



Italian philology is a relatively young discipline at the University of Helsinki. However, the teaching of Italian has a long tradition in Finland. The first Italian “master of languages” in Finland was Antonio Papi (1659 – 1740), a Bolognese scholar. He worked at the University of Uppsala until Charles XI appointed him as instructor of Italian and French at the Academy of Turku. Papi did not stay in Turku for long, however. Uppsala, with its international and culturally lively atmosphere, offered this well-educated *letterato* more challenging tasks. In the beginning of the 1700s he returned to Sweden where he long continued to teach his native language.

It took quite a few years before university-level Italian teaching took off in Finland. This does not mean that Italian language and culture were not practiced and appreciated in our country. In fact, during the 19th century many Finnish writers, artists, and intellectuals made at least one thorough-going trip to Italy, bringing back Italian paintings, language skills (which enabled the translation of significant Italian literary works into Finnish) and other enriching impressions.

The year 1970 finally marked the beginning of the academic teaching of Italian philology at the University of Helsinki. The establishment of this new discipline was largely due to the initiative of students. Teaching was at first given only at the approbatur level which corresponds to Basic studies, and a year later also at the cum laude level. When the chair for Italian philology was created in 1996, the discipline gained the status of a major subject and Advanced studies could begin. The first majoring students were selected in the entrance examination of the same year.