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In memoriam: Aina Blinkena (5.09.1929 – 22.11.2017)

The Academician Aina Blinkena, one of the most famous Latvian linguists of the second half of the twentieth century, has passed away. She lived a life of a prolific scholar and passionate educator. She was a committed populariser of the Latvian language and staunchly fought for its status.

Aina Blinkena was born in Limbaži on 5 September 1929. Her mother Lilija Andersone (née Jenne) was a teacher at Nabe primary school, her father Jānis Andersons – a farmer in an exemplary Penku farmstead, where the Andersons had lived since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Both her parents were active in the cultural life of the local community. Her mother sang in the parish choir and appeared in theatre plays, and her father contributed to the construction of a new primary school in Nabe. Her grandfather, Jānis Andersons, was the head of Nabe parish for 27 years.

On 21 July 1951, Aina Blinkena married Pēteris Blinkens, who was to become a doctor of engineering and associate professor at Rīga Polytechnical Institute (today: Rīga Technical University). On 29 May 1958 their daughter Ina was born; having assumed her husband's surname, she is known as Ina Druviete.

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Aina Blinkena's active scholarly and social life was closely connected with linguistics.

In 1937 Aina started her primary school in Nabe, where she thoroughly learned the basics of orthography and grammar. This period could have been conducive to the development of her later interest in linguistics.

The year 1940 was a time of big changes: on 14 June 1941 the family faced Soviet political repressions, and Aina's uncle's family was deported.

In 1944 she started Limbaži Grammar School, where initially classes were held in the church cloakroom. The school actively organised various cultural events.

Upon her graduation from school, Aina faced a difficult choice about her future occupation because she had many interests. Her parents did not support her plans to become an architect as they thought it was not a profession for women. Consequently, she began her studies at the Latvian State University, the Arts Department of the Faculty of Philology. However, the department was soon closed and the students were advised to pursue studies in journalism, library science or Latvian language and literature. Aina chose literature and linguistics.

The peak of Nikolaĭ Marr's theory was a difficult time for linguistics – Jānis Endzelīns had to leave the university, and a new generation of academic staff took over. Aina Blinkena recalled that Arturs Ozols – who became the main educator of prospective linguists – encouraged students to think and treated them as younger colleagues who are capable of achieving serious scholarly objectives. 1953 was the first year when Ozols taught a course in History of Standard Latvian, where the Latvian language was presented from a historical-cultural perspective, from the early written sources to contemporary publications. One of the first students who attended the course was Aina Blinkena, who later continued Ozols' work. She graduated in 1953, having presented her diploma thesis entitled "One-Part Sentences in Andrejs Upītis' Historical Tragedies".

The time of her undergraduate studies was not easy due to material conditions: her father was deported to Tomsk Oblast in Siberia, her mother did a low-paid job, and her sister was a secondary school student (Jansone, 2008, pp. 86–89, 2017, pp. 421–426).

After her graduation from the Latvian State University, Aina Blinkena was invited to work for the Institute of Language and Literature of the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences, but due to her "politically uncertain" background the graduate placement commission sent her to work in Stopiņi near Riga. However, linguists Rūdolfs Grabis and Arturs Ozols managed to employ her as a junior research associate at the Grammar Research Section of the Institute of Language and Literature. Her first task was to prepare a chapter about interjections for the academic volume *Mūsdienu latviešu literārās valodas gramatika* (The Grammar of Modern Standard Latvian) (MLVG, 1959). Commenting on this period, she observed that she had been really lucky to be part of an excellent team. Under the professional guidance of the experienced educator

and author of Latvian pedagogical grammar Rūdolfs Grabis, linguists of different generations – Milda Lepika, Anna Bergmane, Mērija Saule-Sleine, Antonija Ahero and others – worked towards a common goal; their work on Latvian Grammar was their first serious research experience. They were passionately devoted to their work: they discussed and analysed every chapter, they sought new theoretical foundations and took practical considerations into account, they followed trends in language development and applied the latest findings of foreign grammarians.

While doing her research, Aina Blinkena was also a postgraduate student; her academic supervisor was Jānis Endzelīns. The defence of her doctoral dissertation "Interrogative and Imperative Sentences in Modern Latvian" (reviewed by Jānis Loja and Jūlijs Kārkliņš) was held at the Institute of Language and Literature on 9 April 1958.

In June 1959 Aina Blinkena became a senior research associate at the Institute of Language and Literature; on 11 October 1961, the Higher Attestation Commission of the USSR (VAK) awarded her the title of Senior Researcher. She continued her work on the syntax section of "The Grammar of Modern Standard Latvian" (MLVG, 1962), and the results of her dissertation proved very useful. Aina Blinkena wrote a chapter about the types of modal sentences, focusing on innovative sentence formations. This required in-depth study of various syntactic phenomena, parts of speech, comparative constructions, one-part clauses and ellipsis. The second volume of "The Grammar of Modern Standard Latvian" was published in 1962 (MLVG, 1962). In 1965, the authors of the Grammar – Rūdolfs Grabis, Anna Bergmane, Milda Lepika and Aina Blinkena – were awarded the Latvian SSR State Prize.

Aina Blinkena also conducted research on punctuation, an understudied area in Latvian linguistics. Based on a substantial amount of study material, her monograph *Latviešu interpunkcija* (Latvian Punctuation) was published in 1969 (Blinkena, 1969). The author received the Latvian Academy of Sciences Award in 1970. In the same year, she defended her *doctor habilis* (habilitation) thesis in philology, reviewed by Paul Ariste from Tartu, Jonas Palionis from Vilnius, and Marta Rudzīte from Riga.

In the 1970s, research into Standard Latvian was carried out systemically according to the principle of language levels. The first study published as a result of this project was Aina Blinkena and Anna Bergmane's monograph *Latviešu rakstības attīstība* (The Development of Written Latvian) (Bergmane & Blinkena, 1986); the volume deals with the history of Latvian graphetics, orthoepy and punctuation. The following publication was *Latviešu literārās valodas morfoloģiskās sistēmas attīstība* (The Development of Morphological System of Standard Latvian) (Pokrotniece, 2002, 2007); its first volume *Lokāmās vārdšķiras* (Inflective Parts of Speech), which included Aina Blinkena's chapter on adjectives, was published only in 2002 (Blinkena, 2002, pp. 140–242).

When she was awarded the habilitation degree, Aina Blinkena also became involved in administrative duties. From 1970 to 1981 she chaired the Latvian

Language Department of the Institute of Language and Literature; from 1983 to 1989 she was the deputy director of the Institute for research. From 1976 to 1998 she chaired the Terminology Commission of the Latvian Academy of Sciences; she was a member of several terminology sub-commissions and a co-author of the dictionary of hydrometeorological terms (1978). In 1978, she was elected a corresponding member of the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences, and in 1992 – a full member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. From 1994 to 1998 she was a member of the Senate of the Latvian Academy of Sciences.

Aina Blinkena was also an educator and wrote school textbooks. She co-authored "Latvian for Forms 7–9", published (together with methodological guidelines and three records) in 1974, and reissued in 1975 and 1976; its enlarged edition was published between 1977 and 1979, and reissued in 1982, 1985 and 1986. In 1988, a slightly different team prepared a new textbook: "Latvian for Forms 7 and 8"; "Latvian for Forms 10–12" was published the following year (and reissued in 1990).

Aina Blinkena devoted much time to educating a new generation of researchers. She supervised fifteen PhD dissertations in philology, and was an official reviewer of twenty-one PhD and ten habilitation theses. She also taught a course in History of Standard Latvian to students of the Faculty of Pedagogy (later: Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology) of the University of Latvia. In 1985, the Higher Attestation Commission of the USSR awarded her the title of Professor. In 1989, she received the title of the Honoured Scientist of the Latvian SSR.

When the so-called Third Awakening began in 1988 and the Council of the Creative Unions of Latvia set the goal of regaining the official status for the Latvian language, Aina Blinkena was included in the working group established for the purpose by the Presidium of the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet. Her article "On the Status of Latvian: As It Is and As It Should Be", published in the newspaper *Padomju Jaunatne* (The Soviet Youth) on 30 August 1988, met with an unprecedented response (Blinkena, 1988a): 354,280 people supported the demand for Latvian as the official state language. Based on the survey, the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic decreed Latvian as the official language in the Latvian SSR on 6 October 1988, which meant drafting the Official Language Law. Aina Blinkena was a member of the working group charged with the task. Enacted in May 1989, the Official Language Law of the Latvian SSR provided a solid foundation for the further existence of Latvian with the status of the official language.

On 1 January 1992, Aina Blinkena became the deputy director of the newly established Institute of the Latvian Language of the Latvian Academy of Sciences; later on, she became a Vice-Chair of the Academic Council of the Institute.

Aina Blinkena published more than 450 scholarly and popular articles (Blinkena, 1955, 1958a, 1958b, 1959, 1964, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1982, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1987a, 1987b, 1988b, 1989a, 1989b, 1991a, 1991b, 1992a, 1992b,

1994, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2011; Blinkena & Grabis, 1975; Blinkena & Morkūnas, 1997; Blinkena & Stafecka, 1995). She was one of the first scholars who studied issues of bilingualism in Latvia.

Aina Blinkena attended a number of international congresses and conferences where she presented papers and reports (in Amsterdam, Berlin, Bologna, Moscow, Vilnius, Cracow, Stockholm, and other places); she was a member of the Latvian Council of Science Expert Commission for Philology and Arts (1990–1999) and the Vice-Chair of the Habilitation and Promotion Council of the University of Latvia (1992–1999). Since 1997, Aina Blinkena held the title of State Emeritus Scientist.

Aina Blinkena's contribution to Latvian linguistics earned her much recognition: she received the Order of the Three Stars (4th class, 2001); the Kārlis Mīlenbahs Award from the Riga Latvian Society and the Latvian Academy of Sciences (2006); an award from the University of Latvia for founding a research school (2009); and the Jānis Endzelīns Award from the Latvian Academy of Sciences (2016).

Aina Blinkena worked hard also in the last years of her life. She prepared the edition of her collected studies *Caur vārdu birzi* (Through the Forest of Words), published by the Latvian Language Institute of the University of Latvia in 2014 (Blinkena, 2014); the second volume was published just a few months ago, in September 2017 (Blinkena, 2017).

Aina Blinkena will always remain in our memory as an outstanding linguist, an excellent organiser, an inspiring colleague and a performer of countless songs and poems.

Sit tibi terra levis!

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In memoriam: Aina Blinkena (5.09.1929 – 22.11.2017)

Abstract

Professor Aina Blinkena passed away on 22 November 2017. Upon her graduation from the Latvian State University in 1953, she began working for the Institute of Language and Literature of the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences (today: the Institute of the Latvian Language of the University of Latvia), which became her only permanent workplace. Starting her work as a junior research associate and later – a deputy director and a full member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, Aina Blinkena shaped the linguistic thought in Latvia for almost fifty years. Aina Blinkena pursued broad interests in the history of language and linguistics, as well as morphology and syntax. She also devoted attention to the aspects of language culture and terminology. Her most important monographs are *Latviešu interpunkcija* (Latvian Punctuation) and *Latviešu rakstības attīstība* (The Development of Written Latvian, co-authored by Anna Bergmane). The output of her lifelong work was collected in two volumes of her studies entitled *Caur vārdu birzi* (Through the Forest of Words, 2014, 2017). In recognition of her scholarly work and social activity, Aina Blinkena was awarded the highest Latvian distinction – the Order of the Three Stars.

Keywords: Aina Blinkena; remembrance (obituary); Latvian language; Latvian linguistics

Aina Blinkena (5.09.1929 – 22.11.2017). Wspomnienie

Streszczenie

Profesor Aina Blinkena zmarła 22 listopada 2017 roku. Po ukończeniu studiów na Łotewskim Uniwersytecie Państwowym w 1953 roku, rozpoczęła pracę w Instytucie Literatury i Językoznawstwa Akademii Nauk Łotewskiej Socjalistycznej Republiki Radzieckiej (obecnie Instytut Języka Łotewskiego Łotewskiej Akademii Nauk), z którym pozostała związana przez cały czas pracy naukowej, najpierw na stanowisku asystenta, a później – jako jego wicedyrektor i członek rzeczywisty Łotewskiej Akademii Nauk. Aina Blinkena miała ogromny wpływ na rozwój łotewskiej myśli językoznawczej w ciągu ostatniego półwiecza. Jej szerokie zainteresowania naukowe obejmowały zarówno historię języka i językoznawstwa, jak i morfologię i składnię. Zajmowała się także kwestiami kultury języka oraz terminologią. Najważniejsze monografie Profesor Blinkeny to *Latviešu interpunkcija* (Interpunkcja łotewska) i *Latviešu rakstības attīstība* (Rozwój łotewskiego języka pisanego; współautorka: Anna Bergmane). Jej najważniejsze prace ukazały się w dwutomowym wydaniu dzieł zebranych, zatytułowanym *Caur vārdu birzi* (Przez las słów). W uznaniu jej osiągnięć w pracy naukowej i zaangażowania w działalność społeczną Aina Blinkena została uhonorowana Orderem Trzech Gwiazd, najwyższym łotewskim odznaczeniem państwowym.

Słowa kluczowe: Aina Blinkena; wspomnienie (nekrolog); język łotewski; językoznawstwo łotewskie

Dr hab. Ilga Jansone, Director of the Latvian Language Institute at the University of Latvia, Senior Researcher, full member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. Author of more than two hundred publications in history of linguistics, lexicology, lexicography, onomastics and dialectology. Chair of the Division of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Latvian Academy of Sciences (2008–2012), Coordinator of National Research Programmes "Letonics" and National Identities (2005–2018). Current member of editorial boards of *Acta Baltico-Slavica*, *Linguistica Lettica* and other journals. Member of the Presidential State Language Commission, member of the Senate of the Latvian Academy of Sciences.

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