

Insights into Võro language

Course code: AMU1500

Course name: Multilingual Map of Europe: identity and diversity

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- **A brief description of its linguistic features (e.g. based on WALS)**

Võro is a part of the Finnic branch of the Finno-Ugric languages and is spoken by about 70,000 people in Estonia. The Võro language has all the typical characteristics of South Estonian and all the features distinguishing it from other Balto-Finnic languages. Officially it is considered a dialect of Estonian, since it is the least influenced by standard Estonian and nowadays it has its own literary standard and speakers are seeking to have it recognised as a regional language of Estonia.

The language went into decline in the late 19th century, but a revival started during the 1980s. Today Võro is taught in some schools; there is a Võro newspaper that is published twice a month, and some poems, plays and novels are also written in the language.

Võro is a descendent of the old South Estonian language, which first appeared in writing in 1686 in a translation of the New Testament.

Võro's alphabet is the same as Estonian's and Finnish's and most letters denote the same sounds as in Estonian, with a few exceptions.

A a	B b	C c	D d	E e	F f	G g	H h	I i
aa	bee	tsee	dee	ee	eff	gee	haa	ii
[a]	[p]	[ts̩]	[t]	[e]	[f]	[k]	[h]	[i]
J j	K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	P p	Q q	R r
jott	kaa	ell	emm	enn	oo	pee	kuu	err
[j]	[kk]	[l]	[m]	[n]	[o]	[pp]	[ʔ]	[r]
S s	Š š	Z z	Ž ž	T t	U u	V v	W w	Õ õ
ess	šaa	zett	žee	tee	uu	vee	kaksisvee	õõ
[ss]	[ʃ]	[s]	[ʒ]	[t]	[u]	[v]	[v]	[ʋ]
Ä ä	Ö ö	Ü ü	X x	Y y	'			
ää	öö	üü	iks	üpsilon	üläkomma			
[æ]	[o]	[y]	[ks]	[i]	[ʔ]			

Image 1: Võro's alphabet

The language is endangered, and according to Kadri Koreinik this is due to the government's lack of legal commitment to protect the language

- **A short text (to see its written form)**

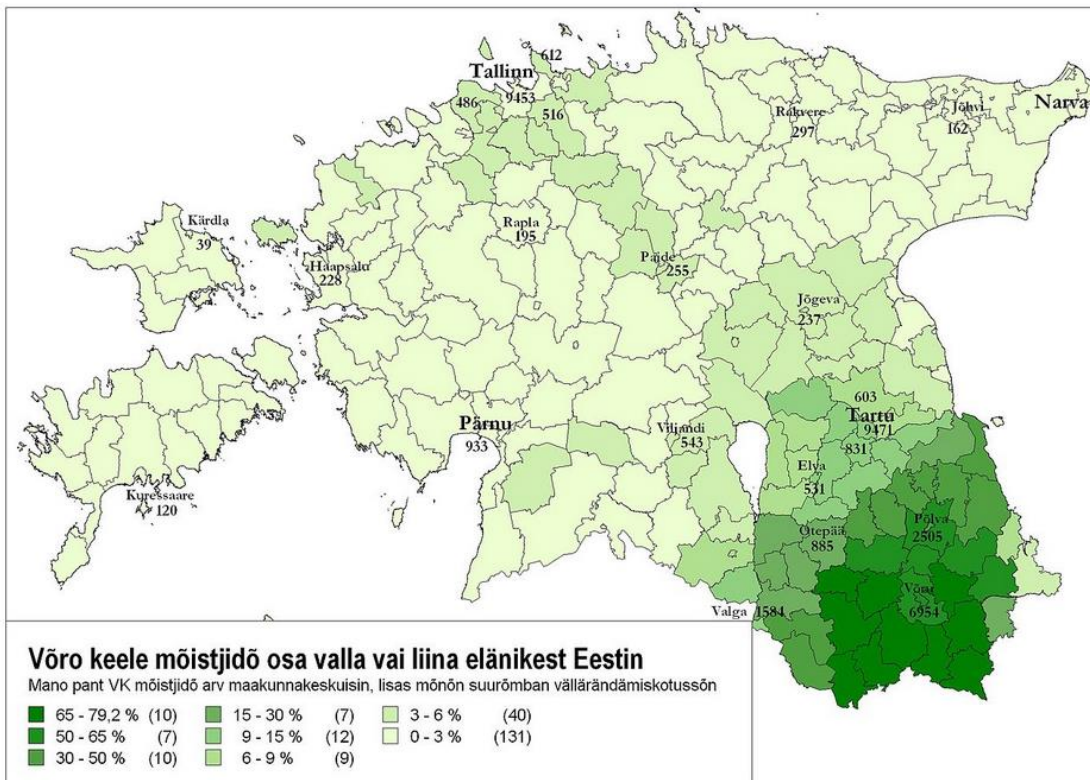
Kyik' inemiseq sünnüseq avvo ja õiguisi poolõst ütesugumaidsis. Näile om annõt mudsu ja süämetunnistus ja nä piät üts'tõõsõgaq vele muudu läbi käümä.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

- A picture/photo from this region



Countryside near Rõuge in Võru County, south-eastern Estonia



Proportion of speakers of Võro in Estonia [Image: Võro Institute]



A bilingual sign in Estonian and Võro. The town of Urvaste in Võro County is Urvastõ in Võro

References:

- <https://deepbaltic.com/2019/04/26/the-other-estonian-language-preserving-and-promoting-voro/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V%C3%B5ro_language
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/421631001227096>
- <https://wi.ee/>