Real language, real literature. Problems of authenticity in modern Finnic minority literatures

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Abstract. Language culture in Europe has been characterized and shaped by the belief in THE standard language as an "ideal code" which contains as little variation and as few foreign influences (above all, loanwords) as possible, corresponding to the folk-linguistic, lexicocentric belief that loanwords are inherently inferior and an ideal language should use "words of its own". These ideals of "precision" and "purity" have also been central in the linguistic emancipation, revitalization and standardization processes of numerous minority languages. Precision and purity are considered the hallmarks of a civilized and developed language, or a "real" language in contrast to a "dialect".
Revitalization and linguistic emancipation often involve the creation of literary texts in various genres. This is not just a practical issue of corpus planning (producing texts for the people to read, for example in school education) but also important for the image of the language: the existence of original poetry and prose or translations of canonic European literature (such as Shakespeare or Goethe) have played an important role in the emancipation of many European languages, "proving" that the language at issue can act as a vehicle for diverse types of European literary culture.
In young minority-language literatures, these two criteria may clash, especially if expectations are geared towards authenticity and realistic representation of the multilingual and/or multidialectal lives and experiences of today's minorities. This paper will analyse a few examples from Finnic minority literatures, focusing on the problems of reconciling multilingual authenticity and the social-indexical functions of language features with the macrogoals of identity-building and corpus planning at the service of the ethnocultural identity.

1. A language for a nation

Kas siis selle maa keel
laulu tuules ei või
taevani tõustes üles
igavust omale otsida?
'The language of this country,
can it not, in the wind of song
rising up to heavens,
seek eternity[1] for itself?'
(Kristjan Jaak Peterson 1818)

Тайӧ кылӧн муköд
Гораджыка сьылас –
Сё кызь сюрс пель сэки
Уна буртор кылас!
'In this language somebody else
will sing more sweetly –

[1] Note that *igavus* in Modern Estonian means 'boredom'; in Peterson's times, it could still be understood in the less lexicalized meaning 'longevity, eternity'.

120.000 ears then
will hear many good things!'
(I. A. Kuratov [1839–1875])

The national awakenings prompted by Romantic Nationalism in the 19th century led to the standardization and modernization of many Finno-Ugric languages: in the Northeast of Europe, first in the emerging state language projects for Finnish and Estonian, and at different points of time from the late 19th to the late 20th century, also with many Finno-Ugric minorities. The goals of these processes were not only practical and political (creating a full-scale, functional national language) but also aesthetic: to create a language which can be used for artistic expression, in all genres of literature. This goal is explicitly expressed by many pioneer authors, such as the Estonian Kristjan Jaak Peterson or the Komi I. A. Kuratov, who in their poems looked forward into "eternity" (as Kristjan Jaak Peterson, with his well-known interest in ancient poets such as Anacreon, very well knew, only the written word is "eternal") or into a future in which literary products ("good things") in their native language and in an aesthetically even more refined form will reach their entire nation ("120.000 ears").

At the times of Romantic Nationalism, language was seen as a product of nature, rather than as a construct or an artefact. The mother tongue was something arising spontaneously from the *Volksgeist* and automatically belonging to all members of the nation as an imagined community or a metaphoric family. The romantic pioneer authors of emerging nations used "a subaltern vernacular in order to demonstrate and celebrate its literary capabilities" (Leerssen 2013: 13), that is, to show that the vernacular connected to their ethnic identity was not just a primitive dialect spoken by peasants and servants but also capable for all types of artistic expression. Paradoxically, however, they had to overlook the conscious processes of language planning and forget the fact that the emerging national language which they wrote was not a direct representation of the common people's authentic vernacular but a standardized, unified, enhanced and purified product used in forms and genres – such as the verse forms of Western European poetry – which were actually alien to the common people. This, of course, was in line with the general folklorism (or "fake-lorism") of these national projects, inventing the tradition and then forgetting how the tradition was invented. (For a summary of the folklorism debate of the late 20th century, see Bendix 2009: 176–187.)

The tradition of Romantic Nationalist language planning lived on in only superficially altered forms in the Soviet Union as well. Both in Scandinavia and in Russia, the literatures of the emerging or recently acknowledged ethnic minority languages struggle with the same problems. (At this point, let me briefly present the Finnic minorities today: written literatures exist for Karelian in Finland and Russia, for Veps in Russia, for the two Far North Finnish varieties, Meänkieli in Sweden and Kven in Norway, for the Võro and Seto varieties in South Estonia which were traditionally considered dialects of Estonian, and to some extent for Livonian in Latvia.) These literatures struggle with the same hidden discrepancy between authenticity and language planning, as reported by many researchers. For Veps in Russia, since the late 1980s or early 1990s, a literary language has existed, but many speakers of the older generation who are more familiar with the traditional vernacular find this new language not authentic, "not the real thing".

. *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 keeps telling me: you speak in a foreign language, because I don’t understand you. I don’t know which language you are speaking, but it’s not Veps. - - Because there are certain words they [= the older generation] don’t know, *neglik* [hedgehog] and *sebranik* [friend], and... Who is a *sebranik*? Oh, *podrušk* [Russian: *podruška* ‘girl-friend’], well *podrušk.’* (Puura et al. 2013: 141)

It may simply be that the written and standardized form of the language is experienced as unauthentic because some speakers resist the idea of written culture. For them, the unified and homogenized written standard just doesn’t feel right, it feels artificial or lifeless, as in this example from a study on the Võro language in Southern Estonia:

> *umma lehte tuud tuud ma piä hindä jaos ümbre tõlkma tuu om väega määndseski kohitsedu keeleh üldiselt kirotõdu*
> *‘Uma Leht* [the Võro-language bimonthly], that, that I must translate for myself, it’s very much, written in a kind of castrated language in general’ (Koreinik 2013: 91)

Facing this paradox, only few authors dare to take a stand and try to bridge the gap between the constructed ethnic language and its legitimation, between the “mother tongue paradigm” or the ethnolinguistic assumption (the idea that there is a simple one-to-one correspondence between a monolingual and monocultural individual’s ethnic identity and language, an organic connection as between a mother and her child; see e.g. Blommaert et al. 2012: 4) and the standard-language ideology which claims that not even native speakers can truly possess or master their language without formal education (Milroy 2001: 537). The only both explicit and elegant attempt that I have managed to find comes from Bengt Pohjanen, perhaps the most active author writing in Meänkieli, a Far Northern Finnish variety which since 2000 has been acknowledged as an autochthonous minority language in Northern Sweden.

> Ennää mie en halvaa olla viehraana toisten toelisuuessa. Mie hääyn oppia suomen, niin, sitä suomea, jota met puhuma ja jota ei vielä ole olemassa, mutta jota mie kannan syämessä sikiönnä, joka jo kauon oon oottanu minun hajoaamista ja sen syntymistä. Enhään mie sitä vielä käsitä, ette mie halvaan synnyttää minun äitinkielen. Samaan se sille, ette mie olen keskonen, mutta minun kielen synnyttäjä mie halvaan olla itte. En mie äpärää halvaa synnyttää rääkhyyn Södertälhjeen Scaniafapriikin krinnuitten ulkopuolele, enkä mie halvaa minun sikiötä huuthaan Torslandavärkissä kilpaa konheitten kans, ette hän halvaa syntyä häänki. Minun kieli halvaa ulos niinku kaikki kielet halvaava, syyreä saahmaan, henkhiin ja haisthaan, anthaan kukile nimiä, kaloile kans, selithään juttuja ja tinkaahmaan, lauhlaan ja itkheen, olheen muitten kielten roikassa. Mie halvaan synnyttää kielen ja sitte auttaa muitaki synnythään. Mie halvan kielen paanmuskaksi.
> ‘I don’t want to be a guest in the reality of others any more. I must learn Finnish, yes, the kind of Finnish that we speak, the language which doesn’t exist yet but which I’m carrying in my heart like a child that has long waited for me to go into labour and give birth to it. I don’t understand yet that I want to give birth to my mother tongue. Never mind that I was prematurely born, I myself want to be the one who gives birth to my language. I don’t want to have a bastard who cries outside the gates of the Scania factory in Södertälje, and I don’t want my child to yell through the noise of the machines in the factory in Torslanda, telling me that

> he, too, wants to be born. My language wants to come out like all languages do, to get oxygen, to breathe and to smell, to give names to flowers, and to fish, too, to explain things and to barter, to sing and to cry, to be a language among other languages. I want to give birth to the language and then help others give birth, too. I want to be the midwife of language.' (Pohjanen 2009: 190–191, my translation)

The quotation is from Pohjanen's autobiographical novel *Jopparikuninkhaan poika* ('The son of the smuggler king', 2009), the story of the protagonist's childhood and youth in Northern Sweden near the Finnish border. The narration begins with the birth of the protagonist, involving two local (and competing) midwives, and by using this metaphor, the author also alludes to the vividly described, often painful and dangerous, reality of physical childbirths in remote villages in the 1940s. This allusion to physical and biological reality is then contrasted with the literary connotations of the expression 'guest in the reality' – *Gäst hos verkligheten,* the title of a famous philosophical novel by the Swedish author Pär Lagerkvist. In Pohjanen's text, this is specified even further: "guest in the reality of others". This 'reality of others' is a literary, theoretical one, while the author's native language is a living being, physically real. At the same time, however, it is only the public and artistic written use by which a language can really exist, because in folk-linguistic thought only written and standardized languages are "real".

With the midwife metaphor, Pohjanen skilfully combines the two opposite aspects of minority language planning, nature and nurture: its ideological legitimation which arises from authenticity (the language has the right to be born because it already exists in some natural way, like an unborn child), and the political challenges this involves (the language cannot be born without the active agency of the midwife, the language activist). Furthermore, the quotation illustrates a typical feature of young literatures in endangered languages: writing *in* the language easily turns into writing *about* the language and language-related issues such as linguistic oppression or discrimination of minorities, the choice of language in itself is a political act and the text has an explicit language-political agenda. In the situation in which minority languages today are used, this means also dealing with the reality of multilingualism, finding a place for the language "among other languages", *muitten kielten roikassa.*

2. Keeping it *our* language: Linguistic purism

The Romantic Nationalist language planning projects in Eastern Europe were also characterized by purism, the avoidance of foreign elements. Thomas (1991: 75–83; see also Brunstad 2003: 57–58, Kamusella 2009) distinguishes six orientations of purism in language planning, some mutually controversial but nevertheless often co-occurring and intertwining:

- *xenophobic* (foreign influences are bad in general),
- *elitist* (the language of educated city elites is inherently better),
- *ethnographic* (authentic dialects of the common people are inherently better),
- *reformist* (a new language for a new society must be created, also to signalize a break with the colonial past),
- *playful purism* (language planning as an aesthetic game), and
- *archaizing* (focus on a "golden age" in the national past).

In a form or another, all of these have been present in the Finno-Ugric language planning movements, although – the traditions of literary and elite language use being very thin or non-existent – the "elitist" and the "archaizing" orientation could only have indirect and abstract representations.

It is also important to note how these aspects of purism relate to the opposition of nature vs. nurture, authentic vs. constructed. The history of Finno-Ugric literatures offers us many examples of both purism-by-construction (as in the Veps example above, with native-based derivatives such as *sebranik* 'friend' replacing established loanwords) and puristic archaisms presented as a return to the ethnographically authentic roots. Again, we meet the paradox of folklorism or what Gayatri Spivak has called strategic essentialism (for an insightful critique, see Lee 2011): accepting and appropriating an "artificial" ethnocultural identity, for political purposes.

Moreover, it must be noted that linguistic purism is often relative. It relates to and targets a certain language as its "enemy", disregarding or re-positioning other languages. In the codification process of Modern Standard Finnish in the 19th century, linguistic purism mainly targeted Swedish influences, making "Swedish" synonymous with "un-Finnish" or "bad Finnish", while Eastern Finnish or Karelian dialect words were perceived as authentic – even if they were adapted Russian loanwords (e.g. *kutri* 'lock (of hair)', *leima* 'stamp'), they were not generally recognized as such, as even educated Finns seldom knew Russian. Similarly, while the Estonian language planning is widely known for its lexical purism and the continuous activity in coining native neologisms such as *arvuti* 'computer' (from the verb *arvuta-* 'count, calculate'), for Võro activists in South Estonia *puutri,* a nativized form of the internationalism *computer,* is more "authentic" than the Standard Estonian word. For many minority languages today, it is the local nation-state language that poses the primary threat, while other international lingue franche, English in particular, may even be perceived as helpers or "allies" in reaching out to the world or in building connections to popular genres.

Debates on puristic language planning are symptomatic of the situation of many minority languages today, and the question whether the language "loses its cultural value with too many foreign words" (Garland 2008: 115) is often heatedly discussed. Freely accepting loanwords from the majority language is an easy solution for modern bilingual speakers, but especially in laymen's eyes, abundant loanwords are understood as a signal of inferiority ("not a real language, just a mixed dialect", "they don't even have a word of their own for X"). On the other hand, too puristic language planning will turn the language into an artificial idiom, "not our language any more", or musealize it into a language for old people and old things.

> *Karttuukos meänkiehleen uusia sanoja vain onkos se semmonen kieli jossako oon vain vanhoita sanoja joitako ihmiset vakovat ja huolehtivat.*
> 'Will Meänkieli be enriched with new words, or is it a language with just old words which people are watching over and caring for?' (Uusitalo 2015: 33, my translation)

The gatekeeper effect – old and/or most fluent speakers with their expert status prevent other, potential users from claiming the language – can be observed especially with many minority languages in Russia (cf. Scheller 2011: 85), where the linguistic culture in general is characterized by prescriptivism. For some endangered languages, the danger of musealization is very real. Claiming and appropriating the language is not enough if the language itself is not really allowed to live and to change.

3. The "real" presence of the other language in literature: from symbolic to macaronic

Literature has played and will play a key role in the promotion, image-construction and maintenance of numerous modern minority languages. Actually, many of them have no role at all or merely symbolic uses in administration and education. Moreover, their media presence may be very restricted, so that literary and artistic uses (for instance, in song lyrics by South Estonian ethno-rock bands) are practically the only public domain open for them.

While the romantic nationalist language and literature projects were characteristically monolingual, stressing the "purity" and celebrating the expressive capacities of the national language, today's minorities face a different challenge. For them, creating and maintaining a monolingual world in literature is only possible in certain genres such as historical fiction. Any kind of text which relates to the linguistic reality of today *must* pay attention to multilingualism and the presence of other languages in modern minorities' life. How this is expressed in the text can be analysed along different dimensions of form and function.

Speaking of function, the explicit presence of other languages in the text can express a subversive, emancipatory agenda: explicitly thematizing linguistic oppression, as in this excerpt from a novel by Alf Nilsen Børsskog, a pioneer of Kven literature. In the novel, the end of World War II is approaching and the protagonists, a group of Kvens, sitting in a hideout in the mountains while waiting for the German occupation army to leave their village, are passing their time by chatting about everything between heaven and earth.

> Enkelitten kuorolaulusta kuosuvaarantakalaiset siirrythiin maalishiin asioihin, ko het alethiin puhuskelehan Kentän kouluhuonheesta, koulumiehestä, ja häne opettamisesta, josta het ei olheet ymmärtänheetkhään niin paljookhaan. «Eihän se mies puhunukhaan meiđän ommaa kieltä,» sanoi Anni. Kaikki heilä oli jäänny oppimatta: Raamatunhistoria, Klaarikka, norjan kieli, äiđinkieli ja vieläpä räkinkiki. Kuka heistä pikkulapsista olis saattanu tiettäät mitä se *fem pluss fem* oli. «Hyvin met tiesimä ette viisi ja viisi oli kymmenen. Mutta kuka viheliäisen viisas olis saattanu arvata mitä tuo *fem pluss fem* oli?» kysyi Anni.
> 'From the choral song of angels, the people behind the Kuosuvaara fjell went on to worldly affairs and started talking about the schoolhouse at Kenttä, the teacher and his teaching, of which they hadn't understood very much. "He didn't even speak our language", Anni said. They had missed everything: Bible history, the Catechism, the Norwegian language, their mother tongue, and even mathematics. Who of them, little kids, could have known what *fem pluss fem* ['five plus five'] was. "We knew very well that five and five makes ten. But who was smart enough to guess what that *fem pluss fem* means?" Anni asked.' (Nilsen-Børsskog 2004: 198, my translation)

This is a very typical example of how the negative aspects of multilingualism are presented in minority literature, thematizing linguistic oppression and assimilatory policies. The foreign elements are sparse and almost symbolic: we don't get a realistic representation of the classroom situation and the hopeless communication attempts between the Norwegian-speaking teacher and the Kven children, a short token phrase in another language is enough to convey the idea of the language barrier. In Meir Sternberg's (1981) taxonomy, this kind of multilingualism moves between

“homogenizing convention” (basically, everything is translated into the language of narration) and “selective reproduction” (only a few examples of the other language are given).

At the other end of the continuum of literary multilingualism, we have what Sternberg (1981) calls “vehicular promiscuity” and what is traditionally often called macaronism or, sloppily, “mixed language”. The other language is present in so numerous insertions that it is difficult to determine which language is the “matrix” one, and sometimes even grammatical elements or constructions can be mixed or intertwined. Macaronism is traditionally used in multilingual puns and inside jokes of multilingual groups, from European academic traditions of mixing Latin with the local vernacular to the multilingual folklore of minority groups, expressing and sharing the joy of being able to play with multiple linguistic resources, their structural and connotational differences (cf. Verschik 2013). One of my favourite examples of classical macaronic folklore comes from a collection of Veps folklore texts, published in the Soviet Union in the 1960s (Zajceva & Mullonen 1969). In this *chastushka,* almost all lexical words are Russian, while the grammar is mostly Veps, with only a couple of hybridized constructions showing both Veps and Russian elements (as in *ot butylkad* ‘from the bottle’, with the Russian preposition *ot* and the Veps partitive case ending *-d* – note that Finnic prepositions usually have their head words in the partitive case). The point here is not that the Veps would not be able to express these things in their own words; rather, this is a multilayered joke playing both on the presence of Russian in the linguistic environment of the Veps and the Veps speakers’ ability to combine two languages and two grammars.

taŕi, taŕi bi kolhozas
d'isćipl'inan nav́et't'a.
pŕedśedat'el'ad kolhoza
ot butl̮kad otv́et't'a.
‘Necessary, necessary it would be in the collective farm
to introduce (more) discipline,
to wean the president of the collective farm
from the bottle.’

In the context of language endangerment, however, macaronism may assume another role. Relating to the traditionally puristic goals of national language planning, macaronism can be used to create caricatures of the threatening assimilation: look what our language is becoming, is it really so that we cannot use our own words any more? This poem by Olga Moshnikova, a Karelian activist, was published on the website for Karelian teachers and language activists, *opastajat.net (http://opastajat.net/luvekkua/muut/olmo.html).* The title of the poem, *Šipainik,* refers to what is known as a “Karelian pasty” in Finland: the name of a characteristically Karelian pie, a filling of rice, barley or potato in thin rye crust, appears in a Russified form (instead of traditional Olonets Karelian *šipa(i)niekku*), symbolizing the Russification of Karelian culture and identity.

Oppizin paista nygözeh moudah,
kui karjalan rahvas ven’akse murdau.
Olis vai himo säilyttiä kieli,
eihäi sit nagrettas oma hieru.

Gu tulethäi kunne,
sit ”zdraste vam”, kuuluu.

Pagin luadu ven'akse muuttuu.

Vahnat, gu bluaznat, muodoillah kaikkeh,
vai olis havahtuakseh, gu tuulen hattu.
Oppiet vai duumaija – mi on kummu:

> Kak dela podruugu, čto novogo kuuluu?
> Tänäpäi televizoras on hyvä fil'mu,
> tule hos gostih da pozvoni kerdu.
> Toizel kerral ob'azatel'no tulen,
> a tänäpäi en voi, zan'atoi olen.
> Utrečkom avtoubusal gorodah ajan,
> Produktua, podarkua lapsile ostan.
> Nu ladno, poka. Sčastlivo ajua.
> Muuzale piivuo ne zabud' ostua.

Kehvelin boleznii meih nygöi pristuanii.
Ved' umnoit dai gramotnoit bili bi kaikin,
Hinnan dai sprosan ičele znaem.
Mikse sit tuskas žizn' protekaet?

('I tried to speak in today's way,
the Russian lingo which Karelians are speaking.
If only one would want to maintain one's own language,
and not be the laughing stock of the whole village.

Wherever you arrive,
you can hear *zdraste vam* [Russian greeting words],
the talk turns into Russian.

Old people, like fools, adapt to everything,
they should just wake up.
Just try to think – how strange this is:

> *How are you, my friend, what's news?*
> Today on TV there's a good film,
> why don't you come *to visit* and *ring me up* some time?
> Some other time I'll come, *absolutely,*
> but today I can't, I'm *busy.*
> *In the morning,* I'll take the *bus* to the *city,*
> buy *food* and *presents* for the kids.
> *OK, so long!* Have a *nice* ride!
> *Don't forget* to buy beer *for the husband.*

What a darned *disease* we have *caught*.
We *should* all *be wise* and *literate,*
we know our price and the *demand* for us.
Why *is our life going by* in anxiety?')

The markedly Russian elements of the poem are not easy to distinguish from established Russian loanwords. For instance, there is no native or inherited word in

Karelian for ‘TV’ or ‘film’, and even *gost'ih* ‘to visit’ or *piivo* ‘beer’ are established loans which were used by Karelian speakers already a hundred years ago. The most obvious Russian loans are greetings and discourse words (*kak dela, čto novogo* ‘what’s news’, *nu ladno, poka* ‘OK, so long’) or verb phrases showing Russian inflections (*ne zabud’* ‘don’t forget’, *znaem* ‘we know’, *žizn’ protekaet* ‘life goes on’). The middle part of the poem, marked as a citation with indentation, illustrates modern Karelian language use, and the last lines, with the narrator also switching to the mixed code, seem to signal a kind of resignation: the influence of Russian is like a disease which we cannot cure any more. Iconically, the last words of the last line represent a complete Russian phrase with Russian grammar.

4. Accommodating mimetic multilingualism

The two previous examples were, in different ways, related to the problematic side of multilingualism as experienced by speakers of endangered minority languages: experiences of linguistic oppression and language barriers, as in the Kven example, or the consequences of assimilation and low prestige of the heritage language, as in the Karelian example. However, modern minorities are often not only bilingual but multilingual, and their linguistic environment includes other languages as well. These languages are not necessarily experienced as a threat, and as they are not necessarily or immediately connected to acute issues of endangerment or inequality, they can be used for aesthetic goals. In the following example, by the Võro-language poet Contra (Margus Kõnnula)[2], the text includes a short phrase in English and the name of a famous Danish football goalkeeper.

> mille meheq from greit briten
> aina juuskva platsi piten
> mille takan aetas kerrä
> õkvalt kae aolehtist perrä
>
> püvvä hinnäst kurssi viiä
> mängjät üttegi ei tiiä
> tiiä vaid et postõ vaihõl
> taanlastõl sais piitrõ smaihhel
>
> (‘why do men *from Great Britain*
> keep running along the square
> why are they chasing a ball
> just look it up in the newspapers
>
> I try to keep myself posted
> I don’t know a single player
> I only know that between the posts
> the Danes have Pete Schmeichel standing’)

[2] Quoted from http://wi.ee/voro/kiranigu/contra/

The most obvious reason for embedding the English words *from Great Britain* into the Võro-language text in the first line seems to be the same as for the name *Schmeichel* in the last line, namely: playing with the sound of these words. Note that both are written with small letters and orthographically transcribed, and Schmeichel's given name is "nativized" *(Piitrõ)*. What we see here is an aesthetic game of finding nice rhyme words, and notably such rhymes that would be impossible in Standard Estonian, the omnipresent dominant language for all Võro speakers. Although the tradition of Estonian poetry is very rich in highly skilled use of rhyme and meter, Standard Estonian for phonological reasons has very few word forms ending with *-n* (to rhyme with *Britain*) and no *-aih-* sound sequences (to rhyme with *Schmeichel*). In these verses, Contra humorously demonstrates how characteristically South Estonian features can be used to create rhymes with foreign words.

We can also read this poem as a miniature illustration of the issue which was already briefly mentioned: endangerment and assimilation are relative, always related to a certain dominant language, and for many minorities, English and other major lingue franche can provide a direct international connection, relativizing the importance of the dominant state language. These foreign items embedded in the text provide a vantage point from which South Estonian, formerly considered "just a dialect", is now in no way inferior to Standard Estonian but a language in the company of other languages (*muitten kielten roikassa,* as Bengt Pohjanen put it in Meänkieli). So, finally, what this example illustrates is increased awareness of multilingualism in general, not just between the dominant language and the minority language at issue.

Multilingualism in literature was long understood as directly reflecting the real-life multilingualism of the author or, more generally, the author's ethnic community. Even in our days, minority and migrant literatures are often subject to an ethnographic authentity expectation: in the same way as women authors in the 19th century were expected to represent a "woman's perspective", migrant and minority authors have long been expected to deliver an ethnographically authentic representation of their linguistic environment and experience (for an analysis of this debate, see e.g. Nilsson 2013: 52–61).

Looking at modern Finnic minority literatures, however, we find very little if any realistic representations of everyday multilingualism. And, notably, this is the case despite the strong traditions of realism in many national literatures and despite the emancipatory agenda of many minority literatures. Instead of constant code-switches and ample nonce loanwords, in modern Finnic minority literatures we see multilingualism and language contacts represented by either a handful of selected token phrases in the other language, as in the Kven example before, or an exaggerated caricature of multilingual communication, as in the Karelian example – both at the service of revitalization or fighting linguistic oppression. Alternatively, minority authors like all others can turn their back to linguistic realism and freely use multilingualism for aesthetic goals, even if this aesthetic use might in turn have connections to language-political issues. We might draw the conclusion that multilingualism in minority literatures has precious little to do with real languages or their use.

Even if analysing these examples needs special linguistic expertise, the real challenge probably lies in understanding and describing the aesthetic and mimetic aspects of literary multilingualism – in relation to prevailing traditions, conventions, and expectations of the target audience, the literary and linguistic culture in which these texts have been produced. These cultures, in turn, differ in different countries. Post-Soviet Russia with its general glorification of the Russian language, despite a certain formal goodwill towards the traditional cultures and folklores of indigenous peoples, is ideologically different from the Nordic countries, where assimilationist policies have in the late 20th century largely given way to more generous attitudes towards minorities

(even if there are still numerous problems on both ideological and practical levels), and from Post-Soviet Estonia with its strongly language-based nationalism. Multilingual individuals do not perceive themselves as representing a phenomenon in general: their multilingualism exists in relation to the languages involved and their situation. For multilingual literatures, this applies to an even greater extent: we should also understand different cultural and literary traditions and their political contexts.

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