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"As we say it in Finno-Ugric"

Some thoughts on making Uralic language studies more accessible to outsiders

1. Introduction

This text reflects our experience with a particularly demanding enterprise, the editing of the new *Oxford Guide to the Uralic Languages*, to which our jubilarian has also contributed. While writing this article, we were in the process of finalizing the manuscript of this handbook. The work left us not only happy and grateful for the interesting and thought-provoking collaboration with an international team of experts, but also pondering the reasons why we, in the course of our editing work, so often felt challenged by apparent discrepancies between Uralic studies and other fields of linguistics. Therefore, we would like to use this Festschrift to comment on various aspects of Uralic studies, grammar writing, language description and all the factors which make an overall survey of the Uralic language family such a challenging task.

Coming from three different countries, we have enjoyed the privilege of having a close view of the history and current state of the three most important national research traditions in Uralic studies. Hungary is, in a certain sense, the homeland of comparative Uralic studies and the home of many important researchers and institutions. At the same time, Uralic studies in Hungary have been subject to extra-linguistic controversies and political pressures which outsiders might find difficult to understand (see, for example, Bakró-Nagy (ed.) 2018; Laakso forthcoming). Finland has played a central role in the historical-comparative research of Uralic languages and cultures, starting in the 19th century with the seminal work of M. A. Castrén as one of the founding fathers of Uralic field linguistics and Sibirology (see e.g. Korhonen 1986: 50–66), and continuing

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with the massive fieldwork enterprises and publication activities coordinated by the Finno-Ugrian Society (Salminen 2008). Outside Hungary and the Russian Empire, some German institutions, most notably the University of Göttingen, also played an important role during the first stages of Uralic and Altaic studies, and German was long the most important scholarly metalanguage for research publications. The German traditions also had a strong impact on earlier Russian linguists and institutions. However, after the October Revolution in 1917, the main goal of Uralic studies in Russia shifted to language planning, especially the unprecedented project of creating written and standard forms for numerous previously (almost) unwritten languages. On the other hand, in recent decades in Russia a strong and ambitious tradition of language typology has appeared which explores also the Uralic minority languages but has largely been independent of the historical-comparative mainstream of Uralic studies.

Probably anyone who has attempted to familiarize herself or himself with Uralic studies is aware of the heterogeneity of approaches and uneven state of research. The theoretical frameworks and terminologies used in the study of Uralic languages, on one hand, partly reflect the differences within linguistics at large, between different theories and schools at different times, while on the other hand the specific internal developments within Uralic studies have created a community of practice or a subculture which is not so easy for outsiders to understand. An important factor here is the low volume of our discipline: developments are slow, discussions extend over decades and are sometimes hindered by language barriers (for a case in point, see Junttila 2015 about the debates on Baltic loanwords in Finnic), and sometimes publications more than a century old – reflecting the state of terminology and theory of those times – are still used as reference works. For instance, the descriptions of Samoyedic by Castrén (1854), Livonian by Sjögren (Wiedemann ed. 1861) or Mansi by Munkácsi (1894) have been read and referred to even now in our time. The terminology of classical Finno-Ugric studies was created by linguists who were well versed in classical European grammatical traditions and, confronted with the morphological richness of the Uralic languages, sometimes developed their own idiosyncratic Latinate terms which may look like the terms for SAE or other grammars but mean something completely different. “Conjugation”, “infinitive”, and “absolute inflection” (see below) are some cases in point.

Between the 19th and the 21st century, paradigm shifts in linguistics have also been reflected in Uralic studies. Perhaps the clearest discernible line of development has led from the unquestioned dominance of the historical-comparative approaches to a diversity of both synchronic and panchronic ones (see e.g. Hovdhaugen et al. 2000: 335–337). Historical-comparative Uralistics is by no means *passé*, on the contrary, historical linguistics and etymology are still one of the strongest, most interesting, and most vibrant areas of Uralic studies, and also one with the greatest relevance for corresponding studies in related fields, especially with regard to research into historical language contacts (for comparative Indo-European studies see e.g. Campbell & Poser 2008: 84–99). However, alongside the historical approach both synchronic-descriptive

and typological-contrastive studies have become an important part of mainstream Uralic studies. This, together with closer institutional cooperation – attending international general-linguistic conferences, publishing also outside Uralistic fora – calls for greater transparency, accessibility, and cooperation. In this, documentational linguistics and linguistic typology in particular are playing a central role.

New challenges and new instances of cooperation have forced Uralic studies to actively open up towards the world and to start presenting their results in a less impenetrable way. This is partly an issue of the *lingua franca* used: German, the language of numerous classical dictionaries, grammars, and other works, can no longer be regarded as internationally accessible, nor can linguists outside Russia be expected to read Russian or non-Finno-Ugricists to understand the numerous and important Hungarian- or Finnish-language sources. Uralicists now are increasingly publishing in English, with an international readership in mind. Yet, editing a new handbook of Uralic languages was an eye-opener for us. Already within this sample of descriptions and grammar sketches, we found differences and problems in how quite central issues of language structure are described and referred to. In what follows, we will discuss some examples.

2. Transcription and phonology, or how we stopped worrying and learned to love IPA

2.1. Description vs. history

Although the first proper descriptive grammars of Uralic languages were written already in the 17th and 18th centuries, the real breakthrough in serious scholarly descriptions came in the 19th century. That was also the time when the first phonetic transcriptions were developed. Most Uralic minority languages did not have a written standard, and many of them were believed to be dying out anyway, so developing literacy for them was not a priority. (For instance, Heikki Paasonen, the most renowned researcher ever of the Mordvin languages, wrote at the beginning of the 20th century that "it is no use trying to save the Mordvin nation, that half-dead carcass"; Salminen 2008: 93.) The way in which language data was recorded and represented was determined by outsiders' scholarly goals, not by the languages' speakers.

At this time, also the Neogrammarian school with its focus on authentic language use and collection of dialectological data established its influence as the dominant theoretical framework in Uralic studies. Consequently, the material on which the major part of 20th-century comparative Uralic studies relied, collected before 1918, was characterized on the one hand by "phonetic extremism", a positivist ambition to reflect the phonetic features of the languages studied in as much detail as possible, and on the other hand by a predominantly diachronic viewpoint. The first approach gave us the Finno-Ugric transcription or FUT (now also called UPA or the Uralic Phonetic

Alphabet), the transcription system notorious for its optically and technically challenging abundance of diacritics (see below). The latter viewpoint, ultimately, hindered the critical evaluation of synchronic phonological systems.

Despite the positivist philosophy of the Neogrammarian approach, the material produced by the classical fieldwork before World War I was, paradoxically enough (see Luutonen 1985), characterized by the search for an invariant or "ideal", "pure", or "authentic" form. This means that the materials recorded were typically edited and purged of whatever was interpreted as unauthentic or, for instance, foreign influence. This may have led to conscious archaization of transcription, as, for example, in the case of the voiced velar fricative in the Pelym dialect of West Mansi. Eichinger (2017: 46–47) points out that this consonant was in the process of being vocalized already in Munkácsi's Mansi material (based on his own fieldwork in 1888–1889 and Reguly's fieldwork in the 1840s), yet Kannisto, a generation later (fieldwork 1901–1906), marks it much more consistently. Consequently, the reality of variation was not adequately reflected in these texts, and latter-day linguists working on the basis of these texts were simply compelled to accept the editor's implicit analysis of the structure of the language, including the phonological system.

The historical-comparative approach with its focus on *Lautgeschichte* has later often been criticized for its neglect of systemic and structuralist approaches (so-called "atomism": focusing on the developments of individual sounds). This criticism is not completely justified. In fact, historical explanations based on the dynamics of sound systems made their way into Uralic studies already before World War II: they were instrumental, for instance, for the work of Erkki Itkonen on the prehistory of Finnic-Saami and for the new understanding of historical phonology which rescued Uralic *Lautgeschichte* from the *cul-de-sac* of E. N. Setälä's gradation theory (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000: 379–380). However, the diachronic approach led to a general neglect of synchronic phonological systems. The field linguists who collected and edited the classical materials and descriptions of minor Uralic languages aspired to great phonetic precision, but their main goal was comparing sound systems; they wanted to understand diachronic processes and achieve more adequate reconstructions.

As a result of the diachronic perspective and its focus on differences rather than similarities or universals, the properties of certain sound systems could be written off as characteristics of the variety at issue. Their exceptional character was simply a result of certain specific sound changes; it was not understood as an indication that there might be something wrong with the original extraction, analysis or interpretation of data. In the theoretical framework of those times, sound systems were not subjected to explicit and systematic typological comparison. Now that such comparisons are part of the mainstream of phonology, some Uralic varieties are already lost beyond record, others are still only sparsely documented and described, and in most of the cases no sound recordings are available which would enable a proper phonetic analysis.

Notorious examples of this are the reduced vowels – the duration of which should be measured in order to determine whether the vowel is reduced in terms of

articulation or is merely of short duration (see Fejes 2008 for Khanty, Salminen 2007 for Nenets) – and the palatal vs. palatalized consonants. In this latter case, the distinction between palatalness (place of articulation) and palatalization (the presence of a palatal gesture in the articulation) has not been properly understood, nor has it been examined in connection with typological comparisons (Klumpp et al. 2017, Stadnik 2002) what kind of palatal vs. palatalized consonants are possible phonetically at all, which of them can be found in the world's languages and under what conditions. In fact, the distinction between palatal and palatalized is not even properly expressed in the FUT system, where consonants can be designated either as dentipalatal or palatal or palatalized or prepalatal or even alveolar.

2.2. The glory of FUT and the pain of IPA

The Finno-Ugric transcription, created at the turn of the 20th century, quickly established itself as the canonical way to render the sounds of minor Uralic languages. Due to the fact that most of these languages either have no established orthography or only have a Cyrillic-based one,[1] FUT has been used until our time in Uralic and partly also in Altaic studies. Its main principle – using basic Latin characters in their Latinate or Eastern European values (for instance, *c* for [ts]) and expressing the rest with diacritics – can lead to an optically challenging abundance of diacritics, if the transcription is fine and phonetic. However, as the values of the basic characters are well known to most readers and the diacritics are often already known from other orthographic or philological traditions (such as the macron for length or the háček for wide sibilants and affricates) or iconic (the arrowheads below the letter indicating frontness/backness or openness/closeness of articulation; turning the letter upside down to indicate reduced articulation), FUT is intuitively clear and easy to learn (Stachowski 2011).

Some of the central strengths and weaknesses of FUT seem to derive from its background in the study of the Finnic languages. Quantity, one of the central issues in Finnic phonology, can be shown in very fine detail, with up to six different quantity grades. At the same time, as mentioned above, FUT does not distinguish between palatalness and palatalization, nor can it show the huge differences in the phonetic realizations of palatalization which can be seen, for instance, when comparing palatalization in more western (South) Estonian varieties with the "Russian-type" palatalization in Seto and with the acoustically almost indiscernible palatalization in Eastern Finnish Savo dialects.

After the 20th century, with its paradigm shifts in linguistics and the advent of modern recording techniques, the phonetic extremism of the classical FUT-transcribed sources has become outdated. The phonologization of FUT was intensively discussed already in the 1970s (see especially Posti & Itkonen 1973), and as of today,

1. Note that the Cyrillic-based orthographies, with principles transferred uncritically from the Russian orthography, made the problem of palatal vs. palatalized consonants or reduced vowels even more opaque.

fairly well-functioning FUT-based phonological transcriptions for many minor Uralic languages have established themselves. However, these transcriptions are still perceived as technically challenging, which has led to the development of parallel transcription systems without special characters, such as that of Tapani Salminen for Nenets (e.g. Salminen 1993, 1998) or that of our jubilarian for East Mansi (Kulonen 2007). Moreover, even latter-day Finno-Ugric transcriptions are still somewhat impenetrable for outsiders, and due to this, after long discussions the Ob-BABEL project (the Euro-BABEL project for creating digital resources for the Ob-Ugric languages) took the painful decision to adopt IPA. A similar decision was taken for the *Oxford Guide,* despite initial protests from some prospective authors.

Most conspicuously, the transition from FUT to IPA has meant technical and visual changes such as replacing *š* with ʃ or *ť* with ɨ, or a breach of traditions concerning which features are to be represented in the phonological or quasi-phonological transcription. For instance, in the tradition of Finnic studies the so-called voiceless media stops (as in Estonian the sounds represented orthographically with ‹b›, ‹d›, ‹g›) have meticulously been written with small caps (*ʙ ᴅ ɢ*), but modern Estonian grammarians (see e.g. Asu et al. 2016) in their phonological analyses simply use *p t k* without paying any specific attention to the fact that these sounds are acoustically strikingly different from the etymologically corresponding *p t k* in Finnish, for example.

Choosing IPA has also shed light on persistent problems with phonological analysis, or on questions of phonetic accuracy and realism. Of the former, the vowel systems of Ob-Ugric are an excellent example, among others, the vowel system of Kazym Khanty. There are two approaches to describe the system. One attempts to grasp the opposition of the vowels as a contrast of duration, i.e. short vs. long duration (Rédei 1968, Kaksin 2010), the other as the opposition of full vs. reduced sounds (Honti 1984). However, both approaches fail to provide a sufficient definition for reducedness – shorter duration and/or more centralized articulation – and therefore they cannot present a convincing phonological analysis. Moreover, no sound recordings of sufficient quality were made to enable phonetic support. With the pioneering work of Kurkina (2000) the opportunity of a more viable solution appeared, and although the question has still not been settled for good, it seems that a more plausible phonological system has been set up which can do without the oppositions of long vs. short, reduced vs. full or tense vs. lax (see Sipos [forthcoming]). Another vowel problem exists in the description of the so-called reduced vowels in Mari; the solution we chose for the *Oxford Guide* does not necessarily reflect the phonetic or even the phonological reality. In fact, the quality of the reduced vowels is partly conditioned by their environment. This brings us to a central problem with IPA: it is a phonetic alphabet, its symbols suggest phonetic accuracy, and therefore, it is not optimally suited for phonological transcriptions. Nevertheless, the shift to IPA in Finno-Ugric publications seems to be inevitable in the long run, as accessibility for outsiders is becoming more and more crucial.

3. A morph by any other name...

The rich morphology of the Uralic languages has challenged grammar writers for centuries already. Confronted with categories which do not exist in classical Latin or Greek nor in modern SAE languages, grammarians modified and adapted Latinate terms to partly new uses, which has led to strange debates about the "real" or "prototypical" meanings of grammatical categories already long before the recent discussions on comparative and universal categories or concepts in linguistic typology (see e.g. Haspelmath 2018). It has been claimed, for instance, that the Hungarian cases are actually not cases at all but fused postpositions (Spencer 2008), or that the Finnish passive is not a "real" passive but something else (see e.g. Shore 1988, Manninen & Nelson 2004). Terminological debates are not rare in other linguistic traditions and subdisciplines either. In Uralic studies, they are also manifested in language teaching, i.e. teaching Finnish, Estonian, or Hungarian grammar to laypeople socialized with the traditions of SAE school grammars. Here, the challenges of terminological discrepancies are present in practice and in the experience of language teachers, but more general theoretical approaches, for instance, from the viewpoint of ergonomy (see e.g. Kok 2012) are seldom applied.

3.1. SAE terms for non-SAE features?

The most obvious problems arise with categories which do not have any equivalents in the Western grammar tradition. Here, terms have been developed which are clear and transparent to Uralicists but misleading for outsiders. The *subjective* and *objective conjugations* in Ugric, Samoyedic, and Mordvin are a case in point. For Standard Average European grammar readers, *conjugation* is a subclass of verbs defined by allomorphic variation in verb inflection: the marker of, say, first person singular can have different realizations, as in Latin *am-ō* 'I love', *doc-eō* 'I teach', and *fac-iō* 'I make'. The "subjective" vs. "objective conjugation" in Uralic, in contrast, are terms denoting two different inflection paradigms: for subject agreement vs. subject-object agreement, i.e. the marking of not only subject person but also certain features of the object on the verb. To confuse things even more, for Udmurt and Mari, which lack a distinction between subject and subject-object agreement paradigms, the term *conjugation* is used in grammars to denote the two main inflection types ("1st" and "2nd conjugation"). Basically, the meaning of "conjugation" here comes close to the Latin tradition, but the distinction between the two conjugations may be derivational in origin and involve syntacto-semantic dimensions as well.

Another classical term which gave rise to many heated discussions between the editors of the *Oxford Guide* was the *absolute inflection* of nouns. Readers who are not familiar with the phenomenon of possessive suffixes and their frequent fusion with case or number markers will not necessarily be able to interpret this "absoluteness" as the lack of possessive marking.

The names of morphological markers often refer to their semantic or syntactic functions. These may be manifold but typically, the name is based on just one of these functions, thus suggesting that this function is in some sense primary. The *possessive suffixes* are an example of this; they are adnominal person markers which establish a relation between the referent of the noun and the speech act participants. The most frequent interpretation of such a relation is possession, hence the label. However, these suffixes do not only denote the possessor person of nouns but also often the subject person of non-finites, not to speak of their "article-like" or "determining" use, for example, in the Permic languages. An even more blatant case is the tradition of calling the object agreement marking the "determinate" or "definite conjugation" (as in, for instance, Keresztes 1999). In fact, it is only in Hungarian that the use of such forms is triggered by the definiteness of the object (which in Hungarian, thanks to the presence of definite articles, is a much less ambiguous issue than in most other Uralic languages), and even in Hungarian there are other factors involved as well, such as the person of the object.

Not only do the morphological terms sometimes give the impression of being based on a randomly selected feature (even if the choice of this feature may have seemed unquestionable to the grammarian who first described it) but these terminological choices can also differ even between descriptions of quite closely related languages. One such example is the so-called destinative, predestinative, or benefactive inflection in North Samoyedic languages, which is a suffix used in connection with a possessive suffix to indicate future or intended possession (as in "my future wife", "a sled for you" or "the boat with which we are going to travel"). The authors of our North Samoyedic chapters chose to use three different terms, each of them being the most appropriate from their language-specific point of view or from the point of view of their theoretical preferences.

Another problematic case was the naming of the numerous non-finite forms. As this is problematic also from a more general point of view, it deserves a section of its own.

3.2. In the terminological jungle of non-finites

The description of non-finites in Uralic is a veritable minefield. First, their part-of-speech affiliation: are they treated as a subclass of verbs (the Finnish and Russian traditions) or as a separate part-of-speech (the Hungarian tradition)? Second, how should we define what they are? Both within Uralic and cross-linguistically, non-finites are often multifunctional, i.e. they can be predicates of relative clauses, complement clauses, and adverbial clauses (see e.g. Cristofaro 2003, Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993).

The general terminology of non-finites differentiates between *action nouns/nominals* (non-finites used in "nominal" syntactic functions of subjects and objects), *participles* (also known as "verbal adjectives", specialized as nominal modifiers), and – the recent term adopted by typologists from Ramstedt's description of the Mongolic

verb (Ramstedt 1903: 55; Haspelmath 1995: 4) – *converbs* (aka "adverbial participles", "gerunds" etc., Ru. *деепричастие*, i.e. verbal/clausal modifiers). One more term in this set is *infinitive*; actually, so-called infinitives are forms which combine properties of action nouns and (purposive) converbs, so it might be suggested that a separate term for such a combination has been created only because of the existence of such specific forms in SAE. As for the division of verbs into finite and non-finite forms, it has often been criticized as not supported by cross-linguistic data (see Nikolaeva 2007: 1, van der Auwera 1998, Haspelmath 1995, Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1994). According to Koptjevskaja-Tamm (1994: 1248) the category of finiteness can be generalized only to some degree, otherwise it is language-specific.

The term "infinitive" is a good starting point for our discussion. In the Finnish tradition, morphology overrides syntax: instead of the division based on syntactic function (relative clauses, adverbial clauses, etc.), here we find a morphologically-based division into two groups labeled "participles" (non-finites with a complete case paradigm) and "infinitives" (non-finites with only restricted case inflection, if any). Thus, what are known as the "five infinitives" in Finnic is a set of forms with different functions and structure; recently there has been a cautious attempt to relabel them from the typological point of view as infinitives and converbs (Ylikoski 2003). Additionally, in Estonia a tradition has emerged of calling one of these forms, the so-called third or MA-infinitive, the "supine", probably because of the modal uses of the MA-infinitive (as in *peab tege-ma* '(s/he) must do') and because this historical illative (or possibly genitive) form is synchronically unmarked (cf. Finnish *teke-mä-än* do-INF-ILL, with the original illative ending still visible). This terminological decision misrepresents the situation from an all-Finnic point of view: in Finnish or Karelian, for example, etymologically the same suffix has practically identical functions but a different term is used, giving the impression that the supine is an individual feature of Estonian.

What we would like to stress further is the fact that we have a separate term "infinitive" for a non-finite form combining two "primary" functions probably because the SAE languages, both the meta- and object languages of the European linguistic Latinate terminology, happen to have such a combination. But what about forms that combine the functions of an "action noun" and a "participle"? Or those that can be also used as "converbs" without additional case suffixes or adpositions to mark their function as dependent predicates in adverbial clauses? Or those that can be used as all of the above – or any combination thereof – plus as a finite predicate without auxiliaries, even if the latter is a result of the later grammaticalization? Compare the range of functions of the "past participle" in *-m* in North Mansi:[2]

2. Examples from the Ob-Ugric Database (‹http://www.babel.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/index.php?abfrage=glossed_corpus_intro›), accessed on 3 May 2019.

as a head of a relative clause (= "participle")

(1) xot=tu:jtxat-am ma:-t os ta kins-e:ɣ-ət
away=hide-PTCP.PST land-LOC again DIP search-PRS-3PL
'Again (they) look for (him) in the place where he was hiding';

as a head of a subject clause (= "action noun")

(2) ne: man xum juw=sʲalt-m-e suit-i
woman or man in=enter-PTCP.PST-POSS.3SG to_be_heard-PRS[3SG]
'It is to be heard that a man or a woman entered the tent';

as a head of an adverbial clause (= "converb")

(3) jol=lonʲxat-am-t sʲowal sam-e o:l-i
down=slide-PTCP.PST-POSS.3SG hearth eye-POSS.SG<3SG be-PRS[3SG]
'As (he) gets down (from the roof into the house), there is a spark in the hearth';

as a finite predicate in the mirative meaning

(4) a:mp-e nupəl su:ns-i, a:tʲim,
dog-POSS.SG<3SG towards look-PRS[3SG] NEG.EX
xottalʲ min-am
to_somewhere go-PTCP.PST[3SG]
'(He) looks at his dog: it is not there, it has gone off somewhere (unexpectedly).'

How should we deal with cases of multiple functions terminologically? In Uralic grammars two approaches are found, polyfunctionality vs. homonymy. The typical "polyfunctionality" solution was already mentioned above in connection with "possessive suffixes": some "primary" term is selected as a label for a concrete non-finite form regardless of its other functions, usually the term "participle". In other words, the form named "participle" in a Uralic (or Altaic) grammar can actually have many other functions. Only some grammars use terms like "nomen actionis" in addition to "participle"; some younger authors have started to use the term "nominalization", though it also presupposes only some functions from the complete set.

Some grammatical descriptions present not "polyfunctional participles" but several homonymous forms (see e.g. the analysis of terminology in Serdobol'skaja et al. 2012: 47, Georgieva 2018: 47). The choice of this solution is often not clearly argued for or even reflected at all. For instance, the number of forms labeled converbs or "gerunds" differ in descriptions of North Mansi: sometimes it is *-ke* and *-im* (Riese 2001: 69–70), the latter homonymous with the "past passive participle" in *-im(a)* as it does not have passive meaning; but sometimes it is *-im* and *-n* (Rombandeeva 1973: 147) or *-im* and

-m (Rombandeeva & Vaxruševa 1989: 144), *-n* and *-m* are claimed to be separate forms homonymous with the present participle in *-n* and the past participle in *-m* respectively. Interestingly enough, no author mentions all of them together as converbs.

One more point, of course, is that in SAE-biased general linguistic dictionaries/encyclopedias – e.g. Bussmann 2008, Crystal 2008, Glottopedia[3] and many others – non-finite verbal forms are characterized as forms that lack tense, mood, and person and they usually function as predicates of subordinate clauses but not as main predicates. However, many Uralic non-finites can be marked for person, even if this marking is formally different from that of finites: instead of verbal person marking the nominal possessive suffixes are used. Moreover, Uralic non-finites do express tense or mood; many languages have different types of participles for different modal or temporal meanings. And finally, using non-finites as main predicates is a widespread strategy to express perfective, resultative, evidential or mirative meanings. Nevertheless, these characteristics are seldom described in full and consequently their relevance for the general theory is seldom reflected on.

4. Can we bridge the gap? Should we?

In our editing sessions, one of the most often repeated phrases was: "No outsider will ever understand this!" In addition to the problems described above, we saw a variety of minor terminological issues and translation problems. Often, such issues surface in the differences between the German-based and the Anglophone traditions. For instance, the phenomenon known as "congruence" in many of our traditions (*kongruenssi*, *Kongruenz*) is, in modern English-language literature, known as *agreement* (which, in turn, was not known to the English-speaking editor of one of our authors).

Beyond terminology, we could heatedly discuss what kind of realia our target readership can be supposed to know. For instance, animals like *burunduk* or *maral* are well known to Sibirologists, but an average Western reader would probably be happier if the words for them in our example sentences were glossed with 'Siberian chipmunk' and 'red deer'. Linguistic fieldwork before World War I – not only in Uralic studies – was often interdisciplinary, and the cultural connotations and special meanings of the terms for local and culture-specific realia were important for classical linguist-cum-ethnographer-cum-folklorist Uralicists. The target audience of our handbook, in contrast, has predominantly linguistic interests.

To sum up, we saw our main task in making the tradition of Uralic studies more understandable and accessible for outsiders – but how far is this possible, or even desirable? Like any other discipline or research tradition, Uralic studies constitute a community of practice, or a "semiotic social space" (in the sense of Gee 2005; see Laakso 2015: 180–181). Being a member of this community means not just knowing and

3. ‹http://www.glottopedia.org/index.php/Finite_vs._nonfinite› Accessed 18 September 2018.

understanding the basics and being able to access information from the central sources, it is also a question of interaction, socialization, and identification. Traditionally dominated by research traditions which defined themselves as *Nationalwissenschaften,* viz. the traditions of Uralic studies in Finland, Estonia, and Hungary, or based on the practical needs of first-language speakers, as in the applied-linguistic and descriptive traditions in Russia, Uralic studies have been practised by people who often from the very beginning identified themselves as insiders. Such people, perhaps, readily accept the differences between their tradition and others' and might even be inclined to exaggerate them. The impression of isolation has been further strengthened by differences in metalanguages, transcriptions and terminologies, and partly, it may have been affected by the linguistic exceptionalism which is part of national linguistic myth-building (which, in turn, was made use of in national emancipation projects, see, for instance, Sommer 2014 for Finnish): our language – in this case: our language family – is so unique, so very much different from everything else.

In this respect, the world around us has changed dramatically in the last few decades, and not only because of the dramatic changes in the political frameworks and in the modalities of scholarly communication (Internet-based communication and publishing in particular). The traditional supporting structures of the *Nationalwissenschaften* have weakened, as have the institutional frameworks for the study of our exotic languages abroad as well; there are no guaranteed university positions in Finno-Ugric studies any more waiting for at least a few fortunate early-career researchers to acquire the necessary qualifications. The results of our work are subject to more and more strict evaluation procedures on a par with other related disciplines. But while these challenges have emerged, among the subdisciplines of linguistics there is an increasing readiness to collaborate and an increasing interest in other languages and research traditions, whereby the rise of linguistic typology, starting from the late 20th century, has played a central role. Young Finno-Ugricists of our times now publish largely in English and from the start they aim for international audiences also outside our traditional circles. This is not a paradigm change in the traditional sense of the word, not at the same level as, for example, the notorious paradigm shift from Neogrammarianism to structuralist and generativist approaches (for critical and even polemic analyses of these processes in Finnish linguistics, see especially Määttä 1994, Itkonen 1999). It is not a change in the research approaches or theories themselves but in their institutional and social frameworks.

Bridging the gap between the tradition of Uralic studies and the rest of the world is a question of resource allocation. Up to a certain point, it is worthwhile to spend our time in translating and transposing the central knowledge of Uralic languages and linguistics, until now only available in "impenetrable" forms and metalanguages, into a contemporary, English-language format, or to write – to quote one of our authors – "very vanilla" English-language descriptions of our less well-known languages and their central features. But, starting at a certain point, the interested reader will have to work her or his way into the world of Uralic studies independently, perhaps

even to get a working knowledge of important metalanguages such as Finnish, Hungarian, Russian, or the exotic German. No handbook can seamlessly connect research traditions nor solve all accessibility problems. What we can do is to arouse interest in our research traditions and motivate our readers to cross the gap into the Finno-Ugric world.

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