Perspectives on learning, knowing, and understanding languages

The 29th volume of the periodical Lähivõrdlusi. Lähivertailuja ('Close Comparisons') continues a long tradition but also brings in new dimensions concerning both the languages under study and the topics of the contributions. The articles published here have found their way to LV through various channels of scholarly communication; some are based on talks given in 2018 at the VIRSU workshop at the autumn symposium of AFinLA, the Finnish Association for Applied Linguistics.

Following its well-established traditions, LV 29 focuses on the comparison of languages and linguistic phenomena. While Estonian, Finnish, and Russian have often been dealt with in LV, and also quite a few of contributions about the Karelian language have appeared, this volume brings in comparisons involving the Latvian language as well. Comparisons between languages is approached both from a contrastive and from an applied-linguistic perspective, focusing on various prerequisites and forms of language learning. This volume introduces a novel dimension which is also important from the point of view of language policy: the role and use of the Finnish language in academia.

As in many previous volumes already, we are dealing with the mutual intelligibility of closely related languages: receptive multilingualism is the topic of two contributions. Pirkko Muikku-Werner and Helka Riionheimo explore the cognitive strategies which Finnish-speaking students apply when translating Livvi Karelian texts into Finnish, and also reflect on the teachability of such strategies. Hanna-Ilona Härnävaara and Charlotte Gooskens focus on the mutual intelligibility of Finnish and Estonian vocabulary, both written and oral, comparing this on an earlier
extensive study on the mutual intelligibility between Germanic, Slavic
and Romance languages.

Niclas Oranen describes the functions of the adessive case in Tver
Karelian, comparing its use with the corresponding cases in Finnish,
Estonian, and Russian. The study shows that although adessive is his-
torically connected with external or vicinal locations, it can also express
time, instrument, possessor, recipient, or experiencer. In addition to
these, the adessive in Tver Karelian also marks direct and other objects.

In two further contributions, Estonian is involved in comparisons. Sirje
Kupp-Sazonov explores the Estonian counterparts of Russian diminu-
tive nouns in short stories by Anton Chekhov and their Estonian trans-
lations; Ilze Tālberga and Merle Vare examine the Latvian verb prefixes on
the basis of Estonian translations of Latvian literature.

Old textbooks of Finnish have been the subject of study in previous
volumes of LV, and now Marja Järventauta takes up the topic. Her study
deals with Soome keele õperaamat iseõppijatele (‘Coursebook of Finn-
ish language for self-study’), published in Estonia in 1919 and translated
from a German textbook from 1890, Praktische Grammatik der Finn-
ischen Sprache für den Selbstunterricht. The Õperaamat is also compared
with two Estonian textbooks of Finnish: Praktilik Soome keele õpetus by
Johannes Aavik (1908) and Soome keele õpiraamat by Lauri Kettunen
(1920).

Kristina Koppel in her contribution presents the current situation
of e-lexicography in Europe and in Estonia, investigating whether auto-
matically selected authentic corpus sentences can be used in a dictionary
for Estonian learners at the CEFR levels B2 to C1. Markku Nikulin calls
attention to academic immigrants’ experiences of the need of Finnish
language skills in their work and everyday life, emphasizing the connec-
tions between language knowledge and the well-being and integration
of his informants.

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