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Use of the Karelian language online: websites in Karelian

The use of the Karelian language on the internet has grown strongly over recent decades. The aim of this article is to analyze the visibility of the Karelian language on the internet, focusing on websites with a full interface in Karelian. The research data are analyzed comparatively from the perspective of the use of Karelian dialects on different websites. The study shows that the number of websites in Karelian is decreasing. The use of different dialects of Karelian on websites varies. The visibility of the language in official contexts is rare, which could be explained by the lack of official status and the dearth of financial and human resources. This study describes existing websites in Karelian, but also shows the challenges of using Karelian on the internet from a language ideology point of view and in terms of linguistic landscape theory.

Keywords: Karelian, language ideology, virtual linguistic landscape, website

Asiasanat: karjalan kieli, kieli-ideologiat, verkkosivu, virtuaalinen kielimaisema

1 Introduction

In the context of language revitalization, the possibility to use and promote an endangered language online plays a crucial role (Grenoble & Whaley 2006: 190). The speakers or learners of a minority language do not just seek resources available online for practicing languages, but they also use the internet to stay in contact with speakers living apart from the community (Soria 2016: 21; Outakoski et al. 2018: 29). The use of minority languages online provides a new image of the language as a contemporary and living instrument and resource, in contrast to perceptions that it is old-fashioned, rural, or possesses a low social status (Cunliffe 2007: 134).

The focus of this study is on the Karelian language and its use as a website language. Karelian is a minority and critically endangered language spoken in Finland and Russia (see Section 2.1). In recent years, the use of Karelian online has been growing, especially on social media, although websites in Karelian have also been important for a building a sense of community (Moshnikov 2016; Salonen 2017). In this article, websites with a Karelian interface are examined. The purpose of the study is to look at the websites from the perspective of the positioning of Karelian and its dialects. The visibility of Karelian is discussed from a language ideology point of view and in terms of linguistic landscape theory. The thematic field and specifics of the websites are also investigated. The visibility of a language online supports language revitalization, and for that reason it is important to study how the use of Karelian on the internet can be improved.

In this article I will answer the following research questions:

1. What websites exist with a full Karelian interface?
2. What dialects of Karelian are used on website interfaces?
3. Who is the main implementor of websites in Karelian?
4. Where else is Karelian visible online?

The focus of the study is on language menus and the language and dialect choices made during the creation of websites in Karelian, but also more widely on the development of websites during recent years as part of the virtual linguistic landscape in Karelian. The research data are also examined from the perspective of language ideologies.

2 Research background

2.1 The current situation of Karelian

Karelian is a Finnic language spoken mainly in Russia and Finland. Most Karelian speakers in Russia live in the Republic of Karelia and the Tver' region, but also in cities like Murmansk, Saint-Petersburg and Moscow (Karjalainen et al. 2013: 13, 23). In Finland, Karelian speakers are spread around the country, but before the Second World War most Karelian speakers were concentrated in Border Karelia in the eastern part of Finland next to the Russian (Soviet Union) border (Koivisto 2018: 59; Appendix 1). This area was ceded to the Soviet Union after the war, and all of its inhabitants were relocated around Finland (Sarhimaa 2017: 20–22).

The number of Karelian speakers is nowadays estimated at about 25,000 in Russia (2010) and 5,000 to 11,000 in Finland (Russian Census 2010; Sarhimaa 2017: 115). However, the number of Karelian speakers in Finland does not include “new speakers” of the language or speakers who recently immigrated, for example, those who have moved from Russian Karelia (Munne 2013: 391–392; Kunnas 2019: 170–171). In comparison, before the Second World War, there were around 250,000 Karelian speakers in the Soviet Union (Karjalainen et al. 2013: 23) and around 50,000 to 60,000 in Finland (Sarhimaa 2017: 112, 115).

Karelian is a minority language in both countries, and it is critically endangered. Linguistically, the Karelian language is divided into two main dialects: Olonets (or Livvi) Karelian and Proper Karelian; the latter consists of Viena (North) Karelian and South Karelian (Koivisto 2018: 57). All Karelian speakers are nowadays bilingual (Karelian-Russian or Karelian-Finnish), but the language skills of Karelian people vary since the speakers' backgrounds may be very different and there is no formal education in Karelian as a native language (Sarhimaa 2016: 17, 77, 81).

The current revitalization of Karelian started in the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s and has later continued in Russia. Teaching of Karelian was started at the university level and has begun in schools and kindergartens, and at the same time mass-media platforms including newspapers, radio and TV broadcasting were established and numerous books in Karelian were published. The revitalization of Karelian in Finland started in the 1990s with community colleges offering Karelian teaching in some towns around the country. A professorship of Karelian at the University of Eastern Finland was established in 2009 and teaching of the language started the same year. At the end of 2009, the Karelian language gained the status of a non-territorial minority language in Finland, and the Finnish broadcasting company YLE announced internet and radio news services in Karelian in 2015. (For further reading, see Austin 2009; Karjalainen et al. 2013; Palander et al. 2013; Sarhimaa 2016.)

However, despite a relatively long revitalization period, the number of speakers of Karelian is decreasing (Karjalainen et al. 2013: 24). The lack of official status and support on a political level, together with other socio-economic and historical factors are seen as the main reasons for the dramatic drop in Karelian speakers. Given the territorial fragmentation of the Karelian community, the individual support given to each Karelian speaker and the use of the Karelian language online are important aspects of the language's revitalization.

2.2 Minority languages and language ideologies

According to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe 1992, Article 1: 1–2), a regional or minority language is a language “traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; and different from the official language(s) of that State”. In addition, a minority language can be territorial, which means that the language is used in a specific area, or it can be non-territorial, which means that the territory where the language is used does not coincide with a particular area (ibid. 2). In this context, the Karelian language can be identified as a territorial language in Russian Karelia, and a non-territorial language in Finland. In the globalized world, traditional speech communities have changed, and Karelian-speaking people have also spread around Russia and Finland (Karjalainen et al. 2013: 20, 23; Sarhimaa 2017: 117).

Intergenerational language transmission, the absolute number of speakers, community members' attitudes toward the language, governmental and institutional language policy, and the official status of the language are crucial factors for the vitality of a language (UNESCO 2003: 7–15). The visibility and use of minority languages in different domains (including media) are also an important indicator of the vitality of a language, and the visibility of the language on the internet is not an exception (UNESCO 2003: 11; Grenoble & Whaley 2006: 190–191).

The visibility of a language can be studied within the language ideology framework. According to Kroskrity (2010: 192), language ideologies are ‘beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other groups, and nation states’. Linguistic norms and the standardization of the language are often related to these language ideologies, especially in the context of language revitalization (Mäntynen et al. 2012: 331). One way of constructing ideological representations of linguistic differences is erasure, which makes particular persons or activities invisible (Irvine & Gal 2000: 37–38). For example, a social group or a language may be imagined as being homogenous, and as a result of erasure its internal variations are ignored.

Language ideologies can be studied from the perspective of norms, which are usually regulated institutionally. Negotiating norms is a part of the language standardization process, especially during the process of creating a written form of the language (Mäntynen et al. 2012: 331). The ideological issues involved include questions of who has the right and the opportunity to regulate and standardize the language, to decide on its status, and to make language or dialect choices in multilingual contexts (ibid. 332).

The creators of internet content in Karelian decide which languages or language forms will be used and in which way, and that could be considered a part of language ideology, especially if certain languages or dialects are excluded from digital use (erasure). There is also a link between speakers' linguistic identity and whether they are able to use and to see their own language or dialect. From the outside, dialects and languages can be a part of a hidden internal hierarchy (Marten et al. 2012: 1; Amos 2017: 94), where decisions about which dialect of a language to use when creating a website has implications for the promotion of one dialect and the erasure of another.

2.3 Minority languages online and the virtual linguistic landscape

Over the past few years, content that is available online has been studied from different perspectives. These studies have utilized the availability of data and developed various methodologies for data collection and analysis. Materials have been studied from the perspectives of multilingualism and language use (Scheffler 2014; Laitinen et al. 2017; Hiippala et al. 2020). The use of minority languages on the internet and social media has also been examined, for example the use of the Welsh language on Facebook (Honeycutt & Cunliffe 2010) and on Twitter by Welsh-English biliterates (Johnson 2013). Paricio-Martín & Martínez-Cortés (2010) have studied the impact of the internet on the revitalization of the Aragonese language. Nguyen et al. (2015) have investigated the use of Frisian and Limburgish on Twitter, and social media-supported learning in Sápmi has also been studied (Outakoski et al. 2018).

The first digital signs of Karelian on the internet emerged at the end of the 1990s, when the first online articles of the Karelian newspaper *Oma Mua* were published in 1997 (Karelia.ru 1997). Since then, the use of the language online has been increasing. However, the number of resources in Karelian is still very limited (Moshnikov 2016: 294; Sarhimaa 2016: 67; Salonen 2017: 16). The digital use of the Karelian language in general has been studied (e.g., Salonen 2017; ELDIA 2022; DLDP 2022), as well as the usage of the Karelian language on mono- and multilingual webpages from the perspectives of translation studies and virtual linguistic landscapes (Moshnikov 2016).

A virtual linguistic landscape can be understood as the digital counterpart of a physical landscape. The concept of a physical linguistic landscape includes the

visibility of (a) particular language(s) in different public environments, including signs and place names (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 25). As a physical entity, the virtual linguistic landscape also has informational and symbolic functions: besides transferring information, it reflects the vitality of the language (Ivkovic & Lotherington 2009: 30–32; Jaworski & Thurlow 2010: 5). If the physical landscape is seen as more stable, the virtual landscape is dynamic and can be updated quickly, which may be a challenge for researchers studying it (Halonen 2015: 143; Laaksonen et al. 2015: 20). Websites, however, are a part of a public virtual space. Since there is no proper physical linguistic landscape in Karelian, the importance of the virtual landscape is particularly important.

A website contains text and images, and sometimes also sound and video and hyperlinks to other websites. A visitor of the website is usually not able to change the content, and the quality of the content is controlled by individuals or organizations who own the site and have the right to make changes (Cunliffe 2007: 134). Hence, web 1.0 technology represents passive communities or ‘read-only’ media. Web 2.0, on the other hand, represents active communities where users have a possibility to become creators as well as consumers of the content; the best-known example of the latter is Wikipedia (Cunliffe 2007: 135; Salmi 2014: 180; Lindgren & Cocq 2017: 135).

As a result of fast digitalization, even small minority languages have been able to live and develop online. It is especially important for endangered languages to expand their areas of use in different domains (Outakoski et al. 2018: 29). Here, technology can play a facilitating role, as it enables more efficient language documentation, as well as the development of online dictionaries and other tools, which is considered important in the revitalization of minority languages (Grenoble & Whaley 2006: 190–191; Cunliffe 2007: 136). But despite all of these advantages, a lack of financial support and human resources (including IT support and language specialists) are the most significant challenges for the visibility of minority languages online, as well as the sustainability of continuous support (Ferré-Pavia et al. 2018: 1082; Outakoski et al. 2018: 25).

3 Research data and methods

The research data used in this study consists of ten websites with a full interface in Karelian (Appendix 2). The data were collected by manual search, and also by using Wanca, a specific tool for listing webpages created in 36 Uralic languages including Karelian, which was developed in the SUKI project (Wanca 2022). Wanca lists webpages using automatic language recognition software. According to Wanca (April 2022), there are 49 webpages that include some degree of written content in Karelian: 20 of these use the Proper Karelian dialect (24 in 2016) and 29 use Livvi

Karelian (35 in 2016). In addition to websites with a full interface in Karelian, this paper also discusses some other webpages where Karelian is present (Section 4.2).

Since the content in Karelian is fragmented, the research data were restricted to websites with a full interface in Karelian. In previous research (Moshnikov 2016), websites in Karelian were investigated from the perspective of translation studies, in conjunction with linguistic landscape theory. But since that time (2016), some websites have disappeared from the internet (see the list in Appendix 2), and new ones have been created. In this paper, the current situation is presented, and the language and dialect choices on websites currently available online are analyzed. The study includes the updated data of websites with a Karelian interface published from 2016 until the present. There is also a comparative aspect to the study, as the development of websites in Karelian has been followed by the author since 2015.

The study data was analyzed using qualitative online content analysis and online ethnography. According to this approach, the internet and websites in particular are seen as spaces, and the researcher is observing and exploring these spaces by collecting, for example, artefacts or screenshots (Laaksonen et al. 2015: 18; Sumiala & Tikka 2015: 161–162). Conceived in this way, online ethnography has common features with linguistic landscape studies, as the visibility and use of the Karelian language and its dialects are observed by focusing on language menus and linguistic and dialect choices of the websites. Since a website is a public virtual space and freely accessible (Helasvuo et al. 2014: 22–23), there are minimal ethical issues or conflicts of interest involved in their research. A public webpage can be described as a physical public space like a street or square (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 24), and the data featured in this study does not include private information or discussions content taken from the forums.

4 The use of Karelian on the internet

4.1 Websites in Karelian

The number of webpages with a full Karelian interface is limited (Figure 1). Websites in Karelian are usually translations of websites that are also available in other languages, but besides these multilingual webpages there are several exclusively monolingual websites in Karelian (also Appendix 2). The Karelian language is visible in the webpages of Karelian media (n=1), associations and societies (n=4), research projects (n=1), a portal created by Karelian activists (n=1), and global multilingual platforms (n=3) such as Wikipedia or vk.com (Figure 1). But Karelian is still invisible on an official level and there are no websites created by official authorities aside from those related to the Karelian language or culture.

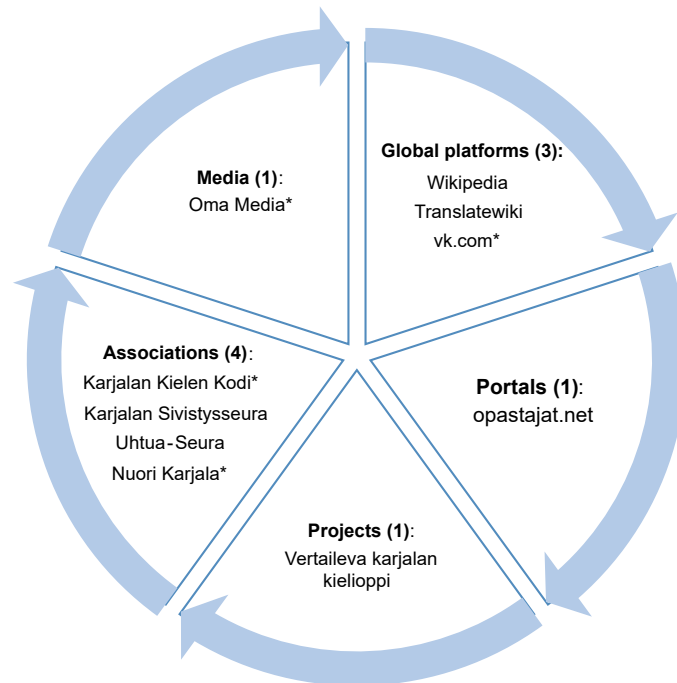


FIGURE 1. The thematic groups of websites with a full interface in Karelian and the names of the websites. Webpages marked with * were either created or significantly updated after 2016. The number in brackets indicates the number of webpages in the group.

The visibility of the Karelian language on the internet through traditional media has significant value. The first articles of the Karelian newspaper *Oma Mua* ('own land', published in Petrozavodsk with the financial support of the government of the Republic of Karelia) were published online in 1997 (Karelia.ru 1997). Afterwards, the website *Oma Mua* and another Karelian newspaper *Vienan Karjala* were linked to the *Periodika* publishing house and developed together with other newspapers and periodicals. *Vienan Karjala* ('Viena Karelia') is a Karelian newspaper that was published from 1999 to 2014 in Proper Karelian (Viena Karelian dialect). In 2014, *Vienan Karjala* and *Oma Mua* were combined into one newspaper, which kept the name *Oma Mua* and which contains articles in the two main Karelian dialects of Livvi and Proper (Viena) Karelian (Moshnikov 2016: 299, 303).

In 2013, perhaps in preparation for this merger, another website of the *Oma Mua* newspaper was created, which used Livvi Karelian and Viena Karelian, but not other varieties such as South or Tver Karelian (Figure 2). The interface was simultaneously available in each of the two main dialects of Karelian, as a unique 'doubly monolingual' implementation. On the basis of the menu the two dialect versions

looked perfect duplicates of one another, but the content of the articles that were available in each dialect was different. In 2020, the website was replaced with a new multilingual portal Oma Media ('own media').



FIGURE 2. Livvi Karelian interface of the Oma Mua newspaper. Using the button on the right, users could switch to the version in Viena Karelian (*Vienakši*). Website is no longer available online.

Established in 2020 in Petrozavodsk, Oma Media (Figure 3) combines all the different newspapers and journals of the Periodika publishing house in one multilingual portal. It has five language versions, including Karelian, Veps, and Finnish. As a consequence of switching to Oma Media, the Viena Karelian version of the website disappeared, which is a significant loss for the speakers of that dialect group. The Karelian language used by default on the website is Livvi Karelian, which is not specifically explained. However, the portal is still under construction, and the future will tell what language and dialect choices will be made, and how the portal will stay multilingual and maintain the national languages and dialects of Karelian.



FIGURE 3. The main page of the Oma Media portal. The language of the interface used in the picture is Karelian.

It is worth mentioning that the Karjal Žurnualu newspaper in Karelian was published in Finland by The Karelian Language Society (Karjalan kielen seura) from 2011 to 2020. The dialect of the newspaper was also Livvi Karelian. Due to financial difficulties and the misappropriation of funding (Mustonen 2021), the society was closed in 2020 and the web content created in Karelian disappeared from the internet, including the Karjal Žurnualu newspaper, a large online library of freely accessible materials in Karelian, as well as some dictionaries and other literature. At the moment, only a limited number of issues of the newspaper are available from libraries and personal archives.

In addition to the Karelian Language Society, there are a number of other associations and societies that actively promote the Karelian language and culture, but only four of them have a website with a Karelian version. The Karelia Cultural Society (Karjalan Sivistysseura) and the Uhtua Society (Uhtua-Seura) are active in Finland, and the Home of the Karelian language (Karjalan Kielen Kodi) and Youth Karelia (Nuori Karjala) in Russian Karelia. Karelian is present in a different way on the websites of each of these organizations. The Karelia Cultural Society and the Uhtua Society have Finnish and Youth Karelia Russian as the main languages of websites. Even though the Home of the Karelian Language is located in Russian Karelia, the website of the organization was created and is maintained together with a Finnish organization (Karjalan kielen koin abuniekat ry) located in Finland. Information about the House of the Karelian language is equally made available in four languages: Karelian (Livvi), Finnish, English, and Russian.

Each of the organizations has a language menu, and in addition to Finnish, the Karelia Cultural Society has six more language and dialect versions including Livvi Karelian, Viena Karelian, South Karelian, Swedish, Ludic, and Russian (Figure 4). The Uhtua Society has a Karelian version in addition to Finnish, but only in Viena Karelian

(*Vienakši*). This choice can be explained both thematically and geographically, since the society focuses mainly on the culture and language of Viena Karelia. Based in Russian Karelia, the Youth Karelia association has a multilingual website. The main language of the site is Russian, but in the language menu users can switch to Karelian or English. The Karelian version of the website uses the Viena Karelian dialect.

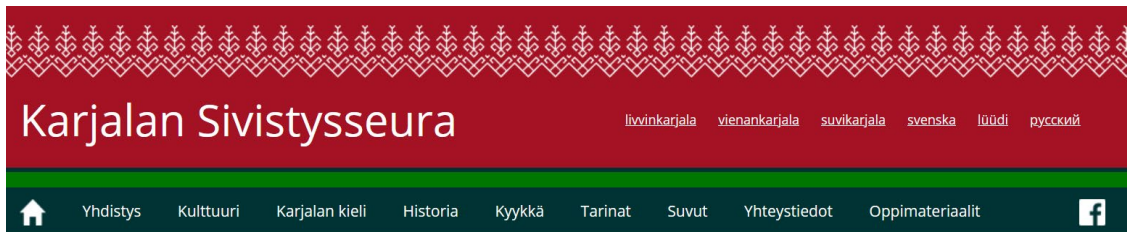




FIGURE 4. The main menu of the Karelia Cultural Society webpage.

In addition to the websites of media and associations, there is also the website of the Comparative Grammar of Karelian (*Vertaileva karjalan kielioppi*) research project, which is created in Karelian. The main language of the website is Karelian (Livvi), but it also has a language menu with three other language versions: English, Finnish and Russian. However, none of these contains actual content, and all the information available on the website is in Karelian.

The *Opastajat.net* portal (kar. *opastai* (pl. *opastajat*) – eng. ‘teacher’) was created in Finland by Karelian activists in 2007. It is one of the oldest websites created in Karelian (Figure 5). The main menu of the website and most of the content is in Livvi Karelian. The portal is a massive source of data, related mostly to learning Karelian. *Opastajat.net* consists of four main parts: studying the language (*Opastu*), reading in Karelian (*Luve*), Karelian people (*Karjalazet*), and News (*Uudizii*). The *Opastu* (‘Learn’) and *Luve* (‘Read’) parts consist of numerous open access links to books and other material published online, both for reading in Karelian and for studying Karelian. *Karjalazet* (‘Karelians’) contains more general information, mainly about Karelian villages and schools where Karelian is taught. The *Uudizii* block (‘News’) consists of links to other sources and projects, as well as a link to a Karelian-speaking forum which also has a full Karelian interface.

Opastu	Luve	Karjalazet	Uudizii
<p>abč</p> <p><u>Mene algsivule</u> Lugemine, Livvii livvikse, Livvin algukursu, Verkokielloppi, Riputandupačas da kuvasanakniigu, Opastusvideot, Pajopučči</p>	 <p><u>Mene algsivule</u> Ristikanzan oigevukset Vähembistökielien peruskirju Opastundukniigat Kiännetyt kniigat</p>	 <p>Skolat, kylät, karjalazet <u>Mene algsivule</u> Skolat Paikat</p>	<p>opastajat.net uudizii opastajat.net/forum karjalankieliopit.net Linkit muujale Internettah</p>

©mp da kirjuttajat, ikonazet: Maria da mp. Perustettu 5.10.2007. Päivitetty 3.6.2022

FIGURE 5. The main page of *Opastajat.net* portal.

Another portal created by Karelian activists is Karelian Wikipedia. Livvi Karelian Wikipedia was announced in 2015 and became independent from the Wikimedia Incubator in October 2016. Wikimedia Incubator is the place where potential new language editions of existing open-content projects supported by the Wikimedia Foundation are tested and developed (Wikimedia Incubator 2022). The existing Livvi Karelian Wikipedia project (Figure 6) includes 3,844 articles (as of 23.6.2022). Another project, mostly concentrated on Proper Karelian, is still in the incubator and consists of 1,828 articles (as of 23.6.2022). The history of Wikipedia in Karelian dates back to 2007, although the few attempts made to create a Wikipedia combining the Karelian dialects all failed. In the context of the Kiännä research project, numerous Wikipedia workshops were organized where participants learnt the basic techniques for creating Wikipedia articles, mainly based on translation from other languages (Kiännä 2022).

The Wikimedia translation portal Translatewiki.net also has a Karelian interface, although the content in Karelian is very limited (Livvi and Viena Karelian). Translating the interface of Wikipedia is an important criterion to get a project out of the incubator. Wiki technology combines features of traditional websites and social media because members of the community can add, modify and delete content from the pages (Cunliffe 2007: 135).

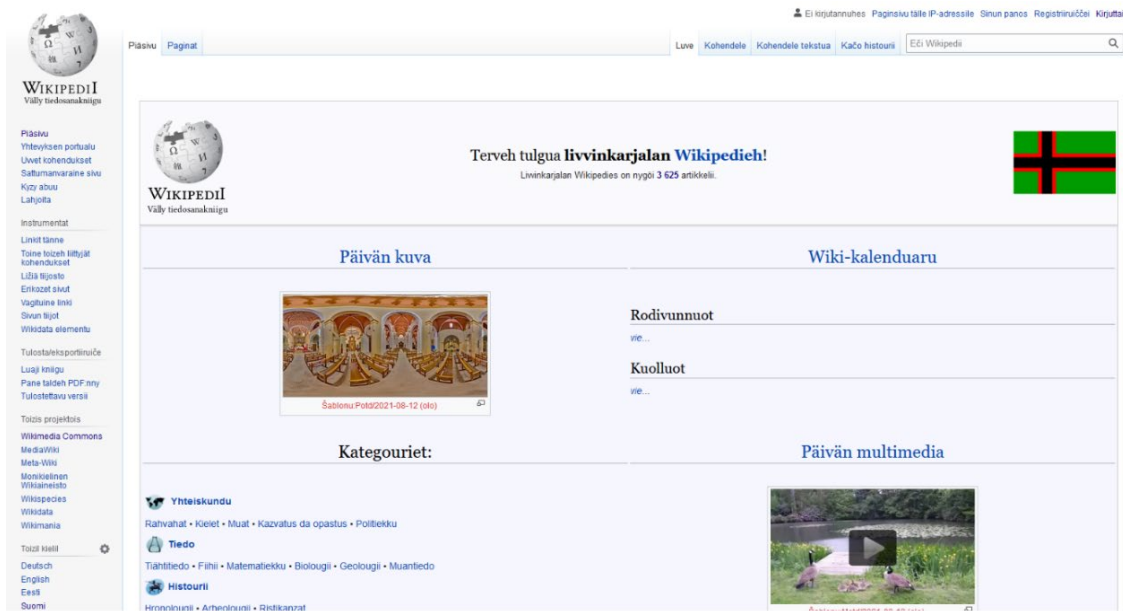


FIGURE 6. The main page of Livvi Karelian Wikipedia.

In 2018, the Karelian version of the vk.com social network was established. Adding the Karelian language to the list of available interface languages in the social media portal has been an important step both for Karelian society and Karelian activists, and because of its local popularity especially for Karelian people living in Russia. Although the translation process is still ongoing and in progress, it is already possible to switch to the Karelian language in vk.com, although registration to the service is compulsory. A group of translators from Russian Karelia are working voluntarily with the Proper Karelian dialect (Viena Karelian), and a screenshot from the news feed is presented in Figure 7.

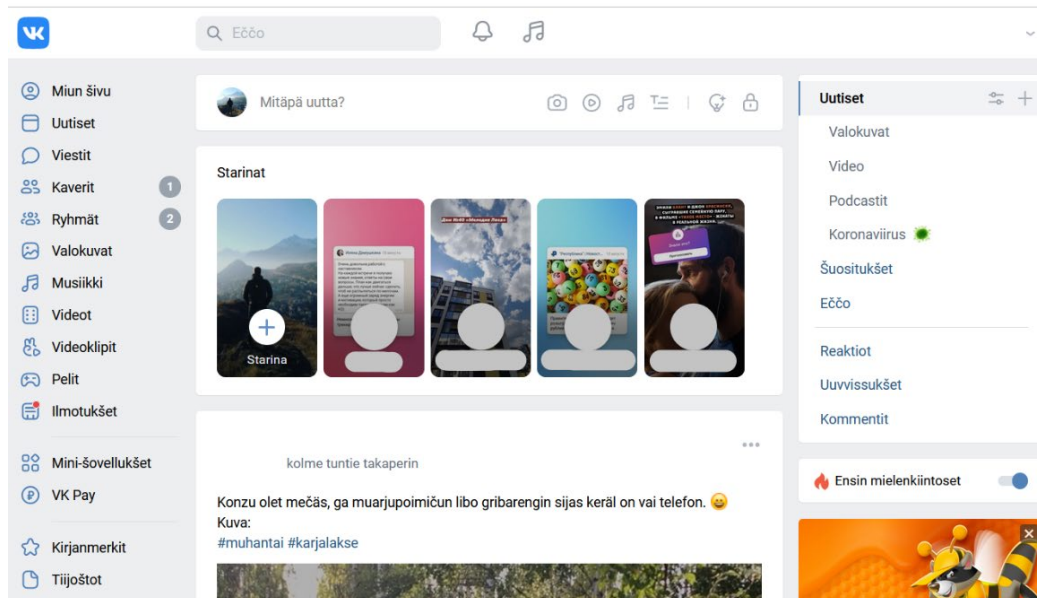


FIGURE 7. The interface of Viena Karelian in the vk.com site.

Translating the interface of Facebook to Karelian was also a topic of discussion among Karelian activists, with some suggesting translating Facebook into Livvi Karelian and others proposing a mixed language, i.e., the possibility to let the people who do the work decide which dialect form they would like to use. However, translation has not yet started because no volunteers have been found for this taxing and long-term project. This has become even more difficult now that Russia has banned the use of Facebook (AP news 2022).

Localizing the interface of global platforms develops vocabulary related to the use of the internet and technology, and brings the language into the contemporary world (Cunliffe 2007: 134). For that reason alone, supporting these initiatives is extremely important. In addition, using the language on popular social media portals as the interface language also increases the prestige of the language.

Table 1 shows the use of Karelian dialects in the data. As we can see, some web-pages are multidialectal but others not. Among the different dialect forms, Livvi Karelian is slightly dominant and for four websites it is the only option available. Viena Karelian is used on three websites as the only option. Two websites have been created in both Livvi and Viena Karelian (Wikipedia and Translatewiki), while Karjalan Sivistysseura has an interface and materials in three dialects of Karelian (Livvi, Viena and South Karelian).

TABLE 1. Use of Karelian dialects as the language of interface.

Website	Dialects of Karelian used
Media: Oma Media	Livvi Karelian
Associations: Karjalan Kielen Kodi Karjalan Sivistysseura Uhtua-Seura Nuori Karjala	Livvi Karelian Livvi, Viena and South Karelian Viena Karelian Viena Karelian
Projects: Vertaileva karjalan kielioppi	Livvi Karelian
Portals: opastajat.net	Livvi Karelian
Global platforms: Wikipedia Translatewiki vk.com	Livvi and Viena Karelian Livvi and Viena Karelian Viena Karelian

The study shows that the virtual linguistic landscape in Karelian consists of several dialects of Karelian. Dialect choice is often based on the resources available to create a version in Karelian but to an outside observer, these choices can have symbolic (Ivkovic & Lotherington 2009: 31–32) and even ideological functions (Irvine & Gal 2000: 38).

4.2 Other sources in Karelian

In addition to these webpages with a full interface in Karelian, the Karelian language is also visible on the internet in other contexts, but without the opportunity to switch the language of the interface into Karelian. These sources are also important for the visibility of the language. In addition, the Karelian language is also used in social media and in private communication (Moshnikov 2022).

The Finnish broadcasting company Yle has been publishing text and radio news in Livvi Karelian on the internet since February 2015 (Giloeva & Kok 2021: 229–230). Radio news is also available online from the Yle Areena service, which allows the user to see how many times the news item has been listened to. Furthermore, the Russian broadcasting company Karelia distributes TV news online in Livvi and Viena Karelian, Finnish and Veps (on YouTube) as well as radio programs (on the official company website and in social media groups on vk.com and Facebook (e.g., Kodirandaine ‘My home shore’). The Viestit Karjala YouTube channel was established in January 2013,

and has almost 5000 subscribers and received over three million views since 2013. Sharing content in Karelian increases the visibility of the language on the internet and is a suitable resource for language learning purposes.

In addition to these websites, there are also blogs available in Karelian. For example, the Kiännä research project has an active website with Karelian-Finnish blog texts that are actively shared on popular social media platforms such as Facebook and vk.com. In 2020, the University of Eastern Finland received funding for revitalizing the Karelian language (2021–2022), and a working group is actively posting blog texts in Finnish and in three Karelian dialects (Karjalan elvyttäminen 2022). These texts as well are extensively shared on social media pages and in groups (e.g., Karjalan kieli eläy on Facebook).

Another, more traditional blog consisting of short texts in Karelian is called Havvinkukkaro ('Clam'; Havvinkukkaro 2022), with texts related to daily family life with children. The language of the texts is Karelian, and the dialect varies from Livvi Karelian to Proper Karelian (South Karelian). Reporting daily life activities in Karelian, however, is closely related to social media behavior, and it is clear that social media interaction has pushed aside such traditional blogs because readers have easier access to social media posts. In recent years, several public accounts in Karelian have appeared (e.g., on Instagram). These profiles are held by individuals or associations and have a lot of similar features with traditional blogs, where the main idea is to share content by publishing posts and stories in Karelian.

It is worth mentioning that associations such as the Karelia Cultural Society, the Home of the Karelian Language, and the Uhtua Society also have active social media accounts. The role of these pages is important for promoting active interaction in Karelian among social media users and for sharing content and activities with them. Social media pages act as a bridge between the use of a traditional website and social media, as content published on websites is often shared on social media as well. While the content of websites is more stable and permanent, the role of social media pages is to allow contact and interaction with the community. Additionally, there are a significant amount of public and closed social media groups and chats (on e.g., Facebook, vk.com, Discord, WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.) related to the Karelian language and/or culture.

None of these sources have pages with a full interface in Karelian, but the content itself is in Karelian. For the visibility of the language, it is important not just to publish content in Karelian, but also to make the interface of websites Karelian. As a further consideration, as we can see from the examples above, the use of different dialects of Karelian varies on these sources as well.

5 Discussion

The use of the Karelian language as a language for website interfaces is still rare. From 2016 to 2022, the number of websites with a full Karelian interface dropped from sixteen to ten. Other studies confirm the tendency of switching from the format of websites to the field of social media (Lindgren & Cocq 2017: 134). The newest research shows that the use of Karelian in social media is increasing (Moshnikov 2022). However, the visibility of Karelian on websites is still important since websites and social media differ from each other, notably in the fact that a website is more permanent and accessible, while social media is focused on interaction between users and often requires registration on different platforms.

The study shows that the implementors of the websites are usually representatives of mass media, different associations or languages activists, whose activities are related to the Karelian language and culture. Websites with a full interface in Karelian most often represent media, cultural associations and organizations, projects, individual portals, and several global platforms, such as Wikipedia and vk.com. But the Karelian language is still not used on an official level, and the main reason for this is a lack of the official status of the language.

The term 'Karelian language' used on websites can refer to at least two or three main Karelian dialects. Their use is heterogeneous, and for a language learner or an external user dialect choice can be challenging. There are no clear indicators for each dialect, and while some webpages differentiate between the main Karelian dialects (such as Uhtua Society), some do not (Youth Karelia or Oma Media). In some cases, the language referred to or used as 'Karelian' is Livvi Karelian, or the website is in Livvi Karelian by default. The Uhtua Society employs '*vienakši*' which means Viena Karelian. But the Karelia Cultural Society has three Karelian versions of the website (Livvi, Viena and South Karelian) and publishes news and blog posts in these dialects as well. However, this is quite rare in the existing virtual linguistic landscape of Karelian. The use of Karelian dialects also differs depending on whether the website is Finnish or Russian. In Russian Karelia, the general trend is to use Livvi and Viena Karelian, but in Finland the South Karelian dialect is also used. Regardless of the dialect that is chosen, any use of Karelian should be supported.

Websites play an important part in the virtual linguistic landscape of Karelian since the physical linguistic landscape is almost non-existent. Like street and place names in the physical environment, the menu bar and navigation of a website in Karelian modify the virtual linguistic landscape. The immersive role of the linguistic landscape is highlighted in the virtual space since it is delocalized and can be accessed from anywhere via the internet (Ivkovic & Lotherington 2009: 19). Nonetheless, the dynamics of the virtual linguistic landscape pose a significant challenge for studying the internet as a linguistic landscape (Halonen 2015: 143), because of the rapid changes of the virtual space that can take place.

The linguistic landscape unintentionally makes the Karelian language visible among its speakers, and for that reason it is important not only to produce content in Karelian but to translate website interfaces as well. Pasanen (2015: 61) and Outakoski et al. (2018: 29) suggest that language revitalization should be carried out by using the target language in new domains. Also, the public use of the language influences speakers' perceptions of the status of the language and affects their linguistic behavior and language use (Cenoz & Gorter 2006: 68).

The heterogeneity of online content in Karelian emphasizes the need for institutional language policy and support, as well as for intentional language revitalization. For better visibility and equal language use, it is important to combine the resources available. The fact that there is no common standard for Karelian has led to a situation where three or even more dialect forms are 'competing' for the virtual space. Often, the visibility of a dialect depends on the human resources available to produce content in that dialect. In that case, the implementor of the content is de facto making decisions related to language policy and ideology by deciding which dialect or dialects of Karelian will or can be used online. So, on one hand, online content in Karelian is creating new norms (Mäntynen et al. 2012: 331), but on the other hand the use of dialects is also inconsistent, which can be symbolically linked to the vitality of the language and its dialects (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 27–28). Overall, the unbalanced use of different dialects of Karelian can be seen as a passive erasure or ignoring of those that are excluded (Irvine & Gal 2000: 38), even though the use of one dialect form over another is partly due to a lack of available resources, which presents a more even coverage. But regardless of the choices that are made, it should be remembered that erasure or ignoring of one dialect form has a significant impact on the linguistic identity of the speakers of other dialects. Thus, institutions and individual activists should be aware of the potential consequences of the decisions they make regarding which or how many dialects of Karelian will be used.

6 Conclusion

Websites in Karelian are an important part of the virtual linguistic landscape in Karelian. They are not just making language visible online, but also creating and developing a new vocabulary in Karelian and supporting language revitalization. A website is a more permanent source of information, while social media interaction is usually temporal and constantly changing. However, both should be utilized in the revitalization of the Karelian language.

The study shows that using several dialect forms of Karelian at the same time is challenging. Creating multilingual or multidialectal websites requires a significant amount of human and other resources. But in the context of two or three main written forms, all of them should be in use at the same time. The current trend of

using three dialect forms is becoming more common, at least in Finland. Otherwise, speakers of dialects that are not presented online may remain outside the virtual linguistic landscape of Karelian.

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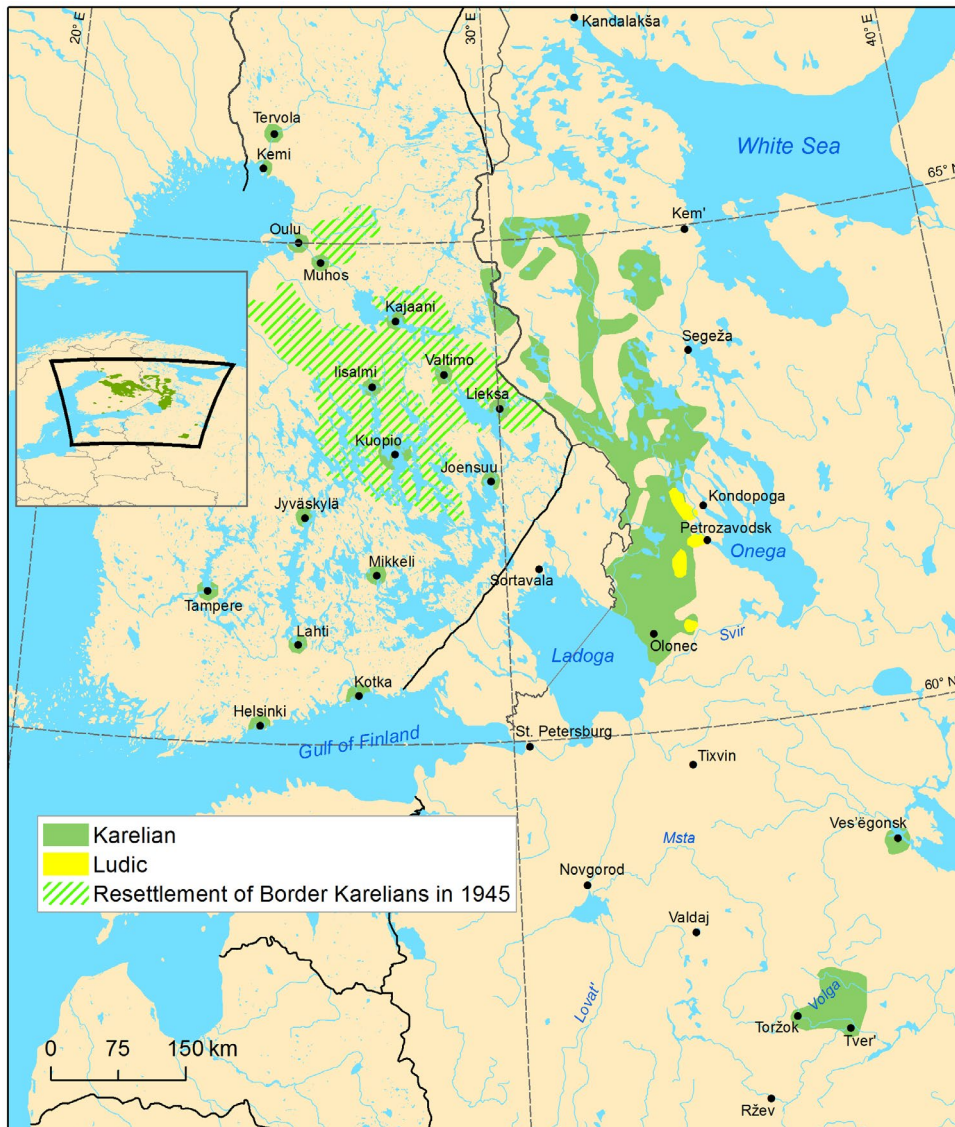
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APPENDIX 1.

Karelian-speaking territories (according to Roose et al. 2021).



APPENDIX 2.

List of websites with full Karelian interface.

	Website	Dialect of Karelian used and other language versions	Description, implementor & link
Before 2016:	1. Karjalan kielen kodi	Livvi Karelian; English, Finnish, Russian	The website of the association 'The Home of the Karelian language'. Updated in 2022. https://karjalankielenkodi.com/
	2. Opastajat.net (website and forum)	Livvi Karelian	A portal with study and reading materials in Karelian. Also contains some general information about the Karelian language and Karelians, and some news. Includes a forum with full Karelian interface. https://opastajat.net/forum/
	3. Vertaileva karjalan kielioppi	Livvi Karelian; English, Finnish, Russian	The website of the Comparative Grammar of Karelian research project. Other language versions are mentioned but not active (no content). https://karjalankieliopit.net/
	4. Wikipedia	Livvi Karelian, optional Proper Karelian; multilingual portal	Livvi Karelian Wikipedia opened for use in October 2016. https://olo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piäsivu Proper Karelian Wikipedia is still in the Wikimedia Incubator. The interface in Proper Karelian is available for logged in users. https://incubator.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wp/kr/!Piäsivu
	5. Translatewiki.net	Livvi Karelian, Proper Karelian; multilingual portal	The official translation portal for Wikipedia. https://translatewiki.net/
	6. Karjalan Sivistysseura	Livvi Karelian, Proper Karelian (Viena and South Karelian); Swedish, Ludic, Russian	Website of The Karelia Cultural Society. https://www.karjalansivistysseura.fi/
	7. Uhtua-Info	Proper Karelian (Viena); Finnish	Website of The Uhtua Society (Uhtua-Seura). https://www.uhtuainfo.fi/
After 2016:	8. Oma Media	Livvi Karelian; Russian, Finnish, Veps, English	Website of the Publishing house Periodika in Petrozavodsk, which includes printed media in Karelian, Finnish, and Veps. https://omamedia.ru/
	9. Vk.com (Karelian added as a language of interface)	Proper Karelian (Viena); other more than 90 languages.	Originally Russian social network V Kontakte. Nowadays, the network is a multilingual portal and has more than 90 language versions. Registration is needed. https://vk.com/

	Website	Dialect of Karelian used and other language versions	Description, implementor & link
	10. Nuori Karjala	Proper Karelian (Viena); Russian, English	Website of The Youth Karelia organization http://nuorikarjala.ru/krl/
No longer available:	11. Oma Mua & Vienan Karjala	Viena Karelian, Livvi Karelian, Russia	The old website of Oma Mua & Vienan Karjala newspapers. Was in use until 2013. http://vienan.rkperiodika.ru/
	12. Karjal Žurnualu	Livvi Karelian	Karelian newspaper published by the Karelian Language Society till 2020. http://verkolehti.karjal.fi/
	13. ELDIA	Livvi Karelian; also other languages (Finnish, Russian, English etc.)	Website of ELDIA research project. http://www.eldia-project.org/index.php/kr
	14. Mat'fein kodi-lehtyöt	Livvi Karelian, Esperanto, Finnish	Personal webpage. http://koti.mbnet.fi/~savelma/
	15. Karjalazet.se	Livvi Karelian; Finnish, Swedish, Russian	Webpage of Swedish Karelian activists. Website is available online, but the content is very limited. http://karjalazet.se/
	16. Karelia-Sever	Proper Karelian (Viena); Finnish, Russian, English	Website of local tourism company based in Pääjärvi, Republic of Karelia, Russia. http://karelia-sever.ru/
	17. Oma Mua	Livvi Karelian & Proper Karelian (Viena)	The old website of the Karelian newspaper 'Oma Mua' ('Own land'). Replaced with Oma Media portal (see the number 8 in this table). From 2013. http://omamua.ru/