

Introduction

This compilation presents a selection of prizewinning essays written by IEAS students for the OTDK (National Scholarly Students' Circle) between 2005 and 2011. One can claim that essays like these represent the best of the creative production of knowledge at IEAS on the student level, as has been confirmed by the national competition. It is well worth having a look at them for several reasons. First and foremost, these texts stand out as successful academic projects on student level with well-defined topics and methodologies. Secondly, they are also informative as to the areas of study that are available and popular at our Institute. Last but not least, the formal requirements (Style Sheet) the Institute sets for seminar and other papers can be observed in use as we read them.

The OTDK is a national competition organized for students active in Hungarian higher education. The competition takes place on two levels, the local and the national within the time frame of two years. First, any active student of a department can register for the local readings with an essay in the Fall semester. The essay has to be about the size of a BA paper, and it is presented in two ways, in writing and orally. To begin with, two copies are handed in, and two readers assess the written work, each giving a maximum of 30 points divided into 5 aspects (project, argumentation, use of materials and novelty, format, language).

The readers also attach a detailed commentary of the academic merits of the paper to their assessments. Then, the competitor is asked to present a 15 minute version of the essay orally for a committee of three faculty members who specialize in the area but have not been involved in the assessment before. The committee can give max. 30 points for the presentation (based on its structure, logic, use of time, response to criticism).

Eventually, the sum of the points will determine the place the paper got in the local competition. The committee also sets the limit for the national round when it determines the number of points necessary for an enrollment in the competition on the national level. For example, it may declare that out of the attainable 90, a minimum of 65 is needed for the national competition, but this limit may change from year to year. This round is called the TDK. Next year or in the Spring of the same year, an improved version of the same paper is registered and is assessed in the very same way it has been processed at the home institution. The difference from the TDK, however, is significant: for one, the other competitors come from all over Hungary, i. e. there are many of them and they are all of good quality, second, the readers come from all over the universities in Hungary, so the new assessments may be profoundly

different from the ones the paper received at home. The points attained will determine the position of the paper in the national competition of students. This round is called the OTDK.

The papers selected for this volume have all won prizes at the OTDK at three subsequent occasions between 2007-11. They have been presented either in English or Hungarian but they have all been written in English as they all started as seminar papers or BAT papers written for the Institute where the language of instruction is English. It is important to note that not all prizewinning essays are printed here: all students had been contacted but eight pieces were sent in and selected eventually. There are diverse reasons for this: most of the essays not printed here have been published elsewhere, but some former students already pursue different interest or did not have the motivation for publication. For this reason, it is vital to include the full list of prizewinning essays only a selection of which is being published here.

Table 1. OTDK prizes by IEAS students since 2005

	Name	Year	Session	supevisor	Prize
1.	László, Zsuzsa	2005	19-20 th c English poetry, drama, arts	Kiss, Attila	2.
2.	Lipták, Dániel	2005	Medieval and Renaissance English literature	Nagy, Gergely	2
3.	Koller, Nóra	2005	American literature and culture	Barát, Erzsébet	1
4.	Maczelka, Csaba	2007	English and American poetry	Szőnyi, György E.	2
5.	Kaposvári, Márk	2007	English and American prose	Kiss, Attila	2
6.	Borthaiser, Nóra	2007	English and American drama and film	Cristian, Réka Mónika	2
7.	Fábricz, Katalin	2007	English and American drama and film	Szőnyi, György E.	2
8.	Kovács, László	2007	English and American drama and film	Kiss, Attila	honorable mention

9.	Kocsis, Ferenc	2007	Literary theory	Bocsor, Péter	3
10.	Nagy, Judit	2007	Applied linguistics	Szabó-Gillinger, Eszter	2
11.	Hajdú, Richárd	2009	Drama and visual culture in English	Dragon, Zoltán	1
12.	Hausz, Frigyes	2009	History	Péter, Róbert	2
13.	Kocsis, Ferenc	2009	Literary theory	Bocsor, Péter	2
14.	Prohászka, Géza	2009	World history after 1945	Péter, Róbert	1
15.	Gyöngyösi, Nikolett	2011	The English novel after 1945	Kérchy, Anna	2
16.	Makai, Péter	2011	Comparative literature	Nagy, Gergely	2
17.	Pintér, Petra Orsolya	2011	Applied literature	Bukta, Katalin	2

The titles mirror key research interests at the Institute. To my mind, they are also informative about the cultural epochs currently popular among students.

The structure of the volume simulates the two major cultural epochs interrogated by the papers: the 16th-17th centuries and the 20th-21st centuries. Within these, you can find fields of study as diverse as Renaissance Studies, Gender Studies, Drama Studies, Film Studies, History, Literary theory, Applied linguistics. It would have been difficult to envision an order of the different fields, so the chronological groups seemed the easiest way to arrange the texts. The authors have been asked to revise and shorten their papers for the sake of this publication, but these shortened versions reflect the interests and arguments of the original. The format of the papers is aligned to the Style Sheet of the Institute, all preferring the Reference format optional there. The essays have undergone some light editing, too, yet the overall aim of the editing work was to present genuine scholarly work by students as is came into being in the course of the TDK process.

Eventually, let me add a few words about the TDK as a form of instruction. TDK papers do not come into being for the sake of the competition. They form part of the educational process initially, but the TDK can enhance the

quality of the original project to a high degree. TDK papers are mostly ready by the time the competition is announced in the form of an excellent seminar paper or BA thesis. In other words, at least half a year or a year has been spent on the project before the local readings start. The students contact their supervisors whether the existing paper needs to be improved and if yes, how before handing in their first version for the TDK. When the oral presentation is made, some changes can be implemented, mostly according to the criticism in the written commentaries. The written commentaries reflect new insight into the topic, because at this point research leaves the scope of the student and the supervisor nexus and is assessed from an outside perspective. Then, the paper sent for the OTDK will be a revised version based on previous commentaries and the questions formulated by members of the Committee. On the OTDK level, reflection goes on, again in the form of two (brand new) commentaries and the discussion. If you think of this process, it represents a series of input-feedback relations that all serve to improve the project and the paper. This process is also present at the heart of seminar work and is reflected in the way BA or MA papers are evaluated. Yet, in the case of seminar papers and theses, the pieces produced and commented on close down a class or a stage of study and the process consists of two stages only: paper and commentary, or in more general terms statement and question. In the TDK process however, this relation is repeated several times: before the TDK, during it, before OTDK, during it, and even after the OTDK, when the paper, ideally, is transformed into an MA thesis (or a publication of some sort) after about two years of work in progress. Therefore it seems just to say that a student who gets involved in the TDK process is likely to get the best of the educational competence provided by institutions of higher education. Papers included in this volume represent the results of this educative process.

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