

Language in Kalevala Plates



1976

Minä kylvän kyyhättelen

I sow swinging side to side

I saw seeds, I move in the rhythm of throwing seeds and filling my hand again.
kyyhätellä –the work is done on the level of hands (y = uplifted)



1978

tuli suihki suksiloista,

Fire sparked from skis.

Suksi = ski, suksista = from skis, plural elative case
sukset = plural nominative, suksiloiset = optional plural nominative,
suksi-loista = elative case.

Lemminkäinen had made these fast skis according to his memory of the advice he had learned as a child when her mother had been singing to him. When he was asked to make skis that are fast enough to catch *the Moose of Hiisi (Hiiden hirvi) 'A little bird' was singing in his ear: "*Pane oksa olkahasen, pää aseta pälkähäsen.*"** When he finally understood the meaning of it he was able to build the fast skis which he now was using to catch the moose. The added syllable with the o-sound does not only add the needed extra syllable for the rhyme but also focusses attention to the skis and reminds how special they are, the origin of them.

*The Moose of Hiisi when translated in Swedish is Elk of Hiisi. The Kalevala people called it moose because they, as well as the Lapps, knew that there was no such giant elk there. The Norwegian Vikings told in their stories having seen the giant Elk, but this was perhaps something they saw on their trip to America. Also, there might be larger animals in Siberia.

**This can be understood two ways. When Lemminkäinen heard the bird singing: "Pane oksa olkahasen, pää aseta pälkähäsen" he thought that the advice was: "Take a piece of wood (branch) in your hand, focus head [mind] on the problem."

Olka = shoulder, olkahanen = extension of shoulder = arm, hand.

Pälkähäsen = problem to solve (being stuck in something)

When the "bird" kept repeating the same, he got mad and throw a piece of wood at it.

The real advice he was looking for is in the same rhyme, "*Pane oksa olkahasen, pää aseta pälkähäsen.*"
The meanings of the words now are:

Oksa = knot,

Olas = groove on the bottom of a ski which helps to keep it straight when it is sliding on snow.
Olakseen = Illative case. Olakse-hen and Olkaha-seen, shortened here olkahasen, are optional Illative forms.*

Pää = the end of the knot on top side of the ski

Päläs = the place in the ski where the shoe is fastened. Pälkähänen = tie to fasten the shoe. Pälkähäsen = Illative case formed the same way as olkahasen.

*If the Illative form, o-lak-se-hen, had been used this would be easier to understand. However, comparison of the ski-snow connection to the shoulder-arm connection shows that this special technique was in use here.



1979

susillensa suin puheli:

To his wolves he spoke by mouth:

susi = wolf, susille = to wolves, susillensa = to his wolves

Kalevala language uses all the case forms which exist in the Finnish kirjakieli, book language. Suin is instructive case of the word, suu (= mouth). This case uses the plural i with the ending n. It is one of the two collective cases,

Comitative and Instructive, which many people think are disappearing from the language. However, these cases are deeply rooted in the language and are seen as very useful among native Finnish speakers.

Kullervo was blamed for the death of Ilmarinen's wife when she was attacked by a bull. She had gone to milk the cows after Kullervo had brought them home. The bears and wolves had been following the herd and arousing the bulls. There had been a feud between her and Kullervo. She did not want to bake bread for the shepherd boy and ignored his pleas for attention.

A shepherd has a horn which he plays to let people know he is coming with the herd or when he is in trouble in the forest. The horn has a loud noise and perhaps that had kept him and his herd safe out there in the forest alone. He plays different tones to let people know if there was danger lurking in the form of predators.

Kullervo went to war to clear his name but no one listened to him and his horn, and the people turned against him. It was an unfortunate war, to remember and learn from.



1980

vaan ei leuka lonkaellut However, the chin was not moving

This perhaps means that Väinämöinen was not crying, or swearing, or showing any bad behavior.



1981

Itsen lauloi Joukahaisen,

Joukahainen himself he sang into swamp.

Joukahaisen itsensä hän lauloi

Itse (one self) - itse-nsä = itse-n. The nsä suffix is shortened and the word order is changed to bring out the main focus in this, Joukahainen himself, first. The word, self = itse, is brought to the beginning of the sentence, separate from

Joukahainen.

This and the lines before this describe how people reacted to the magnificent amount of knowledge and wisdom which Väinämöinen was bringing to them in his songs. People froze in their places to listen,

stars were seen differently, - and so on. The effect to Joukahainen, who had challenged Väinämöinen, was different, he was losing and made to look foolish, was that he sank into 'swamp', a deep feeling of shame for having made a fool of himself in front of the audience with his childish knowledge. Also, the listeners were no longer interested in him. All attention was on Väinämöinen.



1988

pian pistihe pihalle,

soon she rushed to the yard.

Pistihe= hän meni. She stopped what she was doing in the house and rushed out.

The past tense third person form of the verb, pistää, is pisti. Here he is added. This ending adds to the meaning of the verb the sudden reaction. Similar when han/hän, pa/pä are added to bring a personal touch; Onhan se totta. (It's thru, yes). Sepä mukava. (That's nice.)

vierähti veräjän suuhun;

turned herself at the gate

vieriä = roll, vierähtää = to roll aside. She moved turning around and looking to all directions ending at the gate.

siinä korvin kuunteleikse.

There she listens with her ears

Korva = ear, korvin = instructive case (compare with 'suin' in plate 1979), kuuntelee = she listens, kuunteleikse = she listens searching.

In kuunteleikse - the translative ending, ksi with i (ikse) is added as personal ending replacing the e, normal third person ending (long vowel). This adds to the meaning of listening that with her ears focused, she is trying to identify the alarming noise which has alerted her.

The normal way to say it is siellä hän kuuntelee. Again, the syllable count needs addition and the ikse provides an extra one. The ksi is the case ending for the translative case. It is used in verbs as kse added in the I Infinitive followed with possessive suffix to indicate the subject. Here it is added to a personal form, hän kuuntelee, (she listens). This is a way the singer is creatively using this case to describe the action. It shows her curiously listening, looking for where and what the source of the noise is.



1989

Neitoset kisaelevi,

Maidens play,

Nei-to-set ki-saa-vat, ki-sai-le-vat or ki-sa-e-le-vat

Maidens play, or are seen playing. The last form has the highest number of syllables and makes the eight as needed. The e also is a connecting vowel which gives the feeling that this is happening right there while Lemminkäinen is watching. The normal plural verb ending, vat, is replaced with vi, which is singular. This ending is used a lot in Kalevala, where the happenings are told by the singers as present, even they have already

happened. It is like picturing it in the listener's mind.

Here Lemminkäinen is watching from the side and is following especially what Kyllikki is doing. He has fallen in love. However, he is a fatherless boy raised with his mother. He is no match for Kyllikki who comes from a well-to-do family and has brothers who are looking for her safety. To get her attention Lemminkäinen has to make a plan to get her in her sled which he does with help from one of Kyllikki's friends.

This third person ending is not normally used in the singular, but when used, it strongly points to someone following an action as a special interest (hän tulevi tuolla = he is coming there).

kaunokaiset kärkelevi,

The beautiful ones are having fun

Kaunokaiset karkeloi-vat or kärkele-vat, kärkele-vi.

These verb forms are the third person plurals of karkeloida and kärke-el-la. Their meanings are the same.

Kärke'llä is used here. The e and the -vi ending have the same effects here as in kisaevi.



1990

**puilla tuulen taittamilla,
ukon ilman iskemillä.**

**with wood broken off by wind,
hit by thunder storm**

Annikki heats the sauna with wood and branches broken off by wind and lightning during a thunder storm. This is as good Finnish grammarwise as one can expect. Only the word order is changed to fit in the poetical rhythm.

Normally the third infinitive form with ma/mä ending exists as an attribute in front of the noun: tuulen taittamilla puilla; ukon ilman iskemillä oksilla.

The change here provides the poetical rhythm.

saattoi löylyn lyötäväksi.

prepared the sauna ready to throw water for löyly

lyödä = to hit, throw water on the hot stones, lyötävä = present participle, lyötäväksi = present participle translative case.

Annikki prepared the sauna to be ready to use and throw water on the stones (lyödä löyly). Here the translative case is used with the present participle form of the verb indicating the purpose of the preparation.



1991

Ellös vainen, poikueni,

Do not, poor son, my only descendant,

Poika – poikani vs. poikueni. Poikue is youngs, litter.

Here poikue is used as reference to one son. The u usually refers to one object with clear shape. Here it is used referring to her only child, her son Lemminkäinen. It is also used to show the close connection between the mother and the son. It is more of a feeling of presence to hold than a conversation between mother and son. Her husband having been killed in a

war her whole life and future is with this one son.

The vainen (vain = only, vainen = one kind, only one of this kind)

menkö Pohjolan tupahan,

go to the house of Pohjola.

Elä or älä mene is a command. Ellös menkö (= do not go) is more asking not to go than not letting him go. It has the added s for personal touch. It shows the closeness of the relation and fear that if the son leaves this connection disappears. It appeals to the son's feelings.

Ellös is negative form with an additional emphasizing particle, s.



1992

**kun annoit minun poloisen,
oman lapsesi lupasit,**

**when you gave poor me,
your own child you promised,**

Joukahainen's sister is complaining her mother having promised her to marry Väinämöinen.

The accusative form of personal pronoun minä is minut. If this had been a firm deal this form had been used. The minun refers more to the appearance of the daughter, her being young and not capable to marry and care for an old man.

The mother had never made such promise, only indicated being happy with it if it should happen. She understood that Väinämöinen even being old would not have been burden to her daughter. The similar close connection between mother and child is seen in this conversation as with Lemminkäinen and his mother.



1993

etsi suolta poikoansa.

she looked from the swamp for her son.

She looked for her son. Again, here in the word poika the a is replaced with o. She is looking for someone dear to her whom she has lost. And, the same as in Lemminkäinen's skies, it focuses on Marjatta's blame of her son being displayed in the forest by a red berry rising on her lips.

Poika suolta löyettiin,

The boy was found in the swamp.

Löytää, löy-det-tiin, löy-et-ti-hin = optional form with hin ending for long vowel and n.

Now poika with a is used. The hin ending gives the needed extra syllable. The d is not used often in Kalevala and not in spoken dialects either.



1994

**Siitä Seppo Ilmarinen,
Takoja iän-ikuinen,
tunki ainehet tulehen,
takehensa alle ahjon;
otti orjat lietsomahan,
väkipuolet vääntämähän.**

**With that Seppo Ilmarinen
the eternal Smith
pushed the materials in the fire
his making under the forge;
he took his slaves to bellow
people from his house-hold to turn.**

Here in words ainehet (materials) and tulehen (into fire) the longer endings, het and hen, are used to reach the required number of syllables. The III Infinitive forms, lietsomahan and vääntämähän also use the longer endings, han/hän. Those are optional forms in the present kirjakieli and much in use especially in poems.

Did Ilmarinen had slaves? The word orja, slave, is also mentioned in another poem where Ilmarinen asked his orja, slave, to get his horse ready for him to leave for Pohjola. In Finnish, at the present time, the word, orja, is only used for someone not Finnish.

Everyone has to live somewhere and do something for their living. Finnish households often had members who were not directly related to them. However, they were not thought of as slaves in its present meaning. When the Communist Party started many working people were made to believe that they were farmers' slaves, working for them. However, this was not true since the farmers supplied most of the food and living for the whole community and the workers were part of this. They were also getting paid and there was always an agreement with each of the workers and they were treated the same as other members of the household. Nobody was ever in chains. This perhaps is also true with the orja in Ilmarinen's household. (The o in orja refers to origin and ja that he is working there). Kullervo was sent to Ilmarinen's house as a child to learn and work since his father did not have a special trade to teach him. Perhaps it was different with Kullervo since Louhi's daughter, Ilmarinen's wife, treated him so badly. She sent him to look after the cows all day long and thought that he should be able to find his food there instead of by her baking bread for him. However, it was not Ilmarinen who did that, it was his wife.

'Forging the Sampo' was not Ilmarinen forging something from the medals he was using in his smithy. It was forging an agreement with the bride's family about an exchange of farm products for gold and silver from the quarries where Louhi's husband was cutting stones for Runes stones and building materials for castles. Ilmarinen needed to ensure that his workforce and business partners were agreeable to this increased work and also, he had to make sure that he had the farm products available. He was not a farmer but perhaps like others grew enough for himself. Life was not that much different from what it is now.

1995



Sampsä poika Pellervoinen
kirvehen olalta,
iski puuta kirvehellä,
tammea tasaterällä;
pian taisi tammen kata,
puun soresan sorrutella.

Sampsä boy Pellervoinen otti
took an ax from his shoulder,
hit the tree with the ax,
the oak tree with an even faced plate,
soon he was able to cut down the oak,
to manage the beautiful tree.

Pelto = farm field.

Pellervoinen comes from this word the same as Väinämöinen, Ilmarinen, Joukahainen and so on. Those are names used for families in Kalevala. The nen-ending names are kept later as last names in Finnish

church registers. The la-ending names refer to houses which were taxed by the rulers.

Sampsä Pellervoien is cutting the timber for Väinämöinen's boat which he then build according to the advice of Vipunen. The wood needed to come from a large healthy tree. The oak tree was chosen by Sampsä. He cut it down with a flat face ax which is still used in carving logs.

Felling a large oak tree is very dangerous. With its branches spreading wide in all direction is impossible to predict where and how it will fall. Special skill and tools are needed. This skill was introduced in Rhyme III when the overgrown oak tree needed to be cut. Nobody was able to do it until the neatly dressed small man 'rose from sea' (came out of nowhere) and showed how to do it. Now it was no trouble for Sampsä who had already learned how to cut trees while preparing a kaski.

This is also a tradition which Finns brought with them and used to pioneer America with this farming technique. Finns in Värmeland, Sweden had been arrested and fined for polluting the air with their kaski there. They were promised that they could do it here in America and they did.

1996 - 1999



"Nouse neito korjahani..." Untamoinen verkot heitti kokko rautakoura
"Come maiden in my sled.." Untamoinen threw his net eagle iron hand



mi oli metsän eläintä
exiting forest animals

The other rhymes in the plates follow the same poetical arrangements and creative use of the language to keep the syllable count always the same. Kalevala is very realistic giving information and facts truthfully and almost with scientific clarity. There are no miracles in the Kalevala. Everything can be understood with common sense taking into account humanity and life.

Information in Kalevala

The Kalevala does not only preserve the language but it also gives us a clear understanding of the way people lived and the structure of independent households like that of Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen. The moral is also brought up in Kalevala, not only in the teachings of Väinämöinen but in their own lives. In the poem, Runo VIII, Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen are going to ask the same girl to marry and in conversations about this it is made clear that the girl will be the one who decides whose wife she wants to become. That has always been the case among Finnish people. The Louhi, however, has a different idea. The girl is not even asked; she decides to whom she gives her daughters. When it came to Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen she gave her daughter to the one who could force the Sampo to make a business deal for exchange of farm products for gold and silver. That is the way the Vikings made deals.

The girls were given to marry into a business and often the daughter was the one who was in contact with her relatives in the business.

Ilmarinen perhaps was really in love with this girl but since his brother also was on the way to ask for her hand he came along and not being aware of the nature of the deal, agreed to it - which later proved to be a mistake. Väinämöinen had no use for the silver and gold and was not willing to make any deals for her hand.

When arrangements were made for the wedding of Ilmarinen and Louhi's daughter she was prepared for the role she would have in the household as Ilmarinen's wife. She was specifically told about Kullervo being a child 'on the floor' in the house. She was told that regardless of whose child he is she needs to look after him and treat him well. But not coming from the same culture she ignored it and treated him as an orja, slave, in the bad meaning of the word.

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