

TRACING THE HISTORY OF DIALECTOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN FINLAND

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the disciplinarization of dialect research in Finland. Theoretical foundation began to take shape through attempts at comparative linguistics as early as the 16th century. However, it was not until the 18th century that the first scholarly accounts of Finnish dialects surfaced, followed by more disciplinarized work in the 19th century. From this period onwards, dialect research became one of the largest language research topics in fennistics.

Dialect research is intricately connected to Finland's general socio-political history, and the emergence of Finnish national identity around the 18th century. Also noteworthy are the effects of larger trends of Finnish linguistics, such as the neogrammarian school, on dialectology. The bulk of this paper provides an outline of the different development stages.

This paper also briefly addresses the ontological realm of *murre*, the Finnish equivalent for 'dialect'. This includes discussion on the definition of the term in various contexts, especially how it has been conceptualized within the tradition of scholarly dialect research.

The paper is set in a roughly chronological order. Sections 2 through 5 follow the development of Finnish linguistics and dialectology side by side, dividing the topic into the early stages, early disciplinarized research, research during the neogrammarian period, and recent developments, respectively. The chronological account is followed by a brief ontological account of *murre* in section 6. Section 7 concludes the paper.

2. EARLY LANGUAGE RESEARCH IN FINLAND

It is generally possible to identify at least two foundations for dialectology. The first view considers dialectology as "a natural outgrowth of the comparative study of language differences and similarities across both time and space" (Francis 1983, p. 48), meaning that dialectology traces back to comparative philology, as the prerequisite of language diversification is the disintegration of a language into dialects. Another view is that dialectology begins from dialect geography, a discipline established by scholars such as Georg Wenker and Jules Gilliéron in the late 19th century.

It has been noted that scientists "work within and on the basis of the situation which their science, and science in general, has inherited in their culture and age." (Robins 1979, p. 2). As the foremost purpose is to present the history of Finnish dialect research within the larger context of Finnish language research, the story should therefore begin from the early attempts at comparative philology in Finland, which also set the stage for later linguistics. Also, Uralic languages were in the vanguard of comparativism, being relatively well-established already by the close of the 18th century (Ruhlen 1987, p. 66–67; Greenberg 2005, p. 159–160).

Two main topics are covered by the following subsections. First, a short account of Finland's early comparative philology is provided. This is followed by two sections where early dialect observations and analyses are introduced.

2.1. Early comparativism

The first linguistic descriptions of Finnish surfaced in the early 16th century, around the same time that Finnish acquired a written culture. The descriptions were a side product of lexicography, recorded in Latin dictionaries which included translations into multiple languages (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p. 61). Possibly owing to the exotic nature of Finnish, European scholars were soon investigating its relationship to other languages.

The earliest comparative analysis of Finnish is attributed to the German scholar Sebastian Münster, who in 1544 was the first to demonstrate that Finnish and Sámi were related to one another but unrelated to Swedish or Russian. Shortly after this, in 1555, the Swedish scholar Olaus Magnus established that Finnish was also markedly different from Swedish as well as other Scandinavian languages (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p; 110).

Investigation slowly expanded to other neighboring languages. An especially interesting piece of research was produced by Michaël Wexonius Gyldenstolpe in 1650, about a century after Münster's work. This comparative analysis was the first to clearly express the relationship between Finnish and Estonian. His work is especially noteworthy due to its methodology, which was, in some respects, not unlike that of much later comparative philology (Korhonen 1986, p. 28). It has even been argued that if Gyldenstolpe's investigations had generated more academic interest, "the story of comparative linguistics would undoubtedly have been different" (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p. 111). However, despite their exotic attractiveness, marginal languages like Finnish ended up generating little interest in European scholarly circles on the whole. Consequently, Gyldenstolpe's research remained virtually unknown outside Finland.

The general trends of the 17th century linguistics, especially the jingoistic search for mankind's original language, may have also contributed to the low interest generated by Gyldenstolpe's work. The most popular hypotheses of the 17th century attempted to relate Finnish to either Hebrew or Greek. Gyldenstolpe himself addressed this possibility to some extent, although on the whole he remained skeptical about Finnish being related to either language (Korhonen 1986, p. 28).

Enevald Svedonius was one of the first scholars to link Finnish with Hebrew or Greek. His 1662 study proposed Hebrew etymologies for a number of Finnish words. Several followed in his footsteps throughout the next century, including Erik Cajanus in 1697, Daniel Juslenius in 1712 and 1745, and Fredericus Collin between 1764 and 1766. Perhaps the most noteworthy point about these studies was the broadness of their methodology, as they expanded the Finnish–Greek–Hebrew hypothesis beyond the mere comparison of words to the investigation of grammar, phonology and semantics (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p. 111–112).

A late contributor to the Finnish–Greek–Hebrew discussion was Nils Idman, whose 1774 study of Finnish and Greek included around 600 etymology proposals and several morphological parallels, an impressive amount considering the time. To some extent, Idman's work showed the declining interest in these pseudo-genetic comparisons; he took the stance that a relationship between Finnish and Hebrew was unconvincing, as lexical similarity between the languages was no greater than what could be established between Hebrew and any other European language. He was also not convinced that Greek and Finnish were relatives, suggesting that the parallels were due to language contact (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p. 112–113).

The comparative studies of Hungarian linguists Janós Sajnovic and Samuel Gyarmathi mark the beginning of a more scientific comparative research. The genetic hypothesis and methodologically modernized comparativism spread into Finnish academic circles during the latter part of the 18th century (Korhonen 1986, p. 29–32). On a full scale, however, the methods were first employed by Henrik Gabriel Porthan in 1795 and 1801 (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p. 113).

The outline of early Finnish comparativism presented above is not a comprehensive one, but should illustrate how firmly rooted the tradition is within Finland's linguistic history. This may in part explain how and why the later neogrammarian school became dominant in Finland and remained so well into the late-20th century. The early adoption of the genetic relationship also meant that the theoretical foundation of dialect research had been laid quite early.

2.2. Early accounts of dialects

Although comparative language research was well underway in Finland from the 16th century onwards, interest towards Finnish dialects was limited. The reasons for this were largely political; since the 12th century, Finland had been a part of Sweden, making Swedish the main language of the gentry as well as administration. Along with Latin, Swedish was also used as a language of education and research. Finnish, on the other hand, was mostly used only by peasants and part of the middle class. The prestige of Swedish was on the increase especially in the 17th century, reducing the position of Finnish even further. Consequently, it is not surprising that we do not find even marginally academic accounts of Finnish dialects until the 18th century.

Be that as it may, written accounts of Finnish dialects have existed throughout the history of written Finnish. One of the oldest account is found in the preface to the first Finnish translation of the New Testament in 1548, written by Mikael Agricola, whose work essentially formed the basis for written Finnish. Although not providing a detailed description of the dialect situation, Agricola noted that at least each Finnish province had a distinctive speech variant. He also noted that the Finnish spoken in and around the Finnish capital, Turku, had begun to level, making it a logical choice as the basis of standardized Finnish (Rapola 1969, p. 22–23).

The next dialect commentary, by Ljungo Tuomaanpoika, is found from the turn of the 17th century. An early attempt at dividing Finnish into explicit dialect areas, it proposed a four-way dialect division, with the dialect of Turku and Ostrobothnia occupying the north-western part of Finland, the dialect of Uusimaa occupying the south, the dialect of Savo and Vyborg occupying the east, leaving the dialect of Tavastia in the middle. However, due to Tuomaanpoika's casual and subjective approach, where dialects were divided into 'good' or 'comprehensible' ones and 'bad', or 'corrupt' ones, this division did not ultimately contribute to scholarly research of later centuries (Rapola 1969, p. 23).

2.3. The Fennophile movement and the rise of scholarly dialect interest

The 18th century marked an increase of scholarly interest in the Finnish language and dialects, through an emerging 'Fennophile' movement. The movement aimed to raise the Finnish culture and language to a more prestigious status, and included a number of prominent academics.

A central topic in these early scholarly contributions was the division of Finnish into discrete dialect areas. The first, and also the best known Finnish dialect division was outlined by grammarian Bartholdus Vhaël in his 1733 Finnish grammar *Grammatica Fennica*. Based on sound features, it distinguished two dialect areas – western and eastern, which he called *dialectus Aboica* ('dialect of Turku') and *dialectus Savonica* ('dialect of Savo'), respectively (Korhonen 1986, p. 19).

The two-way dialect division was not the only one proposed; in 1777 Erik Lencqvist proposed an alternative, three-way division, in which Finnish was divided into a southern, a northern (or Ostrobothnian) and Savo dialects (Rapola 1969, p; 24). However, the two-way division became the *de facto* standard after Henrik Gabriel Porthan, a professor and a librarian for the Royal Academy of Turku, refined Vhaël's division in his 1801 dissertation. While Porthan retained *dialectus Savonica* as the

name for the eastern dialect, he renamed the western dialect into *dialectus communior* ('the more common dialect').

Porthan's work, despite occasional sketchiness, is one of the main cornerstones in Finnish dialect research, essentially building the foundation for later disciplinized work. The early dialect investigations generally reflect the "intuitive and casual" (Chambers & Trudgill 1980, p. 16) nature of pre-19th century dialectology. This is true of both Vhaël's and Porthan's contributions, which did not rely on empirical evidence.

3. 19TH CENTURY AND THE DISCIPLINARIZATION OF FINNISH LINGUISTICS

The 19th century marked a turning point in the disciplinization of Finnish linguistics. As a result of the Finnish War, fought between Sweden and Russia from 1808 to 1809, Finland became part of the Russian empire as an autonomous Grand Duchy. This both political and methodological changes in academic research.

Among the first changes that the new regime brought was the relocation of Finland's academic center from Turku to Helsinki. After the Royal Academy of Turku was destroyed in a fire in 1827, it was moved to Helsinki and renamed *Suomen Aleksanterin Yliopisto* ('Imperial Alexander's University of Finland'). The transfer was partly dictated by Russia, as they wanted better control over the university by moving it further from Finland's western border (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p. 134).

Russia was also motivated to support the establishment of a more 'Finnish' national identity, as it would create political and cultural distance between Finland and Sweden (Korhonen 1986, p. 9). This brought considerable financial and academic support for ethnology and linguistics.

Also during the early 19th century, universities in the Nordic countries underwent a series of changes, inspired by Wilhelm von Humboldt's Friedrich Wilhelm University (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p. 134–135). Importantly, language research became a more separate discipline, which in turn paved the way for specialist fields such as dialectology. A chair for Finnic linguistics was established in mid-1800s, further advancing the disciplinization process (Korhonen 1986, p. 50).

With respect to dialectology, two noteworthy developments took place during these years. First, more attention was paid to eastern dialects as a result from further standardization of Finnish. Second, large-scale empirical language research began.

3.1. The dialect struggle – Finnish moves eastwards

The relocation of Finland's academic center brought eastern dialects closer to academic activity. One noteworthy result was that scholars with background in eastern Finnish dialects began to demand the inclusion of the eastern variety within the standardized Finnish, which was still largely based on western dialects. This led to a period of active language debate known historically as *murteiden taistelu* ('the struggle of dialects'). First steps in the struggle were taken already a few years before Helsinki became Finland's academic center.

The start of the dialect struggle is often attributed to Reinholm von Becker, an adjunct professor at the Royal Academy of Turku who was also in charge of the newspaper *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat* ('Turku weekly news') in 1820. Becker, who was originally from Savo, felt that Swedish contact influence had corrupted the western dialects, making the eastern ones more suitable for written Finnish. Consequently, his newspaper used orthography that reflected the eastern variety of Finnish. He elaborated that while he did not want the eastern dialects to become a new basis for standardized Finnish, he felt that they had been excessively neglected, and that this should be corrected (Lauerma 2004, p. 145–146).

Becker published a new, comprehensive grammar of Finnish in 1824, which also emphasized the need for a standard that would combine eastern and western linguistic

features. A number of scholars followed in his footsteps, including Elias Lönnroth, composer of the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. Lönnroth was at first a strong supporter of eastern dialects in the dispute, but eventually took a more neutral stance.

The struggle ended around 1840, and the result was a new standard that was fairly successful in combining the characteristics of both dialects. With respect to dialect research, this period had two important effects. First, the introduction of both dialects into standardized Finnish helped to forge an equality between the two varieties, which in turn brought unbiased dialectology one step closer. Second, it brought more dialect awareness by very concretely highlighting dialectal differences.

3.2. The start of empirical dialect research

Perhaps the most important development in the linguistics of the 19th century was the establishment of empirical, fieldwork-based research tradition. This was assisted by Russia's endeavor to alienate Finland from Sweden.

The newly formed *Suomen Aleksanterin Yliopisto* had close relationships with several Russian universities, such as the universities of St. Petersburg and Kasan and the Academy of St. Petersburg. In their endeavor to promote the Finns' national consciousness, the Academy of St. Petersburg supported Finnish linguistic research generously (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p; 135), which began a series of field trips to the Uralic peoples scattered across the Russian empire, as well as field trips within the borders of Finland.

Elias Lönnroth also had a role in setting the stage for dialectological fieldwork. During his travels across Finland between 1828 and 1845, Lönnroth collected folk poetry, folk tales, proverbs and riddles, and provided descriptions of rustic life, Finnish dialects, Baltic Finnic languages and Sámi (Korhonen 1986, p. 74). In relation to the dialect struggle, he made a proposal to the Finnish Literature Society for countrywide gathering of language material to help develop the written standard (Lehikoinen & Kiuru 2001, p. 50).

Antero Warelius may be regarded as one of the first real empirical dialectologists focusing on Finnish. His work began in 1846, when he was asked by the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg to elucidate the two-way dialect division and the geographic boundaries of Finnish dialects as part of a project to produce an ethnographic map of the Russian empire. Unlike earlier scholars, he personally traveled across Finland collecting linguistic and ethnological material for the project. His morphological analysis was the first to illustrate that the boundaries of the two-way dialect division, as well as those of separate dialects, were not clear-cut. Consequently, he showed that the two-way division was an oversimplification. Despite his results, he published a rough geographical division of the eastern and western dialects in Swedish in 1848, and a revised German version in 1849 (Rapola 1969, p. 26–27).

Warelius' pioneering work was followed by more fieldwork, especially in the 1860s and the 1870s, coinciding with the emergence of European dialect geography. A significant proponent of Finnish dialectology was August Ahlqvist, who was professor of Finnish at the time. His contributions to the discipline include a study-aid called *Suomalainen murteiskirja* ('A book of Finnic dialects') from 1869, which included texts and vocabularies from Baltic Finnic languages (Korhonen 1986, p. 83). He also founded *Kotikielen Seura* ('the Mother Tongue Society'), which also promoted the collection of dialect material.

Around Ahlqvist's time the Finnish Literature Society began to award grants for dialectological fieldwork. The first resulting dialectological work, written by Torsten Aminoff in 1871, described the Ostrobothnian dialect morphologically and phonologically (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p. 246).

Active empirical dialectology started a golden era for Finnish dialect research, which reached its peak in the early 20th century. However, new trends from the neogrammarian school soon began to reshape the field.

4. THE NEOGRAMMARIAN PERIOD

The profoundly influential neogrammarian school was brought to Finland by Eemil Nestor Setälä in the 1880s, and had a considerable effect on Finnish linguistics in general. The emphasized historical perspective of the neogrammarians reflected Finland's comparative tradition, which may partly explain why it was so readily adopted.

Scholars have often noted Setälä's strong influence over the entire Finnish linguistic field; he was generally considered the leading language authority until his death in 1935 (Korhonen 1986, p. 107). The effects of the neogrammarian school were long-lasting, remaining even after Setälä's death.

In this section, the effects of the neogrammarian school on Finnish dialectology are discussed. This is followed by a section addressing the most significant dialectological achievement of this era – Lauri Kettunen's dialect atlas of Finnish.

4.1. Neogrammarian effects on dialectology

Setälä (1891, p. 7) described the entire field of linguistics as a trichotomy of *descriptivism*, *comparativism* and *historicism*. I will briefly examine these three concepts and how they relate to Finnish dialect research.

Historicism and *comparativism*, the two main characteristics of the neogrammarian school, manifested themselves in the strong research focus on the history of sounds on the one hand, and the diachronic perspective on the other. These factors did not have a profound effect on dialectology, but they did highlight new research topics.

Perhaps the most prominent new topic was *diachronic dialectology* – the application of comparativism to the study of dialect history. The historical divergence of dialects had already been addressed to some extent in the early 1800s (Rapola 1969, p. 24–25), but without the systematicity of the neogrammarians. Among the earliest diachronic dialect studies were Heikki Ojansuu's investigations of south-western dialects of Finnish between 1901 and 1903. A number of dialect scholars soon followed suit, including Matti Airila in 1912, Jussi Laurosela in 1913–1914, Niilo Ikola in 1925 and 1931, Eeva Lindén in 1942 and 1944, Pertti Virtaranta in 1946 and 1957, Veikko Ruoppila in 1955 and Aimo Turunen in 1959 (Rapola 1969, p. 29).

However, the dialectology of this period was far from being purely diachronic. Synchronic, fieldwork-based dialectology was very active during last two decades of the 1800s, and synchronic dialect research generally continued in parallel with diachronic research throughout the period (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p. 246).

Descriptivism, on the other hand, affected dialect research quite profoundly. One its foremost results was the extensive documentation of language in the form of dialect corpora (Korhonen 1986, p. 108), which reinforced the trend of empirical dialectology that had already been set into motion. Spoken language was also favored over written, which further emphasized the role of dialectology.

Phonetic accuracy of dialect material increased profoundly during this period, as the neogrammarian school also advocated phonetic transcription in order to retain accuracy in the collected data (Korhonen 1986, p. 108). Parlographs, which were first tried out in Finland around 1910, soon became popular, and the use of audio recording in dialect research became commonplace in the 1940s (Rapola 1969, p. 31). The extensive collection of recorded dialect material culminated in the establishment of the recording archive of Finnish language in 1959. Today, the archive includes over 20.000 hours of

language material, 15.000 of which document Finnish dialects (Yli-Paavola 1970, p. 10).

As neogrammarian descriptivism also focused on positivist-inductive research methods, only admitting conclusions from empirical data, it left little room for complex hypotheses or general theories. This meant that linguistic research assumed a highly descriptive form where new theoretical frameworks were not usually readily accepted. It has been noted, for instance, that the structuralist ideas of the early 1900s were virtually unknown in Finnish linguistic circles until the latter part of the century (Korhonen 1986, p; 108). As a consequence, descriptive dialectology dominated while other frameworks such as structural and generative dialectology did not gain a firm foothold in Finnish dialectology.

4.2. The dialect atlas of Finnish

Despite the strong paradigms imposed by the neogrammarians, the early 20th century marked a considerable achievement for Finnish dialectology – Lauri Kettunen’s Finnish dialect atlas. A legendary figure among Finnish dialectologists, Kettunen personally traveled across Finland between 1926 and 1939, surveying and recording the speech of almost every parish. The bulk of his fieldwork was published in two volumes: *Suomen Murteet* (‘Finnish dialects’) in 1930, and *Suomen Murrekartasto* (‘Dialect Atlas of Finnish’) in 1940.

Many of the neogrammarian period trends may be identified from Kettunen’s dialect volumes. For instance, the primary division of his atlas is essentially sound-based, separating the analyzed phenomena into the categories of *konsonantismi* (‘consonantism’) and *vokalismi* (‘vowelism’) (1940a). Purely lexical phenomena, on the other hand, are scarce. In addition, Kettunen’s appendices to the atlas include several diachronic analyses of the dialect features (1940b).

Being the only dialect atlas of Finnish thus far, Kettunen’s work is a considerable disciplinary cornerstone. It is also noteworthy that Kettunen did not attempt to force the atlas to agree with existing divisions, such as the two-way division. The atlas, along with Kettunen’s 1930 dialect book, remain the most cited works within Finnish dialectology (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000, p; 423).

5. DIALECTOLOGY FROM THE MID-20TH CENTURY ONWARDS

The neogrammarian legacy affected Finnish linguistics until the late 20th century. Criticism towards the school became more commonplace around this time.

Published criticism on the matter was scarce; one noteworthy article, written by Fred Karlsson (1975), criticized the combined influence of the earlier fennophile movement and the later neogrammarian tradition on the scientific paradigm of Finnish linguistics. Karlsson identified three driving forces of Finnish linguistics: *konkreettisuus* (concreteness), the strong empirical tradition emphasizing the role of corpora; *historismi* (historicism), the dominance of diachronic linguistics, and finally, *kansallishenkisyys* (nationalism), the shaping of the Finnish national identity that followed the fennophile movement, and resulted in a strong and continuing tradition of preserving the cultural heritage of the Finnish people, including languages and dialects. The stagnated methodology which did not readily accept new linguistic theories, also received its share of criticism.

5.1. 20th century: ‘the golden age’ of dialect research

Since the beginning of the 20th century, dialectology had reached a very dominating position in Finnish linguistics, being possibly the largest single topic within the discipline. A brief quantitative glance at dialect research within Finnic studies, based on a subset of 1200 theses titles from a bibliographical list of Finnish language and literature theses and dissertations from six universities (Paronen et al. 1977) shows that

dialect theses cover at least one fifth of all works within any decade between 1886 and 1975.

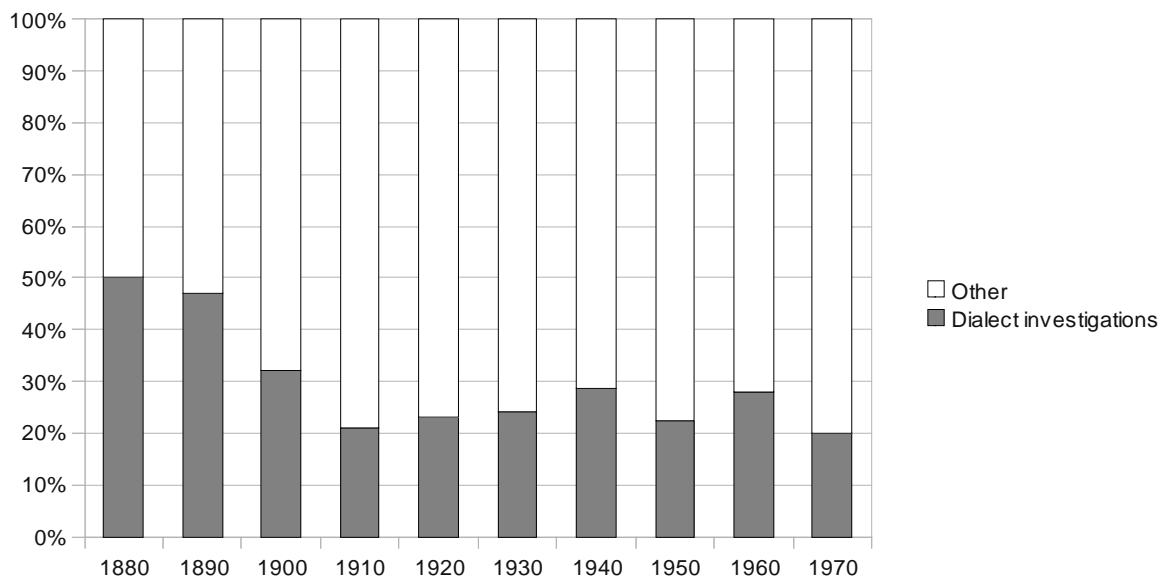


Figure 1: Percentage of dialect-related investigations, based on bibliographical information

The figure is far from exact, as it is based only on the titles. Nevertheless, it does show how strong the position of Finnish dialectology was the neogrammarian period onwards.

5.2. Towards sociolects and quantitativism

In spite of its firmly established position, advancing urbanization brought problems for dialectology. At this stage research interest turned towards the emerging field of sociolinguistics. Emerging alongside dialectology first as variationist studies comparing urban and rustic sociolects, sociolinguistics acted as a logical next step as rural dialects began to dissipate and urban speech variants began to expand (Hurtt 1999, p. 53). The era of sociolinguistics also expanded the ontological realm of dialectology through social categories.

First sociolinguistic investigations surfaced around 1960s in the form of Master's theses. Investigations of large urban speech communities, including Helsinki, Tampere, Turku and Jyväskylä, followed in 1970–1980 (Paunonen 1982, p. 43).

Although sociolinguistic research has partly supplanted dialectology, this does not mean that dialectology has become obsolete. In recent years, the study of sociolects has been complemented by topics such as *perceptual dialectology*, the study of dialect perceptions of the general population (Preston 1989). Scholars representing this field include Marjatta Palander and Aila Mielikäinen (2002), whose research began in the 1990s and continued into the 2000s.

The increased power and availability of computers has also popularized quantitative research in several linguistic sub-disciplines, including dialect research. This has brought dialectometry, which is seen in the work of Marjatta Palander (1996; 1999), Kalevi Wiik (2004), and Antti Leino (Leino *et al.*, 2005). The digitization of existing dialect material will likely result in quantitative reinterpretations. For instance, Sheila

Embelton and Eric Wheeler (1997; 2000) have endeavored to digitize Kettunen's dialect atlas, making it available for new kinds of analyses.

6. ON THE ONTOLOGY OF *MURRE*

This final section addresses the ontological realm of Finnish dialectology. I will begin with a look at how the Finnish term *murre* has been characterized, followed by a few notes regarding dialects as objects of academic research.

6.1. Do dialectologists research 'murre'?

In the mid-1900s, dialectologist Martti Rapola (1947) specified three meanings for *murre*: that of the non-educated layman, the educated layman, and the scholar. The non-educated layman views her own speech as the regular variant, and speech this variant as *murre*, reflecting the relationship between the noun *murre* and the verb *murtaa*, 'to break'. The educated layman, on the other hand, regards *murre* as speech deviating from standardized Finnish; standard written language is consequently the definitive variant, whereas dialects are essentially flawed. Finally, the linguist sees *murre* as a combination of the two definitions; it is speech that deviates from that which one is used to. This enables the scholar to retain objectivity of his research object, and avoid placing higher value either on a specific speech variant or standard Finnish.

Interestingly, Rapola continues that most Finnish dialectologists are, in fact, native speakers of the speech variants they focus on (1947, p. 16–17). Consequently, one could argue that the research object of the dialectologist is not strictly *murre*, the speech deviating from what they are accustomed to, but in fact the speech variant they identify with. This curiously intertwines with the fact that the bulk of dialect research in Finland is a by-product of ethnographic documentation in the wake of national awakening. In fact, aside from a few dialect scholars such as Rapola, much of Finnish dialectology has focused on individual speech variants, and not the larger context of language as an amalgam of these dialects.

6.2. Linguistic levels

Dialect, like language, is a complex entity with characteristics that manifest on different levels. With respect to any linguistic research tradition, it should be safe to say that a few, if any, investigations take more than few of these levels into account.

Typical of early dialect researches of Finnish was the holistic treatment of entire dialects in terms of at least one linguistic level, and often several. More scrutiny was introduced during the neogrammarian period, where the study of sounds in specific contexts became popular. Martti Rapola is considered one of the first dialectologists to establish relations across different levels. This is done in his 1919–1920 analysis, which addressed Finnish dialects with an implicitly functional approach (Hovdhaugen et al. 2002, p. 422).

Finnish dialect divisions generally are primarily established as morphophonological differences. Consequently, they are perhaps closest to the realm of 'accent'. Syntactic and especially lexical level analyses have been on the rise from the 20th century onwards, occasionally providing interesting perspectives to the stagnated views. Leino et al. (2006), for instance, provided a dialectometrical analysis of Finnish dialect words, noting that the level does not support the traditional two-way dialect division of Finnish.

6.3. Murre as a lect

The collection of Finnish dialect material began alongside larger endeavor to establish and preserve the Finnic culture, which has left its mark on the dialect as a research object. It has been noted that the collecting of Finnish dialect material may be characterized, method-wise, as a combination of traditional dialect geography and ethnology (Jussila 1991, v). The downside of this is that new linguistic and dialectological theories have occasionally been neglected, as the collected data has had the combined constraints of these disciplines.

Bearing in mind that many of the dialect researchers of the time focused especially in their native dialects, it is unsurprising that *murre*, especially in a traditional context, has been largely geographical, with the primary unit in collected data being *pitäjämurre*, the dialect of the municipality (Jussila 1991, v). Social background such as gender, occupation and education has often been documented, but considered secondary.

Since the 1960s, the sociological aspect of dialects has received more attention. This has introduced new terminology, including *slangi* (slang), *kaupunkimurre* (urban dialect), *sosiolekti* (sociolect), and *idiolekti* (idiolect). However, even nowadays Finnish dialect research retains much of its geographical bias, especially since the bulk of collected material remains *pitäjämurre*.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Both internal and external factors have affected dialect research development in Finland. The basic context has been outlined in this paper.

Dialect research was scarce before the 18th century due to political reasons and prestige differences. Considering the early establishment of the genetic hypothesis among Finno-Ugrian and Uralic languages, it is possible that dialect research might have taken off earlier had these factors been different.

From the 18th century onwards, modern, empirical dialect research began to take shape. Its objectives essentially evolved alongside the endeavor to preserve the Finnish cultural legacy and to establish a Finnish national identity. Dialect research was closely associated with ethnology, sharing methodological aspects with it. This shaped the dialect as a research object.

Finnish linguistics was dominated by the neogrammarian school from the late 19th century well into the 20th century. This reinforced empirical topics such as dialectology, but also introduced aspects of historical linguistics into dialectology. The overwhelming influence of the neogrammarians methodology more or less isolated Finnish language research from many new theories.

From the late 20th century onwards, sociolinguistics has reformed the traditionally geographical dialect research. Dialect research tradition has also assumed a quantitative direction, aided by the availability of computers.

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