LIVVI KARELIAN AT PETROZAVODSK STATE UNIVERSITY
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

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This thesis explores language attitudes towards the Livvi (Olonets) variety of the Karelian Language at Petrozavodsk State University in the Republic of Karelia.

The Republic of Karelia is a subject of the Russian Federation and is located in the Northwest Federal District. The republic lies to the north of Leningrad Oblast’ on Finland’s eastern border. Karelia’s position at the border with Finland along with the genetic proximity of the various varieties of Karelian to the Finnish language have influenced attitudes towards Karelian since the early days of the Soviet Union.

The Karelian Language is commonly divided into three varieties; Livvi Karelian, Karelian Proper and Ludic; however, this division is not accepted by all researchers, and the status of Karelian as an independent language has not always been accepted historically. Karelian is currently recognized and protected, at least nominally, as a heritage language in the republic, but is not recognized as a state or official minority language despite being the language of the titular people of the republic.

The language attitudes held by students and faculty at Petrozavodsk State University, the republic’s largest, are presented in the form of an ethnography, the material for which was compiled through participant observation while the researcher himself studied the language at the university from September 2014 to January 2015, a period of approximately four months. The qualitative data that was gathered offers the opportunity to understand how the Karelian language is perceived by the very people who are training future language specialists and by the students themselves, as well as how the language is presented to the students.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of Research Topic

The Republic of Karelia is located in the North-western Federal District of Russia, a grouping of eleven administrative units that includes: Leningrad Oblast' with Saint Petersburg, Murmansk Oblast', and the Komi Republic, to name a few. The Republic of Karelia borders Leningrad Oblast' to the south, Vologda Oblast' to the southeast, Arkhangelsk Oblast' to the east and Murmansk Oblast' to the north. The republic shares its western border with Finland.

![Map of the Russian Federation with Karelia shown in Red (TUBS, 2011)](image)

There is a very complex language space within the republic. The official language, or in terms closer to those which are used in the Constitution of the Republic the state language [государственный язык], is Russian. Russian is the only state language in Karelia (Anon. 2001), which is an unusual situation when compared to other republics within the Federation (Zamyatin 2014: 92). Within the republic there are three other languages that have been recognized as being an important part of the republic’s heritage and as such, receive some support from the government for things like education, language preservation and maintenance. These languages are Karelian, Finnish and Veps (Zakon Respubliki Karelija 2004).

As Finnish and Russian are both state languages, i.e. official languages of a state respectively Finland and Russia; they have a history of standardization and hegemony.
There is a standard, widely recognized variety of these languages that is taught in schools, used by elites, broadcast in media and used in cultural products. Veps and Karelian, however, do not have a long and continuous history of being used in the spheres controlled by the state and as a result depend on a political climate that is, at times, either favourable, or antagonistic towards increasing the spheres of use for these languages. In the case of Karelian, the lack of a single dominating variety has complicated how the language is viewed and treated (Karjalainen et al. 2013: 7). There has been disagreement on the different concessions that must be made in strives to create a standard variety that can be taught in schools, and whether this is in fact necessary; however, the de facto situation that I observed while conducting my research is that the three varieties of Karelian: Livvi, Karelian Proper and Ludic are taught independently of each other.

The role of Karelian in the Republic of Karelia is ambiguous. It is the language of the titular people of the republic, meaning that it is the language of the group of people in whose name the Republic was founded. Despite this fact it is difficult to actually define this group of people. Those who identify themselves as Karelian are a minority in the republic, and those who speak Karelian represent an even smaller group (Klementyev, Kovaleva and Zamyatin 2017: 2). This is further complicated by the fact that there is disagreement about who a Karelian actually is. Legislators and those outside of the Karelian communities often speak of Karelian imagining it as a single hegemonic entity or group (Klementyev, Kovaleva and Zamyatin 2017: 2). This idea is in direct conflict with the fact that people speaking Livvi or Ludic, might not necessarily even see themselves as being Karelian, while many speakers of Karelian Proper may view themselves as the real Karelians.

Over the last century Karelian has been experiencing language shift, slowly but continuously disappearing under the shadow of Finnish and Russian in the public sphere; however, Karelian has to a certain extent continued to be used in the private sphere (Klementyev, Kovaleva and Zamyatin 2017: 2). The term kitchen language is sometimes used to describe Karelian referring to the fact the language is often only spoken in the home; however, this a label that many of those working to revitalise the language are anxious to dislodge.

Karelian has been identified as a language in danger of being lost entirely. Based on data from a 2002 census it is estimated that there are about 25000 speakers of Livvi.
(Moseley (ed.) 2010). It is quite likely that this number has since declined. ELDIA, European Language Diversity for All, a project funded by the European Commission which aims to support multilingualism and has gathered useful tools for researchers to understand the current state of Finno-Ugric Languages in Europe, has described the state of Karelian as ‘without doubt a severely endangered language (Karjalainen et al. 2013: 189)’.

At present Karelian is most widely used in rural areas, especially by older generations. It has been noted that often urban populations who identify themselves as Karelian speakers nonetheless demonstrate a clear preference for using Russian and fail to pass Karelian on to younger generations (Klementyev, Kovaleva and Zamyatin 2012: 9).

Karelian is sometimes offered as a subject in schools; however, it is not used as a language of instruction at any schools in the republic (Klementyev, Kovaleva and Zamyatin 2012: 10). Petrozavodsk State University has a key role in the republic as it offers the only opportunity for students to intensively study the Karelian language and has indeed produced many actors who have gone on to revitalise Karelian, working as researchers, activists, and in the media. The numbers of students studying Karelian has been decreasing over the past decade, the Finno-Baltic Philology Department has struggled to retain its students and a reduction in places for students has led to changes in its structure and put its very existence into question.

**Research Question:**

Over the course of the past century Karelia language speakers have continuously shifted from using Karelian to using Russian or Finnish. While official attitudes, changes in legislation and socio-economic factors influence the fate of the Karelian language, Petrozavodsk State University has an especially important role in the republic in forming attitudes towards the Karelian language as it is the only institution of higher learning offering the study of Karelian in its degree programmes. How is the Karelian language presented to students at Petrozavodsk State University, what language attitudes towards Karelian are being fostered by the university and how can this be understood in the context of the shift that the language is experiencing?

1.2 Research Methods

The original aim of this work was to explore the following question: why do students attending Petrozavodsk State University choose to study the Karelian language;
however, after considering the material and data that I gathered while studying Karelian at the university, I have decided to change my focus and have formed the latter research question.

The material used in writing this work was gathered via two main channels. The first is the experience of the researcher in the context of a participant observation study that will be presented in the form of an ethnography. One semester was spent, September 2014 to January 2015, studying the Livvi variety of the Karelian language with students at Petrozavodsk State University, which is located in the Republic of Karelia in North-Western Russia. Material from my experience in Petrozavodsk outside of the community of the university will also be included as a way of creating a broader context. This includes observations from an evening course which was attended parallel to my studies at the university: free Livvi Karelian lessons for beginners provided through The Union of Karelian People (Karjalan Rahvahan Liitto) in cooperation with the Centre of National Cultures and Craft for the Republic of Karelia (Центр национальных культур и народного творчества Республики Карелия). I was also very fortunate to have the opportunity to act and work with the Čičiliušku theatre group (Čičiliušku-karjalaine teatru) which performs original works in two varieties of Karelian: Livvi Karelian and Karelian Proper. This experience provided useful material and contacts for this work. Finally, I have gained attention for simply being a foreigner in Petrozavodsk. This fact has brought me in contact with journalists and members of the wider community, which has also provided insight into commonly held language attitudes towards Karelian.

I was very fortunate in that the University of Eastern Finland works closely with my host university, Petrozavodsk State University, and it was quite easy to find an opportunity to study in Petrozavodsk as an exchange student. I was given funding for my time in Russia through the FIRST programme, (Finnish-Russian Student Exchange Programme). The programme required that I provide information about my plans for study in Petrozavodsk, but they did not provide any comments about my choices, or dictate any further requirements other than the fact that it would be appreciated if I agreed to share my experience with other students who would be interested in studying in Russia.

The second channel for gathering data that I have used is secondary sources. They are used primarily to create a context for the ethnography section and the results. In preparation for this work, classes about the history of Karelia were taken at the
University of Eastern Finland. Introductory courses at the same university about the fields of sociolinguistics and language policy also helped to prepare for the study of the legal situation of the Karelian language in the Republic of Karelia as well as in the Russian Federation. Literature was gathered through class readings, but more importantly through meetings with various actors involved in Karelian studies. This includes researchers at the University of Eastern Finland and at the Karelian Research Centre in Petrozavodsk, a branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

My question is relevant for several reasons and should be of interest to professionals from a variety of backgrounds as well as to actors involved in language planning, maintenance and revitalization. Petrozavodsk State University is one of the few remaining institutions offering courses to study Karelian, and as such it plays a key role in forming attitudes towards the language. Actors involved in maintaining and increasing the spheres of use for the Karelian language can use this information to better understand in which areas efforts are already being focused on and which areas could use more attention. It is also hoped that the perspective of the researcher, as an outsider that does not have a long standing vested interest in the political or social status of Karelian, will also provide a fresh perspective to Karelian studies which could be valuable to the research communities both in Petrozavodsk and in Joensuu, the two communities that have provided support for this work.

1.3 Paper Structure

This paper can be divided into three sections. The first section is intended to create a context for the following sections. It contains background information about Petrozavodsk, the research location, about the Karelian language and the particularities of this language as an endangered language, as a minority language and as a language of a titular people of a Russian republic. In this section I also discuss the choice of methods that was made in approaching the research question as well as the theoretical framework in which I will be presenting my argument.

The second section consists of the ethnography. It follows my experience as a student studying Karelian from late August 2014 to the beginning of January 2015 in Petrozavodsk. The core of this section is comprised of fieldnotes that were recorded during this period.
The final section includes a further development of the ideas and observations made in the ethnography section and aims to explore them within the ideas of the theoretical framework. In this section I make my final remarks in reference to the research question.

2 THEORETICAL METHODS AND FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I will clarify the context within which this work was written and I will discuss the theoretical framework which acts as the lens through which my research will be analysed. I will explain why I have chosen to focus on particular aspects of my research and why I think this approach to the data is important in answering the research question. A description of the methodological approach that was used in gathering data will also be provided. I aim to explain why these approaches were determined to be the most suitable for the environment that I found myself in while conducting my research. I also explain how my research question in fact changed in order to better reflect this environment and data that was gathered.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical context for this work draws on several sources; however, one project in particular has released several documents which came to act as a starting point for this paper and research. This project is ELDIA, European Language Diversity for All. ELDIA is a project that has explored multilingualism as a practice in various Finno-Ugric language communities across Europe, including amongst Karelian language communities in the Republic of Karelia. Universal tools were created through this project in order to analyse language health for these languages, which exist in variety of different language spaces. More importantly for this work, the project explores language attitudes and has identified phenomena that were similarly observed in the research that was carried out for this work.

Multilingualism is one of the central phenomena described by the project. Multilingualism is the use and knowledge of more than one language by a language user or community. Attached to the concept of multilingualism is the term vehicular language, which describes the particular language that is chosen to be used in order to perform a communicative function (Bolaffi et al. 2003: 326), this is the default function of a language that comes to mind when most people are considering the nature of a language; it is the medium through which ideas are expressed and shared between individuals. In a community of language users where passive bilingualism is common,
as is the case with the Karelian language community (Klement’ev, E. 2003), a vehicular language may differ from the language that is used for other functions such as, for example, creating a personal identity. A person may consider themselves to be Karelian and/or consider their mother tongue to be Karelian, but may exclusively use Russian as a vehicular language in their family and community.

Language is often understood as an autonomous system with clear boundaries; monolingualism, or the knowledge and use of only one language is often tacitly understood to be the norm. In reality, language users, even those who identify themselves as monolingual, are able to navigate a variety of registers and dialects. Boundaries between languages, dialects and varieties can be viewed as constructs used to support the political hegemony of elites, or ideologies. For a language like Karelian, a language that defies conventional classification into a single autonomous entity, an analysis through the lens of multilingualism offers the opportunity to reassess attitudes towards the language within a theoretical structure allowing for a varied language landscape and thus removes the burden that has been placed on language actors of restructuring the language to better fit a classification based on a model of monolingualism. Observing Karelian use through the lens of multilingualism also reaffirms the agency of the members of this community in their language use and allows for me, in the mode of a researcher, to avoid positioning them simply as an oppressed minority unable to exert their own will. The role of a foreign researcher in Russia is particularly politicised at present and by focusing on the agency of Karelian speakers I am able to some extent to avoid the politicization of this work.

It is however impossible to ignore the environment that Karelian language users inhabit. Karelians do not make their choices about language use in a vacuum and the research question for this work centers on the concept of language attitudes. Language attitudes are a crucial component in understanding the causes and direction of language shift. ‘Attitude is a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour (Baker 1995: 10).’ By understanding what attitudes are held by members of the Karelian language community, by the groups that members of this community have contact with or that they themselves belong to as well as by those who are in a position to shape language law and education policy, it is possible to understand the issues that contribute to the shift from Karelian to Russian or Finnish and to understand what measures, if any, should be taken to respond to this shift.
Language attitudes also help to give shape to the de facto situation of the language. They tell us how and in what situations the language is expected to be used or to be avoided in favour of another language.

2.2 Methodological Approach

The original question of this work aimed to explore the reasons why students choose to study Karelian. I had originally intended to gather this information through interviews combined with participant observation. However, upon analysing the data that I had gathered, I came to the conclusion that the information about motivating factors did not prove to be particularly enlightening, especially when compared to the data that were gathered through participant observation.

My approach to gathering data can be best described as organic, as mentioned, my original intention was to conduct interviews, but this method has the unfortunate potential of giving skewed results. I realised by the very fact that I, as an outsider - a student from Finland, would be asking questions about the Karelian language and its study, I would be in effect supporting the view that the study of this language is valuable and this would most likely influence the information that I would receive from the students. It is for this reason that I began interviewing students only near the end of my study time, once the students had become accustomed to me and a certain level of trust was shared. Indeed, as I had expected, on more than one occasion students informed me that they were unlikely to provide me with the answers they had assumed I would be seeking. I should also note that I was not able to speak to all of the students and that I disproportionately spoke with students from the Pedagogical Institute.

It is for the above reasons that I chose to alter my research focus and emphasise the data that were gathered via participant observation. My first task as I arrived in Petrozavodsk was to seek out places where I could create contacts with those within the community of Karelian users. As will be later discussed, these contacts cluster around Petrozavodsk State University. This fact underlines the central role that the university has in supporting the use of Karelian in the wider community. It is for that reason that understanding the attitudes towards Karelian that are fostered through the study of this language at the university is so important. Participant observation proved to be the ideal method for gathering this information as I was enveloped in the programme as a student and was exposed to the language attitudes expressed by the faculty and
staff at the university, by other students, by the physical environment of the study places and by the material that was used in classes.

Organizational skills and sensitivity to language are crucial when conducting a participant observation, and I must admit that these are two of my weaknesses as a researcher. The languages of instruction were both Russian and Finnish. Although I do possess enough language skills to comfortably converse in Russian it was clear that there was information that was more difficult for me to understand compared to the native Russian speakers that I studied with. I suspect that studying Karelian through the lens of a foreign language certainly altered my experience, when compared to that of my fellow students. It is for that reason that it is important to emphasise that this is a qualitative study that heavily depends on the subjective experience of the researcher and by no means should my experience in its details be considered to be typical for all students studying Karelian. This situation should not however detract from the fact I was exposed to the same environment and attitudes as the students that I studied with, my gaze and perception may differ from that of the students who I studied with, but we shared many of the same experiences. Also in some ways I am likely more sensitive to attitudes as an outsider as certain ideas that may be tacit to a Russian speaker from Karelia are new and surprising to me, a good example of this is the frequency with which locals refer to Karelian as a dying or foreign language.

Two of my classes included lectures and readings in Finnish. Luckily both of these classes consisted of seminar discussions which were predominantly conducted in Russian, so any central ideas that I missed in Finnish were repeated in Russian; however, I was not able to analyse the Finnish readings in detail.

Upon returning to my fieldnotes, which act as an important memory aide, I found myself disappointed in their lack of details in some situations, or in others their emphasis on details which turned out to be irrelevant to this study. As a result I found it necessary to return to some of the people that I studied with to verify my impressions and to return some details and objectivity to my fieldnotes.

2.2.1 Participant Observation

The participant observation that is referred to in this work as a method to gather data follows the definitions set out by DeWalt (DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland 1998). This is a more narrow view on participant observation, rather than the broader idea of
observation as the basic practice of a social scientist. In this definition the researcher strives to explicitly use the information gathered through active participation and observation as recorded in fieldnotes in order to analyse a research question.

DeWalt describes different approaches to participant observation defined by the degree of involvement on the part of the researcher. One of these definitions is *moderate participation*, in which the researcher mostly observes and only takes part in certain aspects of the lives of those being observed; DeWalt describes the researcher travelling into the community to take part in an activity almost as a sort of day job (DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland 1998: 262).

Another definition is *complete participation*; this is when the researcher becomes a part of the group being studied (DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland 1998: 263). The researcher assumes the roles and tasks of those that he or she wishes to understand.

In my experience gathering data my aim was to use complete participation, to become a student studying Karelian and fully take part in student life. In actual fact I combined the latter two approaches. It was impossible for me to fully share the lives of the students that I was working with and observing. This of course has had an impact on the detail of the data that I have gathered.

There are several reasons why this was the case. One is my actual difference from the students; my age and foreignness. In Russia it is unusual for ‘mature students’ to study with first year university students. Most people who plan to study at university do so immediately following secondary school. It is unusual for young people to take gap years before beginning their university programmes. In my current role in Petrozavodsk I work as a language teacher with teenagers. When this topic of gap years is discussed with my students they often voice the fact that such a break is impossible and even undesirable for them. This might be due to the fact that most students gain access to higher education through the Unified State Exam (Единый Государственный Экзамен), which is held during the last year of secondary school. The results of this exam determine which universities a student can attend and the possibility of receiving funding for their studies. Whatever the case, in my experience, I was on average more than ten years older than my fellow students.

Participant observation is a method that requires diligence on the part of the researcher. An ideal situation would be that the researcher is at all times aware of the various social
interactions and the context that they are performed in, but is also continuously comparing this context and these interactions to the research question. In my personal experience I found that this dual state was almost impossible to achieve. More often I found myself fully participating and only occasionally lapsing into my research focus when I gathered notes about what I was observing.

I took part in the study of Karelian for an extended period of time, from September 2014 to the beginning of January 2015. This is an extremely long time to maintain a habit of observation and note taking. I found that my notes were very detailed at the beginning of my research time and towards the end became more sporadic and less detailed. Unfortunately, I likely missed out on gathering valuable information.

However, it was also at this later period that I felt that I had become a trusted member of the student body and I began to conduct informal interviews with my fellow students. This dual approach, observation along with direct questioning added many important details to the data that I had received about the attitudes of the other students.

2.2.2 Ethnography

In order to relate my experience as a researcher in the role of a student studying the Karelian Language I need to create a conduit through which it is possible to share my findings. A narrative is the most natural way to describe an experience as it follows a familiar structure and is accessible to members of the wider public as well as to the research community. It does, however, also pose some issues.

Narratives can take many forms, and it is quite easy when writing them to obscure information that may run counter to the ideas of a writer while placing undue emphasis on information that supports those ideas. In order to address this issue it is important to introduce transparency into the work. This can be achieved though the clear description of my motives as a researcher, but also through reflexivity (O'Reilly 2013). It is important to strive to maintain a balance between an authoritative tone, as it is important that my writing is taken seriously as a scientific work, but also to highlight the fact that I am relating a subjective experience that is in many ways unique. It is for this reason that I have included my voice throughout the writing of this work.

Maintaining reflexivity in the narrative of the ethnography allows for me to consider the affect that I have had on the results of my research. I am not presenting myself as a sort of fly on the wall observing and recording what goes on around me, but rather my role
and effect on others is acknowledged and considered. As my role as researcher was not concealed from those around me, I cannot pretend that I was unnoticed. My presence indeed influenced the actions and behaviour of those around me, especially considering that very often I was working with students and educators in very small groups and the fact that I am a foreigner from a ‘Western’ country was something that even brought media attention to my activities. It is therefore important that I reflect on my own position and role in the context of my research which allows my readers to critically assess my findings and position.

In some instances the way that I was perceived by those around me in the context of my research provided interesting information about attitudes towards Karelian. For example it was often assumed that I was Finnish as if this fact in itself explained my interest in Karelian, or that I was motivated by a romantic desire to ‘save’ the language from a certain death. It is just as likely however that my presence as someone who is understood to have an interest in Karelian affected how those around me expressed their attitudes causing them to create either an overly grim or, conversely, bright picture about their experience with Karelian. I hope that reflexivity in my writing has indeed opened these situations up for analysis and consideration.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Historical Background

In order to understand the current situation that Karelian speakers find themselves in, it is important to be familiar with the history of Karelia and Petrozavodsk. As a border region Karelia has been the site of competing political and national ideologies. In this section I will present an overview of the how these historical factors have led to the present day language landscape in Petrozavodsk and, in more general terms, in the Republic of Karelia.

3.1.1 Petrozavodsk; Location and Founding

Petrozavodsk has acted as the capital of the Republic of Karelia since its initial formation as the Karelian Labour Commune in 1920. The city spreads out around Petrozavodsk Bay and stretches south along the shore of Lake Onega. Looking at a map of Northwest Russia, it might be surprising to learn how well connected the seemingly landlocked Petrozavodsk is to the rest of Russia and the broader world by its waterways. Its port connects the city to the south and the heart of European Russia
across the Onega via the Volga-Baltic waterway. North through the White Sea Canal, the city is connected to the White Sea, Murmansk and beyond. Travelling south and west out of the Onega along the River Svir’ and into Lake Ladoga, ships have access to the Neva River to Saint Petersburg and the Baltic Sea.

It is the latter waterway, the connection to Saint Petersburg, to which the city owes its foundation. At the turn of the 18th century Peter the Great needed a source of iron to supply munitions to support his efforts in the Great Northern War with Sweden and the construction of his new capital, Saint Petersburg. He sent scouts out to search the frontier between the Russian and Swedish Empires to find this source. A site was chosen on the shore of the Lososinka River not far from its outlet into Lake Onega and a factory was founded to process the local bog iron (Zalazaeva 2016). This was the birth of the city whose name can be translated to mean Peter Factory (Петр -Peter, о - an infix used in Russian to create compound words, завод - factory and ск – a suffix used for city names to indicated a link to a certain feature, in this case the factory). The factory originally stood in the very centre of the city and has taken on many incarnations, the current of which is the Onega Tractor Factory.

It should be noted that this story about the founding of Petrozavodsk is well known by most of those who live in the city. It is well represented in local museums, and fixed physically within the city by various monuments. In the minds of the people of Petrozavodsk, the city is clearly a creation of the Russian Empire.

3.1.2 Petrozavodsk; Early Population

Despite the fact that Petrozavodsk as it has developed since the 18th century is presented, imagined and understood as being the product of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation that later inherited the legacy of these two political entities, the history of Petrozavodsk does not begin with Peter the Great. There were, of course, people living in the area of the city before the foundation of the factory and their presence can be still be found in some of the toponyms of the places and features in and around the city.

The aforementioned Petrozavodsk Bay was called Solomyalahta [Соломялахта] in earlier times. A neighbourhood to the southwest of the centre is called Kukkovka [Кукковка] and another neighbourhood on the north-west edge of the city takes its name from a prominent hill Sulazhgora [Сулажгора]. These few examples can be used to
demonstrate the mix of peoples who have lived in and traversed this area. The solom of Solomyalahta is from the Novgorod word solome which means straight or channel (the people of Novgorod spoke a variety of Russian that was in close contact with Finnic languages). Lahta should be familiar to speakers of Finnic languages, it is from the Karelian word lahti: bay. Present day Solomenoe [Соломеное], a suburb of Petrozavodsk is situated on the narrow waterway acting as the River Shuya’s [Шуя] outlet into the Onega and is the source of the bay’s earlier name. Kukkovka is often thought to be from the Karelian or Veps word for rooster: Kukko or Kukkoi, indeed there is even a monument in the centre of this neighbourhood celebrating this idea. In fact, the neighbourhood which was founded in the 1930’s takes its name from the hill that it stands upon. The kuk is from a Veps word for hill. It is thought that Sulozhgora, which in Karelian is called Suoluzmagi, takes its name from the Saami word suuuz: island, which is sometimes used to name particularly prominent hills in some Saami dialects (Mullonen 2000).

Saami, Veps, Novgorodians and Karelians all have left traces of their presence in Petrozavodsk; however, this history is not well known and is largely overshadowed by Petrozavodsk’s history as a Russian city. It is likely that Karelians, perhaps speakers of the Ludic variety lived in the area of the city in the decades prior to the cities foundation, but this information is difficult to find and requires in-depth historical research. The city's potential Karelian roots are not an essential part of the projected image and identity of the city.

3.2 Karelianness in Petrozavodsk

Modern day Karelianness is not entirely absent in Petrozavodsk. It can be found represented in the public sphere in various ways. These include some particularities of cuisine, and local craft - especially in the market oriented to tourists which is likely trying to capitalise on a certain amount of exoticism, as well as in societies and groups who work to maintain Karelian traditions and the Karelian language.

Restaurants, cafes and bakeries often offer local specialties such as Karelian fish (рыба по-карельски) a fish soup, and perhaps the most ubiquitous, kalitki (калитки) which are well known in Eastern Finland as karjalanpiirakka. Kalitki are small pies often made with a thin buckwheat crust and topped with a potato mixture. These dishes however are not always linked to Karelians as a people, but rather to Karelia as a region; indeed the
name kalitka is well known in the republic, but the Livvi Karelian name, šipainiekku, is almost unknown.

Karelianness is often expressed in a very superficial way and is often disconnected to the original source cultures of the Karelians. A good example of this is the Kalevala, the work that was gathered by Elias Lönnrot and which is considered to be the shared national epic of Finland and Karelia. It is often the source of various tropes which are referenced to in the names of local businesses and festivals but they are regarded more as an expression of something local or even Soviet rather than something Karelian. An example of this is the Kalevala Cinema, which is situated in a cultural centre of the same name and was built during Soviet times. It has a reputation amongst many young people of being uncomfortable, old fashioned and expensive, but it is also seen as being a local institution that has continued to operate despite the gains that nation theatre chains have made in taking over its market share. Activities and events that actually touch on living elements of Karelian culture, or that make use of the Karelian language such as language classes or the Čičiliušku theatre troop, tend to be specialized and attended by a very small group of people.

Image 2 the Kalevala Cinema

In general, the Karelian language is all but absent in the public sphere. Signage, for example, if it is not unilingual, is translated into English or Finnish. There are sources of Karelian language broadcasting, but access to them is limited and their airtime is
infrequent and of short duration. Further discussion about the use and presence of Karelian will be presented in the ethnography.

3.3 Historical Precedence for the Modern Role of Karelian Culture and Language

The reasons for the absence of Karelianness in a meaningful sense, or more relevant to this study, the absence of the Karelian language in Petrozavodsk can be understood through historical developments especially though the early Soviet policy of korenizatsiia and its specific realization in Karelia. Paul Austin’s work The Karelian Phoenix offers a detailed exploration of the history of official attitudes towards Karelian and is the source of many ideas explored in this section.

Korenizatsiia [коренизация, which can be translated to something approaching the term enrooting] was an official policy of the Soviet Union intended to harness sentiments of nationalism and use them as a mode of promoting Communist ideas. It was a sort of affirmative action intended to usurp any potential discontent among the multitude of nations of the former Russian Empire (Austin, 2009: 23). In many cases, including in Karelia to a certain degree, it resulted in the full on creation of national groups, elites, standardized languages and cultural tropes. Part of this policy led to the formation of various republics within the structure of the Soviet Union and within the structure of the subjects of the Soviet Union. These republics would act as homelands for national groups. The Republic of Karelia was first formed as the Karelian Labour Commune on the 8th of June 1920 as a subdivision of the Soviet Russian Republic (Kut’kov n.d.).

The project of korenizatsiia was incredibly ambitious, not only did it foresee the creation of national homelands, but it aimed to formalize and in some cases even create, from scratch as it were, national identities; an important component of this of course being language. Many languages that were used throughout the Russian Empire existed only in spoken form. Thus, through korenizatsiia, it was important to develop literary languages through which Communist ideas could be spread. Often this meant that alphabets needed to be created, grammar systems needed to be studied and formalised and subsequently taught in schools.

The Karelian Labour Commune at the end of the revolution and civil war was in a unique situation. It was located on the border of the Communist world with Finland. Finland, not long ago, had been part of the Russian Empire and had also had its own civil war that was fought between Reds and Whites. In Finland, unlike in Russia, the
Whites supported by German troops were able to gain control over the territory. This resulted in the exodus of the so-called Red Finns, many of whom fled across the border to the Soviet Union. The Red Finns did not abandon their political hopes for their native land and their gathering in the Karelian Labour Commune and the subsequent Karelian Autonomous Republic can be understood as a sort of gathering of forces on the border, ideological at the very least if not military (Kauppala 2002: 332).

Red Finns formed an influential elite in the Karelian Labour Commune at the time when the Soviet leaders were forming their plans for *korenizatsiia*. To understand how this fact along with the attitude of the Red Finns towards Karelian affected the future role of the Karelian language in Karelia it is important to first have some knowledge about the Finnish Language itself.

Finland had existed throughout its history under the control of ‘foreign’ powers, either Swedish or Russian speaking. This meant that Finnish was the language of the local population, but not of the ruling elite. This began to change in the 19th century when the Grand Duchy of Finland was a part of the Russian Empire. The Duchy enjoyed a certain amount of independence and began to foster a national identity. Finnish up to that point had existed as a series of dialects, divided into Eastern and Western groups (Mullonen 2007). These groups were united to create a literary language that was instrumental in forming the Finnish national identity.

One of the dialects that was borrowed from, especially in terms of vocabulary, was the dialect of the Karelians living within the modern Kalevala district in Northern Karelia (Kuusi and Anttonen 1985). This area was not a part of the Grand Duchy of Finland, and as such was not formally included in the national project of the Finns. The dialects of Karelia, unlike the dialects of Finland simply carried on as they always had as a mode of communication and connection among the population at a local level. At the time when the Red Fins had come to form an elite in the KLC (Karelian Labour Commune) and KASSR (Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic), the various dialects of Karelian had not been united and attached to a national project and remained ‘undeveloped’.

Because of its similarities and proximity to the Finnish language, combined with the attitudes of the elites, the Karelian language was conceptually attached to the Finnish language and Standard Finnish along with Russian was used in education and in the publication of government documents (Kauppala 2002: 330). This allowed the Red
Finns to assert their position in Karelia as the cultural and linguistic brothers of Karelians and to attach themselves to the *korenizatsia* project. Unfortunately this also meant that the various varieties of Karelian were not given the support that other languages in the union were given at this time; one crucial point that echoes to this day is the fact that Karelians were never fully united into one people with one common language.

Currently the situation is thus: the three varieties of Karelian are often grouped together, especially in discussions of language policy led by governing bodies, but the de facto situation is that there are three Karelian languages that are used independently of each other; Livvi Karelian (also called Olonets Karelian or Olonetsian), Karelian Proper (Northern Karelian) and Ludic Karelian (Luude). This fact is often presented as a stumbling block in discussions about the recognition of Karelian as an official language. Karelia as the only republic in the Russian Federation that does not recognise an official language other than Russian has been described as an outlier case in terms of its lack of an official status (Zamyatin 2014: 29).

3.4 Official Attitudes towards Karelian

Language at its most basic definition is a tool, but not simply a tool for communication, it is also used to create identity, and to define or blur social groups. Language plays an especially complex role in society; it has a multitude of functions and has an important role in its relation to power and power structures.

In the words of Fernand de Varennes, a scholar that has done much work in the field of minority language rights:

‘Language is power. By being fluent in the language which is official, or used by authorities, you actually have a rather privileged position (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2016).

He goes on to explain that when a language is *made* official it is given power, or more specifically, the speakers of that language are given power. It is not by accident that the word *made* was used in the above phrase. To speakers of a dominant language, for example Russian in Russia, it seems natural that their language should be official, it is very difficult to live in Russia without knowledge of the Russian language; the fact that this situation has been created through centuries of Russian cultural hegemony and more recently and more actively through education policies and the politicization of
language use is often not apparent to Russian speakers. Especially relevant to the situation in Karelia is the decision made by authorities to include or exclude languages. When it is decided that a certain language is to be excluded from an official capacity the members of that group are also excluded from the governing power structures. It is not by accident the Soviet programme of *korenizatsiia* attached the ideology of communism to national cultures and languages. Nationalist sentiment that could potentially see the union broken into several smaller nation-states was redirected as a tool in keeping the union together. Being part of the Soviet Union under the policy of *korenizatsiia* meant to be empowered, to have an official place as part of the authority, something that had been missing in the pre-revolution years of the Russian Empire. The idea of creating stability through granting rights to minorities within the context of language can be further explored in de Varennes’ *Official Languages vs. Linguistic Rights: Does One Exclude the Other? [Langues officielles versus droits linguistiques : l’un exclut-il l’autre ?]* (de Varennes 2012).

Karelian is not an official language in Karelia. There have been several attempts since the formation of the Russian Federation to establish Karelian as an official language, or, as in the language of Russian law, a *state language* [государственный язык], but none have yet proved successful (Knuuttila 2008). At present the only state language of the Republic of Karelia is Russian as is stated in the Republic's constitution:

> ‘1. The state language of the Republic of Karelia is Russian. The Republic of Karelia has the right to establish other state languages based on the direct expression of the population of the Republic of Karelia as expressed through a referendum. [1. Государственным языком в Республике Карелия является русский. Республика Карелия вправе устанавливать другие государственные языки на основании прямого волеизъявления населения Республики Карелия, выраженного путем референдума.] (Anon. 2001)’

An important hurdle for those who are interested in establishing Karelian as a state language is the requirement for the question to be put to referendum. Given the fact that Karelians are a minority coupled with the relative absence of Karelian in the public sphere, it is unlikely that such a question would gain broad support without the support of the authorities; however, it has never actually been tested. As recent as 2016 steps were made to remove this hurdle by the Karelian government, deputies proposed to remove the requirement for a referendum to be held. This motion was however later
struck down as deputies cited their fear of inflaming sentiments of separatism within the republic (Aleksandrova 2016a).

A further legal hurdle to the establishment of Karelian as a state language exists at the federal level. A change was introduced in 2002 to the federal law that determines the use of languages within the Russian Federation, The Law on the Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation [Закон о языках народов Российской Федерации]. This change reads as follows:

‘In the Russian Federation the alphabets of the state language of the Russian Federation and the state languages of the republics are created on the graphic foundation of Cyrillic. Other graphic foundations of the state language of the Russian Federation and the state languages of the republics can be introduced through federal law. [В Российской Федерации алфавиты государственного языка Российской Федерации и государственных языков республик строятся на графической основе кириллицы. Иные графические основы алфавитов государственного языка Российской Федерации и государственных языков республик могут устанавливаться федеральными законами.] (El’cin, B. 1991)’

At present Karelian uses a single unified alphabet for all three varieties. This alphabet is based on the Latin alphabet, meaning that according to federal law, Karelian cannot become a state language unless special provisions are taken at the federal level. The decision to use the Latin alphabet predates the federal law by 13 years, being formally approved in 1989 (Anon. 2007). Given the efforts made to develop the Karelian alphabet and the efforts made to promote its use since 1989, it would be impractical to change to a Cyrillic based system. These efforts have been supported by Karelian law, showing that authorities at least formally support the further development of the Karelian language, but at the same time they seem content to support the status quo in terms of the status of the language. Without a major change in attitude and some serious lobbying of the Federal government, it is unlikely for there to be any changes in this situation.

There are indeed laws that exist to support Karelian. In 2004 a law entitled, On the State Support for the Karelian, Veps and Finnish Languages in the Republic of Karelia [О государственной поддержке карельского, вепсского и финского языков в Республике Карелия], was passed for ‘the preservation and development of the way of
life, culture and languages of the Karelians, Veps and Finns, the preservation of the historical distinctness of the Republic of Karelia [Настоящий Закон направлен на сохранение и развитие образа жизни, культуры и языков карелов, вепсов и финнов, на сохранение исторических и национальных традиций и культурного своеобразия Республики Карелия.] (Anon. 2004). The law positions itself in relation to the federal law On the Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation [О языках народов Российской Федерации] it lays down an outline of various areas and means of support and development for Karelian and guarantees the right to freely choose to use Karelian in communication, the raising of children, education, and creative endeavours. This law has been criticized for many reasons, one of the most salient being that the declared preservation and support has been very slow in its realisation, if at all, because the responsibility for doing so has been framed as a choice. Karelians can choose to study the language if they want, provided that their local schools do indeed choose to teach Karelian, but there is nothing in the law to provide a stimulus to do so. There is no requirement to learn, speak or teach Karelian. The law in effect only makes it clear that using Karelian at home, for education, or in the arts is not in contradiction of the law, people may freely choose to do so (Hohlov, 2013). In the case of education, however, even the basic free right to choose Karelian has been put to the test.

Karelian, specifically the Livvi and Proper varieties are taught at two levels of education; at the school level, for example at the Finno-Ugric school in Petrozavodsk, and at the University level. There have also been some attempts to establish language nests. A language nest is a place where young children, usually at the preschool age, are totally immersed in a target language. The idea was originally developed in New Zealand as a way to revitalize the Maori language. It has proven to be an effective way in revitalising languages that have a significant generation gap, that is where the older generation has knowledge of the language, but the parents of the children do not have an effective fluency. The older generation is given the opportunity to interact with and instruct the children, thus passing on their language and cultural knowledge.

When speaking to activists who are trying to develop more spheres of use for Karelian, they spoke about their attempts to set up language nests. They also spoke about the interference of the authorities who have either caused the closure of language nests or insisted on changes that effectively neutralize their power to pass on the language. The reasons given for this are framed within the context of protecting the children’s rights to
receive education in Russian. In a quote from 2012, the former Head of The Republic of Karelia, Aleksanteri Hutilainen [Александр Худилайнен] defended this very situation saying that the state language for the Republic of Karelia is Russian and that teaching children only Karelian, Veps or Finnish in preschools would be a violation of their constitutional rights, ['…глава Карелии Александр Худилайнен отметил, что в Ленобласти все всегда завидовали научной базе и образовательному потенциалу Карелии. В том числе и по части изучения языков. Также он напомнил, что в республике государственным языком является русский. В связи с этим учить детей в дошкольных учреждениях только карельскому, вепсскому или финскому было бы нарушением конституционных прав.']. Hutilainen goes on to say that the national languages of Karelia should however be supported and that his government is considering what further action to take in this regard (Anon. 2012).

The comments of the former head of Karelia reflect how language issues as they are attached to identity have become politicized more widely in Russia. It could be inferred from Huilainen’s comments that Russian itself is an endangered language and for that reason it needs to be protected, but this is clearly not the case when one considers the clear trend occurring all across Russia of language shift from small languages towards Russian. What I think is actually being suggested here is not the precariousness of the Russian language but rather a fear about the precariousness of Russian patriotism as if fluency in a language other than Russian some how threatens the very Russianness of a person. In the words of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin: ‘We don’t have and there cannot be any other unifying idea besides patriotism [У нас нет никакой и не может быть никакой другой объединяющей идеи, кроме патриотизма] (Anon 2016).’ Russia occupies a huge territory and encompasses hundreds of national, ethnic and linguistic groups within its borders. The specifics of what it means to be a Russian patriot are not clearly defined and the ideological battles that have been waged at the local and individual level over language, minority and gender rights and the role of religion in the public sphere are symptomatic of this situation as people grapple with the idea of what it means to be a citizen of the Russian Federation.

Karelian as a border language is especially vulnerable in such a context. In the minds of many people, both in Finland and Russia, Karelian is simply a dialect of Finnish. One acquaintance, the father of a friend, is especially fond of telling about his family’s war experience as Russians. He related the story about how their cattle were taken away by the Finns and given to Karelian families when he learned about my interest in Karelian,
and subsequently loaned me a book about the experience of Russians in Finnish prison camps. Thus Karelians through their language are linked to the foreign Finns and thus are treated with suspicion. I should however point out that I am drawing on personal experience when making the above statement and studies as part of the ELDIA project have found the opposite to be true. It was found that neutral or even positive attitudes towards Karelian are more prevalent than negative ones (Klementyev et al. 2012: 162).

Ambiguity in the interpretation of identity and how this is can become subsequently politicised is not unique to Karelia. Laura Assmuth has explored how the inhabitants of the Estonian / Russian border in the area of Pechory have come to self-identify and be identified in different ways over time as the political and administrative environment in which they inhabit has changed. In their case the she suggests that the Estonian language has taken on a more prestigious status as the language of a European nation and it is likely that the language will continue to be taught despite a decline in the local Estonian population, however she recognizes that this is not typical for other minority languages in Russia (Assmuth 2009).

3.5 Karelian in the Context of Other Minority and National Languages in the Russian Federation

The plight of Karelian as a small language is, unfortunately, typical. Many other minority languages are facing language shift at various rates; the tendency is from smaller local languages, to bigger more hegemonic languages. The reasons for this are many; economic, as people change their means of livelihood; urbanisation, linked with economic changes as people migrate from smaller to larger centres; an increase in education, education in itself is not the problem, of course, but rather the fact that the language of instruction is often in a different language (Saarikivi and Marten 2012: 1-2). In order for languages to survive these changes they need to be valued. Value for a language can be maintained at a local level, as a form of identity, as is what I saw amongst Karelian activists. It can be a way of linking people to a community, religion or ideal. But if the language is only valued in this way its position is precarious as political and economic factors come to play. Acts such as granting the language an official status, allowing and encouraging the language to be used in education and in media are also important as they return, first, a social prestige to the language and, second, they introduce an aspect of an economic need to use a minority language (Saarikivi and Marten 2012: 1-2). Indeed with the case of Karelian the language has been able to
maintain value at a local or individual level, but this has slowly been eroding over time as it has only received nominal support from authorities.

From the late fifties onward the official policy of the USSR was to centralize education. This was a break from the earlier policy allowing for the nationalisation of education, that is, a decentralised control over education away from Moscow and towards the national regions. Before that point students were required to receive education in their native languages. After 1958 the language of instruction was left up to the parents’ discretion meaning in practical terms that many chose Russian as it promised greater economic prospects (Zamyatin 2012a: 19). In Karelia the situation was different as the language of instruction was typically in Finnish, especially in areas where Karelian Proper was spoken, and in Russian where Livvi and Ludic were used (Kauppala 2002). The clear result of this policy was increased language shift from the national languages, meaning the languages of the republics of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, towards Russian (Zamyatin 2012a).

With the foundation of the Russian Federation after the collapse of the USSR there was once again a move to decentralize control over education (Zamyatin 2012b: 20). This corresponded with a revival of interest in local languages and cultures whose seeds had been developing during the perestroika years. But Zamyatin, in his work: The Education Reform in Russia and its Impact on Teaching of the Minority Languages: An Effect of Nation-Building, is careful to point out that when compared to the levels of language use in education pre 1958, this increase in interest and actual return to using national languages is actually very modest (Zamyatin 2012b: 21).

While the details of the situation differ in Karelia when compared to other republics within the Russian federation, the overall picture is similar. During the 1990’s there was an increase of interest in Karelian in all of its forms including as a language of study (rather than a language of instruction as in other republics). This was supported by an official policy of supporting national revivals. In the 2000s, however, this policy was abandoned as the federal government once again aimed to centralise education control (Zamyatin 2012a). The policy of national revival was not able to come to fruition and through lack of political and financial support the numbers of students choosing to study national languages peaked and since has continued to decrease.
4 ETHNOGRAPHY

In this chapter I will describe my experience studying Livvi Karelian at Petrozavodsk State University from late August 2014 to January 2017. I have assigned pseudonyms as a measure to protect the privacy of the students, educators, activists and members of the community who are mentioned in this study.

4.1 Introduction

Image 3 View from my Kitchen Window

I arrived in Petrozavodsk in late August, 2014. It was my second time in the town and I was lucky in that I was able to stay with a friend who was teaching at Petrozavodsk State University. I arrived with my suitcase and dog by train from Saint Petersburg; it was a grey, wet and cool day. My friend was out of town when I arrived, but his friend, a person I had never met before, was kind enough to pick me up at the train station.

Petrozavodsk is a smallish city by Russian standards with a population of around 250,000. I would in fact be living not far from the train station, but I was grateful for the drive because of the wet weather and the rather scruffy nature of the city that would have certainly guaranteed a dirty and uncomfortable walk with my curious dog, who is always eager to sniff out and collect litter, and my heavy suitcase. I was deposited to the flat and almost immediately left to my own devices. The flat was a little rough around the edges; it obviously hadn’t been fixed up since sometime in the 80’s, judging by the
false wood paneling, but it was well supplied with everything that I would need for my upcoming time studying at the university. Most importantly I had my own room with a writing desk, bed and a stable Internet connection. The location of the building near the centre also meant that I was in comfortable walking distance to anywhere that I would need to go.

Looking back at my notes I see that initially I was quite taken by the condition of the city:

‘PTZ [Petrozavodsk] seems dirty and poor. The roads are in terrible condition, city streets are muddy and the streams carry grey water filled with rubbish. I am living in a poorer neighbourhood and there is a stark contrast with the centre proper. The centre is clean, there are rubbish bins, the streets are well paved, but just 500 metres away is my neighbourhood of Khrushyovkas [apartment blocks built en masse during the time of Nikita Khrushyev and intended as a temporary solution to a housing shortage], muddy streets and air sour with leaking gas (Fieldnotes).’

After having lived in Petrozavodsk for a few years, I have now grown accustomed to the conditions here and am no longer surprised by muddy streets or the amount of litter that accumulates in my building’s yard. What hasn’t changed, however, is the contrast between the people of the city and the unkempt condition of the city that they live in. From my very first days I noticed the friendliness of the people here and the genuine interest that they have in me and the various endeavours that I take part in. I certainly owe a lot to the openness of the people of Petrozavodsk, without their willingness to share my research here would have been much more difficult to carry out.

4.2 Beginning of Study Period

My first task in Petrozavodsk was to attend to business at the university, this included getting registered as a foreign student in Petrozavodsk and meeting the administrators of the Balto-Finnic Philology Department where I would be studying.

Petrozavodsk State University has an office dedicated to the handling of all the bureaucratic hurdles that foreign students need to pass in order to study at the university. The staff was quite friendly and curious about my interest in studying Karelian. One person from the office even told me later on that she was Karelian and was also planning to study the language through the courses offered by the Union of the Karelian People [Karjalan Rahvahan Liitto]. This was not my first time studying in
Russia, so the various steps in the bureaucratic process that I was required to go through were familiar to me. My official status at the university was as a stazhor [стажёř], a word that can be translated as something akin to an apprentice, which in practical terms meant that I had freedom in choosing my study programme. I also learned at this time that as I was a student from a Finnish University, I would be receiving a small stipend during my study time in Petrozavodsk.

The next step for me was to visit the Balto-Finnic Philology Department and to choose my classes. I learned that this department shared a building with the Economics Faculty and that my classes would be held at number 1 Pravdy Street, approximately two kilometres away from the main university building. I made my way to the building and to the floor that housed the department. There was little to tell me that I was on the right path; in my earlier experience studying at Saint Petersburg State University and then at Petrozavodsk State University, I have noticed that Russian universities are often critically short on signage or decoration, which means that it is impossible to simply drop in to a department or office, newcomers need to be provided with clear directions about where these places are housed, or to rely on the not-always-clear directions of those who can be found on the premises. As it indeed turned out, there was little to differentiate between the floors dedicated to the study of economics and Karelian at the building on Pravdy, just a few notice boards showing past student work and some pictures of the theatre group Čičiliušku.

‘I was able to meet with the administration of the Balto-Finnic languages department at the university this week. They seemed quite excited to have me there and were especially helpful. They explained practical matters very patiently and thoroughly and even wrote out my schedule for me by hand. One of the first questions I was asked was which variety of Karelian I wanted to study (Fieldnotes).’

It had been my understanding from the studies that I had made in preparation for my time in Petrozavodsk that Livvi Karelian might be more accessible to me as some of its features, for example phonology and lexicon, would be more familiar to me as it had coexisted with Russian in the south of Karelia for a longer time. However, this was merely an assumption and I cannot say that it actually turned out to be the case. Also, as Livvi Karelian is more distant on the dialect spectrum from Finnish, I thought that the students who chose to study Livvi might have a unique motivation for studying it. It
would, for example, be harder for them to use their knowledge to learn Finnish, and that it would be more likely that they were interested in working specifically with Livvi in the future. Once again, this was pure speculation and nothing in my research proved this to be the case.

‘I chose Livvi Karelian because, of the two varieties offered: Karelian Proper and Livvi Karelian, Livvi differs more markedly from Finnish and has more in common with the Ludic variety (which is not offered for study). In doing this I have purposely chosen the variety that I suspect may receive less attention and hope that the motivation that students and teachers have for working with this variety is more complicated than searching for a link with Finland, although I suspect that this is one of the reasons that will be voiced. Also from a practical perspective I suspect that the Livvi phonological system will be easier for me as there is a less frequent occurrence of long and short vowels in Livvi as compared to Finnish, something that has proved difficult for me when studying Finnish, and as well, more lexical borrowing from Russian which will make it easier to learn. These are simply presuppositions that have yet to be tested in practice (Fieldnotes).’

As was discussed in the chapter 3 Background, the definition of Karelian is at times a loaded political question. On the one hand, by defining Karelian as a dialect of Finnish, it was possible to justify the Finnicization of certain aspects of Karelian life. On the other, by recognizing Karelian as a separate language, from a Russian policy maker point of view, one then needs to consider the shape of that language, for example, the standard form. There are three widely recognised varieties of Karelian; which of these could be used to establish a standard form, or how they would be combined to create a unified variety and who exactly would make these decisions are all questions that have yet to be answered fully. The government of Karelia has adopted a law recognizing a unified alphabet for Karelian which educators have accepted, but the three varieties otherwise are still quite distinct.

‘I was first asked which dialect (диалект) I was interested in [studying at the university]. The speaker then corrected herself and said that it is not actually a dialect but a narechie (наречие). Наречие being a broader grouping [of language] (Fieldnotes).’
The situation at the Balto-Finnic Department is thus: the varieties of Karelian are placed under the same umbrella; students are working towards a degree in Finnish Language and Literature, Karelian Language [Финский язык и литература, карельский язык]. In the actual teaching the varieties are treated as separate languages with separate language classes being held for Livvi Karelian and Karelian Proper. Ludic Karelian is not taught at the university. The students of these narechie have different language instructors, use different literature, or literature duplicated separately into the varieties. The students do come together for other various courses in the same instances when students of Finnish or Veps are also included.

The fact that the varieties of Karelian are unified at the university under the heading of Finnish should also be noted. In 2013 the departments of Finnish Language and Literature and of The Karelian and Veps Languages were united into the Balto-Finnic Department. The official reason for this was due to declining student interest in studying at the department of Karelian and Veps Languages, which, while perhaps being true, reflects a large semiotic shift in attitude towards Karelian. The precedence for this decision echoes back to the days of the Karelo-Finnish language (Anon. No Date b).

Before coming to Petrozavodsk I was told about seven possible courses that I could study, but unfortunately, after speaking to the administration of the department I learned that not all of these courses would be made available that study year. In the end, I agreed to take part in four different classes:

- The first year, Introductory Course to the Karelian Language [Вводный курс карельского языка]
- The second year, Karelian Language Conversation Practice [Разговорная практика по карельскому языку]
- The fifth year, History of the Literature of Karelia [История литературы Карелии]
- The third year, Introduction to Finno-Ugric Studies [Введение в финно-угроведение]

The courses that were not offered were: The Development of Spoken and Written Karelian [Развитие устной и письменной речи карельского языка] and Practice in the Translation of the Karelian Language [Практика перевода карельского языка]. A fourth course, the Morphology of the Karelian Language [Морфология карельского языка], I decided not to attend as I did not want to take on too large of a workload. The credits that I would gain from these four courses while studying in Petrozavodsk would
be sufficient to satisfy the requirements of my study programme at the University of Eastern Finland.

At this time I also began to try to expand my social circle. Part of the reason for this was to speak to people outside of the environment of the university to help get a measure of what attitudes they might have towards Karelian. Initially I met people through friends and acquaintances that I had prior to coming to Petrozavodsk. When getting to know people I would make a point of asking them about their knowledge of Karelian or identity as a Karelian. As people are always interested to ask about my background as someone who is clearly not Russian, but is also able to speak in Russian, my asking them in turn about their self-identification was not so out of place. I did meet some people who identified as Karelian, but none of them claimed to speak the language. In general the people I asked proved to know very little about Karelian.

‘One person I asked about speaking Karelian told me that he doesn’t speak any foreign languages. When I expressed my surprise about [him having used the term] foreign. He stated that he is Russian and not a Karelian, and then apologized for perhaps misspeaking (Fieldnotes).’

4.3 Classes at Petrozavodsk State University; Balto-Finnic Philology Department

It is assumed that students have little or no knowledge of Karelian when they begin first year studies at the Balto-Finnic Philology Department. It is possible that different arrangements are made for students who already have some knowledge of the language; however, I am unaware of this happening. In my group studying Livvi Karelian there were ten students. This was an increase from recent years; the result of the merger between The Petrozavodsk Pedagogic Academy and Petrozavodsk State University in 2013 ("Institut pedagogiki i psihologii :: Petrozavodskij gosudarstvennyj universitet ", 2017). Prior to this there had been two institutions at the level of higher education offering studies in Karelian.

‘05.09.14

I met with the students of the introductory course today. They are young and positive and eager to learn. All the students who want to study Karelian were gathered together and asked which variety they would like to study (Livvi or Proper). I only learned about this later, as I had already chosen Livvi, I was told to wait in the classroom while the others made their choice. Ten students
chose to take the first year Livvi course. The instructor is S.V., and she told us about what books we will be using. Unfortunately, it seems that there are none in print and that they are not available in bookshops. It is possible to get them from the library. I need to get a library card.

We began by working with the book *Karjalan Kielen Livvin Murdehen Algukursu* which is co-authored by S. Rudakova with N. Gilojeva. These books were brought for us to use from the library. S.V. asked us to get them ourselves for next class.

Our group is actually made up of two groups, students from the Department of Balto-Finnic Languages and students from the Pedagogical Academy, which I understood was somehow recently merged with PetrGU [Petrozavodsk State University]. These latter students left early mentioning that they had an English class on another campus and that the professor is very strict and does not tolerate tardiness.

Once they had left we began talking about studying Karelian more generally. S.V. seemed disappointed that the students had left and mentioned that often students, who study more than one language along with Karelian, often drop Karelian in order to focus on a bigger world language like English. One student mentioned that she thinks that employers would be impressed to see that a job candidate has knowledge of Karelian. S.V. agreed, and mentioned that civil servants in Karelia receive a larger salary if they have knowledge of Karelian. She explained that this is because Karelian is the родной язык [mother tongue] of the people of Karelia. She also said that unfortunately many people think of the language as being only for grandparents, but she offered our interest to learn as a counterpoint [to that idea] (Fieldnotes). ’
4.3.1 Introduction to Karelian

The central course for learning Karelian in the first year is the Introductory Course to the Karelian Language. The main source of Karelian language in this class was firstly our instructor, who spoke to us in a mix of Karelian and Russian. We also used a course book that she had coauthored; *An Introductory Course of the Livvi Dialect of the Karelian Language* [*Karjalan Kielen Livvin Murdehen Algukursu*]. The book presents topics including phonology and reading rules, the grammatical case structure of Karelian, verb forms, and discussion topics from describing yourself, talking about family, colours, the home, time and other general topics from daily life:
The book consists of examples of language use taken from original works of literature, 
the drawings of a former student of our instructor, exercises, vocabulary lists and tables 
showing grammatical structures. Apart from publication information at the beginning and 
back of the book, which is in Russian, the course book is written entirely in Livvi 
Karelian.

‘06.09.14

Today we continued our introduction to the phonology, alphabet and reading 
rules of Karelian. The book we are following uses a sort of mixed 
methodology. It includes examples of real language, communicative tasks, 
and a heavy focus on grammatical analysis. The book was actually co- 
authored by S.V.. In class we are mostly reading and translating.

Today’s lesson included a poem by Z. Dubrinina called Karjalaine sana. The 
poem describes how Karelian connects people to each other, how this 
language can be heard only in Karelia and how it connects people to the land 
and its traditions (Fieldnotes).’

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1 Translation can be found in 8.1 Appendix 1
It proved difficult to find copies of this book for all of the students as it had gone out of print. Eventually our instructor decided to give us copies of the book for free. As she said, they had been found for us, but it was clear that they were from her personal collection. The book can actually be freely found on the internet, along with a version that includes audio files (Gilojeva and Rudakova 2010) but, unfortunately, the university's infrastructure would not have supported the students using electronic devices on a regular basis in class as there were not enough electric outlets for everyone and there was no access to Wi-Fi. It would have also been unreasonable to expect that all students have access to devices to bring to class to use an electronic book, so as I have assumed, our instructor chose to use her own resources to solve this problem.

S.V. organised two outings for this class during the semester. The first outing was presented to us as a chance to use Karelian outside of the classroom and to meet Karelian speakers in the community. These outings proved to be an excellent encapsulation of attitudes, which members of the Karelian community themselves have towards Karelian, as well as the attitudes of the students.

An approximate prose translation can be found in 8.2 Appendix 2
‘After a two-day break in my studies I went to my Introduction to Karelian class on Friday morning. A trip to the botanic garden was organised for us. Several students were absent as they had other commitments. S.V. was annoyed that she was not told about this earlier as she could have scheduled the trip for another day (she had told us about this trip some time in advance).

I sat with I.N. [on the chartered bus] and he told me about his earlier studies and family. He spoke about various political and social problems. I asked him why he had chosen to study Karelian. His answer was simply; ‘I am half Karelian’. Knowing that he studies both Karelian and Finnish, I asked if Finnish was more interesting for him. He said, no, Karelian is.

We stopped in the village: ? [I now believe this was somewhere near Chalna or Shuya, communities to the north and west of Petrozavodsk] and a group of elderly people joined us. They are members of [a] Karelian club.

As they got on [the bus] they greeted us in Karelian, but spoke amongst themselves in Russian. I.N. pointed out that some spoke Russian with an accent.

As we drove they began to sing songs in Karelian and then in Russian [the most familiar song to all present was Ongo Petroskoi kaunis linnaire with some of the students joining in to sing]. We stopped in Solomenoe [a suburb of Petrozavodsk] to cross the bridge. This bridge floats on pontoons and we had to cross on foot. As I was getting off [the bus] a woman (who spoke Russian with an accent) asked me in Karelian if I was an American or a Canadian. I told her I was Canadian. As we crossed the bridge she continued [speaking] in Karelian Proper. I asked I.N. what she was saying. He said that she was telling us that people like to fish off the bridge. He thought that as this woman spoke in Karelian Proper I should be able to understand her easily with my knowledge of Finnish. I had to remind him that I know very little Finnish. As we continued I.N. asked the woman a question in Russian and the woman continued the discussion in Russian as well.

Once we had reached the botanic garden we were met by a correspondent from the Karelian language news broadcast. Two women changed into the
Karelian national costume, and our two groups [students and club members] were formally introduced. As we are only just beginning to study Karelian it was decided that there would be a translation of our tour into Russian. The head of the Karelian [club], who also worked at the gardens, explained how she is interested in history and the history of words. She explained that not all of the plants in the garden have names in Karelian. She explained that the garden has many introduced specimens and that if a name was not known for a plant in Karelian, it was logical to assume that Karelians had not known such a plant.

As we were shown the garden we were occasionally quizzed about the names of the various plants. Most students had no idea and most of the questions were in fact answered by S.V. and I.N.. Occasionally there were also disagreements about what a plant was called and [even] our tour guide was occasionally unsure herself what something was called (she often had to refer to her notes).

I should also speak about the reactions of the students to the proceedings. The students range in age from 17-25. Some showed a keen interest and others showed a sort of embarrassment to the singing and attitudes of the older people. During the tour many were uninterested and lagged behind and were in fact reprimanded by the older generation.

At the end of our tour we stopped for tea. We were served two dishes: kalitki [in Finland they are known as karjalanpiirakka, a small pie made of a thin rye crust filled with potato and baked], perhaps the most well known of Karelian dishes, along side blini [crepes, very thin pancakes served with various fillings], the equally well known Russian dish. We were also treated to some songs by the Karelian club.

The Karelian correspondent was a former student of S.V.’s. This led to a discussion of various job opportunities for students of Karelian. S.V. told us that three students from our department had found jobs in broadcasting.

I was invited to attend meetings of the Karelian club. I was told that many members do not speak Karelian and that most of the discussion at the club is
The botanic garden has a large collection of apple trees and annually allows members of the public to come pick apples for a small fee. As we waited for the club members to pack up we were given bags and told that we could collect as many apples as we would like for free. Again few of the students chose to do so preferring to walk in small groups together away from the older generation.

Later in the semester a second trip was organised to the publishing house Periodika which prints books and newspapers in Karelian, Veps, Finnish and Russian. This trip was presented as a chance to see how it is possible to use Karelian in the workforce after graduation. Indeed most of the staff had been students at the university and some of the current students were excited about the idea of becoming a Karelian language journalist. At Periodika we listened to a presentation about the different books and publications that have been released by the publisher. We met editors and writers for the different newspapers and learned about their work and how they put a newspaper together.

We also learned about the children’s magazine *Kipinä*, which is printed in Finnish, Karelian Proper, Livvi Karelian and Veps. Each edition is printed in two of these languages and different times during the year. Some of the students were able to buy back copies of the Livvi edition as well as to subscribe to receive future copies, which would be delivered to the university for us. Unfortunately in practice it proved difficult to receive the copies that I had subscribed to, it turned out that the only way to receive them was to go to the office of Periodika and even when I had agreed beforehand they did not always have copies in Livvi on hand. This arrangement was further complicated by the fact that it was almost impossible to get information about the actual printing dates of the magazine.

The Introduction to Karelian class was central to teaching us Karelian, for me, as I had a special programme, it was my only language class, but for the other students it was in competition with Finnish classes, which students of the Balto-Finnic Philology Department were required to take, and with English or other language classes that the students from the Pedagogic Institute had to take as part of their programme. Some students complained about studying Finnish and Karelian simultaneously as it led to confusion.
‘24-28.10.14

We have been going over some difficult grammar topics in Introduction to Karelian: changes in word stems depending on case, weak and strong stems. S.V. emphasises the similarities between Karelian and Finnish when teaching about difficult topics. It seems to me that the group has a rather weak knowledge of Finnish to make use of it in studying Karelian. There are many situations however where students mistakenly use Finnish pronouns, hän, and some other words when speaking Karelian (Fieldnotes).’

In conversation with other students I learned that for some of them their other language classes were more of a priority for them. Towards the end of the semester the number of students in this class had markedly declined.

‘30.11.14

Things have been quieter at uni. The group attending the first year Karelian class has gotten smaller. Students are either sick, or have stopped attending through lack of interest or time (Fieldnotes).’

By late December we had completed approximately half of our course book and were required to pass a mid-term exam. I was told that I did not have to take the exam, but I chose to anyway. It consisted of a written and oral part. As students wrote at their desks we were invited one by one to sit near S.V. and answer questions about ourselves related to the topics that we had studied. For some of the students the semester had been stressful and as a result they ended the first part of the course with a rather conflictive relationship with S.V. which had surprised me. These students obviously were not very interested in studying Karelian and resented the fact that S.V. criticized them for skipping class. These students were however a minority and most students in my group said that they were ready to continue studying Karelian in the upcoming semester.

4.3.2 Third Year Conversation

In my schedule immediately following the Introduction to Karelian class was the third year conversation class. It was taught by the same instructor, S.V., and attended by only one student besides myself.

‘05.09.14 – Third Year
There is only one student in this class besides me, something that I was warned about. We use a book called *Karjalazien Elaigu*, which S.V. brought for us from the library. [Today] we read about the ‘traditional’ (preindustrial) activities of Karelians in June. S.V. used the book to introduce concepts and vocabulary and then initiated conversations by asking questions about our personal experiences. She asked the student to compare her own summer activities to those of the Karelians in the past, as well as to discuss her fishing experiences. Occasionally S.V. would ask me something in Russian, or translate for me into Russian to make sure I was following. The class was mostly conducted in Karelian, although I noticed that the student was more likely to use Karelian when asked a question in Karelian, but would use Russian when initiating a question herself, for example to ask the meaning of a word (Fieldnotes).”

I felt uncomfortable in this class, because I felt that my presence was a distraction to the other student and that my lack of knowledge forced the use of Russian in the class. After some time, however, this worry faded as I assumed more the role of an observer than a participant.

My difficulties in this class not only stemmed from my lack of knowledge of Karelian, but also from my lack of historical and cultural knowledge. The discussion topics were focused on the daily life of Karelians in the past. We discussed the seasonal tasks and traditions that Karelians once followed, which in some ways paralleled pre-revolutionary Russian traditions, especially when religious observances were considered. Our instructor tried to clarify some of the background for me, but as these traditions both Russian and Karelian are unfamiliar to me I was not able to follow the conversations very closely, even in Russian. The traditions that were discussed are far from my personal experiences with life in modern-day Russia.

For homework we were usually assigned a text in Karelian that we should translate into Russian. We would then read the text in the next class in Karelian, practicing pronunciation and answering questions about the contents of the text. I often was unable to answer questions and my co-student would answer for me.

This student was clearly shy speaking to me and as we waited for class to begin she would avoid conversation by using her mobile phone. I decided not to push her into conversation with me and was never able to ask her questions about her reasons for
studying Karelian or what had kept her interest studying Karelian while all the other students from her group had either dropped out or changed to other focuses in their studies.

4.3.3 Second Year Conversation

S.V. suggested that I join another conversation class as well. This was the second year class and it was also attended by only one other student. This student’s level of Karelian was closer to mine and I was able to fully participate in this class. Unfortunately however, the student was often late or ill, meaning that this class was often cancelled.

‘08.09.14

Today I was supposed to sit in on another conversation class. Second year. It was a very early class: 8:00. I arrived first shortly followed by S.V.. As she was setting up [for the lesson] a friend of the lone student [who would be attending the class] informed that said student had fallen ill… The class was cancelled (Fieldnotes).

This class was structured in a similar way as the third year conversation class, in that topics were introduced through the use of various texts that were translated and explained to us by S.V.. Often our homework was to write a short text in Karelian modeled on our class readings that we would then read in class during the following lesson. The texts in this class also focused on Karelian life in the past, but on one occasion included the history of The Balto-Finnic Department which was used as a source of phrases for us to use in describing our own studies at the university. The texts were taken from a variety of sources, however the main one was *Opastummo Karjalakse* by Aaro Mensonen and Ludmila Markianova.

‘17.11.14

This morning in the second year conversation class, we learned about the organisation of a traditional Karelian house.

I was the first student, and SV spoke to me only in Karelian, I had difficulty understanding, but she continued patiently. She asked me if the open window was bothering me, what day of the week it is and the date. N. [the other student] was late, so we began to read and translate a text about Karelian houses into Russian.
When she arrived, she apologised in Russian for her lateness. S.V. answered in Karelian that she did not understand. N. was confused and eventually S.V. reminded her how to say late in Karelian. The rest of the lesson was mostly in Russian as S.V. described Karelian homes, elaborated on the Karelian language text that we read and translated (Fieldnotes).

N. proved to be far more relaxed with me than the student from the third year class and was willing to chat when we had opportunities to do so. Unfortunately as she was often late or rushing to another class these opportunities were rare. When we did speak we talked about our experience studying at university. She asked me about studying in Finland and I asked her about studying Karelian. When I asked her about why she had chosen Karelian, she only shrugged and seemed embarrassed by the fact that she studied this language, perhaps implying that it was maybe an impractical choice. She said that she supposed that she would eventually go to Finland to work or study, but was unsure if she actually wanted to do so.

4.3.4 Class Environment

These three classes that were taught by S.V. were held in two classrooms. The Introduction to Karelian class and second year conversation class were held in a room dedicated to the teaching of this language and was decorated with grammar tables and pictures of traditional tools and household goods. Later in the semester, the introductory class was held at times in another room typically used to teach English. The third year conversation class was held in a small classroom that was shared with the Veps language classes. This room was decorated with a Veps language calendar, some lino prints showing village motifs and had a small library of Veps language books.

The two remaining classes that I attended were conducted in Russian and Finnish and were open to students of all of the department’s languages. All of the students in these classes were expected to be able to follow class readings in Finnish regardless of what language they were studying. In the fifth year literature class, I was the only Karelian language student, and in the Introduction to Finno-Ugric Studies I was one of two Karelian students. The other students being from the Finnish programme.
4.3.5 Introduction to Finno-Ugric Studies

'09.09 Finno-Ugric Studies

In earlier years [the] course was taught in Finnish [and it] is becoming more and more difficult [to do so] as students can no longer follow [Finnish] as well.

Book list is in Finnish, books published both in Russia and Finland.

Long discussion about the history of Ingrian Finns and the Red Finn’s repression and cultural contribution [to Karelia] (Fieldnotes).'

This class was taught by I. M. the head of language studies at the Institute of Language, Literature and History at the Russian Academy of Science’s Karelian Research Centre. In this class we followed the historical development and movement of the various branches of the Finno-Ugric Language family across Europe and Asia. The majority of the readings for class were taken from the book *Johdatusta Fennougristiikkaan* written by the professor herself. Time was spent considering the development of all the Finno-Ugric languages, but especial consideration was given to Finnish, the Saami languages, Karelian and Veps. Many examples were taken from toponyms, which is a topic that I.M. has studied in great detail, and from the field of contact linguistics.

Discussions also touched on the history of languages in Karelia. We were presented with the idea that Karelia was originally inhabited by speakers of Saami languages, these people were either assimilated or pushed north as other groups moved into their territory. The Veps followed waterways from territories to the south of Lake Ladoga and came to inhabit the shores of Lake Onega and the area between lakes Ladoga and Onega. We also discussed the reason for the dialectical variance between the varieties of Karelian. Karelians originally inhabited the territory to the west of Lake Ladoga but began moving north and east. The Karelians who moved east came into contact with the Veps. This contact influenced changes in the Karelian language leading to the development of the Livvi variety. It was suggested that Ludic is in fact the opposite, a variety of Veps, which was heavily influenced by Karelian. The Karelian Proper variety has this name because it was the most conservative variety, its speakers, having moved north, maintained a variety that was closer to the Karelian that was spoken to the east of Lake Ladoga with a possible influence from an influx of speakers of a Finnish dialect from the Oulu region of Finland.
Class time was divided between lecture classes and seminars. At times contemporary language issues were brought up for discussion during the seminars. The situation of the Karelian language was discussed on more than one occasion. We spoke about the language’s lack of official status in the Republic, a situation that was not known to the students, all of whom, besides me and one other student, were from the Finnish programme. On these occasions I was asked to speak as a sort of class expert on matters related to Karelian. We spoke about that fact that Karelians, the titular people of the Republic, are the only people in the Russian Federation having this status whose language is not recognised as a state language. I.M. suggested that Karelian was not developed enough for this status, but balanced this idea with the fact that a political will is needed to set Karelian on this path, something that has been largely lacking throughout the republic’s history.

Part way through the semester, I.M. invited me to the Karelian Research Centre to meet with researchers working with Karelian. This proved to be a very important moment in my research, as she introduced me to many contacts that proved to be important sources of material and information about various events in Petrozavodsk relating to Karelian

4.3.6 The History of Literature in Karelia

‘21.10.14

This morning I went to my history of Karelian literature class after a week long break. We have moved on from discussing Karelian, Veps and Finnish language literature to Russian language literature, which comprises a much larger and mostly uninterrupted body of work. N.V. pointed out that usually Russian language literature is viewed as a body of work that stretches far back in time and is common to all regions of Russia. Russian literature is not often viewed independently as [a body of] Karelian literature, as it is influenced by innovations that occur in Moscow, Piter [Saint Petersburg] etc. This is in contrast to the literature of the national languages.

The discussion turned at various times to the idea of nationality, which [N.V.] suggested is an important topic in Russia today. She mentioned the conflict caused by contradictions between self identification and how others view individuals and groups. She used the example of someone whose family is
from the Caucuses, but grew up in Karelia. She suggested that it is quite possible that people in both areas could reject this individual (Fieldnotes).

This class was taught by N.V. a researcher from the Karelian Research Centre. It was a fifth year class and the students were more ready to participate in discussions than in any other classes that I attended at the University. N.V. presented an overview of the history of literature in the Republic of Karelia from the early days of its incarnation as the Karelian Labour Commune to the present. The course was structured to look at the literature of each language, Russian, Finnish, Karelian and Veps.

The body of literature for each of the languages except Russian and Veps followed a similar pattern of production; a large volume of work in the early years of the Soviet Union, a lull, a renewed interest and output of work during the years of perestroika and a near standstill in the 2000’s. Veps differs in that to this day there are activists and writers who have stubbornly continued to put out work in that language, showing the impact that even a few very dedicated individuals can make on the perception of a language. The output of works in Russian has remained steady throughout the whole time period that was considered.

In this class we were introduced to writers in their historical context with a particular emphasis placed on the choice of language that writers made. Quite often Karelian speaking writers from the North of Karelia would choose to write in Finnish as this language was seen to offer more perspective as its audience was larger. For these writers it was not so difficult to use Finnish due to its similarity to Karelian Proper. Writers also chose more and more often to use Russian as this language became the public language of the Republic. The choice to use Karelian, Veps, and later on Finnish showed that the writer was in contrast trying to get back to their roots, they were interested in the idea of locality. Russian was used to reach a broader more universal audience, whereas the other languages were used to speak to a smaller local audience. Bilingualism and multilingualism in Karelia were shown to have a solid history at least in the context of its literature and writers.

4.4 The Students

The students studying Karelian with me ranged in age from 17 to 25, at the beginning of the course there were 10 students; eight females and two males. Half of the students were from the formerly independent Pedagogic Institute. My initial impression was that
these students were in general less interested in their study of Karelian as they rarely prepared for class, often came late and left early. S.V. often chastised them for this and, although I was never told this by any of the students directly, it seemed clear by their stubborn refusal to change their ways that they resented the situation that they were in.

‘S.V. asked the pedagogy students, the ones who left early last time, for the contact information of their professor that they leave early to meet with. She wants to call him to make an agreement with him, because, as she said, why should their Karelian suffer because of him. It is clear that she wants to keep the students in the class for as long as possible.

S.V. spoke to these students after the lesson and asked about how serious they are about learning Karelian. They said that they wanted to keep studying Karelian. They also mentioned that their teaching practicum would involve teaching Karelian in schools (Fieldnotes)’

S.V.’s concern would prove to be well founded as the majority of these students would in fact leave the Karelian programme. It should be noted however that in speaking to students from my group that have continued to study Karelian to the present (spring 2017), I have learned that an equal number of students from the other programme have given up studying Karelian.

Students from the Pedagogic Institute would prove to be the easiest to speak to later in the semester when I met with them for semi-formal interviews to learn about what had motivated them to begin studying Karelian. The younger female students from the Balto-Finnic Department never truly came to feel comfortable around me and this made speaking with them difficult. I could only learn about them and their motivation for studying Karelian through observation and what was said in class. In this way I learned that a student who had particularly good knowledge of Karelian in fact had a Karelian speaking mother and voiced this as a motivation for wanting to learn the language.

Not long after the semester began the Livvi Karelian language newspaper printed by Periodika, Oma Mua, released an article about the new students of the Balto-Finnic Department called Hos pieni, ga pippurinjyväine [Small but Peppery] (Filippova 2014). Students from my group were spoken to and asked about their interest in studying Karelian.
There was one very active male student, I.N., who became for a short-time my friend in class. After me, he was the oldest student in the group at 25 years old. He already had knowledge of Karelian from an evening course that he had taken the year before. I.N. proved to be a very useful contact as he encouraged my participation in various events and groups and was more than willing to share his views on various topics.

‘I.N. came back to our group for a visit [he had been studying with the Karelian Proper group]. His Karelian is more advanced and S.V. asked him to translate for the others. He told me about free lessons of Karelian that will be held at the Ministry of Culture starting in October. He encouraged me to go and told about an exchange student from Sweden who attended the lessons last year. I.N. is very eager to promote Karelian. He told everyone in the class that they should come to these lessons. No one seemed very interested. He told S.V. that he is trying to promote these lessons to the students but that they don’t seem to care. She asked him if the lessons had a more conversational focus and he agreed (Fieldnotes).’

I.N. eventually left our class to continue studying Karelian Proper. He explained to me that in doing so he would be able to help maintain the Karelian language in Karelia, but that he would also be able to use his language skills in Finland which made studying Karelian Proper a more promising venture.

I have been able to keep in touch with I.N. over social media. He is still [as of 2017] studying Karelian and is now in his third year of the programme. He intends to finish. He told me that learning Karelian has been difficult and slow, because there is little opportunity to practice speaking. He has joined Čičiliušku, a Karelian language puppet theatre troupe and has participated in two different productions. He is still studying Karelian Proper, but would like to learn Livvi sometime in the future. He told me that his parents are in fact from Northern Karelia and for that reason considers Karelian Proper a more natural choice for him.

Over the 2014 semester students began to disappear from our classes; the first ones to leave were from the Pedagogical Institute. I have since learned that some have left for personal reasons, but most changed to different programmes to study in different departments, to focus on other languages, or to change universities.
Towards the end of the semester I went about setting up semiformal interviews. I asked the remaining students in my group if they would be willing to meet with me to talk about why they had chosen to study Karelian. I can’t say that this went very well. The only students that agreed to meet with me were from the Pedagogic Institute, and even they were mostly reluctant. In the end I was only able to agree to meet with two students for face-to-face talks.

I met with one student, A.K., for lunch at the campus cafeteria. It was immediately following our class, so it was convenient for both of us. We sat together at a small round table and drank tea as I asked questions. I had planned to record our conversation, but I understood that this would probably make her uncomfortable, so I decided against it. I learned that A.K. was from a small community not far from Petrozavodsk. She said that she hadn’t studied Karelian before starting at the university and that she didn’t consider herself to be Karelian. Frequently she apologised, because she didn’t think that she would have anything interesting to tell me saying that she had originally wanted to study English and French, studying Karelian had been her back up plan. I asked why she had chosen Karelian and she said that it was because there was not a lot of competition for places in the department. She also told about a programme that allowed her to study and in exchange she would go to a village to teach Karelian after she had finished her studies. I tried to learn more about the details of the programme, but she was unsure herself. She told me that she liked the idea of living in a village despite the fact that this would not likely pay very well.

I have kept in touch with A.K. through social media. She is now studying to become an English and German translator in a different region in Russia. She explained to me that learning Karelian had been particularly difficult for her, even after finding a tutor one summer she found that she couldn’t keep up with the course and this was actually what led her to choose to study at a different university and in a different programme. She studied Karelian at Petrozavodsk State University for two years.

At present I am only in contact with one student who has remained in the Livvi Karelian programme at the university. She is from the Pedagogic Institute. Like the other students who I spoke to, with the exception of I.N., she had not originally planned to study Karelian, saying that it had been a back up plan in case she didn’t get into her first choice which had been to study English. In her programme she studies both English, which is her priority, along with Karelian.
I asked her about how she feels about studying Karelian and what attitude those around her show towards the language. She said that it is not her main focus at the university, but as she has begun learning it she intends to develop good Karelian skills; however, she doesn’t see it as being very perspective in terms of employment as a teacher. She said that she is saddened by the fact that Karelian is so poorly known by the people of Karelia. She said that most people either think of it as a dead language or as a language for old folks, and that most people don’t even know that it is possible to study Karelian, more ‘propaganda’ is needed to promote the language and its study.

Speaking with I.N., I have learned that only one student from our intake year in 2014 is still studying Livvi Karelian through the Balto-Finnic Department along with about four students from the Pedagogical Institute. The two groups of students follow different programmes and only sometimes attend the same classes; the pedagogical students have fewer hours of Karelian studies. I was not able to confirm this information at the department, but I was told there that the student body has more or less stabilized since the time that I was studying at the university.

Karelian in the Community 4.5

Although my research focus was on the Balto-Finnic Department at the university, I decided to try to expand my contacts and look for other spaces where Livvi Karelian was being used in Petrozavodsk. My first attempts were to look for resources for learning Karelian. I was only able to find one, locally owned, book shop with a dedicated shelf to Veps, Livvi Karelian and Karelian Proper. This shelf was located just below the books on Finnish and in the broader section for language learning. The books include children’s stories, phrase books along with anthologies and publications of cultural studies related to these groups. The contents of this section change over time and Livvi Karelian is not always represented. Here I found a trilingual phrase book in Livvi Russian and Finnish, and a book called Karelian Proverbs and Sayings [Карельские пословицы и поговорки].

Another shop that proved to be a good source of literature is a second-hand book store with a dedicated section for all books related to Karelia. This section includes copies of the Kalevala in various languages such as Russian, Finnish and Karelian, books by Karelian authors, notably Rugoev and Timonen, and the occasional Karelian / Russian dictionary. I was able to find a copy of Aberi an exercise book intended for children who are learning Livvi, Oma Mua, a book of children’s stories and poems in Livvi Karelian
and, a book that was very useful during my lessons a Livvi Karelian / Russian dictionary. All of these books at both shops were printed by two publishers, Periodika [Периодика] and Karelia [Карелия].

‘Today I went to three different book shops to see what books are available in Karelian. There is a very small selection. There were some books of poetry, but most of the books were about history or folklore. There was only one book for learning Karelian, a Karelian – Russian – Finnish phrase book. I also went to the publisher Periodika, where most books in Karelian are printed. As usual I was first asked which variety of Karelian I am interested in [when I went to their office and asked about books]. I was told that they had more books in Karelian Proper. I saw several books by Pekka Zaikov including a Karelian Proper – Russian dictionary and a grammar book for middle schools. I was told that any text books usually are bought up very quickly. I bought almanacs for the past three years as well as some children’s books, all that they had in Livvi Karelian (Fieldnotes).’

The most useful source of literature for studying turned out to be teachers and researchers. While visiting the Karelian Research Centre I was given a copy of a Livvi Karelian course book that includes a CD with audio tracks called We Speak in Karelian [Pagizemmo Karjalakse / Говорим по-карельски]. S.V., as I mentioned earlier, gave the students in our Introduction to Karelian class copies of the course book that she herself had authored. She also told us where we could find electronic resources on the Karelian Ministry of Culture’s and the Karelian Research Centre’s websites. J.F., the teacher of Livvi-Karelian language classes held though the Karelian Union in cooperation with the Karelian Ministry of Culture offered her newly published book, Sanalipas a course book for children, to the members of that class.

I found that in order to find resources and information about events related to the Karelian language it is very important to either know people involved in the teaching or research community, or to be a part of it yourself. Since my time studying at the university my contact with this community has become infrequent and a great deal of effort is needed to learn about events. By far the best way to find information is to write directly to those people who have organised events in the past, who in turn are usually able to give the contact information, often in social media, to those people who may know about events or who know where various resources can be found. It is a sort of
information chain. Information is published in groups in social media, especially on the site Vkontakte, but it is important to constantly follow the news from these groups to know about events as they happen. It is impossible to be a passive consumer or observer, being part of this community requires active participation.

A key contact for me in this community was a researcher that I met at the Karelian Research centre, A.R. She had graduated from Petrozavodsk State University where she studied Livvi-Karelian. A.R. has been involved with many different groups in the Karelian Language community in Petrozavodsk. She works with students at the university, she has acted with Čičiliušku, and she carries out research and publishes works related to Karelian. Every time I speak to her she tells me about how busy she is. A.R. has become a friend and without this friendship I would not have been aware of many of the possibilities that exist in Petrozavodsk to use Karelian.

4.5.1 Čičiliušku

Images 7 and 8 Rehearsal of I'm a Chick, You're a Chick

One of the first places that A.R. invited me to was Čičiliušku, a Karelian Language puppet theatre. I had heard about the fact that it existed at the university, but no one there seemed to have much information about it, or were involved in performing with the troupe themselves. The original plan was to attend a rehearsal, meet the director and some of the actors and watch to see what went on there. A.R. introduced me to the troupe and almost immediately I found myself involved. N.A., the director, made the point that it would be much more interesting to take part rather than to just watch. Naturally, I agreed.

Čičiliušku was a very rich part of my experience in the Karelian community in Petrozavodsk. At a very practical level, it proved to be an excellent opportunity to
develop my language skills. The acting was entirely done in Karelian. Through the theatre I was also able to meet people from the Karelian community involved in activism, research and education. I learned about projects and events throughout Karelia that I wouldn’t have known about otherwise. Čičiliušku also offered me the opportunity to travel around Karelia and to see places where Karelian has, to a certain degree, remained a part of daily life. With the troupe I travelled to Vedlozero, a village with a very active community of Karelian speakers and which is home to an interesting project called the Karelian Language House. Through this project a house was built which acts as a community centre and provides social support along with a space to use Karelian.

‘Trip to Vedlozero

17.11.14

Traveling with my father and Čičiliušku to help put on a performance of [I’m a chick, you’re a chick].

The performance will be in Karelian.

We are travelling with some people that I have never seen before. There are also some reporters traveling with us, at the moment in a separate car.

N.A. announced that they will join us on the bus to ask us questions. She encouraged us to speak up, and to speak in Karelian. The normal working language of the group is Russian.

The reporter has been speaking Karelian with the actors, which has changed the usual language dynamic of the group. The gathering audience is speaking Russian amongst themselves. We are listening to Karelian music while we wait, Karhu.

The audience of the first performance was [made up of] very young children and their families. They were all speaking Russian and N.A. provided a commentary in Russian to help them follow along.

Between performances one of the people working to develop the Karelian House made a phone call in which she spoke Karelian mixed with phrases in Russian.
The audience of the second performance was older. There were senior citizens and some older children with their mothers. There was a man who had stayed after the first performance. He was drinking in the back row. He was, as far as I could tell, the only Karelian speaker watching the first performance. At the end he shouted bravo and said something about the cat and bošši.

He was joined by two older women, with whom he spoke in Karelian. I understood him saying that the performance was in Karelian proper, not in their Livvi Karelian.

The second group was able to follow the Karelian, although there was a definite generation gap. Only old people spoke Karelian amongst themselves and the young people used Russian. One woman with a group of small children gave a running interpretation of the performance into Russian (Fieldnotes).

Photos from this trip and a description of the event can be found at the following Internet address: https://vk.com/karjalanrahvahanliitto?w=wall-48232175_849

The language space in Čičiliušku was particularly interesting. N.A., our director, was also the author of the plays that we performed. She herself does not speak Karelian so the plays are written originally in Russian and then translated to Karelian Proper and Livvi Karelian. The translations were written by different people so the result was that the Livvi version and the Karelian Proper versions sometimes differed greatly. The working language of the troupe when I was there was in Russian. N.A. gave us direction in Russian. The actors and all the volunteers came from a variety of different backgrounds and regions in Karelia, and generally spoke to each other in Russian. Each actor chose which variety of Karelian their character would speak, meaning that performances would be staged using both Livvi and Karelian Proper at the same time. I acted as the back-up performer for the role of Piglet Oink [Počinpoigaine Hruk]. I performed this role in Livvi while the regular actor performed it in Karelian Proper.

The plays are intended for children, but are widely attended by adults as well. Čičiliušku is supported by the Karelian Ministry of Culture, meaning that we had access to a bus and practice space, but there was still a lack of money and resources. Many conversations during rehearsals touched on this problem and N.A. sometimes
suggested that performing in Russian might be a solution, something that the actors were not in favour of. In 2016 Čičiliušku staged a new production, *How the Women Divided the Man* [Как бабы мужика делили], a piece intended for adult audiences. This marks a departure from Čičiliušku’s typical repertoire and perhaps will result in more revenues for the troupe.

4.5.2 Evening Karelian Classes

I.N. told me early in the semester about the Karelian language classes that would be held though the Ministry of Culture in conjunction with the Karelian Union. The first classes were to be held in October and they were kicked off with a gala opening. The explicit goal of these events is to offer the opportunity for potential students to sign up for courses and meet with their future teachers, but of course the function of the gala opening is much larger. It is a well publicized event attended by a broad range of members of the Karelian community, and government officials. The event is traditionally used to make announcements related to the study, status and future potential for the Karelian language.

This is a description of the event in 2016:

‘The new school year has begun for the Karelian language courses - the grand opening was held in the great hall of the Center of National Cultures. As is tradition, the meeting began with the Karelian Folk Choir "Oma Pajo", which performed two songs in Karelian Proper, and one in the Livvi dialect of the Karelian language. Students of the courses were welcomed by the organizers: the director of the Center of National Cultures and Folk Arts, Tatiana Temnysheva, and the chairperson of the NGO "The Union of the Karelian People" Natalya Vorobey, who promised to inspire the students into the world of the Karelian language, to learn about the culture and way of thinking of the Karelian people. The Minister of Nationality Politics, Public Relations and Religious Associations, Andrey Aleksandrovich Manin, in his address pointed out that every year the number of those who want to learn the Karelian language is growing more and more. It should be mentioned, it is the Ministry of National Policy that publishes dictionaries, textbooks and literature in the Karelian language. A dictionary of the Karelian language is an essential and favourite book for all those studying the Karelian language. Students of the Karelian language received to use a Russian-Karelian and
Karelian-Russian dictionaries at the opening of the courses. Many of them immediately looked in the dictionary and learned their first word in the Karelian language. At the grand opening students also got acquainted with the teachers. Those who come to study the Karelian Proper dialect will work with Evgenii Valentinovich Karakin. Adherents of the Livvi dialect who for the first time come to the courses will learn the language with Anastasia Alekseevna Afanasyeva. Those who want to continue to explore the Livvi dialect in their second, third, fourth, and fifth years will study it with Tatiana Alekseevna Baranova.

A musical gift was prepared for the freshmen by the Karelian language course participants of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years of study. Natalya Gromova and Marina Samsukova and performed the song "Summer Just up and Left" in the Karelian language in the translation Tatyana Baranova. The group of Northern Karelians headed by Ina Gokkoevoy sang the student anthem (translation into Karelian by Tatyana Baranova).

The gala opening of the courses completed a symbolic "first bell" by Vova Kundozerov, a first grade student a Northern Karelian of the Louhi region. Then the students with their teachers went to their classes for their first lessons.

We wish all of you success in studying the Karelian language! Take part in the activities of the Union of the Karelian People, and the Center for National Cultures! The course schedule will be posted shortly. ("Karjalat Rahvahan Liitto Sojuz karel'skogo naroda", 2016)’

Two Livvi groups for beginners were formed in 2014 to accommodate all of the students interested. The students ranged in age from school children to people in their retirement years. Unlike at the university, many students, even those who considered themselves to be beginners, had at the very least a passive knowledge of Karelian. They might not have been able to produce Karelian themselves, but they could often understand what was being said to them.

‘Free Lessons: 14.10.14

Last time I noticed that despite the fact that this [is] a beginner class, most students [have] knowledge of Karelian. As we did exercises related to simple
vocabulary some students were [already] well acquainted with [the words]. Others really have no knowledge [of Karelian] at all.

Pronunciation of y, ä, ö seems challenging for everyone, even those with prior knowledge.

The class uses a communicative method, focusing on language practice through games and actual examples of living language (poetry). (Fieldnotes)

The first group was the largest with about 31 students at its peak in the beginning, but I noticed that this number got smaller as time went on, this is generally typical in language classes in my experience. The second group which met later in the evening was of about 10 students.

The classes were held once a week, first at the Centre for National Cultures, but because of the larger than usual number of students the classes were moved to the Finno-Ugric school part way through the first semester.

4.5.3 Media Reaction

Several times while studying Karelian I was approached by journalists to talk about why I was learning this language. A lot of interest was generated by the fact that a foreigner was learning Karelian. This situation caused some concern for me as I found myself in some way representing a community that I did not have strong connections to, but this was mitigated by the fact that many of the people initiating the interviews were in fact themselves members of the Karelian community in Petrozavodsk.

My first experience with the media was during the gala opening of the evening Karelian language classes. I was approached by members of the Karelian Union and asked to speak with journalists on camera. I explained to the reporters that I was doing research about how people learn ‘small’ languages in Russia. This sound bite was then used in a clip on national television that reported on the opening of the courses under the title ‘Foreigners Learn Karelian in PTZ’ (PTZ-Govorit, 2014). I found my image being used as a tool to support Karelian; the fact that a foreigner would take time to study Karelian seemed to add some perceived value to the language, but in the context of federal news this same fact contributed to the idea that Russia in general is able to attract foreigners from the 'West'. The image of the West plays an important role in Russian media as a sort of point of reference that Russia can be constantly compared to. This
was not a position that I was comfortable with, but I had to come to terms with the fact that it is almost inescapable. I learned that what I said when speaking to the media would get edited and placed into a context that I hadn’t always anticipated. I was happy to help those in the community that I was studying, but I also tried to maintain, if not neutrality, an objective stance. Even this position was not always easy to maintain and sometimes required firm stubbornness.

Maintaining objectivity was especially difficult when the members of the media community were trying to use my image to create a story. One incident in particular stands out in my memory. Not long after beginning my studies at Petrozavodsk State University I was approached by the University’s newspaper to speak about why I had come to Petrozavodsk to study. The interviewer frequently used the term dying language when referring to Karelian. It was clear that she already had her own opinions about the language and was having trouble understanding why I, someone with no familial or cultural connection, would bother studying the language; surely there were more important things to learn about. In my inexperience and politeness I made no comment about this phrase, dying language, and carefully avoided saying it myself. After our interview and some consideration, I wrote an email to the journalist explaining that she had frequently used this term, that I did not agree that Karelian is dying and that perhaps the phrase threatened language would be better. She did not respond to this note. Later when a draft of the article was sent to me I noticed that I was quoted myself as using the term dying language. I had being explaining why I think that Karelian is important and was quoted as saying ‘I know that Karelian is a dying language, but I wouldn’t want people to stop speaking Karelian, because I am sure that in life and in culture there should be diversity [Я знаю, что карельский умирающий язык, но мне не хотелось бы, чтобы на нем перестали говорить, потому что я уверен: в жизни, в культуре должно быть разнообразие.]’ I had many problems with this phrase as the context had been entirely changed. I wasn’t merely expressing a romantic wish for the language to continue to be used for the sake of diversity, I had been explaining that using the Karelian language could be a way to help develop interest in Karelia itself and could be a useful tool in retaining the population of Karelia; a strong local identity would be likely to act as a factor (combined with others such as investments in local infrastructure & etc…) in keeping people in the Republic and in rural areas, rather than seeing them leave for better opportunities in Petrozavodsk or Saint Petersburg. This phrase was just a small part of what I had been trying to explain,
but the author decided to focus on it as it better suited her goal of showing me as a romantic student working to save Karelian.

I realised that I would probably not be able to convince the writer to entirely change the article that she had written about me, but I did write to her again and asked her to change the word dying, explaining that I strongly oppose using that word to describe Karelian. This time she agreed to soften the phrase and changed the quote to, ‘I know that Karelian is not actively used in daily life… [Я знаю, что карельский язык активно не используется в повседневной жизни…] (Nopola, 2014).’ This quote was better, but still does not represent my opinion and still doesn’t reflect the reality of the Karelian language. I understood that this journalist had her own ideas about Karelian and nothing that I could say would change them or change how she wanted to use me and my image to express those ideas. I learned a lot from this experience about the media and about how strongly entrenched language attitudes can be.

4.5.4 Attitudes in the Wider Community

Since my time actively taking part in events within the Karelian community in Petrozavodsk my social circle has expanded markedly. I now have an extensive circle of friends and acquaintances. The vast majority of these people self-identify as Russians. When I speak to them about Karelian more often than not they are indifferent. Most do not see the need to know or use Karelian, often referring to it as a dying language. Once when speaking to a family member of one of my close friends I was told that Karelians complain about losing their language, but they don’t even use it themselves.

The hegemony of the Russian language to most people is usually tacit, or even acceptable and seen as natural when acknowledged explicitly. I have sometimes heard the term artificial languages [искусственные языки] used by people when talking about languages that receive state support in other places, such as Belorussian or Ukrainian, the speakers blithely unaware of the state support that Russian itself receives.

Most Russians are monolingual, despite the fact that the study of other languages is an obligatory part of the school programme. Living in Karelia does mean being exposed to certain elements of Karelian culture such as, food and folklore, but it is not necessary to identify yourself as an ethnic Karelian or much less know something about the language
to use and celebrate these things, which in fact have come to be more of an expression of locality and place than of a cultural identity.

5 DISCUSSION

A surprising discovery for me in speaking with students at Petrozavodsk State University was how often they told me about the accidental nature of their choice in beginning their studies at the Balto-Finnic Department. For all of those that I was able to ask directly, I learned that, with the exception of I.N., the choice to apply to the Balto-Finnic Department was a strategic one used to insure that they would find a study place at the university. For many of the students their first experience learning the Karelian language was at the department, meaning that the department and the university play an important role in informing the language attitudes that these students have towards Karelian.

At present the university is the only institution of higher learning that offers the study of Karelian, and as such, it forms the centre of a community of both past and present students, activists and language specialists. It is undeniable that the experience that the students have at the university goes on to inform their attitudes towards the language in the future.

The role of the university could potentially act as an important counter point to the largely apathetic attitude towards Karelian that exists in the wider community. This attitude is symptomatic of the language shift that is occurring from Karelian to Russian. It may very well be the case in some situations that the Balto-Finnic department and the activities of those associated with it stem this tide of change, but in other situations the attitudes at the university towards Karelian in fact perpetuate and reinforce to status quo for the language. This chapter will discuss these contradictory forces.

5.1 A Language of the Past and a Marker for Cultural Identity

A theme that repeated itself in many ways is the close relationship that Karelian has to the past and memory. At times this relationship was tacitly presented through course content, but at other times this attitude was explicitly acknowledged, but critiqued, highlighting the sometimes paradoxical attitudes towards the language.

The class trip that was made to the botanic garden which is described in section 4.3.1 is an excellent example of the tension between the strength of the association that the
Karelian language has, for many people, with the past and the desire for it to be a modern fully functioning language which can be used in all spheres of contemporary life.

The trip was presented as an opportunity to communicate with Karelian speakers and as an opportunity to use the language outside of the classroom. The Karelian speakers were from a language club in a small community not far outside of Petrozavodsk. I was not able to survey the members of this club, but it was apparent that the majority of the club’s members were of retirement age. Only a fraction of these people actually spoke Karelian and Russian was used as the vehicular language to communicate between all the members of the group. The group’s use of the Karelian language was largely symbolic, in that it was used as a way to shape the identity of the group. The club members greeted the students with ‘terveh’, as they boarded the, bus but used Russian while speaking with each other. Later as we were driving, the club members decided to sing for us, their repertoire consisted almost entirely of Karelian language folk songs. At the gardens, some of the women changed into Karelian folk costumes in order to be filmed for the local Karelian language news broadcast as the students and club members were formally introduced.

As we toured the garden we encountered some of the limits assigned to Karelian in its use as a vehicular language. It was immediately decided that the tour would be conducted in Karelian, but with a Russian translation. This obviously made it easier for the first-year students to follow the tour, but also meant that there was not any reason to follow the Karelian that was used. Indeed many of the students trailed behind and were even reprimanded by some of the Karelian club members for not being attentive enough.

Some of the plant species in the garden’s collection had been introduced to Karelia and we were told that these plants had no names in Karelian. We were told that Karelians had not known them historically and as a result had not named them. The implied message seemed to be that there was not any accepted precedent or perhaps authority for creating a Karelian name for these specimens.

Our tour guide had to refer to notes to find names and words to use as she conducted the Karelian language part of the tour, she sometimes made mistakes and was corrected by others. It was clear that Karelian was not in fact a language that she used regularly when speaking about the collections of the garden.
The above is not in any way intended as a criticism, it is rather indicative of the paradox of the Karelian language. Those who identify as Karelian rarely use their language in the public. If they do, rather than using it as a vehicular language, it is used as an expression of culture and identity. There may be a desire to use the language as a means of vehicular communication, but the opportunities to do so are incredibly rare. When they do arise, there seems to be a tension or a worry about excluding those who may not know the language. The students, myself included, were not actually in a position where we could have participated as fully had the tour been conducted only in Karelian, but this meant that the tour did not act as a stimulus showing the value of learning the language in order to take part in such events. Sanna-Riikka Knuuttila explores a similar hesitation to use the Karelian as a vehicular language in her article *Public Attitudes towards Language Use: Karelian Language at ‘Congresses of Karelians’* where the attendees of a congress of Karelians chose to use Russian as their primary means of communication.

This hesitancy to use Karelian as a vehicular language in public has been noted by other studies as well; ‘…people under the age of thirty characteristically have only a weak command of Karelian, whereas those between 30 and 70 years of age generally have a passive command of the language, but prefer to use Russian in most contexts (Klementyev et al. 2012: 57).’

In both of the conversation classes that I attended for second and third year students, written texts were used as our primary source of language. We would read and translate the texts then answer questions about our own experiences with the topics at hand, or prepare our own short text dealing with the topic.

The texts for the classes were taken primarily from two sources, *Opastummo Karjalakse - Lugemistu Aiguzile* [Learning Karelian – Readings for Adults] by L'udmila Markianova and Aaro Mensonen and *Karjalazien elaigu: tekstukogomus: (livvin murdehel)* [The Life of the Karelians: A Collection of Texts: (Livvi Variety)] by L. Bogdanova and O. Zarinova.

In the second year conversation class we began our studies with a text about the history of the Faculty of Balto-Finnic Languages and Culture [Itämerensuomelazien kielen da kul’tuuran tiedokundu]. It acted both as an introduction to our studies, but also as a source of vocabulary for us to use in describing ourselves as students. As the situation at the university had changed since the time that the text had been written we made
changes to the vocabulary to make it more relevant to our experience. The text was written at the time when the department was a faculty. It included a list of majors that students could choose from for their studies; twelve in contrast to the four that are currently offered by the department. It was clear that the opportunities possible at the university in Karelian studies were far richer in the past than they are now. The feeling was that we had missed a sort of golden age of Karelian studies and were now working in its shadow.

We also spent a great deal of time discussing Karelian homes in the second year class. S.V. had spent time working at Kizhi, an open air museum of history and architecture situated on an island of the same name in Lake Onega. She was able to tell us a great deal about how Karelians lived in the past; how they lived their daily lives and what traditions and beliefs they held about these tasks. Again we used texts describing Karelian homes as a starting point and translated them. S.V. would add details where they were lacking and we gathered a large body of vocabulary about historical household tools. Then using our knowledge we wrote about our homes, where we ourselves lived. Of course in order to do so we needed a different set of vocabulary. There was no source provided to us from which we could similarly gather words to describe what the modern population of Petrozavodsk lives in such as the five-storey panel blocks of flats which are famously known in Russian as Khrushcheyovkas. Instead we wrote phrases such as: ‘Minä elän monikerroksizes kivikois’ [I live in a multi-storey stone house], which certainly puts a romantic cast on modern life in Petrozavodsk.
Image 9 Historical Karelian Household Objects - a handout from the second year conversation class

In the third year conversation class the topics exclusively dealt with descriptions of daily life for historical Karelians. I found this class difficult to follow not only because of the language, but because the topics were completely unknown to me. On one occasion we were even given Russian vocabulary to describe how a horse was hitched to a wagon as these Russian words were not familiar to us.
Both of these classes required us to constantly compare the present to the past in our work. The Karelian language proved itself to be rich when describing various tools used in haying or describing the seasons, but when it came time to discuss the present we had no examples of language save the words that were given to us by S.V.. The past was recorded in detail, but words for the present were known only by our teacher and even then not with great certainty.

In the Introductory course to Karelian there wasn’t such a strong accent placed on the past as was in the conversation classes; however there were also moments when we learned about the limits of the Karelian language. When we needed to speak about work, for example, when we described our parent’s professions we often learned that
there was no ‘official’ way to describe what we wanted to say. It was as if we were trying to use the language in ways that it was not expected to handle. We were offered a solution though; the Finnish language could be used as a model when words were needed for describing modern life. Compare for example the Karelian tiedokoneh to the Finnish tietokone.

Karelian’s projected lack of ability to adapt to modern life is not at all surprising when considering the changes that have taken place within the language space of Karelia over that last century. Karelians have gone from being predominantly monolingual Karelian speakers at the turn of the 20th century to predominantly monolingual Russian speakers at present. In between, during the great societal and technological changes that took place over the last century, Karelians found themselves in a much more varied language space. Widespread multilingualism in the shift from Karelian to Russian means that using other languages to express new concepts happens very freely and fluidly. These words taken from other languages can be adapted and made part of Karelian if need be.

What complicates the issue is deciding which languages to borrow from. Computer might, considering the present day language situation in Karelia, be referred to using the Russian word компьютер (komp’yuter) which can then become the Karelian kompjuuter. This might seem natural considering that Karelians are daily exposed to the Russian language, but it isn’t always the case.

‘While chatting with S., I asked her about something that I had noticed. She showed me a book about new words that had been developed to describe various aspects of the structure and function of the Republic. I said that I had noticed that words borrowed from Russian were dropped from the quasi standard Livvi that we were taught and replaced with words borrowed from Finnish... She said that of course Finnish is a much closer relative to Karelian, but it is in fact a чужой язык [the word chuzhoi has a meaning similar to the word alien, something not at all familiar and that does not belong, an alien language]. She reminded me of the sketch from the opening of the free lessons at the ministry. In the sketch, a young woman pays a visit to some older relatives and tells them about a Karelian language newspaper. There is a lot of confusion because she uses the new vocabulary of the newspaper to talk to them and they don’t understand her. S. says that the same thing
happens with her aunt, a native Karelian speaker. She also does not understand the new Finnish borrowings. She can’t even read the Latin alphabet. It seems like there is a huge generation gap between native speakers and language activists and researchers (Fieldnotes).

It would be interesting to study the situations when Karelian languages users choose to use a word borrowed from Russian versus a word borrowed from Finnish. From my experience it seems that the new generation of Karelian language speakers, those educated in Petrozavodsk, tend to borrow from Finnish, while the older generation tends to borrow from Russian. Perhaps the tendency of younger language users to refer to the Finnish language reflects a desire to distance Karelian from Russian and to reaffirm the independence of the language, but this desire has created a generation and language gap between the two groups.

5.2 A Language for Researchers and Activists

The university is in a unique position as it is one of the only places in the world capable of training specialists who can then go on to study and support Karelian. The university also has a second important role in actually teaching students the language, often from scratch, as was the case in my group. The use of Karelian in the public sphere in Petrozavodsk is extremely limited and in all cases that I was exposed to was linked to the efforts made by those who have come from the university or from the Pedagogic Academy which has since merged with the university. Čičiliuški was founded at the behest of Pekka Zaikov the then head of Karelian and Veps languages at the university. All of the journalists and editors that we met at Periodika were former graduates, as were the researchers that I met along with the correspondents from the Karelian language news broadcasts. Our sources of language at the university were almost exclusively written by either graduates from the Balto-Finnic Department, or its earlier incarnations, or by researchers and specialists, who have worked closely with the department. Only on one occasion were we introduced to speakers who presumably acquired the language exclusively in the setting of their home and family at a young age. This again highlights the crucial importance of the university in creating specialists who are able to work in Karelian, but at the same time shows a sort of cultural monopoly is being created in which almost all of the language production is mediated by language specialists.
The university relies heavily on written sources of language. Karelian has existed as a written language at various times; the current system using the Latin alphabet has been in use since the late eighties. While this alphabet has become an important way of unifying the varieties of Karelian, its relative youth also means that there is a very small body of work from which to draw materials in order to create a corpus of language from which students can learn. As many Karelian speakers did not receive an education in Karelian, some, as was mentioned by S., cannot actually read the new alphabet, and it is likely that many of these older generation native speakers are then incapable of creating works (unmediated by a specialist) to contribute to the corpus that would reflect their actual language use. All of the material that we used in our courses was taken from books written by Karelian language professionals, people who have consciously made choices about the shape of the language.

The dissonance between the language of the newspaper and the language used by an elderly aunt are indicative of how Karelian is being shaped. Karelian is not freely adapting to a new language space under the pressure of Russian, it is rather being used as away to push against this pressure. Finnish words are used to fill in the lacunas of the language, even if they seem foreign to the actual speakers of the language. This process could be read as the formation of a new variety of Karelian used by an educated elite, which could be a step towards creating a hegemonic variety that could be used to unify all the varieties of Karelian, but at this point it is far to early to tell.

5.3 The Shadow of Monolingualism

Karelian does not receive adequate support from the state, there are laws and provisions made for Karelian, but they are by in large measures that are met (or theoretically could be met) voluntarily. On many occasions the idea of granting official status to the language has been put forth in the hopes that it would help to reverse the trend of language shift in the community. The answer to this proposal has often been that Karelian is not adequately developed for this role; languages require a certain form which it is asserted Karelian does not match. The ‘problem’ with Karelian is its lack of homogeneity and the supposed lacunas in its lexicon.

Researchers and activists working with Karelian have accepted the task of developing the language. They have set about creating new words based on the Finnish lexicon, oftentimes ignoring the fact that the concepts expressed by these words may already be expressed in the language by words borrowed from Russian, a unified alphabet has
been created for all three principle varieties of Karelian. It is irrelevant that not all speakers of Karelian can actually use this alphabet. Despite these efforts it seems unlikely that the status of Karelian will change any time soon.

The Karelian language is in a sort of trap. It is not hegemonic enough for it to become official, even when changes are made to its form in order to make this seem to be the case, but it is questionable that if it were ‘powerful’ enough to be seen as a language equal to Russian that it would be given status as it would come to be seen as a threat to the position of the Russian language. A good example of this was when legislators abandoned the project to amend the constitution of the republic to allow for the granting of state status to Karelian without a referendum. They feared that this measure would only fan the flames of separatism.

Identifying as Russian is seen as desirable by the majority of people in the republic, the reasons for this are complex and beyond the scope of this thesis; however, it is important to note that the use and knowledge of Russian is central to this identity. As the majority of Russians are monolingual the idea of knowing another language can sometimes be seen as compromising a person’s Russianness. This attitude is especially evident when speaking with parents of young children about language learning. Many feel that they need to protect their children from the influence of other languages in order to insure that their learning of Russian is not impacted. This idea has echoes within the situation that saw the closure of Karelian language nests in the republic. There are many misconceptions that are widely held about language learning and about multilingualism that stand in the way of reversing the trend of language shift to Russian.

There are some positive projects that didn’t fall into the scope of this research, but which are worth noting. The Karelian Language House is a promising example. It is a community centre located in Vedlozero approximately 100 km from Petrozavodsk on the highway leading west towards Finland. This project is particularly interesting as it combines the practical needs of residents of the community with exposure to the Karelian language. As it was explained to me by one of the house’s organizers, it is intended to act as a place that will attract both the youth and elderly members of the community. The older generations of Karelian speakers will be attracted to the centre by things like washing machines and kitchen facilities that might be lacking in their own homes. Younger generations who may have lost exposure to the Karelian language will
similarly be attracted to the centre though various events. The hope is that by bringing these to groups together the language gap between these two groups will be filled. Funding for the construction of the house is provided through private sponsorship. This project has the potential to create a living language space that will reflect the community’s needs. It is unlikely that it will produce a community of monolingual Karelian speakers; this is both an unrealistic and impractical expectation. It is possible that an environment will be created where multilingualism, the knowledge of both Russian and Karelian, will be seen both as desirable and practically beneficial.

6 CONCLUSION

Petrozavodsk State University’s role in providing studies in the Karelian language is central to the continued use and existence of the Karelian language in the Republic of Karelia. At present the language is rarely passed on from one generation to the next in the home; those who are interested in using the language are exposed to it primarily through channels that are created directly by the university itself or by its graduates. It is therefore important to understand how Petrozavodsk State University, through the Balto-Finnic Department, frames the Karelian language; how the language is presented to students both explicitly and tacitly.

There is a contradiction in how the language is approached at the university. Explicitly Karelian is presented as an independent vehicular language which can be used in a variety of situations both public and private. In actual fact there are few opportunities to use Karelian in the public sphere as a vehicular language and as a result its use in the public is often symbolic; it is used as a marker to show belonging to a community of Karelian speakers whose actual fluency in the language varies widely. Tacitly the Balto-Finnic department perpetuates and supports this very situation as the language is shown to be entwined with historical Karelians and their identity. The language is presented as a means through which it is possible to learn about the historical reality and attitudes of this people, but proves to be limited in its use for expressing ideas in certain fields especially those that are related to contemporary urban society in Karelia.

The findings of this research mirror those in the ELDIA project that showed that the Karelian language is perceived by both those inside and outside of the community as not being modern (Klementyev et al. 2012: 190). An interesting difference however is that the university acts as a gateway for many into the Karelian community. The vast majority of students that I studied with claimed no knowledge of Karelian prior to
beginning their studies, while it was found by ELDIA that the vast majority of Karelian language speakers acquired the language at home (Klementyev et al. 2012: 190).

Prescriptive expectations about how languages should look or behave based on a monolingual view of language have the potential to further restrict the use of Karelian. The way that Karelian is actually used should be acknowledged and recognized as a legitimate use of language. Karelian speakers are multilingual and it should be understood that the ways that they use Karelian will differ from the ways that they use Russian. It should not be expected that one language must replace the other. A more flexible, adaptable attitude should be taken towards Karelian.

This does not mean however that those interested in revitalising the Karelian language should simply accept the status quo. There is much that could be done to support the language; The Karelian Language House is a hopeful example of how Karelian can be used instrumentally to become a unifying focal point for a community.

In the law *On State Support for the Karelian, Veps and Finnish Languages* it is stated that these languages are the national treasures of the Republic of Karelia. This truly is the case despite the relative hypocrisy of such a statement from a government that has at best done the minimum to support these languages and at worst actually dissuaded its citizens from using them. Karelian along with Veps, Finnish and the unique Russian dialects that are native to the republic are the basic building blocks that could be used to further develop Karelia’s culture and economy. Through these languages ties could be strengthened with neighbouring regions, a unique image or brand based on the multilingual reality of the republic could be promoted, rather than the simple capitalization on the exotic nature of Karelian tropes as is the case at present. This of course would require a sea-change in the attitude of policy makers not only within the republic but more broadly in Russia. Given Russia’s current political climate where only one expression of Russianness is deemed acceptable this is unfortunately unlikely to happen. At present the task of supporting the language rests on the shoulders of a small number of activists, researchers, Karelians and their supporters at the local level. These actors have truly proven their tenacity and determination.

Special Thanks

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8.2 Appendix 2

5. Read the poem aloud. Search for words in the poem containing long vowels:

**The Karelian Word**

Listen, speak in your own language,
While there is still someone to speak with.
While your sister and brother are near,
Answer them in Karelian.
Then you won't know longing,
If you are on a foreign shore.
When it needs to be said differently.
When Karelian is not spoken.

Then when you hear familiar words,
Like on wings in the air.
As if from a familiar shore on the wind
And tears come to your eyes.
Our words are still alive
They go far beyond the border.
Words just like our people
Listen to words which are like a familiar person.

Here you need to listen carefully,
As in songs, speech rings like bells.
Past generations still live in the deep thoughts
of the words of our Karelian.

Z. Dubinina