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Kieliopin kirjoittamisen luonteesta ja metodiikasta

Esa Itkonen (2003) embarks on no lesser a task than to construct a philosophy of linguistics. This has been a major concern of his for decades. Now, his intention is to "explicate the concept language, understood as the logical prerequisite for studying various aspects of particular languages" (2003:13). His central claim is that grammars composed in all cultures and all historical periods are remarkably uniform and that this is the fact that philosophers of linguistics must explain before doing anything else. In developing his argument, Itkonen voices strong views on many other important topics such as ontology (What levels should one postulate in grammar description? What kinds of entities populate those levels?) and methodology (What are the proper practices for the grammarian to acquire knowledge about grammatical constructions?).

My purpose is to demonstrate that Itkonen's argumentation is unclear, inconsistent, and even false. The main reasons are that he confuses grammatical theories and descriptions of individual languages, that he misrepresents the nature and methodology of grammar writing, and, especially, that he fails to appreciate the important function of corpus observation.

References

Itkonen, Esa 2003. What is Language? A Study in the Philosophy of Linguistics. Turku: Turun yliopisto, Publications in General Linguistics 8.

(Huomautus: Pidän esitelmän suomeksi.)

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