

The importance of the linguistic informant's biography

On the basis of lexical material from nine localities, I have presented a map of the Ume Saami dialect variation (Larsson 2012). The material consists of unpublished archive collections in Uppsala and Umeå and Wolfgang Schlachter's dictionary (1958). The dialect recordings generally present the language of one individual.

As for South Saami – the language bordering Ume Saami to the south – Bergsland emphasized the variation among individuals, and was even inclined to talk of collections of individual languages rather than of dialects. If a similar variability existed also in Ume Saami, the reliability of a dialect map based on idiolects could be questioned.

Sara Andersdotter, one of the Ume Saami informants, had been living in Björkvattnet for some 40 years, when she was interviewed. Her idiolect generally agrees with the other idiolects of the Ume Saami mountain area in the west (i.e. Boksjön, mountain dialect of Sorsele, and Ullisjaure). The material from Ullisjaure shows many unique traits, which give it a position of its own within the Ume Saami language. It turns out that Sara Andersdotter was born in Ullisjaure and grew up there before moving to the neighboring village of Björkvattnet. She did not, however, use the dialect traits typical of Ullisjaure. This indicates that she had adapted her language to the norms of Björkvattnet. Consequently, there were local dialect norms in Ume Saami, not just idiolects.

Keywords: Saami dialects, Ume Saami, linguistic informant, biography.

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