



# Onomatopoeia in Meänkieli

## – a lexicon study of similarities with Finnish and Swedish

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### Background

Meänkieli is a Finnish-Ugric minority language, which has developed in the north of Sweden since the 12<sup>th</sup> century emerging from dialects of Finnish but in contact with Swedish, a Germanic language. Finnish does not normally use initial consonant clusters, while Swedish does. Meänkieli can have initial consonant clusters, and could thus use phonaesthemes like in Swedish.



### Material and Method

Three dictionaries were compared: *Meänkieli-ruotti sanakirja*, *Meänkielen sanakirja* and *Suomi-Ruotsi-Soumi Taskusanakirja*. Swedish onomatopoeic words with the meanings 'wetness' or 'strong sound' beginning with the phonaesthemes *pl-*, *sl-*, *kn-*, *kl-*, *kr-*, *sn-*, *sp-*, and *skv-* were compared with Meänkieli and Finnish. Words beginning with consonant clusters were extracted from the Meänkieli and Finnish dictionaries. 60 Meänkieli words with translations were analyzed.

### Research questions

- Does a language in contact, Meänkieli, preserve onomatopoeic words and structures from its origin, is it affected by the contact language, or does it create its own onomatopoeic words and structures?
- Do phonaesthemes in Meänkieli correspond with phonaesthemes in Swedish?

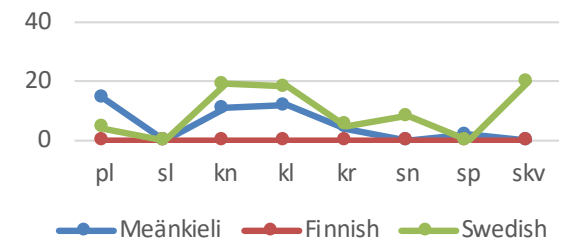
Examples of onomatopoeic words:

Swedish	Meänkieli	Finnish	English
klappa	koputella	kalisten	clop
prassla	krapista	rapina	rustle
skvalpa	loiskia	loiskia	splash
pladdra	klipistä	lörpötellä	babble
plaska	klutsuta	loiskia	splash
knacka	knakata	koputtaa	knock
knaka	kripsahtaa	narista	creak
klappa	klaputtaa	taputtaa	pat
knäppa	kräpsyttää	napsahtaa	snap
snattra	mukista	kaakattaa	quack
smattra	kropista	rätistä	clatter
klirra	kalista	kilinä	clink
smälla	plittoa	paukkua	pop
knattra	prätistä	päristä	rattle

### Preliminary results

- In Meänkieli there are many onomatopoeic words which begin with a consonant cluster, while there were no such words in the Finnish material.
- There were no two consonant clusters in Finnish.
- In Meänkieli the meanings of consonant clusters sometimes coincide with phonaesthemes in Swedish, sometimes not.

% onomatopoeic words in eight consonant clusters



### Conclusions

- Some Meänkieli onomatopoeic words are phonologically similar the Finnish origin, but many have no phonological resemblance.
- Meänkieli does not follow the Finnish onomatopoeic patterns. It shows similarities with Swedish, but also differences.
- The Meänkieli consonant clusters do not always correspond in meaning with Swedish phonaesthemes.