

Change in spoken Finnish – the dialect of 7-year-olds of two generations

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Apparent-time research on the diachronic change of spoken language has been refined in the past decades through real-time studies, especially using panel surveys on the same informants or follow-up studies on single individuals. These methods have made it possible to discover age-grading phenomena and changes during speakers' life-times. (Cedergren 1988; Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2009; Wagner and Sankoff 2011.) If a follow-up study is long enough, it also enables the examination of successive generations in a family.

This paper is part of a life-span study, where regular recordings have been made since 1969 on the spoken language of a male informant, Pasi, born in 1962 in eastern Finland. Other members of Pasi's family are also involved in the research. The study at hand considers the spoken language of Pasi and his twin sons, born in 2004, in light of interviews which were made as all informants were seven years of age. The study is focused on twenty-one phonological and morphological features.

The study shows a dramatic change between the two generations. The standardization of eastern Finnish dialects, which has been noted in several earlier apparent-time studies, is clearly seen in the language of the twins: the differences between the generations are in most cases statistically significant or very significant. The results show that the dialect of eastern Finnish children of the 2000's is nearly devoid of such typical vowel phenomena as diphthongisation in the first syllable, monophthongisation in the non-initial syllables, labialisation, and the schwa vowel. On the other hand, gemination and dialectal personal pronouns have survived well. Change between two generations has perhaps never been as steep as it is at present.