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SPOKEN VÕRO IN REAL TIME VARIATION OF THE INESSIVE ENDING

Abstract. This article gives an overview of the variation in inessive case endings of Spoken Võro according to a real-time analysis of language use in two villages of the Vastseliina parish. Local people use two variants (*-h* and *-n*) to mark the inessive. The variation is of interest because linguistic history tells us only the *h*-suffix has been found in the villages under study; however in the Võro literary language *-n* has become standardised for the inessive. Therefore, this article aims to determine a possible language change in real time by comparing analyses of data collected in 1991 and 2006. A comparison of the surveys suggests that, in the case of the inessive endings, there is an ongoing language change in Spoken Võro in which the *n*-formatives are gaining greater prominence over the *h*-suffixes.

Keywords: Spoken Võro, apparent-time analysis, real-time analysis, inessive, language variation.

1. Introduction

The Võro language used in the south-east of Estonia has been the object of many discussions during the past decades. These discussions have encompassed both the Võro literary language and its spoken form.[1] When discussing the language one cannot exclude language change and developmental tendencies.

Most sociolinguistic studies on Võro (e.g. Org, Reimann, Uind, Velsker, Pajusalu 1994 : 203—209; Pajusalu, Velsker, Org 1999 : 87—103; Velsker 2000; Iva 2002a; 2002b : 84—92; Mets 2004a; 2004b : 657—669) have explained the language use of the Võro people in terms of age, gender and educational level. Possible changes in the spoken language have been indicated by differences in distinct age groups. For instance, it has been stated that middle-aged people have fewer dialectal traits than the older group. Until now there has been a shortage of studies dealing with possible language change tendencies and their distribution of these tendencies at different periods of time.

[1] The result of these discussions was the creation of a literary standard for Võro (e.g. Eller, Kama 1988 : 1271—1274; Tender, Kasak 1995 : 312—319; Tender, Iva, Kasak 1996 : 606—610; Iva 2007). The literary standard is based largely on language history, but also tries to take into account contemporary spoken Võro.

This article tries to analyse linguistic behaviour in real time of the Võro people in the Sute and Otsa villages of Vastseliina parish (Võru county, Estonia). A single sociolinguistic variable, the inessive suffix, has been analysed. Both the informants' background (i.e. age, gender, educational level, social network and origin) and the fact that the Võro language (like any other language) is changing over time have been taken into account. To uncover possible language changes 1) the language use of informants belonging to three different generations has been compared (the so-called apparent-time method); and 2) the results of the data collected in two different periods of time (1991 and 2006) have been compared (the so-called real-time method). Here, the hypotheses have been as follows:
— the variation in language use between generations reflects an ongoing language change;
— a comparison of the 1991 and 2006 surveys demonstrates a change in language use over 15 years in the community under investigation.

2. Database and method

The analysis is based on spontaneous interviews that were collected in two different time periods. The recordings of the 1991 survey (some individual recordings were made between 1992 and 1995) were made during dialect expeditions. The main interviewer, Ervin Org (see Org, Reimann, Uind, Velsker, Pajusalu 1994 : 203—209) originates from this same area and so speaks Võro. In 2006, because of the lack of social network data, I made a second set of recordings in the same villages. Together these comprised a second database capable of comparison with the 1991 data. The interviews were fundamentally composed of four types of question: 1) inquiries about the informant's life, social background and interests; 2) opinions on past and current social issues; 3) Võro cultural issues, including evaluations on the Võro literary language; 4) inquiries about the informant's social network[2]. Alltogether, the database of 1991 contains 28 hours of recordings and the database collected in 2006 contains 26 hours of recordings. Both periods have given approximately 324 000 textual words, of which 4450 are inessive forms.

Informants were selected according to social network analysis principles (see Mets 2010); in other words, most of the informants were acquainted with each other. The 1991 database contains 34 informants; 17 men and 17 women. By birth, the informants were divided into three groups.[3] There were 12 informants (3 men and 9 women) who were born between 1912 and 1929. The group born between 1939 and 1963 includes 11 informants (7 men and 4 women). There were 11 informants (7 men and 4 women) born between 1965 and 1976. In 1991, 19 informants lived in Sute village and 15 lived in Otsa village. 22 informants originate from the area, 12 have come from nearby areas (mainly from Setu areas, but also from Hargla).

[2] Questions concerning one's social network have been asked only in 2006, when all informants were asked to describe his/her social network both in 1991 and 2006. Though, according to the conversations on the recording of 1991 it has been possible to make some conclusions on informant's social network.

[3] Here, the traditional dividing into generations (younger, middle and older) has been abandoned and informants have been divided into groups according to birth years. Such a division has been made because of the reason that there would be a base to compare the data to the data collected in 2006.

Here, it must be expressed that the informants had not been part of a random or short-term immigration, but in fact had come to the area permanently (mainly because of marriage).

In 2006, according to panel study principles (see Bailey 2004 : 328—329), it was possible to record 15 informants (8 men and 7 women). The decrease of the informants is due to fact that some informants who were born between 1912 and 1929 had since died. In addition, some informants from other groups had moved elsewhere. It did not prove possible to add some new informants to the study (i.e. to perform a trend study, see Bailey 2004 : 326) because of the lack of new villagers who could speak the Võro language.[4] For that reason the results of the 2006 analysis are in some places more reliant on idiolects. In 2006, the number of the informants who were born between 1912 and 1929 was 4 (2 men and 2 women). There were 7 (4 men and 3 women) who were born between 1939 and 1963, and 4 informants (2 men and 2 women) were born between 1965 and 1976. 8 informants live in Sute village and 7 in Otsa. 10 informants originate from the area, 5 have come from the other areas of Võrumaa. The latter group have again lived in the villages for decades and had married local villagers.

The recordings made for the present study have been transcribed in the Finno-Ugric phonetical transcription. From this, socially dependent variables have been chosen from the material. This article analyses the inessive ending.

Since the purpose of the article is to analyse changes within Spoken Võro, the variation of the South Estonian suffixes *-h* and *-n* are analysed. These variants reflect newer developments of Võro, so they give good ground for describing changes and tendencies in the language.

The variants of the variable under study have been coded according to the social and linguistic factors discussed below. Here, the main focus is on social factors because the inessive ending is a socially dependent variable. The social factors influencing the variaton of the inessive are the informant's date of birth, gender, educational level, origin, village and social network.

Different methods have been combined in the analysis. The principle method utilised has been quantitative analysis complemented by social network analysis (SNA)[5] and apparent-time and real-time analysis.

In the second stage of the SNA, the qualitative method has been applied for explaining possible differences and similarities in idiolects and micro-networks formed by the four most important ties that bind the villagers as a social unit, namely kinship, friendship, neighbourhood and the workplace.

The main part of the study is based on the apparent-time method where possible language changes are associated with the language use of different generations; if the informants born between 1912 and 1929 favour one variant and the informants born between 1965 and 1976 favour the other variant, an ongoing language change in the community can be postulated. As there

[4] A few new people had come to live in the villages under discussion but they all spoke only colloquial Estonian.

[5] The choice of analyis was made because of the nature of the material; on one hand the informants differ by their date of birth, gender and educational level, on the other hand they form close-knit networks where many members are linked by kinship, friendship, neighbourhood and/or workplace ties (see Mets 2010).

has been a 15-year gap between the recordings (the databases were collected in 1991 and 2006), and since broadly the same informants were recorded on each occasion, the real-time method can be applied to the analysis. A comparison of the language use of the same informants in two different periods allows us to determine whether the hypothesis of a possible language change in apparent time has actually occured in real time, or not.

The quantitative VARBRUL-method (GOLDVARB 2001 has been specially developed for quantitative studies) has been used for statistical analysis.[6] The binomial step-up analysis has been used to study the statistical relevance ($p < 0.05$) of the factors.

3. Apparent-time and real-time methods

Refering to Weinreich, Labov, Herzog 1968, the Milroys claim that language reforms move regularly through social, geographical and historical space (Milroy, Milroy 1985 : 340—341). So, one domain of sociolinguistics is to investigate language reforms. The apparent-time and real-time methods are used for that purpose.

3.1. Apparent-time method

When using the apparent-time method, different generations are recorded concurrently, and afterwards their language use is compared (Trudgill 2002 : 48). If elderly informants use the older variant of a variable, middle-aged people use a newer variant more often, and in the language use of younger informants newer variants dominate, we can take it to be a sign of ongoing language change. Here, the starting point is the assumption that an individual's language use stays the same when (s)he has reached adulthood. That is why the language use of teenagers is considered to be a poor material for such comparisions, because their language reflects more age-specific peculiarities (Bailey 2004 : 323—325).

Guy Bailey (2004 : 314—325) has pointed out three shortcomings of the apparent-time method. Firstly, the relativism of apparent time, in that it is not always clear whether the differences in the language use of different generations reflect language change or not. Secondly, the assumption that one's language use does not change after reaching adulthood. Thirdly, the latter is connected to the fact that some variations belong only to the language use of teenagers; these variations disappear when adulthood is reached, so they cannot be seen as the indicators of language change.

3.2. Real-time method

The other method for investigating language change is the real-time method in which the same language community is recorded at two different periods in time. A linguist often comes upon difficulties when using this method. By far the most significant challenge in using the real-time method is the length of the period of research; there must be a pause of many years

[6] See http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/lang/webstuff/goldvarb; its manual http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/lang/webstuff/goldvarb/manual/manualOct2001.html; Varbrul-programs are described in detail in Sankoff 1989 : 984—997 and Paolillo 2001.

between the initial and final data-gathering exercises which delays the process of finalising the study (Chambers 2004 : 358). The other drawback in using this method is that there can be changes in the community under investigation in the intervening time. These changes can occur on both a social (e.g. the middle class has turned into a working class) and/or a demographic level, but also at the level of the individual (e.g. some informants may have died or moved elsewhere[7]) (Chambers, Trudgill 1998 : 149; Bailey 2004 : 326—327). Thus, it is not always possible to record the same informants; this entails inevitable shortcomings in the sample of a panel study (Bailey 2004 : 328—329). Such shortcomings can be avoided if the purpose is not to record the same informants in two periods. Therefore, the sample can be compiled in such a way that, during the second recording period, new informants are chosen on the basis of the same criteria as at the first recording period — the number of male and female informants stays the same, as do their age group and their socio-economical, ethnic and geographical background.[8] A study using such principles is called a trend survey (Bailey 2004 : 326). Here, it is very important to keep in mind that two samples could be equal and comparable; if the samples do not match, it may bring about discrepancies in the survey results. Another matter of importance is the fact that the researcher should use the same principles while re-collecting the data, i.e. use the same language variety and the same data collecting methods (e.g. interview, the same text in reading style studies, etc.) (Trudgill 2002 : 52). Ignoring these principles can cause lopsided results.

One of the advantages of compiling samples with the same criteria is that the study may be repeated indefinitely (Chambers, Trudgill 1998 : 150). The researcher can return to the language community and observe its language use for many decades if need be. One factor supporting the necessity of long term studies is that some language changes can be very slow in real time (Chambers, Trudgill 1998 : 150).

Studies using the apparent-time method dominate in sociolinguistic studies. Fewer surveys use the real-time method (Chambers, Trudgill 1998 : 150—151; Kurki 2004 : 241). Four of the latter are discussed more closely below.

One of the most famous studies based on the real-time method was made by Joy Fowler in 1986 (a summary can be found in Hudson 1999 : 158—159, and Bailey 2004 : 327—328). Fowler analysed the variation of *r* in the phrase *fourth floor* at three department stores in New York, repeating Labov's study of 1962. While compiling the sample, Labov's principles were followed, in that Fowler examined shop assistants in three department store (Saks, Macy's and Klein) which broadly represented three different social classes. One of the department stores (Klein) no longer existed and had to be replaced. Fowler's results match those of Labov's; *r* was found primarily in the language use of the younger generation and in the department

[7] Changes at the level of the individual characterise the villagers of the present study. Some informants had died between two data collecting periods and some had moved elsewhere.

[8] Unfortunately it was not possible to complement the sample of Sute and Otsa residents in this way, because during the intervening period the only new residents in the village were Estonian speakers.

store associated with the upper class. In this case, therefore, the results supplied to us by the real-time method show a stable variation.

Another real-time study was performed by Peter Trudgill (2002 : 48—61) who studied phonological variables in Norwich, England (also see Hudson 1999 : 159—162). In the first stage of the study (in 1968), he had used the apparent-time method and recorded informants from different generations. 15 years later (in 1983) Trudgill made a fresh set of recordings in the same area, including also the younger generation in his sample. His results confirm the results of the first recording period; many phonological variables indicated a change in real time. Besides, Trudgill (2002 : 54—59) has discovered that at the time of the new recordings, some new variables had emerged. These new variables also reflect language change, however they had been either absent in the first recording period or their rate of occurence had been a very low percentage. Based on these results, Trudgill makes a claim for the necessity of real- time analysis.

Guy Bailey (2004 : 312—332) is the author of the third real-time study. He dealt with 14 variables (12 phonological and 2 morphological). The results of his real-time analysis show that 13 out of the 14 variables indicated a language change. Bailey used two databases from 1989 and one database that had been compiled 15—20 year earlier. While using such materials Bailey (2004 : 325—326) emphasised that the databases collected in different periods must be comparable. As he had transcribed the databases himself, he was very familar with them.

The fourth real-time survey was made by Tommi Kurki (2004 : 241—252, and 2005) who had studied language use in Hanhijoki village in Finland. The recordings were made in 1960, at the end of 1980s, and at the end of 1990s. He combined a trend survey and a panel study. The material of the 1960s comes from a corpus in which 6 informants represent the village under discussion. The database of the 1980s consists of 16 informants. While collecting data in the 1990s Kurki re-recorded the same informants studied in the 1980s; some new informants were also recorded. In his study, Kurki analyses the variation of a phonological variable *d*. In the conclusion, he says that the results of the apparent-time method match broadly the results of the real-time analysis.

4. The variation of the inessive ending of Spoken Võro in real time

Language history tells us there have been three inessive endings (*-h*, *-n* and *-hn*) in the Võro area (Proto-Finnic **-snA* > South Estonian **-hn* > *-h*, *-n* or *-hn*), e.g. *kotoh* ~ *koton* ~ *kotohn* 'at home'. The *h*-suffix has been specific to the eastern parts of Võro (including Vastseliina parish); *-n* has characterised the western parts of Võro. The *hn*-ending has belonged to the transitional areas between the eastern and western parts, i.e. it is typical of Rõuge and Hargla parish (Toomse 1998 : 93; Kask 1984 : map 3; Iva 2007 : 52). Figure 1 gives an overview of the inessive endings in Estonia and in South Estonia.

Despite the fact that the suffix *-h* characterises the language variety used in Vastseliina parish, it has started to become perceptable as a suffix typical to Setu. That is why the language users of Vastseliina have started to favour the *n*-ending, which until now had been typical only of the eastern parts of Võrumaa. While creating the Võro literary language, there had

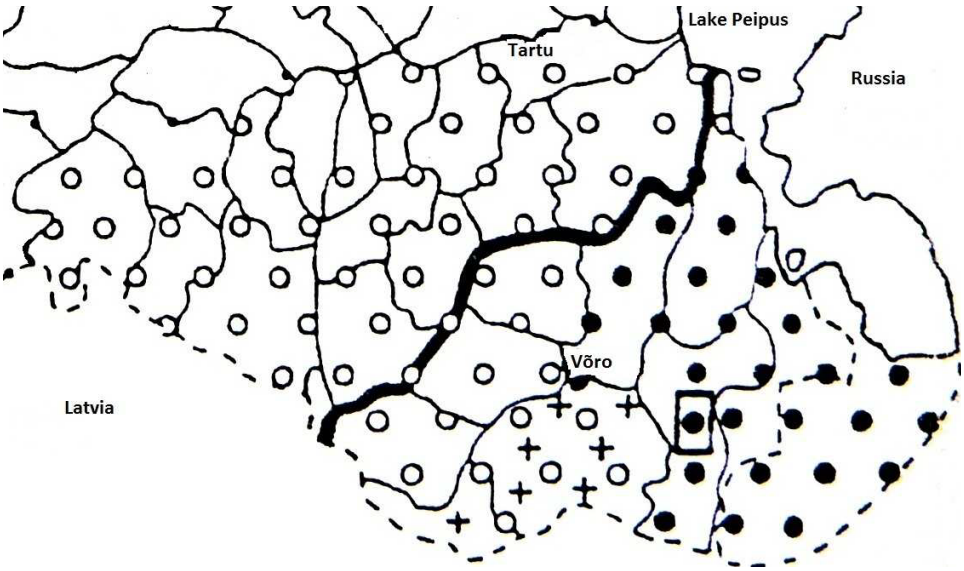

Figure 1. **Inessive endings in South Estonia. Key: o — *-n*, + — *-hn*, • — *-h*, ▬ — border of Võro area, ----- — border of Setu area, ▯ — area under study (Sute and Otsa village) (adapted from Pajusalu, Velsker, Org 1999).**

been many discussions on the issue of whether to standardise *-n* or *-h* as the inessive ending (Eller, Kama 1988 : 1274; Vastus 1992; Jüvä 1994 : 4). In the contemporary Võro literary language the standardised inessive ending is *-n*.

Because of these discussions about the inessive ending in the Võro literary language, it has also been a sociolinguistically interesting variable. The former studies (Pajusalu, Velsker, Org 1999 : 87—103; Velsker 2000) on the inessive ending have shown that the variation of *-n* and *-h* is mostly influenced by social factors. In the present survey, some new factors (informant's social network, origin and village) have been included besides classical social factors (age, gender and educational level). These factors have been used for analysing the database consisting of 4450 inessive endings (2574 of these belong to the database collected in 1991 and 1876 belong to the 2006 database). The variants of the variable are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Variants of the inessive ending in the databases of 1991 and 2006

	1991		2006	
	Total N	%	Total N	%
-h	1633	63	757	40
-n	810	32	953	51
-s	131	5	166	9
Total N	2574		1876	

Table 1 indicates that in 1991 the *h*-suffix, typical of the area according to linguistic history, dominates in the villages; the *n*-suffix is used less. In 2006 the situation had changed. 51% of the inessive forms used *-n* as their

marker, and the use of the *h*-formative had decreased. The database includes also the *s*-suffix typical of Standard Estonian, but this suffix has not been examined closely here. Still, it must be said that in the case of *-s* there have been no extreme changes in its use according to the present database, i.e. *-s* is used minimally in both periods and reveals almost no changes in real time. In the following part of this article, the variation of *h* and *n* will be analysed over two different periods (in 1991 and 2006) by comparing the numerical data obtained from analysing social factors.

While comparing the analyses of 1991 and 2006, it can be seen that by 2006 the use of the suffix *-n* has risen in almost all social factor groups (see Table 2).

Table 2

Spread of *n*-suffixed forms by social factors in 1991 and 2006

	1991			2006		
	Total N	*-n*	%	Total N	*-n*	%
Birth date						
1912—1929	1221	196	17	536	165	31
1939—1963	758	354	47	771	466	61
1965—1976	464	260	57	403	322	80
Gender						
men	998	300	31	844	336	40
women	1445	510	36	866	617	72
Education						
elementary	748	30	5	100	8	8
basic	534	170	32	503	218	44
secondary	470	221	48	290	278	96
higher[9]	691	389	57	817	449	55
Origin						
local	1715	581	34	1143	557	49
immigrant	728	229	32	567	396	70
Village						
Sute	1583	470	30	931	562	61
Otsa	860	340	40	779	391	51
Network						
strong	1159	231	20	600	122	21
weak	1284	579	46	1110	831	75

The language use of the informants born in different periods indicates a tendency for informants to use the *n*-suffix more, the younger they are. The tendency is the same for both the 1991 and 2006 results. Conjointly, it can be seen that by 2006 the incidence of the *n*-formative had risen in all age groups (see also Figure 2). However, one must pay special attention to the group born between 1912 and 1929; their rate of *n*-suffix use is

[9] Here and on figures, 'higher' has been used to mark specialised secondary and higher education.

still under 50%. Yet, these real-time analysis results seem to indicate to a possible language change, i.e. during the 15 years the *n*-forms have became more popular and the use of the *h*-suffixes has decreased. As the middle-aged and younger groups (born between 1939 and 1963, and between 1965 and 1976) in the 2006 database mark the inessive with the *n*-formative more than elderly people (born between 1912 and 1929), it can be speculated that this language change is still ongoing.

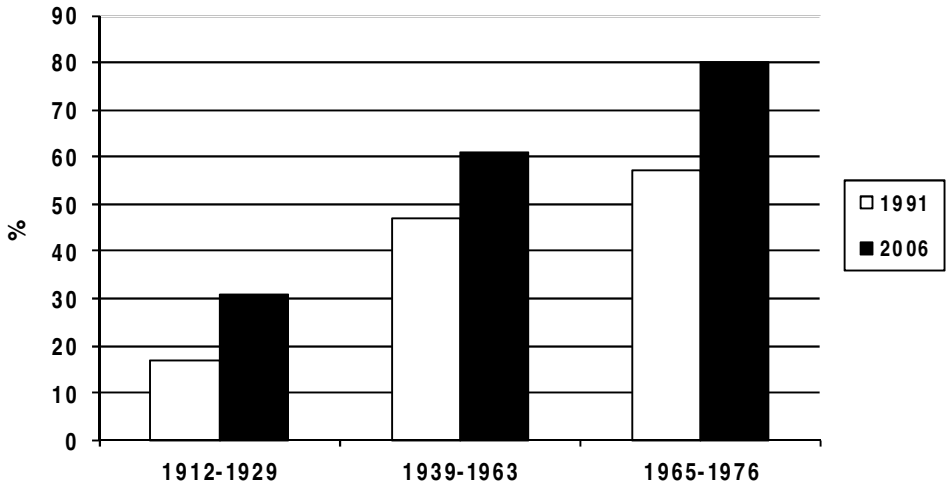

Figure 2. **Spread of *n*-forms in the language use of informants born in different time periods in surveys made in 1991 and 2006.**

The results categorised by gender reveal changes between the two data-collecting periods. By 2006, both in the speech of men and of women, the incidence of the *n*-suffix is higher than in 1991 (see also Figure 3). Moreover, it can be seen that in 2006 the language use of men and women differs more than in 1991. By 2006 the *n*-suffixes account for 40% of the inessive endings used by men, but in the speech of women these suffixes comprise 72% of the total. Such real-time analysis results allow us to assume that in this social network, women are leading the language change.

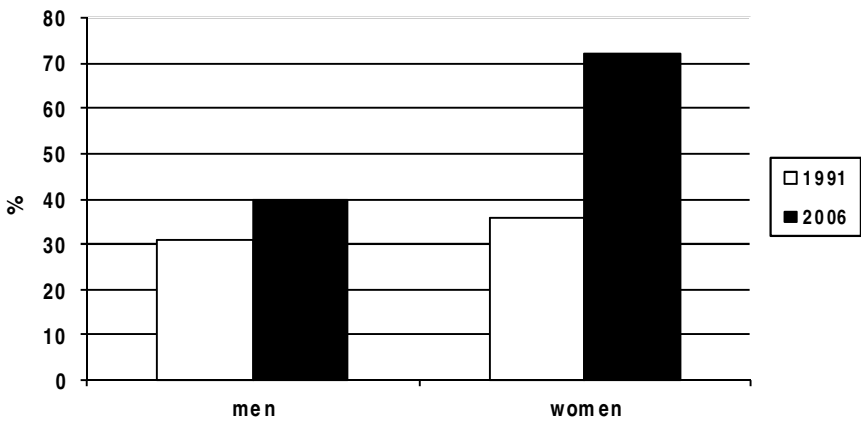

Figure 3. **Spread of *n*-forms in the language use of men and women in 1991 and 2006.**

Language use between the two periods can be seen to have changed in groups of almost every level of education. Numerical data (see also Figure 4) show that the informants with elementary[10], basic and secondary education used the *n*-formative more by 2006. The group with specialised secondary or higher education is different in that their rates of *-n* use have remained almost the same since 1991. The results of real-time analysis indicate that the informants with secondary education have been the leaders of the language change; by 2006, their use of *n*-suffixed forms is the highest. Such results match those of other sociolinguistic studies that have emphasised the importance of middle class[11] people in language change. The same studies have also pointed out the fact that the middle class uses prestigious forms even more than upper-middle class[12] (here, the data for the groups with secondary and specialised secondary or higher education can be compared).

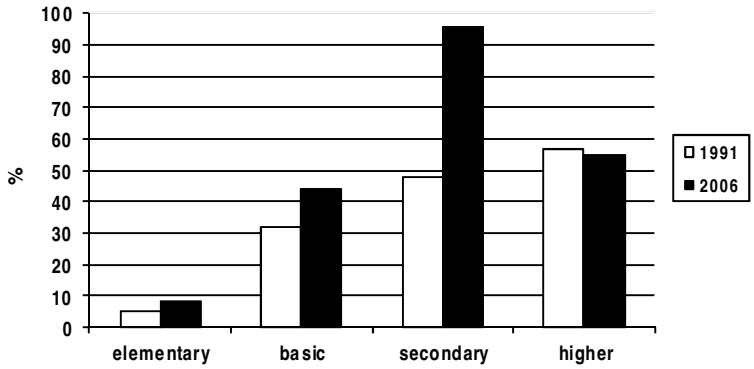

Figure 4. **Spread of *n*-forms by education level in 1991 and 2006.**

Differences between the two periods also occur in an analysis of the informants' origin (see also Figure 5). In 1991 the language use of local villagers was similar to the use of informants who had moved to the area. By 2006, a change had been observed in that the way informants who had come from outside the area preferred more *n*-suffixed forms than local informants. Still, it can be seen that in the language use of local villagers the incidence of *-n* is higher by 2006 than it had been in 1991. On the basis of numerical data it could be assumed that the *n*-suffix has spread in the network thanks to the villagers of non-local origin. As the majority of the informants originating from eastern Võrumaa and Setu areas had died by 2006, and with most informants of non-local origin belonging to the western parts of Võrumaa and having preserved their kinship contacts, such a result is naturally expected.

There have also been changes in language use between the the two villages themselves during the 15 years (see also Figure 6). It can be seen that in both villages the occurence of the *n*-suffix had risen by 2006. This

[10] In 2006, the results for the group with an elementary education the results are based on an idiolect because only one informant could be re-recorded.
[11] In Estonia, the middle class can conveniently be reduced to those with a secondary education.
[12] In Estonia, the upper-middle class corresponds to those with a higher education.

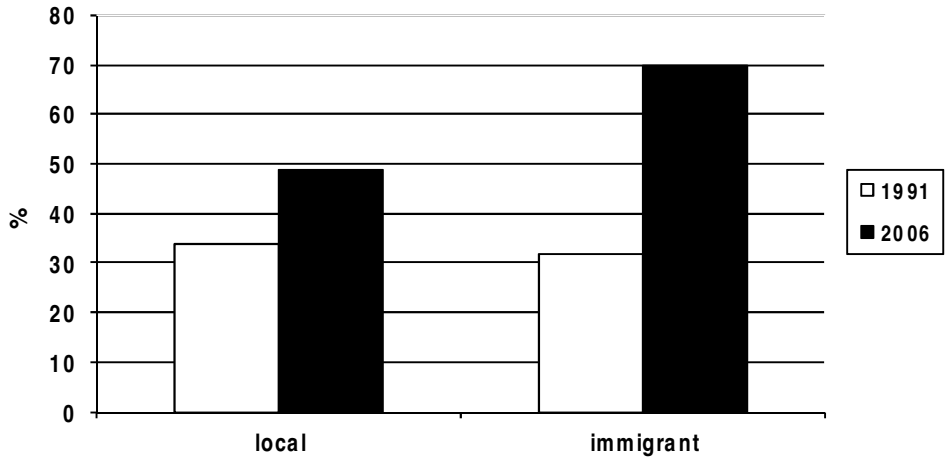

Figure 5. **Spread of *n*-forms in the language use of local and non-local informants in 1991 and 2006.**

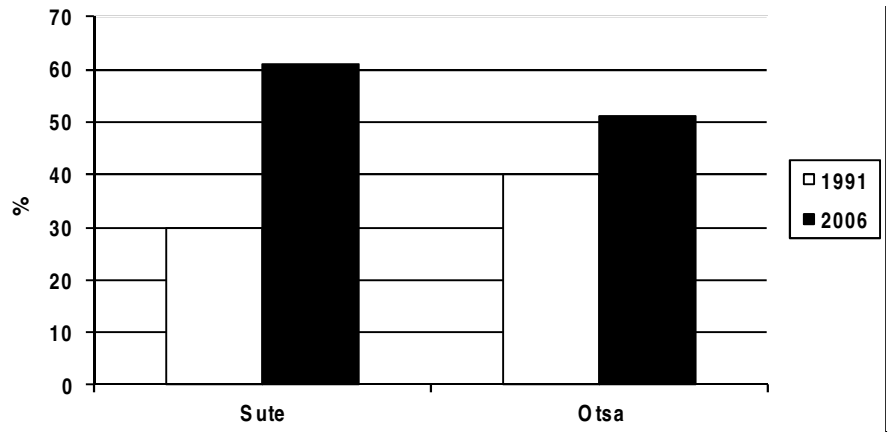

Figure 6. **Spread of *n*-forms in the language use of two villages in 1991 and 2006.**

is so especially in Sute where in 1991 the *n*-formative was less used than in Otsa. These results indicate that Sute has probably become a leader in the language change.

In addition, partial language change can be detected by network analysis (see also Figure 7). The language use of core members has remained the same between these two periods; here, *n*-forms are used equally in 1991 and 2006. The language use of peripheral members has changed during 15 years; by 2006, the rate of *n*-endings had reached 75%, while in 1991 it had been 46%. Based on this network analysis, the hypothesis that peripheral members lead the language change of the *n*-suffixed inessive forms has therefore been shown therefore to be correct. Thus, the statement (Granovetter 1973 : 1360—1380; Milroy, Milroy 1985 : 343—344, 354—355; Milroy, Milroy 1993 : 66—67) that language changes spread through peripheral members (so-called innovators) has been confirmed here, too.

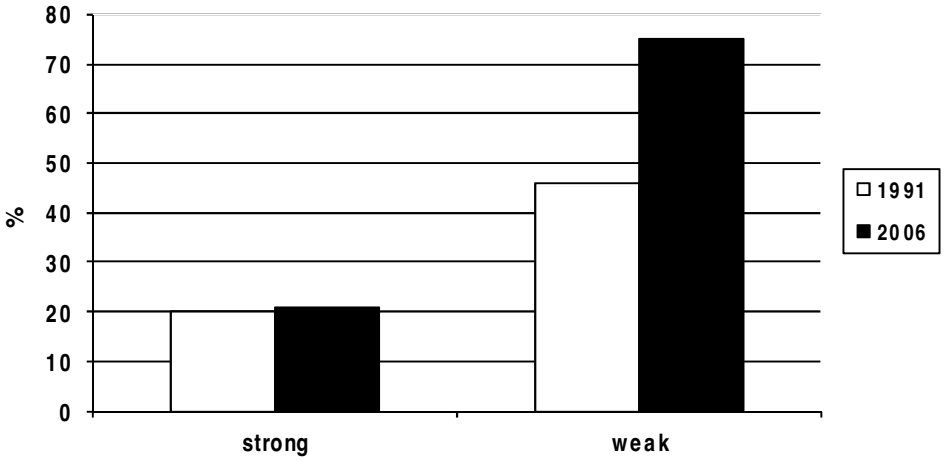

Figure 7. **Spread of *n*-forms in the language use of core and peripheral members in 1991 and 2006.**

To conclude, the results obtained from real-time analysis show that it in the case of the inessive ending, the change depends on social factors, because in all factor-groups the use of the *n*-formative has increased between two periods (1991 and 2006).

While adding here the comparision of idiolects[13], some fluctuation can be seen between the incidence of *n*-formatives used in 1991 and 2006 (see Figure 8 and Table 3).

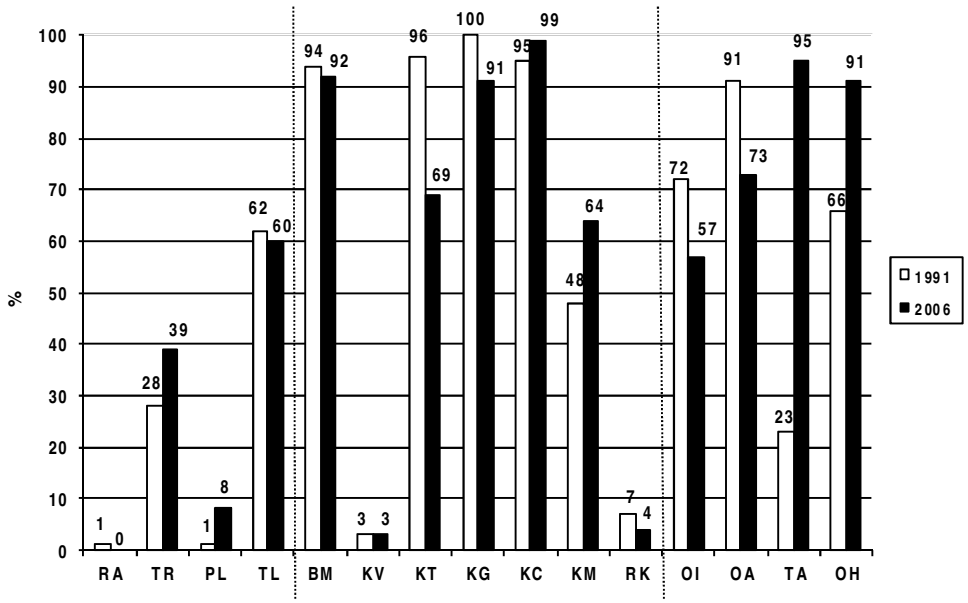

Figure 8. **Spread of *n*-forms by idiolect in 1991 and 2006.**[14]

[13] Here only those idiolects that could be recorded in both periods have been compared.

[14] Three age groups have been separated by vertical lines. In the figure, informants have been listed in descending order of age.

Table 3

Variation of *h*- and *n*-forms by idiolect in 1991 and 2006[15]

Informant	Birth date	Gender	Network	1991		2006	
				-n	*-h*	*-n*	*-h*
RA	1912—1929	woman	strong	1 1%	97 99%	0 0%	132 100%
TR	1912—1929	man	weak	28 28%	71 72%	52 39%	79 61%
PL	1912—1929	man	strong	1 1%	69 99%	8 8%	92 92%
TL	1912—1929	woman	strong	15 62%	9 38%	105 60%	68 40%
BM	1939—1963	woman	weak	124 94%	7 6%	116 92%	10 8%
KV	1939—1963	man	weak	1 3%	30 97%	2 3%	64 97%
KT	1939—1963	man	weak	26 96%	1 4%	9 69%	4 31%
KG	1939—1963	woman	weak	40 100%	0 0%	120 91%	11 9%
KC	1939—1963	woman	weak	39 95%	2 2%	158 99%	1 1%
KM	1939—1963	man	weak	26 48%	28 52%	52 64%	29 36%
RK	1939—1963	man	strong	2 7%	25 93%	9 4%	186 96%
OI	1965—1976	man	weak	107 72%	41 28%	65 57%	48 43%
OA	1965—1976	woman	weak	86 91%	8 9%	57 73%	21 27%
TA	1965—1976	man	weak	3 23%	10 77%	139 95%	6 5%
OH	1965—1976	woman	weak	10 66%	5 34%	61 91%	6 9%

From an analysis of idiolects it can be seen that almost half have maintained the use of the *n*-formative on the same level in both periods. The other half differs from the rest; their use of *n*-forms has either increased or decreased. The reasons are different in this case. The factors that seem most likely to influence the variation are the informant's birth date and social network. In the language use of the oldest informants (born between

[15] The thick line indicates the boundaries of age groups. Informants have been listed in ascending order of age. Their precise birth dates are not shown for ethical reasons.

1912 and 1929) inessive use has changed little during the 15-year period, yet one isolated exception can be seen in TR's language use. This result may be influenced by his network membership; TR is one of the peripheral members, while the other informants of the same age group are classified as core members.

Likewise in the group born between 1939 and 1963 no drastic differences occur. Only KT and KM reveal somewhat different tendencies. KT's use of the *n*-suffix had decreased by 2006. This may be the consequence of the fact that he is a conscious language user, because in one interview he mentions that the *h*-suffix is typical of Sute. In the case of the other informant (KM), the use of the *n*-formative has increased. The reason may be his occupation (taxi driver), a profession that has allowed him to communicate with people from different parts of Võrumaa. This in turn may have decreased the use of *h*-forms.

Most differences occur in the group born between 1965 and 1976. For instance, in the language use of OI and OA the rates of *n*-ending use had decreased by 2006, i.e. older linguistic traits have emerged into their language use. Yet, they are concious language users who have stated that *-h* characterises language in the area. By 2006, the use of the *n*-formative had increased in the language use of the youngest informants TA and OH. Both of them work in Lasva, a larger population centre located outside the area under investigation. Likewise, their familial relationships had changed. TA's mother had died and OH's mother had moved elsewhere. It can be speculated that such changes on the family level have weakened older local norms (such as the use of *n*-forms) in their language use.

5. Conclusions

The matters discussed above indicate that, in case of the inessive ending of Spoken Võro, there is a demonstrable variation that is a mark of ongoing language change. Such an assumption is supported by the fact that in real-time analysis the incidence of *n*-formatives has increased broadly in all social factor groups during the 15 years of study. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that the *n*-ending that had become standardised for the Võro literary language in the 1990s is gradually continuing its spread into Spoken Võro as well. One of the most important results here is the language use of the oldest informants (born between 1912 and 1929); their rates of *n*-suffixed inessive use have increased in line with increases seen in other age groups. Nevertheless, the analysis of idiolects shows that there are also some informants who prefer the *h*-formative; however these are very rare cases and such informants are conscious language users who are well-acquainted with linguistic history and as a result, their results do not much influence the overall picture.

To conclude, the tendency to mark the inessive with the *n*-formative is as expected, as use of the *n*-suffix offers one possibility to distinguish language use from that of the Setu people who use only the *h*-ending — making a distinction between Setu and Võro is still seen as very important for both parties. Secondly, the generalisation of *n*-suffixed forms marks the morphological levelling of Spoken Võro (in which one formative fends off the other) and the formation of a so-called Common Võro.

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МАРИ МЕТС (Тарту)

ВЫРУСКИЙ РАЗГОВОРНЫЙ ЯЗЫК В НАШЕ ВРЕМЯ: ВАРЬИРОВАНИЕ ОКОНЧАНИЯ ИНЕССИВА

В статье рассматривается варьирование окончания инессива в выруском разговорном языке (суффикс *-n*, исторически характерный для запада языкового ареала, и суффикс *-h*, свойственный речи на востоке ареала) на примере говоров двух деревень прихода Вастселийна (Сутэ и Отса). Материал записывался на пленку в 1991 г. и в 2006 г. Цель статьи — выяснить возможные тенденции языковых изменений за реальное время с помощью анализа социальных факторов (дата рождения, пол, уровень образования, среда общения, происхождение и место рождения, т. е. конкретная деревня), которые могли оказать влияние на варьирование окончания инессива. Результаты показывают, что за 15 лет в названном регионе произошло языковое изменение: доля окончания *-n* к 2006 г. увеличилась по сравнению с 1991 г. Исторически характерное для региона употребление окончания *-h* соответственно сократилось. Один из наиболее интересных результатов связан с фактором времени рождения информанта: среди самых пожилых информантов к 2006 г. доля употребляющих инессив с *-n* тоже выросла. Этот наглядный пример подтверждает, что процесс данного языкового изменения продолжается, и форматив *-n* в устной речи постепенно превращается в окончание инессива.