

PREFACE

The University of Vaasa Research Group for the Theory of Translation, LSP and Multilingualism (VAKKI) held its 31th annual VAKKI Symposium in Vaasa on February 11-12, 2011. The theme of the Symposium was *Language and Ethics*. The invited keynote speakers were Professor Jörg R. Bergmann (Bielefeld University) and Eva Biaudet, the Finnish Ombudsman for Minorities.

In his plenary speech, Bergmann discussed the position of morality and ethics in modern society. Although contemporary society is in the process of dividing into several parts (such as law, politics, medicine, and art), each of which observes its own moral values and collective beliefs, Bergmann argued that morality and ethics are not disappearing, especially as general concepts. Bergmann deliberated upon the various forms and functions of moral and moralizing communication, for example from the point of view of conversation analysis. According to him, moral communication is today characterized by indirectness and contradiction, and also involves various kinds of risks. Bergmann gave gossip, which often takes the form of shared moral disapproval, as an example of a typical type of moralization. It may be risky not only for the objects of the gossiping but also for the gossipers themselves.

Biaudet drew attention to the way in which various ethnic groups are talked about in the media and in society in general. She took a critical point of view especially towards the effect of language use on attitudes: as a seminal means of social interaction, language plays a very important role in the formation and social mediation of attitudes towards immigrants, for example. Biaudet also criticized the media, its way of using language and its way of representing states of affairs through language, such as by portraying immigrants either as victims or as a threat and by using only certain kinds of metaphor.

The theme of the Symposium created dynamic conditions for the meeting of researchers, teachers and other experts from various walks of language-related studies. Ethics and ethical questions form an essential part of language use and its study, no matter whether the question is an aspect of literary studies, translation studies, the study of nonfiction or LSP texts, conversation studies, or the study of multilingualism or lexicography. The papers dealing with the theme of the Symposium confirmed that language is not only used to communicate, but also to convey values and ideas; as different kinds of groups, individual communicators, cultures and eras confront each other within language, these values and ideas are called into question and subjected to negotiation. In addition to the papers discussing the theme of *Language and Ethics*, the section papers of the Symposium also featured—in traditional VAKKI fashion—other subjects of study from the fields of translation, LSP and multilingualism.

This multilingual publication contains 33 articles that are based on the papers given in the Symposium. The articles have been refereed by the *double blind* procedure. This publication is also available in electronic *open access* form at <http://www.vakki.net/publications/>.