

The social context of language change in Uralic languages

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Since the seminal works by William Labov (1963, 1972), social context has been considered as an integral part of the studies of language variation and change (cf. Pope et al. 2007, Bell 2016). At the same time, social context has not been traditionally included in studies of historical linguistics, where language change has often been limited to an alteration of linguistic features. In the last decades, however, diachronic studies have begun to treat social settings as belonging to their object of research, mentioning societal contexts that could have shaped the structures or even suggesting sociolinguistic reconstructions based on observed language changes (e.g. Muysken 2010, Ehret 2010, Heggarty 2014, Ross 2020, Epps & Khanina, 2025). Concerning the Uralic languages, most synchronic studies of ongoing or recent change focus on Finnish, Estonian, or Hungarian; beyond those, the studies with attention to social context are still few (though see e.g. Hakimov & Rießler 2020). Diachronic studies which take into account social context are even less common, even if some work has already been done (e.g., Aikio 2012, Björklöf 2019, Grünthal 2020, Grünthal & Holopainen 2023, Khanina 2022, Moilanen et al. 2023, Kallio et al. Subm.).

This workshop aims at offering a forum for the exchange of ideas and research results pertaining to the social context of change and change in its social context in **less numerous Uralic languages** and in **the Uralic past**. We hope to bring together representatives of both synchronic and diachronic language research for their mutual benefit.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Which mechanisms of spread for linguistic innovations are observed in the Uralic languages?
- How structural changes in Uralic languages are influenced by the social contexts of language acquisition?
- How does long-standing bilingualism with non-Uralic languages influence discourse organization or details of structure of Uralic languages?
- How does social context shape different types of bi-modal use of Uralic languages, e.g. language mixing, language fusion, code-switching, etc.?
- Which methods can be used to uncover the social context of the Uralic past?
- What kind of social conditions could produce structural changes (phonological, morphological, or syntactic) reconstructed for the Uralic languages?
- Which social context could correspond to structural convergence or divergence that we observe in related Uralic languages?
- What kind of linguistic data can be considered as evidence for past shifts into/from Uralic languages?

- How studies of ongoing or recent changes as observed in their social context can inform our reconstructions of the Uralic past?

We invite papers either reporting case studies or taking a more general perspective, i.e. theorizing about patterns of interplay between social context and structural or lexical change attested in Uralic languages. The papers can be presented either in Finnish or English.

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