

Workshop II: Minority languages, multilingualism, language policy and language teaching

1. Introduction

Multilingualism is now generally acknowledged as a natural feature of human language faculty, as beneficial for the cognitive and linguistic development of an individual, as a central aspect of human cultural diversity and as an important part of European cultural legacy. At the same time, despite innumerable statements of goodwill and numerous studies and projects dealing with how multilingualism should be managed, supported and created, the EU lacks a coherent strategy for multilingual language policies, as shown, for instance, by the ELDIA project (see e.g. Laakso & al. 2016). The ELDIA project also confirmed one of its basic assumptions: the “natural” multilingualism of minorities and migrants is treated differently from the acquired (functional) multilingualism (for instance, Germans learning English or Finns learning French) which is the proclaimed goal of education systems.

It is especially in language teaching and the education system that the problems and inequality issues typical of minority languages can easily be observed. The majority-language school system with its assimilationist policies has been an instrument of “linguicide” and a deeply traumatizing experience for minority-language speakers in many countries. The methods used to suppress the minority language have varied from downright language bans, punishments and public shaming of pupils who speak their heritage language to more sophisticated “devalorization” of the minority language. They are typically accompanied by propaganda against bilingualism (or arousing fear of “semilingualism”) and by the glorification of the majority language: it is claimed that only the majority language will lead to modernization and civilization or offer better prospects in higher education or on the labour market.

Even if education systems now often give lip service to multilingualism and language diversity, their role in supporting the maintenance or revitalization of minority languages is controversial at best: the teaching of minority languages, notwithstanding its good intentions, is often insufficient both quantity- and quality-wise, concerning both the planning of programmes and curricula and their implementation. European national education systems have often developed hand in hand with monolingual(ist) nation-state projects, which means that the monolingual bias is present even in foreign language teaching (see e.g. Dufva et al. 2011) and the management of multilingualism is determined by the ethnolinguistic assumption, i.e. the idea that ethnic identity and mother tongue are or should be in a simple 1:1 relationship to each other. Dealing with everyday multilingualism in a school class is a challenge for which many teachers in European school systems have not been adequately prepared.

In this workshop, questions of multilingualism involving Uralic minority languages in the education system will be discussed, possibly also with the help of

group exercises. An *active contribution* for this workshop consists of a presentation of ca. 10 minutes in the workshop meeting during the Winter School and a paper based on this presentation (and the discussions in the workshop), submitted (by e-mail to johanna.laakso@univie.ac.at) after the Winter School no later than the end of March.

You are also encouraged to work in *international* pairs or virtual workgroups (consisting of students from different universities). In this case, you can use up to 20 minutes for your presentation; in your written submission you must clearly describe the division of labour within your group.

As introductions into the problematics of minority languages and multilingualism in the education system, Baker (2008), Huss (2008), Hornberger (2009), Pasanen (2008), Gorter (2013) and Pasanen et al. (forthcoming) can also be used as annotated lists of central issues, while Hornberger (ed) (2008), Marten et al. (ed) (2015) and Toivanen & Saarikivi (eds) (2016) are edited volumes with numerous useful articles. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas has published extensively on the issues of minority language education from the point of view of human rights (see e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

2. Possible themes for presentations

For the assignment of theme, contact Johanna Laakso (johanna.laakso@univie.ac.at).

a. Describe and critically analyse the situation of a Uralic minority language of your choice in the education system. You can use, for instance, the following sources:

- the ELDIA reports (available at <http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:80726> for North Saami in Norway, Karelian in Finland, Estonian in Finland, Karelian in Russia, Veps, Võro, Seto, Estonian in Germany, Hungarian in Austria, Hungarian in Slovenia);
- the Mercator regional dossiers (available at <https://www.mercator-research.eu/en/knowledge-base/regional-dossiers/> for Nenets, Khanty, and Selkup, the Finnic minorities in Sweden, Hungarian in Slovakia, Hungarian in Slovenia, Saami in Sweden, and Võro);
- the Language Education Policy Profiles of the Council of Europe (https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Profils1_EN.asp), available for Austria, Estonia, Hungary, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine;
- Zamyatin (2016) for minorities in Russia;
and in addition to these:
- Pasanen (2015) and Olthuis et al. (2013) for Inari Saami;
- <http://www.kuati.fi/fi/saamelainen-varhaiskasvatus/varhaiskasvatus--suunnitelmat.php> and further reports on Saami education and the implementation of Saami language law in Finland (see the homepage of Sámediggi: http://www.samediggi.fi/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=74&Itemid=60);
- Scheller (2011), Siegl & Rießler (2015) for Kildin Saami;
- Hirvonen (2008) and Huss (2008) for Saami especially in Norway;
- Huss (1999, 2008) for the Finnic and Saami minorities in Northern Scandinavia;

- Salo (2005) for Mordvin and Mari;
- Zamyatin (2015) for Mari and Udmurt;
- Brenner (2008), Csiszár (2007), and Csire & Laakso (2011, 2014) for Hungarian in Austria;
- Kovács et al. (2015) for Csángó Hungarian;
- Horváth (2014) for Mansi.

b. Annika Pasanen (2008; Pasanen et al. forthcoming) has divided the Uralic minority languages into four groups on the basis of their presence in the education system:

1. the language is used as the medium of education throughout basic education;
2. the language is used as the medium of education in some subjects or in some grades in basic education;
3. the language is taught as a subject;
4. the language is not present in the education system.

Elaborate and reflect on this classification. In reality, the categories 2–3 cover a broad range of arrangements – describe this in more detail. Why is the difference between the positions as the medium of education and as a subject so crucial, and why is it so difficult to understand or assess?

c. Both Joshua Fishman's *Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale* (GIDS; Fishman 1991) and its expanded version (EGIDS) by Lewis and Simons (Lewis et al. 2016) include the role of the language in the education system into the criteria by which the grade of endangerment or language maintenance is assessed. Reflect on these criteria and their validity or relevance, using Uralic examples of different relevant stages of endangerment.

d. Select a Uralic minority language which currently has no (official) presence in the education system and sketch an action plan (as realistic as possible) to implement it into the basic education, taking into account the legal and institutional frameworks in the country and region at issue.

e. Western research on minority languages has been strongly concentrated on Western, regional (autochthonous/indigenous) and Indo-European minorities, and this tendency can also be seen in the language selection in the minority special issue of *AILA Review* 21 (2008). Reflect on how data from and research on Uralic minority languages could help to correct this bias.

f. The concept of *heritage language* (*Herkunftssprache*, *származásnyelv*, *hemspråk* etc.) is widely used, for example, in the U.S.A. In many European countries, in contrast, language (education) policies are still struggling with the problem that the language connected with a person's ethnic identity is not necessarily his/her first or dominant language, while institutional arrangements are largely based on a binary division between mother tongue(s) and second/foreign language(s). What kind of problems can (and do) arise from this? See, for instance, Csire & Laakso (2008, 2011) for inspiration and further source references, and elaborate on this question using examples from one or more Uralic minority language(s).

g. What should the majority (speakers of the state language) know about minority languages? Can or should the minority language be taught to speakers of the majority language, too – how, when, under what conditions, to what extent? In Norway, for instance, the [school curriculum](#) for Norwegian speakers now includes a minimum knowledge about the background and role of the Saami languages in Norwegian society and a basic knowledge of the Saami alphabet and the pronunciation of Saami letters. In Russia, in turn, the official position of the titular language in ethnic republics has aroused heated debates about the pros and cons of the compulsory teaching of the titular language to Russian-speaking pupils. Research and discuss this situation in a state or region (of your choice) with a Uralic-language minority.

Literature

[most of the material or download links will be provided on the Moodle platform]

- Baker, Colin 2008. Postlude. – *AILA Review* 21: 104–110.
- Brenner, Edina 2008. Ungarischunterricht im Burgenland. In Johanna Laakso (ed) *Ungarischunterricht in Österreich = Teaching Hungarian in Austria*. (Finn-Ugrian Studies in Austria 6.) Wien: LIT Verlag, 128–137.
- Csire, Márta & Johanna Laakso 2011. [Teaching the heritage language as a foreign language: on the questions of bilingualism and minority language teaching in Austria](#). *Eesti ja soome-ugri keeleteaduse ajakiri/Journal of Estonian and Finn-Ugrian Linguistics* 2011, 2 – 1: 93–107.
- Csire, Márta & Johanna Laakso 2014. L3, L1, or L0? Heritage-language students as third-language learners. In Agnieszka Otwinowska & Gessica de Angelis (eds), *Teaching and learning in multilingual contexts: sociolinguistic and educational perspectives*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 215–231.
- Csiszár Rita 2007. Gondolatok a burgenlandi őshonos és a migrációs eredetű bécsi magyar kisebbség anyanyelvi oktatásáról a jogi szabályozás és a gyakorlat tükrében. – *Iskolakultúra* 2007/6–7: 136–149.
- Dufva, H., Suni, M., Aro, M. and Salo, O.-P. (2011). [Languages as objects of learning: language learning as a case of multilingualism](#). *Apples – Journal of Applied Language Studies* 5/1, 109–124. Online at <http://apples.jyu.fi>.
- Fishman, Joshua 1991. *Reversing language shift*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Gorter, Durk 2013. Minority languages in education. In Carol A. Chapelle (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hirvonen, Vuokko 2008. ‘Out on the fells, I feel like a Sámi’: Is There Linguistic and Cultural Equality in the Sámi School?. In Hornberger (ed) 2008: 15–41.
- Hornberger, Nancy H. (ed) 2008. *Can schools save indigenous languages? Policy and practice on four continents*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hornberger, Nancy H. 2009. Multilingual education policy and practice: Ten certainties (grounded in Indigenous experience). *Language Teaching* 42:2, 197–211.
- Horváth, Csilla 2014. What should a Mansi speaking pupil know? Mansi textbooks in public and alternative educational institutes. In Johanna Laakso (ed), *Dangers and developments: On language diversity in a changing world* (Studies in European Language Diversity 34), 73–85. <http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:369606>

- Huss, Leena 1999. *Reversing Language Shift in the Far North. Linguistic Revitalization in Northern Scandinavia and Finland*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet.
- Huss, Leena 2008. Revitalization through indigenous education: a forlorn hope? In Hornberger (ed) 2008: 125–135.
- Kovács, Magdolna, Petteri Laihonon & Hanna Snellman (eds) 2015. *Culture, Language and Globalization among the Moldavian Csángós Today (Uralica Helsingiensia 8)*. Helsinki: Finno-Ugrian Society.
- Laakso, Johanna, Sarhimaa, Anneli, Spiliopoulou Åkermark, Sia, & Toivanen, Reetta 2016. *Towards openly multilingual policies and practices: Assessing minority language maintenance across Europe*. (Linguistic Diversity and Language Rights). Bristol / Buffalo / Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Lewis et al. 2016. Language status (<https://www.ethnologue.com/about/language-status>).
- Marten, Heiko F., Michael Rießler, Janne Saarikivi & Reetta Toivanen (eds) 2015. *Cultural and linguistic minorities in the Russian Federation and the European Union: Comparative studies on equality and diversity*. Cham &c: Springer.
- Olthuis, Marja-Liisa & Suvi Kivelä & Tove Skutnabb-Kangas 2013. *Revitalising indigenous languages: How to recreate a lost generation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Pasanen, Annika 2008. Suomalais-ugrilaiset vähemmistökielet assimilaation ja revitalisaation ristipaineessa. In Sirkka Saarinen & Eeva Herrala (eds), *Murros: Suomalais-ugrilaiset kielet ja kulttuurit globalisaation paineissa (Uralica Helsingiensia 3)*. Helsinki: Finno-Ugrian Society.
- Pasanen, Annika 2015. *Kuávsui já peeivičuová. 'Sarastus ja päivänvalo': Inarinsaamen kielen revitalisaatio. Uralica Helsingiensia 9*. Helsinki: Finno-Ugrian Society.
- Pasanen, Annika & Johanna Laakso & Anneli Sarhimaa (forthcoming): Endangerment and revitalization. To appear in: Marianne Bakró-Nagy, Johanna Laakso & Elena Skribnik (eds), *The Oxford Guide to the Uralic Languages*. Oxford University Press.
- Salo, Merja 2005. The status of Mordvinian and Mari in the school curriculum. In: Eugen Helimski, Ulrike Kahrs & Monika Schötschel (eds.), *Mari und Mordwinen im heutigen Russland: Sprache, Kultur, Identität*. Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica 66. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 22–66.
- Scheller, Elisabeth 2011. The Saami language situation in Russia, in *Riho Grünthal & Magdolna Kovács (eds), The ethnic and linguistic context of identity: Finno-Ugric Minorities (Uralica Helsingiensia 5)*. Helsinki: Finno-Ugrian Society, 79–96.
- Siegl, Florian & Michael Rießler 2015. Uneven steps to literacy, in Heiko F. Marten, Michael Rießler, Janne Saarikivi & Reetta Toivanen (eds), *Cultural and linguistic minorities in the Russian Federation and the European Union: Comparative studies on equality and diversity*. Cham &c: Springer. 189–230.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (2000). *Linguistic genocide in education – or worldwide diversity and human rights?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Toivanen, Reetta & Janne Saarikivi (eds) 2016. *Linguistic genocide or superdiversity?* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Zamyatin, Konstantin 2015. The evolution of language ideology in Post-Soviet Russia, in Marten et al. (eds) (2015): 279–314.
- Zamyatin, Konstantin 2016. Russia's minority education and the European Language Charter, in Toivanen & Saarikivi (eds) 2016: 251–284.

See also:

International Network for Language Education Policy Studies,

<http://www.languageeducationpolicy.org/home.html>