

## **Perceptions of Vaasa Swedish: Inside and outside the town**

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Perceptual dialectology has in recent years become an often used method to gain valuable insights into dialects, using the thoughts of laymen regarding their own dialect and the dialects of other people as the material for linguistic study (e.g. Preston 1999). Studies have shown, for instance, that people often know more (or at least have more to say) about dialects geographically closer to them, than about dialects further away (e.g. Preston 1986). But do the perceptions about one's own dialect correspond to the perception of people in the neighboring area? How much and in which ways?

I study dialect variation in the town of Vaasa in western Finland and the research belongs to a project called *Urban dialects in the Swedish-speaking Finland*, carried out at Åbo Akademi University. Vaasa has roughly 61 000 inhabitants, and about 25 % of them have Swedish as their mother tongue. 19 Swedish-speaking informants from the town have been interviewed, 12 women and 7 men, born between 1947 and 1997. Additionally, interviews have been made with 10 informants from the same age span outside of the town. How do the town dwellers perceive their linguistic landscape? And how are these perceptions different from or similar to those of the people outside the town? How are the town people and their dialect perceived by outsiders?