

On writing grammars

Selected notes and observations

Descriptive Grammars and Typology

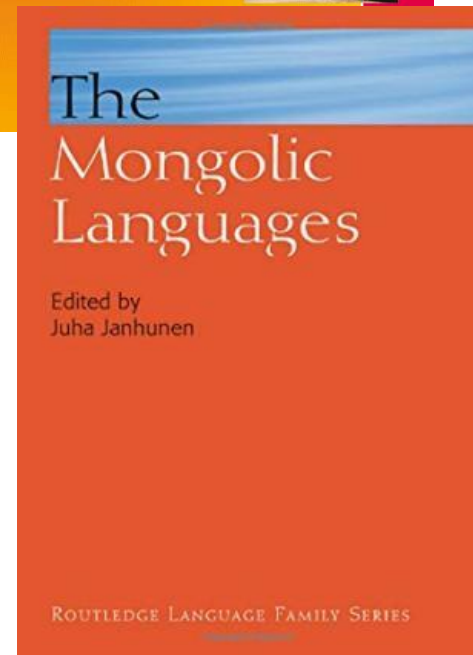
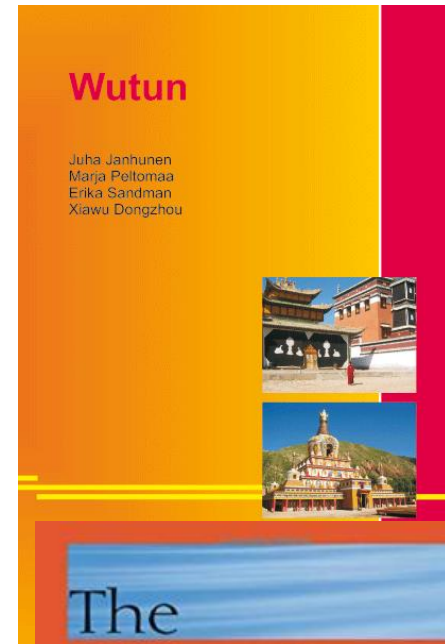
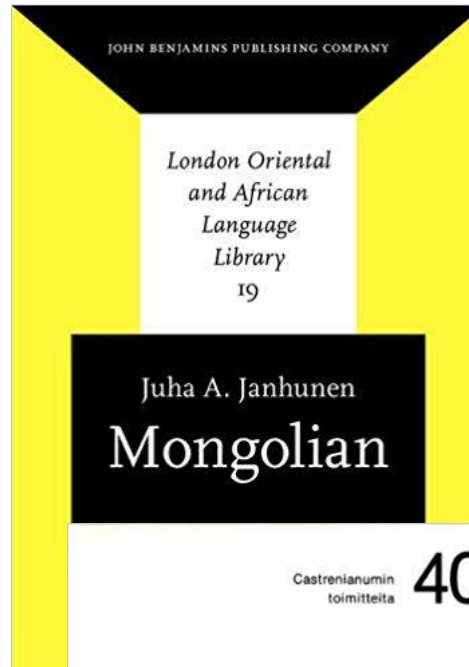
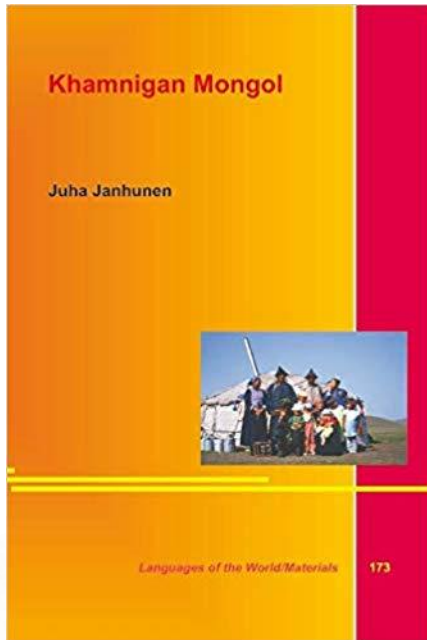
Helsinki, 29 March 2019

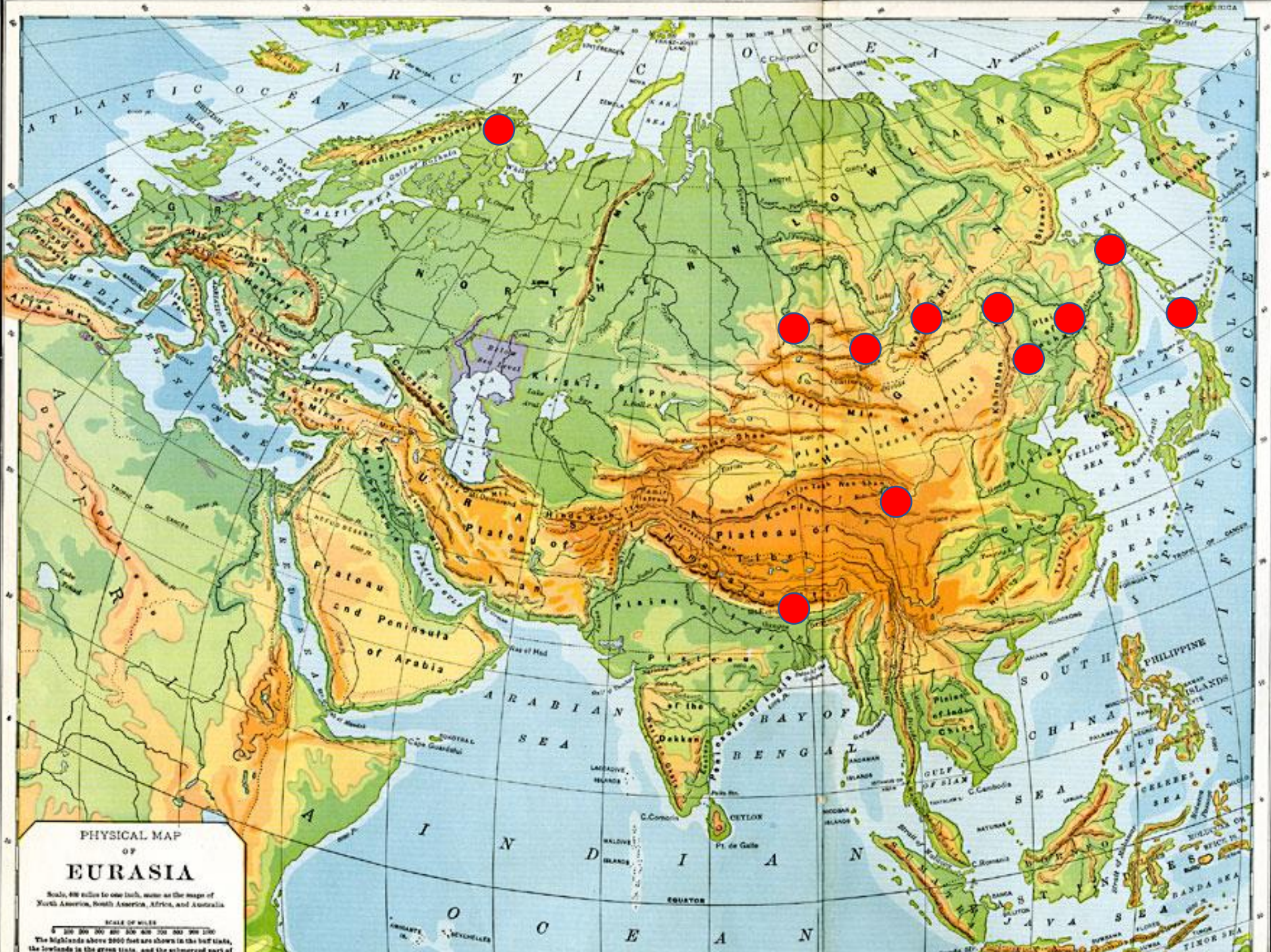
Juha Janhunen

Parameters of discussion

- **Historical perspective** — How it was done before
- **In what language to write?** — English or not?
- **What language to describe?** — Known or unknown?
- **How to get the data?** — Texts or elicitation?
- **Database** — Quality or quantity? How big data?
- **How much to write?** — Large or small?
- **How to proceed?** — Forms or functions?
- **Order of presentation** — Segments vs. constructions
- **Choosing the time level** — Synchrony vs. diachrony
- **Theory base** — Do we need it?
- **Terminology** — How to make it user-friendly?
- **Beyond language** — The extra-linguistic context

My own background





PHYSICAL MAP
OF
EURASIA

Scale, 400 miles to one inch, same as the maps of
North America, South America, Africa, and Australia

SCALE OF MILES

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000

The highlands above 2000 feet are shown in the buff tints, the lowlands in the green tints, and the submerged part of the continental platform in the light blue tint.

Advertisement

**First issue 2019/1
to be published
in May**

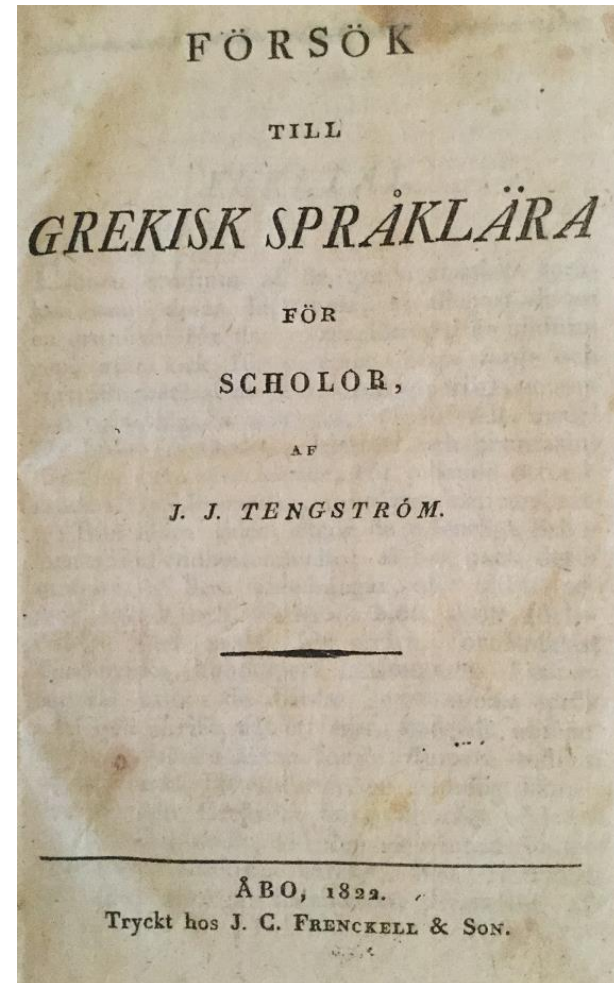
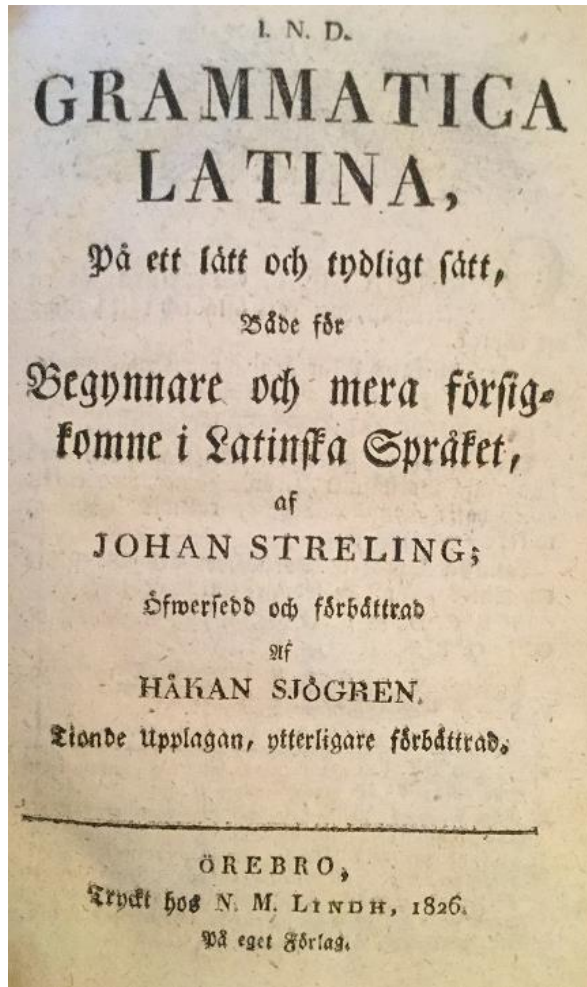
**Contributions are
welcome on:**

- diachrony
- typology
- contacts
- epigraphy

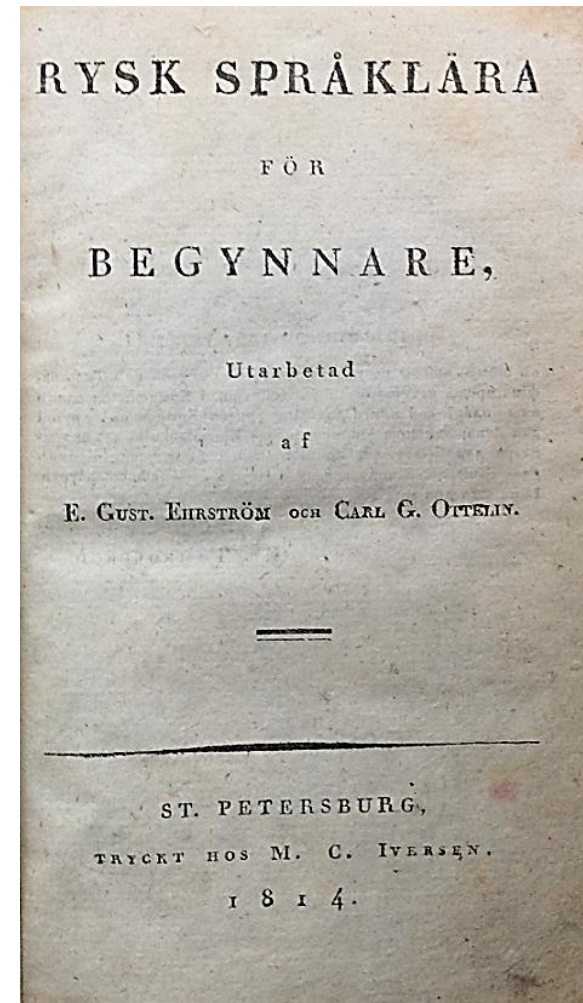
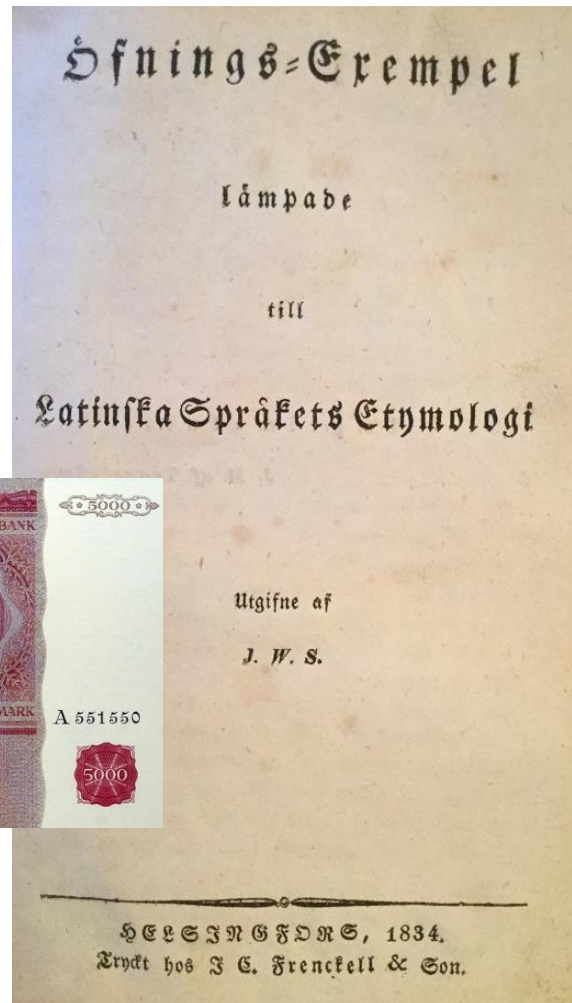
**with a regional focus
on Central Eurasia
(Inner Asia)**

International Journal of Eurasian Linguistics

The grammar school tradition

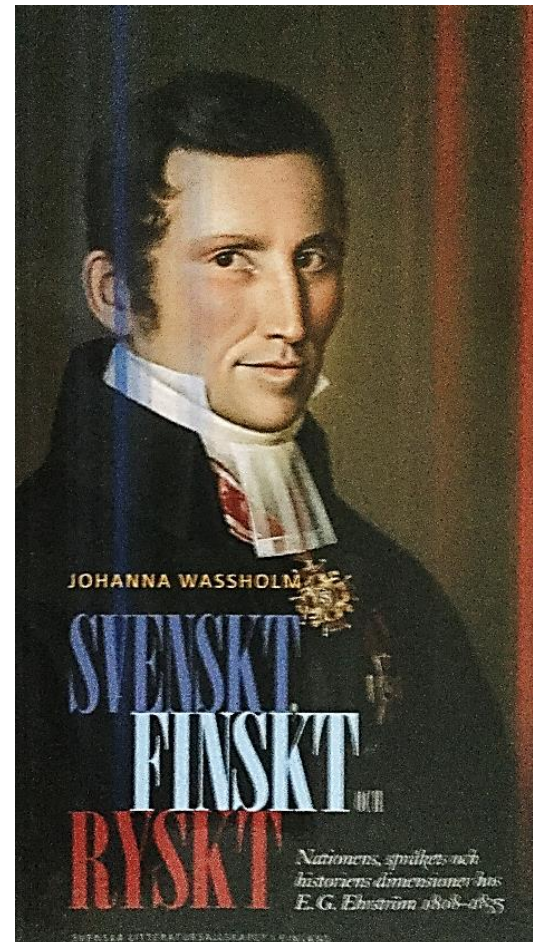


When everyone was a grammarian

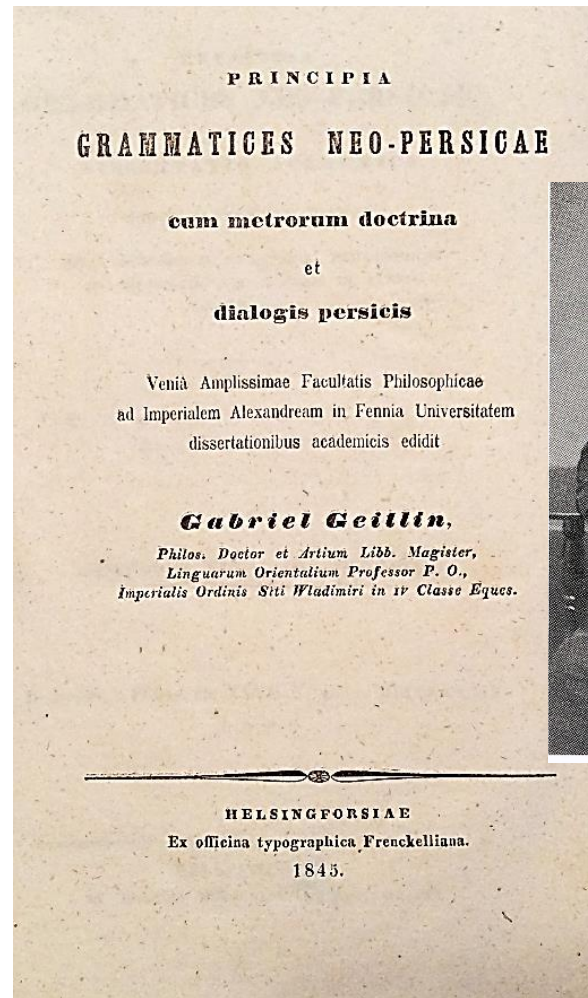
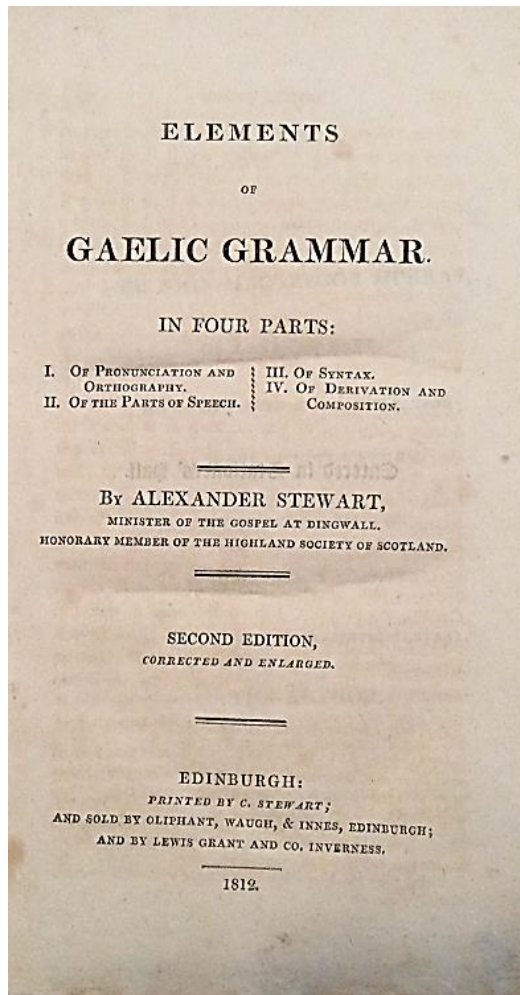


Grammar = basic education

- **Classical**
 - Latin
 - Greek
 - Hebrew
- **National**
 - Finnish
 - Swedish
 - Russian
- **Modern**
 - German
 - French



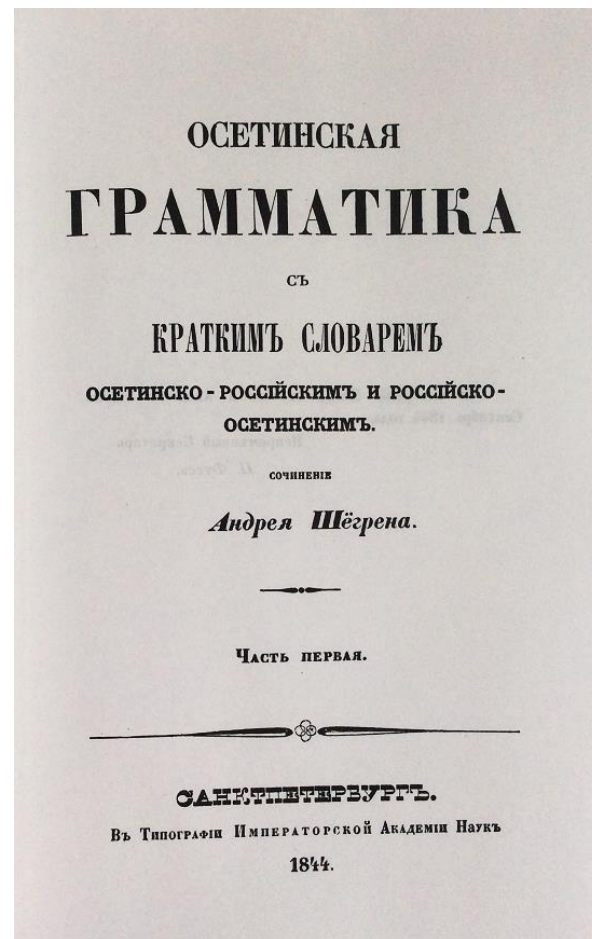
Choosing the metalanguage



Finnish field linguistics: 1st generation



1794-1855



The European model: Rasmus Rask



1817 Anglo-Saxon

1818 Old Norse

1824 Spanish

1825 Frisian

1827 Italian

1830 Danish

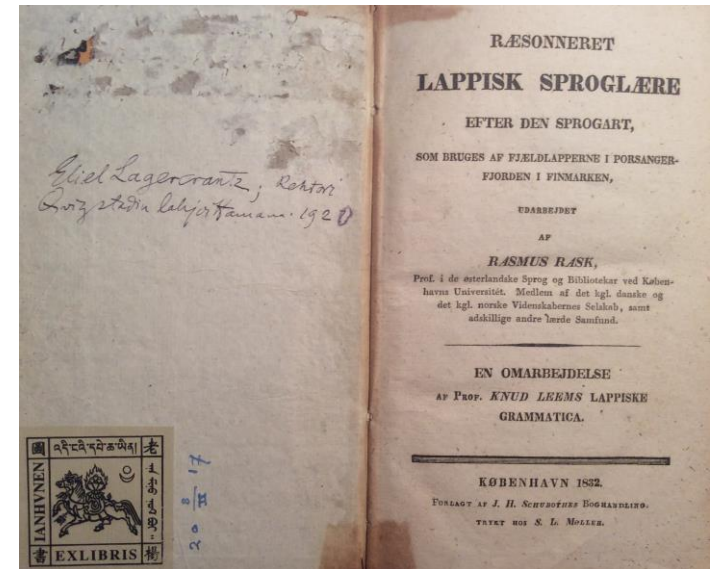
1832 English

1832 Sámi

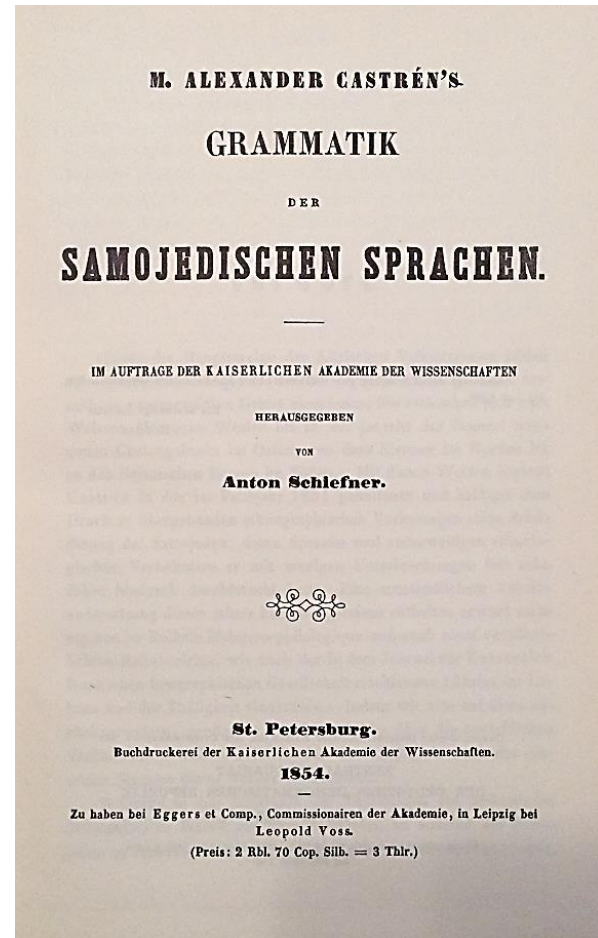
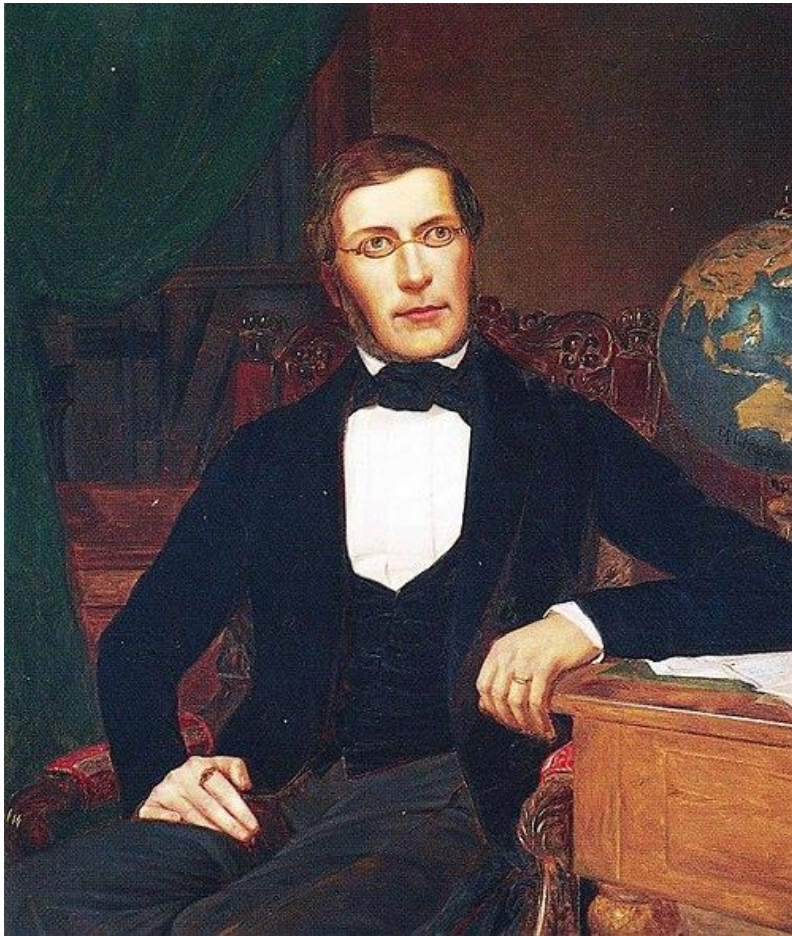
1821 Sinhalese

1826 Avestan

1787-1832



Finnish field linguistics: 2nd generation



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**Manuscripta Castreniana
published by
the Finno-Ugrian Society**

- Linguistica

- Realia

- Personalia

+ online materials

M. A. Castrén

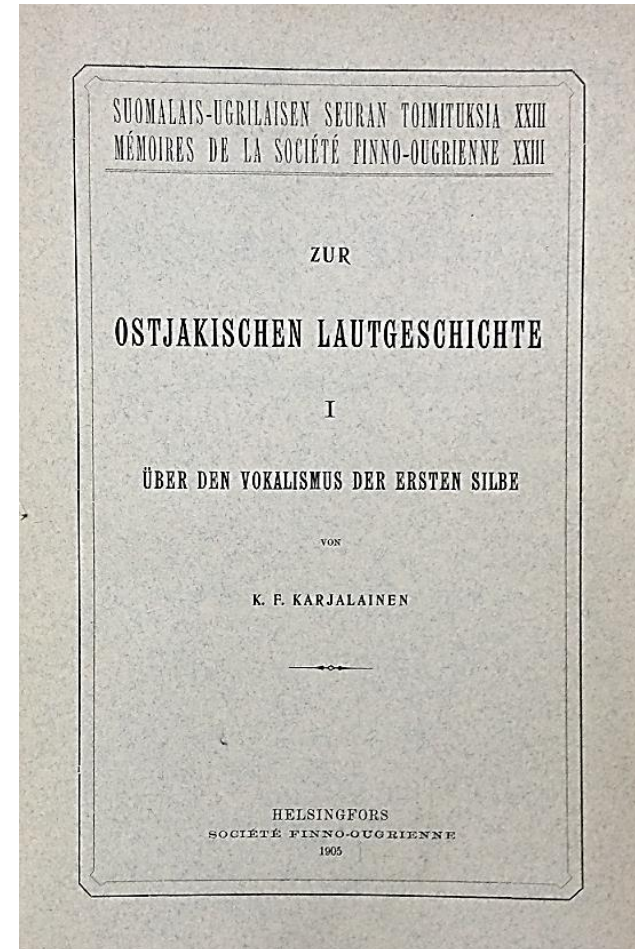


OSTIACICA

Edited by Ulla-Maija Forsberg

MANUSCRIPTA CASTRENIANA
LINGUISTICA V

Finnish field linguistics: 5th generation



The neopositivist generations

Sprachlehre
des
Südlappischen
nach der Mundart von Wefsen
von
Eliel Lagercrantz

Kristiania Etnografiske Museum
Bulletin 1

Kristiania
1923

Lapin kielen opas.

7

määräistä paljoutta osoittavat *aŋ'vat*, *kal'le*, *kallät*, *kè-à'čòs*, *máŋ'ka*, *mò-a'd'pe* (< s. monta), *orra*, *ollo*, *u''é cáa*, *u'e'nán*, *vahá*. — Edelleen huomataan *è-àrà*, *ju-è-čá* toinen | *ju-ò-ò-ya* jokin | *ju-ò''kke* jokainen | *mu''-tem* | *seám-má* sama.

Resiprookkipronomininit. Du. *kò-a'b'vac* ja monik. *ku''ttik* ynnä *kò-ò-ò-me* + poss. suff. toinen toistansa.

Apuverbi *lè-à''t* (ja *orro''t*) olla. — Indik. praesens. yks. 1. *lè-àm*, 2. *lè-à''k*, 3. *lè-à*; duali 1. *lè-à-ni*, 2. *lè-à''p'pe*, 3. *lè-à-wá*, *lè-à-wá*; mon. 1. *lè-à''p*, 2. *lè''ppi''t*, 3. *lè-à''k*. — Imperfekti. Yks. 1. *lè-d-ji''k*, 3. *lè-ò-ò*, *lè-ò*; du. 1. *lè-ò-mè*, 2. *lè-ò-ré*, 3. *lè-ò-ká*, *lè-ò-ò-ká*; mon. 1. *lè-ò-me''k*, 2. *lè-ò-re''k*, 3. *lè-ò-d-ji*. — Optatiivi. Yks. 1. *lè-à-č-č-am* (luc *rrš* < **nč* < ?**ŋkč*), 2. *lè-à-č-č-a''k*, 3. *lè-à-š-š-á*, *lè-à-š*, *lè-š*; du. 1. *lè-š-š-í*, 2. *lè-à-š-š-í*, *š-š-à-š-š-í*, 3. *lè-à-š-š-í*; mon. 1. *lè-à-š-š-í*, 2. *-š-š-í*, 3. *lè-š-š-í*.

§ 58. **Musterbeispiele.** — Der à-Stamm: Sg. Nom. *rěakkà* N. 'Ring', Gen. *rěakkàn*, Akk. *rěakkàp*, Es. *rěakkànε*, Abes. *rěakkòt*, Kom. *rěakkine*, Iness. *rěakkεsε*, Elat. *rěakkεsε*, Ill. *rěakkεsε*; Pl. Nom. *rěakkào*, Gen. *rěakkái*, Akk. *rěakkide*, Kom. *rěakkáigáme*, Iness. = Kom. Sg., Elat. *rěakkiste*, Ill. = Akk. Pl.

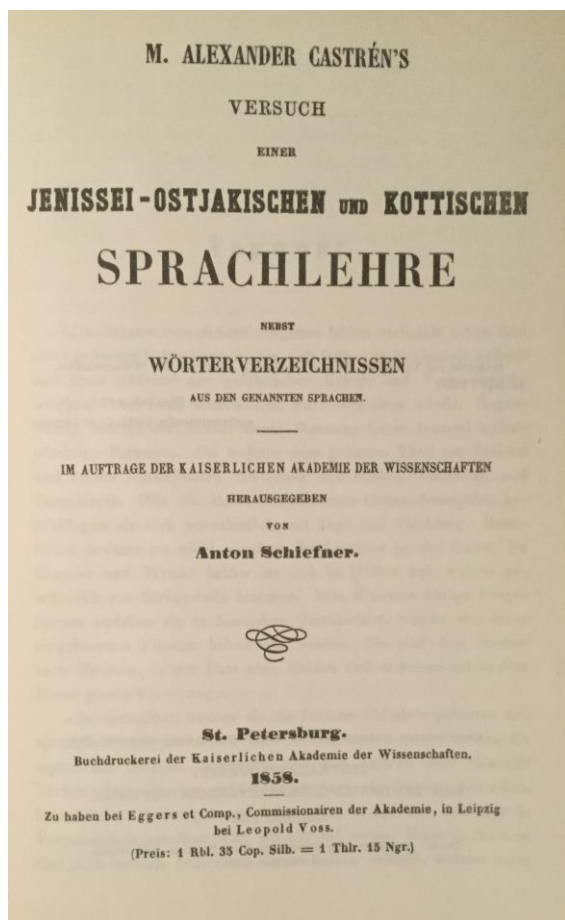
In gleicher Weise werden dekliniert: zweisilbige Nomina: *qŋ'á* S. 'Sehne', *qŋ'já* S. 'Buch', *bqsmà* S. 'Tasche', *bq'š-kà* S. 'Schwanz', *bosokà* S. 'Strauch'.

Viersilbige Nomina mit dem Suffixe *j*: *qweostáj* S. 'Kind mit einer angeborenen Mißbildung', *juš-to'šáj* S. 'ein Umherstreifender', *qššádáj* S. 'ein Kränklicher', *qššwotiertqj* S. 'Tischler', *qššotsáj* S. 'Teufel', *núš'qŋáj* S. 'Frau, Weib', *òr'qŋáj* S. 'Gesicht', *šniéš'kiestáj* S. 'ein Weinender', *wotsiéstáj* S. 'einer der vermindert'; diese Formen sind meistens Nomina actoris.

Mit dem Suffixe *s*: *bruwrejš* S. 'einer, der heiraten soll'; diese Form kann als ein futurales Partizip aufgefaßt werden.

sum, 2. *ki-èsa*, 3. *kissus*; du. 1. *ki-è-so*, 2. *ki-è-se*, 3. *kissuská*; mon. 1. *kissu''p*, *ki-è-so''p*, 2. *kissi''t*, *ki-è-se''t*, 3. *kissust''k*. — Nominaa-limuodot. Inf. *ki-essa''t*. Gerundi *ki-essamin* käärimässä. Gerundiivi *ki-èsa-è-rrijn* kääriessä. Verbaaladv. *ki-èsa* (< genet. **ki-èsan*) kääri-en. Kieltoadverbi *ki-èsa''kë-''t* (táj) käärimättä. Verbaalisubst. *ki-è-sam* kääriminen. Prees. partis. nom. ja ag. *ki-è-se* käärijä, käärivä. Perf.

Texts vs. words vs. forms



<i>Singular.</i>	<i>Plural.</i>
Nom. bięj, <i>Hand</i>	Nom. bięnen
Gen. bięj, bięnda	Gen. bięnen
Dat. biędenę	Dat. bięnenę
Loc. bięgei	Loc. bięnenęi
Abl. biędenęér	Abl. bięnenęér
Instr. bięfäs	Instr. bięnenfäs
Pros. bięnbes	Pros. bięnenbes
Car. bięfan	Car. bięnenfan.
Nom. xoat, <i>Weg</i>	Nom. xėnenę
Gen. xoat, xoadda	Gen. xėnenę, xėnenęda
Dat. xoaddenę	Dat. xėnenędenę
Loc. xoatkei	Loc. xėnenęei
Abl. xoaddenęér	Abl. xėnenędenęér
Instr. xoatfäs	Instr. xėnenęfäs
Pros. xoadbes	Pros. xėnenębes
Car. xoatfan	Car. xėnenęfan.
Nom. up, <i>Vater</i>	Nom. obėę
Gen. up, ubda	Gen. obėę, obėęnda
Dat. ubdanę	Dat. obėęnanę
Loc. ubgei	Loc. obėęngei
Abl. ubdanęér	Abl. obėęnanęér
Instr. uppäs	Instr. obėęnfäs
Pros. ubbes	Pros. obėęnbes
Car. uppan	Car. obėęnfan.
Nom. oppas, <i>Stiefvater</i>	Nom. oppasėę
Gen. oppas, oppasda	Gen. oppasėę, oppasėęnda
Dat. oppasdanę	Dat. oppasėęnanę
Loc. oppaskei	Loc. oppasėęngei
Abl. oppasdanęér	Abl. oppasėęnanęér
Instr. oppasfäs	Instr. oppasėęnfäs

— 134 —

6.

Sing. 1. hama'aniäkę, *ich liebe sie*
 2. hama'aniäku, *du liebst sie*
 3. hama'aniäk, *er liebt sie*

Plur. 1. hama'anläkantę, *wir lieben sie*
 2. hama'anläkanę, *ihr liebet sie*
 3. hama'anläkan, *sie lieben sie.*

Präteritum.

1.

Sing. 1. hama'atolėkę, *ich liebte mich (ihn)*
 2. hama'anilėku, *du liebtest mich*
 3. hama'anilėk, *er liebte mich*

Plur. 1. hama'atolėkantę, *wir liebten mich (ihn)*
 2. hama'anilėkanę, *ihr liebtet mich*
 3. hama'anilėkan, *sie liebten mich.*

2.

Sing. 1. hama'uiolėkę, *ich liebte dich*
 2. hama'uiolėku, *du liebtest dich (ihn)*
 3. hama'uiolėk, *er liebte dich*

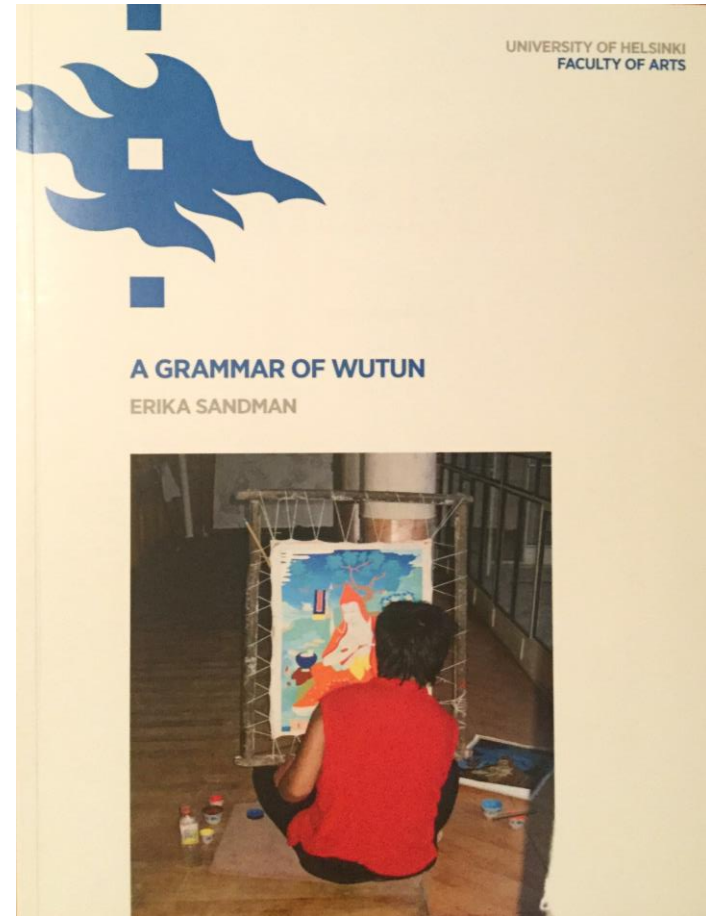
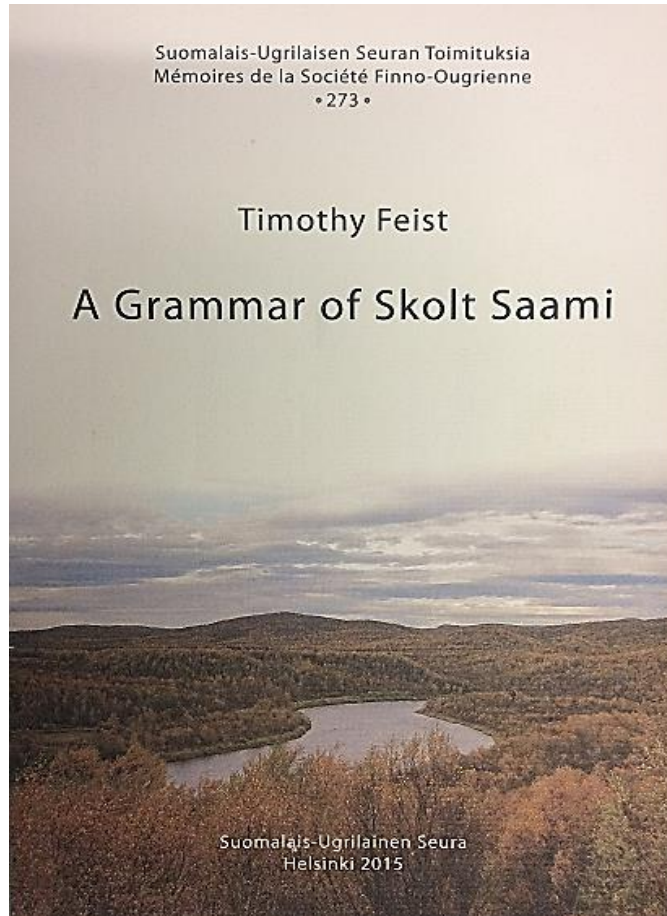
Plur. 1. hama'uiolėkantę, *wir liebten dich*
 2. hama'uiolėkanę, *ihr liebtet dich (ihn)*
 3. hama'uiolėkan, *sie liebten dich.*

3.

Sing. 1. hama'aiolėkę, *ich liebte ihn*
 2. hama'aiolėku, *du liebtest ihn*
 3. hama'aiolėk, *ich liebte ihn*

Plur. 1. hama'aiolėkantę, *wir liebten ihn*
 2. hama'aiolėkanę, *ihr liebtet ihn*
 3. hama'aiolėkan, *sie liebten ihn.*

Taking up grammar writing



Theory or not?

Theory → formalism / dogmatism → irrelevance / oblivion

- **Grounded Theory** (Glaser & Strauss)

Theory or not?

Theory → formalism / dogmatism → irrelevance / oblivion

- **Grounded Theory** (Glaser & Strauss)
- **Basic Linguistic Theory** (Dixon)

Theory or not?

Theory → formalism / dogmatism → irrelevance / oblivion

- **Grounded Theory** (Glaser & Strauss)
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- **Framework-free Theory** (Haspelmath)

Theory or not?

Theory → formalism / dogmatism → irrelevance / oblivion

- **Grounded Theory** (Glaser & Strauss)
- **Basic Linguistic Theory** (Dixon)
- **Framework-free Theory** (Haspelmath)
- **Theory-free Framework** (my recommendation)

The recipe for a good grammar =

Data + Terminology + Common Sense

Form vs. function

- **Function-oriented grammar**

- Universalist approach
- What are the functions?
- Are they verifiable?
- Based on a model language?
- English as a model?

**There are no universals.
Nobody knows.
Normally not.
Typically yes.
Very often.**

- **Form-oriented grammar**

- Language-specific approach
- One form = one function
- Forms are verifiable
- Not based on a model language
- Not based on English

Order of presentation

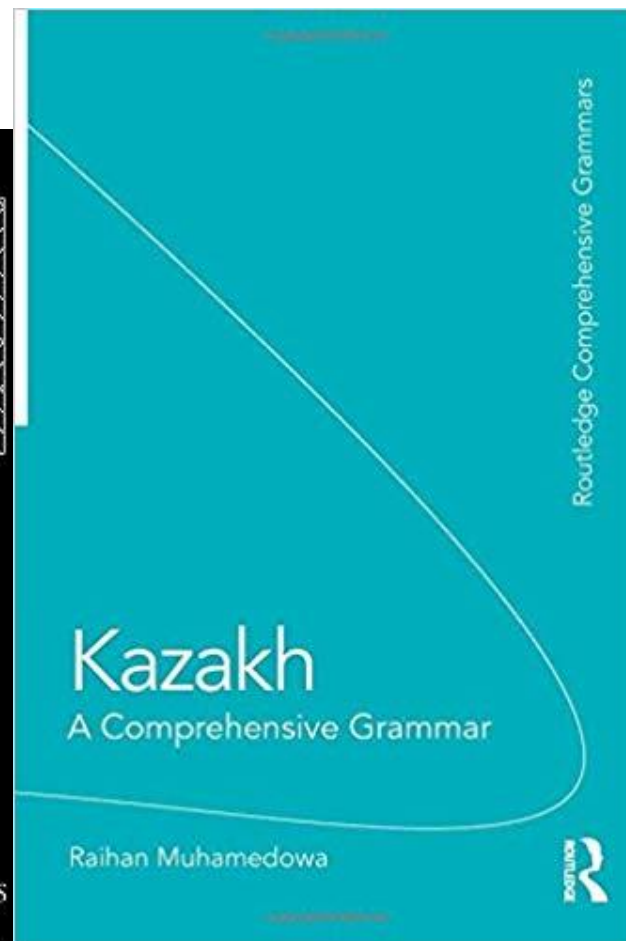
- **Sounds to sentences?**

- Phonetics and phonology
- Morphophonology
- Derivational morphology
- Inflectional morphology
- Morphosyntax
- Phrasal syntax
- Clausal syntax
- Syntax of complex sentences
- Discourse analysis

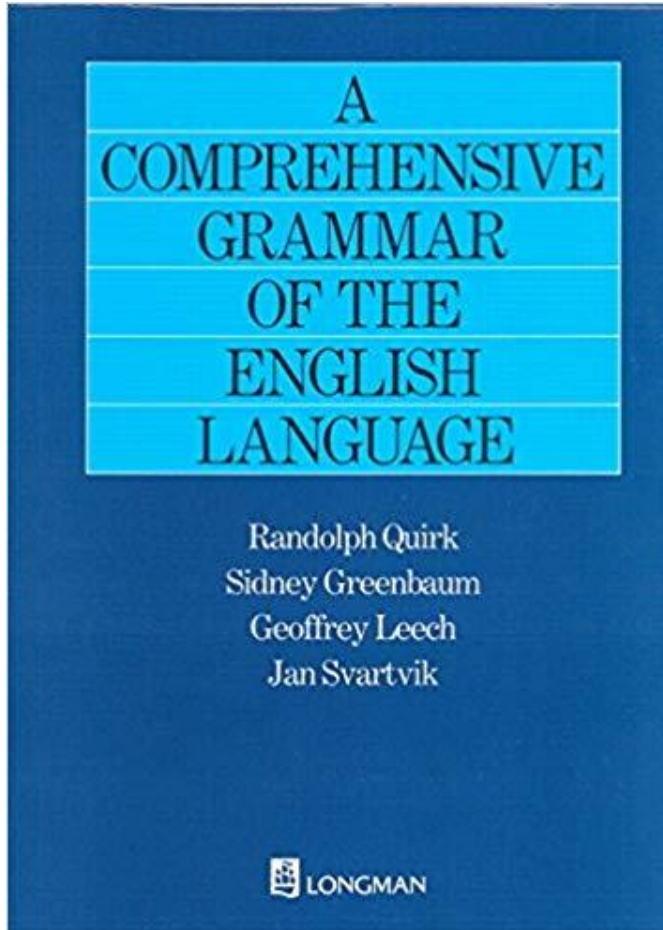
- **Sentences to sounds?**

- Syntax
- Morphology
- Phonology

Grammar is not only about syntax



How big is too big?



1779 pp.



1698 pp.

How to choose terminology?

E.g. Mongolic case form in *-DU/r*

- allomorphs: *-durl-dürl-turl-tür, -dul-dül-tul-tü*
- functions: dative, locative, benefactive, possessive, etc. = 'in, on, at, by, to', etc.

(a) Name by form	dur-form
(b) Name by index	case no. X
(c) Name by function	DAT-LOC
(d) Name by term	dative

Mongolic finite tense-aspect markers

Poppe 1955

Janhunen 2003

Present tense range

*-*m.Ui*

PRS.IMPRF I

Narrative

**-n+A-m > -n'*

PRS.IMPRF II

Durative

**-yU*

PRS.IMPRF III

Deductive

Past tense range

**ji.x.ai > -jai*

PRS.IMPRF

Resultative

**luxA.i > -IAA*

PRS.PRF

Confirmative

**bA.i > -b*

PRT.PRF

Terminative

How many functions in a form?

- Tense forms T
 - Tense-aspect forms TA
 - Tense-aspect-modal forms TAM
 - Tense-aspect-modal-evidential forms TAME
-
- A good grammarian will start from the form, give it a simple name, and list the functions expressed by it
 - Many functions, including “evidentiality” and “mirativity” are secondary, vague, and can even be illusionary just because they have become fashionable topics
 - Not all functions have to be found in all languages

Term building by analogy

- **Conjunct**
- **Conjunctive**
- **Conjunction**
- ...

- **Converb** **Ramstedt 1903**
- **Connegative** **Janhunen? 1977?**
- **Corrogrative** **Janhunen? 1990?**
- ...

Parts of speech

FORMS TO FUNCTIONS

1. Invariables

- functional groups: particles, conjunctions, etc.

2. Variables

- nouns > nominals
- verbs > verbals

3. Ambivalent

- nomina-verba
- functional groups: prowords, adjectives, etc.

From noun to verb to noun

FORMAL TRANSFORMATIONS

1. $N \rightarrow V$ = Verbalization
2. $V \rightarrow N$ = Nominalization

FUNCTIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

1. Noun as predicate = nominal predication
2. Nominalized verb as predicate = finitization

Nominalization

The problems come from the ambiguity of the English term 'noun'

- **Noun : nominal : nominalization**
- **V to N = nominalization, produces deverbal nominals**
- **Some deverbal nominals retain verbality**
 - **“verbal nouns” = *nomina verbalia***
 - = “participles” = nominalized verbs that can occur in adnominal position**
 - = “infinitives” = nominalized verbs in the role of independent head nouns**

Conclusion: “participles” and “infinitives” are functional categories

Verbalization

The problems come from confusing verblity with finiteness

- Verb : verbal : verbalization
- N to V = verbalization, produces denominal verbals
- Denominal verbals are full verbs and do not retain nominal characteristics

- Nominal predication is not verbalization
- Nominalized forms as finite predicates are not “verbalized”, but finitized

Conclusion: “finiteness” is a functional category

Varying functional range

- **Monofunctional verbal forms**
 - the Mongolian tense forms = only finite
 - the Mongolian converbs = only non-finite
- **Polyfunctional verbal forms**
 - Mongolian *-x* = infinitive, participle, finite
 - One form – three functions
 - We call this form a “participle”
 - English *-ing* = infinitive, participle, converb
 - How should we call this form?
 - An option is “gerund”

Finite TAM in Siberian Ewenki

		DX	DX	AOR	PPL	NX	VX	PX	COP
INDEF				-RA-			+		
					-Rii-			+	+
PRS	IMPRF	-JA-		-RA-			+		
	HAB				-bkii-	+			+
FUT	IMPRF	-JA-					+		
	INCH	-JA-	-l.i-	-RA-			+		
	FUT	-JA-			-ngAA-	+		+	+
PAST	PRF				-cAA-	+		+	+
	IMPRF	-JA-			-cAA-	+		+	+
	ITER				-ngkii-			+	
	RES				-nA-	+		+	
MOD	COND	-m-			-cAA-	+		+	+
	DEB				-mAci.n-	+		+	+
	PROB				-rkA-	+		+	+
	OPT				-ngAAt.i-			+	
	NEC				-BkAA-				+

Summarizing verbal forms/functions

	HV	HN	ADN	ADV
• <i>Finitives</i>	+	-	-	-
• Infinitives	+	+	-	-
• Participles	+	+	+	-
• Converbs	-	-	-	+
• Quasiconverbs	-	-	-	+

HV = headverb, HN = headnoun, ADN = adnominal, ADV = adverbial

The power of tradition (Finnish)

QUASICONVERBS

tul.e-ma-lla come-NMLZ-ADESS = modal quasiconverb

tul.e-ma-tta come-NMLZ-ABESS = privative quasiconverb

QUASICONVERBS > CONVERBS

tul-le-n come-NMLZ-INSTR “modaalinen lauseenvastike”

tul-tu-'a come-PASS.PPLE.PRF-PART “temporaalinen lauseenvastike”

PARTICIPLE AS HEADWORD OF OBJECT CLAUSE

nä'-i-n

hän.e-n

tul.e-va-n

see-PRT-1SG

3SG-CONN

come-NMLZ-CONN

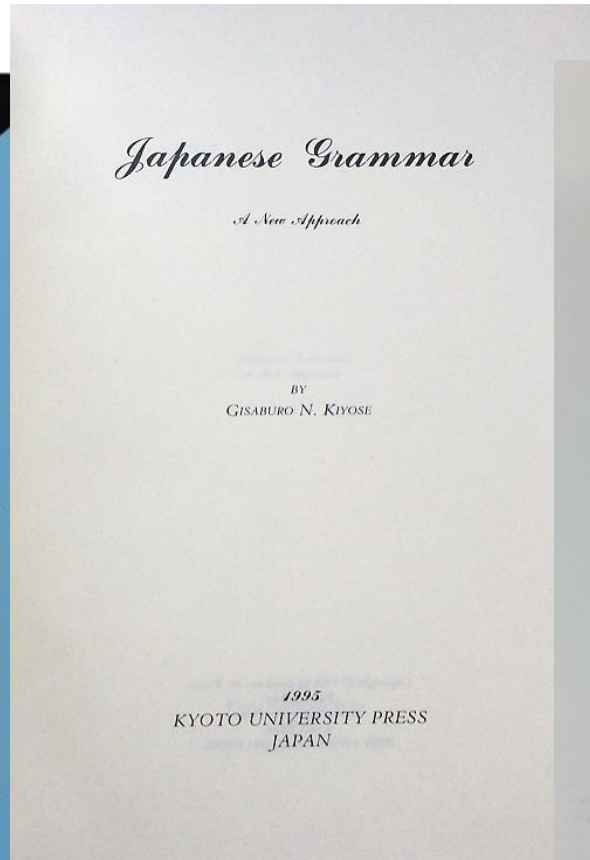
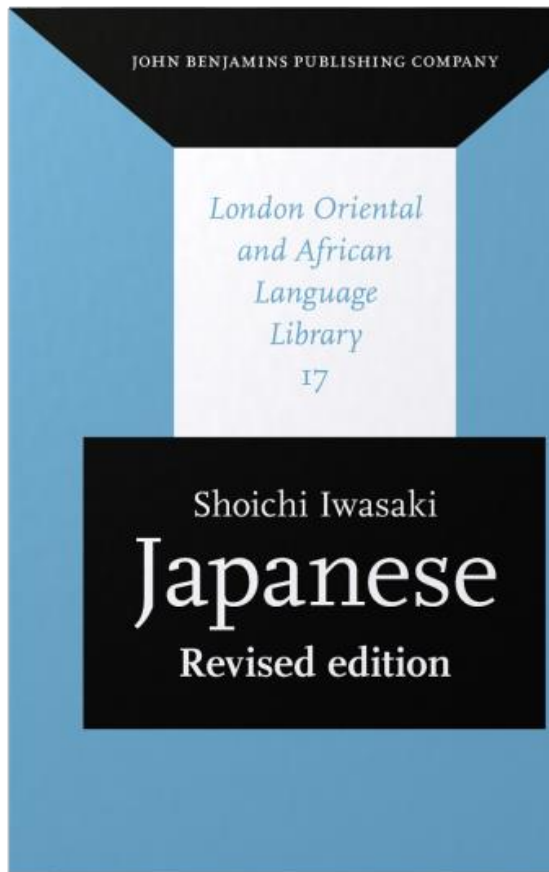
“referatiivinen lauseenvastike” = *accusativus cum infinitivo*

Vague terms – vague concepts

- **Complement**
- **Complementizer**
- **Adjunct**
- **Argument**
- **Valence**
- **Embedded clause**
- **Indirect object**
- **Insubordination**

- **Transitivity**
- **Passive**

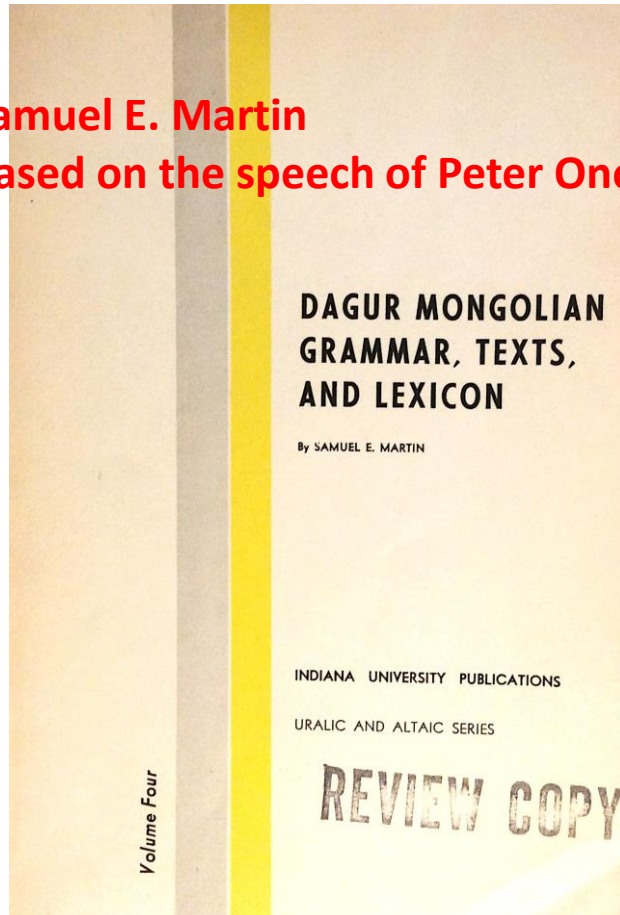
Framework makes a grammar



Whose grammar?

Samuel E. Martin

Based on the speech of Peter Onon



Language
as immaterial property

Kielenopas : -oppaat

Informant/s

Consultant/s

Teacher/s?

Owners?

Corpus work

Other background work

Grammar in context = “Rich grammar”

- **The speakers and their total environment**
- **Spatial setting: geography, ecology, climate**
- **Social setting: demography, ethnology**
- **Chronological setting: history, prehistory**
- **Taxonomic setting: linguistic connections**
- **Areal setting: language contacts, bilingualism**
- **Typological setting: complete structural profile**

The ideal grammar

- **Historical perspective** — learn from the past
- **In what language to write?** — not only in English
- **What language to describe?** — a new one (1 : 5000)
- **How to get the data?** — be not afraid of elicitation
- **Database** — your data is your corpus
- **How much to write?** — quality before quantity
- **How to proceed?** — forms to functions
- **Order of presentation** — segments to constructions
- **Choosing the time level** — pan-chronic approach
- **Theory base** — minimize it
- **Terminology** — make it user-friendly
- **Beyond language** — do not neglect the context