7th Saami Linguistics Symposium

(SAALS 7)

Book of abstracts

Nuortta universitiehtta/Nord University

Bådåddjo/Bodø 4.-5.11.2026

Ante Aikio (Luobbal Sámmol Sámmol Ánte) (University of Oulu) & **Markus Juutinen** (University of Oulu) (Session B4)

Rethinking the Taxonomy of the Saami Languages

This paper presents a critical, up-to-date reassessment of competing taxonomic models of the Saami languages. We focus in particular on two influential proposals. The first is the long standing division into Western Saami (South, Ume, Pite, Lule, and North Saami) and Eastern Saami (Aanaar, Skolt, Akkala, Kildin, and Ter Saami) (e.g. Korhonen 1981; Sammallahti 1998). The second is the alternative model of Häkkinen & Piha (2023), which posits a primary split between South and Ume Saami on the one hand and all other Saami languages on the other. We evaluate these proposals and argue that, despite a long tradition of careful research, attempts to establish a classical, strictly branching taxonomy for the Saami languages have not been successful.

Our analysis concentrates on sound change, as phonology provides the most reliable evidence for subgrouping. Methodologically, we emphasize that only shared innovations constitute valid criteria for genetic classification, whereas shared retentions are not diagnostically relevant.

We systematically reassess the sound changes that have been cited in support of the existing taxonomic models. A substantial portion of this evidence proves problematic under closer scrutiny. In many cases, the actual distribution of a change does not correspond to the subgroup to which it has been assigned. In others, there are indications that the change has diffused across already differentiated Saami varieties. Furthermore, some proposed innovations are so limited in scope – affecting only a single consonant cluster or, in extreme cases, a single lexical item – that their contribution to linguistic divergence, and hence their taxonomic significance, is minimal.

On the basis of this reassessment, we argue that the traditional division of Saami into Western and Eastern branches lacks valid empirical support and should be abandoned, despite its long standing and widespread acceptance as a standard classificatory framework. With regard to the model proposed by Häkkinen & Piha (2023), we find that South and Ume Saami may indeed constitute a valid subgroup, as they share several distinctive and systemically significant sound changes. However, this does not entail that the remaining Saami languages form a coherent subgroup. We argue that the evidence advanced in support of such a grouping is not tenable.

The difficulty of establishing a strictly branching taxonomy, despite extensive research, points to the need for alternative approaches that do not presuppose a tree-like model of divergence. We propose that the Saami languages are more appropriately understood as the outcome of gradual differentiation within a dialect continuum, forming a network of related varieties that can be characterized as a 'linkage' (François 2014). On this view, the diversification of the Saami languages cannot be adequately captured by a simple tree model.

References

François, A. 2014. Trees, waves and linkages. Models of language diversification. In C. Bowern & B. Evans (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Historical Linguistics*, 161–189. London & New York: Routledge.

Häkkinen, J. & Piha, M. 2023. Kantasaamesta eteläkantasaameen, osa 2. Äännehistorian todisteita eteläsaamen varhaisesta eriytymisestä. In: *Sananjalka* 65: 7–30.

Korhonen, M. 1981. *Johdatus lapin kielen historiaan*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura.

Sammallahti, P. 1998. *The Saami Languages. An Introduction*. Kárášjohka: Davvi Girji OS.

Bianca Benini-Morottaja (University of Turku) (Session A4)

Kielâmiäštáreh and Oppâmmäädhih: Indigenous Language Learning Methodologies in Inari Sámi and Apurinã Indigenous Communities

Kielâmiäštáreh já oppâmmäädhih: algâaalmugkielâi oppâmmetodeh anarâš já apurina siärváduvâin

Language teaching and learning methodology are a critical focus in language (re)vitalization efforts (McCarty 2018). Various methodologies have been developed and adapted by and for Indigenous and minoritized communities. For instance, the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (MAP) was originally created by a group of California Indian language speakers and activists in 1992. The main goal was to foster new avenues for passing the heritage language on to the next generations (Hinton et al. 2018). It pairs an Elder (a language master), who is a fluent speaker, with a language apprentice. Together, they engage in everyday tasks using the target language. This approach has been adapted and adopted in Sámi language immersion courses. For instance, the complementary Aanaar Sámi Language Education, CASLE, project introduced the Language Master method early on (Aikio-Puoskari 2018). Later, the Education Institute for Sámi (SOGSAKK) in Finland incorporated it into its intensive one-year Inari Sámi course (Pasanen 2019).

This presentation is organized around two main topics. First, I share my personal experience of learning Inari Sámi as a second language during a one-year language course organized by SOGSAKK in 2022-2023. I focus on two teaching and learning methodologies employed in the course: *Kielâmiäštár* (the "Language Master") and *Oppâmmäädhih* ("Learning by Traveling"). *Oppâmmäädhih* methodology focuses on visiting the main villages around Aanaar municipality, together with a Kielâmiäštár, who guided our visit around their home environment. During these guided walks, the apprentices learn about the history of the places and the area's fauna and flora, all in Inari Sámi.

In the second part, I discuss how these Sámi learning methodologies shaped my fieldwork with the Apurinã community. In 2025, I conducted fieldwork in Kamicuã, an Apurinã territory in southern Amazonas, Brazil. In my PhD, I explore how (re)vitalization and sustainability of Indigenous languages are translated and represented in Language Educational Policies instruments, such as curricula and textbooks. I also examine how these policies are implemented and contested in Indigenous community schools, highlighting grassroots initiatives and the challenges they face. Drawing on the interconnection between the development of learning materials and community-based activities, as *Kielâmiäštár* and *Oppâmmäädhih*, I explore how these methods are adopted by Apurinã teachers to create new uses of the language both inside and outside formal education.

References

Aikio-Puoskari, U. 2018. Revitalization of Sámi languages in three Nordic countries. In L. Hinton, L. Huss, & G. Roche (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language revitalization*, 355–363. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315561271-45

Hinton, L. & Florey, M. & Gessner, S. & Manatowa-Bailey, J. 2018. The master–apprentice language learning program. In L. Huss, G. Roche, & L. Hinton (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language revitalization*, 127–136. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315561271-17

McCarty, T. L. 2018. Community-based language planning. In L. Huss, G. Roche, & L. Hinton (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language revitalization*, 22–35. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315561271-4

Pasanen, A. 2019. Becoming a new speaker of a Saami language through intensive adult education. In S. D. Penfield & A. Sherris (eds.), *Rejecting the marginalized status of minority languages: Educational projects pushing back against language endangerment*, 49–69. Channel View Publications. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788926263-007

Karianne Berg (Nord University), **Camilla Porsanger** (Nord University), **Veslemøy Rydland** (University of Oslo), **Kathrin Olsen**, Nord University & **Monica Melby-Lervåg** (University of Oslo) (Session A3)

Language Use at Home and in Preschool Among North Sámi Children in Norway

Sámi children grow up in highly diverse linguistic environments, often navigating multilingual repertoires that include Sámi and Norwegian. However, there is limited empirical knowledge about how language use in the home and in early childhood contexts supports Sámi language development. This study examines how Sámi language use at home and in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is associated with Sámi children's language outcomes.

Harkness and Super's (1986; 1992) developmental niche framework provides a conceptual lens for understanding how Sámi children's language development emerges within culturally structured environments. The framework proposes that children's developmental outcomes are shaped through the interaction of three subsystems: the physical and social settings of everyday life, caregiver beliefs and ethnotheories, and culturally organized customs and practices of childcare. Applied to the present study, Sámi language use in the home can be understood as part of the child's immediate developmental setting, reflecting both the linguistic environment to which the child is regularly exposed and the parental ethnotheories that guide decisions about transmitting the Sámi language. Similarly, Sámi language use within early childhood education and care (ECEC) represents institutionalized caregiving practices that embody broader cultural and political commitments to Sámi language revitalization. By drawing on this framework, the study conceptualizes home and ECEC language input not merely as isolated variables, but as interrelated components of the developmental niche that collectively shape Sámi children's emerging vocabulary, narrative abilities, and early literacy skills. This theoretical grounding supports an ecocultural interpretation of how linguistic experiences embedded in everyday routines contribute to early Sámi language development.

The sample consists of 54 North Sámi children aged 4–5 years, representing a wide range of Sámi linguistic environments. Children's Sámi language proficiency was assessed using direct language measures, and information about language use and language environments was collected through questionnaires completed by parents and ECEC teachers. Demographic variables are included to capture broader contextual influences within the niche that may also shape children's language proficiency.

The results section will present analyses examining the associations between Sámi language use in the home and in ECEC settings and children's Sámi vocabulary, narrative abilities, and emergent literacy skills. First, descriptive statistics will be reported to provide an overview of the sample's linguistic environments and language-related outcomes. Next, correlations will be used to explore initial

relationships among home language use, ECEC language practices, demographic variables, and children's skills. Finally, multiple regression models will be conducted to determine the extent to which home and ECEC language use independently and jointly account for variation in children's vocabulary, narrative abilities, and emergent literacy skills when demographic factors are included. Together, these analyses will allow us to evaluate how different components of children's linguistic environments relate to early Sámi language development.

By focusing on multiple developmental contexts and Sámi-specific language outcomes, the study contributes knowledge about conditions that support Sámi language development in early childhood and provides empirically grounded insights relevant for Sámi language revitalization efforts.

References

Super, C. M., & Harkness, S. 1986. The developmental niche: A conceptualization at the interface of child and culture. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 9(4), 545 569. https://doi.org/10.1177/016502548600900409

Harkness, S., & Super, C. M. 1992. Parental ethnotheories in action. *Advances in Developmental Psychology*, 7, 373–392.

Ryan Chon (McGill University) & **Ante Aikio (Luobbal Sámmol Sámmol Ánte)** (University of Oulu) (Session B5)

Language contact effects of the northeast spread of reindeer pastoralism and North Saami

This presentation proposes a new account of the historical development of the Eastern Inland (EI) dialect group of North Saami, spoken in the Deatnu (Tana) River basin. We argue that these dialects arose through intense contact with an Aanaar Saami-like variety, and that this contact situation can be linked to the northeastward spread of large-scale reindeer pastoralism in the late medieval period.

The EI dialects of North Saami display a cluster of phonological and lexical features that closely resemble those of Aanaar Saami, but are largely absent from North Saami varieties further west. Conversely, Aanaar Saami exhibits a more limited set of similarities with North Saami that are not found in Saami varieties further east (Rydving 2013; Mettovaara 2024). We interpret this asymmetrical pattern as evidence for two distinct contact processes: (1) EI North Saami developed under substantial substrate influence, both lexical and structural, from an Aanaar Saami-like variety; and (2) Aanaar Saami shows more limited, primarily lexical influence from a North Saami superstrate associated with the same expansion process. This interpretation corroborates the suggestion made by Valtonen & al. (2022), according to which the adoption of large-scale reindeer pastoralism in northwestern Scandinavia and its spread northeastward in the 14th and 15th centuries can be linked with the expansion of North Saami speakers in the same direction, resulting in the convergence between Saami varieties in the region today.

Evidence for substrate influence is examined in both the phonological and lexical domains. In phonology, EI North Saami shows lenited weak-grade reflexes [v] and [ɣ ~ j ~ v ~ Ø] of Proto-Saami *p and *k, respectively, paralleling Aanaar and Skolt Saami; no other western Saami varieties display comparable developments. Similarly, EI North Saami exhibits fronted diphthongs [u̟e̟] and [oæ̟] as reflexes of Proto-Saami *uo and *oa in specific environments, again aligning with Aanaar and Skolt Saami. West of this area, comparable diphthong fronting is otherwise attested only in South and Ume Saami. In the lexical domain, we analyze items that are attested in EI dialects and in Aanaar and/or Skolt Saami but are absent from Western Inland dialects and other western Saami varieties. A substantial portion of this vocabulary can be identified as certain or probable borrowings from the substrate variety.

We situate these linguistic developments within a broader sociohistorical framework. We propose that the transition to large-scale reindeer pastoralism facilitated a northeastward expansion of North Saami speakers, who likely adopted this economic system from Saami groups further southwest. During the

15th century, this new economic system spread through present-day Finnmark in Norway and northern Finnish Lapland in a context marked by significant demographic, environmental and sociocultural pressures, including epidemic disease (Seitsonen & Viljanmaa 2021), declines in wild reindeer populations (Hansen & Olsen 2014; Halinen 2016), increased demand for reindeer products (Salmi & al. 2014; Wallerström 2000), and processes of Christianization (Carpelan 2003). This expansion led to language shift from earlier Saami varieties to North Saami, most plausibly from a variety closely related to modern Aanaar Saami. Such a shift would have enabled integration into emerging pastoral networks extending westward. This scenario accounts for both the contact-induced features of the EI dialects and the comparatively wide geographic distribution of North Saami relative to neighboring Saami languages.

References

Carpelan, C. 2003. Inarilaisten Arkeologiset Vaiheet. In V. Lehtola (ed.), *Inari – Aanaar, Inarin Historia Jääkaudesta Nykypäivään*, 28–95. Oulu: Inarin kunta.

Halinen, P. 2016. The Inland Sámi Societies of Northern Fennoscandia During the Late Iron Age and Early Medieval Period: An Archaeological Approach. In P. Uino & K. Nordqvist (eds.), *New Sites, New Methods*, 160–174. Iskos 21. Helsinki: Finnish Antiquarian Society.

Hansen, L. I. & Olsen, B. 2014. *Hunters in Transition. An Outline of Early Sámi History.* Leiden: Brill.

Mettovaara, J. 2024. Inarin- ja pohjoissaamen kontakteista sanaston valossa. *Mémoires de la Société Finno-ougrienne* 278: 496–514. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.

Rydving, Håkan. 2013. *Words and Varieties. Lexical Variation in Saami*. Mémoires de la Société Finno-ougrienne 269. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.

Salmi, A. & Äikäs, T. & Fjellström, M. & Spangen, M. 2015. Animal Offerings at Sámi Offering Site Unna Saiva: Changing Religious Practices and Human-Animal Relationships. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 40: 10–22.

Seitsonen, O. & Viljanmaa, S. 2021. Transnational Landscapes of Sámi Reindeer: Domestication and Herding in Northernmost Europe 700–1800 A.D. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 46(3): 172–191.

Valtonen, T. & Ylikoski, J. & Aikio, A. 2022. Aanaar (Inari) Saami. In M. Bakró-Nagy, J. Laakso, & E. Skribnik (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Uralic Languages.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wallerström, T. 2000. The Saami between East and West in the Middle Ages: An archaeological contribution to the history of reindeer breeding. *Acta Borealia* 17(1): 3–39.

Ilya Egorov (LMU Munich) (Session B4)

Phonological innovations of Akkala Saami: Between Skolt and Kildin

Akkala Saami remains one of the least studied and most poorly documented languages of the Saami group. Although some valuable observations on the historical development of this variety were made by Sammallahti (1998: 28–29), a more systematic historical-comparative overview has yet to be undertaken. The present talk aims to fill this gap by examining the phonological innovations of Akkala Saami from an areal perspective. In particular, the talk focuses on the conflicting distribution of features, with some features aligning Akkala Saami with Skolt Saami and others with Kildin Saami. Exclusive innovations specific to Akkala Saami will also be discussed.

The study relies on published sources. The available textual data on Akkala Saami are limited to several chapters of the Gospel of Matthew collected by Arvid Genetz (1891), as well as narratives collected and published by Pekka Zaikov (1987; Kert & Zaikov 1988). Lexical material is included in Genetz's dictionary (1891) and in the comparative dictionary by Eliseev and Zaitseva (2007). Zaikov's (1987) grammar remains the only grammatical description of this dialect. All existing materials present various methodological and reliability issues and therefore require a critical approach. Conclusions regarding the details of phonological developments (the precise formulation of sound laws, the relative and/or absolute chronology of innovations, and their distribution via wave-like processes or in accordance with a tree model) can only be drawn after a careful investigation of individual Akkala, Skolt, and Kildin Saami doculects, as undertaken in the course of this study. The research follows a standard Neogrammarian methodology, assuming the exceptionlessness of sound laws. Particular attention is paid to interdialectal borrowings, which may easily obscure the regularity of sound correspondences.

The following features indicate a close affinity between Akkala Saami and Skolt Saami in phonological development:

- Skolt-type consonant gradation of stops: preaspiration in the strong grade and secondary lengthening before contracted vowels;
- Lenition of PSaa *p > v (but not *t > δ and *k > γ) in weak grade. Lack of *t > δ is observed in Njuõ'ttjäu'rr Skolt Saami as well;
- Vowel system following the law of contrastive length correlation;
- Lowering of PSaa *u before second-syllable *$\bar{a}$ and *$\bar{o}$;
- Lowering of PSaa *i before second-syllable *$\bar{a}$, *$\bar{o}$, and *$\bar{e}$ (parallels with Njuõ'ttjäu'rr and Suõ'nnjel dialects).

The following features, in turn, point to shared developments between Akkala Saami and Kildin Saami:

- Monophthongisation of PSaa **ie* and **uo* before **ǧ*, **i*, and **u*. In contrast to Kildin and Ter Saami, the second syllable **ē* did not trigger monophthongisation;
- Apocope of PSaa **t* in the latus of formerly trisyllabic words (a recent areal innovation occurred in the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries).

An intriguing Akkala Saami innovation is the shift of front vowels of different origin to *o* after Akkala palatal consonants: AkSaa *ćorrtɛ* 'to fly' < PSaa **kirtē-tēk*, AkSaa *ćošškɛ* 'to tear' < PSaa **kiškō-tēk*, AkSaa *ćoll* 'bell' < Kar, Fin *kello*, AkSaa *čod* 'through' < PSaa **čǧδǧk*, AkSaa *ńoulɛ* 'to string' < PSaa **ńivlō-tēk*, AaSaa *jonn* 'big' < **jǧnǧ*.

The development of the Skolt-type consonant gradation likely belongs to an earlier period and reflects an archaic dialectal subgrouping. The lowering of **u* and **i*, as well as the lenition of stops, show a gradual distribution across the Skolt dialect continuum. However, the initial phase of these processes (the lenition of **p* and the lowering of **i* and **u* before **ā*) may already have occurred in the common ancestor of Skolt and Akkala. This stage likely predates the Eastern Saami apocope of final vowels.

The monophthongisation of **ie* and **uo*, which links Akkala with Kildin and Ter Saami, should probably be assigned to this period before the apocopes as well. Importantly, this monophthongisation does not fully replicate the Peninsular Kola Saami pattern. In addition to the absence of monophthongisation before **ē*, Akkala shows monophthongisation of **oa* before **u*, a development not attested in the archaic Kildin doculects or in Ter Saami. Apart from these features, the development of the Akkala diphthongs more closely resembles that observed in Skolt Saami.

The present overview of the Akkala Saami innovations supports the conclusion (in agreement with Sammallahti 1998) that this variety shares its most recent common ancestor with Skolt rather than with Kildin Saami. At the same time, contact-induced areal influences from the Peninsular Kola Saami languages can be attributed to an earlier period.

References

Eliseev, Y. S. & Zaitseva, N. G. (eds.) 2007. *Sopostavitel'no-onomasiologičeskij slovar' dialektov karel'skogo, vepsskogo i saamskogo jazykov [Comparative onomasiological dictionary of the dialects of Karelian, Veps, and Saami languages]*. Petrozavodsk: KarNC RAN.

Genetz, A. 1891. *Kuollan lapin murteiden sanakirja ynnä kielennäytteitä*. Bidrag till Kännedom Af Finlands Natur Ock Folk 50. Helsingfors: Finska Vetenskaps-Societeten.

Kert, G. M. & Zaikov, P. M. 1988. *Obrazcy saamskoj reči [Samples of Saami speech]*. Petrozavodsk: Karel'skij filial AN SSSR.

Sammallahti, P. 1998. *The Saami Languages: An Introduction.* Kárášjohka: Davvi Girji.

Zaikov, P. M. 1987. *Babinskij dialekt saamskogo jazyka [Akkala dialect of the Saami language]*. Petrozavodsk: Karelija.

Evan Hansen (University of Eastern Finland) (Session A8)

Passivized causative constructions in Kildin Saami: complex derivations in *-xuvv-* and *-tuvv-*

In this study, I examine the formal and semantic characteristics of passivized causative verb constructions in Kildin Saami. Passivized causative verbs are derived with the complex suffixes *-x-uvv-* (-х-увв-) [-CAUS1-PASS-] and *-t-uvv-* (-т-увв-) [-CAUS2-PASS-]. Earlier language descriptions include brief mentions of *-xuvv-* as either a reflexive (Kert 1975: 241) or passive suffix (Kuruč 1985: 554; Kert 1987: 99), while Kert (1987) additionally describes the complex suffix as deriving passivized causatives. The aforementioned publications further comprise short illustrations of the passivizer and causativizers individually, chiefly touching on how they are used in word formation. The morphemes have otherwise not yet been the topic of a focused study.

Crucial for consideration is that Kildin Saami may be preliminarily described as possessing both a "plain" (1a) and a curative (1b) causative construction type. In the former, the original A argument receives accusative marking as the causee, while the original patient is pushed out to the comitative case. In the latter, a curative agent/causee in the illative is introduced and the original P takes accusative marking as the undergoer. The accusative case, then, may encode both agents and patients of base events:

(1) a. Мунн сӧн чӓенҍ юхта.
munn soon čaaje'n juxta
1:SG.NOM 3:SG.ACC tea.SG.COM drink.CAUS2.1SG.NPST
'I give him tea to drink'. (Afanas'eva et al. 1985: 428, #юхтэ)

b. Кӣзэнтҍ соннэ сӯнэтҍ.
kiize'ht co'nne suune't
wind.CAUS1.SG.IMP 3:SG.ILL thread.PL.ACC
'Have him wind the threads'. (Afanas'eva et al. 1985: 112, #кӣзхэ)

The differences between the two causativizers *-x-* (*-aht-*) and *-t-* (*-d-*) remain unclear, though notably a given verb may seemingly take either using the appropriate stem: *menhte* (мэӈтэ) and *meenxe* (мӭнхэ) 'to make go' ⇐ *meenne* (мӭннэ) 'to go' (Afanas'eva et al. 1985: 202–203).

Regarding passivization via *-uvv-*, intransitive verbs in addition to transitive verbs may be used: *råxptuvve* (роаҥптуввэ) [die.PASS.INF] 'to be killed (about an animal)' ⇐*råxpte* (роаҥптэ) [die.INF] 'tob die (about an animal)' (note also: *råxptaxx'te* (роаҥптаҥтӭ) [die.CAUS.INF] 'to contribute to the death (of an animal), cause to die'). For transitive base clauses, the accusative P argument is promoted to

nominative S, while the demoted A when overtly encoded is found in the comitative or locative. Certain passivized causative data points exemplify how the illative may be used for this purpose, similarly to adversative passives in North and Skolt Saami (Valijärvi and Kahn 2017: 250; Lehtinen 2021: 39). (2) is one such example, which may take the more literal reading 'the child got itself bitten by mosquitoes':

(2) Па̄ррьшя	лӣ	ка̄цькхуввма	чӯшкэтҍ.
paa'rrša	lii	kaa'ckxuvvma	čuuške't
child.SG.NOM	be.3SG.NPST	bite.CAUS.PASS.PTCP.PST	mosquito.PL.ILL

'The child has been bitten by mosquitoes'. (Antonova 2014: 91, #ка̄цькхуввма)

While some verbs in *-xuvv-* and *-tuvv-* may take a true passivized causative reading (e.g. *siijnxuvve* (сӣйнхуввэ) 'to be made to laugh' ⇐ *siijjne* (сӣййнэ) 'to laugh'), the passivizer *-uvv-* (-Увв-)'s multifunctional nature allows for other types of reduced-valence interpretations (e.g. *porhtuvve* (порҕуввэ) 'to feed (itrs.), graze' ⇐*porhte* (порҕтэ) 'to feed (trs.)' ⇐*poorre* (по̄ррэ) 'to eat').

The present study analyzes bilingual Kildin Saami-Russian dictionary and glossary data (cf. Hansen (2025)) and additionally incorporates spoken and other written materials annotated by the *Kola Saami Documentation Project* (Rießler 2005–2025) to explore how argument marking shifts between causativized and passivized causative constructions to reflect different types of valence reductions, as well as which participants of a causativized event may be promoted or otherwise retained in a passivized construction.

This paper will further offer a comparison with passivized causatives in North Saami based on findings presented in Vinka (2002).

Glossing abbreviations

1 – first person; **3** – third person; **ACC** – accusative; **CAUS1** – the causativizer *-x-*; **CAUS2** – the causativizer *-t-*; **COM** – comitative; **ILL** – illative; **IMP** – imperative mood; **INF** – infinitive; **itrs.** – intransitive; **NOM** – nominative; **NPST** – non-past; **PASS** – passive; **PTCP** – participle; **PL** – plural; **SG** – singular; **trs.** – transitive

References

Afanas'eva, N. E. & Antonova, A. A. & Gluchov, B. A. & Jakovlev, L. D. & Mečkina, E. I. 1985. *Saamsko-russkij slovar' = [Sām'-rūšš soagknehk'] = [Saami-Russian dictionary]*. Edited by R. D. Kuruč. Moskva: Russkij jazyk.

Antonova, A. A. 2014. *Saamsko-russkij slovar' =[Saami-Russian dictionary]. Okolo 7500 saamskich slov i 10600 slovosočetanij*. Red. by A. M. Ageeva, S. N. Galkin, D. M. Chomjuk, and E. Scheller. Murmansk: ANO Arktičeskij centr naučnich issledovanij i ėkspertiz.

Hansen, E. 2025. Kildin Saami-Russian-(English) parallel corpus building. In M. Hämäläinen, M. Rießler, E. V. Morooka, and L. Kharlashkin (eds.), *Proceedings of the 10th International Workshop on Computational Linguistics for Uralic Languages*, 49–56. ACL. Joensuu, Finland: Association for Computational Linguistics.

Kert, G. M. 1975. Saamskij jazyk. In V. I. Lytkin, K. E. Majtinskaja, and K. Redij (eds.), *Osnovy finno-ugorskogo jazykoznanija*, 203–247. Vol. 2. Moskva: Nauka.

Kert, G. M. 1987. O glagol'nych slovoobrazovatel'nych suffiksach v kil'dinskom dialekte saamskogo jazyka. *Sovetskoe finno-ugrovedenie* 23: 92–100.

Kuruč, R. D. 1985. Kratkij grammatičeskij očerk saamskogo jazyka. In R. D. Kuruč (ed.), *Saamsko-russkij slovar'*, 529–567. Moskva: Russkij jazyk.

Lehtinen, M. 2021. Skolt Saami passive verbs. *Finnisch-Ugrische Mitteilungen* 45: 15–52.

Rießler, M. 2005–2025. Kola Saami Documentation Project (KSDP). Linguistic and ethnographic documentation of the endangered Kola Saami languages. In *The Language Archive (TLA). DoBeS archive*. Digital language archive. In collab. with A. Afanasyeva, A. Behnke, S. Danilova, A. Dubovtsev, I. Egorov, A. Ershtadt, E. Gamboni, E. Hansen, D. Jackermeier, M. Juutinen, E. Karvovskaya, K. Kotcheva, J. Kusmenko, M. Litvak, S. Nikolaev, K. Olyzko, N. Partanen, I. Perkmann, E. Scheller, N. Sharshina, G. Vinogradova, J. Wilbur, E. Zhivotova, and N. Zolotukhina. Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics.

Valijärvi, R. and Kahn, L. 2017. *North Sámi. An essential grammar*. London: Routledge.

Vinka, E. M. 2002. Causativization in North Sámi. PhD thesis. Montreal: Department of Linguistics McGill University.

Katri Hiovain-Asikainen (UiT Arctic University of Norway & University of Helsinki) & **Antti Suni** (University of Helsinki) (Session B1)

Uralic Multilingual TTS for Supporting Endangered Languages in the Digital Realm

Urálalaš máŋggagielat hállansyntesa áitatvuloš gielaid doarjumii digitála máilmmis

In 2024, the Divvun group at UiT The Arctic University of Norway (Pirinen et al. 2023) released TTS applications for North, Lule, and South Sámi, all of which hold official language status in Norway. As part of this work, entirely new speech corpora were developed from scratch (Hiovain-Asikainen & De la Rosa 2023; Hiovain-Asikainen & Moshagen 2022) or archived, digitally enhanced materials were used to achieve a usable TTS voice for South Sámi (Hiovain-Asikainen et al. 2025). Although these applications mark a significant advancement in Sámi speech technology, further improvements are still needed. In Hiovain-Asikainen & Suni (2025), we have introduced the first multilingual, multi-speaker model centred on Sámi languages. In the present work, we build on this approach by incorporating Inari Sámi—a Sámi language spoken exclusively in Finland—and by exploring links and potential synergies with other closely related Uralic languages, including Olonets Karelian, spoken in Eastern Finland and Russia.

For low-resource languages, the available training data is unavoidably limited, which can lead to fragile synthesis quality: pronunciation inaccuracies and suboptimal prosody may arise, and the number of distinct voices per language typically remains very small. In relatively small language communities such as Lule (~2000 speakers), Inari (~500 speakers), and South Sámi (~500–600 speakers), this also increases the likelihood that users will recognize individual voice talents, which is not always desirable. Moreover, the inherent multilingualism of these communities is difficult to capture adequately; for instance, the rendering of proper names from majority languages may not align well with speakers' actual linguistic competence.

In this study, we investigate whether jointly training multiple speakers and languages within a single neural TTS model can help address these challenges. Our approach combines data from several Sámi languages (North, Lule, South, and Inari Sámi) and supplements it with material from related Uralic languages, including Finnish, Estonian, and Karelian. The goal is to enhance Sámi speech synthesis through shared representations while preserving language-specific features.

Ideally, this strategy will lead to more robust and higher-quality Sámi TTS, as well as increased flexibility in voice diversity and multilingual pronunciation. At the same time, we consider potential cross-linguistic effects, such as the emergence of a "foreign accent." We present our initial findings and discuss the applicability of such models in online settings.

References

Hiovain-Asikainen, K., & De la Rosa, J. 2023. Developing TTS and ASR for Lule and North Sámi languages. In *Proceedings of the 2nd Annual Meeting of the ELRA/ISCA SIG on Under-resourced Languages (SIGUL 2023)*, 48–52.

Hiovain-Asikainen, K., Kjærstad, T., Kappfjell, M. L., & Moshagen, S. 2025. The world's first South Sámi TTS–a revitalisation effort of an endangered language by reviving a legacy voice. In *Proceedings of the 10th International Workshop on Computational Linguistics for Uralic Languages*, 12–21.

Hiovain-Asikainen, K., & Moshagen, S. 2022. Building open-source speech technology for low-resource minority languages with Sámi as an example–tools, methods and experiments. In *Proceedings of the 1st Annual Meeting of the ELRA/ISCA Special Interest Group on Under-Resourced Languages*, 169–175.

Hiovain-Asikainen, K., & Suni, A. 2025. Does multilingual and multi-speaker modeling improve low-resource TTS? Experiments on Sámi languages. In *Proceedings of Speech Synthesis Workshop 13, Leeuwarden, Netherlands*.

Pirinen, F., Moshagen, S., & Hiovain-Asikainen, K. 2023. GiellaLT—a stable infrastructure for Nordic minority languages and beyond. In *Proceedings of the 24th Nordic Conference on Computational Linguistics (NoDaLiDa)*, 643–649.

Pigga Keskitalo (University of Lapland) (session A6)

Voices from Five Sámi Languages: Co-developing Sámi Teaching in Nordic Primary Education

This keynote draws on the ongoing research project *Co-creating Linguistically Responsive Teaching in the Context of Endangered Sámi Languages for Sámi Youth* (LINCOSY). The project examines Sámi language education in Nordic primary schools and explores how teaching can better respond to the diverse linguistic, cultural and educational realities of Sámi children and young people. Focusing on five Sámi languages, the research brings together the voices of pupils, parents, teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders to examine the current situation of Sámi language education and to co-develop new approaches to teaching and learning. An important feature of the research context is its considerable geographical and sociolinguistic variation, ranging from the Sámi core areas to urban centres and peripheral areas. The opportunities to use, learn and maintain Sámi therefore differ substantially across the contexts studied, which is particularly important to take into account when interpreting the findings.

A central framework of the project is Linguistically Responsive Teaching (LRT). In the context of endangered and minoritised Sámi languages, however, linguistic responsiveness cannot simply mean recognising linguistic diversity in the classroom. It also requires attention to highly diverse language repertoires, different levels of language proficiency, interrupted or incomplete language transmission, and the relationship between home, early childhood education and school. Sámi pupils may enter school as fluent speakers, as emerging speakers with varying levels of proficiency, or with little opportunity to use the language outside educational settings. These differences challenge educational systems that often lack sufficiently flexible pedagogical and organisational solutions.

The findings reveal a strong tension between the commitment to Sámi language maintenance and the practical realities of schooling. Parents and teachers sometimes express concern that children's Sámi language skills may weaken to some extent after entering school, particularly when opportunities to use Sámi are not consistently supported across the school day or when the dominant national language becomes increasingly prevalent. Such concerns reflect the particular vulnerability of endangered languages, in which limited opportunities for use may affect language maintenance and intergenerational transmission. At the same time, schools may play a crucial role as places where Sámi is learned, strengthened and, for some children, encountered as a language of education when opportunities for language use at home or in the wider community are limited. This dual role of the school—as a potential site of both language shift and language maintenance or revitalisation—forms an important context for developing linguistically responsive approaches to Sámi language

education. At the same time, parents of children with different levels of Sámi language proficiency may have very different expectations of the school. Schools are expected both to support fluent speakers in maintaining and developing their language and to provide meaningful pathways for learners with diverse skills or those entering Sámi-medium education later. Yet participants often describe a lack of pedagogical solutions for managing these diverse language levels within the same educational environment.

School leaders occupy a particularly demanding position in mediating between these different expectations. They recognise the importance of supporting Sámi languages and are often committed to developing provision, but many report insufficient knowledge and understanding of the sociolinguistic complexity of endangered Indigenous languages. They face challenges related to organising resources, responding to the differing expectations of parents and teachers, and creating educational structures that support pupils at multiple levels of language proficiency. The findings therefore point to a need for strengthened professional development and support for school leadership in relation to Sámi language education and Indigenous language revitalisation.

The situation also varies considerably between the Sámi languages. Smaller and more endangered languages face particular challenges, including limited teaching hours, shortages of qualified teachers and a lack of teaching and learning materials. The scarcity of games and other engaging learning resources was raised especially clearly by pupils, parents and teachers. At the same time, language revitalisation efforts can create a positive momentum. In contexts where Sámi language revitalisation has been actively supported, participants describe increased visibility, optimism and opportunities for language learning. Nevertheless, an important challenge remains: even when children encounter Sámi in early childhood education, this linguistic development may be difficult to sustain throughout primary and especially later stages of schooling.

The voices of children and young people add an important perspective to these concerns. Pupils are generally positive about learning Sámi and express a willingness to learn, although their motivation and engagement may vary over time and according to age and life stage. Some young people describe their relationship with the Sámi language as a process: interest and motivation may temporarily decrease, particularly during adolescence, but the value of the language may become more visible later. Parents also interpret this in relation to identity development, suggesting that young people may at times wish to be like their peers before later reconnecting with Sámi language and identity.

These findings invite us to rethink what *linguistically responsive teaching* means in the context of Indigenous and endangered languages. Linguistically responsive Sámi language education must respond not only to individual differences in language proficiency but also to unequal opportunities

for language use, the fragility of intergenerational language transmission, the role of dominant languages in education, and the broader processes of language shift and revitalisation. It requires pedagogical approaches that can support both language maintenance and language learning, while recognising Sámi children and young people as active participants with different linguistic histories, identities and aspirations.

The keynote argues that the future development of Sámi language education requires a move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions. Drawing on voices from five Sámi languages, it explores how co-creation and linguistically responsive teaching can contribute to the development of more flexible, sustainable and context-sensitive approaches to Indigenous language education in Nordic primary schools.

Further information and updates on the LINCOSY project and its findings are available on the project's multilingual website: LINCOSY project website.

Ilona Kivinen (University of Helsinki, Sámi Allaskuvla) & **Jaakko Leino** (University of Helsinki)
(Session A8)

The existential and habitive constructions in North Saami and Finnish

North Saami and Finnish share rather similar existential and habitive constructions. In North Saami the constructions are presented in (1a–b and 2a–b).

Existential construction

(own knowledge)

1a) Šilju-s lea beana.
yard-loc be.sg3 dog.sg.nom
'There is a dog on the yard'

1b) Šilju-s lea-t beatnagat.
yard-loc be-pl3 dog.pl.nom
'There are dogs on the yard'

Habitive construction

(own knowledge)

2a) Mu-s lea beana.
sg1-loc be.sg3 dog.sg.nom
'I have a dog'

2b) Mu-s lea-t beatnagat.
sg1-loc be-pl3 dog.pl.nom
'I have dogs'

In Finnish they are as follows:

3a) Piha-lla on koira.
yard-abl be.sg3 dog.sg.nom
'There is a dog on the yard.'

3b) Piha-lla on koiria.
yard-abl be.sg3 dog.pl.part.
'There are dogs on the yard.'

4a) Minu-lla on koira.
sg1-abl be.sg3 dog.sg.nom
'I have a dog.'

4b) Minu-lla on koiria.
sg1-abl be.sg3 dog.pl.part
'I have dogs.'

From the point of view of basic clause structure SUBJECT-VERB these constructions differ both in Finnish and in Saami, as the first word of the sentence is in the local case, which is non-typical for subject. The analyses of the North Saami existential (1a–b) and habitive (2a–b) constructions have been different although the constructions themselves are identical. Both the locative (place, owner) part and the nominative part (owned, exister) have been analysed in various ways. Some grammars make the difference between the habitive and existential constructions based on the semantics, thus naming the locative owner as **habitive** (Pope &

Sara 2004: 243) or **habitive subject** (Jomppanen 2004: 12). Some grammars treat these constructions similarly (e.g. oahpa.no; Svonni 2015: 151). The grammars differ from each other also on the regard of the owned or exister, which is in nominative in Saami; whether it is a predicative (Nickel 1994: 395, 398) or a subject (Sammallahti 2005), and if the existential and habitive constructions should be analysed differently also on the regard of the nominative part.

In Finnish, the *koira* is usually interpreted as subject (3a–b) (cf. Tiainen 1997). In habitive constructions the debate has gradually moved from whether or not the *koira* in the habitive construction (4a–b) is the subject to whether the *minulla* is, despite the fact that it is marked with the ablative case and the verb cannot agree with it (e.g. Helasvuo 1996: 349–350; Vilkuna 1996: 156–157). Also in North Saami the semantics seem to support the interpretation of the owner as the subject despite the locative case it has (e.g. Jomppanen 2004: 12).

In this paper we will compare the ways the existential and habitive constructions have been analysed, and try to find the analysis that is pedagogically sensible. We can also see how the different theoretical backgrounds have affected the analysing method of the Saami and Finnish constructions. We will address the following main questions: Should the existential construction and the habitive construction be analysed (and taught to language learners) as separate sentence types or instances of the same type, and how should these sentence types be analysed syntactically?

References

Helasvuo, M. 1996. Ollako vai eikö olla – eksistentiaalilauseen subjekti. *Virittäjä* 100(3): 340–356.

Jomppanen, M. 2004 Subjeavtta sadji davvisámegiela muitalancealkagis. In Somby, S. R. (ed.), *Sámegiela seassamin*, 7–28. Publications of the Giellagas Institute 4. Oulu: Giellagas Institute.

Nickel, K. P. 1994. *Samisk grammatikk*. 2nd edition. Davvi Girji.

Pope, K. & Sárá, M. 2004. *Eatnigiella: Giellaooahpu váldogirji*. Davvi Girji.

Sammallahti, P. 2005. *Láidehus sámegiela cealkkaoahpa dutkamii*. Davvi Girji.

Svonni, M. 2015. *Davvisámegiella – sánit ja cealkagat*. Láidehus sámi lingvistihkkii. Ravda Lágádus.

Tiainen, O. 1997. Suomen eksistentiaalilause – päättymätön tarina. *Virittäjä* 101(4): 563–571.

Vilkuna, M. 1996. *Suomen lauseopin perusteet.* Helsinki: Edita.

David Kroik (Nord University) **& Richard Kowalik** (Nord University) (Session A1)

Establishing common ground: multilingual practices in South Saami

Guktie saemistidh gosse orre baakoeh daarpesje: ovmese gïelh provhkedh gaskestallemisnie

In South Saami

Daennie artihkelisnie monnah goerehtien guktie saemiestidh daanbien, gosse orre baakah daarpesjieh mah eah ennje gaavnesh, jih guktie daaroengïelh, jallh gaajhkh gïelh mah daejrieh, pruvhkieh jïh utnieh gosse gaskestalledh. Monnen daata soptsestallemh medtie golme tæjmah göökte soptsestæjjajgujmie guhth maehtieh saemiestidh jïh guhkiem saemiestamme. Dah digkiedieh sinsitnine gosse baakah veedtjieh jeatjah gïelijste, v.g. dah daaroen gïelh. Monnah digkiedien dejtie strategijidie mejtie provhkoeh daajehtsigujmie goh kovdamålsome jïh gelliengïelevoete, vihkielommes guktie utnedh gosse låasedidh.

Daate onne goerehtalleme jïh daate voestes dotkemeartihkele mesnie goerehte löönemebaakoeh jïh strategijh guktie gaskesadtedh ovmese gïeleldh vierhtiejgujmie, læjhkan vuesehte ij leah saemien barre 'raajnes' gïele, vaallah pleenteldh jeatja gïeligujmie. Gosse almetjh tjebrieh aelkedh viht saemiestidh, dellie åajvah lïeredh magkeres vierhtieh jeatjah gïelijste gåarede provhkedh jïh guktie juktie goerkesadtedh.

In English

This article explores multilingual practices in contemporary spoken South Saami. Based on three hours of recorded spontaneous conversation, we examine how two proficient speakers navigate their multilingual repertoires in the context of language revitalization. Using a qualitative approach informed by research on codeswitching, translanguaging, and multilingualism, we show how speakers draw on their linguistic resources to establish common ground and sustain interaction in South Saami.

The data reveal frequent lexical borrowing, negotiation of terminology, phonological and morphological integration of loanwords, and temporary switches to Norwegian. These multilingual practices function as interactional resources that allow speakers to maintain conversation in South Saami. The resources facilitate the establishment of common ground and contribute to meaning-making.

The study suggests that multilingual practices constitute a natural and ordinary part of language use, even among highly proficient speakers. We argue that such practices are particularly important in language revitalization contexts, as they both sustain ongoing language use and create new opportunities for using the language.

Juha Kuokkala (University of Helsinki) (Session B3)

Proto-Saami *-*tē*- verbs and their backgrounds

The verbal suffix *-*tē*- was a productive means of deriving causative and factitive verbs in Proto-Saami (PS), judging on its wide use in all the attested Saami varieties (for example South Saami *gajhkedidh*, North Saami *goikadit*, Aanaar Saami *kuškadiđ* < PS **koškętē*- 'dry up' ← **koškę*- 'dry (intr.)'; cf. Korhonen 1981: 329). It is evident that the said suffix stems from a verbal derivation suffix *-*ta*-/-*tä*- with similar functions already in Proto-Uralic (PU), as regular cognates appear throughout the language family (see e.g. Aikio 2022: 20; Laakso 1997). In Proto-Uralic, this kind of suffixes could attach to consonant stems of bisyllabic words, as can be seen for instance from the cognate set of North Saami *navdit,* Meadow Mari *lümdə*-, Tundra Nenets *ńumt'e*- < PU **nim-tä*- 'give a name' ← **nimi* 'name' (Aikio 2022: 20). In modern Saami languages, however, this kind of derivation pattern is unproductive, which is indicative of a similar state of affairs in Late Proto-Saami. The current presentation investigates the etymological backgrounds of bisyllabic verbs with second syllable **tē* reconstruable in Proto-Saami to estimate the role of the derivative suffix *-*tē*- in the formation of this structurally definable part of the Saami lexicon. Curiously, almost all this type of verbs in Lehtiranta's (1989) Common Saami lexicon show semantic traits of causativity or agentivity, characteristic of the said derivative suffix. In closer inspection, great many of the verbs turn out to have cognates in Finnic or more remote Uralic branches and an at least arguable derivational background, as well as verbs known only in Saami but derived from old Uralic stems. This comprises not only established etymologies such as North Saami *baldit* < PS **pęltē*- 'scare' < **peltä*- ← PU **peli*- 'be afraid' or North Saami *luoitit* < PS **luoštē*- 'let go' < **laśta*- ← PU **laśki*- 'let go' (Sammallahti 1998: 252), but also new derivational etymologies can be suggested, such as North Saami *čoavdit* < PS **čoavtē*- 'open' < Pre-Saami **śowta*- ← PU **śowi* 'mouth, opening' (cf. Finnish *suu* 'mouth', East Mari *imə-šu* 'needle eye', Hungarian *száj* 'mouth'). A number of *-*tē*- verbs can be shown to be borrowings from Finnic causative/factitive *-*ta*-/-*tä*- verbs whereas others seem to be of Nordic loan origin, which raises questions about the role of borrowings in corroborating of a certain form–meaning pattern on one hand, and about possible favoring of loan verbs with certain semantic traits combining with an associatable phonological structure on the other.

References

Aikio, A. (Luobbal Sámmol Sámmol Ánte) 2022. Proto-Uralic. In M. Bakró-Nagy & J. Laakso, & E. Skribnik (eds.), *The Oxford guide to the Uralic languages*, 3–27. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Korhonen, M. 1981. *Johdatus lapin kielen historiaan*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Laakso, J. 1997. On verbalizing nouns in Uralic. *Finnisch-Ugrische Forschungen* 54: 267–304.

Lehtiranta, J. 1989. *Yhteissaamelainen sanasto*. Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne 200. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.

Sammallahti, P. 1998. *The Saami languages: An introduction*. Kárášjohka: Davvi Girji.

Jihyeong Lee (University of Oslo), **Are Tjihkkom** (University of Oslo) & **Elena C. Varona** (University of Oslo) (Session A1)

Rejecting linguistic purism in Lule Saami: Decolonising language planning

Julevsáme giela purismav vuornodit: Giela plánimav dekoloniserit

Linguistic purism is a political ideology that aims to avoid foreign language influences, e.g. loanwords, and may also include a romanticisation of older, archaic forms of language (Dorian 1994). However, languages influencing each other is a frequent and natural phenomenon and potentially has no limits. For example, Finnish has borrowed even basic vocabulary like *äiti* 'mother' and *aurinko* 'sun' from Indo-European languages. Linguistic purism thus attempts to combat the natural development of language contact, and several cases illustrate that it is problematic for language revitalisation and revival (Dorian 1994). Puristic attitudes require learners to aim for ideals rather than use and put unnecessary pressure on speakers that may discourage them from using the language. Linguistic purism can also be seen in the light of colonial concepts about "pure" cultures and the view that unmixed cultures, including languages, are superior to supposedly degenerating cultures that borrow from others (Hutnyk 2005). We can find traces of this colonialism in early descriptions of Lule Saami that highlighted its supposed pristineness as a quality that gave the language worth (Wiklund 1901).

We examine linguistic purism in Lule Saami revitalisation efforts as the problematic product of a colonial entanglement, the product of both outsider and insider contributions in a colonial encounter (Bauer & Norton 2017). We argue that it is problematic and not effective for revitalising language use. Through content analysis we map out current language planning and compare it to historically attested forms of the language, which has not been done before. We take Qvigstad's 1929 collection of folktales (Qvigstad 1929) and his unpublished fieldwork material between 1883–1927 (Qvigstad n.d.) as a corpus for Lule Saami as it was attested on the Norwegian side a century ago. We take publicly available minutes including appendixes from the Lule Saami section of Sáme Giellagálldo, e.g. Julevsáme Giellajuogos (*Bievddegirjje* 1/2015) and Julevsáme Giellajuogos (*Duoddetjála 1a*, 2015), as sources of official policy and planning, as Giellagálldo has no other published guidelines. It should be noted that purism can be found outside official language planning, e.g. as a creative activity for individuals, where it does not represent a systematic ideology. However, our study is concerned with official policy and attitudes, and individual creativity falls outside our scope.

It is clear that Giellagálldo emphasises creating alternative native words for loanwords. Using sounds that are perceived to be foreign is explicitly advised against, in particular /ø/ and /y/ and /ʉ/, with the reason given that older forms of the language could not use these (Julevsáme Giellajuogos, *Duoddetjála 1a*, 2015). This continues a trend since the 1970s, when the first meetings took place to

consciously create or expand the meaning of words to replace or prevent words identified as non-Saami, e.g. *dumán* 'vacuum cleaner' and *rubán* 'pump' (Kuoljok 1994). However, the negative attitude towards foreign influences does not reflect historical language use, as loanwords and foreign sounds are attested in our corpus, e.g. *flöi'to* 'tool used in fishing' (< Nor. *fløyt*[1]) and *ry'ita* 'cauldron' (< Nor. *gryte*). Giellagálldo's efforts to produce more "native-sounding" wordlists should be seen as pursuing an ideal rather than building on historical Lule Saami. This ideal is the result of the colonial entanglement, as the origins for a puristic attitude in Lule Saami can be traced back to the colonial encounter, which has been internalised and interpreted in a Saami context. It risks reproducing a colonial structure in which speakers are evaluated based on how "pure" their language is. Speakers can thus be dissuaded from using Saami because they do not feel that they live up to the expected ideal, contrary to the goals of revitalisation. Furthermore, the current puristic language planning has an arbitrary tendency. On the one hand, Giellagálldo urges speakers to avoid borrowed lexemes and the phonemes /y/ and /ø/, but on the other hand, not much attention is paid to syntactic developments and phonemes like the unvoiced, aspirated plosive /ph/. For example, Giellagálldo (Julevsáme Giellajuogos, *Bievddegirjje* 1/2015) accepts *pænna* 'pen' as a phonologically nativized form, even though an adaption that completely avoids foreign sounds would in fact be **bænna*. This arbitrariness makes it hard to systematically plan Lule Saami development. Efforts should be spent on overarching matters, like how Lule Saami can achieve a stronger official status and use in a decolonial context, instead of working on isolated wordlists and phonemes.

Our concluding calls to action are clear: Firstly, we should be accepting of foreign language influences in Saami, especially as a part of the decolonizing process, as the value of Saami does not hinge on it being "protected" from natural developments. Secondly, academia should focus on documenting Saami as it is used. Work should also be done on how language revitalisation can be planned in an effective and decolonial way through institutions like Giellagálldo, which is a valuable resource that gives Saami legitimacy as an official language. Thirdly, we call on all language researchers to accept non-puristic Saami as legitimate data, be it however strongly influenced by other languages. Every speaker matters, and their language should be accepted by academia and official institutions.

[1] A more common term for this is *flytholt*. No adequate English translation has been found.

References

Dorian, N. C. 1994. Purism vs. Compromise in Language Revitalization and Language Revival. *Language in Society*, *23*(4): 479–494. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4168553

Hutnyk, J. 2005. Hybridity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *28*(1): 79–102.

https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000280021

Wiklund, K. B. 1901. *Lärobok i lapska språket*. Almquist & Wiksells Boktrykkeri.

Bauer, R. & Norton, M. 2017. Introduction: entangled trajectories: indigenous and European histories. *Colonial Latin American Review, 26*(1): 1–17.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2017.1287321

Qvigstad, J. 1929. *Lappiske eventyr og sagn IV: Lappiske eventyr og sagn fra Lyngen II og fra Nordland*. H. Aschehoug & CO.

https://www.nb.no/items/09671e22d9be3d2d9cb2bddd92b06a75

Qvigstad, J. (n.d.). *Tysfjordlappisk ordliste I-II* [Unpublished manuscript].

https://www.nb.no/items/bad49330107070ba0a75168b7581a035

Julevsáme Giellajuogos 2015. *Bievddegirjje 1/2015*.

https://assets.ctfassets.net/kkxfrpcp7iyu/3LUJq9H2fTBGee0n99w1dR/7d64e6a90d49a32cf3b30b1c5de943e0/03.-04.12.2015_godkjent_protokoll_uten_underskrifter.pdf

Julevsáme Giellajuogos 2015. *Duoddetjála 1a: Ássje 33/13 Guhka á luojkasbágojn – amásbáhkohiebadibme.* Sáme Giellagálldo.

https://assets.ctfassets.net/kkxfrpcp7iyu/6I39Qx74JhMSY7xmBIf2N2/b720cb7b52d87ca993e9778bc83b2850/-_amásbáhkohiebadibme_-_niellja_máhttelisvuoda.pdf

Kuoljok, S. A. 1994. Julevsámegiela Ådåstuhttem. *Dieđut 3: Tearbmasymposia raporta*, 43–50. Sámi instituhtta. https://www.nb.no/items/3a71626104204d576c5e5b5219768902

Miika Lehtinen (University of Oulu) (Session B3)

Potential mood in Skolt Saami and in the neighboring Saami languages

Skolt Saami, like most other Saami languages, features a potential mood in its verbal conjugation. In this talk, I present an analysis of the use of the potential mood in Skolt Saami and compare it with its counterparts in North Saami, Inari Saami, Kildin Saami, and Ter Saami.

The Skolt Saami data are drawn from a folklore collection (Itkonen 1931) and from archived audio recordings made primarily in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as in the early 21st century. The recordings are from the Tape Archive of the Finnish Language (TAFL) of the Institute for the Languages of Finland, but they are stored in the Saami Culture Archive at the University of Oulu.

The discussion of the potential mood in the other Saami languages is based on Bartens (1980), Helander (1980) for North Saami, Mettovaara (2025) for Inari Saami, and Rießler (2022) for Kildin Saami; in addition, I include my own observations on Kildin and Ter Saami.

This presentation is based on an article of mine scheduled for publication this year (Lehtinen, forthcoming).

The potential mood is typically described as expressing possibility or uncertainty. While this characterization is not entirely inaccurate, it requires qualification: syntactic context plays a major role in the choice of mood. In the 20th-century material, potential forms occur predominantly in subordinate clauses, most of which are conditional or temporal. These clauses may include the conjunction *ko* ‘when; if’ (see example (1) below) or *jos* ‘if’ (example (2)), but in many cases the potential mood is the sole marker of a subordinate clause (example (3)). Moreover, some of these clauses do not convey any degree of uncertainty, suggesting that possibility or uncertainty is not an inherent property of the potential mood, even though it is present in most instances.

(1) ***Ko*** *pei’vv* ***aa’ljež*** *čuõvvned,* *de* *poppeeškuätt*
when day begin.POT.3SG dawn.INF then bite.INCH.3SG
pue’rben.
better(ADV)
‘**When** the dawn **starts** to break, (the fish) will start biting better.’ (TAFL 0633_3az 13:46, year 1960)

(2) ***Jos*** *kuõbžguä’đ* ***kaaunžiǩ,*** *te* *gõõlgak*
if bear’s_den.ACC find.POT.2SG then must.2SG
čåå̮u’d *mu’nne* *pu’htted.*
hide.ACC 1SG.ILL bring.INF
‘**Should** you **find** a bear’s den, you must bring the hide to me.’ (Itkonen 1931: 176)

(3) ***Koll'ješkuõ'đež*** *šuumeem* *tuõddrest,* *te*
be_heard.INCH.POT.3SG hum.NZ fell.LOC then
šâdd *njeeu'res* *šõŋŋ.*
come.3SG bad.ATTR weather
'**Should** one **begin to hear** humming from the fell, bad weather is coming.' (Itkonen 1931: 78)

In addition to conditional and temporal clauses, the potential mood most frequently occurs in concessive-conditional clauses ('even if [POT], still [IND]') and in generalizing relative clauses ('whoever/whatever [POT], he/she/it [IND]'). Potential forms are also commonly used in interrogative clauses to express uncertainty or speculation ('I wonder if [POT]').

In declarative main clauses, potential forms serve a range of functions, most commonly the expression of assumption or supposition. However, their use in declarative main clauses is relatively rare.

Rießler (2022) states that the potential mood in Kildin Saami is no longer productive; however, my observations suggest that its traditional use has been similar to that in Skolt Saami. Examples of the Kildin Saami potential can be found not only in older sources but also in literature published in the present millennium.

In contrast, the Ter Saami potential shows no signs of productivity even in earlier sources: all attested forms are forms of the verb 'to be', and most are used in a particle-like manner rather than as full verbal forms.

In addition to Kildin Saami, the traditional use of the Skolt Saami potential mood—particularly in dependent clauses—shows interesting similarities with the eastern dialects of Finnish, the eastern dialects of North Saami, Inari Saami, and Karelian. It is noteworthy that at least in modern times this type of usage appears to be restricted to a geographically eastern area within the Saamic and Finnic languages.

Finally, it is suggested that the use of the potential mood may be undergoing change in Skolt Saami. In stark contrast to the older material, the expression of speculation or uncertainty in interrogative clauses is by far the most common use of the potential mood in the 21st-century data, whereas in the 20th-century material its use in dependent clauses predominates. This shift suggests that the use of the potential mood in dependent clauses may be declining. Moreover, the vast majority of potential forms in the 21st-century data consists of forms of the verb 'to be', which may indicate a decrease in the productivity of the potential mood in Skolt Saami, similar to the development observed in Kildin Saami. However, further research is needed to confirm this hypothesis.

References

Bartens, H. 1980. *Die Verwendung von Potential und Konditional im Lappischen*. Suomalais-Ugrilaisen Seuran Toimituksia 177. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.

Helander, N. Ø. 1980. *En undersøkelse av bruken av modus potensialis og noen av dens modalitetssynonymer*. Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo.

Itkonen, T. I. 1931. *Koltan- ja kuolanlappalaisia satuja*. Suomalais-Ugrilaisen Seuran Toimituksia LX. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.

Lehtinen, M. (forthcoming). *Koltansaamen potentiaali ja huomioita kiltinän ja turjansaamesta*. Suomalais-Ugrilaisen Seuran Aikakauskirja 102.

Mettovaara, J. 2025. Potentiaal. (Blog post.)

https://www.giella.org/articles/1P0LSV5G46uDMSn6aaw1s2 (10.4.2026).

Rießler, M. 2022. Kildin Saami. In M. Bakró-Nagy, J. Laakso & E. Skribnik (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Uralic Languages*, 219–239. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Inga Lill Sigga Mikkelsen (Uit The Arctic University of Norway) (session A2)

Produktijva julevsámegielak máná mánájgárde baktu:

Mánájgárddebargge Anna Andersena, Charlotte Paulsena, Heidi Andersena, Ingrid Kintela, Linnea Knutsena, Mary Knutsena ja May Bente Knutsena åtsådallama

Productive Lule Saami-speaking children through kindergarten:

Experiences of kindergarten workers Anna Andersen, Charlotte Paulsen, Heidi Andersen, Ingrid Kintel, Linnea Knutsen, Mary Knutsen and May Bente Knutsen

In Lule Saami

Divtasvuonan alvos giellamålssom julevsámij gaskan dáhpáduváj birrusij jages 1960 (Aira 2002), dalloj hiejttin ienemus sámegielak æjgáda sámástimes ietjasa mánájda. Dán sivá diehti li Divtasvuonan dássju gallegasj ulmutja riegádam 1960-1980 gaskan gudi sámásti (A. K. Mikkelsen 1996:47, Solstad, Balto et al. 2012:13). Dát dille rievdaj 1980 jagij låhpan. Sámegielak æjgáda sámástahttjájin vas ietjasa mánájda, ja vuostasj julevsáme mánájgárdde Divtasvuonan álgaduváj jagen 1989. Divna máná gudi álggin dán mánájgárddáj båhtin sijdajs gånnå unnemusát akta æjgát sámástij. Boados giellabargos mij sihke mánájgárden ja sijdajn dagáduváj lij produktijva sámegielak máná: máná gudi ietja sámástin, ja adnin sámegielav ståhkam- ja guládallamgiellan. Divtasvuonan nav vas bajeduváj ådå buolvva tjielgga sámegielagijs.

Birrusij 2000 jagijs gielladille mánájgárden hedjunij. Maŋenagi gå dát dárogielak gasskabuolvva, riegádam 1960-1980 jagij gaskan, mánnigådij de hæhttuj mánájgárdde, dássju gallegasj sámegielak æjgádij doarjjagijn, vargga aktu vásstedit mánáj sámegielakvuoda åvdås (Lund 2009). Juska mánájgárddebargge ájn sámástin mánájda de máná ienemusát ietja dárustin, máná ettjin das ståga jali guládalá nubbe nuppij sámegiellaj, da dádjadin majt ållessjattuga javllin, valla sámegiella sjattaj giellan majt máná ietja binnáv ságastin (Lund 2009, Braut 2010, Solstad et al. 2012). Boados giellabargos mánájgárden ij lim desti produktijva sámegielak máná, ájnat stuoráp oasse mánájs sjaddin reseptijva sámegielagin.

Gielladile diehti álgadij mánájgárdde jagen 2019 stuoráp giellarievddadimprosjevtav gånnå ulmme lij sajádahttet sámegielav ståhkam- ja guládallamgiellan mánáj gaskan (Kintel, 2019). Ulmmelasj ja diedulasj bargo tjadá vuorbástuvvin bargge mánájgárden, da rievddadin mánáj giellaanov ja máná Divtasvuonan vas sjaddin produktijva sámegielagin mánájgárde baktu.

Åtsådallama 1989 rájes udnátjij vuosedi jut mánájgárde gielalasj vuorbástuvvam la målssum ja jut sáme mánájgárdde sámegielak barggij ij ietjastis sihkaraste jut máná sjaddi produktijva sámegielagin. Mån lav ságájdahttám mánájgárddebarggijt, Anna Andersenav, Charlotte Paulsenav, Heidi Andersenav, Ingrid Kintelav, Linnea Knutsenav, Mary Knutsenav ja May Bente Knutsenav, giellabargo birra julevsáme mánájgárden Divtasvuonan. Lågådallamin tjiegŋodav jur dan gielalasj rievddadimbargguj mij dagáduváj mánájgárden. Barggij åtsådallamij vuodon tjalmostahtáv gåktu diedulasj, aktisasj ja guhkálasj ratjástibme rievddadij ja sajájduhtij sámegielav luondulasj ja mávsulasj ståhkam- ja guládallamgiellan mánáj gaskan.

In English

In Divtasvuodna/Tysfjord, a dramatic language shift among the Lule Saami took place around the year 1960 (Aira 2002), when most of the Lule Saami-speaking parents stopped the language with their children. Because of this, only a few people born between 1960 and 1980 in Divtasvuodna speak Lule Saami (A. K. Mikkelsen 1996:47, Solstad, Balto et al. 2012:13). This situation changed at the end of the 1980s. Lule Saami-speaking parents started to speak Saami to their children again, and the first Lule Saami-medium kindergarten in Divtasvuodna was opened in 1989. All the children who started in this kindergarten came from families where at least one parent spoke Lule Saami. The result of the language work carried out by both the kindergarten and the home was productive Lule Saami-speaking children: children who spoke Lule Saami themselves and used it as a language of communication and play. A new generation of strong Lule Saami-speakers emerged in Divtasvuodna.

From around the 2000's, the language situation in the kindergarten deteriorated. Gradually, as the Norwegian-speaking middle generation, born between 1960 and 1980, started having children, only a few Lule Saami-speaking parents could support the language work in the kindergarten. Nearly the full responsibility for the children's Saami language skills thus fell to the kindergarten (Lund 2009). Although the kindergarten workers still spoke Lule Saami to the children, the children themselves spoke mostly Norwegian, and they no longer played or communicated with each other in Lule Saami. They understood what the adults said, but Lule Saami became a language that the children themselves rarely spoke (Lund 2009, Braut 2010, Solstad et al. 2012). The result of the language work in the kindergarten, was no longer productive language users, rather, the majority of the children became receptive language users.

Due to the language situation, the kindergarten started a bigger language project in 2019 with the goal of establishing Lule Saami as a language of communication and play among the children (Kintel, 2019). Through determined and conscious effort, the staff in the kindergarten succeeded in changing the

children's language use, and children in Divtasvuodna again became productive Lule Saami speakers due to the kindergarten.

The experiences from 1989 to today show that the kindergarten's linguistic success has varied and that Lule Saami speaking staff does not in itself guarantee that the children will become productive Lule Saami speakers. I have interviewed the kindergarten workers Anna Andersen, Charlotte Paulsen, Heidi Andersen, Ingrid Kintel, Linnea Knutsen, Mary Knutsen and May Bente Knutsen about the language work in the Lule Saami-medium kindergarten in Divtasvuodna. In this talk I will focus on work to change the children's language use that has been done in the kindergarten. Based on the experiences of the kindergarten workers, I will highlight how a conscious, joint and long-term effort changed and repositioned the Lule Saami language as a natural and valuable medium of play and communication among the children.

Nikolett Mus (ELTE Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics) & **Michail Rießler** (University of Eastern Finland) (Session A7)

Exploring constituent order variation in Kildin Saami

Aims and research questions

The present study seeks to systematically examine the structure of non-verb-final clauses and the syntactic and discourse properties of postverbal constituents (PVCs) in Kildin Saami. While previous work has documented occasional non-verb-final structures in Kildin Sámi (Rießler 2007; 2022), their systematic characteristics remain largely unexplored, and the previously assumed tendency towards an SOV-to-SVO constituent order shift calls for closer syntactic examination (Rießler 2022: 233).

The present investigation draws upon spoken data recorded during two different time periods (i.e. from the 1950s and the 2000s), as well as contemporary literary texts translated from Russian. As a pilot study, this work represents an initial step towards understanding PVC behaviour in Kildin Saami and identifying patterns that may have undergone change over time, potentially due to contact with Russian.

Particularly important questions are, whether the postverbal field broadens to accommodate a wider range of constituent types, what are the structural properties and organisation of this expansion? Moreover, to what extent does any such pattern parallel syntactic developments attested in languages of the region, or does it represent an independent trajectory? Finally, a comparison of earlier and more recent data permits an assessment of whether the language has experienced a genuine structural change, or whether the observed postverbal configurations remain derivable from an underlying verb-final grammar.

Background

The indigenous languages of northern Eurasia, including the Saami languages, are generally described in grammatical descriptions and comparative studies as exhibiting a basic SOV constituent order. Nevertheless, the literature repeatedly notes the occurrence of SVO patterns, or more precisely, non-verb-final clause structures, which are often attributed to contact-induced innovation (see, e.g. Grenoble 2000; Anderson 2005; Pakendorf 2020; for Saami languages specifically, see Rießler 2007: 230).

Recent systematic investigations have targeted non-verb-final constructions in several languages of northern Siberia. These studies indicate that the distribution of PVCs is closely associated with Information Structural (IS) configurations (see, e.g. Asztalos et al. 2017; Borise et al. 2022; Borise et al. Forthcoming). Variation in non-verb-final structures may also correlate with register, as suggested by

differences observed between spoken and written data (see e.g. Mus & Surányi Forthcoming for Tundra Nenets).

Kildin Saami provides a particularly suitable context for exploring potential language variation and change, given the availability of older and younger speech recordings alongside literary texts. This not only allows looking at language variation over time but also across different planning types (spontaneous vs. planned/translated).

Data and methods

The study is based on a small pilot dataset comprising four sub-corpora, of which two feature spontaneous spoken language and two consist of standard written texts translated from Russian. The spoken sub-corpora consist of comparable narrative monologues recorded in the 1950s and the 2000s, while the written sub-corpora comprise literary narratives of similar length translated into Kildin Saami. Each sub-corpus contains approximately 80 clauses, which were annotated for syntactic constituent structure.

All instances of PVCs were extracted and analysed with respect to their syntactic category, function, complexity, and IS properties, allowing for an initial characterisation of the postverbal field across time periods and registers.

Results: preliminary observations

The analysis indicates clear differences between older and more recent texts, as well as between spoken and written registers. In the older recordings from the 1950s, PVCs are predominantly afterthoughts or right-dislocated elements, often clause-external and peripheral to the main clause structure. In contrast, the more recent texts, particularly the literary narratives, exhibit a broader range of PVCs, including focused or discourse-prominent elements, suggesting a gradual expansion of the postverbal field.

Registeral variation is also pronounced. The spoken corpora largely retain a verb-final pattern, with PVCs appearing infrequently and typically as afterthoughts. Conversely, the written texts frequently display non-verb-final structures, including PVCs with systematic syntactic integration, often corresponding to discourse functions such as topic continuation or focal marking.

Across both registers and time periods, the most common PVCs are postpositional phrases (PPs), followed by noun phrases (NPs/DPs) and, more rarely, clausal elements (CPs/TPs). Their syntactic functions include subjects, objects, and adjuncts, and they tend to be short and structurally simple, though some longer subordinate clauses appear in written narratives. These preliminary findings

suggest that postverbal positions in Kildin Saami are sensitive to both register and IS factors, with a tendency for broader constituent types to appear postverbally in written, contemporary texts.

These preliminary patterns invite tentative syntactic interpretation. Older PVCs align with afterthought or right-dislocation structures, occupying a clause-external position. By contrast, the broader range of PVCs observed in more recent texts, including focused and discourse-prominent constituents, suggests the availability of clause-internal postverbal positions, rather than purely peripheral attachment. Such configurations are consistent with analyses in which postverbal constituents remain structurally integrated within the clause, for instance in combination with verb movement or discourse-related positional licensing, and may further be conditioned by prosodic factors.

References

Anderson, G. D. S. 2005. *Language contact in south central Siberia*. Vol. 54. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag.

Asztalos et al. 2017. Uráli VX szórend: nyenyec, hanti és udmurt mondatszerkezeti változatok. *Nyelvelmélet és diakrónia* 3.

Borise et al. 2022. Towards more flexible verb-finality via a reanalysis of prosodic structure. *Symposium Change in syntax and phonology: the same or different?* Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.

Borise et al. (forthcoming). When grammar-internal factors hinder an OV-to-VO shift: the case of Surgut Khanty. *Proceedings of GLOW* 47.

Grenoble, L. A. 2000. Morphosyntactic change: the impact of Russian on Evenki. *Languages in Contact*.

Mus, N. & Surányi, B. (forthcoming). Postverbal phrases in Tundra Nenets: An empirical study of rigid verb finality. *Folia Linguistica*.

Pakendorf, Brigitte. 2020. Contact and Siberian languages. *The handbook of language contact*. 669–688.

Rießler, M. 2007. Grammatical borrowing in Kildin Saami. *Grammatical borrowing in cross-linguistic perspective*: 229–244.

Rießler, M. 2022. Kildin Saami. In: The Oxford guide to the Uralic languages.

Felix Mäkelä (University of Oulu) (Session A3)

Initial test reader-based findings of what reader friendly North Sámi social and health care texts could look like

Within the discourse on official documents and public services in the Saami languages, some have raised concern about the usability of Saami language texts, e.g. translations (e.g. Arola 2021: 18).

The aim of this doctoral thesis is to find out what kind of linguistic structures and lexemes different kinds of readers of North Sámi find difficult to read, both in the sense of mechanical reading and of comprehension. The focus is on institutional top-down communication in written form within the social and health care field. It's not beneficial for revitalization efforts if speakers don't want to read in their language or use it in official settings because they find texts overwhelmingly heavy structured.

Because of no prior similar research in any Saami language, this study is formed based on experience-based literature: sparce normative statements in grammatical works (e.g. Vuolab-Lohi 2025: 40) and a governmental writers guide (Språkrådet n.d.) on what kind of structures are seen to be clearer than others. In addition, the study leans to some extent on results in similar studies on Finnish, especially Easy Finnish (Leskelä 2019; Selkokeskus 2022). However, it does not have hypotheses per se but presents the findings as they are.

Theoretically, the thesis will form initial, research-based guidelines for North Sámi Plain Language. Plain Language is a register that is aimed at the common public with the goal of being comprehensible for "everyone". This contrasts with Easy Language; which's main audience is people who face major challenges with reading whether permanent or not. (Leskelä et al. 2022.). There is an ISO standard for Plain Language (*ISO 24495*, 2023), but it does not have detailed instructions for each language.

The main data set for this dissertation consists of test readers' opinions and comments from 2026. Using test readers is a useful way to learn the linguistic needs of a target audience and the method has been used especially in Easy Language research (e.g. Frondén 2025). The test readers in this study are all adults over 18 years old, both L1 and L2 speakers. All the readers are familiar with reading North Sámi to at least some extent.

The test readers read ten short texts chosen by the researcher from public social and health care websites in Finland, Sweden and Norway. After reading, the test readers comment on whether they find each text understandable, easy to read, difficult, weird, or something else. When possible, the readers indicate which part, sentence, or word they mean and why. They are also asked to indicate if they at some point would have changed to a majority language or in some other way "given up". This

study does not test reading comprehension in the traditional sense but focuses instead on co-creating knowledge for the producers of written top-down communication.

At this conference, I will present initial findings from this field work of reading sessions. The results will help institutions, translators, and writers in their work to produce texts that their audience find readable and thus support North Sámi speakers to choose Sámi when possible. Even other Saami languages can benefit from some of the remarks to the extension that they share, e.g. structural features. The results will also show some findings on how readers understand texts from other countries; how the majority languages affect mutual intelligibility.

The dissertation is a part of and funded by the Doctoral pilot program in social care DocSoc360.

References

Arola, L. 2021. *Saamebarometri 2020 – selvitys saamenkielisten kielellisten oikeuksien toteutumisesta*. Sarjajulkaisu No. 1/2021; Selvityksiä ja ohjeita. Oikeusministeriö. https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162826

Frondén, C. 2025. *Lätt språk under lupp, Lätt språk och dess anvisningar utgående från forskningsperspektiv, praktikerperspektiv och användarperspektiv*. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto. http://hdl.handle.net/10138/596293

ISO 24495-1:2023(en), Plain language—Part 1: Governing principles and guidelines. (2023). https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/en/#iso:std:iso:24495:-1:ed-1:v1:en

Leskelä, L. 2019. *Selkokieli: Saavutettavan kielen opas*. Kehitysvammaliitto ry.

Leskelä, L., Mustajoki, A., & Piehl, A. 2022. Easy and plain languages as special cases of linguistic tailoring and standard language varieties. *Nordic Journal of Linguistics*, *45*(2), 194–213. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0332586522000142

Selkokeskus. 2022. *Selkokielen mittari 2.0*.

https://selkokeskus.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Selkokielen-mittari-2.0.pdf

Språkrådet. (n.d.). *Čielgagiella*. Språkrådet.

https://sprakradet.no/klarsprak/om-skriving/cielga-giella/ (13.1.2026)

Vuolab-Lohi, K. 2025. *Sojahanoahppa. Gursamáŋggus.* Unpublished manuscript.

Kristiina Ojala (University of Helsinki) (Session B1)

Integrating linguistics in the development of automatic speech recognition for North Saami

Mo gielladieđa lea ávkin davvisámegielat automáhtalaš hállanáicanprográmma ovdánahttimis

This study explores the integration of linguistics in the development of automatic speech recognition (ASR) for North Saami. An ASR system is designed to convert speech into written form. ASR systems are becoming increasingly important in applications such as automatic transcription, voice control, and language learning. In the 2020's, data-driven methods and neural networks have dominated ASR development. In the context of North Saami, however, the morphological complexity, rich phonological variation, and high lexical productivity, combined with limited resources, necessitate exploring alternative methods to emphasize linguistic characteristics. We hypothesize that in these circumstances, the importance of language-specific features increases significantly in ASR development. To our knowledge, the enhancement of ASR systems through linguistic analysis has not been previously examined in the context of the Saami languages. We aim to answer the following research question: Can we improve ASR accuracy and data use by employing linguistic analysis in the fine-tuning data selection? This study is part of the *SaameAI – speech recognition for the Saami languages* -project, which the Finnish Cultural Foundation funds.

A pilot ASR model for North Saami has been created at Aalto University (Getman et al. 2025). In this study, we employ phonetic, morphological, and syntactic frameworks to analyse the model. The development and fine-tuning of an ASR system require audio recordings and corresponding transcriptions. After evaluating the ASR linguistically, we then conduct two distinct fine-tuning procedures: one utilizing randomly selected data and the other employing carefully curated interview materials covering various dialects and demographic factors, guided by our linguistic analysis. After fine-tuning, the ASR accuracy is reassessed to evaluate the influence of the linguistic analysis.

The preliminary analysis shows that some aspects related to speaker identity, including age and sex, seem to cause fluctuation in the performance of the model. Young female voices tend to be more accurately recognized, whereas older male voices are more challenging for North Saami ASR. This aligns with observations in Finnish ASR (Virkkunen et al. 2022: 1661). Additionally, several language-specific aspects proved challenging for North Saami ASR, including the special characters, for example *vuoi**nn**astit* (ASR prediction) > *vuoi**ŋŋ**astit* (correct form) 'to breathe'. Notably, the ASR output for certain dialects was markedly less accurate, reflecting phonetic characteristics not represented in

orthography, such as aspiration in *jođihi**h**t* (ASR prediction) > *jođihit* (orthographic spelling) ‘to lead’. We propose that ASR accuracy can be improved by strategically selecting fine-tuning data based on the insights derived from linguistic error analysis.

While increasing the volume of training data has been shown to improve ASR accuracy, the nature of the data is equally critical. Enhancing ASR development with linguistic knowledge ensures efficient use of existing resources, which is crucial in low-resource scenarios. Given that the Saami languages share structural, lexical, and phonological similarities, the model and workflow presented are applicable in the ASR development for other Saami languages as well.

References

Getman, Y & Grósz, T. & Hiovain-Asikainen, K. & Lehtonen, T. & Kurimo, M. 2025. Towards large-scale speech foundation models for a low-resource minority language. In *Proceedings of the Joint 25th Nordic Conference on Computational Linguistics and 11th Baltic Conference on Human Language Technologies (NoDaLiDa/Baltic-HLT 2025)*, 192–200.

Virkkunen, A & Rouhe, A. & Phan, N. & Kurimo, M. 2023. Finnish parliament ASR corpus: Analysis, benchmarks and statistics. In *Language Resources and Evaluation* 57(4), 1645–1670. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10579-023-09650-7

Marja-Liisa Olthuis (University of Oslo) & **Trond Trosterud** (UiT Arctic University of Norway)
(Session B2)

This dictionary is not for turning: Problems encountered when working with a Finnish - Inari Saami dictionary

The Finnish–Inari Saami online dictionary (saanih.oahpa.no) has been in active use since 2016, although it still contains shortcomings. The most significant deficiency has been that the dictionary entries in the worst cases neither help the users choose between the Inari Saami equivalents nor explains how they should be used.

The reason for this is that the Finnish-Inari Saami dictionary, like many other Saami production dictionaries, was made by turning a dictionary from Saami to the majority language into the opposite direction. The result is that the Saami entries that were explained with the same majority language word ended up as alleged synonyms of each other, in the worst case with no attempts at distinguishing them from each other.

A case in point is the Finnish verb saada. In the Inari Saami - Finnish dictionary, it was used as an equivalent for 24 Inari Saami lemmas. In the Finnish - Inari Saami dictionary the article for saada thus contained 24 Inari Saami equivalents. Even though the semantic restriction in many cases was inherited from the original Inari Saami - Finnish lemma article, it still was difficult for the user to choose the correct equivalent without guidance. Information on differences in the use of (here) Finnish saada and the Inari Saami word was also not given.

The goal of our presentation is to treat the problem at a general level and investigate how dictionary articles resulting from turning reception dictionaries made be developed into real production dictionaries.

Compared to dictionaries from a Scandinavian language to Saami, the challenge is not that big. As we will show, in some cases, changing the direction works, because the languages are structurally quite similar and the equivalents behave in the same way in both languages. A case in point is the pair (Finnish) lakata - (Saami) joskađ "to stop doing something". Both verbs require their object in elative (Finnish) / locative (Saami), and no explanation is needed. For other verbs, the two languages are not identical, and differences must be explained.

We have started developing the content of central dictionary entries in the Finnish - Inari Saami dictionary. In our presentation, we will describe what needs to be considered in this process. We focus on verbs, since this is the most central part of speech. Although focusing on the Finnish - Inari Saami pair, the challenges should be relevant to other Saami production dictionaries as well.

Helena Omma (UiT The Arctic University of Norway) & **Linda Wiechetek** (UiT The Arctic University of Norway) (Session B1)

Giving grammatical feedback to North Sámi writers

Grammatihkkamáhcahat davvisámegiel čálliide

In this article we present a system for error feedback for the North Sami grammar checker, which is part of the GiellaLT-infrastructure. (Wiechetek 2012) (Moshagen et al. 2023) Developing Sami proofing tools for the language community goes beyond technical and linguistic work. If we want proofing tools to be useful for the writer we need to find the best way to explain A) the grammatical error and B) an adequate correction. The usual outcome of grammar checking involves the following parts – a blue line under the error parts of the sentence and an interactive feedback part. The feedback contains a short description of the error, an additional longer description that can be accessed voluntarily, and a clickable correction function.

In example (1-a), the postposition gaskan 'halfway' is a lexical error and it should be *gaskkas* 'between' instead. In example (1-b), on the other hand, there is a morphosyntactic error, a number error in the comitative noun *nuorain* 'with the youth', which should be plural *nuoraiguin* 'with the youths' instead.

(1) a. *Lea 96 jiena earru blohkaid *gaskan, Vuovdega sahtta oažžut mearrideaddji rolla.*

b. *Leago dus miella oahppat eanet davvialbmogiid birra ja deaivvadit eara davviguovlluid *nuorain?*

For lexical errors our short description is standardized as *Sátni ii heive* 'The word is not adequate'. For grammatical errors short descriptions range from *Boasttukásus* 'wrong case' to *Čállinmeattáhus dán oktavuođas* 'spelling error in this context', Konsonántameattáhus 'consonant error', *Akseanta-a meattáhus* 'A-accent error' etc. We realize that we need to find a compromise between giving feedback of the grammatical side of an error description and keeping in mind other reasons for committing an error, that can be dialectal variations, the gap between written and spoken language and other phonetical reasons.

The longer descriptions in (2-a) and (2-b) involve two parts, they specify the choice the writer has made and it describes the correction. In this description we use grammatical terms like part-of-speech, number, case, etc. (*postposišuvdna* 'postposition', *komitatiiva* 'comitative case', *ovttaidlohku* 'singular') if possible to help the writer to understand the error. However, we also refer to concrete suffixes and letter combinations like *gehčosiin-guin* 'the suffix *-guin'* if we think it will make more sense to the writer than the grammatical term.

(2) a. *Don leat čallan postposišuvnna "gaskan". Dasa heive "gaskkas" buorebut.*

b. *Don leat čallan sani "nuorain" komitatiivva ovttaidlogus. Dat galga leat komitatiivva maŋggaidlogu gehčosiin "-guin".*

The feedback needs to be consistent in terms of both error categorization and terminology. Sami language writers are diverse and so is their grammatical awareness and knowledge. The feedback should be able to explain the errors in an understandable but adequate manner. Another challenge is that the feedback cannot be too absolute because we cannot exactly know what the writer had in mind. However, we want to be assertive enough, so that the writer can trust the grammar checker and avoid errors. The future aim is to conduct a study of how well North Sami users perceive the feedback. For this we need an overview and analysis over the different error types frequencies. We will therefore present a corpus study of our grammar checker in use that will later serve as the foundation to find out how well the feedback can contribute to a better written language in general.

References

Moshagen, S. & Pirinen, F. & Antonsen, L. & Gaup, B. & Mikkelsen, I. L. S. & Trosterud, T. & Wiechetek, L. & Hiovain-Asikainen, K. 2023. *The GiellaLT infrastructure: A multilingual infrastructure for rule-based NLP*, 70–94. NEALT Monograph Series. University of Tartu, Estonia.

Wiechetek, L. 2012. Constraint grammar based correction of grammatical errors for North Sámi. In G. De Pauw, G-M de Schryver, M.L. Forcada, K. Sarasola, F.M. Tyers, & P.W. Wagacha (eds.), Proceedings of SaLTMil 8 – AfLaT2012, 35–40. European Language Resources Association (ELRA), Istanbul, Turkey.

Camilla Porsanger (Nord University), **Karianne Berg** (Nord University), **Veslemøy Rydland** (University of Oslo), **Kathrin Olsen** (Nord University) & **Monica Melby-Lervåg** (University of Oslo) (Session A3)

What do we know about language and literacy interventions for Indigenous children? Implications for Sámi language revitalization

Purpose

Sámi children, like many Indigenous children globally, grow up in contexts with limited structural support for Indigenous languages, where long-standing educational practices have favoured majority languages and contributed to language loss. While language revitalization is a central goal in Sámi education, there is limited knowledge about which language and literacy interventions effectively support Indigenous children's language and literacy development. This study synthesizes international intervention research on Indigenous children's language and literacy development. A main question is how findings from this systematic review and meta-analysis inform Sámi education and language revitalization.

Method

A systematic review and meta-analysis were conducted of intervention studies targeting language and literacy outcomes among Indigenous children. Thirteen studies met the inclusion criteria, yielding 53 effect sizes. Studies were analysed for methodological quality, intervention focus, outcome measures, and language of instruction and assessment.

Results

All included studies assessed outcomes exclusively in the majority language (English), and none examined the development of Indigenous languages. In addition, no intervention studies targeting Sámi language contexts were identified.

The meta-analysis showed a small but positive overall effect ($g = 0.221$) on English language and literacy outcomes. These findings suggest that existing interventions support Indigenous children's academic achievement in majority-language settings, but not Indigenous language maintenance or revitalization. There was an unusually large variation in results between studies. None of the factors examine could explain variation in results between studies, but there were few studies overall and this limits the possibilities to detect such relationships.

Conclusion

This meta-analysis demonstrates that existing intervention research largely prioritizes majority-language outcomes, even when conducted with Indigenous children. In Sámi contexts, strengthening Sámi language revitalization requires a shift in research focus toward Indigenous-language outcomes, community-based approaches, and educational practices that explicitly support Sámi language use and development. Also, most of the included studies had issues related to study quality, and in the future, we need more rigorous studies with high quality designs and adequate sample sizes to get robust results.

Torkel Rasmussen (Sámi Allaskuvla – Sámi University of Applied Sciences) (Session B5)

Sámi language revitalization needs new theory

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the development of theory on minority and indigenous language vitality. I will investigate Sámi sociolinguistic studies and theories on minority language vitality and suggest new factors that should be considered studying vitality of Sámi languages.

Sámi sociolinguistic studies did before 2000 mostly focused on language loss, documentation of decline and analyzing assimilation processes. Several studies have scrutinized structural and political explanations for language shifts as the education systems, state policies and marginalization on both local and macrolevel. (e.g. Aubert 1978; Aikio & Lindgren 1973; Aikio 1988; Partanen 1994; Svonni 1993; Lakomäki 1997).

During the 1990s and 2000s we see an emergence of revitalization thinking in studies of Sámi languages vitality (e.g. Todal 2002; 2007; Huss 1999; Lindgren 2000; Jansson 2005; Sarivaara 2012; Rasmussen 2013; Pasanen 2015; Aikio-Puoskari 2016). This interest in revitalization and reverse of language shift in Sámi contexts stems from the situation on the ground. Revitalization of Sámi language and reverse of language shift is a phenomenon happening in many local Sámi communities. Briefly described: For some Sámi areas and some Sámi languages, we have both Sámi and non-Sámi new speakers, kindergartens and elementary schools are used as learning arenas through strong language learning models, and we can observe increased use of Sámi languages in families, administration, workplaces, media etc. Still, there has been little improvement in some areas and for some Sámi languages.

Nevertheless, theories of language vitality developed globally do not match the language conditions we observe in the field to a sufficient extent. Most sociolinguistics develop theories are based on studies of indigenous and minority languages in more challenging situations. As pointed out by Corson (1997: 80) *Norway's language policies. Developed at national level for the Sámi people, are among the most comprehensive and the most effective in the world.* It is exactly for a situation described by Corson we need better theoretical approaches even though his statement also generalizes the diverse field vitality of Sámi languages is.

The paper will investigate models for studying vitality of minority language which is also applicable on indigenous languages. It will critically review those established theories of language vitality presented by e.g. Giles, et.al. 1977; Fishman 1991; Hyltenstam et.al 1999: Grin 2003; Landweer 2008; Ehala 2009. Compared with results from Sámi language vitality studies it will point out what the obstacles and driving forces are for improving the vitality of Sámi languages and a contribution to development of theory will be suggested.

References

Aikio, M. 1988. *Saamelaiset kielenvaihdon kierteessä: kielisosiologinen tutkimus viiden saamelaiskylän kielenvaihdosta 1910–1980*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura.

Aikio, M, & Lindgren, A. 1973. *Kieliraportit*. In *Saamelaiskomitea* 46, Saamelaiskomitean mietintö: liite: tutkimusraportit. Helsinki: Valtion painatuskeskus.

Aikio-Puoskari, U. 2016. *Gullos sámegiella. Sámegielaid ealáskahttima buoremus vuogit ja álbmotlaš politihká linját Suomas, Ruoŧas ja Norggas*. Finland: Sámediggi.

Aubert, V. 1978. *Den samiske befolkning i Nord-Norge. Sámi ál'bmut Davvi-Norgas. The Lappish population in Northern Norway*. Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.

Corson, D. 1997. Language policies. Language policy and political issues in education. *Encyclopedia of language and education* 1: 77–88.

Dorian, N. C. 1981**.** *Language death: the life cycle of a Scottish Gaelic dialect.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Ehala, M. 2009. An evaluation matrix for ethno-linguistic vitality., In S. Pertot & T. Priestly & C. Williams (eds.), *Rights, Promotion and Integration Issues for Minority Languages in Europe*, 123–137. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.

Fishman, J. A. 1991. *Reversing language shift: theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Giles, H. & Bourhis R. Y & Taylor, D. M. 1977. Towards a Theory: Language in Ethnic Group Relations. In H. Giles (ed.), *Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations*, 307–348. London: Academic Press.

Grin, F. 2003. *Language policy evaluation and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.* Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Huss, L. 1999. *Reversing language shift in the far north: Linguistic revitalization in Northern Scandinavia and Finland*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

Hyltenstam, K. & Stroud, C & Svonni, M. 1999*. Språkbyte, språkbevarande, revitalisering: samiskan ställning i svenska Sápmi*, 41–97. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Jansson, A.. 2005. *Sami language at home and at school: A fieldwork perspective.* Studia uralica upsaliensia. Uppsala: Acta universitatis upsaliensis.

Krauss, M. E. 1997. The Indigenous Languages of the North: A Report on Their Present State. In H. Shoji & J. Janhunen (eds.), *Northern minority languages: Problems of survival.* Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.

Lakomäki, M. 1997. *Sydämeltäni olen saamenkielinen.* Oulu: Oulu University.

Landweer, L. 2008. Endangered Languages. Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality. *Notes on Sociolinguistics*. 5–22.

Lindgren, A.-R. 2000. *Helsingin saamelaiset ja oma kieli.* Helsinki: SKS.

Rasmussen, T. 2013**.** *Go ealáska, de lea váttis dápmat: davvisámegiela etnolingvisttalaš ceavzinnávccaid guorahallan guovtti gránnjágielddas Deanus ja Ohcejogas 2000-logu álggus.* Tromsø: Uit Arctic University of Norway.

Partanen, M. 1994. *Saamen kielen käyttö Suomen saamelaisalueella*. Oulu: University of Oulu.

Pasanen, A. 2015. *Kuávsui já peeivičuovâ. 'Sarastus ja päivänvalo'*. PhD Thesis. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Sarivaara, E. K. 2012. Statuksettomat saamelaiset: paikantumisia saamelaisuuden rajoilla. *Dieđut* 2/2012.

Svonni, M. 1993. *Samiska skolbarns samiska: en undersökning av minoritetsspråksbehärskning i en språkbyteskontext.* Umeå: Universitetet i Umeå.

Todal, J. 2002. *"-jos fal gáhttet gollegielat": vitalisering av samisk språk i Noreg på 1990-talet.* Tromsø: Universitetet i Tromsø.

Todal, J. 2007. Samisk språk i Svahken Sijte. Sørsamisk vitalisering gjennom barnehage og skule. *Dieđut* 1/2007. Guovdageaidnu: Sámi Instituhtta.

Mirain Rhys (Cardiff Metropolitan University), **Rhiannon Packer** (Cardiff Metropolitan University) & **Kathrine Young** (Cardiff Metropolitan University) (Session A4)

Research in a revitalisation context - the case of Wales

This paper presents a research-informed overview of bilingual and minority language education in Wales, drawing on collaborative work at Cardiff Metropolitan University and its partners. It situates Welsh-medium and Welsh as a second language (WSL) provision within broader questions central to minority language sustainability, including learner motivation, sociolinguistic competence, educational transitions, and resource development. By foregrounding empirical findings and ongoing projects, the paper contributes to comparative discussions relevant to Sámi and other minoritised language contexts.

The Welsh case is shaped by ambitious national policy goals, particularly those articulated by Welsh Government under the Cymraeg 2050 strategy, which aims to reach one million Welsh speakers by the year 2050 (Welsh Government 2017). Central to this agenda are questions of effective language acquisition, widening participation, and the normalisation of Welsh across domains, including education, community use, and professional contexts. Our research aligns with key priority areas identified within Cymraeg 2050, including: (1) effective pedagogies for Welsh acquisition, (2) increasing learner confidence and use, (3) supporting progression through education systems, and (4) strengthening the evidence base for policy and practice.

Drawing on mixed-methods and longitudinal research, the paper first examines learner experiences of WSL in compulsory education (Rhys & Smith 2022). Findings indicate persistent tensions between assessment-driven approaches and communicative competence, with learners expressing a desire for greater autonomy, increased opportunities for authentic language use, and more consistent exposure to Welsh across the curriculum. These insights have directly informed developments within the Curriculum for Wales, particularly the move towards a continuum of language learning and a greater emphasis on meaningful use.

The second strand focuses on sociolinguistic development, including learners' perceptions of variation and issues of linguistic confidence and 'linguistic shame'. Research highlights the importance of exposing learners to diverse language forms and supporting their development of sociolinguistic competence, particularly in later stages of acquisition (Young, Durham & Morris, 2024). This has implications for minority language contexts where standardisation and authenticity may be in tension.

A third strand addresses inclusion and accessibility, particularly for learners with additional learning needs (ALN). Current projects include the development of Welsh-medium literacy assessment tools and targeted reading resources, responding to a documented lack of materials for this population. This

work challenges dominant assumptions about minority language provision being inherently limited and instead demonstrates the potential for innovation in resource design (Packer & Rhys 2025).

We explore system-level collaboration, including national teacher education initiatives, practitioner research, and the role of Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (an organisation that develops and funds Welsh-medium education and training opportunities in universities, further education colleges, and apprenticeships) in expanding Welsh-medium provision across higher education. These structures illustrate how coordinated investment can support language revitalisation through education, while also highlighting ongoing challenges in teacher recruitment, retention, and capacity building.

Finally, the paper reflects on the relevance of the Welsh experience for Sámi contexts, particularly in relation to immersion education, community engagement, and policy implementation (Welsh Government 2024). We argue that while sociolinguistic conditions differ, there are shared challenges around learner engagement, resource development, and sustaining language use beyond formal education. The Welsh case demonstrates the importance of aligning research, policy, and practice, as well as the value of longitudinal and interdisciplinary approaches.

By linking empirical research with national strategy priorities, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions about how minority languages can be effectively supported within education systems. It offers both transferable insights and critical reflections that may inform future collaborative research across minority language contexts.

References

Packer, R., & Rhys, M. 2025. Small but mighty: Challenging hegemonic discourses in developing literacy in a minority language. *British Journal of Special Education*. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.70030

Rhys, M., & Smith, K. 2022. "Everything we do revolves around the exam": What are students' perceptions and experiences of learning Welsh as a second language in Wales? *Wales Journal of Education*, *24*(1). https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.24.1.1cym

Welsh Government 2017, July 10. *Cymraeg 2050: Welsh language strategy*. GOV.WALES. https://www.gov.wales/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy

Welsh Government 2024, May 23. *Effective approaches and methods in immersion education: Rapid Evidence Assessment | GOV.WALES*. GOV.WALES. https://www.gov.wales/effective-approaches-and-methods-immersion-education-rapid-evidence-assessment

Young, K., Durham, M., & Morris, J. 2024. Possessive pronouns in Welsh: Stylistic variation and the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. *Language Variation and Change*, 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0954394523000273

Peter Svenonius (University of Tromsø –The Arctic University of Norway) (Session A7)

Discontinuous Complements of North Sámi Postpositions

I argue that North Sámi provides evidence in favor of a particular conception of the relationship of word order to syntactic structure. In this conception, the linear order N (noun) before P (adposition) in a syntactic structure is compatible with P remaining higher than N at all syntactic levels of representation. This contradicts Kayne's (1994) Linear Correspondence Axiom.

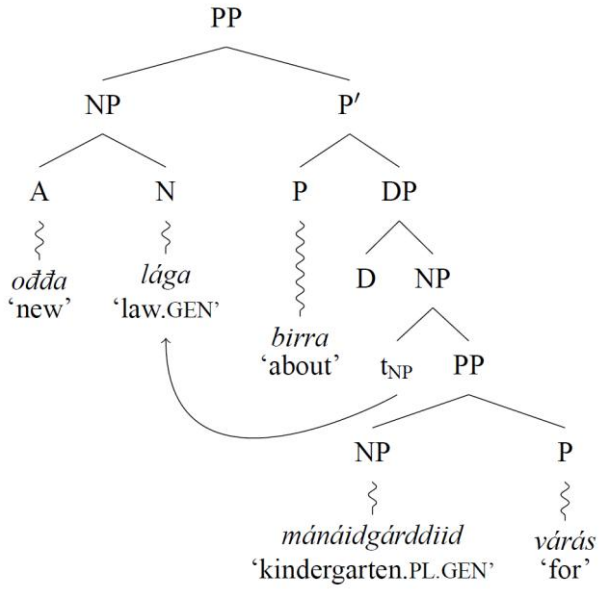
As observed by Julien (2018), when a noun phrase in North Sámi with a postnominal XP, such as a PP or a CP, is the complement of a postposition, that postposition appears immediately after the nominal head, before the postnominal XP. This is illustrated in (1) (from Julien 2018); in (1a), the postnominal XP is a PP; in (1b), the postnominal XP is a CP; in both cases, the highest postposition is in boldface.

(1) a. odđa lága **birra** mánáidgárddiid várás
*new law.GEN **about** kindergarten.PL.GEN for*
"about a/the new law for kindergartens"

b. dan ipmárdusa **nala** ahte lea dásseárvu guovtti álbmoga gaskka
*that.GEN understanding.GEN **upon** that is equality two.GEN people.GEN between*
'upon the understanding that there is equality between two people'

Julien argues that North Sámi adpositions are underlyingly head-initial, and that the surface order is derived through leftward movement of the head of the noun phrase across the adposition. In other words, a constituent consisting of the adjective and the head noun moves to the left in (1a), stranding the lower PP, as illustrated in (2), and in (1b) the determiner and noun move away from the CP.

(2)

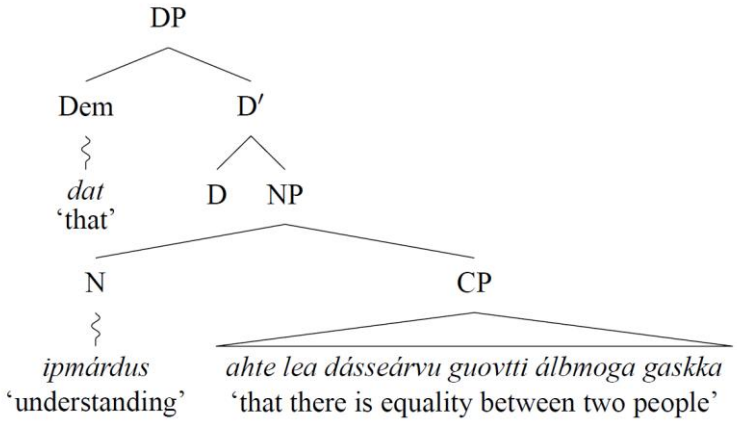


Julien's analysis is therefore consistent with standard assumptions about the syntactic derivation of word order including Kayne's (1994) Linear Correspondence Axiom, under which heads linearize to the left of their complements. However, it hinges on certain assumptions about constituent structure which I will argue are not well founded.

I argue instead that the word order in (1) is the result of the linearization of the heads of the extended projection of the noun, without movement. The postposition linearizes postsyntactically at PF to the right of the noun head of its complement, in a manner similar to that of a suffix. The mechanism of postsyntactic linearization that I adopt is developed as an extension of the proposals in Brody (2000) and Svenonius (2016, 2022).

An advantage of my proposal over that of Julien (2018) is that some of the constituent structures required for Julien's account are at odds with what we know about constituent structure. For example, determiners combine semantically with the conceptual content provided by common noun phrases (Partee 1987), and the conceptual content of the common noun phrase in (1b) includes the CP. Therefore, by simple compositionality, the N should combine with the CP first, then the D, as illustrated in (3), but Julien's movement analysis requires the opposite constituency.

(3)



Another illustration of the constituency problem faced by Julien's account is provided by examples like (4), in which the relative scope of prenominal and postnominal modifiers is variable. In (4), the adjective can be interpreted inside the postnominal modifier, in which case a light trailer has a load, and the load may make the trailer heavy. Alternatively, the adjective may be interpreted outside the postnominal modifier, in which case what is described is a light combination of trailer with load, i.e., it is still light after being loaded.

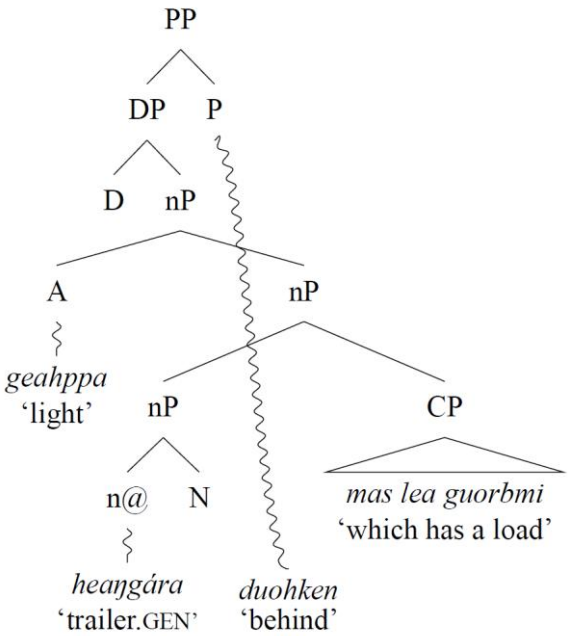
(4) geahppa heaŋgár mas lea guorbmi
light trailer what.LOC is load
'a [light trailer] which has a load' or 'a light [trailer which has a load]'

Given basic principles of syntactic compositionality, only the string is ambiguous: it ambiguously corresponds to either of two unambiguous syntactic structures. Julien's account therefore predicts that only the first reading should be compatible with movement of the adjective plus noun to the left of an adposition. The prediction fails, since examples like (5) retain the same ambiguity (even if a first parse favors the first reading).

(5) geahppa heaŋgára **duohken** mas lea guorbmi
light *trailer.GEN* ***behind*** *what.LOC* *is* *load*
'behind a [light trailer] which has a load' or 'behind a light [trailer which has a load]'

Following Brody (2000) and Svenonius (2016, 2022), the linearization of exponents of heads at PF is determined by the location of a label @. The fact that North Sámi postpositions linearize together with N indicates that there is only one @ in the extended projection that they share, causing them to linearize together at the same height. The height in question must be n, above NP, since the overt noun precedes complements of N as in (1b). Since N-n form an extended projection (along with D and P), the noun N linearizes in n without movement, as shown in (6).

(6)



On the view that linearization is a PF phenomenon, it is simply a matter of convention whether D and P in this tree are drawn to the right or the left of their complements. The presence of a single @ label in the extended projection N-n-D-P means that all overt heads in that extended projection linearize at that label, in mirror order, as *heaŋgára duohken*; squiggly lines are not syntactic branches but indicate linearization at PF. No movement is involved. Following Svenonius (2022), when words combine at a single @, the result is a cluster, with language-specific conventions determining whether the cluster is head-final (as here) or head-initial.

Trond Trosterud (UiT Arctic University of Norway) (Session B2)

Konrad Nielsen's Lappisk ordbok: Background and consequences

Konrad Nielsen's 3-volume dictionary (1932–38) influenced Saami and Uralic lexicography in two ways. First, by thoroughly showing the use of the words of the language he set a standard for later Uralic scientific dictionaries, in contrast to earlier dictionaries of this type. Second, the vocabulary collected in the dictionary formed the basis for Sammallahti's 1989 Saamelais-suomalainen sanakirja and subsequent dictionaries.

Compared to the 3-volume dictionary, Nielsen's first attempt at a dictionary, from 1913, is very different. There, the focus was on phonetic accuracy rather than on phraseology. The talk will investigate what happened in the two decades between the first and the second dictionary, why the focus changed and why there, in stark contrast to the prevailing Norwegianisation policy, were allocated relatively large resources to Saami research. A key factor in this process was Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning (Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture). My hypothesis is that the new direction in Saami research came as a result of a dialogue between the scientific program of the Institute and the view held by Nielsen and Qvigstad.

References

Kyllingstad, J. R. 2025. *«Menneskeåndens universalitet» Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning 1917–1940. Ideene, institusjonen og forskningen*. Oslo: Institutt for sammenlignende kulturforskning. Novus forlag.

Nielsen, K. 1913: Die wissenschaftliche bedeutung des lappischen. *Finnisch-ugrische Forschungen* 13:186–206.

Nielsen, K. 1933: Lappische Lexikographie. *Suomalais-Ugrilaisen Seuran Aikakauskirja* 46.

Øystein A. Vangsnes (UiT Arctic University of Norway & Western Norway University of Applied Sciences) (Session A5)

The turn of the tide for Sámi in Norwegian education

The current tripartite curriculum for Sámi (Sámi 1, 2 and 3) in Norwegian primary and middle school (grades 1–10) has been operative since the school year 2006/2007. In this paper I will show that there has been a significant increase in number of pupils in the last ten-year period, which follows an almost equally large decrease in the preceding decade. I will also present data suggesting that Romsa and other cities are the main drivers in the recent positive trend. **The main question to address is how we should interpret the observed positive developments from a language revitalization point of view.**

1. Total numbers

Figure 1 shows the overall development for Sámi instruction in Norwegian schools between 2006 and 2024. The numbers are obtained from the publicly open GSI database run by the The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir). The numbers reveal a 23.5% decrease in pupil numbers from 2,672 to 2,164 in the first ten years followed by a 28.3% increase to 2,776 in 2024. The number of pupils with Sámi medium education (SME) has a similar, although less pronounced, fluctuation down 15.9% to 2015 and up again by 9.6% to 2024.

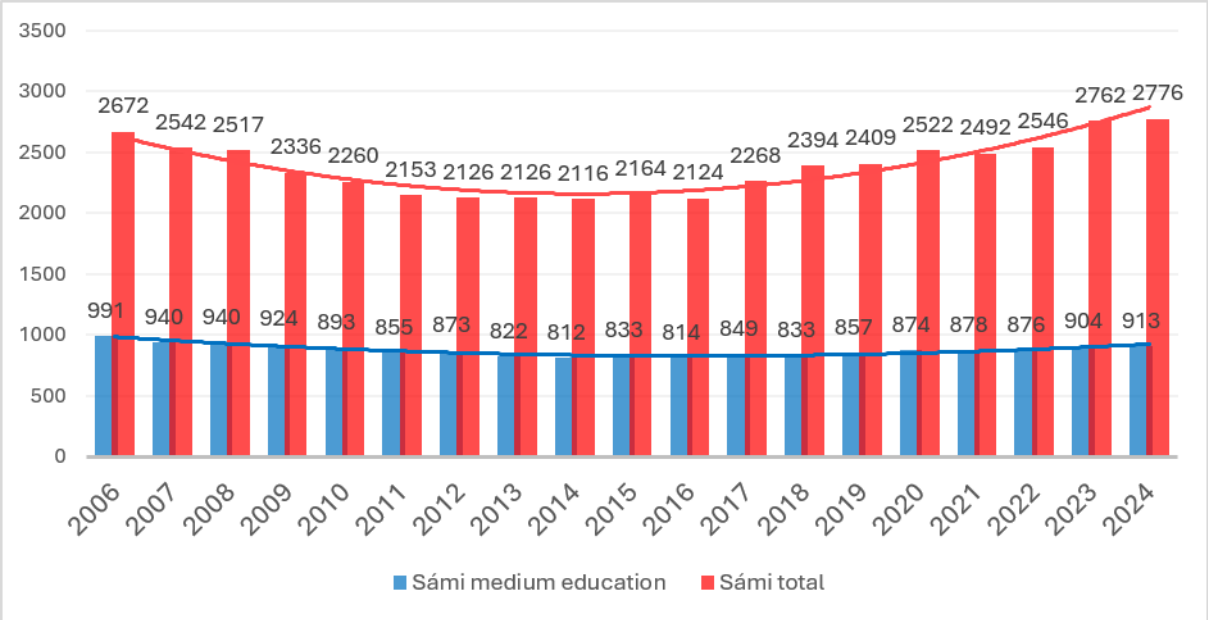


Figure 1: Number of pupils with Sámi instruction in grades 1–10 in Norway between 2006 and 2024. Source: GSI/Udir

Importantly, there is no similar fluctuation in the total Norwegian pupil population which rose by a modest 1.2% during the whole 20-year period. Furthermore, in the three northern-most Norwegian counties, which host the largest groups of Sámi pupils, the overall pupil number dropped from 56,306 in 2015 to 51,664 in 2024 (i.e. −8.2%), contrasting sharply with the rise in pupils with a Sámi provision.

The increase in Sámi pupils after 2015 can be seen across all Sámi curricula, but it is highest for Sámi 2. Figure 2 provides the figures for North Sámi. Also for Lule and South Sámi there is a significant increase for the Sámi 2 group and there is a clear total increase for both languages, but unlike for North Sámi the numbers are either stable or drop for Sámi 1 and Sámi 3.

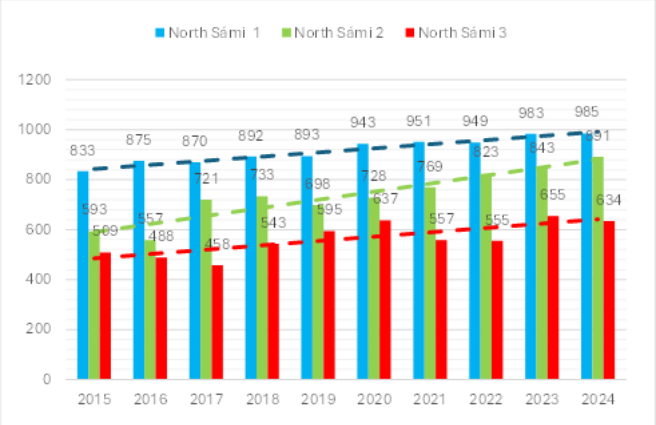
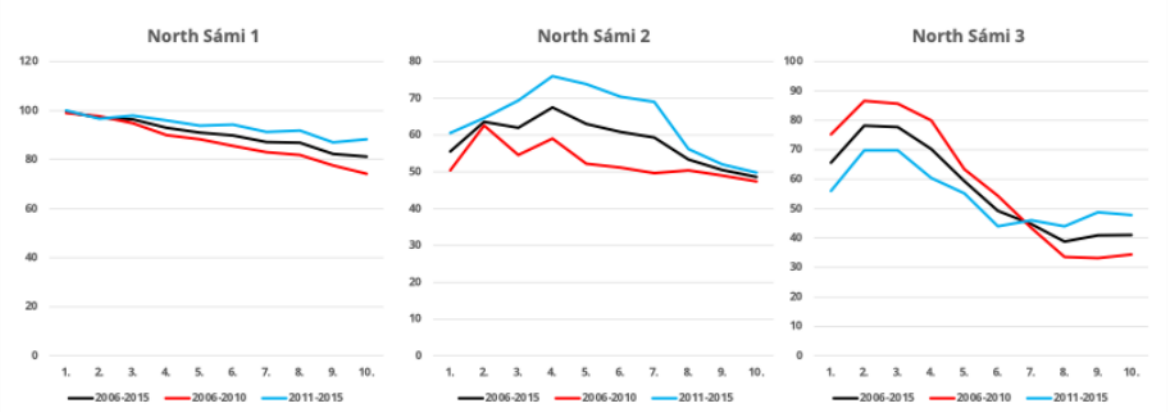


Figure 2: Number of pupils with instruction in North Sámi grades 1–10 between 2015 and 2024. Source: GSI/Udir

2. Drop-out rates

The number of pupils dropping out of the Sámi language provision is lower in the five cohorts starting school between 2011 and 2015 than the five cohorts starting 2006–2011, although with some differences across the three curricula. The three panels in Figure 3 illustrate this for North Sámi 1, 2 and 3, respectively: the black lines show the average development from grade 1 to 10 in the cohorts that started school between 2006 and 2015, whereas the red lines show the average in the cohorts 2006–2010 (Group A) and the blue lines the cohorts 2011–2015 (Group B).



For North Sámi 1, the cohort sizes are the same in 1st grade, but more pupils remain in 10th grade in Group B. For North Sámi 2 the cohort size is bigger for Group B and it increases noticeably in the middle of the school years, but drops to the same level as Group A by 10th grade, hence indicating a higher drop-out rate in Group B. In contrast to this, North Sámi 3 shows a positive development: there are fewer pupils starting 1st grade in Group B, but more of them finish 10th grade than in group A. All curricula viewed together, the net drop-out is lower in the most recent period: Group A drops from an average 224,6 cohort size in 1st grade to 156 in 10th grade (30.5%), whereas Group B drops from 216,6 to 185,8 (14.2%).

3. Romsa and Sámi in the city

In the city Romsa/Tromsø the rise in Sámi pupil numbers is much higher than the national increase. 101 North Sámi pupils in 2015 rose to 289 in 2024. The total increase is 186%, and largest increase has come in Sámi 3 (up from 34 to 164 = 382%), followed by Sámi 2 (up from 11 to 37 = 236%), but also Sámi 1 has had a substantial increase (up from 56 to 88 = 57% – source: GSI data from Romsa municipality). Whereas Romsa hosted 5.2% of the national population of Sámi pupils in 2015, the proportion is now 11.5%.

Although small in absolute numbers, also the city Bådåddjo/Bodø has had a very positive development in the period with a doubling of the pupil numbers (20 pupils in 2015 versus 40 in 2024 – source: Bådåddjo municipality).

4. Interpretation

I will argue that the various positive trends in Sámi pupil numbers must be seen against a more widespread shift in attitudes and sentiments towards Sámi culture, amplified by powerful artistic expressions by a wide range of Sámi artists, but also against a long-term systematic struggle for increased language rights and systemic changes in education since the 1960ies. Several cases of painful confrontations with the majority society both in the long and short perspective are key to understanding Sámi cultural mobilization and in turn both systemic shifts in education and changes in attitudes towards Sáminess. Formal instruction and literacy in minoritized languages is a most powerful tool for recruiting future active language users and transmitters, and although the actual outcome of formalized Sámi instruction in the school setting is dependent on a variety of factors and will vary across individuals and groups, the positive trends presented here are no doubt good news from a language revitalization point of view.

Paulette van der Voet (Umeå University) (Session A5)

Comparing Curricula for Sami Language Education

One part of the framework regulating Sami language education in compulsory education in Sweden and Norway are the centralised, national curricula. Although geographically adjacent, the nation-state border between them results in different goals and content for Sami language education in each context. Thus, the Sami children in respective country are part of and subjected to distinctive school systems and educational policies. And likewise for a Sami child on the Swedish side of the border being subject to Swedish educational policies.

It is therefore of importance to study these curriculum documents, because they are powerful texts (Bjørhusdal 2020). These documents do not only reflect the power of the responsible authorities, but they also actively shape the everyday experiences of both educators and pupils. These curriculum documents influence how Sami is taught in schools, as well as what children are able to learn. In this sense, the curriculum documents even have the power to enable and constrain children's opportunities to learn Sami within formal education. While schools historically functioned as tools for assimilation, they are nowadays assigned an essential role in the revitalisation of both Indigenous languages and cultures (Hornberger & De Korne 2018).

In my presentation, I address what can be learned from comparing curricula for Sami language education. I approach this question through my ongoing doctoral project, which consists of a comparative study of curricula for Sami language education in Sweden and Norway using critical discourse analysis.

To answer this question, I first draw on concrete examples from my doctoral research. A comparison of the curriculum documents shows both similarities and di erences, which highlight how Sami language education is conceptualised in each national context.

I will then take a step back to discuss this question from a broader theoretical perspective, focusing on the importance and value of research on Sami language education across the borders of the nation states dividing Sápmi. At the same time, I will also address the challenges that arise when doing comparative research in the context of Sami education.

References

Bjørhusdal, E. 2020. Mektige tekstar og kritisk. In L. I. Aa & R. Neteland (eds.), *Master i norsk: Metodeboka 1*. Universitetsforlaget.

Hornberger, N. H., & De Korne, H. 2018. Is revitalization through education possible? In L. Hinton, L. Huss, & G. Roche (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language revitalization*, 94–104. Routledge.