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Call for papers: *NJL* Special Issue on the Nordic Languages and Second Language Acquisition Theory

The second issue of Volume 33 (2010) of the *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* will be a special issue devoted to the Nordic Languages and Second Language Acquisition Theory, edited by Ute Bohnacker and Marit Westergaard.

The theme of the special issue is intended to solicit contributions on Nordic languages being acquired as non-native languages as well as work on Nordic-language native speakers learning a second language – not necessarily a Nordic one. We shall adopt a wide definition of the term ‘second language’ (L2), i.e. a non-native (second, third, etc.) language acquired in late childhood, adolescence or adulthood, in a naturalistic or an instructed setting.

For many inhabitants of the Nordic area, a second language is a near-must. Higher education is not always available in one’s first language in the Nordic region, and communication outside one’s home area or community often relies on a non-native language – typically Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, or English. L2 use is also commonplace in areas of language contact, such as the Arctic area of Scandinavia.

However, systematic research on L2 acquisition in the Nordic countries only dates back a few decades. New theories of L2 learning from America and mainland Europe were taken on at Nordic universities and teacher training colleges at a time when some of the Scandinavian countries, Sweden in particular, saw a major influx of immigrants who would soon be acquiring the language of the host country. In the 1970s and the 1980s, researchers began collecting production data from these adult learners, often in cross-sectional studies. Some data were also collected from school-age instructed L2 learners, particularly for Finnish/Swedish. As in other countries at that time, a renewed interest in language universals led to a search for typical L2 features and universal L2 developmental sequences, especially concerning syntax and morphology. This search for L2 universals continues today within a number of theoretical frameworks. Proposals of universal L2 sequences and the theories behind them have been challenged by recent studies that compare L2 learners with typologically different native languages (L1s). Different L1/L2 pairings suggest that the properties of the L1 influence the course of L2 acquisition to a considerable extent. How much such findings corroborate earlier proposals of transfer and whether transfer effects show up to the same extent in all linguistic domains (e.g. phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse pragmatics) remains a matter of vivid debate, and more empirical studies are needed.

Another major avenue in L2 research is comparisons of child L2 and adult L2 acquisition. However, effects of age on the developmental course and eventual outcome of L2 acquisition have not been investigated much for the Nordic languages, and there are remarkably few studies of child L2 learners concerning the Scandinavian languages (Danish, Faroese, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish) or indeed any of the other Nordic languages (Finnish, Greenlandic and Saami). We thus do not know whether child L2 learners of Nordic languages invariably outperform late L2 learners, and if so, whether performance with increasing age declines gradually or abruptly (and whether or not it is indicative of a critical period).

We hereby invite papers addressing these or other acquisition issues relating to the Nordic languages. We would be particularly interested in contributions that identify claims of grammatical models and theories of L2 and test these claims by using empirical data. The deadline is January 31, 2010. Papers should be sent to one of the following two guest editors:

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