

Celebrating 35 years and 30 volumes of “Close Comparisons”

Memories of our past and of our dear colleagues, reflections on teaching, learning and understanding languages

The series *Lähivõrdlusi. Lähivertailuja* (‘Close Comparisons’, *LV*) has again reached a milestone: in 2020, we celebrate the 35th anniversary of the first edited volume with this title, and the 30th *LV* volume is issued. Over the years, the series has become an important forum for Finno-Ugric applied linguistics. This volume contains reminiscences on the first years of “Close Comparisons”, by emeritus professor Heikki Pounonen and by one of the early activists of this cooperation, Dr. Hannu Remes. Our celebration is mixed with mourning. In December 2019 we lost the renowned Estonian linguist and public figure Mati Hint, whose last article on the Estonian orthography as developed by Eduard Ahrens appeared in the 28th volume of our series. In March 2020, our dear colleague and friend, professor Kirsti Siitonen, long-time editor of the Finnish-language contributions to *LV*, passed away. We remember our deceased colleagues with gratitude and dedicate this volume of *LV* to their memory.

The contributions of this volume join our long tradition of investigating language learning and especially the multifaceted relationship between Estonian and Finnish. Hannu Remes presents a historical survey on the Estonian grammar by Eduard Ahrens from 1843. This work is now known especially for its crucial role for the establishing of modern Estonian orthography, but it has also influenced Finnish linguists’ and language learners’ views on the character and structure

of the Estonian language. Two articles deal with mutual intelligibility between languages, a central topic of numerous articles in many *LV* volumes already. Pirkko Muikku-Werner and Jarmo Harri Jantunen examine the various strategies which Finnish speakers apply while reading Estonian texts. Isabel Zins approaches the same question on the basis of tests and interviews with German speakers who attempt to understand a Hungarian text, also focusing on the role of encyclopedic knowledge and context. Many articles investigate linguistic issues from the point of view of language learners. Mikael Varjo and Hanna Jokela reflect on the experienced authenticity of zero-subject clauses from the perspective of Finnish learners, while Mare Kitsnik and Monika Sooalu attempt to identify the reasons why 9th-graders in Russian-medium schools in Estonia sometimes seem to be losing their motivation to learn Estonian. Pille Eslon and Annekatrin Kaivapalu compare the characteristics of Estonian language use in texts at the levels A2 and B1 written by Estonian learners with Finnish or Russian as their first language. A new topic in *LV* is the motivation for career choice: Satu Grünthal and Kersti Lepajõe explore the motivations of future mother-tongue teachers in Finland and Estonia.

We thank our authors for their rich and interesting contributions, the reviewers for their expert comments, and everybody involved in the preparation of this volume for their efficiency and flexibility. Special thanks are due to the Finno-Ugric Cultural Fund (*Suomalais-ugrilaisen kulttuurirahaston säätiö*) for their continuous support. Last but not least, we are especially grateful for the opportunity to publish *LV* under the aegis of the Estonian Association for Applied Linguistics.

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