

Workshop at the 51th Annual Meeting of the *Societas Linguistica Europaea*,
Tallinn, 29th August – 1st September 2018

Circum-Baltic languages: varieties, comparisons, and change

Convenors: Liina Lindström (University of Tartu), Helle Metslang (University of Tartu),
Andra Kalnača (University of Latvia)

The languages of the Circum-Baltic region belong primarily to the Indo-European (Baltic, Slavic, Germanic) and Uralic (Finnic, Saami) families. These languages have historically developed common features which have triggered discussions over a possible *Sprachbund* (see e.g. Stolz 1991). The University of Stockholm research project “Language typology around the Baltic Sea” (1991–1996) yielded the 2001 compendium “The Circum-Baltic languages” (Dahl, Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001a, 2001b), in which it was concluded that the region is more properly regarded as a contact superposition zone (Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Wälchli 2001). The Indo-European languages of this region are considered close to Standard Average European (SAE) languages, while the Uralic languages fall on the periphery of SAE or outside of it entirely (Haspelmath 1998, 2001). The area as a whole forms part of a buffer zone between SAE and Central Eurasia (Wälchli 2011).

The Circum-Baltic language area has developed as a result of historical contacts between historical language forms. In the modern world, language contact is no longer as dependent on geography; interaction takes place online and English has become the *lingua franca*. Changes are being observed which are bringing languages on the periphery of SAE closer to typical SAE languages (Heine, Kuteva 2006, see also Lindström, Trigel 2010, Metslang 2009). The boundaries of language areas may not be stable, and they may be formed by shared or diverging trends of language change rather than by the presence or absence of stable features (see Campbell 2016).

Language comparison and typological generalizations have thus far been based overwhelmingly on studies of standard language. It has been observed that the SAE features are more typical of the standard forms of European language than their non-standard variants (Fiorentino 2007, Seiler 2016). If a language lacks an established standard form, studies rely on other available material, primarily from dialects. Thus a single language form is often taken to represent the language as a whole. In order to obtain a more accurate picture, it is necessary to analyze the languages of this region in all their variety, to compare different forms of the same language as well as similar/analogous forms of different languages. Without including non-standard language varieties, the resulting picture is coarse and one-sided, from both a static and a dynamic perspective (Kortmann 2010, Murelli, Kortmann 2011, Auwera 2011, Wälchli 2011, Szmrecsanyi, Wälchli 2014).

The rapid development of corpora in the 21st century creates better opportunities for comparison of language variants. Corpora may represent different registers, regional dialects, idiolects, communication channels (verbal, written, online) etc. Such diverse corpus material is well-suited for identifying characteristic features of particular language varieties. In addition to corpora, new

data may come from other sources, such as linguistic questionnaires, linguistic experiments or new media.

The aim of the workshop is to take a new look at the Circum-Baltic area, taking into account new data sources of standard languages as well as including data coming from non-standard varieties, registers, etc. The use of new data sources makes it possible to improve comparisons between the individual languages in the area as well as to identify common linguistic features and usage patterns in the area which have hitherto been understudied or even unnoticed. The broader goal is to add new data into the discussion on areal features in Circum-Baltic languages.

We welcome presentations which bring new data and knowledge regarding the common and distinctive features of Circum-Baltic languages:

- concerning standard or non-standard varieties of Circum-Baltic languages using data from new data sources (e.g. corpora)
- concerning comparisons between the languages in the area on different levels of language (phonetics and phonology; morphosyntax; (lexical) semantics and pragmatics), based on new data;
- pointing out the changes taking place in this region both in terms of individual language features as well as in the delimitation of the language area itself.

References

- Auwera, Johan 2011**, Standard Average European. – Bernd Kortmann, Johan van der Auwera (eds.), *The Languages and Linguistics of Europe: A Comprehensive Guide*, Volume 1. (World of Linguistics, vol. 1. Ed.: Hans Heinrich Hock.) De Gruyter Mouton, 291–306.
- Campbell, Lyle 2016**, Why is it so Hard to Define a Linguistic Area? – R. Hickey (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Areal Linguistics*. (Cambridge Handbooks in Language and Linguistics, pp. 19-39). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dahl, Östen & Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria 2001a**, *The Circum-Baltic Languages*, vol. 1. Past and present. (Studies in Language Companion Series 54.) Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins.
- Dahl, Östen & Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria 2001b**, *The Circum-Baltic Languages*, vol. 2. Grammar and Typology. (Studies in Language Companion Series 55.) Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins.
- Fiorentino, Giuliana 2007**, European relative clauses and the uniqueness of the relative pronoun type. – *Rivista di Linguistica* 19.2, 263–291.
- Haspelmath, Martin 1998**, How young is Standard Average European? – *Linguistic Sciences*, 20 (3), 272–287.
- Haspelmath, Martin 2001**, The European linguistic area: Standard Average European. – Martin Haspelmath, Ekkehard König, Wulf Oesterreicher, Wolfgang Raible (eds.), *Language typology and language universals: An international handbook*. Vol. 2. (Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft, 20.2.) New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1492–1510.
- Heine, Bernd, Tania Kuteva 2006**, *The changing languages of Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins,

- Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria & Wälchli, Bernhard 2001**, The Circum-Baltic languages: An areal-typological approach. – Östen Dahl, Maria Koptjevskaja-Tamm (eds.), *The Circum-Baltic Languages*, vol. 2. Grammar and Typology. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins, 615–750.
- Kortmann, Bernd 2010**, Areal variation in syntax. – Peter Auer, Jürgen E. Schmidt (eds.), *Language and Space: An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation. Theories and Methods*, 837–864. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.
- Murelli, Adriano & Bernd Kortmann 2011**, Non-standard varieties in the areal typology of Europe. – Bernd Kortmann, Johan van der Auwera (eds.), *The Languages and Linguistics of Europe: A Comprehensive Guide*, Volume 1. (World of Linguistics, vol. 1. Ed.: Hans Heinrich Hock.) De Gruyter Mouton, 525–544.
- Lindström, Liina & Ilona Tragel, 2010**, The possessive perfect construction in Estonian. – *Folia Linguistica*, 2, 371–400.
- Metslang, Helle 2009**, Estonian grammar between Finnic and SAE: some comparisons. – *STUF – Language Typology and Universals*, 62 (1–2), 49–71.
- Seiler, Guido 2016**, Variation as a window to the past: On the origins of Standard Average European. – Book of abstracts. 49th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, 31 August – 3 September 2016, University of Naples Federico II, Naples (Italy), 248–249.
- Stolz, Thomas 1991**, Sprachbund im Baltikum? Estnisch und Lettisch im Zentrum einer sprachlichen Konvergenzlandschaft. Bochum: Brockmeyer.
- Szmrecsanyi, Benedikt & Wälchli, Bernhard (eds.) 2014**, *Aggregating Dialectology, Typology, and Register Analysis: Linguistic Variation in Text and Speech*. (Linguae & Litterae 28.) Berlin / Boston, Walter de Gruyter.
- Wälchli, Bernhard 2011**, The Circum-Baltic languages. – Bernd Kortmann, Johan van der Auwera (eds.), *The Languages and Linguistics of Europe: A Comprehensive Guide*, Volume 1. (World of Linguistics, vol. 1. Ed.: Hans Heinrich Hock.) De Gruyter Mouton, 325–340.

