

Finno-Ugric applied linguistics: Keeping the tradition in an era of changes

You are reading the 31st volume of the journal *Lähivõrdlusi. Lähiver- tailuja* ('Close Comparisons'). This volume continues the tradition of its thirty predecessors, focusing on the contrastive study of languages, lan- guage use and language learning. At the same time, new dimensions of languages and topics are brought in. Our journal has established its posi- tion as a forum of applied Finno-Ugric linguistics, and it will continue developing in the spirit of this era of changes.

The contrastive study of Estonian and Finnish is here represented by Ene Vainik, Pirkko Muikku-Werner, and Geda Paulsen. In their article 'How to describe anger? A comparison of Estonian and Finnish idioms from the perspective of cognitive linguistics' they compare the figurative expressions of the emotion HATE in Estonian and Finnish. Explaining the specifics of such expressions with the semantic features of idioms, they analyse their data within the framework of metaphor theory. The paper by Anne Uusen and Helin Puksand 'Writing skills of Estonian and Russian language speaking school students based on the results of the mother tongue standard-determining e-tests' brings in a new topic: the first-language writing skills of Russian- and Estonian-speaking school children in Estonia. The authors apply a wider definition of writing skills and use analytic writing as their starting point. A further contras- tive viewpoint to receptive multilingualism – a topic of many studies already published in previous volumes of our journal – is presented by Anna Branets and Daria Bakhtina. In their article 'The role of language exposure in mediated receptive multilingualism' they investigate how Estonian speakers understand Ukrainian on the basis of their L2 Russian

and how their receptive skills correlate with the extent of their exposure to Russian.

Three of our articles deal with Estonian as a target language. Pille Eslon and Kais Allkivi-Metsoja continue their research on learner Estonian. In her article 'On the language use patterns of Finnish- and Russian-speaking learners of Estonian at the levels A2 and B: Variability vs. stereotypicality', Eslon analyses the factors which contribute to diverging developments in the language learning of Finnish- and Russian-speaking groups. Allkivi-Metsoja ('Written Estonian at the levels A2–C1: Comparative automated analysis') investigates the criteria for the assessment of learners' Estonian language skills. Mare Kitsnik and Katrin Mikk in their article 'Engagement, activity and affordability of learning activities in Estonian as a second language courses for adult learners: Analysis of teachers' opinions' present the results of a questionnaire study, seeking to find out how well the teaching of Estonian to adults fulfils the contemporary criteria of efficient language teaching, that is, how motivating and active it is and how adequately it corresponds to the learners' level of proficiency.

Mari Honko, Sari Ahola and Tuija Hirvelä in their article 'Finnish language proficiency of Estonian-speaking learners in the National Certificates' intermediate level language test' compare the performance of Estonian Finnish-learners with the average performance of all test participants. Their results show that the receptive skills of the Estonian-speaking group are particularly strong, and this finding confirms the results of many studies on mutual intelligibility between Estonian and Finnish, also published in earlier volumes of our journal. As shown by previous research, higher levels of proficiency in Finnish correlate with a longer duration of language studies and living in Finland. Nevertheless, an increasing number of Estonian speakers who take the National Certificates' language test have not acquired their Finnish skills during a long-term stay in Finland nor by way of formal language education.

Nóra Schleicher and Minna Suni bring in a novel topic: language in the world of work. Their article 'Healthcare professionals on the move:

Investing in learning a new language for work' deals with issues of language and immigration from the point of view of Hungarian healthcare professionals employed in Sweden or Finland.

We thank our authors for their interesting and thematically wide-ranging articles and our reviewers for their expert comments. Our sincere gratitude goes to all who participated in the preparation of this publication with admirable flexibility and efficiency. Special thanks are due to the Finno-Ugric Cultural Foundation (*Suomalais-ugrilaisen kulttuurirahaston säätiö*) for their continuing financial support and to the Estonian Association for Applied Linguistics for allowing the publication of *Lähivõrdlusi. Lähivertailuja* under their aegis.

Joensuu, Vienna, and Tampere
Annekatriin Kaivapalu,
Johanna Laakso,
Hanna-Ilona Härmävaara, and
Triinu Viilukas