

EDITORIAL

# Introduction: Migration and linguistic diversification

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This special issue of the *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* is dedicated to language diversification, a term referring to complex, protracted processes during which dialects gradually evolve and diversify over time, potentially resulting in the emergence of new languages. This issue focuses on dialect divergence brought about by migration, which in turn may be caused by the re-demarcation or shifting of state borders, changes in natural conditions, the spread of agriculture, overpopulation and famine, colonisation, and industrialisation (see e.g. Deumert 2006:130). Using various types of data and a variety of methodologies, these articles examine how living in isolation from other speakers of the original language and encountering speakers of a new, dominant language and members of other ethnic minorities affect and shape their variety. The articles highlight two significant cases: the dialect of Karelian in Russia around the city of Tver', and the Kven language, spoken in Northern Norway. These varieties have much in common: they originated as a result of migration several hundred years ago; their speakers have lived isolated from their original language community; they are small minority languages that have been strongly influenced by a dominant, majority language; in the course of the twentieth century they have been losing speakers and have become endangered; and more recently their remaining speakers have been attempting to revitalise their languages. In this Introduction we will briefly outline the complex sociohistorical settings of Tver' Karelian and Kven and also the ways in which the articles contribute to research into linguistic diversification in migration settings.

The first case study in this volume is Karelian, a Finnic language closely related to Finnish (especially to eastern Finnish dialects) and originally spoken in the border region of Finland and Russia. Special attention has been paid to Tver' Karelian, a dialect that has been spoken in Tver Oblast, located in inner Russia to the northwest of Moscow. Its origins date back to the seventeenth century, when the Swedish empire expanded strongly, in particular with the conquest of the Karelian-speaking

parts of eastern Finland that had previously belonged to Russia. Under Swedish rule a significant number of Karelians fled the country and moved to the Russian interior, mostly to the region surrounding the city of Tver'. In their new domiciles they formed close-knit Karelian-speaking rural communities, and, despite being surrounded by Russian-speaking areas, Karelians have managed to preserve their language down to the present day (e.g. Sarhimaa & Siilin 1994:274; Saloheimo 2010; Koivisto 2018:61–62). The evolution of Tver' Karelian differs from the conventional development of a dialect: it was formed by migrants who spoke the same language but had come from several different locations and thus had different dialectal features in their idiolects. The language situation in Tver' in the seventeenth century was ground-breaking in the sense that Karelian had never been spoken there before the migrants arrived, but the populations of the new villages now consisted entirely of Karelian speakers. The linguistic situation was monolingual, but not fully uniform since it reflected the presence of different dialectal traits. A crucial factor was isolation: the migrants had left their home villages permanently, and in the historical circumstances of the seventeenth century all contact with other Karelian varieties was severed and no further immigration from Karelia occurred thereafter.

Traditional methods and theories of dialectology may not be sufficient for dealing with this kind of exceptional dialectal evolution. The first article in this special issue, Vesa Koivisto's 'Tver' Karelian as a new dialect', approaches the emergence and development of the dialect in question as a possible instance of a phenomenon known as new-dialect formation, defined as 'a linguistic situation which arises when there is a mixture of dialects leading to a single new dialect which is different from all inputs' (Hickey 2003), or 'immigrant koinéization' (Kerswill 2002). The inspiration for the article stems from Trudgill's (2006) theory, and the author compares the characteristics of Tver' Karelian to those suggested by Trudgill, concluding that Tver' Karelian fulfils Trudgill's preconditions for a new dialect. According to Trudgill (e.g. 2006), new-dialect formation occurs through accommodation between speakers in face-to-face interaction, and the process typically involves initial variation, which later decreases through accommodation and levelling during a couple of generations. The phenomenon has been studied rather extensively in recent years in the context of World Englishes (e.g. Britain & Trudgill 1999, Kerswill & Trudgill 2005, Trudgill 2006, Schneider 2007, Dollinger 2008, Weber 2014). In the course of investigating World Englishes the researchers have been able to use documentation and linguistic studies concerned with the varieties of English spoken in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the case of the Karelian used in Tver', a small language with no written form, such information is not available. In his article Koivisto makes use of what is available, and concludes his text by suggesting that this perspective might be worth a more detailed study at some point in the future; we would add that this could be combined with a thorough linguistic analysis of forthcoming corpus data (see Palander and Riionheimo in this volume). It is also worth noticing that the theory has principally been elaborated in connection with English, and Koivisto's article makes a valuable contribution by applying this framework to a different kind of sociohistorical setting and a different language family.

In addition to language-internal developmental traits, the Tver' Karelian variety has been shaped by the continuous and overwhelming presence of Russian as the

dominant language of the area. For the Karelian language Russian has been the most important contact language in general, and Russian has exerted influence to some degree on all varieties of Karelian (see e.g. Grünthal 2023:437 and the references therein); this influence has been strongest in the Tver' region (Novak 2019). In the present volume, Henna Massinen's article 'The Russian origin of Karelian cow names' addresses language contact between Karelian and Russian from the viewpoint of onomastics – a rarely used perspective in the field of contact linguistics. The article examines the Russian-origin names for cows given by Karelians (in contrast to names originating from Karelian), and examines the areal differences between the original Karelian-speaking areas and in Tver' and the temporal changes within a time span dating from the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century down to the present day. The author compares her field data, collected during field trips within the Russian Federation in 2010s, against an older set of data that she has extracted from the comprehensive dialectal dictionary of Karelian (*Karjalan kielen sanakirja* [Dictionary of Karelian] 1968–2005). The analysis reveals a clear change: there are fewer Russian-origin cow names in the dictionary data, and they have been phonologically and morphologically adapted to Karelian, whereas in the newer data most of the names are Russian in origin and have preserved the features of Russian phonology. With regard to the naming of domestic animals, Massinen demonstrates how the dominant language has replaced the minority language. However, the data do not allow us to determine the point in time at which this replacement tendency began. The dictionary of Karelian was compiled at a time when linguistic research relied heavily on the ideology of monolingualism and 'pure' languages or dialects, and these tacit ideological views guided researchers' choices in their gathering of data (Sarhimaa 1990:445–446; Massinen 2022:54). It is possible, and even probable, that the Karelians already used Russian-origin names alongside Karelian ones at the start of the twentieth century, although researchers did not regard them as worth documenting.

Thus, the emergence of the Tver' Karelian dialect and its gradual divergence from other Karelian dialects has been a process of both dialect contact and language contact. Divergence is often examined from the perspective of the language system, but it is elementary to acknowledge that the speakers of a language are also the ultimate agents of language change. The way in which contact-induced changes occur in interactions involving multilingual speakers using their multilingual repertoire has been addressed by a number of researchers in both contact linguistics and sociolinguistics (e.g. Heine & Kuteva 2005, Matras 2009, Blommaert 2010, Pennycook 2010). In the field of folk linguistics and perceptual dialectology, research methods have been developed specifically to examine how non-linguists perceive varieties that differ from their own. Researchers have been interested in investigating the conceptions that non-linguists have of language, their observations concerning language(s), their linguistic attitudes, and their language awareness in general (e.g. Preston 1999, Niedzielski & Preston 2000, Preston & Niedzielski 2010, Hoffmeister et al. 2021). Thus, the perceptions and awareness of language users offer a valuable additional perspective for considering language diversification (e.g. Eppler & Benedikt 2017, Lasagabaster 2017).

In the present volume, Marjatta Palander and Helka Riionheimo's article 'Diversification in time and space and how it is perceived: Applying a folk linguistic

listening task with Tver' Karelians' is an attempt to address the outcome of the process of diversification from the perspective of present-day Tver' Karelians as individuals. The authors have made use of a folk linguistic listening task to examine how the respondents recognise and describe a sample of their own dialect (recorded in Tver' Oblast) and a sample of Border Karelian (recorded in Finland); these two dialects have a shared origin but they have been diverging since the seventeenth century. The respondents were all middle-aged or older, and they had learnt at least some Karelian during their childhood. However, Karelian has been used only in spoken form in their daily lives: it has not been taught in school and the present Tver' Karelian written standard, based on Latin script, seemed to be rather unfamiliar to the respondents. Today, all Tver' Karelians are bilingual, with varying degrees of proficiency and ability to use Karelian in face-to-face interactions. During the interviews, most of the respondents also used at least some Russian, which for many of them is obviously the strongest language and the most natural choice in spontaneous speech. With respect to the theme of this volume, the study shows that the Tver' Karelian respondents mostly understood the Border Karelian sample but they frequently commented on its differences from the Tver' Karelian sample. This seems to imply that they easily noticed the linguistic features that differentiate Border Karelian and Tver' Karelian, especially phonological and phonetic ones. However, many of the respondents had difficulty in placing the Border Karelian sample geographically, probably because the Tver' Karelians have not had much contact with other varieties of Karelian and may even be unaware of the fact that Karelian is also spoken in Finland.

The second case study examined in this volume is to do with the development of the Kven language, a small Finnic variety spoken in northernmost Norway that is closely related to the Far North Finnish dialects in Finland and to Meänkieli in the Torne Valley and its surroundings in Sweden. Like Tver' Karelians in inner Russia, Kvens have for centuries formed an ethnic and linguistic minority in Norway and their history dates back to the sixteenth century. Originally, Kvens were immigrants who moved to the counties of Troms and Finnmark from Northern Sweden and Northern Finland, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the first newcomers were documented in old tax books from as early as the 1520s (Elenius et al. 2015:206–207; Keränen 2018). With respect to the contacts between the people who migrated and the people who remained, however, the disparity between the Tver' Karelians and the Kvens becomes visible. While migration cut off Tver' Karelians' contact with the speakers of other Karelian varieties entirely, throughout their history Kvens have been in touch with their relatives in Finland and with literature written in Finnish (Niiranen 2019). Nevertheless, due to the border demarcation, competing nation-state projects, and the general political and sociolinguistic development both in Norway and in Finland, spoken Kven has diverged from the conventions of modern written Finnish so significantly that many members of the Kven community no longer identify with written Finnish at all and regard Kven as a language in its own right. In consequence, in 2005 the Kven language achieved the status of a national minority language in Norway (previously, it was regarded as a Finnish dialect), with the result that Kven language planning was established in 2007 with the development of a new written standard based on the spoken dialects (e.g. Söderholm 2014, Keränen 2018).

One of the factors involved in the process of linguistic diversification in the case of Kven that cannot be ignored is the respective school systems, which implemented rather different policies on either side of the border. In Norway, the policy of Norwegianisation promoted by the Norwegian government refers to the process of national homogenisation (approx. 1850–1940), which aimed at strengthening the position of the Norwegian language and culture throughout the country. At the end of the nineteenth century it reduced the use of Finnish in schools to a minimum, with the policy being applied even more rigidly in the first half of the twentieth century (e.g. Eriksen & Niemi 1981:48–61; Elenius et al. 2015:230). Finnish was used – if at all – in addition to Norwegian to support learning only when the actual aim was to achieve literacy in Norwegian. Later, students were completely denied the use of their mother tongue in schools (Keränen 2018). At the same time, the new standard language in Finland, Modern Written Finnish, was undergoing active development during the nineteenth century and was transmitted via both literature and the new elementary school system. This policy was highly effective in increasing the distance between the Far North Finnish dialects in Finland and the Kven dialects in Norway, and in promoting their development into different languages with separate standard varieties.

The final article published here is Daniel Haataja and Leena Niiranen's study 'Letters to the Paulaharjus from Ruija: The emergence of two writing cultures in Finnish among the Kvens in the early twentieth century', which addresses language diversification in the context of writing. The article examines private letters that were written to Samuli and Jenny Paulaharju by Kvens who had had a mixture of formal training in writing. The Paulaharjus were a famous Finnish ethnographer couple, who travelled around Finnmark in the 1920s and 1930s collecting folklore among the Kven people. (We should note that the letters were written long before the start of the discussion leading to the emancipation of the Kven language.) The study focuses on certain orthographic features that demonstrate, on the one hand, the individual writer's relative experience of modern written Finnish and its practice at the time and, on the other hand, the writer's multiliteracy in Finnish, Norwegian, and Northern Sámi. As mentioned above, from the eighteenth century onwards the Kvens had had contact with the tradition of written Finnish, but these connections were mainly restricted to religious texts that were linguistically rather old-fashioned compared with the secular literature of the same period. Many Kvens were not in the habit of reading the religious texts for themselves but had become accustomed to the written language by listening to someone reading it to them aloud. Although the general level of literacy in Finnish never spread completely amongst the Kvens, the study reveals that contact with Finland and with Finnish written literature, including religious texts, helped to maintain relations between the languages and to some extent held up the diversification process.

Thus, the four articles appearing in this volume together shed light on migration-based language diversification from several different angles, painting a multidimensional picture of this complex phenomenon. Migrating a long distance away from original residential areas and becoming exposed to a new majority language are common causes for diversification, but they are not the only contributing factors. Each case of diversification is a unique combination of sociopolitical factors, which include official language policies, language ideologies and attitudes, and the

use of languages within a school system. Frequently, factors such as these have only a slow and steady influence, but sometimes the winds of change can be extremely swift. To cite an example related to Karelian, albeit one that is beyond the scope of this issue, we could consider Soviet policy in the 1930s towards Karelian and many other minority languages: first, completely new written standards were swiftly set up for languages that had previously existed only in spoken form, but then all use of these new standards was abruptly cut off (see e.g. Anttikoski 2003). The processes of diversification may also be controversial, and the same language variety may face diverging pressures. This has been the case with the Kvens since the latter half of the twentieth century. They have lived in the riptide of maintaining their connection with Finnish in Finland but, at the same time, of positioning themselves outside this variety and attempting to emancipate and promote Kven as their own language, independent of Finnish.

The studies contained in this special issue may also cause readers to consider attitudes towards minorities and minority languages on a more general level. It is apparent that we are talking not only about Karelians or Kvens but also about a universal phenomenon in which languages are becoming an essential part of all politics where – in the worst case – linguistic rights may in every era be suppressed as a result of the political ambitions of the dominant ruling powers. Both Karelians and Kvens have suffered as a result of nationalist ideologies and the construction of nation-states, subsequently drifting towards a different destiny. In the current political climate pertaining in Russia the suppression of Karelian is still ongoing, whereas in Norway the state has officially acknowledged Kven as one of the country's minority languages and now provides support for the maintenance and development of this variety. It would seem that, for those in positions of authority, language may well be regarded as powerful and thus a dangerous tool that can both unite people and also arouse suspicion. From the majority's point of view, a minority that stands out because of its own language may appear to be a threat to the nation-state. All four papers in this issue deal with historical chains of events, but their findings highlight problems that remain topical in the 2020s. In many respects the assimilation policies of the past have shifted towards cultural pluralism and more tolerate attitudes, while international agreements and legislation affecting minorities have also improved. Nevertheless, there still exists a powerful assumption that a nation should have a single uniform language. It is a sad fact that, even today, the linguistic rights of minorities are still often oppressed, while social structures promote the choice of the majority language, not only in Russia and other authoritarian states but also in Western democracies. It is our sincere wish that researchers in multilingualism and minority languages will continue to have the opportunity to spread knowledge about their research and thus influence attitudes significantly and positively.

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