

From Aleksandr Evgen'evič's garden

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Aleksandr Evgen'evič Kibrik raised several generations of linguists, many of whom have carried on the tradition with their own students. Since a large number of his students and their students are engaged in typological research and in the description and documentation of underdescribed languages, there are few other people (if any!) whose overall contribution to ALT is comparable to that of Aleksandr Evgen'evič. Among other things, there are hardly any ALT and SWL conferences where the Kibrik school isn't massively represented.

But the Kibrik school is different from many of the other current linguistic schools, which are easily recognizable as such by their adherents' eagerness to advertise their affiliation. "My research has been done in the tradition of school X" or "I am following the usual assumptions of paradigm Y" are frequent passwords by which researchers signal their tradition or school membership. These work as business cards for companies, or as credos for a particular religion or ideology, often top-governed and fairly exclusive. There are, however, other traditions or schools which are much less obvious for external observers, and Kibrik's school is one of those. Aleksandr Evgen'evič did not impose any strong ideological or theoretical restrictions on us, apart from insisting on the basic general scholarly imperatives. He was neither a preacher nor a prophet, nor a chief executive officer, but a born gardener, both literally and figuratively. He was passionately devoted to the garden at his dacha, in which both he and Antonina Ivanovna, his wife, invested a lot of time, energy, and love, and in which they took great pride as the flowers, fruit, and vegetables they had planted and nursed were thriving. We, the students of Aleksandr Evgen'evič, were plants in his garden, too, with all our diversity and peculiarities. He saw his task as helping us to grow and develop into curious and independent linguists, and he carried out this task with devotion and patience and with pride in the results.

Aleksandr Evgen'evič was an excellent gardener.

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