

Hundred Finnish linguistic life stories: Interviewers' reflections on data collecting as part of a new kind of research project

INTRODUCTION

- Aim of the project: to collect 100 life stories of people living in Finland by interviewing them
- Interviews can be analysed in terms of content, linguistic variation and interaction
- Majority of the data have been collected by students as part of their studies

DATA & BACKGROUND

- 15 learning diaries of students
- 60 forms of background information
- 60 students from 4 universities

Training of the students

A) 5 lectures on the following topics:

- Introduction of the research project
- Interview as a research method
- How to choose informants for this project
- Interviewing in practice: informing an interviewee (e.g. consent), questionnaire and its use

B) Literature:

- Comparing interviews recorded for dialectology and sociolinguistics (Nuolijärvi 2005)
- Reflection of a Labovian interview (Meyerhoff 2016)
- Immigration and multilingualism in Finland (Latomaa et al. 2013)
- Principles of research ethics

C) Training interview and its reflection

D) Guidance on the use of recorders and cameras

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What do the students' reflections reveal about the nature of the interviews and the linguistic ideologies among the students?
- How do the students' comments reflect the advice given during the course or theoretical knowledge on sociolinguistic interviews achieved in the previous research?

During the interview I was in a way irritatingly aware of my language use and I regretted some lexical choices immediately after using them.

Itse haastattelussa olin jollain lailla ärsyttävän tietoinen omasta kielenkäytöstäni ja kaduin joitain sanavalintoja heti niitä käytettyäni.

ANALYSIS

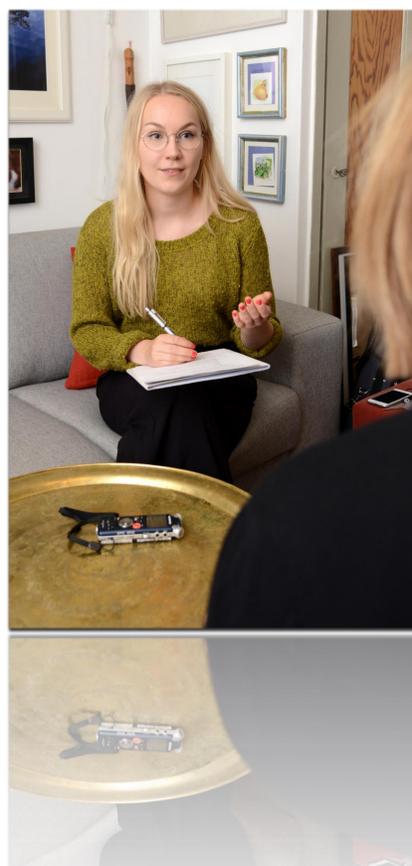
Ideal informant

- motivated and relaxed
- talkative but sticks to the point
- understands the questions and is able to answer them

Ideal interviewer

- well prepared
- keeps to the schedule
- asks all the (relevant) questions
- is able to formulate the questions understandably
- is able to ask complementary questions
- does not use leading questions
- does not comment too much on the informant's replies

Photograph: Tero Pajukallio



Setting and atmosphere

- relaxed (but not too familiar)
- challenges: new situation for many students
- peaceful room, no outsiders
- no technical problems or interruptions during the interview

The interview became a bit short, even though I tried to get as much information as possible of the interviewee. My interviewee is usually rather talkative but she was clearly nervous about the interview situation.

Haastattelusta tuli hieman lyhyt, vaikka pyrin saamaan haastateltavasta mahdollisimman paljon tietoa. Haastateltavani on yleensä melko puhelias, mutta haastattelutilanne selvästi jännitti häntä

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

- The students were strongly oriented to produce data according to the instructions
- Critical discussion on how an interviewer's activity may have affected the outcome
- Assumption that non-relaxedness is reflected in the language, cf. attempts to reach "natural" or authentic speech (Labov 1972)
- Talkative informants are appreciated: easy to interview; good sources of information and linguistic data
- Can a quiet and shy person be a good informant?

Variation between students

- Preferring an interview-like or an everyday conversation-like situation?
- The interactional role of the interviewer (comments, the use of dialogic particles; De Fina 2011)
- Satisfied/dissatisfied with their interview

No or only few comments on

- The variety/varieties used in the interview
- Mistakes in language
- Reflections of a heteroglossic language ideology?

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