

Marja Järventausta & Marko Pantermöller (Eds.) *Finnische Sprache, Literatur und Kultur im deutschsprachigen Raum – Suomen kieli, kirjallisuus ja kulttuuri saksankielisellä alueella*. Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica, Band 85. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2013. Pp. 370.

Reviewed by Johanna Domokos

Introduction

This extensive collection of material, edited and published by Marja Järventausta and Marko Pantermöller in 2013, gives us a thorough summary of the major research avenues and educational challenges of Finnish Studies in German-speaking academia. The field has a well-grounded tradition going back more than 90 years, and Järventausta and Pantermöller's volume gives the impression that the field has reached new heights. The book, whose title translates into English as *Finnish Language, Literature and Culture in the German-speaking context*, is a joint publication of two related projects, resulting in eighteen papers in German and Finnish, and two in English.

The studies of the book resulted partly by the *SuoSa* project (Suomi Saksassa – Finnish/Finland in Germany), a collaboration of Finnish instructors and researchers at universities in the German-speaking world. Their works draw awareness to the pedagogical and methodological challenges of teaching Finnish in a foreign-language context. Hailing from a field whose history is twice as long in Germany as it is in Finland, the papers form a valuable contribution to the national discourse on this topic.¹ The remainder of the papers are a result of the international conference “Finnish Language and Literature in the European Context – Historical Perspectives and Current Challenges”, held at the University of Greifswald in 2011. The studies offer a brilliant overview of contemporary developments in Finnish Studies in Central Europe, as well as of studies on relevant intercultural phenomena in linguistics and literature (loanwords,

¹ Presently the most important database on Finnish as a second or as a foreign language (S2-Suomi kakkonen, ‘Finnish second’) is run by the Finnish Department at the University of Jyväskylä. See: <https://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/kielet/oppiaineet_ks/fennicum/s2> (3rd December 2014), parts under construction.

bilingual dictionaries, literary reception, etc.). Due to a well-thought-out editorial decision, all of the papers are followed by an abstract in the “partner” language (Finnish papers with German abstracts, and vice versa). Only the two papers in English are lacking an abstract, though a short summary would have been useful for these as well.

The nearly 350-page publication begins with a preface introducing the two projects, and ends with a short list of the names and institutional affiliations of the contributors. The papers themselves are arranged into six chapters, which I will present one by one in the following.

Chapter one

The first chapter, “Perspectives on (language) history and language policy”, begins with a study by Kaisa Häkkinen, a highly acclaimed Finnish linguist and language historian from the University of Turku. By offering valuable insights into studies of Germanic-Finnish language contact since the 17th century, Häkkinen illustrates how changes in ideological premises, along with the growth of linguistic knowledge and the improvement of research methods, have contributed to a better assessment of various layers of Germanic loanwords. Historic Baltic cultural exchange provides the overarching framework for a study by Finnish classical philologist and Romanist Outi Merisalo from the University of Jyväskylä. By concentrating on book printing and the circulation of texts in the 15th–17th centuries, Merisalo uncovers a highly functional infrastructure for cultural exchange between Finland and the Holy Roman Empire.

Finnish nation building and mid-19th-century cultural developments come into focus in the next paper by Carola Häntschi, a researcher from the University of Greifswald. Reflecting on the role of J. V. Snellman in establishing Finnish as a national language, Häntschi shows the implications of Snellman’s linguo-philosophical views on his language policy decisions. By thematizing “multilingual literature”, a concept Snellman vehemently opposed, Häntschi forges a link to the next study by Pirjo Hiidenmaa, a scientific language expert from the University of Helsinki. After some general considerations on the various aspects of multilingualism in the current era of migration, Hiidenmaa lists the benefits and drawbacks of using the English language in scientific education and research in Finland.

Chapter two

A study by Marko Pantermöller, Professor of Finnish language and culture at the University of Greifswald, opens the book's second chapter, "Historical Perspectives of Finnish Studies Abroad". Though the chapters are not given separate title pages, each new chapter is marked in the table of contents. Pantermöller's first study in the book concentrates on important developments in establishing Finnish language teaching and Finnish Studies in the German-speaking academic world. His focus includes the history and challenges of eighteen active (and six defunct) academic centers in Germany, as well as another two in Switzerland (active now only in Basel), one in the Netherlands (University of Groningen), and one in Austria (University of Vienna).

In her first study in this book, the University of Cologne linguist Marja Järventausta concentrates on the conditions surrounding the 1925 publication of the innovative Finnish language textbook *Lehr- und Lesebuch der finnischen Sprache* (The Teaching and Learning Book of the Finnish Language). Järventausta illuminates why the book's author, Arvid Rosenqvist, the first-ever Finnish instructor in the German context, refused to use the two other language textbooks available to him at the time (M. Wellewill 1890; J. Neuhaus 1908). She presents Rosenqvist's work in terms of the eight conceptual marks defined in his prologue. The next study, by linguist Mikko Bentlin of the University of Greifswald, continues to deepen the historical grammar descriptions of Finnish. Bentlin analyzes thirty-one works dated between 1649 and 1898, focusing specifically on terms related to gradation and vowel harmony.

Chapter three

The third chapter, "Grammatical Perspectives", concentrates on certain grammatical phenomena relevant in teaching Finnish as a foreign and/or second language. Like several studies in subsequent chapters, this study is written by a Finnish instructor at a German-speaking university. The study by Kari Hiltula (previously an instructor at the University of Greifswald, now at the University of Tampere) discusses the different interpretations of dual nominal and verbal forms (*kaksihakmotteisuus*), based on the ways they are presented in several significant works on Finnish grammar, paying particular attention to *Iso suomen kielioppi* (The Big Finnish Grammar,

2004) by Auli Hakulinen, Maria Vilkuna, Riitta Korhonen, Vesa Koivisto, Tarja Riitta Heinonen and Irja Alho.

In her study Eva Buchholz, a Finnish instructor at the Humboldt University of Berlin, gives a clear and concise summary of the major differences between Finnish and German morphosyntax. Buchholz, who is the author of *Grammatik der finnischen Sprache* (Grammar of Finnish Language, 2004), a good Finnish grammar written for German students, underlines the major differences between teaching Finnish as a second language in Finland and as a foreign language abroad, while also summarizing the major challenges of teaching the language in either case.

The following article by Mikko Kajander, a Finnish instructor at the University of Vienna, responds well to certain questions formulated in Buchholz's study. Both authors considering different teaching strategies, Kajander advocates giving priority to a top-down approach, in which students move from sentences and idioms to their constituent morphological units—rather than a bottom-up approach, where forms and rules take precedence over speaking. The top-down approach enables students to gain command of longer linguistic units, and it motivates them to discover for themselves the structure and paradigms of the language. The final study of this chapter, provided by Maisa Martin, a professor of Finnish language at the University of Jyväskylä, reflects on the accuracy of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEFR) for measuring writing skills in Finnish L2 teaching. This study serves as a bridge between the mostly introspective, analytical view of Finnish Studies Abroad (and of the book) to more common concerns about the theory and methodology of language teaching.

Chapter four

The fourth chapter of the book, “Didactic Perspectives”, exemplifies various concerns relevant to teaching methodologies. Tiina Savolainen, a Finnish instructor from the University of Göttingen, developed over a dozen criteria and eight major categories for comparing the eight Finnish language textbooks most often used at local universities and adult evening education programs. Though *Hyvin menee* ‘It’s going alright’ and *Kuulostaa hyvältä* ‘Sounds good’ received fairly high rankings, Savolainen concludes that a more efficient book for university teaching remains to be written. Focusing on the uses of music in language teaching, Katri Annika

Wessel, a Finnish instructor at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, introduces the term “audio literacy” and gives a detailed example of how a textual and performance analysis of a video clip by a Finnish band (Ultra Bra: *Jäätelöauto*, ‘Ice Cream Truck’) can enhance students’ language proficiency. Since a high number of Finnish learners at German universities come to Finnish classes because of the contemporary global success of several Finnish rock and pop bands, this method should be considered more thoroughly.

In the following study receptive and productive Finnish competencies are considered in two different learning environments by Lili Ahonen, a Finnish instructor at Groningen. Contrasting Finnish language learners in Finland, this article demonstrates other challenges facing Finnish language learners abroad. Ahonen’s thorough demonstration of the Groningen Model, which aims to enhance listening comprehension and oral skills in the BA curriculum, sets an example that is worth implementing at other institutions as well.

Chapter five

The fifth chapter of the book, “Contrastive Perspectives”, contains three studies dealing with further comparative aspects of Finnish language teaching. These studies could have been included in the previous two chapters as well. The first part of the paper by Marja Järventausta, the Finnish language professor at the University of Cologne, demonstrates why the existing Finnish-German or German-Finnish dictionaries do not suit the needs of German students learning Finnish. In both printed and electronic forms, passive and active bilingual dictionaries are made for Finnish speakers who want to either understand a German text or produce one. Monolingual dictionaries are more appropriate for Finnish language learners, although they are rarely used and their content is much less accessible in the first phase of language learning. The second part of Järventausta’s article demonstrates different strategies for using dictionaries in the translation process. For that purpose, she evaluates the work of twelve students in translating one sentence from German into Finnish.

The following paper of Paula Jääsalmi-Krüger, a Finnish instructor from the University of Hamburg, assesses the results of a survey given to her thirty-four students. The students were given fifteen questions regarding their parallel learning of Finnish and Estonian, and their answers

reveal an interesting mapping of the ways in which closely related languages like Finnish and Estonian, as well as the historically relevant contact language of German, intermingle in the process of language learning.

The final contribution to this chapter is a study by Finnish language professor Pirkko Muikku-Werner, from the University of Eastern Finland, on the history and present developments of idiomatic expressions in Finnish. Muikku-Werner examines “how Finnish-ness is reflected in the idioms, how Finns produce them, and what on one side, the national, and on the other side, the borrowed idioms look like” (p. 311). Even if, as the author agrees, we cannot arrive at a clear answer to these questions, which themselves might even need reformulation, the study provides many interesting insights—for example, the very high rate of Finnish idioms connected to the consumption of alcohol.

Chapter six

The three studies of the final chapter, “Perspectives on Finnish language, literature and culture from abroad”, symbolically reflect the place granted to literary and cultural studies in this field. Around two-thirds of the space in this volume is devoted to linguistic studies, and a third to cultural and literary studies—and in his thorough overview of the curricula and Ph.D. research of Finnish Departments of Central and Eastern European Universities, Marko Pantermöller finds a similar ratio in the field in general. This has much more to do with the traditions of the field than with a conscious effort on the part of the volume’s editors.

Taking a departure from previous studies, which usually focus on the market dynamics of Finnish literature abroad, the article of Päivi Lappalainen, Professor of Finnish literature at the University of Turku, concentrates on the reception of Sofi Oksanen’s novels in Western Europe. Special attention is given to the German and Estonian reception of her successful novel *Puhdistus* (2008, Engl. *Purge*).

The closing paper of this chapter and also of the book, by Thekla Musäus, research assistant at the University of Greifswald, offers a statistical and analytical overview of works translated from Finnish and Finland Sámi authors into German, with special attention to the latest publications from 2009–2011. The range of these works is well summarized in the title of her article, which also coincides with the

historically changing interest of the reading audience: “‘Poetic Poems’ or from ‘Crime to South’”.

Conclusions

All of the studies included in this volume attest to the fact that *Auslandfennistik* (Finnish Studies Abroad) does excellent work in both teaching and research. As Pantermöller’s overview of the field accurately demonstrates, Finnish Studies are well connected abroad, and the necessary infrastructure is already in place for the field to take a further step in its articulation. The field could develop more of its own vision, based on a clearer self-confidence, just as intercultural German Studies (Interkulturelle Germanistik, <<http://www.germanistik.unibe.ch/gig/seiten/meaning.htm>>) became a fully developed, complementary field to Germanic Studies within the span of a decade. With a clearer focus on intercultural contacts between Finnish culture, language, and literature, as well as theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical goals, the field could truly reach new heights. The foundational work has been done, and no matter what path it takes in the near future, Finnish Studies Abroad will provide a valuable contribution to Finnish Studies as a whole.

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