

How do young Finns perceive foreign influence? Folk linguistic recognition test as a contact linguistic tool

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Recognition test is a commonly applied tool in folk linguistics, often used to investigate the recognition of areal varieties of a given language (e.g. Niedzielski 1999, Niedzielski & Preston 2000, Kerswill 2002, Vaattovaara 2013). This presentation reports findings from a study where the test involved a different (although closely related) language: young Finns listened to a sample of an old Karelian dialect. Karelian is the closest cognate of Finnish, differing from it largely due to strong influence from Russian. The aim is to test the applicability of the recognition task in the field of contact linguistics, answering the following questions: 1) What kind of linguistic features do the informants consider non-Finnish and 2) to what language do they ascribe these features?

The test was carried out by 350 students of the Finnish language at several Finnish universities in 2013–2016; the participants had Finnish as their first language, with varying dialectal backgrounds. Most of them had just started their university studies but there were also a few groups of second or third year students who had during their studies acquired some theoretical knowledge on the varieties of Finnish. The participants heard a sample of Karelian, recorded in the 1970s, and they were asked to point out linguistic features they considered different from the Finnish varieties they are familiar with.

The results show that the Karelian sample was perceived as deviant from Finnish. It was often described as “un-Finnish” or having foreign influence, and the languages mentioned were Russian (in more than 30 answers) and sporadically Saami, Estonian and English. The foreign features noted most often were phonetic or phonological ones: different sibilants and affricate *č* as well as the palatalization of dental consonants. All in all, the study demonstrates that folk linguistic perspectives and methodological tools can offer interesting data for contact linguistics.