

## **Changes in the norms of language use and language attitudes in Enontekiö (2003–2013)<sup>1</sup>**

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### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to report on a longitudinal study I started in 2002 and repeated in 2012 in the Saami speech communities of Eanodat/Enontekiö, Finland with the support of the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA). The study focuses on examining the current language situation of this minority community, especially aiming at exploring the way norms of language use and language attitudes have changed during the past decade. In this paper I will present some of the recent results of the study. Firstly, I will shortly consider the theoretical background, more specifically the notions of language change and language attitudes, which are central to this study. Next, I will describe the set-up of the research, i.e. the place and the participants of the study, as well as the methodology I have relied on throughout the research. The description will be followed by the research questions I attempt to answer in this paper. Some of the results of this longitudinal study will be considered in the next section of the paper. Finally, I will sum up the results and point at future research tasks to be accomplished within the framework of the study.

It is widely claimed that the world's dominant languages are expanding and today multilingualism has become all too common in most countries. While in stable multilingual situations versus unstable ones the languages are functionally separated, in most multilingual communities one of the languages, usually the one with less prestige loses the domains where it has originally been used. A similar process happens in the case of indigenous minority languages which are spoken in a community where the users of the

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<sup>1</sup> Report on recent results (OTKA-PD-104612).

majority language outnumber that of the minority language. Such languages generally go through the process of language change, a process which is characterised by the diminishing role of the minority language in everyday communication leading eventually to language shift, referring to the process through which the minority community gradually shifts to the exclusive use of another language variety, to the majority language as a rule (Weinreich 1953; Gal 1979).

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the study of endangered minority languages. Most of the research carried out in these communities focus on exploring the situation of the language in danger at a certain point of time and on making predictions about its vitality and its future in the community under investigation. Only a handful of the researchers return to the scene of the study to examine the longitudinal trend of language change in that certain community. Such studies make use of both apparent-time and real-time data gathered at different points of time, often decades apart (Labov 1972; Nahkola – Saanilahti 2004; Aikio 1988).

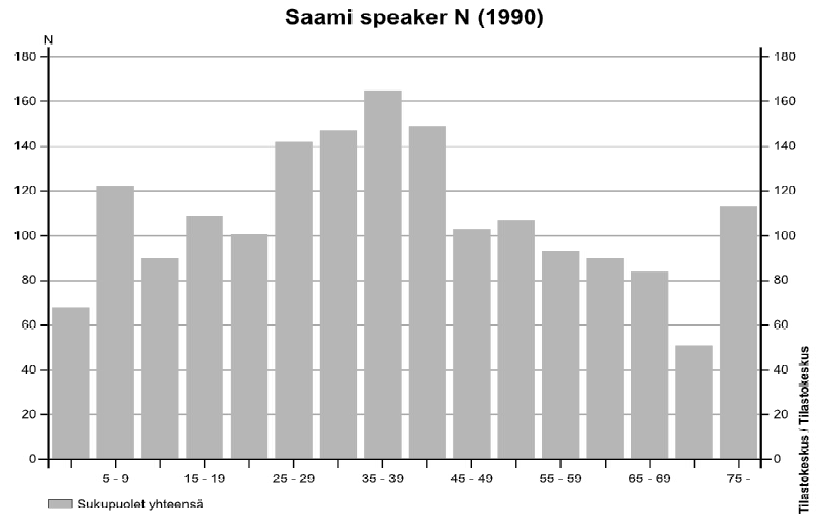
In the Saami language communities of Fenno-Scandinavia language change started cc. 150 years ago, reached its peak 40-50 years ago and has apparently slowed down since then. The slowing down of language change is mostly due to positive changes on macro level reflected mainly in more supportive institutional support as well as in generally more positive majority and minority attitudes towards the Saami language and culture. Positive attitudes are apparently reflected in an increased degree of participation in decision-making concerning the Saami, especially in the past 20 years. Table 1 below includes the most recent data as to the number of Saamis and the number of Saami speakers in Finland assessed by the Saami Parliament and the Finnish Statistical Office. According to the data, there are about 10 000 Saamis in Finland, out of which about 20% speak Saami as their mother tongue in the whole of Finland. In the past 25 years the number of speakers has increased by 12% in Finland, while there has also been a 4% decrease in the number of Saami speakers in the Saami core area in Finnish-Lapland, mainly due to migration away from these territories. The 12% rise in speaker numbers in the whole of Finland can similarly be due to migration, i.e. the fact that Saami speakers have moved to the southern territories of Finland and especially to larger cities because of better opportunities in education and at the labour market. Today only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the Saamis live in the core Saami area, where about half of them speak the language as their mother tongue.

	<b>Saami N</b>	<b>Mother tongue speaker N (2014)</b>	<b>Mother tongue speaker % (1990–2014)</b>
Finland	cc. 10 000*	1949** (90% Northern Saami)	12 % ↗
Finnish-Lapland ( <i>Sápmi</i> )	cc. 3500*	1553**	4 % ↘

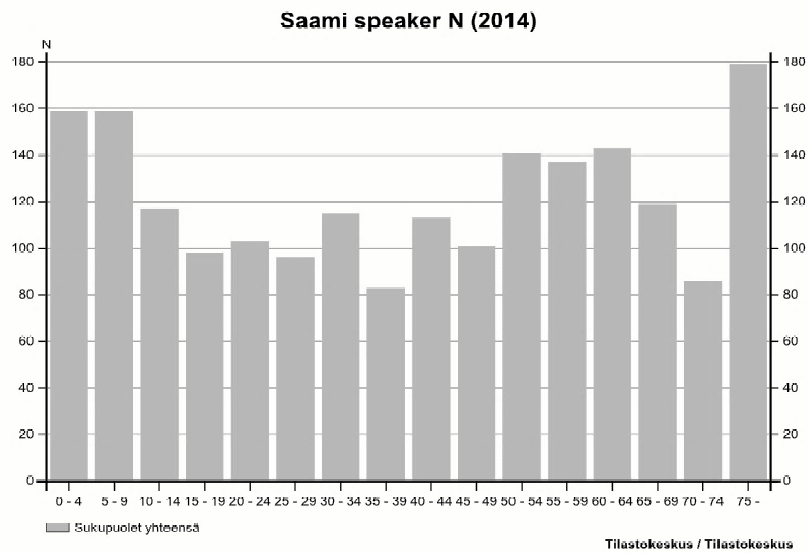
**Table 1.**

Change in the number of Saamis and Saami speakers in Finland  
(\*Saamelaiskäräjät 2014; \*\*Tilastokeskus 2014)

Figure 1 below indicates how the process of language change is reflected in the different age groups a couple of decades apart. In 1990 the number of Saamis, who declared Saami as their mother tongue, was the highest in the generational groups of young adults, i.e. in the age group of 25 to 40. In 2014, as is illustrated in Figure 2, the same age group still in high numbers claim Saami as their mother tongue. Noticeably, today the elderly and the oldest age groups much more eagerly attach to Saami than the elderly Saamis did so 24 years earlier. By comparing the two tables, another striking difference is that today the youngest generations are attached to their mother tongue in quite high numbers. It is a change most welcome from the point of view of language revitalization. These numbers can refer firstly to the fact that language is successfully transmitted to young generations in the Saami community and secondly to the fact that the attitudes of the Saami in Finland have become more positive towards their mother tongue during the course of 24 years due most probably to more proactive policy environment concerning the Saami in Finland. A more favourable policy climate, thus, seems to have a positive effect on the attitudes of the Saami towards their mother tongue.



**Figure 1.**  
The number of Saami speakers in 1990 according to age groups (Tilastokeskus 2014)



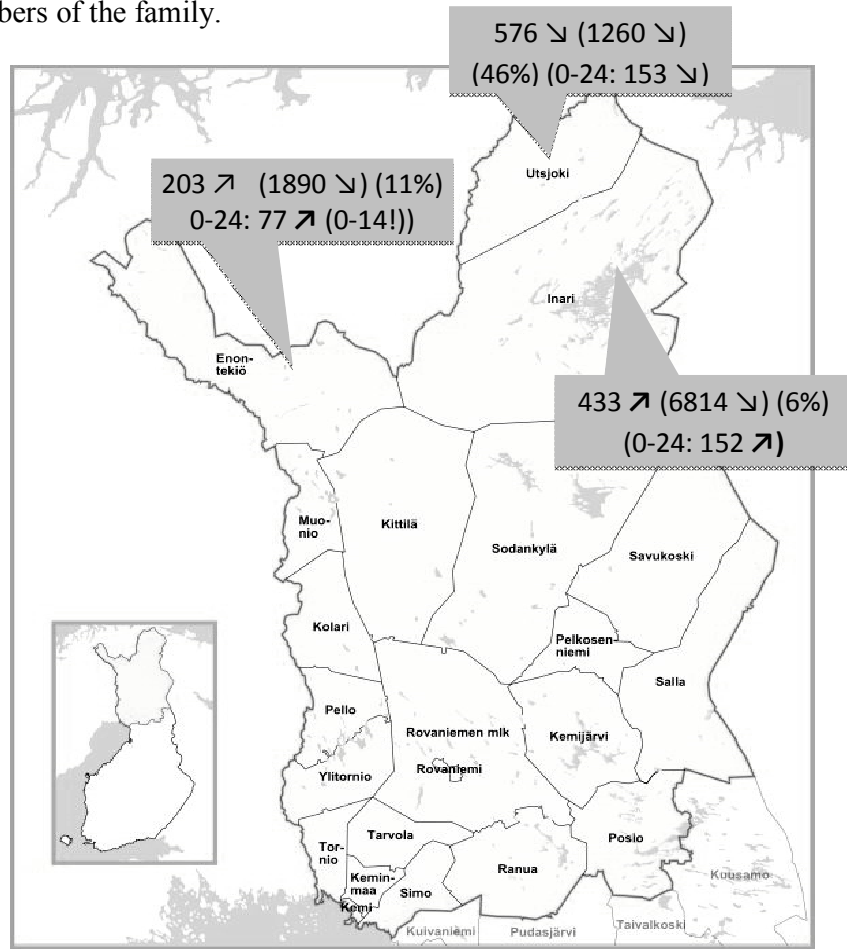
**Figure 2.**  
The number of Saami speakers in 2014 according to age groups (Tilastokeskus 2014)

The process of language change in a minority context is characterised by the diversity of skills and very importantly also by the diversity of attitudes of the speakers of the languages. Attitudes, similarly to minority language use, tend to change with time, and thus also follow a longitudinal trend. Minority attitudes can become more positive, more negative or can remain stable towards language preferences, language maintenance and several aspects of multilingualism. They can not only vary according to time and have a longitudinal trend, but can also vary with respect to age and education as is claimed by Fasold (1984). When it comes to language maintenance and language revitalization many authors, Lewis (1981) among them, claim that attitude is just as important a dimension of social structure as the size and age distribution of the minority community. Furthermore, a positive attitude is claimed to be a prerequisite for successful revitalization (Grenoble – Whaley 2006). Thus, people's attitudes towards their mother tongue have strong effects on its status within a given community and therefore they are good indicators of language health (Baker 1992). According to Gal the most important type of attitude when examining language change is the attitude of the minority community towards its mother tongue, its value and that of the majority towards the minority language and culture (Gal 1979). The present discussion concentrates on exploring minority attitudes towards language maintenance and Saami–Finnish bilingualism.

## **2. Research design**

The study has been conducted in the municipality of Enontekiö in Finnish-Lapland where only a minority of the population can today be regarded as ethnic Saami after about a century of majority assimilation policy and internal migration. According to the most recent census, detailed in Table 2, today there are 203 Saamis in the municipality who constitute 11% of the population there. This is the second most populated territory occupied by the Saamis in Finnish-Lapland after Inari to the east with only 6%. The Saami in Enontekiö live concentrated in the central village of Hetta and in some other smaller communities, mostly scattered throughout the municipality, being the third largest in Finland. Although Utsjoki municipality has the most Saamis of the three with its 46%, both Enontekiö and Inari can proudly present an increasing number of Saamis in their respective communities. Most importantly, with respect to language revitalization, in the past few decades the number of Saami speakers both in Inari and in Enontekiö has steadily increased in the young age groups (from 0 to 24). The rise in speaker

numbers is most apparent in the youngest generations, as in indicated in Table 2, namely from 0-14 which is a sign that parents seem to be making efforts and also find ways to pass their mother tongue on to the youngest members of the family.



**Table 2.**

(<http://lappi.sekl.fi/lappi/yleista/toiminta-alue-ja-seurakunnat>,  
<http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/sq/3093fc89-2132-4535-87e3-f79d58247dab>)

The longitudinal research in its first phase was a questionnaire paper survey in Finnish. The aim was to have as many respondents as possible participate in the survey and have them reflect on Saami language use and language attitudes towards Saami, its maintenance and revitalization as well as

towards Saami–Finnish bilingualism. In the second phase of the research, a decade later, I repeated the same survey, used the same methods and asked the same questions. The survey was designed to have mostly closed and some open items and was a variable-oriented one focusing on 3-4 key variables during the analysis as the sample was stratified according to mother tongue, place of living and age. It included respondents above 25 years of age. The first sample, as it is revealed in Table 3, in 2002-2003 was mailed to 227 Saamis, out of which 60 returned the questionnaires. In 2013 I resampled the survey with 179 of the original sample and received 30 surveys back. The table also shows that only ten Saamis filled in and returned both surveys and three of them indicated a willingness to be interviewed later on. As the birth dates indicate in the table, the ten Saamis mostly belong to the older age groups.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Survey N</b>	<b>Interview N</b>
2002–2003	227 > 60	–
2013–2014	178 (48†) > 30 > 10 (1958, 1957, 1957, 1951, 1950, 1949, 1946, 1942, 1930, 1924, 1923)	3

**Table 3.**

The longitudinal survey sample in 2002–2003 and in 2013–2014

At the present phase of the research I am engaged in the analysis of the surveys and in making arrangements for the next stage during which the research will be complemented by the assessment of attitudes towards Saami and the norms of language use on the level of the individual.

In this paper I seek to answer the following research questions based on the data available in the 2003 and 2013 surveys:

- 1) How do changes in language use relate to the longitudinal trend in Saami–Finnish language change?
- 2) How do changes in language attitudes relate to the longitudinal trend in Saami–Finnish language change?

Firstly, I will illustrate how language use in informal and formal domains has changed during the past decade. Secondly, I will analyse a decade of change concerning language attitudes towards language maintenance and Saami–Finnish bilingualism. Thirdly, I will demonstrate the generational variations associated with the changes in language use and language attitudes. The data will be presented in diagrams.

### 3. Discussion

As it is widely known, it is the informal domain where minority language use counts the most considering language revitalization. Figure 3 below presents how the patterns of language use in the informal domain, i.e. at home, have changed throughout a period of 10 years. On the horizontal line I listed the people the respondents supposedly have contact with and on the vertical one the frequency of Finnish and Saami language use. The respondents were required to indicate the frequency of language use on a scale from '1' to '5', '1' marking the exclusive use of Finnish, '5' the exclusive use of Saami and '3' a mixed use of both languages. The light grey columns indicate language use in 2003 and the dark grey ones refer to language use 10 years later, i.e. in 2013. As the diagram represents, there is a slight decrease in the mixed use of Saami and Finnish with the elderly members of the family, depicting a change towards the use of Finnish. However, there is a slight increase towards the mixed use of the two languages with the younger generations, indicating a change towards Saami language use. The decrease can be explained by the fact that some of the elderly and the oldest people in the family have passed away during that 10 years' time. The increase, nonetheless, is a positive change which indicates a slightly more positive attitude and willingness to speak Saami in the family and especially and most importantly with the youngest members of the family.



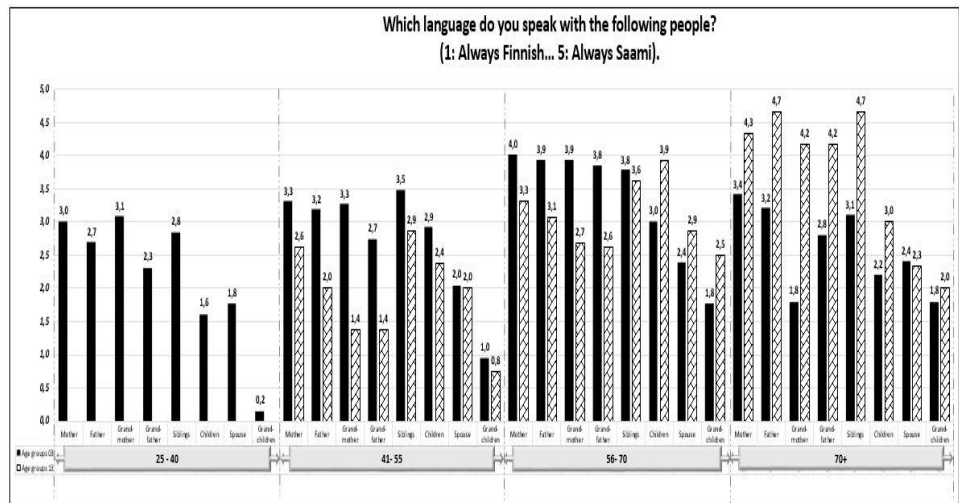
**Figure 3.**

Language use in informal domains (2003–2013)

Figure 4 presents how language use in the same place of interaction, i.e. at home, with the same partners has varied according to the four age groups

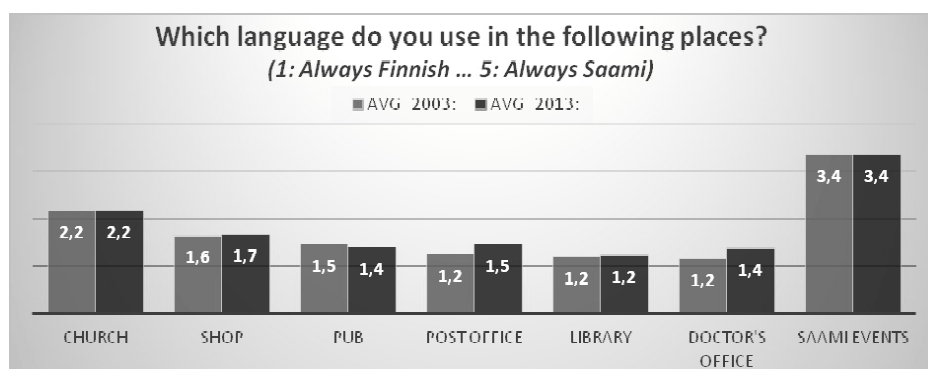


during the same ten-year period. The black columns indicate language use in 2003 and the chequered ones present language use in 2013. What can strike the eye first is the change in the oldest age groups, i.e. from 70 and above, towards the use of Saami in the family, especially with the older members. Similarly, a younger, but still elderly age group, i.e. 56-70, is today more willing to speak Saami with the younger members of the family than they were a decade earlier due most probably to more favourable majority attitudes successfully offsetting several decades of negative attitudes and assimilation policy. In the second younger age group, however, there is no such change towards a more willing approach to use Saami. Saami speakers in this middle-aged generation use both Saami and Finnish, but mostly Finnish with the elderly and with the younger generation alike. In sum, although there is a slight increase in the willingness to speak Saami among the elderly and the oldest age groups, i.e. from 56 to 70 and above 70, today younger generations are much more reluctant to speak their mother tongue in the family. We can conclude here that changes in language use at home over ten years follow the longitudinal trend of language change as far as the third generation, i.e. we can see the increasing dominance of interactions in Finnish. However, in the third generation the tendency turns for the better, i.e. interactions are increasingly dominated by Saami as speakers get older.



**Figure 4.**  
Language use in informal domains (2003–2013): Age group variation

The following diagram in Figure 5 illustrates the change in the patterns of language use outside the home, i.e. mostly in formal situations. As it is presented below, these are the places the Saami interact the most Finns with and the ones dominated by interaction in Finnish. Saami events and the church are the only exceptions. They as a rule allow for the mixed use of Saami and Finnish because these are the places where the Saami meet Saami friends and relatives. If we consider the relationship between the light and dark grey columns, i.e. the change in the norms of language use, we can notice that hardly anything has changed in the patterns. Finnish language use generally dominates interactions in places outside the home, following again the longitudinal trend of language change, i.e. the dominance or the increasing dominance of Finnish in interactions.



**Figure 5.**

Language use in formal domains (2003–2013)

If we look at the generational variation below in Figure 6, the columns illustrate that the older generations are much more inclined to speak both Saami and Finnish at the church and at Saami events. As they are less formal situations than the other ones and can involve friends and relatives who are also Saamis, speakers are more at ease and can thus be more willing to rely on their home language. Moreover, service at the church in Enontekiö is recently held in Saami, undoubtedly contributing to a more favourable attitude towards Saami language use among Saami speakers. The change during the past ten years is also for the better in these elderly generations. It seems that the older the speaker, the more willing he or she is to use Saami at the church and at Saami events. All the other formal domains of interaction remain dominated by Finnish language use all through the four generations and throughout the ten years.

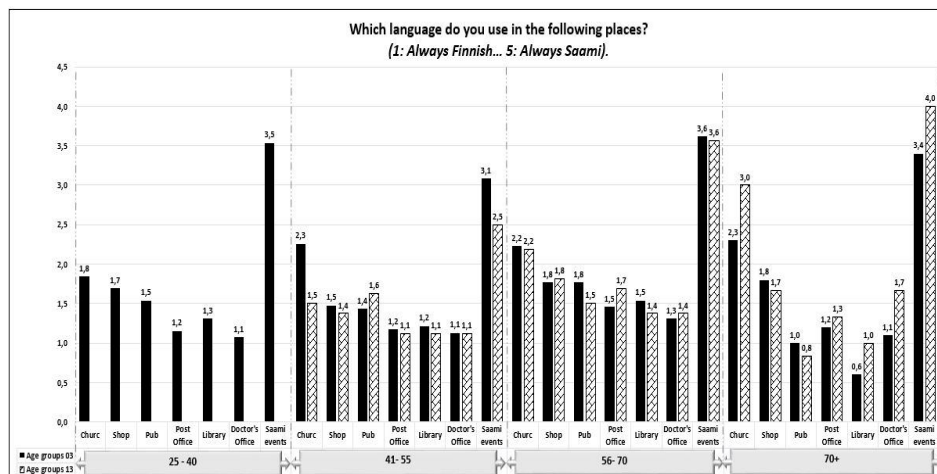
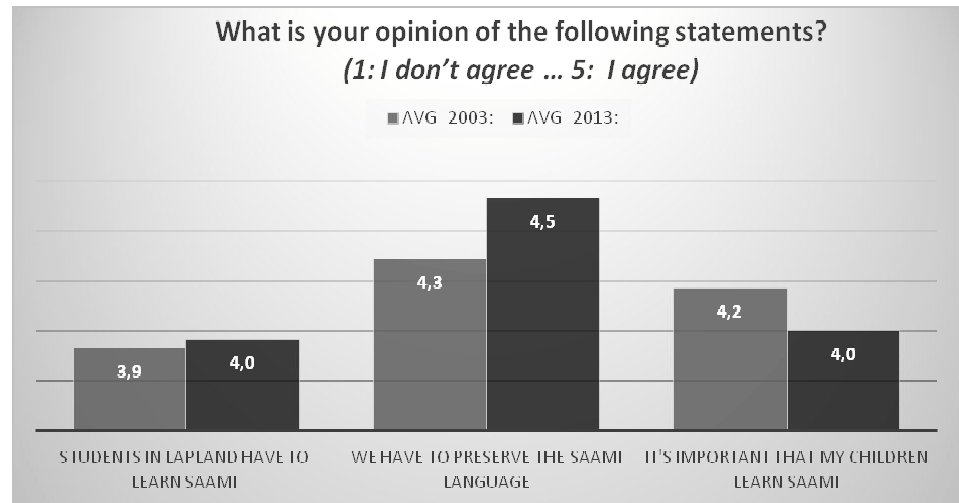


Figure 6.

Language use in formal domains (2003–2013): Age group variation

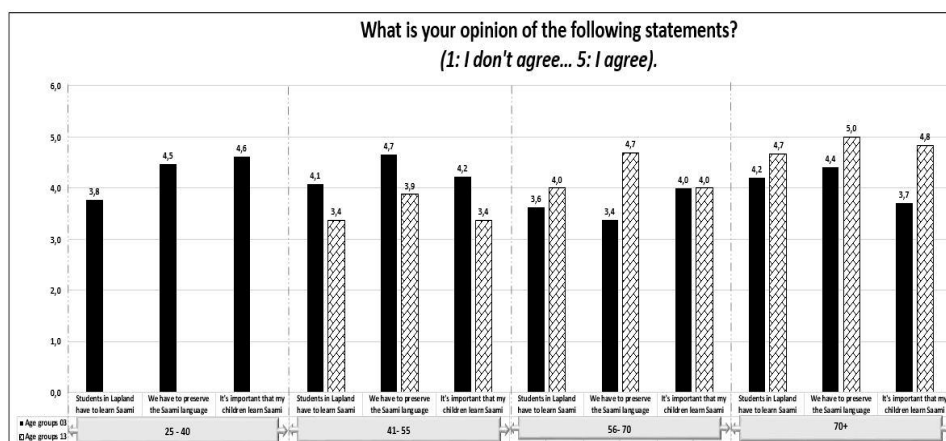
As it has been established in the literature, an endangered language can most successfully be maintained if it is transmitted to the younger generations. Hence, the attitude of the adult generations to language maintenance can be an indicator of behaviour or at best willingness to pass the minority language onwards. In the attitude module of the survey respondents were required to express their opinion on certain attitude statements and rate them on a scale of ‘5’, ‘1’ marking complete disagreement and ‘5’ complete agreement with the statement. In Figure 7 I selected three statements, each relating to an attitude to language maintenance. As it is revealed by the numbers, respondents mostly claim that it is important to teach children Saami and more importantly to preserve Saami as their native tongue. Today respondents agree slightly more with the significance of preserving Saami and contradictorily, slightly less with the importance for children to learn Saami, pointing to a potential discrepancy between attitudes and behaviour. One might easily interpret these numbers as altogether positive attitudes which are probably not followed by actual measures taken by the parents to provide for Saami educational environment for their children. Yet, on the average, respondents scored ‘4’ in both 2003 and 2013, referring to the fact that attitudes have basically remained positive towards language maintenance during the past ten years.



**Figure 7.**

Attitudes to language maintenance (2003–2013)

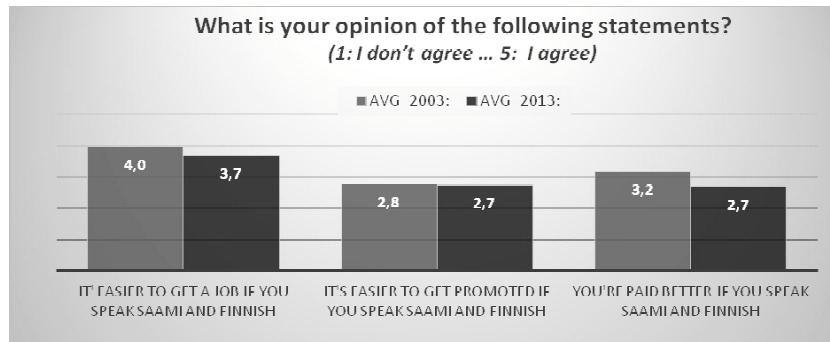
The generational variation in Figure 8, however, reveals a more subtle picture of attitudes towards language maintenance. Similarly to the previous diagrams, sample data are missing for the youngest generation in 2013, the reason being that respondents have become older by 2013 and have been included in the adult generation, i.e. in the age group of 41–55. In this generation respondents have become slightly uncertain concerning the significance of preserving Saami and transmitting it to the younger generations. In the older age groups, on the other hand, there has been a change towards the other direction. The older the respondent, the more convinced he or she is about the importance of preserving and teaching the Saami language. The longitudinal trend of change in attitudes, therefore, follows a similar pattern to that of language use.



**Figure 8.**

Attitudes to language maintenance (2003–2013): Age group variation

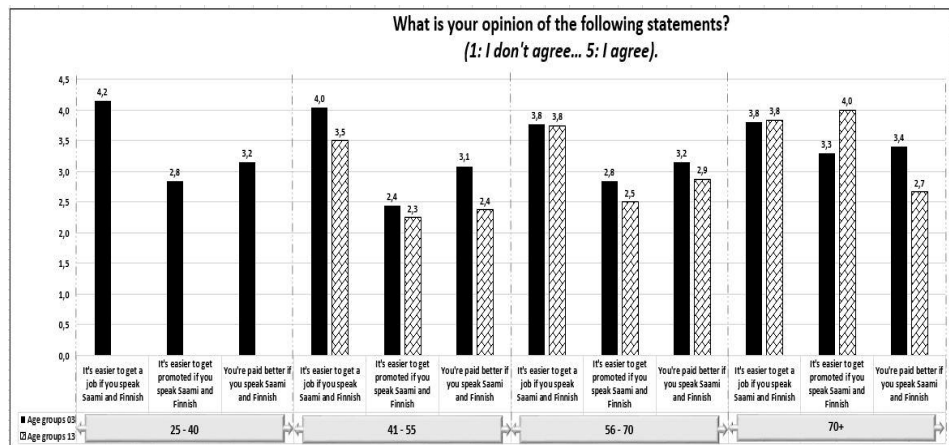
In a previous study (Duray 2014) I conclude that although the Saami community in Enontekiö is in a language shift situation, featured by functional language loss, it is also in an additive bilingual situation, i.e. both the minority and the majority have shown positive attitudes not only towards the use of Saami in informal domains, but also to the presence of Saami and Finnish in everyday life, e.g. at the workplace and at schools. In this paper I have so far enquired about the individual Saami speaker as language revitalization is claimed to work best on the individual level where the Saami speaker has the possibility to use Saami in an increasing number of domains, mostly in the family. The societal level of revitalization, however, is equally important in this respect. On that level the majority is expected to recognize minority language rights and thus, educational and cultural institutions are established and preferably, the labour market also welcomes speakers of Saami in certain jobs rewarding the knowledge of the minority language with a higher salary. Figure 9 below shows how the respondents view their possibilities to use Saami at workplaces in the community and to what extent the knowledge of Saami is rewarded by their employers. As the data suggests, during the past decade the Saami participating in the survey have been nearly equally unsure about getting a promotion or better salary if they speak Saami, but most of them have considered Saami to be an advantage when seeking a job in their community in Lapland. However, there has been a slight decrease in agreement here, signifying that today speakers are less sure about Saami being an advantage at the labour market.



**Figure 9.**

Attitudes to Saami-Finnish bilingualism (2003–2013)

As for the generational variation concerning the same attitude statements, Figure 10 shows a decrease in agreement with the usefulness of Saami at the labour market. The diagram also indicates that the adult generation, i.e. the age group of 41–55, is the least convinced about Saami being an advantage at the labour market. In this age group a change towards disagreement is more considerable than in the other age groups. The older and the oldest age groups are the ones which are not that negative, but generally uncertain about the usefulness of Saami at the workplace. These are also the generations that are retired or are approaching retirement. They are present at the active labour market to less extent, but can certainly be involved in jobs related to the traditional livelihood of the Saami, i.e. in handicraft or reindeer herding, in jobs that tend to preserve the minority language.



**Figure 10.**

Attitudes to Saami-Finnish bilingualism (2003–2013): Age group variation

#### 4. Conclusion

The Saami participating in the survey have in general shown a slightly more positive attitude and willingness to speak Saami with family members, and most importantly, with the youngest members in the family. However, it must also be noted that the generational variation shows that the younger generations are more reluctant to speak their mother tongue at home. There also seems to be a tendency to use more Saami in the family as one gets older.

As illustrated in Table 4 below, changes in language use at home in ten years follow a trend towards the decreasing use of Saami as far as the third generation. In this third generation the tendency turns towards the increasing dominance of Saami in interactions followed by the same pattern in the fourth generation. At the same time Finnish language use dominates most of the interactions in places outside the home all through the four generations and through the ten years' of investigation, which follows a steady longitudinal trend towards the increasing dominance of Finnish in most formal interactions. The only exception is the church and Saami events, where there is a counter-tendency, i.e. the older the speaker, the more willing he or she is to use the Saami language.

How do changes in language use relate to the longitudinal trend in Saami–Finnish language change?				
Age group	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Longitudinal trend in informal domains	Finnish →		Saami →	
Longitudinal trend in formal domains	Finnish →		Finnish →	

*Table 4.*

The longitudinal trend in language use in formal and informal domains

As for attitude change, Table 5 illustrates that the longitudinal trend of change in attitudes follows a similar pattern to that of language use. As far as the third generation, attitudes change towards the negative. The shift occurs in this third generation, where attitudes become more positive towards preserving Saami and towards passing it on to the younger generations.

Interestingly, it is this third generation where we can see a change concerning the attitudes towards Saami–Finnish bilingualism. Young speakers have become less sure about Saami being an advantage at the labour market, the second generation being the least convinced about it and about getting a better payment if speaking Saami. However, an opposite way of change happens in the two oldest age groups. They are the ones who are generally unsure about the usefulness of Saami at the labour market, indicating a change in the trend.

How do changes in language use relate to the longitudinal trend in Saami–Finnish language change?				
Age group	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Longitudinal trend in attitudes towards language maintenance	Negative ↘		Positive ↗	
Longitudinal trend in attitudes towards Saami–Finnish bilingualism	Negative ↘		Uncertain →	

*Table 5.*

The longitudinal trend in language attitudes towards language maintenance and Saami–Finnish bilingualism

### 5. Summary

There is a clear-cut discontinuity in the longitudinal trend between the second and the third generation with regard to change in language use and language attitudes. Therefore, it is the second generation of Saami speakers which is the key age group to follow on in ten years' time to see whether the changes depicted in language use and attitudes are enduring ones and will follow a similar trend in the third generation towards the diminishing use of Saami and less positive attitudes regarding Saami, or whether they represent a unique stage in the language change process in the community that is counterbalanced in the third generation with an increasing use of Saami in the informal domain and with more positive attitudes towards Saami language maintenance.

The surveys considered in this paper allowed me to have a general picture of the process of language shift in the community. In the following stage of the research, preceding the repetition of the survey in a decade's time, I opt



for a method which is more qualitative in nature. Thus, interviews and participant observation will foster a deeper understanding of the change in language use in the community and will help reveal several facets of language attitudes, as well as the relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Cross-case studies will also allow the analysis of commonalities and differences between language attitudes and practices of language use of individual speakers in the community under investigation.

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### **A nyelvhasználati normák változása és a nyelvi attitűdök Enontekiöben (2003–2013)**

A Fenneskandináviában beszélt északi számi a veszélyeztetett nyelvek közé tartozik, amelynek beszélői a nyelvi és kulturális asszimiláció következményeként egyre kevesebb színtéren használják anyanyelvüket. Írásomban annak a longitudinális szociolingvisztikai vizsgálatnak a részeredményeiről számolok be, amelynek célja feltárni a nyelvcsere folyamatának sajátosságait a finnországi Enontekiö jelenleg 203 fős számi beszélőközösségében.

Mivel a nyelvhasználati szokások és a nyelvi attitűdök idővel változnak, egy kisebbségi közösségben zajló nyelvcsere úgy tárhatunk fel megbízhatóan, ha időről időre visszatérünk hozzájuk, és megfigyeljük, majd rögzítjük a változásokat. Dolgozatomban összehasonlítom a 2002-ben és 2012-ben végzett kérdőíves vizsgálatom részeredményeit annak érdekében, hogy árnyaltabb képet kaphassak az enontekiői számi beszélőközösségben zajló nyelvcserefolyamat üteméről és irányáról. A kérdőívben az első vizsgálat során 60, a másodikban 30 adatközlő nyilatkozott négy korcsoportba rendezve nyelvhasználati szokásairól és nyelvi attitűdjeiről a számi nyelv fenntartásával és a számi–finn kétnyelvűséggel kapcsolatban. Az elemzés során egyszerű kvantitatív módszert alkalmazok, és grafikusán ábrázolom a két vizsgálati időpontban gyűjtött adatok egy részét. Arra a kérdésre keresem a választ, hogy a nyelvhasználati mintákban és a nyelvi attitűdökben észlelhető változások miként viszonyulnak a számi–finn nyelvcsere longitudinális trendjéhez.

Az itt bemutatott adatokból megállapítom, hogy az egy évtizedet felölelő vizsgálati mintában nem érvényesül a nyelvcsere longitudinális trendje a nyelvhasználat és a nyelvi attitűdök tekintetében. A második és harmadik korcsoport között ugyanis megszakad a folytonosság és a legtöbb esetben ellentétes irányú változás veszi kezdetét. Ezért az anyanyelvi beszélők második generációját tekintem kulcsfontosságú korcsoportnak, amelyet a következő, tíz év múlva esedékes vizsgálat során kiemelt figyelemmel kell kísérni. A megválaszolandó kérdés akkor pedig az lesz, hogy vajon az első és második generációnál tapasztalt trend, azaz a számi egyre kevesebb nyelvhasználati színtéren való használata és a beszélők egyre negatívabb attitűdjei átterjednek-e az akkorra harmadik generációssá váló beszélők körére, vagy pedig az ellentétes irányú változás újra megfigyelhető lesz ebben a harmadik generációban, amennyiben ebben a korcsoportban újra növekedni kezdene a nyelvhasználati színterek száma, és újra pozitívabb attitűdökkel fordulnának legalábbis a nyelvfenntartás irányába.

DURAY ZSUZSA