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The Dialect of Gammalsvenskby: an Outline of Morphology

The village of Gammalsvenskby is located in the Kherson region, Ukraine. Its dialect historically belongs to the group of Swedish dialects of Estonia and goes back to the dialect of the island of Dagö (Hiiumaa). The dialect of Gammalsvenskby is the only surviving Scandinavian dialect in the territory of the former Soviet Union. The only description of the grammar of the dialect is a brief article by A. Karlgren written in 1906 and published in 1953 (Karlgren 1953). Due to the complete lack of studies of the present-day dialect and because of the severe endangerment in which the dialect is currently situated, the most urgent task is to collect, classify and publish the factual material.

From around the 1950s, the main spoken language of all village residents, including dialect speakers, has been Russian-Ukrainian ("surzhik"). At the moment the dialect is spoken by a small number of elderly people and is represented by a number of varieties, which are accounted for by the different levels of language competence of its speakers. The "conservative" variety represented by the fluent speakers (concisely described in Mankov 2013a) serves as a starting point in my research, while material obtained from semi-speakers provides the opportunity for comparison and therefore allows us to study structural changes taking place in the dialect (some results of this study are presented in Mankov 2013b).

In my paper I will give an outline of inflectional morphology of the present-day dialect and examine declension types of nouns, adjectives, pronouns and verbs. A text sample will be given as well. The sources for the material presented in the paper are interviews with speakers of the conservative variety of the dialect recorded during my fieldwork in the village from 2004 to 2013.

References

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