

**The 11<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Finno-Ugric Studies:  
Finno-Ugric Peoples and Languages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century\***  
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The 11<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Finno-Ugric Studies was one of the biggest conferences in the last years among the Finno-Ugric events. *Finno-Ugric People and Languages in the 21st Century* dealt mainly with the language and political situation of the Finno-Ugric languages in Russia. Recent researches on descriptive linguistics and new approaches to theoretical and typological issues were also presented at the Congress.

Keywords: *Finno-Ugric Studies, typology, sociolinguistics, negation, syntax*

## 1 Introduction

The 11<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Finno-Ugric Studies (CIFU) was organized by the Finno-Ugric Studies Department<sup>1</sup> of Peter Pázmány Catholic University (PPCU) and it was held in Piliscsaba in the middle of August, 2010. The four-day Congress provided a great opportunity for researchers and students of Finno-Ugric Studies from all corners of the world to meet and get to know each other's work. There were 450 participants and 394 talks were presented in various Finno-Ugric languages, in Russian and in English. The proceedings of the Congress appeared in printed version and are available on-line<sup>2</sup>.

This event was the latest in the series of meeting under this name. The first International Congress for Finno-Ugric Studies was organized by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest in 1960. The Congress takes place every five years in different cities. So far it has been held in Finland, Hungary, Estonia, the Komi Republic and the Mari Republic<sup>3</sup>. The Congress has always been an important event for researchers; for example, during the Congress in the 1980s Bible translations were presented and exchanged in different Finno-Ugric languages, and before the 1990s it was the only possibility for researchers from the West and the East to see each other, talk about different Finno-Ugric issues and get to know each other's work.

The title of the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress, *Finno-Ugric Peoples and Languages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, was chosen by the organizers because the issue of minority languages is one of the most important questions of Finno-Ugric Studies at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most of the Finno-Ugric languages are endangered; their prestige is really low in their own region, therefore, it is not only important to describe these languages but also to convince native speakers that these languages also have values and they can be used as any of the world languages.

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the Finno-Ugric Department was shut down in 2012.

<sup>2</sup> <http://fu11.btk.ppke.hu/>

<sup>3</sup> Budapest 1960, Helsinki 1965, Tallinn 1970, Budapest 1975, Turku 1980, Syktyvkar 1985, Debrecen 1990, Jyväskylä 1995, Tartu 2000, Yoshkar-Ola 2005

It was a novelty in the linguistic discussions that besides descriptive linguistics the theoretical and sociolinguistic approach also appeared at the Congress, for example, in the generative syntax workshop or the typological symposium reviewed here.

Following the procedure established at previous meetings, the Congress included plenary sessions, symposiums, sessions on various topics, and a poster session. Here we will review four different symposiums and workshops that we believe to represent some of the main research areas of today's Finno-Ugric Studies. Two plenary session presentations were also chosen: one is a traditional linguistic lecture on etymology, and the other one is on prosody of the Finno-Ugric languages, which is a relatively new topic in this field.

## 2 Plenary sessions

Finno-Ugric Studies include multi-disciplinary research areas like linguistics, ethnology, history, literature, etc.; and the talks of the plenary sessions tried to cover all of these fields. We could hear presentations about linguistics, ethnology and archaeology. This diversity was true of the linguistics presentations as well, because the four plenary talks were from different areas of linguistics: etymology, language variation, prosody and (Bible) translations. The two presentations we chose to review are from two different linguistic fields, and they illustrate the diversity of the topics covered during the session.

In her presentation *Expressive Vocabulary in the Early Phases of Fenno-Ugrian*, Ulla-Maija Forsberg (Helsinki) discussed an old problematic group of words in Finno-Ugric languages, which are known as descriptive, onomatopoeic, descriptive-onomatopoeic, imitative, *hangutánzó* or expressive among the Finno-Ugric scholars. This group of words is problematic from the perspective of etymology and reconstruction, because most of them are young or their denotations in the present-day languages, and they include unetymological sounds, vowel variations and contain a lot of derivative morphemes. In Forsberg's proposal what these words have in common is their special relation between their sound structure and semantics, so it would be better to call them sound symbolisms. Their reconstruction has to be based on the theory of phonesthemes, and we should try to reconstruct only sound combinations in the proto-language instead of whole words.

Ilse Lehiste (Tartu) – one of the greatest Finno-Ugric linguists – held an excellent presentation on comparative prosody of Finno-Ugric languages (*Experimental Study of Prosody in Finno-Ugric Languages*), together with Karl Pajusalu (Tartu). This lecture was one of her last presentations. In the first part of their presentation they discussed the recent research questions of the three well-researched Finno-Ugric languages (Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian). The Finno-Ugric Prosody Project deals with understudied Finno-Ugric languages like Erzya, Moksha or Livonian. The project has been carried out by researchers at the University of Tartu and other institutions over the past decade, and the aim of the project is to analyze the prosody of lesser-known Finno-Ugric languages using modern experimental tools. The experimental studies on these languages provide interesting new data, which can be used not only for comparative Finno-Ugric studies, but also for theoretical analyses.

### 3 Workshops and Symposiums

There were session talks and workshops during all three days of the Congress. Most of the sessions were on linguistics. The linguistic sessions contained eleven different subsessions divided by topic (e.g. Bible translation, etymology) or by languages (e.g. Mordvinic, Permi or Obi-Ugric languages). The 20 different workshops and symposiums were organized around specific topics, and gave an opportunity to the researchers of new fields in Finno-Ugric studies, such as typology and theoretical linguistics, to present their recent results.

In this section, we will review the program of four different symposiums (the ones on typology, sociolinguistics, negation and syntax), which were chosen because they can give a representative overview of today's linguistic research in Finno-Ugristics.

#### 3.1 Symposium on Typology

The symposium consisted of two main parts. First, the organizer of the symposium, Ferenc Havas (Budapest) held an introductory talk on the Uralic Typology Database (UTDB) project<sup>4</sup>. Havas claimed that the UTDB, like the WALS (Dryer – Haspelmath 2011) for instance, can be seen as a virtual grid that includes data arranged in columns and rows. The columns stand for languages; the rows contain data on different features. These features would cover all levels of the human language, that is, the database would consist of phonological, morphological, syntactic and perhaps lexico-semantic features as well. Data should be collected from grammar books and from native speakers if it is necessary. The implementation of the project is to be organized by a permanent Supervisory Board, which would invite specialists for collecting material on a certain feature and writing an article of the database. All the materials should undergo a peer-review process, and if a submitted article is accepted, it can be added to the database. Following this, the UTDB would keep expanding continuously.

There were comments after the talk suggesting, for example, that minor pilot projects should be carried out first<sup>5</sup>, and it was mentioned that there is an ongoing project which deals with the typological features of the Ugric languages, hosted by the Yugra University (Khanti-Mansiysk) and Eötvös University<sup>6</sup>.

The second part of the symposium was devoted to talks on various topics based on the typological description of the Uralic languages. In this part, the talks principally focused on two topics: (i) the questions of case marking and argument structure, and (ii) verbal semantics in Finno-Ugric languages. Marcus Kracht (Bielefeld) listed some general features of local expressions, which are similar to local case systems of Caucasian

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<sup>4</sup> The idea of the UTDB, that is, an online typological database covering all the Finno-Ugric languages, first came up in 2005 at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Finno-Ugric Studies held in Yoshkar-Ola, the Mari Republic. It was followed by an international conference on this project in 2008, hosted by the University of Vienna (<http://www.univie.ac.at/urtypol/index.html>). Till recent times, the typological approach has been considerably omitted in Finno-Ugristics, and it has not dealt with the language family as a whole either, although general typology has focused on some Finno-Ugric languages. It follows from the above that the existence of a database like this would be beneficial not only for Finno-Ugrists but for typologists as well. See Havas 2011

<sup>5</sup> A pilot project funded by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA) has recently started, which aim is to provide the online typological database of the Ugric languages. (Ref. num.: OTKA-104249).

<sup>6</sup> For further details on the project, see Havas 2010.

languages, for instance. There is a strong tendency in Uralic languages to make a straight distinction between stasis and change. Mariya Usacheva (Moscow) gave a systematic sketch of the locative system of the Udmurt language from a semantic perspective. Anne Tamm (Budapest-Florence) pointed out how local case markers of some Finnic languages have continuously changed to elements encoding TAM relationships as a typical instance of grammaticalization. Riho Grünthal (Helsinki) examined some cases of inflectional syncretism in Finnic languages. Since Northern Finnic languages have a more regular suffixal morphology than the Southern members of this group, they use less syncretic forms, which can have diachronic motivations. Tatyana Agranat (Moscow) introduced a current project on “*Expression of Semantic Roles and Localizations in Uralic Languages*”, whose task is to establish an online database which includes data about surface and semantic cases. In her presentation, Fanni Karácsony (Budapest) stated that the differences of nominality in Finno-Ugric languages are in close connection with the degree of prototypicality in a certain language.

The rest of the talks dealt with verbal categories, such as aspect and Aktionsart. Giving a corpus-based analysis, Laura Horváth (Budapest) pointed out that the relatively lower frequency of compositional markers in the Volga-Kama region can be due to the richness of paired verb constructions and other non-compositional aspect markers. Katalin Gugán (Budapest) listed general features of Aktionsart markers in (Old) Hungarian and Surgut-Khanty, and found that the well-known typological implications on this topic should be modified. Krisztina Korencsi (Budapest) compared some types of causation in Estonian and Hungarian. She demonstrated that the lexical-semantic grouping of these constructions can offer a tool for the better understanding of causatives. Nikolett F. Gulyás (Budapest) focused on the notion of impersonality with respect to some Finno-Ugric languages. She proposed that a reclassification of impersonals on a broader, functional basis would be useful to get a more detailed picture of the phenomenon. Following Siewierska’s definition of passives, Erika Asztalos (Budapest) argued that there is a personal passive construction in Udmurt, which can be formed both with transitive and with intransitive verbs. Szilvia Németh (Budapest) presented a typology of constructions encoding information structure in Mansi investigating implicational criteria.

### 3.2 Sociolinguistics

Applied linguistics, especially sociolinguistics and the study of bilingualism are comparatively new research fields in Finno-Ugric Studies. Although there have been studies carried out on the so-called bigger Finno-Ugric languages (i.e. Estonian, Finnish, and Hungarian), the smaller languages remained outside the scope of sociolinguistic inquiries. Research at the universities of the minor Finno-Ugric peoples rather concentrated on the descriptive grammar and historical aspects of these languages.

In recent years, however, sociolinguistics and especially the study of bilingualism has become part of the current research topics in Russia as well. Studies on bilingualism include articles written on the (socio-)political, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of this phenomenon. Language policy and linguistic human rights are some of the other mainstream areas. Gender studies are becoming popular as well.

The reason for the change in academic trends can be attributed to a variety of factors ranging from historical to political and methodological ones. The collapse of the Soviet Union had at least two consequences which are important from this respect: it became possible to carry out fieldwork among the Finno-Ugric minorities living in

Russia, and researchers gained access to literature published in the Western world. Field trips provided data on actual language use, which enabled researchers outside the given language communities to study contemporary language use, and moreover, to study the bi- and multilingualism of these communities.

Having access to publications on sociolinguistics, bilingualism, language contact, and so on enabled researchers to acquire new methodology they can use in this new type of studies. Getting acquainted with the new trends in language policy, communities learned how to acquire and implement their (community) language rights more efficiently. Attitudes towards bilingualism, at least in academic circles, have changed. Bilingual speech used to be considered to be a defected language variety. Studies that make the bilingual community aware of the fact that their bilingualism and the mixed variety they use are common phenomena in bi- or multilingual situations around the world can help raise the prestige of these languages.

The beginning of international co-operation was another important change in the history of the field. A recent development is that members of the minority communities themselves began to realize the level of endangerment of their languages and the need for study in their native tongues. Societies such as the Uralic Sociolinguistic Society (USOS<sup>7</sup>) have been formed to facilitate international co-operation of researchers and members of Finno-Ugric minority communities in Russia. Nonetheless, a number of joint projects have failed or they still stagnate.

As opposed to the small number of successful projects and societies, conferences concentrating on the new aspects of the minority Finno-Ugric languages proved to be more fruitful. There have been steps taken to organize workshops and seminars on these current topics at conferences focusing on the new aspects of Finno-Ugric research<sup>8</sup>. It is especially crucial that researchers of Finno-Ugric languages can present their papers at international conferences, as Finno-Ugric linguistics has been rather self-contained, with very little feedback from colleagues working on similar topics but, for instance, on Indo-European or Australian aboriginal languages. CIFU also proved that significant changes have started in Uralistics and the scope of research has broadened.

As we can infer from the topics of papers presented at these conferences, it seems that the major issues in this field are the following: language endangerment and documentation, bi- and multilingualism (political, grammatical and social aspects; language policy and attitudes), and code-switching (both from a pragmatic and grammatical point of view).

We could hear presentations, among others, from Boglárka Janurik (Szeged) about grammatical types of code-switching in the speech of Erzya-Russian bilinguals and from Zsuzsa Salánki (Budapest), who discussed some grammatical variables in Udmurt with respect to modern bilingual language use.

Students from the minority community itself participate in research; many of them received their education in one of the three autonomous republics. Along with their

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<sup>7</sup> <http://u-sos.nytud.hu/>

<sup>8</sup> More general conferences (as Conference on (Hungarian) Language Use, 4–6 September, 2008, Párkány–Stúrovo; Grammar and Context, 19–21 April, 2011, Budapest; and NTU (New trends in Uralistics) 3–5 September, 2009, Szeged) provided new opportunities to researchers to introduce these newer fields to the academic public and this year a conference specialized in the multilingualism of the Finno-Ugric peoples was organized in Hamburg (2–3 June, 2011 with the title: *Uralic languages and multilingualism: contexts and manifestations in a language family*).

language studies these students have become acquainted with contemporary theories which are not available in Russian yet. Senior researchers belonging to the Finno-Ugric minority communities are also interested in these topics, it is only logical that especially former dialectologists turn to sociolinguistics and to the study of the numerous varieties of their languages. Larisa Shirobokova, one of such native speakers, presented her recent results on Udmurt-Russian code-switching in today's languages.

In conclusion, the study of minor Finno-Ugric languages from a sociolinguistic point of view has yielded promising results (Udmurt; Salánki 2007, Shirobokova 2011), there is also research going on concerning the urban variety of Finno-Ugric minorities (e.g. Mansi; Sipőcz & Bíró 2009). Code-switching is also widely studied, pertaining to both the actual languages (Karelian; Sarhima 2001, Erzya; Janurik 2011) and the typology of code-switching between Russian and the minor Finno-Ugric languages. Hopefully, international co-operation of applied linguists is going to provide more data on the linguistic situation of minor Finno-Ugric peoples and these pieces of information could be applied in order to sustain these endangered languages.

### 3.3 Negation in Uralic Languages

The symposium *Negation in Uralic Languages*<sup>9</sup> was presented as the part of the Typology Symposium. The one-day event included discussions and presentations about the negation strategies in the Uralic languages.

The organizers (Anne Tamm, Budapest-Florence; Matti Miestamo, Stockholm; and Beáta Wagner-Nagy, Hamburg) held talks about the negation in general and presented their recent project on negation in Uralic languages, furthermore other researchers who study negation from a typological or a descriptive point of view also presented at the symposium.

The Symposium focused on the analysis of Uralic negatives for several reasons. Despite the fact that there is an increasing amount of research dealing with negation in the individual Uralic languages, traditional Finno-Ugric linguistics has not explored negative strategies systematically yet. The organizers aimed to bring together those scholars who work on negation either in an individual Uralic language or from a typological perspective. Some of the main goals of the event were to provide a typological classification of negation in the Uralic languages and to describe the negation strategies in the Uralic languages on the basis of a unified questionnaire. The research concentrates on the description of the markers and negative constructions in standard and non-standard environments (e.g. negative imperatives, interrogatives, existentials, non-verbal predicate negation, the negation of dependent clauses, negative replies, constituent negation, negation in NPs, and negative derivation and inflection). Further central topics were the morphosyntactic and semantico-pragmatic phenomena of negation.

The programme of the symposium was divided into two parts based on the nature of the research presented. On the one hand, an overview of typological research on negation was given by Matti Miestamo (Stockholm), among the presentations of several other typological results. On the other hand, specific features of negatives were demonstrated in Finno-Permic by Sirkka Saarinen (Turku), who talked about negation in

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<sup>9</sup> Related projects: Negation in Uralic Languages: <http://uralicnegation.pbworks.com>, Typology of Negation in Ob-Ugric and Samoyedic Languages: <http://www.univie.ac.at/negation/team/team-en.html>

Mari in general, and by Arja Hamari (Helsinki), who discussed negation of stative relation clauses in Mordvin, Mari and Permic languages in her presentation. Ob-Ugric was represented by Sosa Sachiko (Helsinki), who presented her recent research on the pragmatic functions of negative clauses in Surgut Khanty. Samoyedic languages were discussed by Larisa Leisiö (Tampere) and Valentin Gusev (Moscow) with their presentations on Nganasan and by Beáta Wagner-Nagy (Hamburg), who gave an overview about negation of predicative possession in Samoyedic Languages.

The negation of Uralic languages will be published in a book next year (2013). Similarly to the structure of the symposium this book describes the negation strategies in individual Uralic languages with a focus on the specific aspects of negation in Uralic languages in general.

### 3.4 The Syntax of Finno-Ugric Languages and Universal Grammar

Theoretical linguistics was represented at the Congress with a two-day workshop entitled *Syntax of Finno-Ugric Languages and Universal Grammar* organized by Anders Holmberg (Newcastle), Katalin É. Kiss (Budapest-Piliscsaba) and Anne Tamm (Budapest-Florence). Syntactic research on Hungarian, Finnish and Estonian in the generative framework is well-known and has a tradition that is several decades old, but it is very rare among the so called small Finno-Ugric languages. The aim of the organizers was to bring together linguists who have current or recent work on any issues on the syntax of one (or more) Finno-Ugric language. During the two-day workshop there were talks on Hungarian, Estonian, and Finnish, but also on Saami and Tundra-Nenets languages, which means that the syntactic analysis of these languages has already begun. The organizers of the workshop categorized the syntactic talks on the basis of the language(s) under discussion: the languages discussed on the first day were Hungarian and Finnish, and on the second day Finnic and Samoyedic.

The workshop began with two comparative talks. The presentation by Ora Matushansky (Utrecht) on predicatives in Hungarian, Estonian and Finnish dealt with the different predicative case assignment in DP and AP predicates, Gergely Kántor & Júlia Bácskai-Atkári's (Budapest) talk on elliptical constructions in comparative subclauses in Hungarian, Estonian and Finnish presented data from these Finno-Ugric languages based on parametric settings of Comparative Deletion and Comparative Ellipsis (paper versions of both talks are available in this volume).

Three talks presented syntactic research on Hungarian. A study of external causatives in Hungarian and their antilexicalist treatment based on Marantz (1999) was presented by Huba Bartos (Budapest). In her presentation, Barbara Ürögdi (Budapest) argued that referentiality restrictions play an important role in 'weak islands' in Hungarian. Balázs Surányi (Budapest) presented a syntax/semantics/prosody interface based analysis of the movement of identificational focus in Hungarian.

The second day of the workshop was devoted mostly to Finnic and Samoyedic languages. Diane Nelson (Leeds) discussed (non)finiteness in Finnish and Saami (also in this Volume), Pauli Brattico (Helsinki) gave a talk on long-distance case assignment in Finnish, and Saara Huhmarniemi & Anne Vainikka's talk on multiple wh-questions and syntactic islands in Finnish presented their recent research on the topic.

The session called *Contributions that are not Finnish or Hungarian* included Irina Nikolaeva's (London) talk on possessive relative clauses in Tundra-Nenets, and a presentation by Heete Sahkai (Tallinn), which focused on Estonian genitive agent phrases. Éva Dékány (Tromsø) and Anikó Csirmaz (Utah) gave a talk on classifiers in

the Hungarian DP. Anne Tamm (Budapest-Florence) closed the session with a presentation on cross-categorial cases in Finnic nonfinite verbs. Ida Toivonen (Carleton) argued for a lexical-functional treatment (LFG; Bresnan 1982, 2001) for syntactic phenomena in the Saami languages.

The workshop also included a poster session in the afternoon of the first day and the posters were on display during the two-days of the symposium.

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