

REVIEWS * ОБЗОРЫ И РЕЦЕНЗИИ

ANNA WIDMER (Hamburg)

RECONNECTING AND RECONSIDERING.
REMARKS ON THE FINAL DISCUSSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
LINGUISTIC SYMPOSIUM "RECONNECTING FINNIC",
HOLD IN HELSINKI, 14.—16. 11. 2002*

Abstract. In the final discussion of the symposium "Reconnecting Finnic" an attempt was made to probe into the question of why the fields of general linguistics on the one hand and Finnic/Uralic studies on the other take so little note of one another or build so little on the research of the other discipline. A number of problems were mentioned in the discussion, for example the academic education of Uralists, the use of generic transcription systems, the use of languages other than English in Uralist publications or the inability of Uralists to describe adequately syntactic problems of the so-called smaller languages. In this contribution I will try to examine these arguments with respect to their plausibility and look for other problems which inhibit the dialogue between general/theoretical linguistics and any particular linguistic field as, for example, Uralic studies. I consider it a significant point that the number of publications has reached a level that makes their recognition virtually impossible.

The symposium "Reconnecting Finnic" had the intention, as the invitation informs, "to reestablish the connections between the study of the minor Finnic languages and the most vigorously developing approaches and subfields of modern linguistics". The symposium was open to "all researchers of the Finnic languages as well as all linguists interested in Finno-Ugric and Circum-Baltic languages" and aimed "to discuss the various perspectives of Finnic studies and the possible contribution of Finnic studies to general linguistics — or vice versa".¹

In the final roundtable discussion, as opposed to the preceding talks, a more direct approach was taken to recall the similarities between Finnic/Uralic studies and general/theoretical linguistics and name the reasons that might impede "reconnection". Some approaches given in this discussion are not only for the target audience; some points which would have required mention were, however, ignored.

The discussion on the relations between general/theoretical linguistics and Finnic/Uralic Studies is relevant to all linguistic disciplines and to organization of science in general.

In the following I would like to pick out and analyse some of the suggestions and approaches given. I will then concentrate on further problems not specifically

* I would like to express my gratitude to Giedre Vasiliauskaite (Helsinki), Daniel Hole and Gerson Klumpp (both Munich) for stimulating and encouraging discussion.

¹ <http://www.helsinki.fi/hum/sugl/proj/recfin/>.

mentioned during the symposium. This extension of the discussion seems to make sense for the following three reasons:

1. during the round-table discussion problems could only be briefly touched upon,
2. the points in question have been around for a long time and are worth discussing in more detail,
3. the problems are worth discussing in the broader public.

The core problem that was made the central topic of discussion during the symposium can be formulated as follows: Finnic/Uralic² studies and general linguistics suffer from a lack of mutual recognition.

To clarify this issue, note that the main difference between Uralic in the classical sense (meaning historical-comparative linguistics with an emphasis on Uralic languages) and general linguistics lies in the *selection* of examined languages: Uralistic focuses on a language group that is considered to be genetically related, its member languages and their historical predecessors. Its main questions are:

- How do Uralic languages work?
- What do they have in common?
- How (and probably also for which reasons) did each language develop over time?

This applies *mutatis mutandis* to Finnic studies.

General linguistics/theoretical linguistics³ is concerned with languages *independent* of their genetic relationship. Its main questions are:

- How do human languages work?
- How can the differences between languages be explained?

However, it also poses the question:

- How can the large number of correspondences between languages be explained?

Contrary to popular belief, the historical dimension is not only of relevance to so-called historical typology but to general linguistics as well. The reason that research in general linguistics and typology is mainly concerned with linguistic systems still in use today is purely a pragmatic one. Stages of a language that are posited via reconstruction (as the common denominator of their daughter languages and as cross-sections of inner reconstruction) are obviously heterogeneous entities (even if we consider the unlikelihood of the reconstruction corresponding to historical facts), originating from different historical periods. The few early stages that are documented in written form are fertile grounds for linguistic and typological studies, as seen with Latin and Romance languages.

It is a logical consequence of the divergent development of different linguistic branches (linguistic in the general sense) that the allocation of a problem to a single discipline is often arbitrary at best. However, a good Finnicist/Uralist should be interested just as much in the findings of general linguistics and should also spend some time with the study of languages that are not (at least closely) genetically related to Finnic/Uralic languages. A good typologist, on the other hand, will also show thorough expertise in a number of individual philologies.

The unity of Uralic studies and general linguistics and their problems in communicating with each other can be explained by the observation that both disci-

² The discipline traditionally called Finno-Ugrian Studies is more and more called Uralic Studies, since this definition also includes Samoyedic languages. This article uses both terms synonymously.

³ The difference between general and theoretical linguistics, which is variously defined depending on the background of the scholars involved, is irrelevant for the present purposes.

plines often follow similar paths independently. For instance, the principles of construction grammar that were established recently in general linguistics have been well known to Finno-Ugrists through the works of Raija Bartens for quite some time.

Since the arguments presented by both factions to document and to explain the ignorance of the respective other discipline were quite different, it seems reasonable to examine both issues separately.

1. In a first step, I will comment on the remarks made during the symposium which claimed that the findings of general linguistics are not taken into account sufficiently by Uralists.

Typologists, intending to address the issue right away, criticised the lack of education among Fennicists and Uralists as far as general linguistics is concerned. To change that perception, it was suggested that students of Finnic/Uralic complete a set of basic courses in general linguistics prior to embarking on Finnic/Uralic studies.

In the following I will address both the education (1.1) and the professional life (1.2) of Uralists with respect to general linguistics.

1.1. To make one thing clear straight away: Mandatory classes in linguistics as part of a major in Uralic studies are widespread. However, implementation differs greatly. I will focus on some countries and universities (concentrating on those familiar to me) to point out typical problems and to illustrate how these problems may differ.

It should be noted that the problems addressed are of relevance with respect to higher education policy and no easy solutions are offered.

Procedures differ across countries and universities. Finland⁴ and Estonia have had mandatory general linguistics courses for a long time. The same applies to Hungary, where, however, only few complementary classes are required. Overcoming her colleagues' fierce opposition, Marianne Bakró-Nagy successfully introduced a regulation which confronts students of Finno-Ugrian also with syntactic research in general linguistics.⁵

The situation in German speaking countries is very heterogeneous. During my studies in Munich in the 1980s and early 1990s it was quite common to combine Finno-Ugric studies with other linguistic subjects, and it was (and still is) mandatory to attend introductory classes in theoretical and general linguistics. This is not possible everywhere for organizational reasons. In Hamburg, for instance, the departments of general linguistics and Uralic studies were unable to agree on joint classes.⁶ Thus, the department of Uralic studies has to rely on internal solutions. The mandatory linguistics class was evaluated one and a half years ago and extended to two semesters, thereby guaranteeing that the material is sufficiently covered and further interest in the matter can be generated.

However, the stricter handling of academic duties has far-reaching consequences: many students are deterred by higher demands. While this is not a critical problem for the field as such, the department's budget and the salary

⁴ That this is the case was mentioned hesitatingly during the discussion, without having a noticeable effect on its outcome, however.

⁵ According to a personal communication in October 2002, Marianne Bakró-Nagy (Budapest—Szeged) considers extending linguistics classes in Szeged from one to two semesters, as was done in Hamburg recently.

⁶ This problem is soon going to be irrelevant in a most unfortunate way: General linguistics, which has not been an independent department in Hamburg for some time now but has been incorporated together with Indo-European studies into the Department of Phonetics and Language Didactics, will no longer be present because the professorial positions will not be filled again.

of the staff (among other factors) are partially dependent on the number of enrolled students, thus posing a dilemma: Should one risk low enrolment numbers by introducing high standards or lower the academic quality, ensuring financial security through higher numbers of students — both are mutually incompatible.

With respect to possible combinations of subjects in the German-speaking area, the buzzword "interdisciplinarity" increasingly suggests to students of linguistics choosing non-linguistic minors or a second major. This is done with the noble intention of preventing overspecialisation and to increase job opportunities outside academic circles. Obvious disadvantages are the impossibility of concentrating on topics which really belong together and the lack of helpful complementary knowledge of closely related subjects.

Personally, I advise my students to choose a combination that best suits their interests and abilities (although due to my background in general linguistics and Indo-European studies I belong more to the specialised group), since only this will ensure the necessary enthusiasm and perseverance. There is no job guarantee, however, no matter what combination one chooses. A qualification in general linguistics is unavoidable when dealing with "classical" Finno-Ugric research anyway. Vienna offers the option to choose from humanities classes that can be mixed and matched rather freely, forming a combined major. This elegant solution proves to be quite flexible, while, of course, not guaranteeing success.

A basic problem that was largely ignored during the discussion (concerning not only Uralic Studies in Germany, but studies in general) is the duration of studies. 8–10 semesters are insufficient for a thorough qualification in Uralic Studies.⁷ Additional qualifications in general linguistics increase the duration even further. Short degree tracks and thorough education are mutually exclusive.

Generally increasing the duration of studies is, if only for economical reasons, counterproductive. It is no secret that the majority of students of Uralic will not find employment in their field. Assessing the options for further qualification in related disciplines such as general/theoretical Linguistics, Altaic Studies, Indo-European Studies, Ethnology, literature, musicology, etc. will be the topic of 1.2.

1.2. In their professional life, Finno-Ugrists are faced with similar scheduling problems, but for different reasons (see 3.1). This section is concerned with whether the claim that in Finno-Ugristics the findings of general linguistics are ignored is true, and to what extent.

The call for better linguistic training has been with Finno-Ugristics for decades. In its infancy, when linguistics emancipated itself from mainly historically oriented linguistics, the linguistic community consisted of specialists in single languages and language families, Finno-Ugrists playing a certain role as well (e. g. Wolfgang Steinitz, who had close ties with the Prague Circle). After general linguistics had been established as an independent discipline, it was lamented that Finno-Ugristics was not keeping up with current developments in general linguistics.

It was probably due to this (sometimes legitimate) criticism that Uralist works have been increasingly citing general linguistic works over the last decades. On closer inspection, these references often turn out to be no more than a pseudo-bibliography, however. Conflicting approaches are sometimes mentioned back to back without any further reflection. Vice versa, Uralist works appear in bibli-

⁷ This period is often exceeded in Finland, since most students are compelled to work part-time besides their studies for financial reasons — a growing trend in Germany as well.

ographies of typological works, without being incorporated into the actual paper. The internet makes it increasingly easy to locate bibliographical references to certain topics without actually having to get into them too much. Besides some positive effects this also has consequences which are — and this applies to other disciplines as well — ethically questionable.⁸ Not to be dismissed in this context is the fact that the calls for a better integration with the findings of general linguistics primarily come from within the community, and these calls have remained continuously strong over the years. This alone indicates (and is proven by closer inspection) that there have always been Finno-Ugrists who followed the developments in general linguistics closely and took them seriously, even actively supported them. This is naturally reflected in their publications. One example would be the “ergative rage” in Finno-Ugrist publications during the 1970s, which couldn’t possibly have been written without incorporating the corresponding studies in general linguistics (Katz 1970; 1981; Gulya 1971; Honti 1971; T. Itkonen 1974; 1975, etc.).

Examining the generation of today’s 70 year old Finno-Ugrists and their relationship to general linguistics would reveal a gradual cline from some having firm knowledge to others being only marginally interested. This can be applied to other generations as well.⁹

Looking at disciplines other than linguistics, such as History and Philosophy of science, Baltic Studies, logic or ethnology, whose scholars could as justifiably lament the lack of acknowledgement by Finno-Ugrists, yields the same results.

It would be interesting to check the situation in the field of Typology, Turkic or Indo-European studies. What about the knowledge of the specialists in these fields in the neighbouring disciplines? Presumably, the situation is quite similar to the state of affairs in Uralistics: There are, depending on individual inclination and on different schools of thought, various predilections.

1.3. Thus, the problems are complex. The demand that students of Finnic and Uralic Studies should attend classes in general linguistics is “flogging a dead horse”. As explained above, it is already generally mandatory, but difficult for practical reasons, such as time issues (being detrimental to depth of coverage) and personal issues, such as disagreements across departments or scholars.

The general accusation of ignorance does not hold up to scrutiny for the relatively small group of scholars privileged to continue working in the academic system after obtaining their degrees, as was discussed at the round table discussion and already previously.

1.4. The question still remains whether general/theoretical linguistics is a sister discipline amongst others, or if it is like a mother whose findings are indispensable for every Uralist. To rephrase: Is it possible to be a good Finno-Ugrist without showing interest in general linguistics?

1.4.1. This question leads directly to another problem: the exact definition of what Finno-Ugric Studies and general/theoretical linguistics are if one is not satisfied with the rudimentary picture sketched above.

1.4.1.1. It is widely known that Finno-Ugric is more than the study of Uralic languages. The reasons are of a practical nature: the study of single philologies

⁸ The German Hochschulverband (University Association) deals with this issue in its July 17, 2002 resolution “Zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis in der Gemeinschaft von Lehrenden und Lernenden”, which discusses academic teaching, see www.hochschulverband.de/presse/plagiate.pdf.

⁹ It is doubtful if this condition will prevail, at least in Germany. After a maximally short degree track where students are expected to get a diverse education (see 1.1 above), a PhD will be awarded after a 2–4 year period.

as the study of the material and spiritual culture of people speaking Uralic languages are embedded into Finno-Ugristics because otherwise there would be no opportunity to study, e. g. Mordvin poetry or nation building processes of the Nenets. The interpretation of what constitutes Finno-Ugristics is thus quite broad.

In accordance with the revised Hochschulrahmengesetz (the German law providing the general framework within which the universities have to operate) of 2002, a period of at most 6 years called junior professorship follows, during which the qualification for full professorship takes place (somewhat akin to the American tenure track system). This comprises frequent publications (bearing in mind the increasing pressure to publish), a teaching load of 4–8 hours of classes per week, committee work, grant applications, sometimes editorial tasks (which used to be in the publisher's responsibility) and, if necessary, supervising dissertations. Tenure must be awarded after 6 years at the latest, since temporary positions are not provided after that. It is obvious that this system does not benefit small disciplines such as Finno-Ugric studies, where both professorial positions and grants are rare. How this tight schedule is supposed to give people time to read and to digest the findings of fellow colleagues and other disciplines remains the legislator's secret. See Bahle 2002 for an English commentary on the issue.

For simplicity's sake one could limit the question to "classic Finno-Ugristics", but the result would be similarly extensive, ranging from the phonetics and phonology of single languages to dialectology and historical morphosyntax, etc.

1.4.1.2. Looking at general linguistics, things are quite similar. Although the cultural background of speakers of the examined languages may not play as big a role, the field is so extensive that nobody could ever wholly represent it. The components of grammar in the world's languages, their phonetics and phonologies, cross-linguistic developments, historical aspects of all of them, typology, etc. are all encompassed by general linguistics. It is also an umbrella for all the languages that do not constitute independent academic disciplines, like Amerind, Austronesian, Caucasian languages, etc.

1.4.2. To rephrase the question: Is it possible to be a good Finno-Ugrist while not having an interest in phonetics? Is it possible to be a good Finno-Ugrist while not having an interest in phonology? Is it possible to be a good Finno-Ugrist without having an interest in syntax? Is it possible to be a good Finno-Ugrist without having an interest in dialectology? Is it possible to be a good Finno-Ugrist without having an interest in typology? etc.

Each question can theoretically be answered with "yes". There are Finno-Ugrists, and not uninspired ones, who show little enthusiasm for phonetics, but nonetheless have made valuable contributions to the field of Finno-Ugristics. The same can be applied to phonology, with Bernát Munkácsi, an outstanding expert on Mansi (Vogul) and Udmurt (Votyac) languages, being an illustrious example, and no one will question the research of Erkki Itkonen, although he dealt with syntactic problems in only relatively few of his works.

To reverse the question: what value does a typological study have that disregards Uralic languages? We Finno-Ugrists would — spontaneously — answer in unison: nothing. What value does a typological study have that disregards Albanian? We would be less concerned by that. And what about other languages that have yet to be sufficiently described? Do the results of typology render them obsolete? No more than results from other scientific disciplines. They are valid only within a limited area and are, as epistemology and likewise experience teach us, preliminary.

Regarding scientific integrity, it is of eminent import, however, to clarify that the listed studies cannot claim universal validity, since

they disregard Uralic, Albanian and not yet (or incompletely) researched languages. The history of typology and research into language universals advise us to be careful when transferring conclusions from previously researched languages to yet undescribed ones, but that belongs to another chapter.

1.4.3. Another reason to disagree with the demand to increase mandatory general linguistics classes for students of Finnic or Uralic can be derived from scientific history. Scientific progress (in all disciplines, not only linguistics) is best made when scientists are allowed to work autonomously, without being limited to specific fields, methods or goals (aside from the furthering of knowledge).

The results of Soviet Marrism or the "research" on the so-called Dacic language in the Rumania of the Ceaușescu era demonstrate where norms on science and academic policy can lead to. To declare any related discipline mandatory for Uralists therefore does not promise much. A compulsory canon can in no way guarantee scientific progress.

It is our responsibility to sharpen our senses and to remain attentive so that we do not fall into the (all too human) trap of turning our personal preferences into dogmas, of declaring our field of expertise the centre of the world, be it Selkupic, Functional Grammar, Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics, epistemology, consonant gradation and so on.

It cannot be our task to determine what is most important about Uralic studies or other disciplines, nor can it be the task of politics and sociology, as we painfully experienced when influential sociologists tried to render basic research obsolete because no "immediate use of science" was discernible.¹⁰

¹⁰ Marginalizing or even abandoning basic research (including most humanities) in favour of practical research has far-reaching consequences in the medium and long run. The fact should not be ignored that all those inventions that provided practical solutions to many problems did not come into existence ex nihilo. They were based on preliminary work, the "cognitive capital" (Albert 2002 : 14) of hundreds of generations and represent individual solutions of an all-encompassing cultural "network". Sociologist and philosopher Hans Albert has been tirelessly criticising the attempt to theoretically substantiate the call for "immediate scientific use" since the 1960's, most recently in Albert 2000; 2001. Recently educational scientist Volker Ladenthin (2003 : 11–12) expressed further refreshing criticism in his article about the current state of humanities and natural sciences: "Heute bestimmen Qualitätspakte, publizistische Resonanz, mediale Wirksamkeit darüber, was als Wissenschaft stattfinden kann, nicht ein innerwissenschaftlicher Dialog um die Wahrheit. Mehrheiten in Gremien bestimmen, was erforscht wird und was nicht — also das, was künftig als Wissen gesellschaftlich verfügbar ist, und was verschwiegen bleibt. Nicht Wahrheit ist regulative Idee, sondern der Erfolg in Gremien." ["Science today is defined by quality agreements, publisher feedback and media efficacy, not by an intra-scientific dialogue in search for the truth. Majorities in committees decree what is and what is not to be researched, i.e. what knowledge will be available to society and what will remain hidden. Not truth is the regulative force, but success in committees."] [---] "Durch die Transformation der Wissenschaft in Technik — also Anwendungswissenschaft — geht z. B. ihre kritische Funktion verloren. Der einstmalige von Jürgen Habermas gesellschaftskritisch und anklagend aufgespürte Zusammenhang von Erkenntnis und Interesse wurde dergestalt zur Norm, daß der Sinn von Wissenschaft heute in außerwissenschaftlich gesetzten Zwecken völlig aufgeht. Wahr ist, was nützt" ["By transforming science into technology — that is applied science — its critical function is lost. The interrelation of knowledge and interest, once critically analysed by Jürgen Habermas, has manifested itself in such a way that the meaning of science is now determined by external factors alone. Truth is defined by its usefulness"]. [---] "In den Geisteswissenschaften wird der Begriff der Wahrheit durch den Begriff der "Akzeptanz" ersetzt. Nicht eine hypothetische Begründung, sondern ihre tatsächliche Akzeptanz wird zum Kriterium für die Qualität der Aussagen. Die Öffentlichkeit wird nicht zum Artikulationsort von Vernunft und

What can be expected, however, is that a Uralist involved with the syntax of a complex clause in language X has a firm knowledge of general syntactic theories; or that somebody examining borrowings from Indo-Iranian into Finno-Ugric languages should know Indo-Iranian. Otherwise they run into the obvious risk of delivering substandard results that do not match the current state of research.

It is in everyone's responsibility to avoid dilettantism. Combining musicology with Uralic Studies can be a great benefit to the field; if the same person lacks basic knowledge of Pragmatics and still writes about it, it is the scientific community's duty to resist. As self-evident as it may seem, emphasizing it is anything but superfluous. Uralic studies and linguistics, like other professions, are not free from the presumptuous drive of certain individuals towards disciplines that they have no authority on but claim to do so by calling upon the expertise gained in other fields.¹¹

Aufklärung, sondern zum Kriterium" ["As far as the humanities are concerned, the term truth has been replaced by "acceptance". The criterion for the quality of an assertion is no longer based on a hypothetical rationale, but its actual acceptance. The public is no longer a place to debate reason and enlightenment, but a criterion"]. The new "criterion of truth", the consensus of the disputants, that V. Ladenthin denounces here, was first introduced in the 1960s, most famously by Jürgen Habermas (see Habermas 1974; for a critique of this approach see Albert 2001 : 69f.). This principle can easily be found in Finno-Ugric Studies as well. The discussion about the "revolutionary" approach of Kalevi Wiik and his followers is a prime example of decision making via public opinion — here, broad acceptance (via populism) replaces the assessment of scientific argumentation. Although the acceptance of the "contact theory" postulated by the "Wiikings" has so far been limited to Finland and Estonia, it is conceivable that it will soon undergo further spreading, supported by Theo Vennemann's "Vascon Theory" (which states that wide parts of Europe were populated by peoples speaking languages related to Basque, which are otherwise completely hypothetical), which thus harmonises *mirum in modum* with K. Wiik's claims. V. Ladenthin's seemingly exaggerated statement about the public assessment of experts and their opinions, "Experte wird genannt, wer es zuletzt kapiert und das kompliziert ausdrückt" ["An expert is someone who catches on last and explains it in as complicated a way as possible"] (Ladenthin 2003 : 12) and "Wissenschaft hat nur noch die Aufgabe, dasjenige mit der Aura ihres Mythos' zu schmücken, was man offensichtlich auch ohne Wissenschaft weiß" ["All that is left for science is to create a mythical aura for what is already obvious without science"], received an astounding confirmation in a squib (which was otherwise also hardly a beacon of objectivity) about the Finnish independence day, a vox populi (Maija Dahlgren, journalist, Metro-lehti): "Huomisen Itsenäisyyspäivän kunniaksi tarkastelemme nyt Suomen historiaa sellaisena kuin se vihdoin alkaa tutkijoillekin kirkastua — tosin ei vielä toistaiseksi historioitsijoille, vaan kielitieteilijöille ja geneetikoille. [---] Turun Yliopiston emeritus fonetiikan professori Kalevi Wiik on julkaissut jyvaskyläläisen Atenan kustannuksella erinomaisen teoksen "Eurooppalaisten juuret". Ja meidän suomalaisten juuriahan ne alkuperäisimmät eurooppalaiset juuret ovat" ["In honour of tomorrow's independence day we shall now consider the history of Finland as it finally is also dawning upon the scientists — albeit not historians, but linguists [i. e. Kalevi Wiik, as is subsequently revealed] and geneticists. [---] Kalevi Wiik, professor emeritus of phonetics at the university of Turku, has recently published his brilliant "Roots of European Nations" (Atena, Jyväskylä). Our Finnish roots are exactly the primordial European roots."] (see Dahlgren 2002). Later, the author of the Metro-lehti squib is amused by the anger of the non-Finnish northern Europeans, who, their Finnish heritage now exposed — their "de-fennicisation" merely due to language shift, now feel deprived of their roots.

¹¹ This kind of authority abuse leads by the way to the result that expert opinions are no longer taken seriously — scientists have themselves to blame as well.

Even though it has become evident that the call for additional classes in general linguistics for students of Uralic and Finnic at the beginning of their curriculum cannot be defended, one point remains important:

It is vital to acquire a basic set of tools for Uralistics and skills early to be able to follow those topics whose progress one can best serve with one's individual interests and talents.

2. We will now have a look at the arguments that were presented to justify why findings in Finnic and Uralic studies are not sufficiently taken into account in general and theoretical linguistics.

2.1. One of the difficulties general linguists were said to have in the discussion is the unconventional transcription style, the so-called FUT (Finno-Ugric Transcription, see Setälä 1901; FU-transkription yksinkertaistaminen 1973) that is commonly used in Finno-Ugric studies.

2.1.1. This seems especially surprising since typologists (who originally filed this complaint) are used to working with 150–200 languages at the same time, with only a minority of them transcribed according to the IPA. One would assume that especially typologists should not have problems to understand a new system. The similarities between IPA and FUT by far outnumber those symbols that could be misinterpreted.

Uralic scholars do not seem to have problems with the fact that other languages (e. g. English) are coded in other, often totally arbitrary systems, and even within Uralics different methods of transcription do exist for historical reasons. A student of Saami, for instance, has to be familiar with at least four different transcription systems. The same applies to other languages.

This should not be understood as a desirable state of affairs, it is admittedly often fairly inconvenient. However, problems arising from different transcription systems should not be exaggerated if we want to come to a solution of the problem.

The fact is that every science needs to develop a reasonable notational system, reasonable in the sense that, e. g. no symbols for clicks were introduced in Uralic studies, but clear distinctions between various vowel qualities and quantities.¹² Such a lack of common norms is commonly due to historical developments and traditions and can be found in natural ("exact") sciences as well. In molecular biology, the symbol T stands for a nucleotide base (thymine) in the DNA double helix, T in immunology means a special type of lymphocyte, endocrinology uses T to describe a thyroid hormone. A naturally developed scientific discipline reflects its developmental phases and the impact of different schools in its jargon and notational system.

Specific branches of linguistics are faced with the same problem: the same term can be used differently, depending on school of thought and on *modus quaerendi*.

The first documented attempts to create a uniform system date back to the 16th and 17th centuries (R. Bacon, I. Newton, R. Descartes and G. W. Leibniz among others). In the 19th century further efforts were made within the context of logical positivism, resulting from the — in my view reasonable — conviction that all sciences form an entity. One of the more questionable results of this unifying spirit was the creation of new languages such as Esperanto, with the intention of abandoning historically motivated irregularities present in traditionally evolved systems.

As noble as such an endeavour may be, the unification of terminologies would be excessively time consuming — more than learning the differences within their

¹² Deviations of a traditional writing system from IPA-type systems are frequently based on the phonological features of the specific language (German: <*s*> before *t* and *p* initially, where there is no opposition between *s* and *sch*).

constitutive scientific contexts. The same applies to different transcription systems: their unification would take a lot of effort and be of questionable use.

2.1.2. Irrespective of the feasibility and the effect of such an endeavour, the argument that general linguistics and linguistic typology are unable to sufficiently take into account Uralic data due to deviating transcription is hardly convincing. Why is it that there are no such issues with classical/modern Greek, Armenian, Latin, Russian and several Indian languages, with Tagalog, etc.? IPA-transcribed studies of these languages do not exist. Only those languages lack their own transcription and description systems that were not described until recently or have never developed a writing system. But even data from only recently described languages (e.g. Australian and native American languages) are cited in "practical" orthography, e.g. <y> is used instead of [j], <š> or <sh> instead of [ʃ], etc.

The argument is not only not tenable but also offensive. It is hard to imagine a student of Uralic explaining to a Slavist that she did not include findings of Slavic studies because they are written in the "wrong" language (see 2.2 below) or use the "wrong" transcription system.

2.1.3. In this context another issue can be raised that renders the above argument questionable: modern typology is hardly concerned with phonetic aspects of languages. Being aware of the difference between $\dot{\xi}$ and ξ in the FUT transcription is hardly relevant when morphosyntax, semantics and pragmatics are the primary focus.

2.2. The problem of choosing a language for publication was briefly touched upon in 2.1.2. It was stated during the round-table discussion that linguists are unable to utilise findings of Finnic or Finno-Ugric studies because they are published in Finnish or other uncommon languages.

A closer look at bibliographies reveals, however, that it is more a question of personal preference and knowledge. Some linguists also cite Finnic or Hungarian literature, others don't. The criteria of the former which of the cited works to incorporate, however, are not always clear, let alone understandable from a scientific point of view. In most cases it is thus not correct to say that the language of publication is the reason why a book or an article is not duly referred to.

Furthermore, it should be noted that many Finno-Ugric works are published in German, a quite widespread language. However, with the exception of the "Uralisches etymologisches Wörterbuch" (UEW) which is not that useful for morphological and syntactic studies, they do not seem to be more widely known among general linguists either.

Russian, although being relatively widespread and important to Finno-Ugristics, was not discussed at all. This leaves open the question if publishing in Russian is a viable option from the perspective of a general linguist, considering that many are not as familiar with it as with German, Finnish, Hungarian or French (also widely spread and of some importance to Finno-Ugric studies as well). The danger of generalising from personal preferences seems great.

It was agreed during the discussion that publications in English be preferred. If one now wants to avoid the trap of excessive publishing and publishes in one language only, where English does make sense, a scientific forum is created which approximates the Soviet and (Putin-) Russian educational systems, with the difference that the choice of language is even more restricted, and the language is not Russian. We shall see soon how for example members of the Saami intelligentsia react to such a proposal.

2.3. Regarding syntax, typologists complained that Uralic scholars, especially those specializing in smaller languages, according to their own deposition tend to

disregard syntactic research because they are (allegedly according to their own deposition, too) overtaxed by it.

While syntactic studies on Uralic languages do indeed exist (see 2.4.2), syntax has undeniably been neglected and deserves more attention by the Uralic camp — typologists are also invited, of course.

2.4. In addition to the issues mentioned in 2.1—2.3, other problems arise, in my view, that were not examined during the round-table discussion. It is difficult for outsiders to get access to Uralist expertise if it pertains to features that have been described relatively early, i. e. long-known features, or if the topic of interest to the linguist is only part of a larger treatise. Unless certain studies are included in recent Uralist handbooks (e. g. *The Uralic languages* 1998, chances are high that they will be overlooked or that their existence might be even be denied.

2.4.1. A peculiar stumbling block for the non-initiated is the kind of knowledge that was gained and described in the early days of Finno-Ugric studies and has since been handed down in academic teaching. The two possible ways to gain access to these sources are to study Finno-Ugristics or to rely on works that are 50 to 100 years old, sometimes older. Recent works tend to touch upon those topics only briefly. Examples of such topics include the problems with the differentiation of the noun and the adjective, the fossilisation of old case suffixes in adverbs or the indifference of voice of verbal nouns in certain Uralic languages.

2.4.2. Moreover, outsiders are often unable to locate statements about syntactic problems because these tend to be included in works whose titles do not make explicit reference to syntax, or because they (understandably) look at syntactic problems from a morphological point of view. This is a typical problem of "interdisciplinary" work and also known from other historical comparative philologies.

2.5. Another problem emerges while reconnecting specialised fields and typology, and which becomes clearer when we look at other fields than Uralic studies: even comprehensive syntactic research is not recognised or is not sufficiently recognised. In the late 19th and the early 20th century (ancient from a typologist's viewpoint) Berthold Delbrück (1893—1900) made remarkable achievements in Indo-European studies. His works are hardly read today. Scientific history (with the exception of Indo-European scholars themselves) seems to have largely forgotten his work, for the pigeon-hole into which we love to slot the neogrammarians is labelled "sound change and morphology", ignoring that these scholars were outstanding philologists who studied syntax as well as other aspects of language.

Even recent works such as H. Hettrich's 800 page monograph (1988) are ignored outside Indo-European circles. They require too much effort to read and comprehend, time that neither scholars specialized in typology nor Uralists can afford to dedicate to other disciplines.

2.6. The most baffling proposal that was voiced in the typologists' camp regarded the treatment of texts in Uralic studies. In order to gain knowledge about Uralic syntax it was suggested reading fewer texts, but paying more attention to general/theoretical linguistics and typology instead.

In my opinion, however, one of the major drawbacks of common scientific practice in Uralic studies is to rely too heavily on digests and general overviews (which are superficial by definition) instead of thoroughly analysing the source material.

The results of typological research commonly give information about tendencies, frequencies, links between features, etc. Depending solely on such findings may in general mislead, however, since hypotheses, even those built on the basis of other languages, are of little scientific merit if they are not verified by actual data

of the language under investigation, for which they are supposed to be of explanatory value.

The importance of texts, in particular, is even greater when dealing with languages for which no sufficiently competent speakers are available anymore. The usual interview methods are bound to yield unreliable or even false results.

To me the above suggestion is not a viable alternative to the testing of hypotheses (of either general linguistic or Finno-Ugric origin) with actual language data, but an attempt to evade the admittedly intimidating amount of source material that needs to be covered.

Disregarding texts is a fallacy. Typologists especially depend on an exact, detailed and descriptively adequate presentation of reliable source material.

The times of pure empiricism and logical positivism, whose dangers were possibly noted during the discussion, in Uralic studies are (with minor exceptions) over. The positivist practice to arrive at generally valid statements from a set of data via induction (a practice already criticised by the Scottish empiricist David Hume (1748); his position became common knowledge but in the 20th century through Karl R. Popper's work)¹³ was rightly replaced by the hypothetico-deductive method also in historical and comparative linguistics. Following what is known in philosophy as the Hempel-Oppenheim schema, a given hypothesis is tested against actual data. How the initial hypothesis is established is irrelevant, in most cases via (logically false) inductive generalisation. General structures are concluded from concrete examples.¹⁴ As long as a hypothesis is not falsified by data, it is considered "true", in other words: "It is reasonable to assume P (a proposition), so it is justified to assume P when P has withstood thorough critique" (Musgrave 1993 : 288: "Es ist vernünftig, P [eine bestimmte Aussage, Proposition] zu glauben, wir sind also gerechtfertigt, P zu glauben, genau dann, wenn P ernsthafter Kritik standgehalten hat"). The hierarchy of competing theories is governed by the methodology according to which the strongest and least implication dependent theory is to be preferred over the others (see Popper 1935; 1959, ch. 7).

To refrain from checking claims against actual data will not yield further insight into the languages which one originally set out to examine. The result will merely be a dogmatisation of those findings that were originally discovered on the basis of different material.

3. Points 2.4 and 2.5 already mentioned another problem: the sheer amount of available literature.

The increase in the amount of publications which must be digested is due to two reasons, one of which was not specifically mentioned during the round table discussion at the "Reconnecting Finnic" symposium but is commonly known: the diversification within the field of humanities, the establishment of new academic disciplines, the creation of increasingly specialised positions and the "natural" growth of data (resulting from thorough research) lead to an overall increase of material that warrants consideration and inclusion into one's own

¹³ Throughout his life, Karl R. Popper severely criticised the logical positivism of the "Vienna circle", most prominently in his "Logik der Forschung" (Popper 1935; 1959). The fact that K. R. Popper is often considered a positivist himself (frequently even by the usually K. R. Popper friendly English philosophy), despite the arguments brought up the so-called positivist debate ("deutscher Positivismus-Streit") of the 1960s, seems like a caprice of scientific history.

¹⁴ E. g. A. Musgrave (1993 : 285): "Beobachtungsaussagen, die berichten, was wir wahrnehmen oder wahrzunehmen scheinen, werden besondere und ziemlich grundlegende Hypothesen oder Vermutungen über die Welt statt mit Gewißheit gewußte Wahrheiten" ["Empirical observations that describe what we perceive or seem to perceive turn into specific and general hypotheses or assumptions about the world instead of truths founded on certainty"].

research. Since the 19th century, this problem has spread to all areas of scholarly research. Additionally, the differences between disciplines have deepened further and turned into a dogma owing to the exaggeration of their respective importance, partly thanks to the "paradigm theory" of Thomas S. Kuhn and his successors, which state that there are no gateways between the different sciences.¹⁵ It is an all too simple solution to reply to the questions and arguments of scholars of other disciplines that they would not be able to understand anything because they work in a different paradigm.¹⁶ The second explanation for the lack of recognition between the linguistic disciplines is often overlooked in discussions: the "publish-or-perish" problem.

3.1. This seems to be a hard to solve problem with far-reaching consequences for the exchange of knowledge between closely related disciplines such as general/theoretical linguistics, Finno-Ugric studies, Indo-European studies, Turkic studies, etc. There is simply too much to read from the respective other disciplines. In view of our fast-moving times we have less and less time to research, to read, to learn, also due to the pressure to write, to publish, to increase the list of publications at any price, let alone bureaucratic and administrative duties (maybe with the exception of some of the few research positions). To lay the blame on other disciplines for having deviating standards of writing, lower academic standards or being too traditional, etc. (which does not mean that these claims are always unfounded) means to ignore the complexity of the matter. To a Uralist, intellectual or educational reasons are generally not an issue for following the developments in general linguistics and incorporating its findings — aside from generative linguistics, whose proponents form their own, almost hermetically sealed off trade within the field of linguistics. Analogously, a general linguist should have no difficulty following the development of Uralic studies content-wise.

Contrary to what one could think after hearing the arguments voiced during the discussion, there are no fundamental differences between the two disciplines.

Dramatising and generalising the ignorance issue does not serve scientific progress, neither does suppressing it. The only constructive form of criticism is to make public the neglect of important findings in specific cases.

The question of reconnection is thus also a quantitative one, applying to all disciplines. It is doubtful that the publish-or-perish problem can be overcome by publishing works in more than one language (e. g. in Finnish for the Karelians who do not speak English and in English for the typologists who do not speak Finnish), as was suggested in the discussion.

¹⁵ In "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" (1966) T. S. Kuhn claimed that the concept of frameworks applied primarily to major disciplines, but the model was soon extended to minor fields as well. This perspective gained wide recognition in sociology, academic policy and philosophy and continues to haunt us. Incidentally, T. S. Kuhn himself revised his theory quite extensively in the following years (e. g. Albert 2001, section "Erkenntnis, Sprache und Wirklichkeit. Der kritische Realismus und das Problem der Erkenntnis", chapter V: "Sprache, Denken und Wissenschaft: Die Rolle kritischer Systeme", p. 70, remark 22), which, however, did not make its way into the public consciousness. Steve Fuller recently (2002) gave a lecture in Helsinki about the critical reception of Kuhn's paradigm model over time (regarding the consequences also see Fuller 2000, esp. Section 1 "The Contemporary Symptoms of Kuhnification" of chapter VII "Kuhnification as Ritualized Political Impotence").

¹⁶ More on the "immunisation to criticism" of this type see Albert 2000, IV. Chapter "Wissen, Glaube und Heilsgewissheit. Zur Kritik der reinen Religion und der religiösen Weltauffassung", subsection 12 "Die religiöse Hermeneutik und der Mythos des Rahmens", esp. p. 163.

3.2. The problem thus appears not to be inherent in the disciplines and their alleged incompatibility, but is rooted in academic policy instead. The demand to publish more in less time prevents scientists from acknowledging the large amount of publications in other disciplines — and their own. This provides fertile grounds for charlatanry, as several well-known cases in physics prove. For testing purposes, physicist Alan Sokal strung random semiotic buzzwords together in his infamous essay "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity"¹⁷, which professed to forge a link between the natural sciences and the humanities. It was published 6 years ago in "Social Text" magazine (Sokal 1996) and subsequently survived the peer-review process, embarrassing more than one discipline and proving how easy it is to publish nonsensical works, circumventing the critical reason of the scientific community.¹⁸ German nano-physicist Jan Hendrik Schön, who works on the electronic behaviour of organic structures, was even considered a Nobel prize contender with his forged studies on molecular electronics.¹⁹ The case of the French-based brothers Igor and Grishka Bogdanov, which created quite some attention last fall, also demonstrates the precarious state of sciences in general, not just physics: Despite the peer-review process, they managed to publish their absurd theories in various essays in well-respected scientific journals and even received PhDs for their work on the big bang theory (cf. Drosser, Schnabel 2002).

Experts such as Arnold Schmidt, president of the *Fond zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung* (Austria's central institution for the promotion of fundamental research), are of the opinion that cases like the above are due to "the increased pressure to publish and the resulting time pressure" [own translation], and that the "once highly competent and strict peer review process" has apparently become dysfunctional in view of the publish-or-perish craze, according to Ingolf Ruge²⁰, director of the German Fraunhofer Institut "Systeme der Kommunikationstechnik" (systems of communication technology).

Quantity has gained importance in comparison to quality, despite the fact that the general consensus has not changed significantly — anybody would say that quality ranks first for themselves. In reality, it becomes ever harder to pay attention to quality, due to the forced increase in quantity. Moreover, it is becoming progressively more difficult for the scientific community to effectively control the process.

Scholars, on the other hand, feel forced to publish the same essays in different languages and in different books and journals, simply to increase the chances of getting read.

The solution for stopping this tendency of "quantity before quality" can only be a collaborative effort, implying that scholars (despite the competition) need to stop the current publish-or-perish craze and use the resulting transparency to ensure the wider recognition of fewer but higher-quality papers. The weakness of this proposal is obviously the remaining danger that some scholars might not comply, feigning higher qualifications with an artificially inflated number

¹⁷ The complete article is also available on the internet at http://www.physics.nyu.edu/~as2/transgress_v2/transgress_v2_singlefile.html. The bigger part of the debate is documented at <http://www.physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/#papers/>.

¹⁸ Countless articles on the "Sokal affair" are available, in Finnish for example on the homepage of Jukka-Pekka Takala: <http://www.helsinki.fi/~jtakala/sokal96a.html>.

¹⁹ Report of the Investigation Committee on the Possibility of Scientific Misconduct in the Work of Hendrik Schön and Coauthors. — http://www.lucent.com/news_events/pdf/researchreview.pdf.

of publications.²¹ Should the reduction of the amount of publications prove to be unrealistic, the only feasible and promising solution would, in my opinion, be to give the reader a hand by applying strict selectional criteria for publication. This would mean that publishers as well as other academic institutions have to enforce a strict anonymous peer-review process, also with applications, conferences, certificates, etc.

A noteworthy suggestion made in natural sciences (see Gura 2002) may be applicable to linguistics as well: papers are submitted to internet discussion forums prior to publication in printed form. While this does not solve the issue of time pressure, experts could preview their colleagues' work, minimising the chances of fraud.

4. Independent of the above-mentioned problems of excessive publication and the strong increase in published material in all disciplines, it must be stressed how the isolation of individual disciplines can be prevented and how reconnection can be achieved. The best way to promote scientific progress and collaboration, no matter whether in general linguistics, Finno-Ugric studies or elsewhere, is, in my opinion, to be scientifically honest in one's own work, to refrain from blanket accusations and to achieve a dialogue with neighbouring disciplines with the goal of identifying *s p e c i f i c* scientific misdemeanours in *s p e c i f i c* works and developing corresponding appropriate solutions.

REFERENCES

- A l b e r t, H. 2000, *Kritischer Rationalismus. Vier Kapitel zur Kritik illusionären Denkens*, Tübingen.
 ——— 2001, *Lesebuch. Ausgewählte Texte*, Tübingen.
 B a h l e, T. 2002, Eyes and ears wide shut: Reform of the university career structure in Germany. — Features. Spring 2002, Volume 1, No 3. www.essex.ac.uk/ecpr/publications/eps/onlineissues/summer2002/features/bahle.htm.
 D a h l g r e n, M. 2002, Arvokasta Itsenäisyyspäivää! — *Metro-lehti*, 5. 12. 2002, 6.
 D e l b r ü c k, B. 1893—1900, *Vergleichende Syntax der indogermanischen Sprachen 1—3*, Straßburg.
 D r o s s e r, C., S c h n a b e l, U. 2002, Die Märchen der Gebrüder Bogdanov. Zwei Franzosen erhalten den Dokortitel für eine unsinnige Theorie und blamieren damit die Physik. — *Die Zeit* 2002/46/Wissen.
 F u l l e r, S. 2000, *Thomas Kuhn: A Philosophical History for Our Times*, Chicago.
 ——— 2002, *The Kuhn—Popper-controversy — why the wrong side won?* (Paper, read on Nov. 21st 2002 at the Department of Philosophy, University of Helsinki.)
 FU-transkription yksinkertaistaminen. Az FU-átírás egyszerűsítése. Zur Vereinfachung der FU-Transkription. On simplifying of the FU transcription, Helsinki 1973 (Castrenianumin toimitteita 7).
 G u l y a, J. 1970, Aktiv, Ergativ und Passiv im Vach-Ostjakischen. — Symposium über Syntax der uralischen Sprachen. 15. bis 18. Juli 1969 in Reinhausen bei Göttingen. (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse. 3. Folge), Göttingen, 80—83.
 G u r a, T. 2002, Scientific publishing: Peer review, unmasked. — *Nature* 416 (21 March 2002), 258—260.
 H a b e r m a s, J. 1973, *Wahrheitstheorien. — Wirklichkeit und Reflexion*. Walter Schulz zum 60. Geburtstag, Pfullingen, 211—265.

²¹ "Les intellos précaires" is an interesting study on competition and the resulting lack of solidarity among French intellectuals without a permanent position (Rambach, Rambach 2001). The issues portrayed there generally apply to the academic community, not only to (officially) independent French intellectuals. If only the majority of scientists displayed a more moderate publication output, the flood of information would already be alleviated.

- H e t t r i c h, H. 1988, Untersuchungen zur Hypotaxe im Vedischen (Untersuchungen zur indogermanischen Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft. Neue Folge 4), Berlin.
- H o n t i, L. 1971, A cselekvő (logikai) alany alaktana az obi-ugor nyelvekben. — NyK 73, 430—40.
- H u m e, D. 1748, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.
- I t k o n e n, T. 1974, Ergatiivisuutta suomessa. — Vir., 393—379.
- 1975, Ergatiivisuutta suomessa. — Vir., 31—56.
- K a t z, H. 1970, Lesefrüchte. — ALHung. 20, 59—62.
- 1981, Das Ururalische — eine Ergativsprache (Vorläufige Mitteilung aus der Werkstatt). — CIFU V. Pars VI, 393—400.
- K u h n, T. S. 1966, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Chicago.
- L a d e n t h i n, V. 2003, Wissenschaft am Ende — ihrer Epoche? — Über das Verschwinden der Wahrheit in der Welt des Nutzens. — Forschung & Lehre 1/2003, 11—13.
- M u s g r a v e, A. 1993, Alltagswissen, Wissenschaft und Skeptizismus, Tübingen.
- P o p p e r, K. R. 1935, Logik der Forschung, Wien.
- 1959, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, London.
- R a m b a c h, A., R a m b a c h, M. 2001, Les intellos précaires, Paris.
- S e t ä l ä, E. N. 1901, Über [die] transkription der finnisch-ugrischen sprachen. — FUF 1, 15—52.
- S o k a l, A. 1996, Transgressing the Boundaries. Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity. — Social Text 46/47 (spring/summer 1996), 217—252.
- The Uralic Languages, London—New York 1998 (Routledge Language Family Descriptions).