PREFACE

The University of Vaasa Research Group for the Translation, LSP and Multilingualism (VAKKI) held its 32nd annual VAKKI Symposium in Vaasa, Finland on February 10-11, 2012. The theme of the Symposium was Languages in Motion. The invited keynote speakers were Dr. Katharina Brizić (Austrian Academy of Sciences) and Dr Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva (University of Edinburgh). Also the award for the Humanist of the Year 2012 was given to Professor Emeritus Kari Uusikylä at the Symposium. An account of the grounds for giving Professor Uusikylä the award is included in this publication.

In her plenary lecture, Dr. Brizić discussed an ongoing Austrian research project that examines from a linguistic point of view social inequality brought about by migration. The project is investigating how multilingual immigrants’ individual and communal models of language use operate in the context of education, and how they affect the immigrants’ success. As examples, Brizić mentioned the Kurdish and Roma communities of Austria, which often use three or even four languages. The results of the project suggest that multilingualism has not been taken into consideration within the educational systems of most immigration countries. That is why the social inequality that the immigrants have experienced in their country of origin may recur or even become aggravated in the countries of immigration, and may cause some groups of multilingual students to underachieve within European educational systems.

Dr Susam-Sarajeva drew attention to translations that usually remain unnoticed. Translations are typically defined as products of translators, interpreters and other professionals, and research into translation and interpreting has concentrated on the obvious forms of translating, technical translation, localization, conference interpreting, and translation for the media. According to Susam-Sarajeva, however, we are also surrounded by a large number of translations that are not so visible and that are produced, for example, by literary scholars, poets, medical doctors and even mothers. In her plenary lecture she discussed the phenomena that are disregarded when the interests of research only include translational activity and translation products that are economically and institutionally visible, and urged the audience to think about the consequences of this.

As usual, the working languages of the symposium were Finnish, Swedish, English and German. This year’s theme inspired researchers, teachers and other professionals from all fields of language-related studies to discuss their work and research from the point of view of language and motion. The participants interpreted the idea of language on the move along a multifaceted continuum ranging from the social, historical and geographical changes taking place within language all the way to the concrete movement of language between places along with their human bearers.