

Strengthening the Literacy of an Indigenous Language Community: Methodological Implications of the Project *Čyeti čälled anarâškielân*, ‘One Hundred Writers for Aanaar Saami’

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Abstract

Aanaar Saami (Inari Sámi) literacy is weaker than that of majority languages in the sense that reading and writing Aanaar Saami is less common. In order to strengthen literacy, we argue for an approach that represents a methodology for participatory research from a community and an in-group perspective. We also discuss the implications this has for Indigenous research. The chapter presents a strategy for producing new readers and writers, both native and non-native. Whereas the language revitalisation process of the last decades has successfully created new speakers in the younger and middle generations, literacy is still lagging behind, and thus we prioritise strengthening literacy. The strategy, called *Čyeti čälled*, is a set of actions taken to encourage people to write, creating new domains for writing and supporting people in their writing processes. We argue that in order to succeed, revitalisation needs a pluralistic approach, including the involvement of all generations and the inclusion of both spoken and written language.

Keywords

language revitalisation – language planning – Indigenous writing – community perspective in research – widening language domains

1 Introduction

The chapter presents an approach to consolidating and extending the language revitalisation of Aanaar Saami (AS), Inari Sámi. In the first revitalisation

phase (1997), the young speaker generation was recreated by using the ‘language nest’ method for child speakers. Faced with a situation of fluent elders and a generation of children who could speak the language, the second phase aimed at recreating a middle generation of speakers (Olthuis et al. 2013). The third revitalisation phase is the core of this chapter: that is, how to activate the recreated language generations to write in AS. We will show that the approach of this third phase has methodological ramifications for Indigenous research in ways that will become clear below. The perspective for revitalisation is kept internal to the language community in question. We will also discuss whether this has implications for Indigenous methodology on a more general level.

The language revitalisation process that AS has undergone during the last generation is arguably one of the most successful cases, even on a global scale (for an overview, see Olthuis et al. 2013; Pasanen 2015). So far, it has included a long-term and large-scale language nest project and a one-year full-time educational project, producing AS proficiency for 17 speakers from the lost middle generation. The next step in the revitalisation process is to establish AS literacy that matches and supports the language community. The goal of this step is to find out how to create new writing domains for AS and strengthen the existing ones, to educate and encourage the recreated middle and young generations to read and write the language, and finally, to stabilise the writing culture.

This chapter holds a community perspective on the research process, with the early stages of developing a writing culture in the One Hundred Writers for Aanaar Saami project (*Čyeti čälled anarâškielân*) as a starting point. We describe how the project is outlined and conducted and then analyse our practice of conducting it. These actions together form our literacy revitalisation method and have a direct impact on Indigenous literacy itself. All the actions used in this project can be applied to language revitalisation contexts all over the world.

For the project itself, we implemented a particular method in order to get people to write, creating an open atmosphere and ideology for writing, combined with new publishing domains, writing tools and teaching methods aimed at writing. Our point of view comes from within the AS community and language and the way we approach the language is by insisting that our revitalisation approach actually works and does not merely pay lip service to the revitalisation goal. We will describe the measures to recreate the missing writers’ generations and to activate them in their personal and communal writing processes. The paper describes a revitalisation programme, *Čyeti čälled anarâškielân*, initiated as a cooperation between Anarâškielâ servi (The Aanaar Saami Association)¹ and the research group Giellatekno at The Arctic University of Norway (UiT). The programme creates new writing domains and strengthens existing ones.

The chapter is structured as follows: after this introduction comes a background on the AS language and its linguistic situation, followed by a section on methodology, the latter giving both a general discussion and a presentation of the methodological considerations underlying this chapter. We then provide an analysis of the *Čyeti čälled* project and its relevance for the language revitalisation. This is followed by a discussion of the results and conclusions of our work for strengthening literacy of Indigenous languages.

2 The Aanaar Saami Language

The Aanaar Saami language is one of eight living Saami languages. The Saami languages are spoken within central and northern Fenno-Scandinavia and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. AS is spoken in an area located around Lake Inari in Northern Finland, and the number of AS speakers has probably never amounted to more than 1,000 people (Olthuis et al. 2013, 25).

The AS language community experienced a rapid increase in the status of their language in the period following the year 2000, with a need to use the language as a medium of education in schools and in the production of study materials when teaching began in AS in local schools. Furthermore, the language was used in the Saami media, as well as in official translations in the municipality of Aanaar/Inari. The language was also protected by law due to the Saami Language Act (legislated in 1992, updated in 2003), as all official announcements needed to be published in all three Saami languages of Finland. These changes were very welcome, as AS underwent a decline in the number of its speakers earlier, during the period of 1950 to 1980, when the language nearly lost its middle and young speaker generations. There were several reasons for the decline. First, the language shift happened through mixed marriages. Second, in 1920, the Spanish flu killed about 10 percent of the population in Aanaar. Third, during the Lapland War in 1944–1945, nearly all of the inhabitants of Lapland were evacuated to Ostrobothnia, where they faced the pressure to shift to the majority Finnish language. Fourth, the traditional migration schools were replaced with primary schools after World War II. This placed the children in dormitories for long periods of time, separated them from their families. In addition, the children were often punished for speaking Saami (Olthuis et al. 2013, 31–32).

The lost generations from the post-war assimilation period have been recreated through threefold revitalisation programmes organised from within the AS language community itself: (a) through participating in language nest activities for small children; (b) by using the language in schools as a medium

of education; and (c) through adult language education, especially for the lost middle generation. This recreated middle generation is now transmitting the language to younger generations (see Olthuis et al. 2013; Pasanen 2015).² In the first stage, the revitalisation efforts focused on boosting the oral skills of L2 speakers, with less focus on literary skills. In the 1980s, the language counted approximately 350 speakers, but the revitalisation efforts (Olthuis et al. 2013; Pasanen 2015) raised the number to 450 speakers, including new L2 speakers. After the introduction of new speakers to the language community, writing follows as the natural second step in revitalisation.

The founding of Anarâškielâ servi in 1986 has been the most important step towards creating stronger literacy in AS. Within a period of 30 years, the association has published nearly 40 books in diverse genres such as memoirs, collections of old stories, translated children's books and a comprehensive study of AS place names (see also Morottaja 2018, 63). Crucially, before the *Čyeti čälled anarâškielân* project, there was only one speaker writing regularly and continuously. The other speakers were more irregular writers or merely writing short messages.

AS writing crosses a number of genres, including ecclesiastical texts, autobiographies and biographies, short stories, novels and poetry, as well as children's books. Additionally, oral tradition, such as storytelling and traditional *livde* music, should be included in the *belles lettres*, even though this oral tradition has mostly remained unwritten.

Modern printed AS fiction consists of publications from the last three decades. Since then, over 60 works have been published, about two thirds being children's books. The most common way of generating fiction is to translate books from North Saami or Finnish; however, publishing original children's books has recently become more popular. Adult fiction consists of memoirs or folklore, and there are two poetry collections. Popular genres such as sci-fi, fantasy, detective stories, romantic stories or just plain prose are almost non-existent (Morottaja 2018, 63). Petter Morottaja (2009, 70; see also Gaski 2018, 40) points to the absence of internal criticism:

Writing in AS has always been a holy right for each language speaker. Each script will be accepted with applause. We have to think whether this is good or not: not every text can be first-rate. However, there is nothing else. [...] It is possible to take a new perspective for the text, even though one is not able to write that well. It is sufficient to write a bit differently than the others. (Translated by the authors)

As Morottaja points out, there are no full-time authors in AS. Typically, AS authors are language workers (journalists, AS researchers and translators) who

write their texts as a hobby or side job, possibly with small grants or without any compensation whatsoever. Increasingly, authors and publishers of literary publications in AS need to apply for more grants. Hence, there has been a lack of systemisation in setting up new writing domains and activating new writers. The *Čyeti čälled* project addresses this problem.

3 Methodological Considerations

This section begins with a general discussion of Indigenous methodology, followed by a presentation of the positions the present authors have in the language community. Finally, we illuminate the data-gathering process in the project under discussion.

3.1 *The Concept of 'Indigenous Methodology'*

Ethics in Indigenous research are greatly emphasised due to oppressive research processes that Indigenous peoples have faced throughout history. Crucially, the transmission of this research paradigm has been going on for the last two decades, and this ethical perspective has been established as a norm within Saami studies. Several writers have established a set of concepts called *Indigenous methodologies* (IM) and view them as methodologies that 'can be summarized as research by and for Indigenous peoples, using techniques and methods drawn from the traditions of those peoples' (Evans et al. 2009, 894; see also Battiste 2000; Smith 1999). Our approach is different. We see the main principles of Indigenous research on a more overarching level, as research conducted from the language community's viewpoint, using Indigenous language in the study, applying the expertise of both insider and outsider researchers, and returning research results to the community. Besides being researchers, we are also part of the language community as coordinators of an active collaboration (see also Chapter 5 in this volume). At this phase of the *Čyeti čälled*, we already see the initial results of the project strengthening AS literacy and thereby also AS speakers' agency.

Methodologically, our perspective comes from within the AS language community, a community of which we are part.³ When it comes to Indigenous studies, we cannot highlight enough the importance of including the members of the language community on the research team. Our methodologies are taken from language revitalisation and from descriptive and computational linguistics. The principles behind the AS orthography and the computer proofing programme to support the writers are not made by 'methods drawn from the traditions of [the Indigenous] people', as Evans et al. suggest (Evans et al., 894).

We do indeed use the AS grammar as our fundament and pay close attention to the ways it functions, but the methodologies arise from orthography building and grammar modelling by technological language methods. The Indigenous perspective in our approach can also be found in our insistence upon using modelling methods suitable for the complex word structure of AS, rather than, for example, copying methods developed for English.

Seeing the context of this study from a linguistic perspective, the lexical and grammatical description of AS is based upon one and a half centuries of research by outsider linguists and philologists, created in cooperation with AS speakers. During the last two decades, AS linguists and pedagogues have built a practical AS orthography with the needs of the AS speaker community in mind. An orthography created with the writers in mind is a good starting point for developing literacy, but it is not enough if there is no space for a writing culture. The *Čyeti čälled* project was set up in order to bring the speakers in touch with literary culture.

The pedagogical principles behind the project are for engaging writing. In the *Čyeti čälled* project, several texts were written collectively while discussing both linguistic and orthographical issues among the participants. As mentioned, the research methodology of *Čyeti čälled* is connected to participatory research aimed at empowering suppressed groups, in this case a language community with a need to establish its own literacy. The literature of the language community must necessarily be written by the community itself.

Writing about Indigenous literacy in other languages is not enough to advance literacy; what is needed is rather that the Indigenous people write in their own language. This requires writers with linguistic knowledge and a will to write, as well as the means to carry it through. Such means include an orthography for the language in question. The orthography should be developed in a way the speakers could easily use in writing their own Indigenous language. From a majority-language point of view, this may seem like an obvious requirement, but all too often, Indigenous languages' orthographies are created in order to express the nuances of the language to linguists rather than as an actual tool for writing (see also Bird 1999; he makes the same point when discussing tone marking for orthographies of languages in Cameroon). When insisting upon keeping the perspective of the writer in mind, appropriate demands for the orthography automatically follow. This is not self-evident, and both AS and other Saami orthographies have undergone changes in recent decades in order to fulfil these demands. By the nature of the project, only members of the AS language community are able to write. The text resulting from the project will have content deemed relevant and interesting by the community itself.

A possible critique of the present programme may be that literacy is a Western invention alien to Indigenous communities, and that oracy should be in focus. We wholeheartedly believe in the focus on oracy, and its role in AS revitalisation is amply documented and discussed in works by both Marja-Liisa Olthuis, Suvi Kivelä and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2013) and Annika Pasanen (2015). Still, we find that literacy has a role to play alongside oracy in language revitalisation as well. When revitalising their language, adults often have limited access to native speakers, or they must acquire a certain level of language skill before they can interact with elderly speakers in the minority language. Both teaching material and a language community distributed across time and space require literacy.

3.2 *The Writers' Positions*

It would be natural to assume that Saami-speaking researchers, working with a literary revitalisation programme, would be fluent writers of Saami. This is definitely not always the case. Writing in a minority language is never self-evident, even if we were to call ourselves leading figures in modern Saami literacy. We need to begin at the grassroots level. It has therefore been necessary to find our own positions as writers of Saami in the community. This has been thoroughly discussed among the authors in this group. Most of us started writing in Saami as adults. While introducing ourselves in the following sections, we also describe our personal methods for teaching ourselves and our positions as researchers. The authors have varying roles in this project.

Marja-Liisa has a PhD in AS and is the leader of the revitalisation programmes for AS. She initiated the *Čyeti čälled* project, together with Erika Katjaana. Marja-Liisa is a self-taught writer who learnt to write in AS during her graduate school fellowship at Oulu University, mainly from dictionaries and scarce texts. Before her university years, she had not used any AS for 10 years. After graduating with a degree in Finnish, her first task when embarking upon the process of taking the language into use again, was to renew the AS orthography and to proofread the AS hymn book. Through this work, she learnt to write. She started to write in AS in the year 2000, when the need to produce study materials arose. She has written five children's books⁴ and keeps her own blog called *Tejâblogi* (Olthuis 2018). Presently, she writes fiction and poems as a hobby, with or without the spellchecker. Her way of learning is to write more and frequently. She still experiences writing in AS to be a slow process, mainly from a linguistic standpoint – yet, as pointed out by one of the respondents to our questionnaire, 'Writing in AS is twice as slow as in Finnish, but why should one hurry?'

Erika Katjaana works as a lecturer in North Saami language and culture in teacher education at the University of Lapland. She has a PhD in education,

and she has the title of docent at the University of Helsinki. She is a North Saami speaker and a writer who has revitalised and taken back the North Saami language in her family. She uses North Saami both in academic circles and as a home language with her children. Erika understands AS. Her children are AS speakers, which is their heritage language. Erika worked as a post-doctoral researcher from 2015 to 2016 on both the AS language technological project at Giellatekno and the *Čyeti čälled* project.

Eljas worked as editor in chief for the *Čyeti čälled* project in 2018 and took over the editing of the communal magazine *Anarâš*. He is one of the most active writers in the community. He also edits belletrist texts and books. He is an L2 speaker who learnt AS during the Saami Education Institute's study year 2012–2013. At present, he is a fluent speaker and always willing to broaden his vocabulary. Due to his job as a journalist, from 2018 onwards, he has become a key individual in activating people to write. He is harsh with himself when he makes mistakes, and he spends a lot of time solving linguistic problems. Sometimes while writing, his texts flow with ease, and sometimes he gets stuck, mainly because of complicated linguistic issues.

Petter has had the longest career as an AS writer. He is a native speaker who learnt to write AS in elementary school. He has had, and still has, various roles in the AS community: as a university teacher, translator, writer, journalist and researcher. As a teenager, he published two adventure novels in AS, and he has published shorter texts in *Anarâš* magazine as well. Writing in AS has meant making compromises on how to express thoughts that have emerged mainly in a Finnish-speaking environment using a language that seems to lack the vocabulary and the established style of popular culture. Nonetheless, he has not seen these compromises as drawbacks but rather as opportunities for creating something completely new in AS literature.

Trond is a professor of Saami language technology. He led the AS language technological project at Giellatekno in 2015–2016. The technological language tools emerging from this project are in daily use by writers, forming the basis for today's writing. He is a native speaker of Norwegian who has used Finnish on a daily basis for the last three decades. He speaks and writes North Saami in professional contexts, utilising Finnish as a starting point for expressing himself in Saami. When writing in North Saami, he makes extensive use of writing tools (e-dictionaries, proofing and grammar-checking tools, corpora), as both input (via reading) and writing practice are too scarce for automatising the writing process. Trond never studied AS and is not an AS writer, but he has a passive knowledge that makes him able to participate in a conversation in AS using North Saami.

On a personal level, we all seek to improve as writers and to activate others to write. In our research process, there is a continuous need to get a complete and up-to-date picture of the literacy and especially of the potential writers' obstacles to writing in AS.

3.3 *Data Gathering*

The *Čyeti čälled* project is based on the writing needs of AS speakers, and the idea was to initiate and implement the project while taking into consideration real-life necessities. During the early phase of the planning process for the project, Giellatekno conducted a web-based survey in order to determine the needs of AS writers (Olthuis et al. 2016). The target group was people who are able to read and write in AS. The material was collected in January 2016. A total of 43 writers, 33 female and 10 male, participated in the survey. The number of participants was sufficient, as it was almost a third of all AS writers. The aim of the survey was to find out who writes in AS, the number of writers, their thoughts and feelings about writing in AS and, finally, what kind of support they need when writing in AS.

According to the results, 14 participants reported that their language ability was at the level of a native speaker, whereas 25 participants reported themselves to be L2 speakers. The participants also evaluated their linguistic skills and especially the linguistic challenges they met when writing. The most challenges appeared in the field of inflection, where 14 participants experienced challenges. There were also 12 participants who perceived conjugation and declension as (very) simple matters.

Most participants (N = 25) maintained that they write the language daily; nine of the participants write weekly, four monthly and two seldomly. The most common writing domains were mobile phone messages, emails and other Internet messages. Some participants wrote shopping lists, children's school papers, and news texts in AS. Less-used domains were blogs and academic texts. The participants wrote relatively little AS in other domains.

From the turn of the millennium onwards, digital tools have been predominantly used for writing. For this to be possible, the tools needed must be in place for all languages in need of literacy. This implies the implementation of language-specific letters, keyboard layouts and drivers, as well as proofing tools and lexical resources. For AS, large parts of this infrastructure are already in place due to the language technology project for AS conducted at Giellatekno, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, and subsequent cooperation between UiT and various institutions in Finland (Anarâškielâ Servi, the University of Oulu and the Saami Parliament, *Sämitigge*).

4 Strengthening AS Literacy

A natural method to activate writers is to create a need for writing within the language community, thereby creating stronger writing domains. This is one of the main paths the *Čyeti čälled* project follows. The process of establishing new domains is slow, demanding a remarkable change in the societal position of the language as well as funding and human resources.

4.1 *The Profiles of Aanaar Saami Writers in 2016*

As already stated, a language needs both a core of active writers and a larger number of other writers in order to create vibrant literacy. For languages with weak literacy, the role of the most active writers becomes even more significant. The AS writers' skills differ from one speaker-generation to the next; thus, the speakers need to be activated and educated from different perspectives, depending on their writing experiences as well as their orthographical and computer skills. Our primary goal was to identify these experiences and skills in order to take the present situation as a starting point for further work.

4.2 *The Elders*

Elderly AS people are native speakers who have mastered the grammar and expressions, but mainly lack writing skills in their mother tongue. They either write in AS with their own personal orthographies or do not write at all (Olthuis and Gerstenberger 2019). This generation also reads Saami remarkably slower than they read Finnish. In addition, they are mostly unfamiliar with computers, and they seem to encounter problems with the modern vocabulary recently created for various new domains, mainly for study material purposes in schools (Kalla 2010).

The elders have been activated to participate in the revitalisation process as Language Masters for the middle generation. They have appreciated this role and taken it seriously (Olthuis et al. 2013, 82–94; Pasanen 2015). In the same revitalisation context, they have also been activated to write in AS by the middle generation and have received some orthographical teaching from their apprentices. One of the Masters, Anni Sarre, has been encouraged by her apprentices and published a poetry book *Spejâlistem*, 'Reflection' (2014). She had written poetry in Finnish before (Sarre 2014, 4–5), but now she also writes poetry in her mother tongue. The writing of most elders is more recreational, a joyful way of expressing themselves in their own language.

4.3 *The Working-Age Middle Generation*

The main division in the language community runs between the older generation of native speakers and the middle and young adult generations, who are mainly L2 speakers and familiar with computers. Since the AS study programme

had mostly concentrated on oracy, there had been less time for literacy. Most L2 speakers are familiar with the AS orthography, yet their writing process is slower than when writing in Finnish, their own native language. Like typical non-native language speakers, they need grammatical support as well as support with vocabulary and expressions.

For this chapter, we interviewed four AS key writers who use the language actively, addressing their needs and experiences in writing AS. They all wished to be mentioned by name. From our viewpoint, their attitudes towards writing in AS have been essential to the revitalisation process. The main issue common to all these writers is the feeling of fear and stress when writing in AS. They also experienced that writing in AS was slower than writing in Finnish.

Anja Kaarret is a native speaker who works as a journalist and writes news media texts in AS. Since she did not learn to write AS in school, her texts are proofread, and she uses the new spellchecker. She thinks it is easier to write in AS, as one can write without fear, and it is also fun to produce texts together with others.

Annika Pasanen is an L2 speaker and a scholar who has written academic papers and short stories in AS. She considers academic texts to be easier to write than other texts, as one can operate with a more limited vocabulary. She has mastered the orthography but mentions that her vocabulary and expressions are limited, and she feels that her writing in AS is slower than in Finnish. She has also written literary texts in Finnish and therefore has high expectations for her AS texts as well.

Petra Kuuva is a teacher and an L2 speaker who mainly writes exercises for her pupils. Writing is easy for her, as is the orthography. Like in Annika's case, vocabulary is the main challenge for her. She also experiences writing in AS to be a slow process because of both technical and vocabulary limitations, as typing each AS-specific character requires her to press two keys on her keyboard (see also Olthuis 2017).

Henna Aikio is an L2 speaker who works as a teacher and produces study materials for schools. She writes for *Anarâš* magazine, essays for her AS studies and poems at her leisure. She has no problems with the orthography, but she feels that her vocabulary is more limited than in Finnish. She also checks inflections regularly with technological language tools.

It is well worth noting that all of the individuals also write AS in their work life. They need it in their professional roles, and this provides the opportunity to become fluent writers. Similar results have been found by Antonsen (2018a, 85ff). By assessing relevant language communities, she illustrates the worldwide tendency that Indigenous language communities benefit on a general level when their language is used in administration. The literacy of languages without such a professional writing domain do not fare as well.

4.4 *Youth and Children*

The youngest writers (primary school pupils) often face several obstacles in writing. They have mainly learnt AS in the language nest.⁵ Eljas has worked with the children during the project and argues that the children seem to like writing. They also master orthography, and it is easy to activate them in writing, but their language skills are not at the native-speaker level. Their texts are not always comprehensible or grammatically correct. There are still gaps in their knowledge concerning linguistic structures. Besides writing, Eljas expressed that the children also need more intense language teaching, mainly with the structures that differentiate AS from Finnish. Writing seems, however, to be a good way to learn the language.

For example, Kuuva uses AS as a medium of education in primary school. She describes her pupils' language skills as heterogeneous. This can also be observed in their general AS usage. For some children, the language nest has been their only place to learn AS before school. AS is rarely their home language, but in many families, at least one parent speaks it. However, there are already native speakers in this generation. Kuuva's 13-year-old pupils write confidently in AS, without any shortages in their language skills concerning their creative writing. Their misspellings do not hinder understanding. The pupils prefer Finnish in writing, which is expected, because their main language domains are also in Finnish (private e-mail from Kuuva, October 30, 2018).

Kuuva's pupils, ages 9–12, write the way children normally do. Some of them like writing and are productive, but some can get only a couple of words written. Pupils who are interested in writing do not mind if they lack a single Saami word. They just ask their teacher or a friend. Older pupils are also able to use the e-dictionary (*Nettidigisäänih*⁶). The children's stories are humorous, imaginative and, for the most part, descriptive. The younger children seem to prefer writing in AS over writing in Finnish, mainly because they still lack writing experience in other languages (private e-mail from Kuuva, October 30, 2018).

The situation is less optimistic outside the Saami area, where AS instruction only occurs in small-scale settings. Without specific attention and activity from parents, the children easily become illiterate in AS. Nowadays, distance learning is possible in some schools. According to statistics from the Saami Parliament, 60 percent of the 10,000 Saami people in Finland⁷ and more than 70 percent of the Saami children under the age of 10 (Lehtola and Ruotsala 2017, 23) live outside the Saami area. The fragile social status of the Saami languages outside the Saami area is a main concern in revitalisation work and truly a threat to people's personal writing skills. The *Čyeti čälled* programme is set up for the Saami area, where it also activates writers in a context where the language is actively spoken and used.

5 A Planned Strategy for Strengthening Literacy

It was clear from the outset that AS literacy would have to be developed in a wide range of domains. As a starting point, we looked at the already existing domains, which, above all, were administrative texts and AS study material for the primary and secondary schools, all of which are published by the Saami Parliament. The permanent and most of the freelance jobs are related to these domains. Another notable writing arena is required by the Saami Language Act, as all municipal documents must be translated into Saami. The third strong writing domain is the Saami media, YLE Sápmi, especially its homepages.

One of the oldest writing domains is the communal magazine *Anarâš*,⁸ established in 1988 as one of the first measures of language revitalisation. With a circulation of close to 300 subscribers, it covers the lion's share of the speaker community. *Anarâš* is now published twice a year, with each issue containing approximately 10 articles spread over 36 two-column pages. The magazine has been the core of AS literacy since its establishment and nowadays activates an increasing number of writers. These writing domains have existed since the beginning of the twenty-first century and should be maintained.

A new domain is scientific writing, through scientific theses at different academic levels, with the journal *Sámi diedalaš áigečála*⁹ as a central domain-specific outlet. The recent (2018) launch of a second scientific journal publishing in Saami languages, the biannual *Dutkansearvvi diedalaš áigečála*,¹⁰ published by the Sámi Language and Culture Research Association, adds more to this domain.

The way of activating writers through work has proven to be effective. Recently, a report to the Nordic Council of Ministers assessed the situation of Saami literature (Domokos 2018). The author suggests 15 measures to create a stronger literature (2018, 26–27; Appendix 1). Her approach is different from ours, as her focus is on promoting literature whereas ours is on creating writers. Most of the measures she mentions will only be relevant when there are AS writers to be promoted who are able to write the literature.

6 The One-Year Programme to Reinforce Writing in Key Professions

One aim of the *Čyeti čállled* project was to support professionals (mainly AS journalists and translators) in their writing process. The survey concurred that the new L2 generation was willing to write, but they needed linguistic support. Since the Saami Education Institute did not have the usual study year

for AS in 2016–2017, the AS community wished to organise a one-year writing programme for professionals. The aim was also to learn how to use the new AS spellchecker (Morottaja et al. 2018) at the same time. In total, 18 participants registered for the one-year programme. They were divided into three groups based on their writing purposes: media, science and study materials/translations. Besides individual writing at work, the programme offered sessions with instructors. There were three instructors available, one for each thematic group. The participants had either face-to-face sessions in the classroom or remote sessions in the virtual classroom, with technical support. The sessions were usually organised twice a month.

The outcome correlated perfectly with the writing needs in the field: longer texts were produced by the study material and translation experts. Participants even produced a few scientific texts, namely papers and master's theses, during the year. These groups were in contact with their instructors at regular intervals. Surprisingly, even though the media group was continuously producing texts, it had the least contact with the instructors among the groups. We learnt from our experience that there should have been variation in the instruction according to the genre. While the news reporters were pressed for time and usually had no time to wait for the sessions with their news texts, the other groups worked in completely different circumstances: their texts could be written with a less demanding agenda, and comments from the instructor could wait longer. The reporters developed their own survival strategies: the native speaker who struggled with the orthography commented on the texts, and the non-native speakers, based on these comments, were able to write and proofread each other's texts. We concluded that this method should be used more in Indigenous text production with writers with more limited skills.

As the participants had already conceived their texts, there was no need to answer questions concerning genres and personal writing processes. Instead, the instructors faced the matter of missing terminology. This is a very common phenomenon when the language is taken into a new domain. We could trace terminological problems concerning historical and scientific texts, and news texts were approached using more colloquial vocabulary.

In spite of the mismatch in the planned schedule concerning the text production, this experimental year was a very positive experience for us. As Saamâl Morottaja, one of the instructors, pointed out in an interview (Niskanen 2016), there is still a shortage of all kinds of texts. The most positive outcome was the collective production of more professional and educational texts over the course of the one-year programme.

6.1 *Promoting Writing in Academic Studies*

As mentioned earlier, the AS revitalisation programme promoted oral skills in its first stage. The influences of oracy can be seen at the university level: it is challenging to begin working on writing. Furthermore, writing a master's thesis in AS is a new genre for students. Writing in AS also has its advantages: it is easier to address the morphophonological gaps in students' texts, as well as interference from Finnish. The students also use the new spellchecker, so it is less labour-intensive to concentrate on content and grammar instead of correcting misspellings.

For the first time, the University of Oulu participated in strengthening AS writing in 2019–2020. We have added a more intense writing section, from five to 15 study credits in AS advanced special studies.¹¹ During the first course of five study credits, the students can translate texts, write a scientific paper or use creative writing (see Mäenpää 2015). During the second course, the students concentrate on scientific writing – the writing process as well as the proofreading of their texts. Third, we have added a missing course on the AS literary tradition. Thus, getting used to the writing process will be the focal point. The students have appreciated this change, and they will also get more responses in writing. These sections appear to be quite natural in the study programme, but it has been a long journey to develop a study programme from scratch, stressing oracy, and then slowly move towards more literacy. Nonetheless, it is still too early to discuss specific results.

As there are not very many writers of AS, it would be ideal to specialise in some of the following genres that would also strengthen AS over time:

- a. Non-fiction, i.e., study materials, with a specialisation in some subjects, such as biology, history, mathematics, etc. (see also Mäenpää 2015)
- b. Journalism and its genres
- c. Fiction: novels, sci-fi, short-stories, poems, drama
- d. Scientific writing: articles and monographs

It would be helpful to organise a text seminar focusing on writers' skills, such as stylistic issues, grammar and morphosyntax. Each participant could write his or her own texts, which would then be analysed and proofread together.

The first PhD programmes for an AS Master of Arts are being planned by the Giellagas Institute at the University of Oulu. It is necessary to plan revitalisation programmes in detail and activate speakers in using the language orally and in writing. The first feedback has been promising, and even new speakers are very welcome.

6.2 *Children's Wishes: 1000 sijđod nuorâikirjálâšvuotâ anarâškielân*

The idea for the *1000 Pages of Youth Literature* as an AS side project arose from the Finnish Cultural Foundation's *Lukuklaani* project, or 'Reading Clan', where the idea is to establish or improve existing school libraries in Finland to activate schoolchildren's reading and thus improve their reading abilities.¹² The intention of the *1000 sijđod nuorâikirjálâšvuotâ anarâškielân* project is to translate *belles lettres* into AS, as the schoolchildren were asked for their ideas and they said they would like to read 'Harry Potter' and 'other famous books'. This side project received funding from the Kone Foundation in November 2018. Besides activating child readers, this kind of project is a good way to activate writers and translators as well. While finishing this paper, the project was established, implemented and finalised. Young AS speakers have participated in the project and translated novels, short stories and Wikipedia articles. The translations by young speakers have mainly been carried out as summer jobs, conducted by an AS student, Martta Alajärvi (2019), and an AS media worker, Fabrizio Brecciaroli (2020). Hopefully, these activities can be continued. More experienced AS students have translated entire books that will be published in the near future. Their translations have been conducted as part of their academic AS study programme. Our experiences have been very positive. This method also works as a study materials project: the pupils have learnt to produce learning materials by themselves, and translation work also has a positive effect on their literary use of the language.

6.3 *Activating Leisure Time Writing*

During the *Čyeti čalled* project, Anarâškielâ servi has organised writing evenings and weekends for AS speakers. These gatherings have been popular. The focus has been on creative writing. The participants have written poems and short stories that can be found on the *Čyeti čalled* blog.¹³ One of the most pleasant memories concerning creative writing was a writing evening in October 2018; a language nest needed a story concerning traffic safety. That evening, five writers worked on the same text, with one document, writing and editing at the same time. It worked, and the language nest got their story, called *Šírottâs*, or 'Reflector'.¹⁴ This kind of writing is voluntary work for everyone, and thus the texts are usually short due to personal time constraints and the purpose of the writing.

Continued success depends on who will write books in the future. The writing projects seem to strengthen the writing culture. The writers dare to write more freely and use their imaginations. It might also help if Saami literature were better funded and people could become full-time authors, at least for some time (Morottaja 2009, 70). Even improved technical means would be of great assistance.

7 The Use of Language Technology in the Minority-Language Writing Process

Seen from the perspective of the writing process, Indigenous languages differ from majority languages in two ways. First, they are used less frequently and in fewer arenas than written languages, and the written norms are thereby less familiar to the speaker. Second, most Indigenous languages are morphologically more complex than the surrounding majority languages; each dictionary word (lemma) occurs in a high number of word forms.

For the writing process, the writer needs to find words he or she wants, spell them correctly and put them together in appropriate ways. Language technology may offer four types of help in this process for different aspects of the language:

1. Lexicon: e-dictionary enriched with grammatical information
2. Orthography: spellchecker
3. Grammar: grammar checker for the minority language or translation programme from the minority to the majority language
4. Stylistics: text collection with examples of usage

Language learners need proper dictionaries in which the minority language is used as the target language. Indigenous language communities who want to use their languages in everyday settings face the additional challenges of the terminology in modern society: What shall we name all these modern things? Do we take the word from the majority language, and if so, do we adapt its orthographic principles? Do we borrow a loan translation (calque) from the majority language, or do we invent a new word altogether? Often, language communities use all these strategies, and the challenge for a minority language community is to agree upon a common term in each concrete case. Good dictionaries from the majority to the minority language, enriched with grammatical information, are probably the most central resources for supporting the writing process.

Majority-language spelling is learnt through reading the same word forms over and over again. Minority languages possess fewer texts and fewer channels of exposure than majority languages. There are not only fewer books and magazines in minority languages but also barely any billboard commercials and TV programmes with minority-language subtitles. Speakers of Indigenous languages, thus, read their own language for fewer hours a day than they read the majority language. For grammatically complex languages, morphological variation also leads to less exposure to each word form. Indigenous languages often lack a standardised spoken variety defined by an economically dominant

elite. This adds up to a situation where it is hard to learn the written language by memorising the written form of each and every word. The availability of a good spellchecker may, in fact, be a prerequisite for establishing the literacy of a given language. A key concern for the *Čyeti čalled* project and, we would argue, for any literacy project involving Indigenous languages is to address the fundamental difference in written language acquisition met by Indigenous language readers and writers.

L2 speakers of a heritage language are often insecure about the grammatical structure of the language. These writers need all the help they can get, and a grammar-checker programme to give advice on grammatical patterns may be the tool needed for L2 speakers to be able to become active writers. For L1 speakers, it would help them to avoid interference from the majority language if so desired.

How to use a language is learnt by example, and the paucity of linguistic input in a weak language community may be compensated for by giving access to corpora written in the minority language. Thus, when faced with the challenge of using a specific verb, the writer may look up its usage in a text collection. For writers of minority languages, access to lemmatised and grammatically tagged corpora may provide a resource compensating for the paucity of linguistic input in the speech environment.

For AS, the basic tools (keyboards, proofing tools, analysers and machine translation) are available online and as downloads from UiT.¹⁵ The proofing programme has rather decent coverage and is advanced enough to support both beginners and experts alike (cf. Antonsen 2018a, 30 for an overview of the AS transducer coverage, and Morottaja et al. 2018 for a presentation of the proofing programme itself). L2 writers would need a different type of programme – for example, a grammar checker that also corrects grammatical errors when the words in isolation do not contain any spelling errors.

8 Discussion

In this paper, we have described the *Čyeti čalled* project and its attempts to activate people in writing and to set up new writing domains. The vicious cycle of having neither writers nor readers seems to be broken in the AS community. This has been done via a detailed plan for promoting a writing culture. We expect this writing culture to be strengthened further as more and more people write AS as part of their work.

The experience from the one-year full-time adult language course referred to in section 2 is that grammar should be prioritised first, and thereafter oracy.

The basic materials of a grammar, a dictionary and textbooks to learn the language are thus central to revitalisation. When extending this to writing, the *Čyeti čalled* project was the first draft of an AS writing programme. Further details still need to be planned out. Whatever strategy one decides on, one has to cope with scarce human resources; if something needs to be done, then all other activities must wait. A strict priority order is needed.

The full-time one-year course got somewhat downscaled into follow-up courses at the Sámi Education Institute in Inari. These courses seem to be steady at the moment, and should be kept going, as language transmission still needs to be prioritised. Furthermore, especially in academic or higher education, the urge to educate writers should be honoured. Promising writers should be recruited, and specific writing programmes developed for them. Daily writing assistance is also needed in creating texts for everyday life. A study programme for creative writing needs to be planned and implemented. There is a growing need to write both administrative and academic texts, as well as nonfiction and literary texts.

Dutkansearvi – Sámi Language and Culture Research Association has now published four Saami issues of its linguistic journal, with 28 articles in Saami, eight of them in AS. Nevertheless, there is still a long journey to stabilise academic writing in Saami. Having a strong academic peer-review system has been the main issue, as well as motivating Saami-speaking researchers to write in Saami. Furthermore, the journal needs to be accepted in the three-level classification system of the Publication Forum,¹⁶ as the rating system of universities prefers publications in rated journals and book series. Last but not least, it is a challenge to get funding for academic Saami publications.

The single most important issue when planning the future of AS literacy is the future of *Anarâš*, the community magazine.¹⁷ This magazine has been published two to four times a year since 1988, is only written in AS and is read by the whole AS community. From the very beginning up until 2017, the majority of the articles were written by the editor, Ilmari Mattus. The revitalisation efforts of the last generation, including the work reported here, have given rise to a new linguistic situation. In a way, one may say that the continued existence of AS literacy throughout the whole revitalisation period has given what Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998) refer to as a *prior ideological clarification*. For them, the lack of such a clarification, and thereby the lack of belief in the feasibility of Indigenous literacy or even revitalisation at all, has been the main reason for the failed attempts at the revitalisation of Tlingit and Haida. Pasanen (2015, 45) observes a corresponding ideological clarification of the speakers' own role in AS revitalisation as foundational to its success. Restricting ourselves to literacy, we would like to stress that the continuous existence

of *Anarâš* in a very concrete way has established both the possibility and the use of an AS written culture. At present, the strategy should be to widen the writer base to a larger part of the speaker community, and also strengthen *Loostâš*,¹⁸ a web publication with shorter articles and a younger target group. In order to broaden the writer base, technological language means need to be further developed. Today, there is a spellchecker to catch orthographic mistakes (Morottaja et al. 2018); this should be followed up with a grammar checker, a programme to catch real-world and syntactic errors.

Sitting together and writing together does not necessarily require funding. It does not need strict planning, either – just a large dose of creativity. Creating prestigious new domains, however, calls for a remarkable change in the status of the language and a change in the old ways of thinking. It might also help to have a project planner to write funding applications and propose programme suggestions to potential funders and co-partners. Such tasks are often underestimated and understaffed. For example, the advice to activate young people to read Saami literature does not help very much (see Domokos 2018, 26; Appendix 1, point 1), as there are not a lot of texts to read. We think that the texts need to be written first, and by young people themselves. Could the children translate or even write (and illustrate) a book or stories in school? This could also help them understand the current situation of Saami literature and improve their writing skills at the same time. Or should they translate stories? As Kuuva (private email, October 30, 2018) remarks, the gaps in grammar and vocabulary are not that visible while there is something interesting to do. Pupils with fewer creative writing skills could probably translate or have a different role in the writing process, such as developing the plot and protagonists. Someone also needs to illustrate or just comment on the plot. The classroom could develop a common strategy for working things out. But their teachers also need to be encouraged in Indigenous writing.

Our focus on literacy for Indigenous languages is not without its opponents. Although seldom put forward in scientific texts, we have encountered among both fellow linguists and Indigenous community members the view that literacy is neither a part of Indigenous tradition nor plays a prominent role in revitalisation. Now, the Latin alphabet is no more native to Germanic languages than to any of today's Indigenous languages, and a good orthography should in any case be built upon the language itself rather than upon conventions laid out for a foreign language. As for literacy in revitalisation, written language plays a central role in the linguistic documentation forming a basis for language teaching. Furthermore, a literary society gives more prominence to the written language. In an investigation of Indigenous and minority languages

on a global scale (Antonsen 2018b), it was shown that precisely the minority language communities that employ professional scribes (e.g., for bureaucratic text) also represent the languages with an infrastructure for Indigenous literacy.

We, as authors, have started at the grassroots level, motivating ourselves to write in Saami. We think this attitude has helped during the *Čyeti čalled* project. We have not taken traditional researcher roles – we have also been writers, dreamers, doers and developers. Since there is not much to read, we will have to create the needed texts ourselves. We have been joined by others. We are thankful for their impact, thoughts and words. As shown by Morottaja (2018, 65), ‘It seems that during the project there has been an increase in the number of writers. The project has had a positive impact, especially on the activation of L2 speakers. Some previously passive native speakers have also produced texts’. This is exactly what we have wanted, and what we have to continue with.

9 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have provided an analysis of the revitalisation of AS. This revitalisation has gone through three phases: (a) a language nest programme boasting a 25-year continuum; (b) the intensive schooling of almost an entire generation of new adult speakers; and (c) the introduction of AS into schools and society. What has been missing from this picture is a stronger focus on literacy. For all the new domains in which AS is being introduced (school, adult education, workplaces, administration), literacy is a prerequisite. The very first steps of this third revitalisation phase have thus been characterised by attempts to activate the speakers as writers and to set up new writing domains that are actively used by the writers. The method has been one of participatory writing, where new writers have shared their texts and received advice from more experienced writers. Since this work is in an initial phase, it has few measurable results as of yet. We are still able to conclude that the revitalised speakers see literacy as a central part of their linguistic ability and that they are willing to go through considerable efforts to acquire these skills. The existence of professional domains for writing (administration, school, media) has been an operational factor in promoting literacy. At the same time, writing in professional domains should be only a part of Indigenous literacy. Literacy is, to humankind, so many other things: a vehicle of thought, an expression of creativity, a sharing of ideas and the expression of one’s innermost thoughts. This should be, and increasingly is, the case for Aanaar Saami as well.

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Notes

- 1 Anarâškielâ servi ry. Uđđásumos Anarâš-lostâ. *Anarâškielâ servi*. <https://www.anaraskielaservi.fi/anaras-losta/>
- 2 CASLE – Complementary Aanaar Saami Language Education, <http://www.casle.fi>
- 3 A similar position is taken by Outakoski et al. 2019, who argue that it is crucial that at least one of the members of the research team also belongs to the language community in question. The topic of our research is different, though, as Outakoski and her co-workers focus on schoolchildren (see Outakoski 2015 for the full research programme) and utilise a wide range of assessment methods, whereas we focus on adult writers and their motivation and ability to write.
- 4 <http://nettisaje.wikidot.com/anaraskiela-servi>
- 5 The primary component of the first phase of AS revitalisation from 1997 onwards has been the establishment of an AS language immersion kindergarten, a so-called *language nest*. Due to the success of the approach, there are three such language nests for AS today, two in Inari and one in Ivalo.
- 6 <https://www.saanih.oahpa.no>
- 7 <https://www.samediggi.fi/saamelais-et-info/>
- 8 <https://www.anaraskielaservi.fi/anaras-losta/>
- 9 <http://site.uit.no/aigecala>
- 10 <http://dutkansearvi.fi/diedalas-almmuheapmi>
- 11 See University of Oulu (2020).
- 12 <https://lukemo.fi/tyokaluja-lukemiseen/lukuklaani/>
- 13 <http://cyeticalled.blogspot.com/>
- 14 <http://cyeticalled.blogspot.com/>
- 15 See <http://divvun.no> and <http://giellatekno.uit.no>
- 16 <http://www.julkaisuforum.fi/en/publication-forum>
- 17 <http://nettisaje.wikidot.com/anaras-losta>
- 18 Anarâškielâ servi ry (2018).

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Appendix 1: Domokos – Recommendations for Strengthening Saami Literacy

1. Strengthening the role of Sámi literature on all levels of education, e.g., including more Sámi literary texts in the curricula of majority and Sámi children in Nordic schools
2. Offering more language-specific working, publication and promotion grants for Sámi authors
3. Introducing new ways of improving the visibility of Sámi literature inside and outside the Sámi community
4. Strengthening the relationship of the young people to Sámi literature as readers and writers
5. Establishing a transnational Sámi literature exchange and export institution
6. Supporting Sámi literary centres in the Nordic region
7. Establishing regular literary events where Sámi authors and their Nordic readers can meet
8. Organising an annual Sámi literary contest with different categories
9. Strengthening of digital presence and the digital processing of Sámi languages and literature
10. Supporting printed and open online literary magazines in all Sámi languages
11. Establishing an open-access Sámi literary archive containing originals and translations

12. Strengthening the relations between Sámi and other Indigenous authors around the world
 13. Publishing of canonical literary anthologies for poetry
 14. Establishing regular meetings for Sámi literary scholars and Sámi authors with their translators
 15. Providing literary publications both to the local/Nordic promoters and to international promoters of Sámi literature
- (Source: Domokos 2018, 26–27)