compare with.

So prosody is worth studying – it can carry communicatively relevant meanings, which can only be studied after we have described them properly.

Annette Myhre Jørgensen and Marie Espeland

Intracultural perspective on the requests made by teenagers in Buenos Aires and Madrid

The speech act of requesting has been widely examined features in intercultural pragmatics (Márquez Reiter 2000, Blum-Kulka & Ohlstein), but not among teenagers, nor from an intracultural perspective.

The acts of request are directive speech acts with illocutionary purpose: to get the hearer to do something in circumstances in which it is not obvious that he/she will perform the action in the normal course of events (Searle 1969). The acts of request are considered to be invasive and face threatening in the Politeness theory (Brown&Levinson 1987, Green 1975). For this reason, the acts of request require specific politeness strategies (Trosborg 1995, Salgado 2011). In this paper we will take a closer look on the different politeness strategies applied by the teenagers from Madrid and Buenos Aires when asking for something:

Amanda: dale please pati me estoy muriendo de hambre (BABS2-03)

Tina: oye, me puedes hacer un superfavor/ (MAORE2-12)

Speakers of a language have interpretative skills based on their social environment and own experiences. Speakers from Madrid and Buenos Aires share the same language, but not the cultural and social environment, and therefore their interpretative skills may differ. The comparison of the politeness strategies used by Madrid and Buenos Aires teenagers will shed light on these differences/similarities. This comparison is possible thanks to the COLA corpus from the Bergen University (www.colam.org), which offers informal speech and conversations held between teenagers from 13 to 19 years from both cities.

Panel VI

Åsta Haukås

On the importance of metacognition in language learning

The ability of metacognition has been defined as belonging to the key competences of the so-called 21st Century Skills, and researchers, teacher educators and policy makers increasingly point to the importance of metacognition for success in learning in a lifelong perspective. In the language classroom, it is essential that teachers are aware of their own knowledge and beliefs about languages, cultures and language learning in order to support their students in their learning efforts. Similarly, students profit from a conscious approach to the language learning process. This paper discusses insights from empirical and theoretical research on metacognition in language teaching and learning. Furthermore, it presents an ongoing project on metacognition with collaborating researchers from Norway, Sweden and the UK.

Vibeke Grunnreis Kessner

The role of pronunciation in foreign language learning – Teacher cognitions and practices

Research on pronunciation in foreign language learning reveals that intelligible pronunciation is a central component of communicative competence. Nevertheless, research continues to report that pronunciation has a limited role in foreign language programs. Pronunciation is also often neglected in language teacher education. The aim of this study is to understand the attitudes of five teachers of German as a foreign language towards the

importance of pronunciation in foreign language learning. In interviews, the teachers were asked to present their views about pronunciation as a part of language acquisition in general. Furthermore, they were asked to give their opinions about the role of pronunciation in their own teaching. The discussion of the results are based on analyses of the interviews, observation of the teacher's practices, and data from a survey that explores the learner views about this topic.

Eli Moe

The language of schooling – a challenge for subject learning

Success in the educational system is closely linked to having a good command of the language of schooling in the country of residence. Learners' level of language proficiency has an impact on their success in all school subjects: languages as well as other subjects. Having a migrant or minority background may thus affect young learners' school performance.

This paper reports on a two-year project, within the 2012–2015 program of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), attempting to identify language level requirements for the language of schooling, more specifically for mathematics and history/civics.

In the project around 160 language descriptors for listening, reading, speaking and writing were developed with two age groups in mind: 12/13 and 15/16 year olds. Researchers and teachers at an international workshop provided feedback on the initial descriptors. Then two online questionnaires were launched and

- 1) 78 international language experts assigned the descriptors to levels of the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR)
- 2) 230 teachers of mathematics and history/civics assessed whether pupils in the relevant age groups needed the competence indicated in the descriptors in order to succeed in mathematics and history/civics.

The results are diverse. On the one hand, specific CEFR levels of language requirements emerge for the two subjects and age groups. On the other hand, the data yield no clear cut pedagogical suggestions – because of diverse language requirements inherent in subjects and competence aims and non-language teachers' inexperience in thinking in terms of language requirements.

Panel VII

Helge Vidar Holm

Kronotopier i Patrick Modianos historieskriving: eksempler fra romanen *Dora Bruder* (1997)

Hele romanforfatterskapet til Patrick Modiano er preget av en sterk bevissthet om den nære fortidens rolle i våre liv, den fortiden som i stor grad ble skapt av og kom til å prege forfatterens foreldregenerasjon. Denne historiske arven som kronologisk går forut for våre egne liv, er en del av vårt eksistensgrunnlag, på godt og vondt. Mens mange av Modianos andre romaner har klare selvbiografiske referanser, søker forfatteren i *Dora Bruder*, med utgangspunkt i en avisnotis fra 1941, å etterspore og fremstille deler av livshistorien til en ung jødisk pike som annonsen melder savnet. Konkrete steder (*topoi*) i Paris og Frankrike knyttet til bestemte tidsforløp (*chronos*) gjennom et narrativt mønster der Mikhaïl Bakhtins teorier om kronotopen vil kunne gi interessante innfallsvinkler til analyse av Modianos særegne form for oppgjør med en nær og traumatisk historisk arv.

Camilla Skalle

Nostalgia and Hybrid Identity in Italian Migrant Literature

Recent developments in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan etc. have created the so-called refugee crisis and an increased media attention to refugee and migration issues. Humanistic disciplines have a particular relevance to the interpretation of these phenomena by examining individual experiences, looking beyond the so-called masses and studying aesthetic expressions such as novels, films, performance and more which thematize the migrant's position.

Nostalgia, from the Greek *nóstos* (return home) and *álgia* (pain), was originally a Seventeenth century medical diagnosis for those suffering from severe homesickness, and the term is often used by scholars of migrant literature. But what is home in contemporary migrant literature? How can one long for a home one no longer can remember, or never has even lived in? How does nostalgia influence the migrant's local, national and cultural identity? One of the Italian migrant writers who examines this is the Italian Somali writer Igiaba Scego, and I will base my conference paper on readings of two of her short stories, "Dismatria" ("Exmatriate") and "Salsicce" ("Sausages"), as well as her autofictional novel *La mia casa è dove sono* (*My home is where I am*).

Lene Johannessen

Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic* as Site of Cultural Memory

American writer Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic* was published in 2011, and announces itself as a powerful illustration of how literature participates in and shapes the unceasing process of cultural overlaying and disclosures, and hence (self-) understanding. The novel re-calls events that transpired on the American Pacific Coast between the 1910s and 1940s, up until recently often shrouded in silence. In the past ten-fifteen years, however, the painful history of the interment camps during WWII are giving rise to a growing body of literature that brings these histories to light, constituting and constituted by an aesthetic imaginary of great complexity. In Ranjan Ghosh's description aesthetic imaginaries are "entangled figurations bearing out the promise of 'shared realities'" (2015, 134). The present talk reads some such figurations as they transpire in *Buddha*, illustrating how literature is able to provide a site for the performance of cultural memory. By articulating and giving aesthetic form to past violations such performance may also point to the potential beginning a 'shared reality'.

Panel VIII

Karol Janicki

Linguistics and society: from conflict talk to peaceful communication

My talk will concern my most recent and present research that can be seen as of potential interest to the society at large. Over the last few years, I have concentrated on two socially relevant topics: (1) language and conflict, and (2) folk linguistics. Under the heading of 'language and conflict', I have investigated some of the ways language can contribute to both instigating and alleviating conflict. In my opinion, the way we view meaning, communication, and definitions is central to our understanding of and avoiding language-ridden conflict. As for 'folk linguistics', which concerns the layperson's views of language, I have investigated the question of what the lay people see as the most important language-related *problems*. I have examined this question in several countries, on several languages and in several professional institutions. At present, I am doing research on (3) peaceful

(non-aggressive) communication. I am trying to find out what linguistic and other communicational features the lay people see as making our language peaceful.

Ingunn Lunde

Culture as politics: on language legislation in Putin's Russia

One of the goals of this conference is to point at the significance of our fields, to show the world that languages are important, history, culture, literature are essential to society, perhaps even to politics.

In Russia, culture, history, literature, language are indeed viewed as a matter of great importance. So important that the authorities have, in recent years — and months — significantly increased their involvement in the cultural field, adopting new laws and regulations and exploring the capital of culture for all it is worth.

In this paper I will situate the field of language politics within this context and take a closer look at state involvement in question of language legislation, regulation and cultivation over the last decade.

Martin Paulsen

Are Ukrainian writers still relevant as an object of study?

Ukraine has a strong poetocratic tradition: Historically, and particularly in the time following the crowning of Taras Shevchenko as their national poet in the middle of the nineteenth century, Ukrainians have looked to their writers for answers to fundamental questions of relevance to their society at large. While the literary works have contributed to the writers' status, the public has shown interest in their opinions and attitudes to questions outside the literary realm. In such a situation, it makes sense to study the writers and their influence on society to understand the development of public discourse.

However – while granting Ukraine independence, which has been perceived to be so important for the nation's political and cultural survival and development — the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991 also implied the questioning of core cultural values, including those related to literature and the role of writers in Ukrainian society. This role was also challenged by Ukrainian writers themselves, most notably by Yuryi Andrukhovych in an early 1990s trilogy of novels. Thus, in the long perspective, there is a tension between tradition and the current development, when it comes to the understanding of the importance of writers to society.

Importantly, this is not only a question of the role writers choose to take upon themselves, it is also a matter of the role writers are given by others. These perspectives are interrelated, but the latter perspective also opens up for an investigation of the role historical writers (e.g. Shevchenko) are given today.

Currently, Ukraine is going through several crises, one of which is the on-going war between Russian-backed separatist and Ukrainian government forces in the Donbas region. The conflict is of a great scale with 10.000 reported dead and more than a million internally displaced persons, in addition to several hundred thousand refugees. It is likely to continue, and even if it ended today, the trauma caused by the war would be expected to have a huge impact on Ukrainian society for many years to come. It is a crisis that calls for the kind of answers that Ukrainians have traditionally turned to their writers for.

In this paper I shall, against the background of the current crisis, 1) discuss the role of writers in contemporary Ukraine and how it can be explored further; 2) discuss the relevance of investigating not only literary works, but also the writers' role in society. How can a study of this kind contribute to our understanding of key developments in Ukrainian society? Is this insight relevant to other societies?

Panel IX

Erika Wolf

The importance of the dialogue between industry and humanities in the light of Leonardo Sinisgalli's viewpoint

The eclectic poet, draftsman and art director Leonardo Sinisgalli (1908–81) has been among the ones who most vigorously endorsed the synergy between humanities and industry in Italy. Having himself worked in the new field of marketing communication for Olivetti at the end of the Thirties, he encouraged the encounter between humanists, artists, scientists and technicians especially through the pages of the house organs he founded, "Pirelli" (1948) and Finmeccanica's "Civiltà delle macchine" (1953), owned by two major industrial groups. In Sinisgalli's mind, the exchange of ideas between artists, poets and the factory should help to escape utilitarianism and the arid technicality industry could breed. This dialogue would at the same time stimulate the artists to reflect on how industry and its technological innovations shapes our reality and creates new values which contribute to transform society – questions which many intellectuals of that time were highly skeptical towards or not used to address. In Sinisgalli's model of enterprise the humanists were employed in strategic positions, such as in communication, advertisement and in the personnel departments. The factory itself was thought as a phenomenon uniting scientific research, design, work and education, and the debate around these topics was meant to disclose and interpret the bonds between arts, production and the growing mass of the technological objects and machines, so as to write a new history of forms. This paper aims to reconstruct the way Sinisgalli meant literature, arts and technics complement each other, by investigating the poet's experience with the industrial world in the context of other "marriages" between industry and humanities and in the light of the house organs phenomenon.

Sissel Læg Reid

Reading and (possibly) understanding Kafka: how is it still relevant?

„Richtiges Auffassen einer Sache und Missverstehen der gleichen Sache schliessen einander nicht vollständig aus“.

This quote from Kafka's "The Trial" from the scene where the priest and Josef K. discuss possible interpretations of the parable "Before the Law," indicate the intriguing dialectics of understanding-misunderstanding underlying his work.

In my paper I will discuss the question of how – in face of the current European migration and refugee crisis – dealing with the fundamental, hermeneutic challenges Kafka addresses in his work can be implemented in a productive way in the process towards finding a more reflective solution to the societal challenges of integration and mutual understanding?

Panel X

Shouhui Zhao & Yang YANG

Characteristics of sociology of language in China: intellectual tradition and sociopolitical reality as reflected in an academic subject

This study attempts to reveal an intriguing intellectual phenomenon that underlies the phenomenal development occurred in the research area of sociology of language, or language planning and policy (LPP) studies in China. Based on the textual investigation of

six key words (strategy, soft power, resource, service, state and security) prevalent in scholarly publications within China, we endeavor to critically demonstrate that as a branch of sociolinguistics which is about an academic investigation of the language use in the society, how LPP as an emerging academic subject is domesticated and localized with distinct Chinese features as a result of the constraints of both intellectual tradition and sociopolitical reality. Through unpacking the transformation process and the hidden agenda of an otherwise pure academic venture, this study not only outlines the an intriguing picture of the latest development of research accomplishment, methodologies and epistemological orientation in an area of sociolinguistics in China, but also sheds light on the characteristics of social science and humanities research, which is inevitably heavily toned and tinted by collective political ideology of researchers and the social settings in which the researchers is an integrative part. Moreover, the study also offers an insight into the Chinese characteristics in a broader sense for international researchers in other areas of sinology study. In this sense, it is our hope that our efforts can open a new thinking line of how to apply interdisciplinary approaches in examining an emerging academic subject.

Panel XI

Aud Solbjørg Skulstad, Hild Hoff and Sigrid Ørevik

English as school subject – socially relevant in the 21st century?

The panel will discuss the relevance of the EFL subject in 21st century Norway from several angles of second and foreign language pedagogy. First, the text culture of the EFL subject as represented by published material for teaching, learning and testing will be presented and discussed in terms of relevance for changed views of genre, literacy and writing. The second topic for discussion concerns implications of a multimodal view of language and language learning, and to what extent these implications are reflected in the EFL subject. Third, the EFL subject as an arena for intercultural learning and processes of *Bildung* will be discussed.

Panel XII

Kjersti Fløttum and Øyvind Gjerstad

Citizens' stories on climate and solutions

Narration as a fundamental activity practiced among human beings dates from long before writing was invented, and spread throughout many different civilisations. Within cultural and literary studies it underwent a renaissance through the work of the Russian folklorist and scholar Vladimir Propp, who analysed the basic plot components of Russian folk tales (published in Russia in 1928, translated to English in 1958, *Morphology of the Folktale*). Then, with the breakthrough of text linguistics, the narrative perspective entered forcefully into analyses of non-fictional texts (Wehrlich 1976, van Dijk 1980, Adam 1992).

There have been many discussions about the number of components in the narrative structure, but there is currently a more or less clear consensus on the 5 component schema: initial situation, complication, reaction, resolution, final situation.

The narrative structure has also entered non-linguistic fields, such as psychology and political science, and more particularly into climate change discourse, where even the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has called its reports “narrative.”

With this as a backdrop, we will in the present contribution discuss the notion of narrative and its relevance in the analysis of a kind of text which has not yet received a genre label, but which can be called “survey discourse.” This corresponds to answers to open-ended questions in a survey undertaken by the Norwegian Citizen Panel in 2015, where respondents answer freely in their own words the following question: “Concerning climate change, what do you think should be done?” Our findings will show how these texts may comprise a plot, and how different characters (heroes, victims, villains) are integrated into the unfolding ‘story’.

Oleksandr Kapranov

Construals of Climate Change in Political Discourse by British Prime Minister David Cameron

This conference talk will outline conceptual construals in British political discourse concerning the issue of global climate change. Specifically, the corpus of this qualitative study involves official reports on the issue of global climate change made by David Cameron, current British PM, within the timeframe from 2010 until 2015. Data analysis involves identification of conceptual construals in the corpus viewed through the lenses of the methodological apparatus of cognitive linguistics. Data analysis reveals that Cameron’s discourse pertaining to global climate change involves a series of metaphoric construals. In particular, it has been found that Cameron’s official discourse on global climate change is embedded into conceptual metaphors ‘Britain as a Responsible Citizen’ and ‘Britain as a Caring Person’ respectively.

Francis Badiang Oloko

Global warming in the Cameroonian political discourse: a(n) (polyphonic) analysis of the divergence of views between the South and the North

This research project raises the problem of global warming which arises once we start thinking on the issues of sustainable development as well as the future of the planet. Its proven and often tragic consequences have led to an overall mobilization – especially that of the political authorities – of the world, led by the UN. These consequences are rampant everywhere but underdeveloped countries, including Cameroon, are those that undergo them more severely. Yet, such countries are the least polluters as many studies seem to conclude; whence the recent interesting and contradictory speeches between the North and the South on the management of this crisis. This state of affairs leads us into building our research on the following main question: How is the climate issue introduced and developed in the political discourse in Cameroon (that of president Biya)? We shall base our investigation into this question upon two theories: the Scandinavian theory of linguistic polyphony (“ScaPoLine”) by some Scandinavian linguists and the “Praxématique” postulated by Bres, in a bid to reveal the other voices present in selected speeches of Cameroon’s president on climate, and then the relationship between these voices and his. We shall lay emphasis on the past six years (2009-2015). The main objective of this project is to demonstrate that if on surface, the speeches seem to converge towards an agreement such as that obtained during the recent Paris COP 21, a deeper analysis based on polyphony could reveal profound disagreements over strategies to be worked to curb this phenomenon. The joint effort that has to be made to definitely reduce the extent of global warming is thereby delayed.