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KARELIAN LANGUAGE IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN REPUBLIC OF KARELIA

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The paper focuses on the study of the situation of teaching of the Karelian language in light of contemporary language policy. Education is a sphere of regimented communication regulated by administrative and governmental authorities. The regulation is targeted at orderly use of language in the society, and is effected by means of language legislation. The process to revitalize the Karelian language was initiated by the resolution of the conference “Karelians“ in 1989. In the academic year 2010/2011 the Karelian language was taught in 11 districts (Belomorsky, Kemsy, Kalevalsky, Kondopozhsky, Louhsky, Medvezhjegorsky, Muezersky, Olonetsky, Prionezhsky, Pryazhinsky, and Suojarvsky) and two municipalities (Petrozavodsk and Kostomuksha). The Karelian language is taught also in institutions for extra-curricular education. In 2011, 48 children studied Karelian proper and 43 children – the Olonetsian dialect in such institutions. Thus, the situation with the Karelian language in education today does not look bright at all. Schoolchildren are not motivated to study the Karelian language as it is unlikely to bring any “bonuses” in education, finding a job or further socialization. Furthermore, placement of Karelian language students is very problematic. Although the Karelian language does function in education – one of the spheres maintaining the language vitality –in the situation where the Russian language dominates in most major spheres of communication the real-life social status of the Karelian language is such that there is no potential for “building up” the communicative load of the newly scripted Karelian language and widening its functionality.

Keywords: Karelian language, revitalization, educational system, language vitality.

КАРЕЛЬСКИЙ ЯЗЫК В СИСТЕМЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ КАРЕЛИЯ

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Статья посвящена изучению ситуации с преподаванием карельского языка в системе образования в свете языковой политики, проводимой в Республике Карелия. Образование относится к сферам регламентированного общения, в которых применяется регулирование со стороны административных и государственных органов. Регулирование направлено на упорядоченное использование языка в обществе и осуществляется путем языкового законодательства. Процессы ревитализации карельского языка были инициированы решением конференции «Карелы..» в 1989 году. В 2010-2011 учебном году карельский язык изучался в 11 муниципальных районах (Беломорском, Кемском, Калевальском, Кондопожском, Лоухском, Медвежьегорском, Муезерском, Олонецком, Прионежском, Пряжинском и Суоярвском) и в двух городских округах (Петрозаводском и Костомукшском). Карельский язык преподается также в учреждениях дополнительного образования. В 2011 г. в учреждениях дополнительного образования собственно-карельское наречие изучали 48 детей, ливвиковское – 43. Сложившаяся в Республике Карелия ситуация с карельским языком в сфере образования представляется на сегодняшний день далеко не радужной. У школьников отсутствует практическая мотивация к изучению карельского языка, поскольку знание языка не предоставляет дополнительных «бонусов» при получении образования, поиске работы и дальнейшей социализации. В свою очередь, перед студентами, изучающими карельский язык, встают

серьезные проблемы с последующим трудоустройством. Несмотря на то, что карельский язык функционирует в сфере образования – одной из тех сфер, в которой поддерживается витальность языка, – реальный общественный статус карельского языка в современной ситуации при доминировании в большинстве основных коммуникативных сфер русского языка не позволяет «наращивать» коммуникативную нагрузку карельского младописьменного языка и расширять его функциональность.

Ключевые слова: карельский язык, ревитализация, система образования, витальность языка.

Education is a sphere of regimented communication regulated by administrative and governmental authorities. The regulation is targeted at orderly use of language in the society, and is effected by means of language legislation [1]. Use of a language in education is a reliable indicator of its actual public status. Whether the language is just a subject or the language of instruction is an essential matter [2].

The process to revitalize the Karelian language was initiated by the resolution of the conference “Karelians: Ethnicity, Language, Culture, Economy. Development Challenges and Pathways in the Context of Improving Interethnic Relations in the USSR” [3]. An issue actively discussed during the conference was revival of Karelian script in two major dialects of the language – Olonetsian and Karelian proper– and possibilities for teaching the Karelian language in schools of Karelian Republic [4]. Following this event, in 1989 eleven schools of the republic started teaching the Karelian language.

First Karelian language textbooks appeared in 1990, and in 2002 textbooks were published for basic general education years 5 to 9 [5]. Since the written language tradition was based on the Olonetsian and Karelian proper dialects, the first textbooks, primers and abecedaries were created in these two Karelian dialects. Today, Karelian language teachers can use the 2007-edition new-generation textbooks for 1st year (in the Olonetsian and the Karelian proper dialects), and 2nd

year (in the Karelian proper dialect), prepared with regard to the present-day language situation, when children entering school have no language skills.

School and Pre-school Education

The number of Karelian language learners was the greatest in the late 1990s – early 2000s. According to the Republic of Karelia Ministry of Education, this number has lately decreased compared to the so-called “upsurge” period: where in the 2001/2002 academic year 2596 pupils in 55 schools studied the Karelian language, in 2009/2010 there remained only 33 such schools with only 1657 pupils learning the language.

In the academic year 2010/2011 the Karelian language was taught in 11 districts (Belomorsky, Kemsky, Kalevalsky, Kondopozhsky, Louhsky, Medvezhjegorsky, Muezersky, Olonetsky, Prionezhsky, Pryazhinsky, and Suojarvsky) and two municipalities (Petrozavodsk and Kostomuksha). The total number of Karelian language learners was 1718 [6]. The greatest number of children learning the Karelian language at school is concentrated in the Olonetsky District. The language is predominantly taught within regular classes, but also as an elective. Most Karelian language learners are 1st to 4th year pupils (primary school). In secondary school, the proportion of the pupils is lower, just like the number of Karelian language teachers. In the 2011/2012 academic year the number of schoolchildren learning Karelian increased somewhat compared with the previous academic year (1774 pupils), but it was no longer taught in the Kemsky District.

Guidelines of the Republic of Karelia Ministry of Education “On the use of academic hours of the regional component of the Republican framework curriculum in academic year 2011/2012” stipulate that the municipal educational institutions which curriculum includes the subject “Karelian language” as a mother tongue can set aside the following number of academic hours weekly (from the regional (national-regional) education component): year 1 – 1 hour; years 2, 3 & 4 – 2 hours; years 5, 6 – 2-3 hours; years 7, 8, 9 – 2 hours; years 10, 11 – 1 hours.

In Petrozavodsk, the Karelian language is taught in the Lönnrot Finno-Ugrian School and in Secondary School № 2. In the Lönnrot Finno-Ugrian School children have been studying the Olonetsian and Karelian proper dialects of the Karelian language for over 16 years. The school works with original syllabi in the Karelian, Vepsian and Finnish languages, specialty courses have been developed on the history of Finland and Karelia, rituals and traditions of Karelians and Vepsians, Kalevala Epic, and folk crafts of Karelia. According to the school report on academic year 2010/2011, the main reasons for studying native languages (Karelian, Vepsian, Finnish) were the parents' wish (42% of respondents) and the child's wish (36%). The number of the Olonetsian dialect learners peaked in the early 2000s, that of Karelian proper – in 2006-2009, the overall tendency lately being a decrease in the number of children studying both dialects. Federal educational legislation has been modified, and starting September 1st, 2012 admittance of first-graders to schools will be based on their residence area. Until now, children from any part of the city willing to learn Vepsian, Finnish or Karelian entered the Finno-Ugrian school. As the novelty caused concerns about the fate of the school, people suggested granting the national school the status of a school subordinated to the Governor of the Republic or the City Mayor, so that school admittance does not become territorial.

In Petrozavodsk Secondary School № 2 the Karelian language has been taught for 19 academic years in 1st to 11th grades. The number of children studying the Karelian language has lately been steadily decreasing: in 2005/2006 there were 178 learners, in 2010/2011 there were 106.

In some districts of the republic the trend in the number of Karelian language learners is positive. To wit, this number in schools of the Pryazhinsky National District in the period from 01.09.09 to 01.09.10 increased from 149 (12%) to 245 (18%).

Schools employ some non-traditional methods of Karelian language teaching. E.g., the ethnocultural camp “Livvin linduzet (*Olonetsian Birdies*)” has been held annually since 1997 in the village of Kotkozero, Olonetsky District. Children of 3rd-

5th grades participating in the camp are immersed in the natural Karelian language environment. The puppet theatre, where young actors perform fairy-tales in the Karelian language they have written themselves, has operated at the Kotkozero Village School for several years now. Many schools have a “Karelian chamber”, where children get familiar with traditional Karelian culture. A tradition at the Kalevala Secondary School is the “Beauty of Uhta” contest in the intermediate school period, and the “Starlet of Kalevala” contest in the primary school period, which aim to promote the national culture and native language.

In the 2010/2011 academic year, 32 teachers in schools of the republic taught the Olonetsian dialect, 13 teachers – the Karelian proper dialect. Comparing with data over the previous three academic years, the number of Karelian language teachers dropped nearly twice[7].

The Karelian language is also taught in pre-school institutions in 6 districts (Kalevalsky, Muezersky, Olonetsky, Prionezhsky, Pryazhinsky, Suojarvsky) and two cities – Petrozavodsk and Kostomuksha. In 2011, 676 children studied the Olonetsian dialect, and 128 children studied the Karelian proper dialect. In terms of the number of pre-school institutions teaching the Karelian language the leaders in the republic are the Olonetsky and Pryazhinsky Districts, where 350 children from 9 nursery schools and 167 children from 5 nursery schools, respectively, studied the language in year 2011. In academic year 2011-2012, Karelian language teaching in pre-school institutions was performed in 5 districts (teaching in the Suojarvsky District ceased), and the number of the language learners there increased somewhat – 875.

In Kalevalsky and Muezersky Districts, and in Kosomuksha children study the Karelian proper dialect; in other districts of the republic and in Petrozavodsk the Olonetsian dialect is taught. Little ones are familiarized with the culture, traditions and customs of the Karelian people through language exercise, games, fairy-tales, singing, dancing, festivals, master classes, excursions, and study the language in original courses.

Lately, so-called “language nests” have been founded in the republic. Children entering “language nests” often have no knowledge of the Karelian language [8]. In the “nest” the child first assimilates the language in a passive way, and later on begins to speak actively. The basic principle of the “language nest” is immersion in the linguistic environment. It is essential that tutors address children in the minority language at all times with no exceptions, and never translate what has been said into the majority language. Since September 2009 two “language nests” have operated in Petrozavodsk, with the Olonetsian dialect spoken in one and the Finnish language in the other. Since the autumn of 2011 a Olonetsian dialect “language nest” has been functioning in the Village of Tuksa, Olonetsky District. The “language nest” principle is realized in the republic only partially – as nearly all children are practically monolingual one tutor communicates with them in the minority language, and the other one – in Russian.

The Karelian language is taught also in institutions for extra-curricular education. In 2011, 48 children studied Karelian proper and 43 children – the Olonetsian dialect in such institutions.

Secondary vocational education

The Karelian language has been taught in the Petrozavodsk Pedagogical College since 2003. Students majoring as “primary school teachers” additionally study national language and literature. The full course of study is 4 years and 10 months; admission to the college to specialize as “primary school teachers” with additional study of the Karelian language was 19 students in 2003, 18 – in 2007, and 8 – in 2011. The Director of the College mentioned that additional teaching of the Karelian language was introduced simultaneously with introduction of additional special education curriculum. The number of students admitted in the special education group originally was 12 persons, and has since remained invariable. On the other hand, the figures above prove that the number of Karelian language learners dropped more than twice – from 19 to 8 students. In 2012, no prior knowledge of the Karelian language will be required to enter the Pedagogical College for the

qualification “primary school teacher” with additional study of national language and literature.

Karelian language teaching in higher educational institutions

Karelian language teaching at the university level is offered by the Karelian State Pedagogical Academy (formerly Karelian State Pedagogical Institute/Karelian State Pedagogical University), since 1992, and by the Karelian and Vepsian Language and Literature Department of the Balto-Fennic Philology and Culture Faculty of the Petrozavodsk State University (since 1990).

Karelian State Pedagogical Academy

In 1992 the Inter-faculty Department of National Languages (since 1995 – Department of the Karelian and Vepsian Languages) was founded at the Karelian State Pedagogical Institute.

In the period of 1992 to 2011 the Karelian and Vepsian Language Department worked in two faculties: Primary Education Faculty for the “Pedagogy and Methods of Primary Education, Karelian (Vepsian) and Finnish Languages” degree and Pre-school and Social Pedagogy and Psychology Faculty for the “Pre-school Pedagogy and Psychology, Karelian (Vepsian) and Finnish languages” degree with full-time instruction [9]. Graduates of village schools from Karelia, Vologda and Leningrad Regions willing to enter the academy for the above majors had the possibility to take the free full-time course at the pre-university training department. In 2005, the minority pre-university training department was shut down because of non-financing by the republic and for the lack of demand for the course among school graduates and applicants.

Professors of the Department have worked out original study courses and sets of teaching and learning materials to teach the Karelian, Vepsian and Finnish languages as a minor.

Over the 19 years of its work the Department has graduated 178 specialists, most of them now employed in education. In the past decade however problems with

employment for alumni qualified as teachers of Karelian and Vepsian have become very clear – hardly any vacancies for such teachers have shown up since 2003.

In academic year 2010/2011 the Faculty of Primary Education graduated its last group of Karelian language specialists, who did not get a single vacancy offer on their speciality from educational institutions of Republic of Karelia. The Academy is currently training four 4th year students with the “teacher of the Karelian language” minor at the Faculty of Pre-school and Social Pedagogy and Psychology.

Schools in 6 districts of the republic do not teach native language and culture (City of Sortavala, Sortavalsky, Pitkarantsky, Lahdenpohsky, Pudozhsky and Segezhsy Districts), although Article 4 of the Republic of Karelia Education Act stipulates that government bodies and local authorities shall create the conditions favouring Karelian, Vepsian and Finnish language fluency. Local authorities have lately submitted no orders for training specialists with knowledge of minority languages to the Pedagogical Academy.

It has been resolved to resume training of Karelian language teachers at the Academy starting 2012. Call for applications for the “Pedagogical Education” bachelor degree was opened for the new basic curriculum combining the “Finnish Language” and “Native (Karelian) Language and Literature” profiles; 15 state-funded places have been provisionally allocated for admission under order from the Ministry of Education, Republic of Karelia. Some problems can be foreseen already now: firstly, the decision to open the call was taken after schoolchildren had selected the exams to be taken; secondly, alumni-to-be do not bear any obligation to return to the district that had ordered the student to be trained.

Petrozavodsk State University

The Department of the Karelian and Vepsian Languages was founded on October 1, 1990; since 1993 it has been a structural unit of the Faculty of Balto-Fennic Philology and Culture, Petrozavodsk State University. The Department provides training in two majors: “Karelian and Finnish languages and literature”, “Vepsian and Finnish languages and literature”; the graduates qualify as philologists.

The terms for being admitted in the “Karelian and Finnish languages and literature” and “Vepsian and Finnish languages and literature” courses have been eased: starting year 2004 no interview in the Karelian and Vepsian languages, or the knowledge of the language is required, it suffices to have Unified State Examination results in literature, Russian language, and history. The number of Karelian language students peaked in 2004-2005, when more than twice as many students as before were enrolled. The reason for that was that no prior knowledge of the Karelian or Vepsian languages was required for admission. However, less than 50% of those admitted did graduate (19 graduates vs. 44 enrolled). The number of students enrolled has been steadily declining since 2006; 10 students were enrolled in the 2010/2011 academic year, and not a single application was submitted for the “Karelian language” major in year 2011.

No more than a half, but more commonly – $\frac{1}{4}$ or even $\frac{1}{5}$ of the students graduating from the Department find jobs within their specialty. The graduates stress it is hardly possible to find such jobs in Petrozavodsk. Among those few that did find a job within their specialty most were employed by mass media, schools, nursery schools, some teach in language courses. The most common “sheet anchor” in job hunting is the Finnish language. Many of those who failed to find a job connected with the Karelian language chose to take another course of education in a different field, and some left for Finland seeking for jobs or further education.

Thus, the situation with the Karelian language in education today does not look bright at all. Schoolchildren are not motivated to study the Karelian language as it is unlikely to bring any “bonuses” in education, finding a job or further socialization. Furthermore, placement of Karelian language students is very problematic. Although the Karelian language does function in education – one of the spheres maintaining the language vitality – in the situation where the Russian language dominates in most major spheres of communication the real-life social status of the Karelian language is such that there is no potential for “building up” the communicative load of the newly scripted Karelian language and widening its functionality.

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Assistant Professor. Bogdanova presented her paper “The role of Karelian State Pedagogical Academy in training teaching personnel with Karelian, Vepsian and Finnish language skills for the educational system of Republic of Karelia” at the scientific conference “Bubrikh Readings: Study of Languages and Cultures of Balto-Fennic Peoples in the Polyethnic Space” at the Petrozavodsk State University on October 21, 2011.

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