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All: In Memory of Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Lars Johanson

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Subject: In Memory of Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Lars Johanson

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Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Lars Johanson (born March 8, 1936) of Turcology sadly passed away in Mainz, Germany on November 24, 2025.

Lars Johanson, Swedish-born linguist, played a crucial role in establishing the study of Turkic languages as a modern linguistic discipline. In addition to his significant work on Turkic linguistics, his studies in general linguistics, primarily language typology, are of great importance. His theoretical models for the study of verbal aspect systems, evidentiality, and contact linguistic phenomena have been applied to a number of languages.

Born in the small Swedish town Köping. Lars spent the first years of his life alone with his mother Birgit, in great love and intimacy. His father was serving in the military in a Swedish location unknown to the family. Lars' mother Birgit was asthmatic, but she enjoyed singing while working, pausing between verses. In this way, Lars easily learned countless Swedish songs, which he hummed throughout his life.

Lars learned the letters from shop signs while he and his mother went shopping. And he spent his life under the spell of these letters. There was not a day that he did not sit down to write, as he said, but to keep knocking, initially on a typewriter, later on a computer. This determined the order of his life and this brought him joy every day. He lived in the world of letters. He learned Esperanto as a child and on his first trip abroad, accompanied by his mother, he attended an Esperanto conference in Oslo. He was always first in school, without any effort. This gave him time for linguistic adventures.

He studied German, Scandinavian, Slavic, general linguistics, Turcology and Sanskrit at Uppsala University and studied Oriental Studies in Vienna from 1959 to 1960. He received his BA in 1959 and his MA in 1961. From 1960 onwards, he specialized in Turkic languages and received in Uppsala his "licentiat" degree in 1966 and his "docent" degree in 1971 with his studies on Turkic linguistics. He researched the mysteries of the functioning of languages and made epoch-making discoveries – mainly immersing himself in the inner order of the Turkic languages – without joining fashionable linguistic trends. In 1972-1973 he was Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellow at the University of Mainz and in 1973 made his German Habilitation (with the title "Professor") in Turcology at that university.

His 1971 groundbreaker book *Aspekt im Türkischen* was recognized in linguistic circles. In the following years, he conducted research and visited several Turkic-speaking countries and China. In 1979–1980, he was a visiting professor at the University of Frankfurt, and from 1981 at the University of Mainz. In 1982, he was appointed professor for lifetime at the latter. He remained affiliated as "docent" with Uppsala University, his alma mater, during his whole life. Between 1966 and 2025, he published more than 500 studies. Among the books published in the

last few years of his life, the most significant is *Turkic*, Cambridge University Press 2021, a monumental work, a comparative description of the Turkic languages. This unparalleled handbook will also be published in paperback next year (2026). His theory of verbal aspect is presented in his book *Aspect in the Languages of Europe*, published in 2023. In this, Johanson proves that his theory applied to the description of the Turkish verb system is also excellently suited for an adequate and novel analysis of the verb systems of European languages.

His contact language model is summarized in his book *Code Copying. The Strength of Languages in Take-over and Carry-over Roles*, published in 2023. In addition to presenting the model, the book aims to prove that copying from other languages does not make the copying language suffer of "structuritis", a sickness of the language's structure. On the contrary, it can also be a means of survival for endangered languages. Throughout his work, he was interested in the linguistic evidence of old Turkish texts in non-Arabic script. His last book, published in 2025, together with his wife Éva Á. Csató, is a translation of a 17th-century Latin-script Bible into Azeri.

Lars has been continuously expanding the online edition of the *Encyclopedia of Turkic Languages and Linguistics Online* (Brill), which contains hundreds of articles and which he initiated and edited. In the future, Éva Á. Csató together with the editorial board will continue its editing.

He was convinced that linguistics and literary studies are closely related. During his life, he wrote numerous articles on Turkic literary history, which he collected and published in Swedish in a volume in 2024. His Swedish legacies also include a Turkish grammar, which he co-authored with Birsel Karakoç and Éva Á. Csató and which will be published in 2026.

In addition to his research and teaching activities in Mainz, he published the highly successful *Turcologica* monograph series at the Harrassowitz publishing house in Wiesbaden from 1985 onwards, in which more than 130 volumes have been published to date. From 1995, he founded and edited the journal *Turkic Languages*, which had published 29 volumes by the time of his death.

Lars carried out his teaching activities with great enthusiasm and dedication. As a result, most of his doctoral students have worked as professors in different countries, following and further developing their professor's teaching in Turkic linguistics.

As an internationally recognized scholar, he was a visiting professor or researcher in many countries: in Tokyo, Kyoto, Melbourne, Beijing, Istanbul at the Boğaziçi University, Yakutsk, Zurich, at the Max-Planck Institute in Leipzig, and the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in Uppsala. His cherished connection was with the Department of Altaic Studies, University of Szeged, where in 1999, he was appointed an honorary doctor, of which he was very proud.

Lars Johanson is survived by his wife Éva Á. Csató, his children Karin and Andreas and his sister Kerstin. He will be put to his eternal rest in Köping, Sweden in the Johanson family grave.