

# Karelian speakers' and learners' views on multilingual practices

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In my presentation, I discuss the views expressed on multilingual practices by respondents of a recent survey on the Karelian language in Finland. Attempts to develop and revitalize the Karelian language in Finland have strengthened during the past two decades, and in the last few years the threat of losing the language has been started to be reacted to at the societal level. Recently Karelian has been included in Finland's language policy guidelines (Language policy programme 2022). For the purposes of language revitalization work and language policy it is necessary to obtain up-to-date information about the use of the Karelian language in Finland. In 2024, I conducted a survey together with Lotta Jalava from the Institute of the languages of Finland to gather information on Karelian language proficiency, use and attitudes. The online survey reached a considerable number of respondents, nearly 500. The survey was not statistically representative, but if we start from the assumption that the respondents represent a group that is particularly interested in the development of the Karelian language, examining their characteristics is meaningful and may shed more light on the revitalization process.

A clear majority of the respondents said they only had learned Karelian in adult age. In Finland, the possibilities to learn Karelian outside of the home are mainly located in civic colleges and at the University of Eastern Finland, which has together with the Karelian language revitalization project designed forms of education that cater to many age groups. Also, the respondents' evaluation of their language proficiency showed significant differences between comprehension and production skills. This means that at least the younger generations of the Karelian speaker base in Finland are characterized by L2 speakers, many of whom are still learning the language. Most of them have grown in a monolingual family in a society where multilingualism has not been widespread. Against this background, the question of how the respondents feel about phenomena that seem to challenge the prevailing language norms, e. g. learner language or code-switching, becomes very interesting, especially as language attitudes play a central role in language revitalization (e.g. Dołowy-Rybińska & Hornsby 2021, Underriner, Marean, Keskitalo, Zahir, Bommelyn & Tuttle

2021). In my presentation I examine attitudes towards multilingual practices in the survey data and discuss their effect on the revitalization process of the Karelian language in Finland.

## References

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