

IN MEMORIAM ILSE LEHISTE
(31.01.1922—25.12.2010)



December 25, 2010 died Ilse Lehiste, an outstanding scholar who has made an invaluable contribution to phonetic and phonological studies of Estonian, its cognates and many other languages, as well as to the research of the phonetic realization of the metric structure in the oral poetry of several languages.

Ilse Lehiste was born on January 31, 1922 in Tallinn. Her first school was Lender Gymnasium in Tallinn, the curriculum of which offered, among else, several languages. Of those, especially Latin inspired her early interest in linguistics. Her 12th schoolyear started during World War II, soon after the first Soviet occupation had begun in Estonia.

Upon graduation (true, the gymnasium had been renamed into Secondary School No. 8) Ilse Lehiste spent a year at Tallinn Conservatory studying the piano, but in 1942 she took up Estonian Philology at the University of Tartu. Her studies were discontinued in 1944 as she fled to Germany to escape the second Soviet occupation. After the war she worked as a secretary at the bureau of Baltic University at Pinneberg near Hamburg. Soon she entered the University of Hamburg, taking Germanic philology, Old-Icelandic philology and classical philology (majoring in Latin). In 1948 Ilse Lehiste defended her doctoral thesis at that university and was promoted Doctor of Philology. Her dissertation analyzed the poetry of William Morris, especially those works of the British poet that drew on Icelandic sagas. She continued as lecturer at the same university.

In 1949 Ilse Lehiste left for the USA, where her first jobs included lecturing on German in two small colleges. In a few years she became a student at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she met their new professor Gordon E. Peterson, one of the founders of acoustic phonetics as a branch of research, who brought along one of the world's first spectrographs. Here Ilse Lehiste enthusiastically experienced the world of experimental phonetics and theoretical linguistics. In parallel with her studies, she published her first articles and worked as an assistant at the communicative sciences laboratory. That is where in 1959 she defended her second doctoral disser-

tation "An Acoustic-Phonetic Study of Internal Open Juncture" for PhD. The dissertation was published as a monograph supplement to the journal *Phonetica*. For the next few years she remained with the laboratory as a research associate.

Ilse Lehiste's longest employment was with the Ohio State University, starting from 1963 (professor from 1965, professor emeritus 1987). She joined the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures where she worked until 1965, when she became chair of the newly founded Department of Linguistics, which position she kept until 1971. She was also acting chair of the same department in 1984–1985 and, once more, head in 1985–1987.

Ilse Lehiste received an honorary doctorate from the Universities of Essex (1977), Lund (1982), Tartu (1989), and Ohio State University (1999). In 1990 she became a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, in 1998 a foreign member of the Finnish Academy of Sciences, and in 2008 a foreign member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. In 2009 her linguistic effort merited the Wiedemann Language Prize.

As a visiting professor Ilse Lehiste delivered lectures in many universities the world over (including Cologne, Vienna, Tokyo, Beijing, Tartu). In that capacity she stayed in Cologne in 1965, in Vienna in 1974 and in Tokyo in 1980.

Ilse Lehiste has said that although she likes lecturing, research has always been nearer to her heart. As for linguistics, Ilse Lehiste spent decades using methods of experimental phonetics to study prosodic issues of many languages (e.g. Estonian and its cognates, Serbo-Croatian, Latvian, English, Japanese), as well as, for example, the acoustics of Estonian diphthongs and consonants, including the palatalization of the latter, and segmental phonetics of several other languages. Researchers of Estonian quantity degrees still keep referring to Ilse Lehiste's article "Segmental and Syllabic Quantity in Estonian" of 1960, as later the quantity-generating durational relations of Estonian syllables (Q1 2/3, Q2

3/2, Q3 2/1) there presented have been proved over and over again both in her own and in other authors' studies of phonetic quantity in read as well as spontaneous Estonian speech.

Ilse Lehiste has authored over 200 articles, over a 100 reviews, and she has been the author, a co-author or editor of 20 books. Her book "Lectures on Language Contact" (1988) testifies to the author being a marvellous lecturer relying on abundant examples from different languages. Another definitive work is "Principles and Methods for Historical Linguistics" (written jointly with Robert J. Jeffers, 1979). Of her earlier works, the more important ones are two books on prosody: "Accent in Serbocroatian" (1963), co-authored by Pavle Ivić, and "Suprasegmentals" (1970), discussing accent, quantity and tone at the time most phoneticians were fascinated by segmental issues. That work still serves as a valuable handbook for prosody researchers.

Prosody has been the focus of several other monographs (and articles) by Ilse Lehiste, be they devoted to spoken language, read poems, or runic songs, e.g. the monograph "Word and Sentence Prosody in Serbocroatian" (1986, co-author Pavle Ivić), "Estonian Prosody: Papers from a Symposium" (1997, co-edited by Jaan Ross). The Estonian publication "Keel kirjanduses" (Language in literature; 2000, compiled by Jaan Ross) contains translated articles part of which also deal with prosodic issues such as metrics and its acoustic correlates in read poems. The joint study of Jaan Ross and Ilse Lehiste titled "Temporal Structure of the Estonian Runic Songs" (2001) surveys Estonian prosody, discussing the metric structure of Estonian folk songs and the mutual influence of language and music.

Personally, I first had the honour to meet Ilse Lehiste in the spring of 1993, when she presented the Psychology Department of the University of Tartu with a speech analyzer (Kay Elemetrics CSL 4300) and held a related special course on Estonian phonetics. That involved fascinating lectures and exciting practical training, which aroused in me a great

interest in acoustic phonetics. There must be many others whom Ilse Lehiste has inspired, either as lecturer or supervisor, to take up phonetic studies. My closer contacts with Ilse Lehiste began in 1998, when she initiated Estonian research into the prosody of Finno-Ugric languages. Many students have benefitted from this collaboration, gaining experience in acoustic analysis of speech; this is proved by several Master's theses and one doctoral dissertation finished, while two more doctoral theses are under way. Most of the present results of Finno-Ugric prosody can be found in the following three monographs: "Erzya Prosody" (2003), "Meadow Mari Prosody" (2005) and "Livonian Prosody" (2008). The whole autumn Ilse Lehiste was actively participating in the preparation of a volume on Moksha prosody. All those studies have benefitted from her inspiring, supportive, advising and

critical presence, while her criticism was invariably constructive and helpful, never destructive. One could hardly avoid being impressed by her enthusiasm in linguistic discussions. During the recent years the joint project mentioned took Ilse Lehiste annually to Estonia. Her last visit took place last August before the 11th International Congress for Finno-Ugric Studies held at Pülsisaba, where she participated with an invited talk (jointly with Karl Pajusalu) on the prosodic studies of Finno-Ugric languages.

I will always be grateful for the opportunity I had of getting to know such a wonderful person as Ilse Lehiste and of learning from her. Her admirable acumen and intellectual alertness, her integrity and devotion has set an unforgettable example for many of her colleagues and students.

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