Fieldwork: methods and theory.
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Documenting the Dialect of Gammalsvenskby

Introduction

Location of the dialect: village of Gammalsvenskby (Russ. Старошведское, Ukr. Зміївка), Kherson region, Ukraine.

The village was founded with involvement of Grigory Potyomkin as a foreign colony in New Russia in 1782. The majority of foreign colonists in New Russia were Germans. By 1863, the number of Germans in South Russian provinces was 151,925 (Novorossiyskiy kalendar' 1864: 121).

Genetic classification of the dialect: Estonian Swedish, East Swedish, North Germanic.

The dialect of Gammalsvenskby is the only surviving Scandinavian dialect in the territory of the former Soviet Union.

The number of speakers: 1782 — ca. 880 people; 1800 — 150 or 160 people; 1917 — 718. Now fewer than 20 elderly women; critically endangered.

Previous studies of the dialect: Freudenthal, Vendell 1886 (vocabulary), Karlgren 1953 (grammar outline published by Nils Tiberg; data collected during winter 1904–1905).

Current state of the dialect was not described systematically until 2004.

Royal couple of Sweden with dialect speakers, 2009 (photo: Tage Brolin).
Left to right: E. Kozenko, M. Malmas, E. Utas, L. Hansas, A. Annas, V. Norberg, A. Lyutko, Queen Silvia, L. Utas, ?, Karl XVI Gustav, ?, M. Prasolova, ?.

Spelling system

Vowels: *a* [a], *ā* [aː], *e* [ę], *ē* [eːⁱ, ęː][1], *i* [i], *ī* [iː], *o* [o], *ō* [oː], *u* [u], *ū* [uː], *y* [y], *ä* [ɛ], *ā̈* [ɛː], *ö* [œ], *ō̈* [œː], *ü* [ɵ][2], *ṻ* [ʉː], *äi* [ɛˑi, ɛĭ], *öü* [œːʉ, œŭ][3].

Consonants: *b* [b], *d* [d], *ḍ* [ɖ], *f* [f], *g* [g], *h* [h], *j* [j], *k* [k], *l* [l], *ḷ* [ɭ][4], *m* [m], *n* [n] ([ŋ] in front of *k*), *ṇ* [ɳ], *ŋ* [ŋ], *p* [p], *r* [r], *s* [s], *ṣ* [ʃ], *t* [t], *ṭ* [ʈ], *v* [v], *x* [x], *z* [z], *ẓ* [ʒ].

The consonants *p, t, k* are not aspirated; *ḍ, ṭ, ṇ* are postalveolar (as in Standard Swedish). The combinations *dj, gj, nj, sj, tj* designate palatalised consonants; *skj, stj* are [skʲ, stʲ]. The length of consonants within morphemes is snown by doubling the letter: *tummär* 'empty'. If a long consonant occurs in front of another consonant within a morpheme, its length is not designated: *vänt* [vɛnːt] 'to wait,' whereas on morpheme boundaries it is designated:

[1] [eːⁱ] occurs within morphemes, both in closed and in open syllables, e.g. *h*[eːⁱ]*n* 'hen', [eːⁱ]*ra* 'ear'.
[ęː] (long close *ē*) typically occurs in morpheme coda position, e.g. *br*[ęː] 'bread', *br*[ęː]-*är* 'brothers', *d*[ęː]-*är* 'dead'.

[2] Central rounded open vowel; lower than Standard Sw. [ɵ], lips are rounded and protruding.

[3] The diphthongs usually shorten in front of long consonants or groups of consonants. In this case the second element is pronounced extrashort, e.g. *g*[ɛĭ]*gḷar* 'gills', [œŭ]*ks-brūn* 'eyebrow'.

[4] Retroflex flap.

tumm-t (n. sg. of *tumm-är*). The hyphen is employed to show elements of compounds (e.g., *sīr-boss* ‘sorrel soup’) and enclitic forms of personal pronouns (e.g., in *hāv-e* ‘had it’, *vār-e* ‘was it’, *to-de* ‘when you’, *vā-ṇ* ‘was he’). Phrase stress is shown with a stress sign ˈ, e.g., *slū ˈhjōl*. Phonetic variants are divided with /, morphological with //.

Principles behind the spelling system:

• All characters must be monovalent, i.e. there should be no cases when the same letter refers to significantly different sounds, or the same sound is expressed by different letters.

• Single sounds must not be expressed by combinations of two or more characters. However, doubling the character is permitted, as it is necessary for long consonants.

• The array of special symbols and diacritics should be minimised.

• The spelling system should not require considerable training and should be intuitively clear, not only to phoneticians but also to village residents (in case they happen to learn it).

• It should not break the established tradition and evoke bewilderment of colleagues, nor should it require to install a specific font or cause technical problems in publication process.

• It should not be oriented exclusively towards Swedish readers because the ancestors of the village residents are found not only in Sweden but also in e.g. Canada; besides, in the village itself not all residents are familiar with Swedish. Practically, this only concerns [o] = *o* (rather than *å*), [u] = *u* (not *o* as in Swedish), [ɞ, ʉː] = *ü*, *ṻ* (not *u*).

Apart from the *ä, ö, ü*, the sign of vowel length, and the sign of stress, the only diacritic used is dot, the only specific symbol is *ŋ*.

Inflections

Roman numbers refer to morphological, i.e. phonetically non-conditioned, types. Arabic numbers refer to phonetically conditioned variants within morphological types (i.e. morphophonological subtypes). For details and more examples, see Mankov 2017.

Nouns

Basic paradigm is the same as in Swedish, i.e. (1) indefinite sg. (always zero ending), (2) definite sg., (3) indefinite pl., (4) definite pl.

Masculine:

Type	Def. sg.	Pl.	Def. pl.	Examples
I.1	*-en*	*-ar*	*-a//-ana*	*fisk, fisken, fiskar, fiska//-ana* ‘fish’
I.2	*-n*			*kvüst, kvüstn, kvüstar, kvüsta//-ana* ‘twig’
I.3	*-ṇ*			*stūḷ, stūṇ, stūḷar, stūḷa//-ana* ‘chair’
I.4	zero			*bjūn, bjūn, bjūnar, bjūna//-ana* ‘bear’
I.5	*-en*	*-j-ar*	*-j-a//-j-ana*	*säkk, säkken, säkkjar, säkkja//-jana* ‘sack’
II.1	*-en/-n*/zero	*-är//-ar*	*-e//-ena//* *-a//-ana*	*svänsk, svänsken, svänskär//-ar, svänske//-a//-ana* ‘Swede’
II.2	*-n*	*-är*//zero	*-e//-ena//-na*	*bokar, bokan, bokarär, bokare//bokana* ‘baker’, *biggjar, biggjan, biggjar//biggjarär, biggjare//-ena* ‘builder’
III.1	*-n*	*-r*	*-na*	*stoka, stokan, stokar, stokana* ‘stick’
III.2	*-an*	*-ar*	*-ana//-a*	*ēnd, ēndan, ēndar, ēnda//-ana* ‘end’
IV	*-n*/zero	*-är* with umlaut	*-re/-e* with umlaut	*fūt, fūtn, fētär, fētre* ‘foot’

Feminine:

Type	Def. sg.	Pl.	Def. pl.	Examples
I.1	*-e*	*-ar*	*-ana*	*brūː, brūːe, brūːar, brūːana* ‘bride’
I.2	*-e//-ja*	*-j-ar*	*-j-ana*	*sāŋ, sāŋ-e, sāŋj-ar, sāŋj-ana* ‘bed’
II.1	zero	*-r*	*-na*	*viku, viku, vikur, vikuna* ‘week’, *näsa, näsa, näsar, näsana* ‘nose’
II.2	*-a*	*-ar*	*-ana*	*hēn, hēna, hēnar, hēnana* ‘hen’, *sistär, sistra, sistrar, sistrana* ‘sister’
II.3	*-j-a*	*-j-ar*	*-j-ana*	*kirke, kirkja, kirkjar, kirkjana* ‘church’
III	*-e*	*-är* with umlaut	*-re/-e* with umlaut	*būk, būk-e, bēk-är, bēk-re* ‘book’

Neuter:

Type	Def. sg.	Pl.	Def. pl.	Examples
1	*-e*/zero	*-är*	*-ena/-na*	*lōmb, lōmbe, lōmbär, lōmbena* ‘lamb’, *finstär, finstre, finsträr, finstrena* ‘window’, *kļē, kļē(e), kļēär, kļē(e)na* ‘cloth’
2	zero	*-r*	*-na*	*stikke, stikke, stikkär, stikkena* ‘piece’ *öua, öua, öuar, öuana* ‘eye’

Adjectives

Paradigm of adjectives:

Singular (strong form)			Plural		Weak form	Comparative	Superl.
masc.	fem.	neut.	attr.	non-attr.			
varm-är (1)	***varm*** (2)	***varm-t*** (3)	***varm*** (3)	***varm-ar*** (4)	***varm*** (3)	***varmare*** (5)	***varmast*** (6)

All inflectional types of declinable adjectives are phonologically conditioned, i.e. they depend on the stem final, namely:

Type 1: Stems in consonants, except for *r, ļ*, and in long (i.e. always stressed) vowels.

Type 2: Stems in *r, ļ*.

Type 3: Stems in unstressed vowels, i.e. di- and polysyllabic stems.

Type	Masc. sg.	Fem. sg.; attributive pl.; weak form	Neut. sg.	Non-attributive pl.
1	*tumm-är* ‘empty’ *nī-är* ‘new’	*tumm* *nī*	*tummt* *nitt*	*tummar* *nīar*
2	*dīr-an* ‘expensive’ *fāļ-an* ‘beautiful’	*dīr* *fāļ*	*diṭṭ* *faṭṭ*	*dīrar* *fāļar*
3	*likļe-ndär* ‘lucky’ *rost-ndär* ‘rusty’ *nako-ndär* ‘naked’	*likļe* *roste* *nako*	*likļet* *rostet* *nakot*	*likļendar* *rostndar* *nakondar*

Verbs

Verb paradigm consists of the following forms: (1) infinitive (always identical with present pl. and in most cases with imperative sg.); (2) present sg.; (3) imperative pl.; (4) preterite (never distinguishes numbers in my interviews); (5) supine. Supine and preterite of weak verbs are always identical.

Depending on the form of the preterite and supine, I divide the verbs into the following morphological types (conjugations):

I. Verbs ending in *-a* in the preterite and supine: weak verbs with stems in *-a*.

II. Verbs ending in a dental stop in the preterite and supine: weak verbs with stems terminating in consonants, (long) vowels and diphthongs.

III. Verbs with changes in the root: strong and irregular.

Type I

Type	**Infinitive; present pl.; imperative sg.**	**Pres. sg.**	**Imperative pl.**	**Preterite/supine**
I.1	*boka* ‘bake’	*bokar*	*bokae*	*boka*
I.2	*vänt* ‘wait’	*väntar*	*vänte*	*vänta*
	kļīstär ‘whitewash’	*kļīstrar*	*kļīst(ä)re*	*kļīstra*
I.3	*inke se* ‘groan’	*inkja-ṣe*	*inke jār (änt)*	*inkja se*
	skinde se ‘hurry’	*skinda-ṣe*	*skinde jār (änt)*	*skinda se*
	bire ‘begin’	*birjar,* also *bire*	*bire*	*birja*

Type II

The distribution of the endings in Type II depends on stem-finals, both in the present and in preterite. In the present system (infinitive, present, imperative) the following groups are distinguished depending on the correlation between the infinitive and present sg.:

1. Stems in voiced stops, *m*, (always long) vowels: pres. sg. in *-är*.
2. Stems in *ll, nn, n*: pres. sg. in *-d-är*.
3. Stems in *r*: pres. sg. with the zero ending.
4. Stems in **j* (reflected as *-e*) with (a) long, (b) short roots.

Type	Infinitive/pres. pl.	Pres. sg.	Imperative	
			Sg.	Pl.
II.1	*kēp* ‘buy’	*kēpär*	*kēp*	*kēpe*
	gḷēm ‘forget’	*gḷēmär*	*gḷēm*	*gḷēme*
	leva/liva ‘live’	*levär/livär*	*lēv*	*leve*
	trū ‘believe’	*trūär*	*trū*	*trūe*
II.2	*häll* ‘pour’	*hälldär*	*häll*	*hälle*
	bränn ‘burn’	*bränndär*	*bränn*	*bränne*
	lōn ‘loan’	*lōndär*	*lōn*	*lōne*
II.3	*hēr* ‘hear’	*hēr*	*hēr*	*hēre*
II.4a	*riŋŋe* ‘surround’	*riŋŋär*	*riŋŋe*	
	sēke ‘seek’	*sēkär*	*sēk*	*sēke*
II.4b	*sjöḷe* ‘sell’	*sjȫḷ*	*sjȫḷ*	*sjöḷe*
	äre ‘plough’	*ǟr*	*ǟr*	*äre*
	säte ‘plant’	*sätär*	*sätt*	*säte*
	kräve ‘demand’ (pres. pl. also *kräva*)	*krävär*	*krǟv*	*kräve*

For the preterite/supine of Type II, the following grouping is relevant:
1. Stems in *s, n, ll, t* (after *äi*), *k, p, ld*: preterite/supine in *-t*.
2. Stems in *m, mm, nn, v* and vowels except *äi*: preterite/supine in *-d*. Stems in *r, ḷ*: preterite/supine in *ḍ*.
3. Stems in *äi*: preterite/supine in *-dd*. After *ē* both *-dd* and *-d* occur.
4. Some stems in *t* and *d*[5]: zero ending in the pret./sup.

In preterite and supine of Type II many sandhi regularities take place.

Type	Infinitive	Preterite/supine
1	*bḷēs* ‘blow’	*bḷēst*
	lōn ‘loan’	*lōnt*
	still ‘feed’	*stillt*
	bḷäit ‘soak’	*bḷäitt*
	hōld ‘hold’	*hōlt*
	sēke ‘seek’	*sēft*
	kēp ‘buy’	*kēft*
2	*drēm* ‘dream’	*drēmd*
	kḷämm ‘press’	*kḷǟmd*
	bränn ‘burn’, trans.	*brǟnd*
	leva/liva ‘live’	*lēvd*
	hēr ‘hear’	*hēḍ*
	sjöḷe ‘sell’	*sjȫ̄ḍ*
	svölge ‘swallow’	*svȫ̄ḍ*
	hēŋe ‘hang’	*hēmd*
	riŋŋe ‘ring’	*rēmd*
	bigge ‘build’	*bēvd*
	rū ‘row’	*rūd*
3	*sträi* [strɛːi] ‘straw’	*sträidd* [streĭdː]
	kḷē (pō) ‘put on’	*pō-kḷedd / pō-kḷēd*
4	*hitt* ‘find’	*hitt*

Type 3

The present system generally conforms to the same rules as Type II; preterite and supine change the root. Examples:

Class 1

bīt ‘bite’ — *bäit* — *bite*;
bḷī ‘become’ — *bḷäi* — *bḷȫ̄e*;
gnī ‘rub’ — *gnäi // gnīd* — *gnēe // gnīd*;
vrī ‘twist’ — *vräi // vrīd* — *vrēe // vrīd*.

Class 2

[5] These are *fä(r)līt se* ‘hope’, *gift se* ‘marry’, *hitt* ‘find’, *rädd* ‘scare’ (also Type I.2), *smält* ‘melt’ (transitive), *vēnd* ‘turn’.

bjū ‘invite’ — *bjöü // bjūd — bjō̈e / bjṻe // bjūd*;
brūt ‘break’ — *bröüt — brüte / bröte*;
fl̥ū ‘fly’ — *fl̥öü — fl̥ō̈e*.

Class 3
bind ‘tie’ — *band — bunde*;
drikk ‘drink’ — *drakk — drukke*;
sväll ‘swell’ — *svall — svülle*.

Class 4
bära ‘carry’ — *bār — büre*;
kuma ‘come’— *komm — kume*;
sōa ‘sleep’ — *sō — sūe / sōe*;
stjöl̥a ‘steal’ — *stjūd̥ — stjöl̥e*.

Class 5
bā̈a ‘request’ — *bā — bā̈e*;
gäva ‘give’ — *gāv — gäve*;
jäta ‘eat’ — *ōt — jäte*;
ligge ‘lie’ — *lō — lēa*;
site ‘sit’ — *satt — satt*;
sī ‘see’ — *sō — sīd*;
vara ‘be’ — *vār — vare*.

Class 6
drā̈a ‘drag’ — *drū — drṻe / drō̈e*;
däi ˈō ‘die’ (of animals) — *dū ˈō — ˈō-dūe* (of people — *bl̥ī dēär* m., *dē* f., *dēar* pl.);
gäi ‘bark’ — *gū — gūe*;
lē ‘laugh’ — *lū — lūe*;
slō ‘strike; mow’ — *slū — slāe*;
stō ‘stand’ — *stū — stōe*;
tōa (also *tā*) ‘take’ — *tū — tāe*.

Class 7
fall ‘fall’ — *foll — falle*;
fō ‘get; must’ — *fī — fōe*;
grōt ‘weep’ — *gräit — grote*;
gō ‘go’ — *gī — gōe*;
hugg ‘hew’ — *hogg — hugge // hugga*;
löüp ‘fade’ — *löüp // löüpt / löüft — lüpe / löpe*.

Vocabulary and dictionary

At the moment, the FieldWorks database has been compiled up to the middle of the letter S. The number of entries is 3165, including compounds, verbs with particles, and phonetical and morphological variants.

Examples of the entries

[1]**bī** noun m. I.1 village: *Hēr vār trī tīska bīar*$_{\text{INDEF.PL.}}$, *a vōran stū e mittüte milla-dom... vōr bī*$_{\text{INDEF.SG.}}$ *stū ˈinn milla-dom, vō-Ṣvänskbī* LU Here were three German villages, and ours stood in the middle between them, our Swedish village.

[2]**bī** noun n. 1 // m. II.2 // f. II.2 bee: *Tēr, konn tom vill bīa*$_{\text{DEF.PL.}}$ *lād ˈinn huniŋ üte räiana, tom gära ˈfast he hol̥e* LU Where the wild bees put honey in the rush, they do up that hole.

bāran adj. 2 bare: *unde bār*$_{\text{WEAK}}$ *himmen* MP under the open sky; *Han jär grannt skallatär. Hṻe jär bāt*$_{\text{NEUT.}}$ LU He’s totally bald. The head is bare.

fl̥ṻ v. III.2 (perfect with *vara*) fly: *Äild-gnistana fl̥ṻ*$_{\text{PRES.SG.}}$, *o fl̥öü*$_{\text{PRET.}}$ *ˈtitt po han kask-rukan* LU The sparks are flying, and have flown there on the heap of furcoats; *Han komm titt fl̥ṻande*$_{\text{PART.I}}$ *bait oss, o ja pajja-en* LU He <the dog> came there running <"flying"> after us, and I stroked him.

fl̥ṻ ˈbot̥t fly away: *Gässe fl̥öü*$_{\text{PRET.}}$ *ˈbot̥t räi ot varm lande, he bl̥äi räi kallt. Um vōre kuma-dom ˈōtär* MP The geese have already flown away to the warm land, it's already become cold. In spring they come back; *Fṻl̥a jära bot̥t-fl̥ō̈e*$_{\text{SUP.(PERF.)}}$ AL LU MP The birds have flown away.

flū ˈinn fly in: *Dōmbe fl̦ūär*$_{\text{PRES.SG.}}$ *ˈinn fron gōḍn* LU The dust flies in from the yard; *Ja läivd finstäre ipet, he bl̦ēst hōle, o komm-där mike dōmb inn-fl̦ūande*$_{\text{PART.I}}$ *girm finstäre ot stjūe* LU I've left the door opened, it blew a lot, and there came a lot of dust flying in through the window to the house.

Structural differences between fluent speakers and semi-speakers

Personal pronouns in interviews with fluent speakers, AL, LU, MP (str. — strong phonetic form; w. — weak phonetic form):

	Sg.			Pl.		
	1 pers.	2 pers.	3 pers.	1 p.	2 p.	3 p.
Subject	***ja***	str. ***tö***; w. ***-de***	m.: str. ***han***; w. ***-en/-n***	***ve***	***ne***	str. ***tom***; w. ***-dom***
Object	***me***	str. ***te***; w. ***-de***	f.: str. ***hon***; w. ***-on***	***os(s)***	***jăr***	
			n.: str. ***he***; w. ***-e***			

In interviews with a semi-speaker (mostly EU):

	Sg.			Pl.		
	1 p.	2 p.	3 p.	1 p.	2 p.	3 p.
Subject	***ja***	str. ***tö, te***; w. ***-de, -te***	m.: ***han***	***ve, me***	***ne, nö***	str. ***tom***; w. ***-dom***
Object	***me***	***tö, de, dö***	f.: ***hon***	***os(s)***	***jăr***	
			n.: str. ***he***; w. ***-e***			

Pronouns of the 2st and 3rd person sing. and 3rd person plural distinguish strong and weak phonetic forms. Strong form is used at the beginning of the sentence (regardless of the stress) and in a stressed position. Weak form is used enclitically. These "conservative" regularities were established on the material of interviews with fluent speakers. Despite the fact that in interviews with them strong forms occasionally occur in place of the weak, the distribution of strong and weak forms is quite consistent. In interviews with EU, the semi-speaker, the "conservative" use of the pronouns 'you' (sg.), 'it', 'they' is also possible:

Tö$_{\text{STRONG}}$ *fōr kamm titt hōr* 'You need to comb your hair'; *Ko kūka-****ḍe***$_{\text{WEAK}}$*?* 'What are you cooking?'; ***He***$_{\text{STRONG}}$ *blikstär o donar-****e***$_{\text{WEAK}}$ 'The lightning is flashing and the thunder is rolling'; ***Tom***$_{\text{STRONG}}$ *grāv kadeflar* 'They are digging up potatoes'; *Kott kroka-****dom***$_{\text{WEAK}}$*?* 'Where are they climbing?'.

However, very often strong forms occur instead of weak: *Ko gitsä-****ṭö****?* 'What do you think?' [fluent: *Ko gitsa-ḍe?*]; *Hund kan bīt* ***tö*** 'The dog can bite you' [fluent: *Hund kan bīt-de*]; *Ko kostar* ***he****?* 'What does it cost?' [*Ko kvüstar-e?*]; *Kofére hindra* ***tom*** *me?* 'Why are they bothering me?' [*Komfére hindä-ḍom me?*].

The pronouns 'he' and 'she' in interviews with EU have not occurred in the weak form at all.

Alongside mixing up strong and weak forms, in interviews with EU the conflation of these also occurs frequently, namely: **1)** *te* 'you' in the strong form (instead of *tö*) as a conflation of *tö* and *-de*: ***Te*** *kan färkĺla tö* 'You can catch a cold' [fluent: *Tö kan färkīla-de*]. **2)** *te* in the weak form (instead of *-de*): *Kofére gävä-****ṭe*** *iŋa svār?* 'Why do you give no answer?' [*Komfére svora-ḍe änt?*]. **3)** *dö* in the object position as a contamination of *-de* and *tö*: *Go roka dö!* 'Go have a bath!'

Other contaminated forms in interviews with semi-speakers: **1)** *me* 'we' (dial. *ve* 'we' and Russ. *мы*): *Me brā̄s pankukar* 'We bake pancakes'; *Me bosa vatn* 'We heat the water'. **2)** *sö* (*se* and *tö*): *Kofére fräida-ṭö sö?* 'Why do you rejoice?' [fluent: *Komfére fräida-ḍe-de?*]. **3)** *nö* (*ne* 'you, pl.' and *tö* 'you, sg.': *Kofére fräida se nö?* 'Why do you rejoice?' [*Komfére fräida-ṇe jār?*]. All these forms have never occurred in interviews with fluent spekers.

Overall, as contrasted with the fluent speakers of the dialect, the grammar and vocabulary of semi-speakers is characterised by the following features:

- High frequency of free variation in morphology.
- Regularities in the distribution of forms are weak.
- Numerous contaminations, due to which the number of forms increases.
- Weak regularities in attaching affixes to stems. Semi-speakers possess the same set of affixes as the fluent speakers and may be familiar with the stems, but they do not possess the rules of attaching a specific affix to a specific stem, due to which historical links between stems and their affixes are broken.
- Periphrastic constructions instead of a specific verb, e.g. *gära häitt* 'make hot' instead of *hita* 'to warm'.
- Use of words with a more general sense (hyperonyms) instead of those with a specialised sense (hyponyms).
- Limited vocabulary; many words are unknown.

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