

Giellariššu: Indigenous language revitalisation in the city*

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About 10% of all pupils in grades 1–10 who learn Sámi in Norwegian schools live in the city of Tromsø in Northern Norway. This group totalled 232 pupils in the school year 2020/2021, and the pupils went to over twenty different schools. All but one were pupils of North Sámi, and a handful also received instruction in South Sámi. In Umeå in Sweden, 42 pupils attended mother tongue classes in Sámi in the winter of 2021, divided among four different varieties of Sámi, reflecting the diverse composition of the Sámi population in the area. In neither city, the Sámi pupils exceed three percent of their municipal peer group and they are embedded in local communities fully dominated by the Norwegian and Swedish majority language, respectively. We discuss the challenges and opportunities that Sámi children who grow up in two urban environments face when reclaiming, maintaining, and developing their indigenous heritage language, and we report from piloted language (re)vitalisation activities. *Giellariššu* gathers pupils from different schools regularly for activities in Sámi, led by adult proficient speakers with the goal to strengthen the pupils' language skills and the social bonds between children who otherwise do not meet on a regular basis.

Sámiⁱ children and their parents in the cities of the Nordic countries live and experience a very different and diverse world than their grandparents and earlier generations did. In some cities, such as Tromsø in Norway, there exists a continuum of Sámi presence (e.g. Todal 2002, 103–5) that has the potential to support linguistic and cultural maintenance within the Sámi population in the area. When we look at the linguistic background of most of the Sámi children who attend Sámi instruction in Tromsø schools today, the Sámi population appears quite homogenous as the great majority belongs to the North Sámi speaking group. In the school year 2020/2021, 232 children in grades 1–10 received some form of instruction in North Sámi whereas only a handful received instruction in South or Lule Sámi.

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In other cities, such as Umeå in Sweden, the ancestral Sámi presence is deeply hidden and the linguistic ties to the new Sámi generations in the area are close to non-existent or have been cut many generations ago. The loss of ties to the cultural and linguistic heritage is to a large extent an effect of the assimilative political and educational systems that hit hard on the inland Sámi communities of the southernmost parts of Swedish Sápmi at the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century (see e.g. Kortekangas 2017, 59–60). Many Sámi families who maintain Sámi language in the homes today have moved to Umeå from elsewhere. The remaining speakers and learners of Sámi languages in Umeå have ancestral and/or linguistic ties to one, or more, of five different Sámi language varieties (North, Lule, Pite, Ume and South Sámi) resulting in cultural and linguistic diversity with a potential to divide rather than unite the efforts of language revitalisation. The strong will to reclaim, revitalise, maintain and develop the Sámi languages in the families is nevertheless a unifying factor that brings the Sámi together in both cities as well as in other urban communities with a larger presence of Sámi people.

In this article, we look at the context of the two cities, Tromsø and Umeå, from the point of view of linguistic and cultural revitalisation among Sámi children and youth. We examine a specific new domain for language use called *Giellariššu* (“språkdusch” in Norwegian or “language shower” in English), that has been established in the two cities on the basis of common methodological principles only a few years apart. This new arena is positioned between school and free time, which makes it difficult to place according to traditional notions of bilingual (weak or strong) education (Baker and Wright 2017, 198–200; see discussion in the Sámi context in e.g. Todal 2002, 54–55; Hirvonen 2008, 29–32), immersion education (see e.g. Cummins 1998; Tedick, Christian and Fortune 2011; Hopewell and Escamilla 2014; Royal-Tangaere 1997; and for discussion in the Sámi context Pasanen 2010; 2018) and community-based leisure time activities (see e.g. McCarty 2018; Chodkiewicz, Widin, and Yasukawa 2008; Hinman and He 2017; and for a description in the Sámi context see Aikio-Puoskari and Sámediggi 2016). In both cities, the language shower activities have been used as a resource in the higher education of Sámi students, and in Tromsø the project has succeeded in recruiting Sámi adolescents to function as language activity leaders and mentors for the participants in the language shower.

The term “language shower” was chosen to indicate that it is not the same concept as “language immersion,” but nevertheless one that has the potential of becoming a form of partial immersion. The term is semantically and symbolically connected to the commonly used term for a full immersion model in Scandinavia and Finland, i.e. “language bath” [North Sámi: “giellalávgun”, Norwegian/Swedish: “språkbud”, and Finnish: “kielikylpy”] (e.g. Laurén 1999; Pasanen 2015; Swanström 2008; Todal 2007), which implies that the language learners are fully surrounded by the target language, or immersed in it, during their school or preschool day. In contrast, the (language) showers offer shorter intensive periods of language exposure instead of a fuller immersion environment, and they aim at filling the gap between formal school programmes and home language use. Unlike how for instance second language immersion programmes in Canada have been described (e.g. Cummins 1998), the Sámi language showers are not primarily directed towards non-Sámi learners, but embrace the whole spectrum of learners from ethnic L1 speakers to L2 learners with diverse ethnic backgrounds the way many other immersion programmes do that target Indigenous learners (e.g.

Hill 2020; McCarty 2014). The main function of the language showers is thus to offer an additional arena for active language use oriented towards play and games, arts and crafts, traditional cultural activities, cooking, story and reading sessions, theatre and drama, hobbies and interests, etc. Our paper seeks to describe this new sort of language arena and its challenges and affordances. The similar prerequisites, initiation, planning, set-up and preliminary outcomes offer a unique opportunity to compare the pilot projects from several different perspectives on language revitalisation, including the youth and participant perspectives which are the focus of this special journal issue.

The article is organised as follows. In the next section, we position our main research questions against the background context of multilingualism, the reversing of language shift, the reality of language revitalisation and the emerging language arenas in two urban settings in Norwegian and Swedish Sápmi. We then present the research design before we turn to describing and analysing the materials and the data from the two pilot project sites against concepts of language use, planning and identity. Finally, we discuss the results in light of the research questions and provide some concluding remarks.

Background and research questions

Language revitalisation through immersion education, bilingual programmes and various community-based vitalisation campaigns has become a common research object around the world. This is partly due to rapidly increased diversity and multilingualism, debates and views on human and minority rights and other similar phenomena that have arisen from the fact that people, and with them languages, are more mobile than in the past, and increasingly in constant contact with other cultures, languages, traditions and communities. Thus, there is also a growing number of contexts where processes of language shift are active and where the efforts to reverse such language shift are carried out to varying degrees.

In Joshua Fishman's (1991) classical theoretical framework on Reversing Language Shift (henceforth "RLS"), intergenerational transmission of language, i.e. when the language is transmitted from one generation to the other, is identified as one of the most urgent and crucial sore points to attend to when a language shift process is spotted and identified in a language community. Baker (2006, 52) spells out the harsh truth about the main cause of language shift as follows: "[a] lack of family language reproduction is a principal and direct cause of language shift." In our time, the challenges of language maintenance are closely connected to increased mobility, forced or voluntary, which in Sápmi is dominated by migration out of traditional Sámi communities to mainly larger urban places. Grenoble (2013, 797) states that "[i]n order for a language to be vital, it needs to be used by a community of speakers in a large number of domains." Mobility, urbanisation and access to the domains of the wider globalised world pose a very real challenge, or even a threat, to local minority/Indigenous language community building and domain maintenance. Fishman (1991, 258) addresses the core of the problem concerning intergenerational transmission of languages caused by differential social mobility in the following way:

[...] the fact [is] that they do not have their own relatively inviolate space, their own concentrated communities in which their own language-and-culture can dominate or at least where like-minded RLS-minded families can easily reinforce one another by dint of daily interaction and implementation of similar norms and values.

Although Fishman in this specific case refers to immigrant languages in Australia, the same is true also for many non-immigrant minorities and Indigenous peoples who have moved to urban areas and suddenly find themselves in contexts where language maintenance is no longer a natural process that requires no effort from the speakers.

The emergent and growing mobilisation of the Indigenous world, which gained momentum in the 1970's, functions as the engine in making the Indigenous voices heard in the global and local politics and, at least to some point, also in education. However, Indigenous communities are similarly, if not even more so, affected by globalisation which manifests itself through for instance complex (and often intrusive) migration patterns, increased tourism, land use of and by visitors, media content and popular youth culture in multimodal and multilingual forms. Invasive migration, extractive violence, potentially violent dislocation policies of nation states, linguistic and cultural genocide and a number of other factors have led to situations where Indigenous peoples have been forcibly moved from their ancestral lands or extinguished, or have chosen to leave in the hope for a better future. In such cases, one may refer to distinct dislocation patterns that lead to different degrees of language shift. Fishman (1991, 57) specifically mentions physical and demographic dislocations which "leave the remaining populations demographically, socially and culturally weakened", and that lead to a situation where "those who leave, or are driven or carried off, are usually even in worse straits, insofar as intergenerational ethnolinguistic continuity is concerned". Furthermore, cultural dislocation has the consequence that "indigenous populations are enticed and rerouted from their customary areas and distributed in small numbers to a variety of new and less advantageous areas in which their traditional cultural pursuits cannot be successfully re-established" (Fishman 1991, 62).

In Sápmi, the land of the Sámi people, the linguistic effects of globalisation and forced dislocation/voluntary migration of the Sámi have not been researched on a larger scale. However, several sociolinguistic and other studies have documented the local processes of language shift and changed patterns of mono-, bi- and multilingualism (e.g. Helander-Renvall 1984; Svonni 1993; Olthuis, Kivelä, and Skutnabb-Kangas 2013; Scheller 2013; Pasanen 2015; Rasmussen 2013), that are more or less direct results of increased contacts with outsiders/settlers/migrants and oppressive majority language policies and political systems (Aikio-Puoskari 2005; Kortekangas 2017; Linkola and Keskitalo 2015; Minde 2003; Rasmus 2008) and of demographic changes (see e.g. Bals 2010; Bals et al. 2011). Other impacting factors are known from e.g. Hyltenstam and Stroud's taxonomy of factors that boost or hinder language shift at the level of society, group/community and individual (see summary of the factors in Table 4, Hyltenstam and Stroud 1991, 117). Although it is outside the scope of this paper, we acknowledge the past causes and the present effects of the systematic and oppressive assimilation processes that are crucial for understanding the early dislocation patterns in Sápmi and the systematic diminishing of the value of Sámi languages and cultures. These processes have their equivalents in other Indigenous contexts around the world. The direct effects of them in the mindset of the current Sámi speakers and learners are often discussed and described in public opinion, but they have not yet been systematically investigated.

There is furthermore very little research among Sámi youth about the linguistic and identity-oriented effects of globalisation and urbanisation. However, recent research on multilingual Sámi youth's writing and educational context (e.g.

Outakoski 2015; Sullivan et al. 2019; Lindgren et al. 2017) shows that even in the most remote areas of Sápmi, English, along with Western popular culture, has been added to the linguistic repertoire of Sámi children. This addition has “resulted in a daily tri-lingual (if not more linguistically diverse) context that together with other dimensions has created a superdiversity environment” (Lindgren et al. 2016, 56). Pietikäinen (2015, 208) describes the position of Sámi languages in Sápmi as Sámi being “a part of multilingual repertoires and practices”, and Sápmi being “a site of emerging multilingualism”. Jonsson and Rosenfors (2017) investigation of a Sámi learner’s identity and linguistic struggles has also shown that the relationships between the languages in individual’s linguistic repertoires are not straightforward. When the Sámi families move from remote homeland areas to cities, the complexity of the environment and identity struggles increase, as do the negotiations of new multicultural identities (e.g. Seurujärvi-Kari 2010; 2011; Pedersen and Nyseth 2015). Extensive out-migration by the Sámi from the core Sámi areas to urban areas and to areas outside Sápmi has resulted in a situation where most Sámi descendants now live outside those areas where Sámi language still has a strong standing locally.

The two urban sites in our study are in different ways, and to a varying degree, affected by the dislocation patterns of the past and of the more recent demographic changes that are no longer so much a result of forced processes as they are of voluntary out-migration from core Sámi cultural areas to cities. Both sites experience a steady in-migration of Sámi from surrounding and more distant areas. Tromsø and its surroundings has a long history of continuous Sámi presence (see e.g. Todal 2002, 103), but a historical “demographic diminution” (a term from Fishman 1991, 57) of the Sámi population has taken place as a result of state assimilation policies and also in connection with for instance the Sámi *bággjohtimat*, i.e. the forced relocations/dislocations in the early 20th century (see e.g. Lantto 2010).

In Umeå it is difficult to find written records of the Sámi history in the city. This could imply that the early demographic diminution has coincided with a rapid language shift and cultural integration, or, just simply, that the Sámi history in this area was never prioritised by those in charge of such historical recordings. The most prominent documentation of the Sámi presence in the area is based on the recent court cases that have been investigating the customary and traditional rights of the Sámi reindeer husbandry in the area. Those rights and the customary tradition were recently confirmed by the Swedish Supreme Court (verdict NJA 2011 s. 109).

There are no statistics providing exact numbers of Sámi living in these two cities since information concerning ethnic affiliation (including information about mother tongue) is not systematically gathered in Norway and Sweden. The electoral rolls for the Sámi parliaments in the two countries give some indications of the population size, but enrolment is voluntary and not contingent on knowledge of a Sámi language. The only readily available numbers which to some extent indicate some degree of Sámi language use, are school statistics which give the number of children and young that either study Sámi language as a subject in school (following separate curricula for L1/L2/L3 Sámi in Norway, or the so called Mother tongue subject, language choice or modern language subject in Sweden), including those pupils who also attend the Sámi as medium of instruction (henceforth “SMI”) programme offered at one school in Tromsø (see total numbers of Sámi learners in table 1). The SMI programme in Tromsø typically recruits pupils who have attended Sámi language pre-schools and/or have Sámi

Table 1: Comparative Chart of the Two Pilot Projects.

CITY AND COUNTRY	UMEÅ, SWEDEN	TROMSØ, NORWAY
<i>Pupil numbers in the catchment area 2015–2021, total for the compulsory school years, ages 6–16 (number of languages taught). (Swedish numbers are published in the winter term, Norwegian numbers in the autumn.)</i>		
Sámi pupils 2015	22 (3)	111 (2)
Sámi pupils 2016	25 (3)	123 (2)
Sámi pupils 2017	36 (4)	153 (2)
Sámi pupils 2018	37 (4)	195 (2)
Sámi pupils 2019	46 (4)	226 (3)
Sámi pupils 2020	47 (4)	232 (3)
Sámi pupils 2021	42 (5)	n/a
Total amount of pupils in the municipality 2021	14 431	8 255
% Sámi pupils	0.3%	2.8%
Number of public schools in the municipality 2021	58	43
Municipality recorded total population 2020	129,651	76,974
General information – Giellariššu – Language shower		
Recurring activity - Periodicity	2–4 times/school term	Once a week
Weeks per year	08-apr	+/- 36
Time for each meeting	3 hours	3–4 hours
Estimated time for whole school year	12–24 hours	54–72
Offered to all Sámi pupils	No	Yes
Physical gatherings	Yes	Yes
Online gatherings	No	No
Covid-19 adjusted/”proof”	No	No
Number of attending pupils	7–14	49–55
Sámi languages (focused groups)	North and South Sámi	North Sámi
Ages	7–15	6–12
Mixed groups (based on age)	Yes	Sometimes in 1st year
Mixed groups (based on language skills)	Yes	Initially yes, 2nd year no
Including heritage pupils with no initial language skill	Yes	Yes
Including non-Sámi pupils	No	Yes
Primary catchment area	Umeå municipality	Tromsø municipality
Planning, community collaboration and initiatives		
Academic planning group	Yes (initially)	Yes
Municipal planning group	Yes	Yes

Other local planning group	Yes	No
Community initiative	Yes	No
Community collaboration	Yes	No
Municipal funding	Yes	Yes
University funding	Yes (initially)	Yes
State funding	No	No
External funding	No	Yes (Norw. Sámi Parliament)
Staff and language workers		
Sámi speaking director at the municipality	No	No
Sámi speaking coordinator	Yes (initially)	Yes
Sámi speaking teachers	Yes	No
Other Sámi speaking staff or resource staff	Yes	Yes
Sámi language students from university	Yes	Yes
Parents, elders, community members	No	No
Guests – e.g. Sámi artists, authors, tradition bearers	No	Yes
Pupils as language mentors	No	No
Only Sámi speaking staff	Yes	Yes
Activities, pedagogy and didactics		
Only planned activities	Yes	Yes
Thematic planning	Yes	No
Pedagogical/didactic planning	Yes	Yes (to some extent)
Meals included in the planned activities	Yes	No
Task based learning	Yes	Yes
Literacy training	Yes	Yes (to some extent)
Games and play	Yes	Yes
Outdoor activities	Yes (limited, no trips)	Yes
Internet and e-learning	Yes (e-learning support)	Only post COVID 19
Traditional knowledge	Yes (to some extent)	Yes (to some extent)
Dance and music	Yes (to some extent)	Yes (to some extent)
Arts	Yes (to some extent)	Yes
Drama	Yes (to some extent)	Yes
Gaming	No (or very little)	No
Mystery or problem solving	No	No
Cooking and baking	No	Yes
Elders, visits, guests	No	Yes (to some extent)

as a home language. There are no bilingual/immersion classes for Sámi pupils in Umeå and no SMI programme either. A newly established Sámi day care/preschool unit in Umeå has been struggling to find Sámi speaking staff, and currently it is not an immersion unit, although the children do learn cultural content and are exposed to Sámi languages to some degree.

We have summarised the available numbers in table 1. In the winter of 2021, there were 42 pupils with some degree of Sámi instruction in Umeå, and they made up 0.3 percent of all pupils (14,431) in the municipality. In Tromsø, the number was 242 pupils who made up 2.8 percent of the total pupil population (8,255). In practice, almost all Sámi pupils in Tromsø learn North Sámi, whereas in Umeå there are children and adolescents from five different Sámi language groups. A good number of children and young in Tromsø have Sámi as the language of daily communication, while only a few pupils have the language as an active home language in Umeå.

Apart from the SMI programme in Tromsø and some activities organised by the local Sámi associations in both cities, as well as in some of the homes, there are no other natural and regularly recurring meeting and gathering places for Sámi children where Sámi languages can be heard, used and learned. In Umeå, most of the Sámi pupils only encounter Sámi language in school during the mother tongue lesson(s) since there is no Sámi school or class, and because most of the parents have already experienced a full negative cycle of language shift. The same is true of a smaller number of Sámi pupils in Tromsø.

Against this background on ongoing urbanisation, Sámi populations' mobility patterns and the potential arenas of language use available for Sámi children and adolescents in the two Nordic cities we ask the following research questions:

- What are the challenges of language reclamation, revitalisation and maintenance among young Sámi in these two cities?
- What are the challenges, potential and affordances of the newly established language use arena called Giellariššu—language shower?

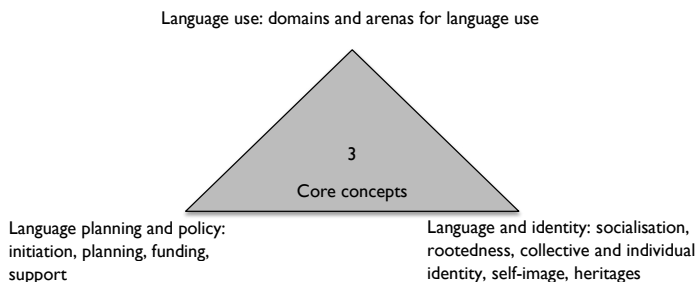
Research design

Our investigation and observations are based on three central concepts that are most often discussed in the RLS research (internationally in e.g. Fishman 1991; Baker and Wright 2017; Grenoble and Whaley 1998; Hornberger and King 2001; and in the Sámi contexts in e.g. Olthuis, Kivelä, and Skutnabb-Kangas 2013; Todal 2002; 2018; Pasanen 2018; Scheller 2013), see Figure 1. The central concepts are language use, language planning and identity. All of these concepts have been identified as central factors for defining, evaluating and assessing contexts for language revitalisation, for the potential of reversing language shift and for long lasting language maintenance and development efforts. In our study we have investigated these concepts in direct connection to the language shower activities without making generalisations about the Sámi language community at large.

Our analysis and results are mainly based on the investigation of these concepts in connection to numeric and descriptive data from the projects for comparative purposes (summarised in table 1), the reflections of three young language shower participants on their linguistic and cultural experiences, a popular scientific project report from Umeå, notes and observations by participant

observers (researcher, teachers, teacher trainees, leaders of the language shower, and staff), and annual surveys among the participating families.

Figure 1: The core concepts of language revitalisation central to the analysis and evaluation of an emergent language use arena in two cities in Sápmi.



The two pilot projects were never intended as research projects, but the focus has all along been to explore the opportunity of creating an additional arena for Sámi language use for children and young in school age. This initial aim of the project has some consequences for the ethical and analytical issues concerning this article. Sámi communities in the two sites are small, and the participants, teachers, students and other staff in the project are easily recognisable, at least inside the community. We have therefore chosen to exclude information that can be connected to individual participants. Three young Sámi speakers, with the permission of their guardians have, however, agreed to give their retrospective view on the language shower activities. The interviews are presented and summarised here as three narrative portraits. A general critical note on interviews as data gathering method is called for in this connection since it is difficult to evaluate or assess the experiences that the three young speakers have chosen to share with us. According to our own participation in the activities, there is, however, no reason for us to assume that the picture painted through the portraits deviates drastically from the actual experiences of the three participants.

Other limitations in this study concern 1) the fact that there is, to our knowledge, no comparable design/domain/language arena that is so clearly, and also didactically, positioned between the domains of formal education and community based activities, and yet supported by higher education and municipality joint efforts, and 2) the sample size, which only gives an indication of how an additional language arena like the Language shower may contribute to local RLS efforts.

Large scale interviews/surveys within the two projects have not been possible due to the escalating situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, that has worsened during early spring 2021—almost a year after all language shower activities were stopped. The pandemic has had a devastating effect on all language activities that require group gatherings in physical spaces, including language showers. Both projects have been ill-equipped to handle the consequences of a changed world and have not been able to move online in the same way as e.g. Sámi language classes in schools have done. The effects of the pandemic have also had negative effects on how the students and the teachers at the university have experienced the fact that they have not been able to participate in the course activities that were an integral

part of the course design. All language shower activities in both cities have been on hold since March 2020, and still were when we wrote this paper in the spring of 2021. In Tromsø, it is uncertain if the non-permanent staff that was hired to lead the language activities will be available when the language shower can start up again.

We would also like to offer a note of researcher positionality to our readers. As main initiators of these two projects we can hardly be seen as neutral investigators. We recognise this positionality as a potential challenge for the presentation of evaluative analysis in this article. However, many, if not most, language revitalisation projects have been researched on, described and presented by the very same people who have been deeply involved in the language revitalisation efforts or in the work of describing those efforts (in the Sámi context see e.g. Olthuis, Kivelä, and Skutnabb-Kangas 2013; Pasanen 2015; Rasmussen 2013; Todal 2002). It is our intention to describe and evaluate the projects as neutrally and objectively as possible against the common theoretical concepts and assumptions about language revitalisation. However, we remain unapologetic of the fact that we both support inclusion of Sámi language use in a wider societal context in the Nordic countries.

Two pilot projects - Sámi language showers in urban settings

The empirical part of this article focuses especially on two pilot projects that intended to create new language arenas for Sámi children in two urban environments: Umeå in Sweden and Tromsø in Norway. The language showers at the two sites are to a great extent similar, but there are also differences in the initiation and planning process, local resources, the extent and intensity, funding, periodicity and other aspects of the two projects. A summary of general and some more detailed information of the two projects is found in table 1.

Site 1: Umeå, Sweden

The language shower idea was first coined in the official dialogue between Umeå municipality and the representatives of the Sámi community in 2014–15. Both parties of the dialogue agreed that mother tongue teaching needed to be strengthened in some way. In this highly collaborative project between the municipality and Umeå university, the team who initially worked on the development of language showers consisted of the Sámi and Finnish mother tongue teachers in Umeå municipality and the project leader (first author).

The team produced a detailed teaching plan for monthly gatherings according to a number of seasonal themes relevant for Sámi and Finnish teaching. During the spring term 2016 and 2018, students from Sámi BA level course in Sámi didactics took actively part in the planning and execution of the language shower meetings. Documentation from this initial pilot project period during the school year 2015–2016 is used as data in this study.

Ubmí giellariššu, The Umeå language shower, started its activities in August 2015 and was initially organised once a month as a support to Sámi mother tongue education, which during that period consisted of 40–60-minute extracurricular classes per week. Participation in the activities was offered to all North and South Sámi pupils from grade 1 to grade 9 (ages 7 to 15) in compulsory schooling in Umeå. Language showers in the other Sámi languages have not been organised due to lack of teachers.

During the first year, approximately half of the 22–25 Sámi studying pupils in the municipality visited the language shower monthly. The pupils had different

degrees of language skills in Sámi and the groups consisted of pupils of different ages. When approached by the municipality, the Umeå Sámi association, Sáhkie, provided the venue for the language showers during the first year of the project. However, the members of the association, the parents and Sámi elders have not participated in the activities, which means that the potential language community of the site has not been actively involved in the project.

During the initial period, the pupils were gathered and transported from different municipal schools to attend the language shower activities during one afternoon (3–4 hours) every month. Although the number of pupils was low, the costs for transportation were the biggest expenses for the project. Unlike in Tromsø, where the Norwegian Sámi parliament supported the project with external funds (see below), Umeå had to rely on municipal funds for this extra cost.

Initially, the language shower meetings were organised during school hours (for the older pupils) and during the organised after school activities (Swe. fritidsverksamhet) for the younger pupils, i.e. time after (and before) regular teaching but within regular working hours of the parents. To compensate for the missed afternoon lessons and to gather the mother tongue teachers to language showers, the regular Sámi lessons were replaced by the language shower activities during language shower weeks. During the two initial years of the language shower, the activities were carefully planned to support mother tongue teaching, although the format of the language showers was more explicitly oriented towards language use, communication and linguistic enrichment, rather than towards formal language skills, assessment and evaluation.

From the fall of 2018 until February 2020 the language shower was organised 2–4 times during a school term. The activities were also moved to weekends and more clearly characterised as leisure time and free time rather than school activities, thus also potentially separating them from the school budget and the earlier pedagogical set-up designed for the initial activity. The earlier opportunity to use the after-school organised activity time for language showers has been abandoned. Furthermore, as the activities were moved to weekends, the parents became responsible for transportation. The number of Sámi pupils in Umeå has almost doubled from 2015 till 2021 from 22 to 42, but since no documentation after spring of 2018 is available to us we do not know how many attended the language showers in the last part of the time span. Moreover, there have been no language shower activities after the pandemic was declared in Sweden in March 2020.

Site 2: Tromsø, Norway

The idea to start up Romssa giellariššu, The Tromsø Sámi language shower, was first pitched to the municipality in the late autumn of 2016, but it took until September 2018 before the activities started. Language showers were organised weekly from then on until the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020. Hence, it was operative in the school years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.

The language shower was set up as an offer to all children in grades 1–7 (ages 6 to 12) who receive instruction in North Sámi in Tromsø schools either as 1st or 2nd language. The language shower was established at the initiative of UiT The Arctic University of Norway (UiT) (in practice by the second author) and was a collaboration between the university and Tromsø municipality. The municipality made physical facilities available for the project and hired a coordinator for the project on a part time (40–50 %) internship contract under a bilateral agreement

with the university. The university in turn paid language assistants at the language showers on an hourly basis, all of whom were fluent speakers of Sámi and most of whom were students enrolled in various programmes at the university. The tasks of the coordinator involved both practical administration and planning and leading of the activities. The Norwegian Sámi parliament supported the project with a budget for transportation and other running costs. Sámi students from a Sámi sociolinguistics course at UiT were also intended to join the showers and plan language activities every second spring starting in January 2020. Because of the COVID-19 situation, the first group of students managed to visit the shower only twice before all activities were cancelled.

During the first year of Romssa giellariššu, 55 children were enrolled in the activities, 43 of whom followed the North Sámi as a first language curriculum (Sámi 1). The remaining 12 second language students split in one group of five who followed the curriculum for pupils with some knowledge of and exposure to North Sámi from outside school (Sámi 2), and seven who followed the curriculum for children with little or no exposure to North Sámi outside of school (Sámi 3). The students came from twelve different schools in the municipality, with the biggest group coming from the SMI. In the second year of the project, 49 children were enrolled, 28 following Sámi 1 and 21 following Sámi 3. Both years there were more children from the lower grades (1–4) than from the higher grades (5–7).

The meetings took place on a particular weekday between approximately 1 pm and 4 pm: in Tromsø municipality the teaching hours are organised so that this weekday is a short day, ending at noon for the children, leaving time for meetings and other administrative tasks for teachers and staff to take place in the afternoon. This meant that the language shower did not interfere with the spare time activities of the children, and it still took place within normal working hours of their parents. Most of the youngest children in grades 1–4 were enrolled in organised after school activities at their local schools (Norwegian skolefritidsordning (SFO), cf. above for Umeå).

Physically, the language shower was based at a different school than the one hosting the SMI programme. This location provided more space for the activities, but did not provide any Sámi cultural environment. Many participants got free transportation by taxi back and forth from their local schools, with the most distant participants coming from schools about a 40-minute drive away. On some occasions the activities would take place outdoors at a nearby outdoor activity facility.

Surveys collecting feedback from the parents were issued in February 2018 (during the planning process), in December 2018 (at the end of the first semester), and in September 2020 (half a year after the activity had stopped due to COVID-19). Reports that summarise the second and third survey have been put together by the second author. These reports as well as notes and impressions from meetings and seminars with the coordinator and language assistants form part of the knowledge base for the present study.

Language planning at grass-root level

It should be pointed out that although the language showers were carefully planned to increase language use among Sámi learners, this kind of measure is not included in any official language planning programme that intends to strengthen the position of Sámi languages in general. The projects are therefore best described as grass-root projects both in Umeå and in Tromsø, rather than a top-down long-term measure of an official language planning programme. In both cases the initial idea

has come from individuals, and furthermore all planning of the activities has been the responsibility of a handful of individuals. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Norway and Sweden, the nature of the planned activities, the size of the groups and the varied ages of the participants turned out to be a hinder for a rapid move to an online format, while top-down planned municipal educational programmes managed to make that move quite easily. This indicates a certain level of vulnerability in projects that are not part of official programmes.

Participant narratives

We have interviewed three language shower participants, two from Umeå and one from Tromsø. At the time of the interviews, all participants had turned 12 years of age and were enrolled in compulsory schooling. The semi-structured interviews collected background information, information on language attitudes and information about participation in the language shower activities. The interviews lasted between 15 and 23 minutes and the transcribed texts are between 1900–2800 words long. Interview answers are presented as compressed participant portraits to avoid identification on the basis of individual speech styles and other traits.

Portrait 1, Umeå language shower: This participant has Sámi as a daily language of interaction in the home, as language subject in school and as language of occasional interaction with Sámi friends and relatives who live at a distance. In the free time, there are no opportunities to use Sámi with peers other than occasionally in connection with visits and online activities. For this participant, Sámi is the language of the home and of a language community at a distance, and s/he often longs for opportunities to stay longer in the active language community. The participant has overall very positive attitudes toward Sámi and is personally proud of the language. S/he believes that s/he will be using the language also in the future and also with the next generation. S/he does, however, also experience that Sámi is a difficult language. The participant is very conscious about language use and language choices, and feels that language skills in Sámi make one rooted in the Sámi community and can also offer future job opportunities. S/he participated in all or most language showers during the pilot period in the school year 2015–16, but not in the following years. The language showers have not offered this participant a real opportunity to develop the language skills. S/he feels that the activities are designed for beginners, who are in majority in the language showers and the level of difficulty of the actual language activities has been too easy. The best activities have been physical and outdoor activities, the meals and some of the computer-based activities and games, where language use has been effortless and natural. The participant does, however, see the potential of the language showers as a good meeting place for those who are learning the language and for cultural group spirit. S/he notes, however, that s/he did not notice increased oral language use among the peers at the Umeå site, although the teachers were very consistent and always spoke Sámi. S/he has also participated in community led Sámi free time activities elsewhere, and feels that the activities that were solely in Sámi language and where the participants could themselves choose the activities (e.g. cooking, baking, football, games) were the best kind of language showers that really boosted language development. The peers also actively used the language since they were speakers like participant 1. This participant compares the opportunities to use the language in the city with the opportunities to use it somewhere else where the language is more visible and stronger, and often comes back to positive language experiences that are related to Sámi life and language elsewhere outside the city.

Portrait 2, Umeå language shower: This participant has a very similar background and opportunities for language use as the first participant. Sámi is spoken and used at home and is a school subject. This participant has had more free time opportunities to use Sámi with friends than the first participant, but also in this case the friends are online friends living at a distance. Furthermore, this participant feels that Sámi language is not the language of the city, but is used and survives somewhere else. Participant 2 has somewhat negative or ambivalent feelings and attitudes toward Sámi. S/he reports that s/he likes the language to some degree but that it is very difficult, and that there might be a future or a period of time when s/he is not going to use the language so much. S/he has participated on all or most language showers during the pilot period in school year 2015-16, and in the following years. Language shower activities are seen as a positive addition to opportunities for language use in the city. This participant also recalls that s/he did not speak so much Sámi before participation in the language shower. Language showers are identified as a place where one hears and can use the language if one has the skills. The participant feels pride in the skills s/he has and about the fact that s/he can do well in the language activities. S/he also feels that s/he has learned new things and acquired better language skills because of the language shower. At the same time the language showers have not expanded the participant's language community and s/he has not made new lasting friends there. The best memory of the language shower is from the meals where language use and learning happen naturally. This participant particularly mentions the positive sides of the venue for the initial language showers that were provided by the local Sámi association, which in many ways boosted the feeling of being on Sámi grounds. S/he feels that language showers are a good meeting place and can lead to better language skills.

Portrait 3, Tromsø language shower: Participant 3 identifies her-/himself as one of the more advanced speakers of Sámi among the pupils who participated in the language showers. S/he has one parent who does not speak Sámi, but almost exclusively uses Sámi with the other parent. Furthermore, participant 3 has been in the SMI programme in grades 1-7. S/he also has friends and peers with whom s/he can speak Sámi in the free time. S/he is conscious about language choices, and gladly uses Sámi with friends, family and other people who know Sámi. S/he also mentions, that s/he would very much like to speak Sámi to potential off-spring and to continue to use the language in the future. S/he has friends in the same age in other areas, who s/he meets at times and with whom s/he mostly uses Sámi. S/he participated in the language showers during the first year when all pupils of mixed ages and with varying language skills were in one group. S/he was one of the oldest participants and did not have so many peers in the same age there. S/he most often uses the word "fun" to describe language shower activities in general, and says that the language activities were varied. The best memories are from the practical cooking sessions, games and trips, or physical activities where participation has been effortless. Participant 3 was not equally positive about the venue for the gatherings and feels that it might have been more beneficial for the group to gather at a location where no other pupil groups were around. S/he would also have wanted to meet more pupils of the same age and perhaps separate the groups according to age. S/he also feels that s/he spent most of the time with people s/he knew from before and does not recall making new lasting friends at the showers. S/he describes the showers as a site of Sámi language use where even those pupils that knew less language were encouraged to use the language. According to participant 3, Sámi was always the main language of communication from the leaders to the participants. Another

positive comment concerns the young Sámi mentors that were recruited to lead the activities, some of whom s/he knew from before. When asked about language skills and development, s/he finds it difficult to assess improvement since s/he already had the language, but s/he also comments that language showers might better boost the language of those pupils who are not as fluent from the beginning. When asked what the best ways to strengthen Sámi are, s/he says that natural, effortless free time activities such as meeting, talking, playing and gaming together with other speakers are the occasions where language use is best boosted. According to this participant, Sámi language is spoken and used in the city as well as in other places.

Our three participants all share an interest for the Sámi language and they all identify themselves as speakers and users of Sámi. Participant 1 and 3 are in many ways similar to each other and share the visions and hopes for future use of Sámi language with potential children. They also feel that because of their language skills, participating in the language shower has perhaps not improved their proficiency as much as might be the case with pupils who start with lower proficiency in Sámi. They would also have wanted to meet more participants of the same age and with similar interests. While participant 1 has been very alone during the language showers, participant 3 has mostly kept company with people s/he knew from before.

What all three participants seem to have in common is that they have not made any new lasting friendships at the language shower. Participant 2 differs from the two others in that s/he has a somewhat less positive relation to Sámi language but still believes that language showers have boosted her/his Sámi language use. S/he has also been able to enjoy the feeling of being a speaker and commented on the benefits that access to language can bring about.

The most striking difference between the participants from Umeå and the one from Tromsø has to do with the mental image of Sámi language use. The Umeå participants connect Sámi language use with friends and family at a distance and not in the city, while the Tromsø participant identifies her/his city environment as a vital site for language use. The Umeå participants describe a situation where socialisation to the Sámi community happens elsewhere than in the city, and they are also rooted to their Sámi identity through family heritage that is connected to some other place. The Tromsø participant sees sáminess both in the city and in other places where friends and relatives live.

These voices reflect the experiences of participants from both a revitalisation and a maintenance perspective. In future research, we hope to be able to also include experiences from a beginning learner's perspective.

Language activities

We have summarised the main activities that were part of the language showers in table 1. The two sites are quite similar in this regard. Some of the differences have to do with thematic vs. non-thematic planning, and the possibility to organise practical activities such as cooking and baking, and the opportunity to invite Sámi speaking guests. Otherwise, the activities and tasks are alike in both places. At both sites, the language shower meetings during the pilot period were carefully planned to offer as much opportunity for language use as possible.

At both sites, community engagement has been non-existent in the sense that the parents, members of the local Sámi associations and elderly speakers have not been an active part of the projects. The biggest difference between the two sites has to do with periodicity and extent of the language showers. Initially, the pupils

in Tromsø met each other once every week on a particular afternoon, but quite soon the group was split. After trying out different groupings based on age and language proficiency, in the second year the rotation ended up being based on the latter so that the first language pupils met one week and the second language pupils (Sámi 3) met the other week. The pupils in Umeå met initially one afternoon every month. This amounts to a substantial difference in volume giving the children in Tromsø significantly more language training than the pupils in Umeå.

Pupil, parent and teacher/leader assessments

We have gathered assessments from pupil, parent and teacher/leader surveys that summarise the positive and negative aspects concerning the language showers. One of the most positive aspects of the language showers had to do with the positive group spirit that the new arena created. At both sites, language showers functioned as a uniting cultural gathering place that had the potential to strengthen Sámi identity, feeling of rootedness and the knowledge of traditional Sámi content. Physical and outdoors activities, as well as the meals, were appreciated as opportunities for authentic and spontaneous language use and training of basic phraseology. In Umeå, access to the cultural physical environment provided by the local Sámi association was considered an asset. The youngest participants found joy in most activities, and the teachers/leaders also felt that it was easier to design activities for the younger pupils. Some parents and pupils reported increased use or will to use Sámi at home. For example, in Tromsø in December 2018, a parent left the following comment in an anonymous survey: My child has started speaking Sámi at home after joining the language shower [Mu mánná lea álgan hállat sámegiela ruovttus mannjá go álggii giellariššui].

The two sites differ somewhat when it comes to the negative aspects. In Umeå, the most negative aspects are connected directly to the small size of the participant group, and to opportunities to find peers in the same age and with the same language proficiency. The same seems to be true of the older participants in Tromsø. The leaders and the participants experienced more challenges and negative aspects with ascending age and limited language skills. Large age differences and very varying language skills in one group were conceived negatively, and the leaders struggled with designing activities and language tasks to suit all participants. In Tromsø, the coordinator of the showers experienced more challenges during the initial phase of the project when the groups were mixed. This led to adjustments in the group set-up that resulted in two separate groups, one for L1 speakers and one for heritage language learners, an organisation that became more natural in the second year where the balance between the two participant groups was more even. At both sites it was clear that the negative aspects decreased when the number of staff increased. Although the location in Tromsø provided for the language shower was spacious, it created some practical challenges for the logistics. Furthermore, the location did not provide a Sámi physical environment, and there was also occasional interference from outsiders.

Discussion

For the L1 pupils in Tromsø, language showers seem to offer a true chance of using and strengthening Sámi language with peers while engaging in fun and varying language activities that are not assessed as school work. For them, language showers can function as an important extension of the immersion environment of the SMI programme and the Sámi speaking home domain to free time and peer activities. For the pupils in Umeå and for the heritage language learners in Tromsø, the main

function of Giellariššu is that of a uniting cultural arena, rather than a natural domain for active self-initiated language use. The greatest challenge for the children and youth that belong to the heritage learner groups at both sites has to do with the colonial legacy that they are left to tackle. In order for them to enjoy the same positive language use effects as the pupils in the L1 group, there need to be more comprehensive and long-term opportunities to use and develop their language proficiency, better strategies to strengthen Sámi at homes, and increased opportunities to have Sámi as a language of instruction. The extent and volume of the language showers needs also to be expanded so that they can be experienced as a recurring, stable arena for language use. The goals of the future language arenas should, according to us, be in line with Grenoble (2013, 797) who claims that “[r]evitalization programs need to carve out domains for language use and foster them intensely”.

For individual learners, language showers offer different things, just as their experiences with Sámi language and culture differ. Optimistic attitudes toward the heritage language, the feeling of rootedness and positive experiences of inclusion serve to maintain and increase the will to learn and to use the language. Enrichment and strengthening of such attitudes and experiences should therefore be at the core of the identity building that takes place at new arenas of language use. The most immediate and evident challenges of language reclamation, revitalisation and maintenance among Sámi youth in cities are, according to the young Sámi voices in the study, the lack of access to recurring, inspiring, natural and effortless language use domains and the missing company of peers with the same cultural and linguistic interests. For both groups, the language showers offer an important additional domain or arena where Sámi identity can grow and where rootedness to the Sámi community and knowledge of the cultural content is at focus.

Based on the study presented here, we argue that there is a need for additional Sámi language arenas in urban environments that are positioned between education and home environment, somewhere in the free time and leisure sphere. The organisation of such extracurricular arenas may take on different formats than how we have described the language showers in Tromsø and Umeå, which have been cooperative projects between the university and the municipality and which have non-intentionally excluded the rest of the language community. The RLS literature is clear about this point and states that high community engagement is more likely to result in a positive turn in the revitalisation process (e.g. McCarty 2018, 30–31; Royal-Tangaere 1997, 47; Olthuis, Kivelä, and Skutnabb-Kangas 2013, 4).

The challenges, potential and affordances of new additional language arenas such as Giellariššu are to a large extent dependent on the local premises and resources. We conclude that language showers offer an important addition to maintenance and development of Sámi language among the young Sámi in Tromsø. In Umeå, it may be worthwhile to consider whether a maintenance or a revitalisation programme is a better alternative. Revitalisation and reclamation programmes will require much greater efforts and a strong positive will from the municipality and the language community. Grenoble (2013, 794) states that “[j]ust what kind of revitalization program is realistic depends on an interplay of available resources, commitment from community members who will be involved in revitalization, and their overall goals”. In our study we have observed that the needs of the local programmes can vary substantially and need to be mapped carefully, and we have also seen that the local programmes can be vulnerable to sudden changes when not included in a wider language planning programme.

Endnote

1 The Sámi people (The Saami/Sami, or in the past also Lapp, considered nowadays as a pejorative term) are Indigenous people of Northern Europe. Nine Sámi languages have survived until the present, but all of them are endangered and under a tremendous pressure. The traditional settlement area of the Sámi people is called Sápmi in North Sámi spelling, and it stretches from the Kola Peninsula in Russia across the northern parts of Norway, Finland and Sweden all the way to Central Norway and Sweden. Most Sámi of today live modern lives and are integrated in the majority societies through education and occupations. A technologised form of reindeer herding is often still seen as a main livelihood of many Sámi who live in the core areas of Sápmi. For many Sámi who still feel the connection to Sámi society, even the ones now living outside of Sápmi, the relations to the land, the waters and to family and ancestors form the core of the value system.

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