Comments received for
ISO 639-3 Change Request
2019-037

Outcome: Rejected
Effective date: January 23, 2020

The request to deprecate the code [olo] for Livvi and merge it into [krl] Karelian is rejected. Although the initial request was supported by several linguists, the Registrar looked for evidence of the use of the [olo] code. For instance, it was found that the [olo] code has a Wikipedia site with 7,877 pages and 26,711 edits (https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias), while the [krl] Wikipedia site is still in incubator stage with 2,104 pages and 7,909 edits (https://tools.wmflabs.org/meta/catanalysis/index.php?cat=0&title=Wp/krl&wiki=incubatorwiki). In addition, Livvi (as distinct from Karelian) is currently supported by a Gboard keyboard, a Gboard spelling dictionary, and an Apertium Machine translation implementation. The review panel concluded that the significant development of Livvi indicates that the code is being used by the language community, and should not be merged.

In addition, two statements (which are appended) were received by the Registrar from developers in the language community opposing the merge request. These further indicated that the two codes have separate constituencies and continued usefulness. Therefore, the code [olo] for Livvi will be retained.
To the ISO 639-3 Registration Authority
<iso639-3@sil.org>

We represent the task force Karjalan kieliruadajat ('Karelian language labourers’ in Karelian) which works for the maintenance and development of the Karelian language in Finland. It has been brought to our attention that Anneli Sarhimaa, who works at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, has approached you with a request to suppress the distinct ISO 639-3 codes for the Karelian and Livvi languages. She appears to claim that there is no basis for distinguishing between the Karelian and Livvi languages, and that Livvi (formerly known as Olonetsian), in particular, has never been recognized as a language distinct from Karelian. We would like to dispute these claims as inaccurate with the following arguments:

(1) Olonetsian and Karelian were treated separately already back in the 18th century, for instance, by the famous explorer Pallas, who in his dictionary from 1797–1799 presented translations given “[po] olonecki” (in Olonetsian), on the one hand, and “[po] korel’ski” (in Karelian), on the other.

(2) In 1804, two concise prayer books were published, one “na korel’skom jazyke” (in the Karelian language) and the other “na oloneckom jazyke” (in the Olonetsian language). In effect, Karelian and Livvi (Olonetsian) continued to be treated as separate languages in the 19th century.

(3) Arvid Genetz, the first professor of Finno-Ugrian Studies in Finland, regards Livvi (Olonetsian) as a language distinct from Karelian in his monograph Tutkimus Aunuksen kielestä ‘A study of the Olonetsian language’ (1885: p. v): ”Nyt ilmestyvä todistee kuitenkin selvälleen, että tämä [aunuksen kieli] on samallainen itsenäinen välimuoto vepsän ja karjalan välillä, jommoinen vatsja on viron ja suomen välillä.” (Translation: What is published now should clearly demonstrate that this [Olonetsian language] is a similarly independent intermediate variety between Veps and Karelian as exists in the form of Vote between Estonian and Finnish).

(4) Later in Finland, however, it was decided to include both Karelian and Livvi (Olonetsian) materials in a single dictionary, which was thereafter called the “Dictionary of the Karelian Language”, although the reasons for doing this were purely practical and in no means linguistically sound.

(5) In comparison, although the official policy of the Soviet Union dictated the existence of a fictitious ‘Karelian language’, which encompassed not only the Karelian and Livvi languages but also the Lude language, dictionaries were published separately for Karelian and Livvi (Olonetsian).

(6) Later on, in the final years of the Soviet Union, three separate literary languages were established, (i) vienankarjala for the northern dialects of Karelian, (ii) Livvi (Olonetsian), and (iii) kariela for the southern dialects of Karelian spoken in the Tver’ Province, but not in the Republic of Karelia where the southern dialects of Karelian continue to be spoken, and these literary languages have been developed ever since.

(7) Linguistically, there should be no doubt that Finnish [fin], Karelian [krl], Livvi [olo], Lude (rather than “Ludian”) [lud], and Veps [vep], as well as Ingrian [izh], constitute fully separate languages in the northern section of the Finnic branch of the Uralic language family. From an ‘Ausbau’ perspective, it is a tragedy that while a literary standard is possessed by the northern dialects of Karelian (as vienankarjala) and the Tver’ dialects of southern Karelian (as kariela), the southern dialects of Karelian spoken in the Republic of Karelia as well as in diaspora in Finland, which are what we represent, have until recently lacked a literary expression, although our task force has by now been contributing to this cause extensively. Our hope remains that the ISO 639-3 standard continues to represents the Karelian and Livvi languages correctly, which it is doing currently, notwithstanding the ill-advised request by Anneli Sarhimaa. It should be noted that as recently as in
2012, Anneli Sarhimaa and a colleague of hers, one referred to in her request, Riho Grünthal, published a map that unambiguously showed Karelian and Livvi correctly as separate languages: https://www.sgr.fi/muutjulkaisut/ItamerensuomalaisetKieletMurteet2012.pdf

It should be further noted that Riho Grünthal, in particular, has recognized the independent language status of Karelian and Livvi in his publication in 2007 (Karjala kielten ja murteiden rajapintana. – Tiede rajojaan etsimässä. Toimittaneet Kari Raivio, Jan Rydman & Anssi Sinnemäki. Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press. Helsinki.) What has happened since is that various pressure groups have tried to suppress the Karelian language in Finland and promote the Livvi language in its stead, a stand that Sarhimaa and Grünthal have by and large complied with. Needless to say, political manoeuvres of the kind should obviously not undermine the status of Karelian and Livvi as distinct languages. In short, and contrary to Anneli Sarhimaa’s ideas, a large number of recent and current specialists have voiced their view, conforming to the views of the actual speakers of these languages, that the Karelian and Livvi languages have long since been and continue to be fully distinct of each other.

The academician Pertti Virtaranta, despite of his position as the chief editor of the “Dictionary of the Karelian Language”, covering both the Karelian and Livvi languages, established on several occasions that Livvi is a language distinct from Karelian (e.g. Itämerensuomalaiset kielet. – Itämerensuomalaiset. Heimokansojen historiaa ja kohtaloita. Toimittanut Mauno Jokipii. Atena Kustannus Oy. Jyväskylä 1995). The linguist Tapani Salminen, who we shall ask for a further assessment of the situation, has regarded Livvi as a separate language both diachronically and synchronically since the 1990s. Matti Jeskanen, the leading Karelian scholar in Finland, has consistently followed this suite for decades as well. Several other authorities and specialists have raised their voice for the independent status of Karelian and Livvi in recent decades (e.g. Itämerensuomen pohjoiset tyttäret ja tyttärennyttäret – murteita, kieliä, varieteetteja? – Helena Sulkala (toim.), Kiel- ja kulttuurikontaktit. Oulu/Kajaani 2000), although their views have by now been largely suppressed by anti-Karelian activists, such as Anneli Sarhimaa, who incorrectly propagate the status of Livvi as a ‘dialect’ of Karelian, and thus a representative of an imaginary ‘Karelian language’ to the extent of actually disregarding the Karelian language itself.

To sum up, we hold that the proposal of Anneli Sarhimaa for the expansion of the ISO 639-3 code [krl] is ill-founded, as it aims at suppressing the actual language diversity in our region. None of the arguments presented by her are valid, and, what is more, they appear to be tendentious insofar as they are designed to direct attention and resources to the Livvi language at the expense of the Karelian language. Karelian [krl] and Livvi [olo] should therefore remain in the ISO 639-3 standard as they are, with a minor notice that the misnomer ‘Livvi-Karelian’ found in the Ethnologue entry for the Russian Federation would be better replaced by simply ‘Livvi’ in the forthcoming volumes.

In Helsinki, on the 31st of December, 2019, respectfully yours,

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The indigenous languages of Karelia and their current status

A preliminary report to the Committee of Experts of European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on the 8th of February, 2018, by

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Preamble

Historical Karelia in its entirety consists of the old Russian Karelia, which roughly corresponds to the current Republic of Karelia, the Karelian territories ceded by Finland to the Soviet Union during the Second World War, and the modern Finnish Karelia. The traditional languages of the area include five Finnic languages, from west to east Finnish, Karelian, Livvi (or Olonetsian), Lude, and Veps (in Finnish, respectively, suomi, karjala, livvi or aunus, lyydi, and vepsä), as well as Russian.

This essay focuses on the indigenous languages of the ceded territory north of the Lake Ladoga, also known as ‘Border Karelia’, from the perspectives of language classification, language endangerment, and language policy. Border Karelia constitutes the original home region of the modern speakers of Karelian and Livvi in Finland, who, together with all the other residents of the territories annexed by the Soviet Union, were evacuated to the remaining parts of the country in the 1940s. Karelian and Livvi, from the point of view of their relation to Finnish, may be referred to as the regional languages of Finland, even if they have functioned more as non-territorial languages since the evacuation of their speakers. In this technical sense, ‘regional language’ is defined as a language closely related to but clearly distinct from the official and dominant language in the region, often incorrectly referred to as a ‘dialect’ of the dominant language, not least for the purpose of downgrading it. Karelian and Livvi were, indeed, not recognized as minority languages by pre-war Finnish authorities, and their official treatment in post-war Finland has been checkered to say the least.

The international status of Karelian and Livvi

From a worldwide perspective, the status of Karelian and Livvi as independent languages with regard to both Finnish and each other is uncontested. As explained in more detail below, they are so distinct and divergent that they are far beyond any borderline case of language vs dialect. They are included in the international ISO 639-3 standard as Karelian [krl] and Livvi [olo] (the latter code reflecting the older English name of the language), and have been separately listed in the Ethnologue, the most widely-quoted treatment of the world’s languages and the principal source of the ISO standard, for decades before the standard’s establishment. Specifically, they also receive independent treatment by all global surveys of language endangerment. Needless to say, Karelian and Livvi are covered by the projects in which I have been involved, notably the Encyclopedia of the world’s endangered languages.
(Salminen 2007) and the UNESCO atlas of the world’s languages in danger <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap.html>, but equally well other comparable endeavours such as The Endangered Languages Project <http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/> created by the leading American specialists.

The status of Karelian and Livvi in the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is the country where the great majority of the speakers of Karelian and Livvi reside, but in contrast to their international status, Karelian and Livvi are strictly speaking unrecognized languages in the Russian Federation. Since the Soviet and Russian language policy has had and continues to have far-reaching impact on the treatment of Karelian and Livvi in Finland, a concise survey of the topic is included here.

Following an administrative tradition deriving from early Soviet times, no less than three languages, Karelian, Livvi, and Lude, are officially subsumed under the umbrella of ‘Karelian language’. This is based on an official list of registered nationalities, all of which are supposed to correspond to a single national language. ‘Karelians’, defined in this dogmatic manner, therefore cover the speakers of all three languages in question.

The paradoxality of the situation is immediately revealed by two quotes from Kovaleva & Kondrashkina (2016: 203) in a recent Russian language handbook. First they point out that “[i]n Russian Finno-Ugristics it is customary [italics mine] to distinguish three main dialects of Karelian: Karelian proper, Lude and Livvi (or Olonetsian)”, only to state later that “[t]he differences among all of the dialects [i.e., Karelian, Lude and Livvi] are so great that they prevent mutual intelligibility between their speakers”. Needless to say, even in standard Russian linguistic practice, the circumstance described in the latter statement would be sufficient for establishing three distinct languages.

The treatment Karelian, Livvi, and Lude in the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation does not represent an unprecedented situation, because several other groups of closely related but clearly distinct languages have been lumped through administrative measures into larger units both in European Russia and Siberia. The geographically closest example would be the Saami languages, i.e., the ‘Saami language’ in official Russian parlance. There are, however, a number of quite unique features concerning the ‘Karelian language’, including the following.

(i) In most parallel cases, one of the languages covered by the larger official ‘language’ was elevated to the status of a literary language in the Soviet Union, so that, for instance, Kildin Saami was cultivated among the Saami languages, Tundra Nenets among the Nenets languages, and Northern Mansi among the Mansi languages. For almost the entire history of the Republic of Karelia and its predecessor entities, however, no written or otherwise official use was granted to the indigenous languages, but another Finnic language, Finnish, was adopted to the role of the ‘national’ language of the administrative unit.

(ii) The ‘Karelian language’ also differs from other similar cases on a terminological level, because no overaching cover term such as Saami, Nenets, or Mansi is available. Karelian, in its factual meaning not covering Livvi and Lude, is therefore referred to as ‘Karelian proper’ in contexts that follow the official dogma.
An interesting contrast to the Saami languages, and an issue relevant to the minority languages of Finland, involves the terminology used for ‘dialect’ in Russian. Unlike in English with a single term dialect (or murre in Finnish), it is possible to distinguish three degrees of similarity or diversity among the (perceived) subunits of a language. The terms range from local dialect говор (говор) to major dialect диалект (диалект) to a distinct dialect group наречие (наречие). The last-mentioned term is, indeed, generally used in cases where factually distinct languages are officially relegated to ‘dialects’. As it happens, the Russian language itself was called a наречие only a hundred years ago alongside Belarusian and Ukrainian. Karelian, Livvi, and Lude are most commonly called наречие as well, which is more than expected given the extent of their differences. The Saami languages come into this picture because they are not always accorded even the intermediate term диалект but may be called говор instead. This stands in marked contrast to current international and Finnish practice, which, on a principal level at least, correctly acknowledges Saami as a group of languages, and speakers and specialists of the Saami languages would quite unanimously find the Russian language policy obsolete. The notable fact that Karelian, Livvi, and Lude are regarded as more distinct from each other than the Saami languages, respectively, is illustrated in the recent ‘comparative-onomasiological dictionary of the dialects of Karelian, Veps, and Saami languages’ (Sopostavitel’no-onomasiologicheskiy slovar’ 2007: 9–10), where ‘Karelian’ consists of the three наречие in question, Veps contains three диалект, and the four Saami languages appear in the position of говор, on the same level as local dialects of Karelian, Livvi, Lude, and Veps.

Finally, from a linguistic point of view the case at hand is also untypical, because the three languages in question are neither historically nor synchronically even the most closely related languages to each other (Salminen 1998). On the one hand, Karelian is closer to Finnish and the eastern dialects of Finnish in particular than it is to Livvi, and on the other hand, Lude is markedly closer to Veps than Livvi. The respective language boundaries around Livvi are likewise sharper than those shared by Karelian with Finnish, and Lude with Veps, respectively, although even the latter are substantial enough to rule out references to transitional dialects or dialect continuums. A representative description of the boundary between Karelian and Livvi within a single municipality is offered by Nirvi (1932).

Since the perestroika and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Finnish no longer has the privilege of being the only Finnic literary language in the Republic of Karelia. Although there are problems with the official status because of the use of the Latin alphabet, frowned upon by Russian authorities, no less that three young literary traditions have emerged, or re-emerged from earlier experimental phases there. They are based on the northern dialects of Karelian, Livvi, and Veps, respectively. The Karelian literary language in question (vienankarjala both in Karelian and Finnish) is strictly codified (Zaikov 2013) to the extent that it cannot serve the speakers of the southern dialects of Karelian in the Republic, and the Lude language is left without literary use altogether. At the same time, in the distant Tver region, where Karelian was established in the 17th century, a written form based on southern Karelian (tverinkarjala in Finnish) was also recently re-established, but its use is confined to the language enclave in question. The facts that an earlier attempt to create a joint written language for the ‘Karelian language’ in the Russian Federation failed profoundly, and that there now exist three modern literary traditions in its stead, obviously highlight the position of its components as distinct languages. Nevertheless, two groups of speakers are neglected in this respect, as they are still deprived of the fundamental right to cultivate their own language.
The recent and current status of Karelian and Livvi in Finland

Besides the so-called Border Karelia, where the indigenous population until the Second World War spoke the southern dialects of Karelian in the north and Livvi in the south of the region, there is, or rather used to be, a third area consisting of a few small villages on the eastern border of Oulu Province, notably Hietajärvi and Kuivajärvi, which still belong to Finland and whose inhabitants traditionally spoke a northern dialect of Karelian. Sadly, the last fully active user of Karelian in that area, Jussi Huovinen, passed away in 2017, and the dispersed community deriving from northern Border Karelia now represents the bulk of Karelian speakers in Finland.

Despite the fact that the speakers of Karelian and Livvi came to live in effective diaspora in Finland, both languages still appear to have at least a larger number of users than expected. Not only the oldest generation born in Border Karelia speak their traditional language but in some families Karelian and Livvi may have had a kind of an underground presence which has allowed a few younger people to gain competence in the indigenous language, and what is more, much larger communities are committed to studying and cultivating Karelian and Livvi. The potentially positive aspects of the status of Karelian and Livvi in Finland are unfortunately overshadowed by the lack of sufficient public support for both languages in general, and by the extremely unequal treatment of Karelian and Livvi in particular. In short, many influential institutions in Finland support and propagate the idea that instead of recognizing Karelian and Livvi as independent regional languages in their own right, there should be a ‘Karelian language’ with a highly preferential position for Livvi in literary use, public presence, and material support. While such an idea is clearly similar to the status of southern Karelian as opposed to Livvi in the Russian Federation, Finland differs, or it should differ, from the neighbouring country in this respect, thanks to guarantees in the constitution of Finland, specific laws concerning equal civil rights of Finnish citizens, and international commitments made by the Finnish government.

The current essay is by necessity a collection of arguments for the equality of Karelian and Livvi in Finland. In this context it should be emphasized that even if Karelian and Livvi were referred to as major dialects or dialect groups or anything other than languages, there would still be no justification for inequality and discrimination. From my background in the fields of classification of languages and the assessment of language endangerment, I have no preference in favour of either regional language of Finland. If the situation was reversed and Livvi had been left without recognition, support, and cultivation, the essay would be very much the same in its contents and its level of criticism with just the names of the languages switched.

There are several factors why there are both conceptual and terminological problems with the notion of ‘Karelian’ in Finland.

(i) In popular usage, the south-eastern dialects of Finnish are commonly referred to as Karelian dialects, and the idea of a distinct Karelian language and, even more so, the existence of something different that would be called Livvi or Olonetsian, are poorly known both to the wider public and the decision makers.
(ii) The single most confusing issue caused by linguists in particular was choosing the title ‘dictionary of the Karelian language’ (Kärjalan kielten sanakirja 1968–2005) for a multi-volume publication containing lexical materials from both Karelian and Livvi. It has not been unusual in Finland to compile dictionaries and other publications that cover several closely related languages, and the series where the dictionary of Karelian and Livvi was published alone contains several examples, but the others have appropriately comprehensive titles. On the planning stage of the dictionary there were, indeed, several suggestions for a precise title, notably by a leading specialist of eastern Finnic languages E. A. Tunkelo, who explicitly proposed the title ‘dictionary of the Karelian and Olonetsian languages’ (Kärjalan ja aunuksen kielten sanakirja), as mentioned in the introduction of the dictionary.

(iii) As detailed below, Karelian and Livvi have traditionally been kept distinct by leading Finnish linguists. In the latter half of the 20th century, however, there was increasing cooperation and mutual influence between Finnish and Soviet specialists, and the Soviet idea of a wider ‘Karelian language’ and specific ‘Karelian proper’ (varsinaiskarjala as a calque from Russian in Finnish) became better known. The occasional Finnish version of broad ‘Karelian’ typically does not involve Lude, and Finnish linguists such as Pertti Virtaranta were duly criticized by colleagues from the Republic of Karelia including their leading specialist G. M. Kert for creating an unprecedented conglomeration unit consisting of Karelian and Livvi alone, incompatible with Soviet dogma. From the point of view of evacuees from Border Karelia this was obviously a mere academic exercise, because Karelian and Livvi would in either case be perceived as ‘dialects’.

As mentioned above, a very recent trend in the field involves controlling figures speaking for the amalgamation of Karelian and Livvi in favour of Livvi as the only supported and cultivated regional language in Finland under the name of ‘Karelian’ and at the expense of the Karelian language itself. Such an unusual situation, especially from individuals and institutions that are expected to be active in promoting language diversity and addressing language endangerment, may partly be explained as a reaction to suggestions, still presented only a decade ago, that the regional languages of Finland, dispersed and apparently without hope of survival as they were, should be left to die out, and whatever means of support might be delivered, they should be directed to assisting the communities of Karelian and Livvi speakers in the Russian Federation. The lack of resources is a current fact, but the remedy would obviously be a substantial increase of support instead of neglect or unequal treatment of a particular language community. In this context, the most alarming development concerns specialists who have previously shown that they understand and recognize the status of Karelian and Livvi as independent languages but who have ostensibly changed their views to concur with the amalgamation ideology.

(i) Notably, the high-quality language map ‘the Finnic language and their major dialects’ (first edition 2004 and second edition 2012: Itämerensuomalaiset kielet ja niiden päämurteet) published by the Finno-Ugrian Society and downloadable at <http://www.sgr.fi/nuutajulkaisut/kartat.html>, presents a reliable classification of the eastern Finnic languages discussed in this essay, with Karelian (karjala) as such in both editions, and, with a terminological update, Olonetsian (aunus) in the first and Livvi (livvi) in the second edition. After the publication of the second edition, as recent as it was, and especially in the course of 2017, publications and statements by the editors of this map have suggested strongly opposite views, whose major points are dealt with in this essay, but a detailed critique must await another occasion.
(ii) Similarly, when it was pointed out to the representatives of the Institute for the Languages of Finland (Kotimaisten kielten keskus) that their widely-quoted website contained numerous problems with regard to the indigenous languages of Karelia, the resulting update contained an increased number of unreliable and incoherent statements. As it happens, the Institute is no longer concerned with Karelian and Livvi (see immediately below), which, however, is not a good excuse to present information that is known to be incorrect.

(iii) Furthermore, the University of Eastern Finland, which carries the main responsibility for the study of Karelian and Livvi in Finland, has explicitly adopted the amalgamation ideology, with a long-time focus on idiolects or rather registers which exhibit heavier than usual interference in the language contacts among Finnish, Karelian, and Livvi.

(iv) The Finnish Orthodox Church, which is strongly associated with the evacuees from Border Karelia and their descendants, also emphasizes the preferential status of Livvi, and similar bias can be noted in the positions of various authorities and foundations.

Background issues concerning the status of Karelian and Livvi in Finland

It is safe to say that the present situation, which may be characterized as baffling to say the least, could not have been anticipated on the basis of the history of Karelian and Livvi studies in Finland. The first serious descriptions of Karelian and Livvi, by Arvid Genetz, also represent an early culmination in the history of research, viz ‘a study of the language of Russian Karelia’ (Tutkimus Venäjän Karjalan kielestä; Genetz 1880) on Karelian and ‘a study of the language of Olonets’ (Tutkimus Aunuksen kielestä; Genetz 1884) devoted to Livvi. The leading specialists of the Finnic languages in the 20th century such as Heikki Ojansuu and Lauri Kettunen consistently used the terms Karelian (karjala), Olonetsian (aunus), and Lude (lyydi) when referring to the constituents of the ‘Karelian language’ as defined by Soviet authorities. This explicit tradition survived till the end of the century, as witnessed by the subtitle of a pivotal study by Matti Larjavaara called ‘the demonstratives of the Finnic languages 1: Karelian, Olonetsian, Lude, and Veps’ (Itämerensuomen demonstratiivit 1: Karjala, aunus, lyydi ja vepsä; Larjavaara 1986). When Karelian and Olonetsian were treated in the same publication, a hyphenated compound appellation was used, e.g., ‘the historical phonology of Karelian-Olonetsian’ (Karjala-aunuksen äännehistoria; Ojansuu 1918), and whenever it was deemed practical to employ ‘Karelian’ in a wider sense, the referent was not necessarily Karelian plus Livvi, cf., for instance, ‘the guide to the Karelian language’ (Karjalan kielen opas; Ojansuu 1907), which does cover both Karelian and Livvi in separate sections but also includes a third section devoted to Ingrian (in Finnish inkeroi), i.e., another closely related eastern Finnic language. It may be noted that Olonetsian (aunus) is simply the older, and not in any way derogatory, synonym of Livvi, which is nowadays more frequently used because it is based on the respective autonym, and presumably also because it is fully unambiguous, as not only Livvi but also Karelian dialects are spoken in parts of the former Olonets Governorate.

At the same time, there was a lot of ambivalence with regard to the status of Karelian and Livvi as well as Lude and Ingrian in the course of the 20th century. In Finland, Livvi was often called “Olonetsian dialects” (aunukselaismurteet), and for Lude and Ingrian similar terms were even more common (lyyditäismurteet and inkeroismurteet, respectively). Whether or not these ‘dialects’ belonged to a particular language was often not made explicit, but
according to the most conservative assessment, all four languages mentioned above would be called dialects, and the number of Finnic languages in total was five (Livonian, Estonian, Võõre, Finnish, and Veps), as opposed to the current understanding that the correct number is ten, i.e., the above four as well as the Võõre (or Võõro-Seto) language added. This conservative view was nearly uniformly held outside specialist circles by Finnish authorities and educators, and Karelian and Livvi had little presence in schools, media, and public life before the Second World War. At the time of the Finnish military occupation of much of the modern Republic of Karelia, even Veps children were educated by Finnish teachers in Finnish (Kettunen 1960: 27) in the spirit of nationalistic thinking of the day.

In view of the terminological concerns and varying classifications, it is interesting to notice that even those specialists who have nominally regarded Karelian and Livvi as ‘main dialects’, have called attention to their divergence when dealing with actual language material. Pertti Virtaranta, the editor-in-chief of the ‘dictionary of the Karelian language’ among many other achievements, published a survey of the dialects of Karelian and Livvi, under the name ‘Karelian’ for certain, yet he went to great lengths to demonstrate how profoundly distinct they were, starting from the statement “Das Olonetzische oder die olonetzischen Dialekte bzw. das «Livvische» ist sehr deutlich abgegrenzt” (Virtaranta 1972: 13). A parallel case may be mentioned from the Soviet Union, where the leading specialist D. V. Bubrih officially championed the dogma of tripartite ‘Karelian’, but asserts in the introduction to the ‘dialectological atlas of the Karelian language’ (Bubrih & Beljakov & Puntina 1997) that “the morphology and syntax of Karelian proper differ fundamentally from the morphology and syntax of Veps and both of the southern dialects of Karelian [i.e., Livvi and Lude]. It may even be said that the morphology and syntax of both of the southern dialects of Karelian (Olonetsian and Lude dialects) can be studied from the perspective of Veps dialectology. This notion is equally valid for nominal and verbal inflection as well as word-formation, not to speak of lexicon. The borderline also in that respect lies between the Karelian proper dialects on the one hand, and Veps and both of the southern dialect groups of Karelian on the other.”

**Latest developments in the status of Karelian and Livvi in Finland**

Since the days of Virtaranta, Bubrih, and other leading specialists, who may have paid lip service to different notational classifications of eastern Finnic languages but who always respected their actual differences and employed internally consistent terminology, much has changed for the worse. A case is point is the repeated renaming of Livvi in Finnish since the last years of the 20th century. The well-founded change from Olonetsian to Livvi is not part of this process, which has involved the creation of ill-suited neologisms for the purpose of forcing through the idea that Livvi should be regarded as a (primary) representative of ‘Karelian’ rather than an independent language. The first neologism was the tautological ‘Olonetsian Karelian’ (or ‘Karelian of Olonets’, in Finnish aunuksenkarjala), introduced in the late 1990s, which is misleading also because, as mentioned above, Karelian dialects are spoken in parts of the former Olonets Governorate, and if the new term was to have a productive reading, they would be its actual referent. The second neologism for Livvi, which only goes back to the early 2010s, is ‘Livvi Karelian’, insofar as the term is translatable, because the Finnish expression livvinkarjala is strictly speaking ungrammatical. To put it bluntly, calling Livvi livvinkarjala is not unlike, say, referring to the Skolt Saami language as ‘Skolt Inari’, with reference to either the territory of Inari where Skolt Saami is spoken, or Inari Saami, the other eastern Saami language of Finland, with the anticipation that the Inari
Saami language itself is in some way replaced with Skolt Saami. Notably, these terminological innovations have no model in Russian usage, but they were designed for preconceived purposes in Finland alone. In the Livvi language itself, however, the use of the traditional autonym has been artificially challenged with a neologism involving "Karelian", which does represent the same tendency as with Finnish. Traditionally, the name from which Karelian is derived, would only have been used by Karelians (in Soviet style ‘Karelians proper’) as well as part of the Ingrians.

A related propaganda exercise concerns the overemphasizing of the dialect divisions within Karelian. Karelian is, indeed, divided into northern and southern dialects, although there is also a transitional zone (Virtaranta 1972) as is usual in the case of dialect groups but not when closely related languages are involved. What is more, this basic division is based on one single feature, namely the absence (in the north) and presence (in the south) of voiced obstruents in the consonant system. There are obviously other dialect differences, but their isoglosses do not coincide with this defining feature. Needless to say, the one particular difference in question occurs extremely frequently, which is one of the causes why the literary norm based on northern Karelian cannot be satisfactorily employed for writing southern Karelian. Through this background it is easy to understand why Jeskanen (2005) also highlights the three units consisting or northern Karelian, southern Karelian, and Livvi, as his concern is to promote rather than demote the neglected southern dialects of Karelian; cf. Pasanen (2006: 116–117). In the light of the above, it would obviously be even more patently absurd to oblige the speakers of southern Karelian to adopt literacy in Livvi.

Several references to the Saami languages has been made above, including the disparate terminology used for the eastern Saami languages (as only local dialects) as opposed to the eastern Finnic languages including Karelian and Livvi (as major dialect groups which in fact indicate closely related languages) in the Russian Federation. In this context it must be noticed that still in the 1980s it was not unusual in Finland to talk about ‘Lapp dialects’ for what are now, with the exception of the Russian Federation, universally recognized as the Saami languages. In Finland, the relationship between Inari Saami and Skolt Saami shows several parallels with that between Karelian and Livvi, to the extent that the speakers of Skolt Saami in Finland were also evacuated from a territory ceded to the Soviet Union. The linguistic differences and historical developments between the two pairs of languages are also broadly equal, and the very existence of all of them is not exactly common knowledge in Finland. All three Saami languages are in many public and private contexts also lumped together as the ‘Saami language’, although this is, unlike the distinction between Karelian and Livvi, not officially sanctioned.

From an outsider’s perspective, the most unfortunate feature in the current treatment of Karelian in Finland is the hostility frequently directed at the individuals and collectives devoted to the long-time survival of the language. Many of them have by now resigned from institutions that factually promote the Livvi language alone under the pretext of ‘Karelian’ unity and consequently neglect the Karelian language, which has lead to rather disgraceful propaganda efforts, also targeting people who support the equal status of Karelian and Livvi not only from linguistic but also social, legal, and political viewpoints. A career of one or more professional linguists is obviously a small price to be paid if the future of a traditional language community is going to be better safeguarded even to some extent. Meantime, it can only be hoped that neutral and respectful approaches may eventually overcome the current atmosphere. I am convinced though that the only way to reach that goal is to disseminate accurate information as candidly as possible.
To end my essay on a positive note, there are a few (minor) reasons for optimism. Apparently the Finnish authorities have introduced the option for citizens to register their mother tongue as either Karelian or Livvi, in contrast with the earlier single option. The downside is that Livvi is referred to as aunuksenkarjala (cf. above), which I can confirm on the basis of several personal interviews is unknown to speakers and students of Livvi, for whom livvi remains the only autonym. In any case, it seems that international recognition of Karelian and Livvi as independent languages may have had some unanticipated effect on official bodies which until recently were reluctant to address the situation.

Related to the above, but potentially of much larger significance, the ‘Karelian language workers’ (in Karelian Karjalan kieliruadajat; the English translation mine), which constitutes the most active and prominent group of advocates for the Karelian language in Finland, have only recently been invited to discussions about the official treatment of Karelian. While the above-mentioned propaganda efforts have lead to a situation where the group is forced to cultivate and develop southern Karelian in Finland practically without external support, their results are already noteworthy. Furthermore, their own approach to the current struggle, which may be described as the civil rights movement of the Karelian speakers in Finland, is optimistic and constructive, with the positive goal of equal treatment of and increasing support for both Karelian and Livvi.

Finally, Karjalan kieliruadajat cooperates actively with specialists from the Karelian speaking community in the Tver region, which, as pointed out above, is the only territory in the world where southern Karelian is officially promoted and cultivated both in spoken and written form. Their work is also supported by an expert group with members from the Tver region, the Republic of Karelia, and Finland, which aims at giving professional advice when needed.

References


