Maintaining linguistic diversity in Europe – lessons learned from the project ELDIA[1]

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Abstract

The research project ELDIA (European Language Diversity for All), funded by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Union from March 2010 till September 2013, set out to examine the state of multilingualism in today's Europe. The project, working on a sample of Finno-Ugric minorities from the Barents Sea to Slovenia, began with a context analysis (desk research) and proceeded through fieldwork-based case studies (questionnaire surveys and interviews) as well as interconnected media-sociological and law analyses. One of the main results was the EuLaViBar (European Language Vitality Barometer), a tool for assessing the state of language maintenance and identifying the points where special support measures are needed. In this paper, some central results of the project, with respect to maintaining language diversity in Europe, are discussed.

1   Introduction: Goals and methods of ELDIA

The research project ELDIA was a collective enterprise involving dozens of researchers and led by a steering committee representing seven universities and research institutes. To mention only one name: Anneli Sarhimaa (Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz) was the instigator, the driving force and the coordinator-in-chief of the project. In addition to her leadership and ideas, this paper is based on the work of many colleagues, too numerous to be listed here; more detailed information can be found on the project website: *www.eldia-project.org*.

   ELDIA set out to examine the state of multilingualism in Europe today, departing from four assumptions:

- Language policies reflect two mutually incompatible views on multilingualism: the acquisition of parallel monolingualisms, which is defined as an asset and a positive goal of European education policies, and multilingualism as an ethnic attribute and a burden to individuals and society in minority and migration politics, i.e. the view that minority-language speakers are born with a special handicap and the society is mainly concerned with whether and how they get integrated and acquire the dominant language (see e.g. Busch 2011, Laakso 2014). These two types of multilingualism are never treated on a par: the former

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[1]   I 'inherited' the invitation to the LIPP symposium 2013 from my colleague Rosita Schjerve-Rindler, who had to cancel her participation because of a serious health issue. While finishing this published version of my talk, I was hit by the sad news of her passing. I dedicate this paper to the memory of Rosita Schjerve-Rindler, an eminent linguist, an incredibly competent and dependable colleague, a person of impressive integrity, and a real lady in the best possible sense of the word.

is a generally recognised European goal, a necessary investment, the latter is an issue of national and regional policies, a burden and a problem to be solved.

- The linguistic diversity in the world is changing into superdiversity (the term as defined by Vertovec 2007 and Blommaert/Rampton 2011 did not explicitly figure in our research plan, but our research agenda was planned along very similar lines of thought). Languages and language resources become mobile and intertwine in new ways, modern minorities lead multilingual lives with multiple, overlapping and fluid identities. Thus, it becomes increasingly difficult to categorise languages in international and regional, vehicular and vernacular, and the traditional ethnic minority paradigm (based on the idea that minorities live in their own isolated islands, traditional communities, Karelian-speaking villages or Chinatowns) does not apply anymore.

- Speaker agency and speakers' choices play a central role in language maintenance or language shift, and understanding these mechanisms requires an interdisciplinary approach. Language maintenance is not an issue of language structure (although it is connected with matters purely linguistic, for instance, in language planning and standardisation), of language as an entity, languageness – it is a matter of languaging, whatever is done with the language and how speakers use the language resources which are at their disposal. These choices are influenced by numerous factors, among other things, legislation, institutional frameworks and institutional support, or media.

- The existing research on European minorities and multilingualism is heavily biased, focusing on a few old minorities in Western Europe. For a better understanding of linguistic diversity, research covering a wide range of diverse types of multilingual communities, involving migrants, Eastern European and non-Indo-European languages is urgently needed. Some of the Finno-Ugric minorities, which were investigated in ELDIA, had been almost completely neglected in previous research, some had been researched very extensively but almost exclusively in national or regional frameworks such as the traditional Hungarian *kisebbségkutatás,* 'minority studies' focusing on Hungarianness and its maintenance.

The project, working on a sample of Finno-Ugric minorities from the Barents Sea to Slovenia, began with a context analysis (desk research) and proceeded through fieldwork-based case studies (questionnaire surveys and interviews) as well as interconnected media-sociological and law analyses. One of the main results was the *EuLaViBar (European Language Vitality Barometer),* a tool for assessing the state of language maintenance and identifying the points where special support measures are needed.

Unlike many well-known scales of language endangerment or vitality such as the famous GIDS (*Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale*) by Joshua Fishman 1991 and its expanded version EGIDS (see Lewis/Simons 2010), EuLaViBar is based on empirical data and its analysis: data collected with a survey questionnaire are processed and calculated into scores on four so-called dimensions (language use and interaction, education, legislation, media, illustrated by different colours in this polar diagram) within four so-called focus areas (represented by quadrants of the polar diagram). Three of the focus areas represent an elaboration and operationalisation of the three criteria for

language maintenance as developed by François Grin and others (see e.g. Grin/Vaillancourt 1998), viz. *Capacity*, *Opportunity* and *Desire* to use the language. The fourth focus area, *Language Products,* was inspired by Miquel Strubell's work and his Catherine Wheel model (see e.g. Strubell 2001), a model of supply and demand or the well-known vicious circle turned in the positive direction: the more products and services there are in the language at issue, the more eagerly the language will be used and learned, which in turn will promote the creation of even more language products, and so forth. The scores were calculated on a 4-point scale from 0 (severely and critically endangered) to 4 (maintained at the moment); it is notable that none of the minority languages investigated in ELDIA reached the grade 4 in any focus area.

The results of the EuLaViBar can be illustrated with a polar diagram, where the four focus areas are represented as quadrants, each of them divided into colour-coded sectors representing different dimensions (green for language use and interaction, purple for education, yellow for legislation, and blue for media). The scores for individual dimensions are indicated by the length of the lines; the longer the line or the lighter the shade of the colour, the better the language is maintained in that dimension.
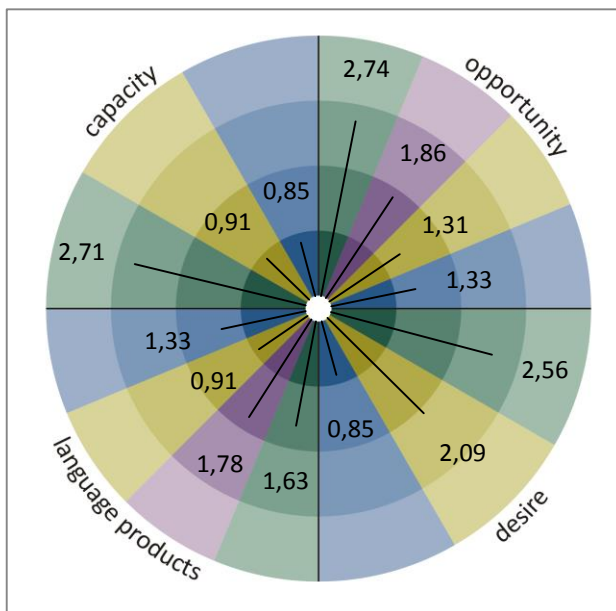
Figure 1: EuLaViBar diagram illustrating the maintenance of the Hungarian language in Austria (from Berényi-Kiss, Laakso/Parfuss 2013)

The diagram serves to illustrate the fact that the maintenance of a language is a sum of different interacting and intertwining factors. Thus, it can be used as a tool for policy-making: for identifying the most critical aspects in the situation of an endangered language, so that resources for support measures can be allocated efficiently.

2   Insufficient support and invisibility

I will return to the problematics of the EuLaViBar later on, but before that, let me very briefly summarise some other main results of the project. As already mentioned, the project was an interdisciplinary one, including an analysis of legislation and institutional frameworks (by an international team led by Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, a

specialist of minority and human rights issues in legislation) and a comparative media analysis (also by an international team led by Reetta Toivanen, who is a social anthropologist working with issues of minorities and indigenous peoples).

To start with the politically perhaps most interesting overall result: As already mentioned, all languages in this sample are endangered, none comes even close to the theoretical maximum score of 16 points (4 points x 4 focus areas of the EuLaViBar model). Moreover, the three languages with the weakest overall scores – Meänkieli in Sweden, Karelian in Finland, Kven in Norway – are all spoken in the Nordic countries, that is, in countries with a long tradition and high international rankings in democracy, human development and civil rights. The obvious conclusion is that general non-discrimination and recognition are not enough to guarantee language maintenance, and mere permissive frameworks, *allowing* the language to be used, will not ensure that the language really *is* used. Above all, if a language looks back on a history of assimilation policies throughout almost the whole 20th century, as in the case of all these three minorities, just introducing new permissive legislation will not recreate the speaker generations which were lost in the meantime, it will not reshape family-internal patterns of language choice and thus ensure intergenerational transmission.

Moreover, one of the main findings of our law team was that although in all countries under study language laws and minority laws have been passed or amended quite recently, they are always 'toothless': there are no sanctions, or if there are, they are not properly implemented. Never and nowhere do the laws protect multilingualism as such. Our field studies clearly showed that minorities want to know and use *both* their heritage language *and* the majority language (plus other important vehicular languages), which inevitably means that they want to develop and apply sustainable models of multilingual language use. Example (1) from our case study on Veps (see Puura et al. 2013) shows how speakers value and conceptualise their ability to use many languages (and even relativise it, making fun of their weak language skills). The informant speaks Veps, Russian and Finnish and also wants to develop his English skills:

(1) *minä tedan miše, konz ühten kelen tedad sinä oled, miččiš a ningomiš kuti sindai ühtes sijas ištud, honuses, a konz äi kelid nece om jo, äihonusine fater, sinä void kävelta, ((laughing)) ka, minai om koume honused fateras i völ nece kut hän tualet, ((laughing)) englan- kel', ((laughing)) sikš ku hän pen' völ om i tedad tedad.*

'I know that when you know one language you are sitting like on one place, in one room. But when there are many languages, it's already an apartment with many rooms, you can walk ((laughing)), right. I have three rooms in my apartment and then a toilet ((laughing)), the English language ((laughing)). Because it's still small, you know, you know.'

However, laws do not regard or respect this wish. What is protected by law is, in the best case, the right of a certain group of people to use a certain language in a certain area – that is, the idea of distinct unilingual minorities in their distinct unilingual worlds, something that does not exist in today's superdiversity. The idea of unilingual worlds and territorial support is especially problematic in the case of dispersed minorities, both small-numbered migrant groups which do not form distinct communities (as, for instance, Estonians in Germany) and traditional minorities affected

by internal mobility (for instance the Sámi or the Meänkieli speakers, a large part of whom now lives outside their traditional area where special language laws apply).

As for the results of the media analysis, the sad overall result was that minorities everywhere are underrepresented in media and that their own media are underresourced. Generally, it seems that both minority and majority media tend to avoid discussing politically relevant matters such as the reality of discrimination. Instead, at least in some cases it was obvious, that both minority and majority media may be involved in what in the media analysis for Hungarian in Austria[2] was called the mutual gratitude discourse: the minority is grateful for being accepted and tolerated and does not want to be regarded as a group of trouble-makers, the majority is grateful to the minority for its willingness to get integrated – which leads to a general invisibility of the minority. The avoidance of politically sensitive themes may also lead to a general focus on traditional culture, the 'musealising' view on minorities, illustrated with photos of folk dance groups and old ladies wearing a national costume. This, in turn, may strengthen the 'extinction narrative', depicting the minorities and their culture as something which belongs to the past and is bound to die out. An example of what this can lead to, from our case study in Russian Karelia (Karjalainen et al. 2013):

(2) *a konzu hyö mendih yhten kerran matkah en en musta Karjalas sie avtobusas ajajes sanottih što vot täs ennen elettih karjalaizet myö jo elimmö meidy jo ei ole elämäs sit lapsi tuli ja sanou elettihgo karjalaizet vai oletgo sinä vie karjalaine elävy karjalaine vot nenga on meil dielo školas se on itkusilmis voibi kuunnella nengomii midä meile školas on.*

'When they once made a trip, I don't remember, in Karelia, during the bus ride it was said that once the Karelians lived here. We once lived… [as if] we do not exist any more. Then my child came and asked, are there any Karelians left, are you still Karelian, a living Karelian? This is the situation at school. With tears in [your] eyes, you can listen what it is like at school.'

3   A multidimensional approach...

I don't believe that any of the issues described above constitute anything new for anybody who has worked with endangered and minority languages. Actually, the preliminary results of the ELDIA project have received criticism from some colleagues precisely because we "didn't tell them anything they wouldn't have known already". It is all too well known that language maintenance ultimately depends on a few central variables: it depends on how and whether the language is transmitted to new speaker generations, it depends on whether the language is actually used and its actual use is supported and accepted, and it depends on whether the speakers themselves want to transmit and use the language. You don't need the barometer results and the scores for the different areas to tell that the languages investigated in the ELDIA project are endangered, and this was not the main point of our project either – on the contrary, we wanted to go beyond general statements of endangerment, deconstruct endangerment into parts and show which areas are in particular need of support. Furthermore, we wanted to create a tool with which the situations of languages can be compared with

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[2]   The media analysis for Austria was conducted by Rita Csiszár, and a summary of its results (by Reetta Toivanen) has been published in Berényi-Kiss, Laakso & Parfuss 2013).

each other, not necessarily in order to rank them, to find out which languages are more endangered than others, but in order to show that similar overall scores can result from very different combinations of different factors. For instance, Seto in Estonia and Karelian in Russia had very similar overall scores, although the contexts and situations of these languages are different by almost all criteria.

In his book *Guns, Germs, and Steel,* Jared Diamond 1997 refers to the so-called "Anna Karenina theory" to explain why certain possible macro-eco-historical processes never happened (for instance, why Africans or Native Americans never colonised Europe). The name of this theory derives from the very first sentence of the novel *Anna Karenina*: All happy families are alike, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. In other words: In order for a complex enterprise to be successful, a number of necessary conditions must always be fulfilled. For an overall failure, the failure of just one of these or any combination of these is enough. In our case: Language maintenance can fail in a number of ways, and the ELDIA project was largely about getting a more fine-grained understanding of all of them.

First of all, this means that our approach to the conditions of language endangerment or maintenance was a deconstructional one. Unlike the GIDS scale by Joshua Fishman 1991, but similar to the UNESCO endangerment scale, the EuLaViBar was not holistic but multidimensional. And unlike most other scales, it was based on a wealth of survey data. The scale itself is fairly coarse, with only four grades of endangerment (as opposed to the eight levels in Fishman's GIDS and the thirteen levels in its expanded version, the EGIDS by Lewis/Simons 2010), all defined fairly loosely (and subject to discussion, of course). Instead of a 'ground zero' where the language has completely vanished, the ELDIA scale starts with a zero level in which the language still exists in a way but is no longer used actively and spontaneously. On level 1, there are serious problems (which we didn't specify, as they can be found in different areas of language transmission or use), on level 2, the language is obviously, although not imminently, endangered, while on level 3, at least part of the speakers seem capable and willing to use and transmit the language, even if this implies developing models of sustainable multilingualism, and on level 4, the language does not appear endangered at all at the moment.

The scale, thus, was fairly simple and coarse, but as the barometer was not holistic but intended to show diverse dimensions of language maintenance, the main challenge was to develop a method by which the data collected with the survey questionnaire could be processed into barometer scores and assigned to each dimension of the EuLaViBar. This work was mainly done by Anneli Sarhimaa and Eva Kühhirt at the University of Mainz, and their main challenge arose from the circumstances under which the questionnaire had been created: due to various issues which finally led to the partner responsible for this part of the work dropping out of the project, the planning of the questionnaire was severely delayed and finalised under extreme time pressure, the questionnaire became overlong and unwieldy, with some badly formulated questions resulting in validity issues, and the data analysis had to be planned post hoc, without really knowing what the planner of the questionnaire had had in mind.

I will not go into the details of these procedures but just describe one example: a question inquiring whether in the respondent's childhood anybody had tried to prevent the parents from using the language at issue with their children (and where these attempts took place). The answers to this question were manually graded, with 4 points if the respondent did not report any discrimination of this kind, 3 points if attempts to

prevent language use had taken place elsewhere, neither at school nor at home, 2 points if the respondent had witnessed such attempts either at school or at home, 1 point, if both at school and at home, and 0 points if such attempts had taken place at school, at home *and* in other contexts as well. Finally, our statistics experts created an algorithm by which the results from each question were processed into scores for each focus area and for each dimension within them.

4   ... to metadiversity

As regards the theoretical contribution of the ELDIA project to the research of language maintenance and endangerment, the data analysis for the EuLaViBar model – that is, processing questionnaire data into EuLaViBar scores – of course both required intensive reflection on the various dimensions of language maintenance and will, hopefully, inspire further theoretical and practical treatments of these issues. However, instead of analysing these aspects in more detail I would rather proceed to what I find both a fundamental challenge and, perhaps, the most exciting overall question of our whole research agenda: tackling metadiversity, the diversity of diversities. Have we been trying to compare what is simply not comparable?

One of the essential points of departure in our whole research plan, and one of the main motives for choosing to investigate Finno-Ugric minority languages (instead of the usual suspects in European minority-language research: the Celtic minorities, Basque, Catalan, and Frisian) was that we wanted to use our existing institutional resources and expertise to cover as broad a range of multilingual minority groups as possible. As I already mentioned, migrant minorities are underrepresented in research, and we included two migrant groups representing very recent EU migration and also challenging the concept of migrant community: Estonians in Finland and Germany. The Estonians in Germany are too few and too dispersed to form a migrant community in the traditional 'Chinatown sense', while the Estonians in Finland, also a very recent, work-related minority – although there have been migrations between Estonia and Finland throughout the documented history – often do not define themselves as "the Estonian community of Finland": some of them just want to assimilate and speak Finnish to their children, while many of them see themselves as belonging to Estonia and only temporarily working in Finland, and the organisations and activities of Estonians in Finland are remarkably passive and few in number.

Moreover, the boundary between regional (old) and migrant minorities is not always clear, and we included some groups which challenge this dichotomy. The Hungarians in Austria are a heterogeneous group consisting of both the old Hungarian minority in Burgenland and of numerous migrant groups from Hungary and other traditionally Hungarian-speaking areas, with different migration histories. The hundreds of thousands of Finns in Sweden are mainly *Gastarbeiter* from the 1960s and 1970s or their descendants; however, as there have been migrations from Finland to Sweden throughout the common history of these two countries, we can say that Finnish has always been present in Sweden, and for this reason, Finnish was recently officially acknowledged in Sweden alongside other old minority languages (Meänkieli, Sámi, Romani and Yiddish).

The typology of minorities turned out to be a very interesting and also heatedly debated issue. Not only the boundary between regional and migrant minorities but also the boundary between different types of old minorities can be a problematic question. In

the Far North of the Nordic countries, the Sámi seem to occupy a special position as an indigenous people, in the sense of indigenous and tribal peoples in the ILO Conventions 107 and 169 (the latter is ratified by Norway but not by Sweden or Finland) and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The other Northern minorities under study, the Kven and the Meänkieli speakers, have sometimes contested this arrangement as it produces, in their understanding, a hierarchy of minorities in which the Sámi enjoy a stronger protection. In Russia, there is an official category of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East, 'small-numbered' meaning that the number of the population must not exceed 50,000. For this reason, the Veps are included in this category, while Karelians are not, and some of the Karelian interviewees in our study explicitly resented this arbitrary criterion. Presumably, they could not see any substantial differences between the position and situation of the Karelian and the Veps minorities nor understand why the Veps should deserve a higher grade of protection.

What also turned out to be relevant for our investigation was the dichotomy between languages with kin-state support (languages which are standardised and cultivated in writing and used as an official language in the 'linguistic homeland') and roofless languages. The comparison between the overall EuLaViBar scores shows that the best results were reached by Hungarian- and Estonian-speaking minorities. (The case study on Finns in Sweden was not finalised, because of the Swedish partner dropping out of the project.) Again, the reasons are obvious: these speaker communities receive at least some support from the motherland, and above all, there is an ample supply of language products such as books, textbooks, media and news services, films, radio and TV programmes (which nowadays are largely available on the Internet). Moreover, many of the respondents in these groups were first-generation immigrants, born, raised and educated in the motherland. These languages are also obviously perceived as important and useful simply because they are national and official languages of a state. (A very illustrative comment turned up in the case study on Estonians in Germany (see Praakli (forthcoming)): one informant, a second-generation immigrant raised in an Estonian-speaking family, had only spoken German to her children – obviously, in the 1970s or -80s – for the explicit reason that "no-one believed back then that Estonia would ever be free again". Now that Estonia is independent, she might have decided otherwise.) And obviously, considering the high ranking of North Sámi in Norway in the overall EuLaViBar scores, a very high degree of legal protection and societal recognition and support can partly compensate for the lack of state-language position: due to its politically important role as the most important language of the Sámi nation also across the borders of three Nordic countries, North Sámi is almost like a state language – or has recently started to function as such, as also testified to by some ELDIA interviewees in the case study on North Sámi in Norway (see Marjomaa forthcoming):

(3) *Dalle vel álggu- álgobáliid dat lei nu aht- ii dat galgan sámigiella oppanassiige ja mii oainnat jurddaheimet ahte dat ša- šaddá nu ahte, dat ee ahte dat dárbbuhuvvá sámegiella š- fudnot ja danne mii eai sámistan mánáidguimmet go ledje helt smávvat, muhto dál go lea áigi rievdan de mii leat fuopmán aht- dat lei vearrut go mii ean sá- sárdnon daiguin.*

'The, in the beginning it was so that it shouldn't be Sámi at all and you see, we thought that it'll turn out so that, ehm, that Sámi language [won't] be needed [?]

and because of that we didn't speak Sámi with our kids when they were quite small, but now the time has changed and we've noticed that it was wrong that we didn't speak [it] with them.'

The roofless minorities, in contrast, not only lack the ample supply of language products and the institutional support which exists for Estonian and Hungarian minorities – at least in the 'motherland'. Most of these languages have also been very recently standardised, so that their written and official use is only taking its first steps. There is often very little material available, which means that, for instance, the data on media use which was extensively mapped in the ELDIA questionnaire are not directly compatible. Estonians in Germany or Hungarians in Austria can access a wealth of Estonian- and Hungarian-language newspapers and news services from the 'motherland' at least by way of the Internet every day, while for Veps, there is only one newspaper appearing once a month. And for Meänkieli or Kven, the supply is much more modest and thus the indicators remain low, even if it can be stated (see Arola, Kangas/Pelkonen forthcoming) that the Meänkieli speakers really do consume all the media supply available in Meänkieli.

For new, recently standardised minority languages, the new standard may be unknown and difficult to use: for instance, in the case of Karelian and especially Veps in Russia, the most fluent speakers in the elderly generations received all their formal education in Russian and are only literate in the Cyrillic script, which means that they cannot read the modern standard language based on the Latin script. Or, even if potential users can access the standard language, they may think that their language simply does not belong to written and official domains, as does this interviewee in the case study on Seto in Estonia (see Koreinik (forthcoming)):

(4) *mina näiteks olen setu keele õpetamise vastane koolis sest noh ma leian et no ta (.) tulebki seest ja selleks peab ka olema kodu kogukond.*

'I for instance oppose teaching Seto at school because, well, I think, that, well, it […] comes from inside and there must be a home community too for that.'

Moreover, it may be that small speaker communities show little tolerance towards deviances from their in-group language use; so, they may be disturbed if the standard deviates from their own dialect, they experience it as "foreign" (cf. the Veps example 6 from Puura et al. 2013) or "artificial", or as a Võro-speaking interviewee (example 5 from Koreinik 2013) put it, "castrated language":

(5) *ma õkva ütle kuis ma pruugi eesti kiilt raamatit loe eesti keelen televiisorit kae eesti keelen raadiot kullõ eesti keelen -- umma lehte tuud tuud ma piä hindä jaos ümbre tõlkma tuu om väega määndseski kohitsedu keeleh üldiselt kirotõdu.*

'I'll tell you straight out how I use Estonian. (I) read books in Estonian, (I) watch TV in Estonian and (I) listen to the radio in Estonian. Uma Leht [the local Võro-language bimonthly], that, that I must translate for myself, it's very, in general written in a kind of castrated language.'

(6) *minun tatam sanub kaiken aigan sinä pagižed verhal kelel, sikš ku minä sindai en el'genda, en tea miččel kelel sinä pagižed, no ed vepsän kelel, - - erased sanad potomu što hii ii tekoi, neglik da sebranik da, ken om sebranik, a podrušk a no podrušk.*

'My father always says: you're speaking a foreign language, because I don't understand you. I don't know which language you're speaking, but it's definitely not Veps. - - Because they don't know certain words, *neglik* [hedgehog] and *sebranik* [friend]. Who is *sebranik*? Oh, *podrušk* [RU *podružka* 'girl-friend'], well *podrušk*.'

From the point of view of the whole ELDIA project and its central aspect, the idea of creating something generalisable and compatible by applying the same research design, the same questionnaires and interview templates everywhere, means a serious challenge, perhaps even a serious validity issue. How can we compare the heritage-language media consumption of Estonians in Finland and Kvens in Norway? How should we evaluate speakers' expectations as to the usability of their language, if the circumstances are completely different? Many Karelian respondents in Russia, for instance, seemed indifferent towards the need of developing Karelian. Presumably, they saw it this way: Karelian is good as it is, it's enough if I can speak it at home with my grandparents – for the school and public authorities, there's Russian which I speak as well (perhaps even more fluently than Karelian), why on earth should I expect schools or public authorities to function in Karelian? Now how are we to compare these people's ideas of their language skills or their desire to use Karelian with, for example, first-generation Hungarian migrants in Austria who have grown up in a monolingual Hungarian environment and gone to a Hungarian-language school?

A further aspect which is very relevant for some of the roofless minority languages under study is that their status as a language has been contested. Meänkieli and Kven, earlier Karelian as well, have been classified as dialects of Finnish, while Võro and Seto are still officially considered dialects (or regional forms) of Estonian. This may be linguistically and historically arguable. However, the emancipation of these former dialects has obvious political motivations connected to the ethnic revival of these speaker communities. For the Kven and the Meänkieli speakers, the emancipation movement was also a reaction to the semilingualism debate of the 1970s: it was about speaking a real, full-scale language, not a dialect of Finnish, the language of the neighbour state, but a language form which has been spoken in these regions since times immemorial. And for the South Estonian activists who initiated the revival of the Võro-Seto language in the 1980's, this may have been an exemplary action: the emancipation of a minority within Estonian might serve as a grassroot-level example and encouragement for the emancipation of Estonians within the Soviet Union (where, in those times, the official Russification propaganda, under the pretext of bilingualism and "making Russian the second native language of all Soviet citizens", was rampant). Yet, this emancipation has not been accepted by everybody: all Kvens or Meänkieli speakers do not like the new standardisation of their languages, and some would rather go on calling their language form Finnish as they have traditionally done. In South Estonia, the Võro speakers in particular generally do not distinguish themselves from the Estonian nation or even its language – they typically see themselves as Estonians, with an additional regional identity, rather than as a clearly distinct ethnic minority.

Again, the question is whether speakers of these contested varieties, their attitudes and experiences of language use, can be examined on a par with speakers of languages which are clearly bounded entities. The Estonian migrants in Finland and Germany, or the Hungarians in Austria and Slovenia are very well aware of the fact that there exists a standard language which has norms, grammars and dictionaries, and that there are not only possible but even real worlds where this language is used and dominates

everywhere. They also obviously see their language as a bounded entity: although languages do get mixed, words and expressions are taken over from the dominant language, real hybrid forms are very rare. With the Finnic minority languages, in contrast, we have in our interviews quite a few examples of not just switching between varieties but even hybridising them: Veps informants attempting to speak Finnish (example 7), or Võro-speaking informants producing hybrid forms (Standard Estonian *toda* or hybridised *tuda,* partitive form of the demonstrative pronoun 'that', instead of Võro *tuud)* – while explicitly pleading for "pure" Võro (example 8). These two quotations beautifully illustrate both the reality of hybridisation and fuzzy boundaries between languages and the normative views on the importance of standardisation. There is an ideal of the one and only correct language, even if all speakers cannot live up to it:

(7) *a sinä oled, sotan aikan ää suomekš elin.*

'And you are, during the war [Fi. *sodan aikana*] I lived in Finnish.'

Interviewer2:

sinä pagiže ičemoi kartte, voinan aigan kus elid.

'Speak our way [= Veps]! Where did you live during the war?'

(8) *olõs ikka hää ku saasi toda kõrralikku kiilt rohkemp hoita sest kas tuda (!) säänest vaja om millest varsti inämp aru ei saa kas ta om kiräkiil või võru kiil*

'it would be good anyway if one could keep that correct language more, because, who needs such a thing of which one doesn't understand any more whether it's the standard language or Võro?'

This leads to my almost-last point: the issue of languageness. In our original research agenda, we took a stand for speaker agency and languaging, focusing not on language as a system but language as the speakers' actions. In his book *Language: an ecological view,* Mark Garner 2004 claims that languageness, the idea of language as an entity and a system, is socially constructed – for people who are not formally educated and socialised with the idea of languages as distinct systems, languages are just ways of speaking. This means that these people cannot produce pragmatically meaningless utterances. Such utterances do not exist, because language as an abstract system does not exist for such speakers. Examples can be found from the long tradition of linguistic fieldwork; one famous example is the historical anecdote known to many Finns about the founding father of Siberian and Samoyedic studies, Mathias Alexander Castrén, and his Nenets informant who refused to say "My wife is ill" in his language, because his wife was healthy. Furthermore, languageness is often questioned in modern research into multilingualism and codeswitching; quite a few researchers, while emphasising the in-built polyphony of human language, speak of polylanguaging. In the words of Jørgensen (2008: 169-170), "language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal with the intention of achieving their communicative aims." Now if it really is so that for multilingual people, languages as distinct entities do not exist, and the speakers are not aware of how they combine and mix their languages, how can we ever assess people's language attitudes, language use or language skills by way of questionnaires or interviews? (This is a nihilistic and hypersceptical question, but perhaps somebody has to ask it...)

And finally, just very briefly: I very much like Harold Schiffman's 2006 term *linguistic culture* – it is wider and more comprehensive than the very fashionable

language ideology, covering both explicit language policies, language attitudes and practices, and the academic and lay knowledge about language and languages, in Schiffman's (2006: 121) words, "the sum totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, religious strictures, and all the other cultural 'baggage' that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their culture". Speakers' choices in favour or against multilingualism and the maintenance of minority languages do not only depend on explicit and overt language policies and institutional frameworks and not only on attitudes and emotions as such but also on collective and individual knowledge and prejudices. Within the ELDIA sample, this is especially evident when we compare the minorities of Russia with the minorities in the Western world. So far, we haven't been able to do such a comprehensive comparison, but our material is now there and can be used for research purposes, hopefully, for many years to come.

Thus, the time has come to conclude my presentation with a final statement: The ELDIA project has produced

- lots of new or up-to-date knowledge about some European minorities and accessible English-language introductions which outsiders can use,

- a tool for assessing the state of language maintenance, the EuLaViBar – it is not easy, simple or cheap to use, and it should be developed further, but the fact that the scores which we calculated seem to correspond to what was already known about the state of these languages shows that the barometer works,

and, finally, the firm conviction in all of us that teamwork, cooperation and networking, especially networking and supporting early-career researchers, is of essential importance and should be continued, both within Finno-Ugric studies and across its boundaries.

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