

“Taking our language back home” - Motivation and challenges in the South Sami area

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- Motivation and challenges in the South Sami area

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The South Sami language is my mother tongue; I am transmitting it further to my daughter. I hope for the future that she can use the language outside the home as well. I would like to thank all my informants that make this possible. They are providing the language for our children. I appreciate them for sharing all the experiences regarding the South Sami language with me, and I admire them for the work they are doing. Without their strength and many other parents that transmit the language to further generations the outlook for the language would not be so bright.

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Abstract

The South Sami language was the daily language of the South Sami before Norwegianisation and assimilation made it less used among the South Sami themselves and useless in the Norwegian society. The language was then not transmitted to the next generation anymore and UNESCO listed the language as severely endangered. The topic of this thesis is the revival that has taken place in the South Sami area for the last decade and which is still ongoing. As a result of this, the status of the South Sami language has changed and it is now equalized with Norwegian in two municipalities after they were incorporated into the Sami administrative language area. Institutions have been established to keep the culture and the language alive. My focus is the home as an arena for language revitalization. Many South Sami have after becoming parents made the South Sami language their home language, though Norwegian was their daily language when growing up. I look closer at what the motivation is for these parents and what kind of challenges regards to the language shift in making the children functionally bilingual. It is difficult to make the children functionally bilingual only by using the language at home. The Intergenerational language transmission is important, in connection that the language is in use in other domains. The future of the language is brighter because of the positive changes

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The South Sami area, Norway and Sweden



(<http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/nouer/2000/nou-2000-3/6/4.html?id=356991>)

1. Introduction

I grew up in Kautokeino, a north Sami village in Finnmark. The majority language in Kautokeino is North Sami. At home I spoke Norwegian and South Sami language, as my mother from Trøndelag spoke South Sami to me. Every summer we visited relatives in Trøndelag, and spend a lot of time there. I did not realize before I was about nineteen that the others at my age didn't speak South Sami. When one person commented: "You are so clever speaking South Sami", I started thinking about the language that had been so natural to me, my mother tongue. No-one says that to a Norwegian who speaks her or his mother tongue – Norwegian. And that comment made me angry on behalf of my mother. "Why did she believe that my mother would not speak Sami to me?" Then I realized the situation in which the South Sami language was. Sami is not spoken in many areas in the South Sami area at all. It is an endangered language. And I had not heard many of my relatives speaking Sami, only the elder people and some of my mother's cousins. The language was not transmitted to the younger generations. Because of me growing up in the North Sami area, the Sami language was natural and common for me, so I had not reflected over that that the situation in the South Sami area was different. I read Jon Todal's book *Samisk Språk i Svahken Sijte – sørsamisk*

vitalisering gjennom barnehage og skule (2007) and his quote "It appears that more young parents now talk South Sami with their own children than fifteen years ago, even when the language is not the parents' strongest language" (2007:21 my translation). I found that quote interesting because it revealed the big change in the South Sami area regarding the language. Something had happened through the generations and I wanted to find out what. Today the future of the language is brighter and one of the reasons is that young parents speak Sami to their children at home. There are also different projects, such as language nests, to teach everyone who wants to learn it and bring back the language. Why and how did the generation that grew up with Norwegian as home language decided to do a language shift and teach their children Sami?

Following, my research questions are: What role does the home play in a revitalization process? Why does the parent generation today want to talk Sami to their kids? What kind of challenges are there in the homes regarding language revitalization?

1.1 Facts about the South Sami language and society today.

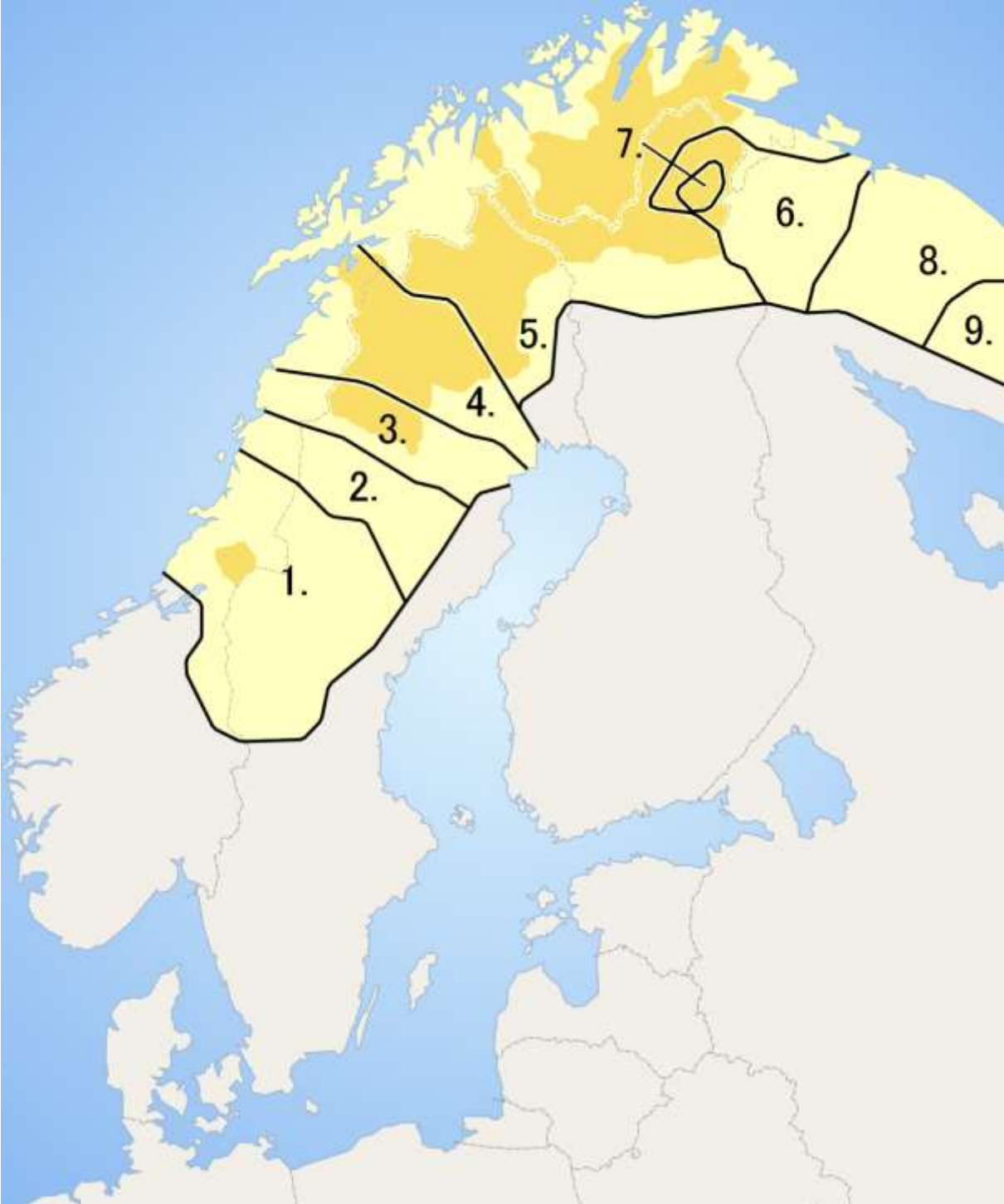
The South Sami language is one of the three most spoken Sami languages in Norway. The other two are the North Sami language and the Lule Sami language. UNESCO¹ has estimated that there are around 500 speakers of the South Sami language in both Norway and Sweden. Most of them are elders. There are in total around 2000 South Sami in Norway and Sweden. The South Sami live in Norway and Sweden. The South Sami area in Norway stretches from Saltfjellet in Nordland in the north to Elgå in Hedmark in the south. The Sami are spread over a large geographical area. To compare: the Lule Sami language is estimated to 2000 speakers and the North Sami language is estimated to 30 000 speakers. The North Sami language is the Sami majority language, and 90 % of the Sami speakers speak the North Sami language.²

Reindeer herding is a big part of the South Sami lifestyle. Although they are living spread, with long distances between them, the kinship relationships among South Sami are nevertheless close and important (Todal 2009). The South Sami had always lived among and close to the Norwegian society. The big distances and the fact that they do not have any village where Sami represent the majority has made them weak and vulnerable for the Norwegianisation process. To compare, the North Sami in Finnmark are living closer to each other, and their language is stronger. There are two villages in Finnmark, Kautokeino and Karasjok where the North Sami language is in majority and the north Sami language is the

¹ <http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap>

² <http://www.sametinget.no/Spraak/Fakta-om-samiske-spraak>

dominant communication language. There is a concentration of South Sami to be found in Røros, in the South of the South Sami area and in Snåsa and in the interior of Helgeland in the North of the South Sami area (Todal 2010). See the map on page 4.



The South Sami area is number 1. Number 2 is Ume Sami, 3 – Pite Sami, 4 – Lule Sami, 5 – North Sami, 6 – Skolt Sami, 7 – Enaresami, 8 – Kildinsami, 9 –Tersami³

In the map you can see how big the South Sami language area is. The “neighbor” language, the Ume Sami language is according to the Sami parliament website almost extinct in Norway, The Pite Sami language as well. The areas are still called the Pite Sami area because of the people living in the area.

1.2 Previous literature

My topic, revitalization, is a current topic for many. Politicians, linguists and minority groups are today aware of all the small languages that died out and the languages that are endangered. Many researchers have made research on the topic. There are different ways of revitalizing and keeping a language alive. My main focus is revitalization at home. The home comes under the individual level, where the individuals decide themselves witch language they are going to use at home.

As Olthuis, Kivelä and Skutnabb-Kangas (2013) state, there is a possibility to give life to a language that is threatened when doing it with effort. In Finland they have managed to get new life to the Anaar Saami. The language was seriously endangered because it was not used by young people. There are different ways of revitalizing a language, as the previous linguistics did in Finland, with the Anaar Saami. In the South Sami area they have vitalized the language through programs and projects that include school and the society with good results, Jon Todals (2007) book *Svahken Sijte* is a result of the project, which I will come back to later. Kristine Tjåland Braut (2010) has written about the daycare as a language arena in the Lule Sami area. That is interesting for me to see the differences when the language is used in different domains.

There are also articles and books written particularly about the South Sami language situation. The Linguistic Inger Johansen (2006) has written a social linguistic master thesis about the revitalization and the South Sami language. She states that there is a revitalization process ongoing, and she discusses what that contains and which factors strengthen or weaken the language. Her informants are young fluent South Sami who are active in the ongoing revitalization process. She writes about the levels in the society, micro, macro and individual level, where she focuses most on the individual level. She has also written other articles about the South Sami language (2007, 2008). In these two articles she writes about central topics

³ http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samiske_spr%C3%A5k

that are relevant for my thesis; she writes about barriers to cross and in general about the situation in the South Sami area. She has also written an article about the history of the South Sami daycare (2009).

The linguistic Jon Todal has also written articles about the situation of the Sami languages and also especially about the South Sami language. He has arranged a vitalizing project in the South Sami village Elgå, in 2005, where the aim was to make the children start using the language by making the language available on a daily basis in cooperation with home and school. After this project, a book was published in 2007 where the result was given. Todal has also written many articles (2005, 2009 and 2010) and a PhD thesis (2002) about Sami languages and the use of the Sami language. The topics in these articles concern the Sami languages: history, development, situations and use of the Sami languages. Some articles are specifically about the South Sami situation, which is useful for me. Others are about the whole Sami society in general. The articles are relevant for my topic because we touch the same issues.

Torkel Rasmussen has written an article (2011) about the Sami language situation and how the language has developed to what it is today. He points out that the attitude and the status of the language affect the Sami language transmission and use of the language. Further, he has conducted interviews with Sami parents about the motivation and challenges of Sami language transmission. He also focuses on the individual level, and among his informants not all succeeded to transmit the Sami language to further generation, and he explains the reasons for this. This article is relevant for my thesis because of the selection of the informants: the parent generation is the same as the one I am focusing on. I can see and compare that my findings is not only related to the South Sami area but the whole Sápmi.

Joshua A. Fishman has written a book called “Reversing language shift” (1991). By reversing language shift, he means stopping the language shift that has occurred for the minority language. “Native languages are threatened because their intergenerational continuity is proceeding negatively” (1991:1) He has established eight stages to measure and consider how threatened the language situation is and how to preserve a language. Here I found that stage six: “The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighborhood: the basis of mother tongue transmission”. He says that this stage is the most important for a language to stay alive. I am not going to use the stages and factors to consider and measure the situation of the South Sami language. I will bring his words on stage six with me.

Hyltenstam and Stroud's article about Language shift and language preservation (1991) how they can consider and measure the minority languages in relation to the majority language in Sweden. They divide it into community level, local level and individual level (my translation). There we can see which factors affect that a minority language is preserved in a situation where a language shift would occur, as well as see what makes a language shift occur. Hyltenstam and Stroud also have another article (1999) based on the one from 1991 where Mikael Svonni is participating. In this article, they have developed and added more research done by themselves and Svonni. They are still using the levels and they are clear that the community level is the most important for a language, language shift and language preservation. At this level the minority's status is decided in relation to the majority.

The linguists Leena Huss and Anna-Riitta Lindgren (2011) divide the society into three levels "where the language emancipatory action can take place" (Lindgren/Huss 2011:13): individual level where family is included, group level (NGO or activist level) and macro level (State, authorities). Huss (1999) and Huss and Lindgren (2011) have written articles and books with the Sami and the Nordic countries as a starting point. Huss (1999) presents relevant issues regarding "reversing language shift in the far north" (Huss 1999). Two other linguists, Grenoble and Whaley (2006), write in a more general basis about issues in language revitalization. They present different models for doing language revitalization; I will not go deeper into that. They use the two levels that are the basis for evaluating endangered language situations: micro and macro level.

The researchers use different terms on the levels, but the message is the same. The levels affect one another, so dividing the society into these levels makes it easier to understand language development especially regarding minority languages. The most important for my thesis is the individual level, and the choice of language the individual make. I investigate closer the levels in Chapter 3.

The historians Håkon Hermanstand and Ansgar Kosmo have written a book about the South Sami community called "Røyrvik – Samene i Østre Namdal" (2009). The book deals with the South Sami history from the perspective of the village Røyrvik. I have used this book when writing my history chapter; thus the history chapter is local from the South Sami area. The book deals with many topics. The book goes back to 1700, but I have chosen to start my history chapter from 1900 when the South Sami people were bilingual. This is one of the few books that deal especially with the South Sami history after 1900. Hermanstrand (2010)

and Olsen (2010) have both written about the South Sami history before 1900 that I will not include into the thesis.

1.3 Methods/data

I gathered data to find an answer to my questions by using qualitative research methods. A qualitative method is used when you are going to study people's behavior and daily life stories (Silverman 2010). I have used written and oral sources: interview and informal conversations and articles, books and other writings that are relevant for my topic. To find the answers to my research questions I find the interview as the most adequate method. Seale (2012) writes that the qualitative interviews offer access to attitudes, values and feelings. Such interviews enable flexibility, exploration of suppressed views, discussion of sensitive issues, depth, reflection of complexity and they can allow respondents to answer "in their words" (Seale 2012:211). My aim is to get access to my informant's values and feelings about the South Sami language. My interview method is the unstructured or non-standardized interview method described here from Chilisa: "The unstructured or non-standardized interview: The unstructured interview starts with a general question in the area of study. This is usually accompanied by a list of topics to be covered in the interview. This type of interviews allows for flexibility and makes it possible for researchers to follow interests and thoughts of informants. Interviewers freely ask questions in any order, depending on the answers" (Chilisa 2012). I choose that form of interview because in my thoughts it would be easier for the informants to talk more freely if the interview was more like a conversation.

I have done my fieldwork at the Norwegian side of the South Sami area; I have visited almost all my informants in their homes and had informal conversations that I had thought about beforehand. As stated above, the South Sami live in Norway and Sweden. I concentrate on the Norwegian side of the border; even though some of my informants are Swedish, they are all living in Norway. The south Sami live spread, so I have been doing interviews in the municipalities Snåsa, Røyrvik, Grong, Namsskogan and Troms. Where in the country the families were living had no influence on the selection. Nevertheless, I found the families in the in area nearby where it was easy for me to visit them. I did not visit the South Sami living in the Southern part of the South Sami area. I made in total seven interviews. I have done four interviews in the South Sami language and three in Norwegian.

My selected criteria were that the families had the South Sami language as their home language. My informants are parents who speak South Sami to their children at home; all of

them have had the Norwegian language their strongest language during childhood. I interviewed four families – three of the interviews were only with the mother, and one interview involved both mother and father, where only one of them was a South Sami. Almost all of them had had Norwegian as their strongest language at home when growing up, but they all heard and maybe used South Sami in some arenas, and maybe had it at school, where they had Sami as a subject in the same way as a foreign language. I had hoped for more families, but it was not so easy to find such.

I interviewed one grandmother to get her perspectives and attitudes to language in a historical view. To understand the value and the development of the language it is important to know the history and how the attitudes and understanding of the language has changed through the years. I also interviewed one aunt to get her understanding how it was to start talking Sami with someone you are used to speak Norwegian to. I also interviewed the leader of the language center in Snåsa, Gielem Nastedh, to find information on how they work and what they do to keep the language alive locally. These empiric data I will see in contexts with written sources about language revitalization and South Sami culture and history.

I used a recorder for almost all of the interviews, and took some notes during the interviews. I asked the informants if I could record during the interview. During the first interview I only wrote. After returning to the university, I transcribed the interviews. Some of the interviews went far out of the topic, and I have not transcribed those parts.

1.4 Use of terminology

When I talk about language revitalization, I agree with Elizabeth Scheller and use the term he way she has described it as “a process in which a language is in danger of disappearing or is about to lose its user areas (domains) knowingly revived and preserved for the future” (Scheller 2001:90, my translation). Helander defines language revitalization as revival of the use of the Sami language in areas where it is about to disappear. Revive the language within a specific geographical area where it has been used before (2009:135). Grenoble and Whaley state: “Revitalization almost always requires changing community attitudes about a language...” (2006:13). Leena Huss describes linguistic revitalization in more details: “Revitalization is literally “The act of giving new life”” (Huss 1999:24). She also divides and explains that revitalization at the individual level “may mean for example that a person or a group that has already experienced a language shift begins to learn their original language anew, or that a person who previously only used their original language orally is becoming

literate in the language” (Huss 1999:24). At the societal level: “revitalization can imply that an endangered minority language gains new domains, such as education and mass media, where the majority language had reigned supreme” (Huss 1999:24).

Vitalization is actively promoted to expand the Sami language domains and expand the range of application for the language (Helander 2009:135 my translation). Todal (2002) uses the term vitalization because he means that to use the term re-vitalization means that we are going back to something that has been. The Sami language has for instance not been in such domains as public writings, signs and media. There are new domains where the Sami language has arisen.

I use the term *keep alive* the South Sami language. The language has never been gone; it has always been there. In some families, like my own, it has been transmitted through generations. In other families, it has not been naturally transmitted, but it has still been there in forms of words or at school. To keep alive the language means to preserve the language and transmit it further so it won't extinct.

I also talk about Language shift, when I mention language shift I mean a shift from Norwegian/Swedish to Sami. I say “language shift” because these families have had Norwegian as their strongest language, the language that was the most used one. Joshua A. Fishman (1991) uses the term “reversing language shift”, and he means the same: when people are going back to their native language.

In this thesis I talk about being functionally bilingual; that means that somebody masters two languages functionally. In this thesis the two languages are South Sami and Norwegian. This is a definition that is based on the competence of the languages. Being bilingual is when a person is able to function in two languages (or more), in monolingual or bilingual communities, in a way that it is expected and required from the person and others in a standard like the native speakers of the language. (Skutnabb Kangas 1981:93 1980b my translation). Skutnabb Kangas also writes about that the individuals are able to identify themselves into the language groups and the cultures where they belong.

My selected families have grown up with Norwegian as their strongest language, which means that they are not functionally bilingual. They are not functionally bilingual because of different reasons for not speaking the South Sami language. The South Sami language is their weakest language. At the same time, as Inger Johansen writes: “The South Sami talk about

the South Sami language as their *mother tongue*” (I. Johansen 2008), even if they are not in command of the language. It is about their relation to the language of their forefathers. The term “mother tongue” has many definitions, as Tove Skutnabb Kangas (1981) says. One of the definitions is: “The language one identifies with” (1981:23 my translation). This means:

“The language that through the process of socialization has acquired the group's norms and value system. The language conveys the group's cultural traditions and gives individuals an identity that binds her to the in-group and simultaneously separates her from other groups (language boundary-keeping instrument). As this socialization process occurs with the help of language, the language forms a symbolic representation of the group. Identification to a language is thus also a symbolic act” (Skutnabb Kangas 1981:23 my translation).

This definition fits the profile of my informants. Another definition of the term is: “the language of one’s mother” (does not necessarily mean the biological mother, but origin), or the language one uses most or the language one masters the best. The definition that Skutnabb Kangas (1981) presents is also presented by Øzerk (1992). He means that the individual’s first language is to be called the person’s mother tongue.

When talking about generation and the grandparent generation, I use the term active and passive use of the language. In my opinion this explains the situation and the use of the language well. Many in the grandparent generation had in their childhood the South Sami language as an active language – they were functional bilinguals. Because of the Norwegianisation, they suppressed the South Sami language, so the language was passive for many years before they started to use it again.

1.5 My own role as an researcher

I was anxious about how it would be to do research and interviews with people I knew from before. And in a culture and topic that I felt I had knowledge about. As a South Sami myself, I speak South Sami and wear a South Sami *gapta*⁴. Although I have never lived in the South Sami area, I have contact with my relatives in the area. My family also has a summer house there. When I define myself as a South Sami, I think of myself as an insider. I don’t know what my informants think of me. I understand that in a way I am an outsider at the same time. I don’t have the knowledge about the daily life in the area where the South Sami are. Evjen (2005) writes about that you can have one opinion of yourself, and others are having a different opinion about you.

⁴ Gapta: Sami traditional dress

My mother has always spoken South Sami to me, and I have Norwegian as the second home language. I have had North Sami from daycare and school. I am in command of all the three languages.

While I was doing my fieldwork I became a mother myself. I speak south Sami to my daughter, and she is becoming three-lingual with South Sami, North Sami and Norwegian. I was not prepared that my informants would bring my questions I had for them back to me. I understand that the South Sami language can be a sore subject for many, and maybe the fact that I have the language as a home language while they did not, cause the interviews to be more difficult.

“It is argued that a deep understanding of the indigenous culture can only be achieved by a member of that culture“ (Saugestad 2001:8) I do believe that only a person submerged in the same culture can achieve a deep understanding about her/his culture, as Saugestad says. But in this case, I have to be aware of not being blind and avoid taking the cultural aspects for granted (Wadel 1991). I experienced that since I had a daughter, and I explained how important it was for me that she grew up with South Sami as one of her home languages, my informants realized that we had the same aim, that we had something in common. I was aware of the fact that we at the same time did not have the same point of departure, since I grew up with South Sami as home language. I don't think that made any difference when talking to them. “Polite acceptance and even friendship do not always mean that access will be granted to the confidential regions of the life of those who extend it” (Berreman 2007:157). Even though some of my informants are my relatives, it does not mean that they feel that they will tell me everything because our point of departure and childhood is not the same.

My academic background is bachelor degree in social anthropology and I am now writing this master thesis on indigenous studies. The master program is interdisciplinary, which means that we learn about many disciplines, such as like anthropology, history and so on. My thesis, about the language situations in the society belongs to the domain of sociolinguistics. This is a field that I did not have basic knowledge about before starting the work with this thesis. That should be taken into consideration while reading the thesis.

1.6 Thesis overview

This thesis contains five chapters.

Chapter 2 presents the South Sami history from late 1800/early 1900 until approximately year 2000. The aim with the chapter is to explain how the South Sami went from being bilingual to only transmit and use the majority language in year 2000. The major reason for this development was the Norwegianisation process and the school system, where the language was suppressed. The South Sami language lost its value among the South Sami people, and many of them were embarrassed of being Sami.

Chapter 3 is about the decade of revival that came late to the South Sami area from the year 2000 until today. The South Sami and other Sami are becoming aware of the critical situation the Sami languages are in. The UNESCO report states that the Sami languages are endangered and that the South Sami language with its approximately 500 speakers is severely endangered. In this period, a political willingness has arisen and the economic frames are better. Many institutions have been established. The language gets better conditions in more domains.

Chapter 4 is about the home as an arena for revitalization. My informants are mostly from the parent generation that had decided to make a language shift, and has succeeded. In their way to make the South Sami language their home language they have met challenges and success. I will also discuss what role the home plays in a revitalization process.

Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter. Here I discuss the research questions and analyze my findings.

2. Historical background

In this chapter the focus will be on South Sami history from 1910 to 2000 in Norway. To describe South Sami history it is important to include other Sami societies and languages as well, mostly the North Sami because that language was the dominant and most developed in this period. That means that I will discuss what kind of developments the Sami society has undergone from the national level. I will discuss how the use of the language developed from a daily language to a language that was avoided and lost its value; I provide an explanation why the language became endangered after being used daily. I have chosen to start the history chapter from 1900 because the language was then still transmitted further to the next generations and was very much alive and used as a daily language among the South Sami. Focus will be on school and education because the school system has a huge effect on the use of the language. Todal (2002) writes that the school is in an exceptional position as a factor during the language shift from Sami to Norwegian. I will also include the attitude toward the bilingualism and multilingualism in the 70s and the 80s that also affected the use of the language.

In Finnmark and Troms, the Norwegian government had a Norwegianisation policy towards the Sami and the Kven. The Norwegian government wanted to assimilate them into the Norwegian society, and they focused on language (Minde 2005). According to Minde (2005) the Norwegianisation policy period stretches from about 1850 to 1980. In order to assimilate the Sami and the Kven, the Norwegianisation policy had to be a part of school and education. The South Sami area was not part of the Norwegianisation policy area, but here was still Norwegianisation towards the South Sami in society in general.

2.1 South Sami history from 1900 – 1950

As written in chapter two, the South Sami are few and living in a big geographical area. The life the South Sami had known started to change in the late 1800 and early 1900. Hermanstrand/Kosmo (1999) calls the period from 1900- 1950 the time of the Majorities. The areas had to be shared with laedtieh.⁵ The reindeer herding was now regulated by law, and the Sami had to subordinate themselves to an official employee called *lappfogd* (Hermanstrand/ Kosmo 2009). Due to the changes the Sami felt they needed an arena where they could strengthen themselves and their interests. In the South Sami area the reindeer herders started organizing themselves. In the period from 1906 until 1911 five Sami politic organizations were established in Helgeland, Nord- Trøndelag and in Sør- Trøndelag (Evjen 1998). Worth

⁵ Laedtieh: The Norwegians

noticing in the South Sami area are the women that got organized and were active. The most known are Elsa Laula Renberg that organized the first Sami national congress in Trondheim 1917. There were around 150 Sami from both Sweden and Norway (Evjen 1998). In this meeting a statement was written in which the Sami wanted suitable schools for the Sami children, where they could learn the Sami language and subjects that are important for the Sami (Jacobsen 1979).

2.2 School and education

Most of the South Sami were nomads and reindeer herders. It was not so easy for them to attend schools; many of the children had to participate in the reindeer herding and their lifestyle did not fit into a school system. The South Sami did not have much formal education before 1900. Around 1900 many families became sedentary; they started with farming beside the reindeer herding (Hermandstrand/Kosmo 2009:245). One reason is that during this time, an increasing number of predators made the reindeer herding difficult. Family life changed too; the women that had been a part of the reindeer herding started to be home and take care of the farming and children. During this time, the use of traditional clothing also changed, they started to use Norwegian clothes (Hermanstrand/Kosmo 2009).

In 1910 the first school for the South Sami children was established. This boarding school was called “Sameskolen i Havika”. Havika was near Namsos, almost in the middle of the South Sami area (Devik 1980). This school was established after missionaries realized that the South Sami children did not attend any schools, and after the South Sami themselves required a Sami school. In Finnmark they had boarding schools for the Sami children, and they wanted the same for the South Sami children. It was primarily for children from the reindeer herding families that was planned to the school. Children from all over the South Sami area came to Havika. When establishing the school, it was going to be a Sami school where the kids could wear Sami clothes, speak Sami and learn traditional *duedtie*⁶ and culture. This changed gradually, most likely without consulting the Sami parents. The children were not supposed to use their mother tongue anymore. After some years, it was the missionary group called “Finnemisjonen” that was leading the school. The Sami speaking staff and teachers were squeezed out one after one (Devik 1980).

The language in the school became Norwegian because the school leaders could not do otherwise than the government decided; they had to run the same policies towards church and

⁶ Duedtie: Sami handicraft

education. Suddenly the school was an ordinary Norwegian boarding school. The Sami parents protested, but they kept sending their children to the school even though they were not satisfied with the situation. The Sami parents wanted a Sami speaking staff. At the school in Havika there were children that had problems understanding the subjects because they did not understand Norwegian. The teachers reported to the missionaries that it was almost impossible to teach the children something because they were mentally retarded. (Devik 1980) Because of the boarding school, Sami was not a daily language for the children anymore, and eventually Norwegian becomes their daily language.⁷ Ella Holm Bull explains what the Sami thought about the school in Havika: “Although the Sami were happy for this school, they wanted a school where they could learn their own culture, their own language and their own history. The school in Havika did not have such courses. “In its program the school was a regular Norwegian boarding school” (Holm Bull 1979:89 my translation).

Even though the school was not the best for the Sami children, the school established a unity for the South Sami and made them stronger. Both parents and pupils had the opportunity to meet each another and they could discuss about future. This may made them stronger (Devik 1980:80). The school lasted until 1950.

2.3 The South Sami language

The impression is that the South Sami was the main language in almost every South Sami home around 1900 and until World War II (Devik 1980:58). When the children started school, the language was used less. The language shift started in the period after World War two. The south Sami language was then the home language to a minority among the South Sami.

Norwegian had taken over. Håkon Hermanstrand and Ansgar Kosmo (2009) write also that the Sami were bilingual around 1900; the daily language at home was Sami, and Norwegian in public places. Jon Todal writes in his book (2007:40) that the grandparents mastered Sami and Norwegian/Swedish when they grew up around 1930, but they did not transfer Sami to their children because they could not see it was important. The language did not have any function for them. Falkenberg (1986) writes that in Røros the Sami went from moving from gåetie⁸ into houses in 1920-40:

“Anders Nordfjell put so much emphasis on this that he outright claimed that Sami went over to speak Norwegian with each other after they left the hut and started living in wooden

⁷ <http://www.nordland.fylkesbibl.no/Kultur-Nett/HTML/SSKOLE/historie.htm>

⁸ Gåetie: turf hut

houses. He believed that when the Røros Sami in the 1940s in contrast to the year 1890 spoke better Norwegian than Sami, the reason was primarily housing structures and that the settlement were changed”(Falkenberg 1986, my translation). That quote explains that the change of living also had an impact of the use of the language.

2.4 The Dunderdal accident

When writing about the South Sami history, it is impossible to neglect the Dunderdal accident. In June 1948 a bus from a constituent meeting in Tromsø for the first nationwide Reindeer herding organization was involved in an accident (Hermanstrand/Kosmo 2009). The initiative for the meeting came from the South Sami. In this accident the whole South Sami community lost 16 people, parents, children, entrepreneurs and committed people. The South Sami were few from before, and then they lost some of the most active and leading figures. The South Sami community was hit hard. In the wake of the accident the community was in a vacuum; there were funerals and sorrow. As Hermandstrand/Kosmo mentions, this accident changed the life for many and also the South Sami history (2009:305). It is still a grief for many; the sorrow of the accident followed the life after, in the reindeer herding as well. All looked positive when going for the constituent meeting; they were to be connected with other Sami to co-operate about the future of their lifestyle.

“Since South Sami through centuries have had a collective experience of being in a displaced position, it is not an unreasonable assertion that the Dunderdal accident had a big impact on the common cultural perception of their own situation. Through the loss of rights, constant arguing about land and experience of the state and law were not for Sami. It is reasonable to assert that it has built up a collective understanding of how difficult a minority situation they were in (Hermanstrand/Kosmo 2009:309, my translation).

The years after were hard, and the South Sami had to learn living with the loss and sorrow. The years after were for survival and to do the best in their situation.

2.5 South Sami history from 1950 - 2000

Hermanstrad and Kosmo (2009) write that in the 50s and 60s the South Sami language was still the dominant language among the Sami, and also among the youth. In the early 1950, in the period of modernization, some of the families in Røyrvik moved into houses, they had been living in *gåetie* before that. As they moved into houses, the language lost its value and function. The language did not fit into the modern, and moreover, they did not have Sami words for the new fixtures and fittings. The Norwegian language took more and more place.

The culture changed. The modernization at that time also affected the use of the language, the status of the language impaired (Todal 2002:217).

2.6 School and education

At the same time, the second Sami boarding school for South Sami children in 1951 was established in Hattfjelldal in Nordland County. It is in the north of the south Sami area. It was established here because it was a suitable building for a school. This school continued in the same line as the school in Havika; it was a school for Sami children with little Sami subjects at school. The school in Hattfjelldal gave the parents a better feeling; they got Sami staff at the boarding school and sometimes Sami teachers as well (Hermanstand 2009:334). In this period, the understanding was that the kids could speak Sami to each other and the Sami staff. At the school in Havika the children had to speak Norwegian so the staff could understand what they were saying. Children from all over the south Sami area were also in Hattfjelldal. They had a few texts on North Sami, but it was not helpful for the South Sami children.⁹ The Sami committee raised a wish for one Sami school for those in Nordland County, and another for those in Trøndelag (Jacobsen 1979).

In 1968 it became a reality, a South Sami school in Snåsa was established, Åarjel Saemiej Skuvle. That was the first time South Sami was a subject at school. In the beginning it was only two hours a week, and they hoped for more (Holm Bull 1979). Snåsa is almost in the middle of the south Sami area, so after establishing this school the Sami children were divided into two schools: the school in Snåsa and the one in Hattfjelldal. "Right from the start of the Sami school, we have looked at the hours with Sami subjects as something substantial" (Holm Bull 1979:91 my translation). There were subjects as Sami culture history and *duedtie*¹⁰ (Holm Bull 1979). There were no teaching materials in South Sami language at that time. And the teacher, Ella Holm Bull, had to make the teaching materials on her own, not only the teaching materials, she also created the norms for the South Sami written language. The kids who started in Snåsa all knew a little bit Sami, but Norwegian was their strongest language and they talked Norwegian to each other (Lund 2001). The South Sami had big expectations for this school, they hoped for a South Sami language center in Snåsa, and that did not happen. But it was a good start (Hermanstrand 2009:338). In the 1960-70 teaching in Sami was still seen as a tool for teaching other educational goals (Todal 2007:42).

⁹ <http://www.nordland.fylkesbibl.no/Kultur-Nett/HTML/SSKOLE/historie.htm>

¹⁰ Duedtie: Sami handicraft

The South Sami language was not been written before 1957, when Gustav Hasselbrink and Knut Bergsland wrote a book that was written in the same way that the North Sami language used to be (Magga 2000). Ella Holm Bull and Knut Bergsland developed the writing language, and in 1976 that was approved for school (Magga 2000, Hermanstrand/Kosmo 2009). In the same time they published a reading book. This was a huge step for the language and the South Sami. Then they had the possibility to make and write books in their own language, and the best was school books so they were able to get education in their own language. Ella Holm Bull made great efforts for developing and preserving the South Sami language (Hermanstrand/Kosmo 2009).

2.7 The use of South Sami language.

Due to the modernization in general, after the World War II it became difficult to be a Sami. The Norwegian government was going to build up the country again. The saying from the government was: Norway for Norwegians. There should no longer be differences between people (Bjørklund 2000). The Sami culture and language did not fit in. Many Sami suppressed their own Sami identity and were ashamed of being Sami. The modernization had massive consequents for the minorities in Norway. If the Sami youth wanted to succeed with employment they had to be, act and talk like Norwegians. The language was already vulnerable because there were not many South Sami; the Norwegianisation weakened the status of the language among the Sami as well. All of this made the language even more vulnerable. The language had no status at all within the Norwegian government, and one reason was that the language was not used in the church (Hermanstrand/Kosmo 2009:257).

Inger Johansen (2006) writes that the South Sami language was a language that was used in private domains: reindeer herding and in contact with relatives. That made the South Sami language a “home language”, something private that the Norwegian society could not see. Hermanstrand/Kosmo (2009) also explains that the South Sami language was a language used when there were only South Sami speaking people there and was not used in public. Even though the status of the south Sami language was non-existent, the language got a new domain. The first South Sami radio broadcasted in October 1973, it started with 5 minutes in a month. After a while it was 15 minutes twice a month (Hermanstrand/Kosmo 2009:334).

2.8 The Sami language in the society.

The Sami language that survived the Norwegianisation politic was only a "home language"; the Sami language was not used in public, and had no status in Norway. It was only used among the Sami when no one other could hear them. Many Sami were embarrassed by being Sami. So the policy had huge consequences for the Sami languages and the Sami self-confidence. The impact of the policy was also that the Norwegians learned to neglect the Sami people (Magga 2000). As mentioned above, the Norwegianisation policy was not in the South Sami area, but there was still a Norwegianisation and an assimilation process in the South Sami area.

An important development for the Sami language in Norway began in 1959. In this year the School law was changed so that ministries could authorize the use of Sami in school; before this Sami was only used as a tool in school. In 1967 the Sami language in school was in a trial phase and in 1969 the Primary law was changed so that Sami had a formal place as a school subject. In the late 70s the Sami movement started, the Alta Case made the Sami mobilize and a fight for the Sami rights started. The Alta case concerned a watercourse expansion and turned into a Sami movement. It was mentioned in the media and got much attention. The Alta Case was also a turning point for the Sami in general. The Government understood that they had to take the Sami seriously (Eidheim 2000:7). According to Minde: "It became a symbol of the Sami fight against cultural discrimination and collective respect" (Minde 2005:7). In 1985 the Constitution was again amended to so that teaching is in Sami. And in 1987 the Sami language was equalized in the constitution. In 1989 the Sami Parliament was established. That was a huge victory for the Sami people. This gave expectations for the South Sami as well. The Sami in Røyrvik mobilized and wanted to run for election so the South Sami voices also were going to be heard (Hermanstrand/Kosmo 2009). In 1990 the Norwegian government ratified the ILO convention number 169 concerning indigenous peoples and tribal groups in independent countries. In Norway it concerned the Sami people (Henriksen 2008). From 1990 all kids with Sami as mother tongue had the right to have Sami at school.

Year 1992 was the big breakthrough for Sami language in public use in Norway. This year was an important year for the Sami languages. The Sami in Norway got a new law that gave the Sami-speakers right to information and answers in Sami, in all public administration. The

Sami had the right to get understood in their mother tongue. The Sami language got equated with Norwegian, but this applied only in the Sami administrative language areas Kautokeino, Karasjok, Nesseby and Porsanger in Finnmark and Kåfjord in Troms (Magga 2000, Henriksen 2008). The South Sami language and Lule Sami language were not included in this law.

“I have in the thesis argued that the changes were so extensive that it is natural to see the 1990s as a turning point in the history of the Sami language in Norway. The period from 1990 onwards can be called revitalization period. This applies primarily to North Sami” (Todal 2002:211 my translation).

So much happened in the 1990 that Todal calls it a turning point in the history. The Sami language was recognized as one of the public languages in Norway, and it got easier to get Sami at school. As Todal points out, the steps forward was mostly for the North Sami language. The Lule Sami and the South Sami languages stayed behind. Magga (2000) claims the same, the South Sami language and the coastal areas fell behind.

2.9 An endangered language

In the movie *Firekeepers* made by the Director Rosella Ragazzi and producer Brit Kramvig (2007) we meet the two yoikers Lawra Somby and Sara Marielle Gaup. When Lawra was a little boy, he spoke North Sami and South Sami and Norwegian. In the movie he gets to know the reason why he lost the South Sami language he spoke when he was a little boy. In the day care in Oslo he did not talk so much, so the staff at the day care advised the parents to take away one language. They meant that the child was confused from the three languages, that it would be easier for him with only two languages. And that show us the attitude that was in the 80s towards multilingualism and bilingualism. Lawras mum says that now they know better, that it is common for children with many languages to have periods where they don't talk so much. Before it was a common attitude among linguists and healthcare workers that many languages was a burden for children. The advice they gave to the parents at that time was that one language was enough; they believed that the children got confused and would not develop normally (Vangsnes 2013). In the movie we can see Lawras anger and grief of losing the South Sami language; he says he understands that it was like that at the time. He is not angry at anybody. “But a whole foundation of me is ripped away” (Lawra 1997).

The South Sami language had no value in the Norwegian society; the South Sami language lost value among the South Sami themselves, only a few families used the language daily. The language was no longer transmitted to the younger generations at home (Todal 2007). It

was only a language that the older people knew but did not use. “During the period of assimilation minority identities became stigmatized and marginalized by the dominant society, and gradually many members of minorities adopted this negative way of seeing themselves and their own culture” (Rasmussen 2011:51). The parents did not see any reason for transmitting the language; they were used to speak Norwegian.

In 1993, UNESCO¹¹ stated that the Sami languages were endangered. The Lule and the South Sami languages are defined as severely endangered. That means the following: “[l]anguage is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves”¹². Todal has also stated the same: “One of the reasons why the language is getting endangered is because of imbalance in the age of those who use the language” (Todal 2009:148 my translation).

2.10 Conclusion

Above we have followed the South Sami language from 1900 to 2000. From being a daily language for most of the South Sami it changed because the livelihood changed and the children went to school. The Norwegianisation in Norway at that time caused the Sami language to be avoided at school. The wish from the parents for Sami content in school was not met. The children had to learn Norwegian to be able to follow teaching. The modernization also affected the use of the language, and the Sami language lost its value and status among the Sami. The language got invisible in the South Sami area. The Alta case made the Sami mobilize and start working for their rights. The Sami parliament and the Sami rights were incorporated into the constitution. From the 80s the Sami language in general was strengthened and given equal rights. The South Sami language fell behind.

¹¹ http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_report.html

¹² <http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php>

3. Finally, the Decade of revival in the South

“The Sami language is richness, I don’t think I thought about that when I was young“(Anna).

Some ten years after the North Sami area, the awakening regarding the South Sami language started among the South Sami themselves and the local community in the South Sami area (e.g., Todal 2006, 2009, I. Johansen 2011). The Sami Parliament and the Norwegian government have also shown a growing willingness regarding South Sami issues. The attitude and the status towards the language have changed, and the prospects of the language are better. I have dated the time from 2000 until 2013. The period can be discussed. Inger Johansen writes that even though no-one has stated that a revitalization process is ongoing, there is a common understanding that such a process is going on (I. Johansen 2006:21).

How and why did this awareness start? Is there a bigger political willingness for the South Sami language? And what kind of changes happened in the local society during these years? What kind of institutions is established to frame the development?

To get the answers to the questions and to find the development during the last ten years, I will look at different levels in the society that had an impact on the changes. When talking about levels and factors I mean the following levels: the national level, the local level and the individual level. These levels will help me to easier analyze, describe and understand the situation of the South Sami language. I provide a deeper explanation about those levels below, and give the definitions that I use. The levels influence each other. Åse Mette Johansen writes that “Language shift and language preservation are sociolinguistic phenomena that can only be understood through analysis and interpretation of the interplay between various factors in society, group or individual level” (Å.M. Johansen 2007:162). She has been writing about language shift in Manndalen in Kåfjord municipality in Northern Troms, where she has been looking at the different levels to give an explanation on the situation of the Sami language in the area.

As said in Chapter 2, the positive development for the Sami languages in the 90s, the laws and the Sami administrative area made advances most for the Northern Sami language (Todal 2002:211), and that the Lule and the South Sami languages fell behind. The same development is happening for the South Sami language a decade later.

3.1 Political changes in the society towards south Sami language

The big political changes are made on the national level. In addition, the indigenous issues are also taken to the international level, like the UN where indigenous peoples from all over the world meet. The level is also called macro level as Grenoble and Whaley (2005:21) define it: “[t]he macro level issues are the laws, circumstances, policies, etc. which pertains at a national level, or even a transnational level. These include such things as governmental support for a local language or lack thereof, national language planning and education goals, attitudes towards bilingualism, and so on”. Leena Huss and Anna-Riitta Lindgren (2011:13) also define the macro level as the level that concerns the State and authorities. Hyltenstam, Stroud and Svonn (1999:51) point out that political-legal condition, the majority society's ideology, language legislation, implementation, economic factors, socio-cultural norms and education are affected on this level.

Official recognition has a powerful impact on local and minority languages, and the attitudes towards the languages for the non-Sami in the local community. Educational policies and national attitudes towards multilingualism have a big relevance to language revitalization (Grenoble and Whaley 2005:26) as we have seen in Chapter 2, and I will go deeper into the issue in this chapter. Norway has in the 90s, as written in Chapter 2 ratified the ILO convention 169 for Indigenous Peoples and Tribal Groups in Independent States, which obliged the government to adjust for the Sami people in Norway. Year 1992 was a breakthrough for the Sami languages in general. A law secured that the Sami people were going to get official and public papers would be in their own language, and the possibility to meet public offices in their own language was approved. However, the practical equality of status was only applied in the municipalities that were incorporated in the Sami Administrative area (Magga 2000), and none of the South Sami municipalities was at that time defined within the area.

In 1993¹³ the UNESCO red book on endangered languages was published, here we could read that the South Sami and the Lule Sami languages were severely endangered, while the North Sami language was definitely endangered. South Sami and Lule Sami are listed as severely endangered because there are none or few children learning the language. I believe that this was a report that opened the eyes of many Sami people in the whole Sami community.

¹³ http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_report.html

On September 13, 2007 Norway approved The United Nation declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This declaration concerning collective and individual rights for the world's indigenous peoples determines the rights to culture, language, identity, education, and so on.¹⁴ As Norway has ratified the declaration, the Norwegian Government has a duty to protect and facilitate that the Sami people have the possibility to develop and keep alive their language and culture. This also shows that the Government knows their duty to protect and give the Sami practical and economic frames for developing and keeping alive their language and culture.

The South Sami are known for organizing, and for being initiative. So in 2009 a political Party called *Åarjel-saemiej Gielh*¹⁵, ran to election into the Sami Parliament for the first time. They had the opinion that the Sami Parliament and the South Sami area needed more voices to be heard. The members at that time were all under the age of 33. One of their points was that the South Sami had other needs than the other Sami, and that they needed to be seen and heard, make more understanding and knowledge about the Sami living in the Norwegian society¹⁶. Ellinor Marita Jåma got elected as representative into the Sami Parliament, and she has ever since been an important politician and an ambassador for the South Sami culture and language. She has been also seen and heard in Sami Media. I will say that the party made the whole South Sami society more visible for other Sami, and the South Sami themselves. And they showed that the young South Sami are initiative and take responsibility for their own culture.

3.2. Status of the south Sami language changes

As discussed in Chapter 2, the South Sami language and culture has not had the same development as the North Sami language in Finnmark and Troms before year 2000. Jon Todal calls the period from 1990 “onwards a revitalization period”. This period can be seen as a turning point in the history of the Sami language in Norway. He points out that this applies for the North Sami language (Todal 2002:211). So we can see that the Lule Sami and South Sami language fell behind. The big changes concerning these languages are mainly after 2000. In 2006 the Lule Sami municipality Tysfjord was incorporated into the Sami administrative language arena, which was important for the Lule Sami language and people.¹⁷

¹⁴ <http://www.fn.no/Bibliotek/Avtaler/Urfolk/FNs-erklaering-for-urfolks-rettigheter>

¹⁵ Åarjel Saemiej Gielh: South Sami voices

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/AarjelsaemiejGielh?fref=ts>

¹⁷ <https://www.tysfjord.kommune.no/om-tysfjord-kommune.95780.no.html>

As explained in Chapter 2, the Sami administrative language arena is important for the Sami people and languages in Norway and the North Sami municipalities have been incorporated for many years. When a municipality is incorporated into the Sami Administrative Area it means that the municipality recognizes the Sami language equally with the Norwegian language, and that all public writings and contact with public offices and so on could also be in the Sami language¹⁸. When a municipality is incorporated into the administrative area, the municipality gets financial support called “bilingual grants”. To be incorporated into the Sami administrative language arena the municipality makes a decision to seek incorporation¹⁹. This means that the local politicians must agree that the municipality is going to be bilingual.

“Furthermore, the attitudes among both Samis and Non-Samis vis-a-vis the Sami languages are not always positive; rather they can be ambivalent or sometimes even highly negative. This greatly influences intergenerational language transmission, language use and language attitudes in Sápmi” (Rasmussen 2001:44).

The quote above explains the strong impact from the people around in the local community. The local non-Sami and the Sami influence each other and the opinions and choices they make. When a municipality is incorporated into the Administrative area then it gives a more positive attitude for the languages if there has been a negative attitude for it before.

The first South Sami municipality, Snåsa was incorporated into the Sami administrative language arena in 2008, 16 years after the first North Sami municipality. This was important for the South Sami population. The process went easily; most of the people, the Sami and the non-Sami in Snåsa were positive. It was one politician that wanted a referendum if the municipality should be involved in the area, when she was told that it did not work that way the rest went smoothly. At least, if there was someone more negative they did not speak in public. The municipality promotes itself as a bicultural municipality and an important center for the South Sami culture.²⁰

In 2013, Røyrvik municipality got incorporated into the Sami administrative language arena – the second South Sami municipality. The process went more slowly than in Snåsa, so the

¹⁸ http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kmd/tema/samepolitikk/samiske_sprak/samelovens-sprakregler-og-forvaltningsom.html?id=633281

¹⁹ (http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kmd/tema/samepolitikk/samiske_sprak/samelovens-sprakregler-og-forvaltningsom.html?id=633281#2)

²⁰

<http://www.snasa.kommune.no/nordtrondelag/snasa/snasak.nsf/0/AE2AC935AC7D2625C125753C00436677?OpenDocument>

inhabitants in Røyrvik had to wait for some years until their incorporation into the area was made possible by funding²¹. The municipality was positive, and that would give the municipality more jobs as well. When Røyrvik was included in the Sami administrative language arena, the Norwegian Government sent out a press release stating that this was in line with the government's desire to support Sámi culture²². This is important for South Sami language and culture that the government supports them in public, it sends out strong signals that are important for the Sami themselves and other people in the area.

The status of the language is not only a matter for the Sami themselves; the Norwegians also take responsibility for the language. This shows that the attitude among the South Sami themselves and the Norwegians living in the area has changed. The focus and the use of the language have changed to the better during these years. “When they have come so far as it is been locally implemented measures to vitalize a language, we simultaneously progressed so far that the language is seen as something positive, as a benefit. Otherwise they would not have tried to vitalize it” (Todal 2007:206 my translation).

3.3 Local level

At the local level, here are many factors that are important. I list up the ones that are relevant for the South Sami situation: language attitudes, human resources and financial resources (Grenoble and Whaley 2005:21). Hyltenstam, Stroud and Svonni (1999) use the term *group level*: this level is about the internal relationship within the minority group. Demographics, language relationship, heterogeneity/homogeneity, nourishment, type of ethnicity, internal organization, institutions, media and cultural expressions. More institutions are established to develop and keep alive the language in the local South Sami community. Some of my informants were living outside the Sami administrative language arena, but they were still positive and happy about what was happening in the South Sami area.

Snåsa has developed to be a South Sami center (Todal 2009). Here is Åarjel Samiej Skuvle, the Sami boarding school, and different Sami organizations are established here. The Sami Radio and the Sami Parliament have offices here. The one and only South Sami museum and culture center, *Saemien Sijte*, is also in established in Snåsa since 1964. There are many start-ups here for culture and language, such as the language center and the fact that the local newspaper has welcomed South Sami articles. When you drive through Snåsa, you see it as a

²¹ <http://www.namdalsavisa.no/Nyhhet/article6258239.ece>

²² <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/stoltenberg-ii/fad/Nyheter-og-pressemeldinger/pressemeldinger/2012/royrvik-inn-i-forvaltningsområdet-for-sa.html?id=704691>

Sami and Norwegian village with Sami and Norwegian flags, and there are signs in the South Sami language as well.

In 2010 there was an article in *Daerpies Dierie*, a south Sami church magazine published in both Norway and Sweden, about the situation of the South Sami language in Sweden. They have the same issues as in Norway. The leader at the language center in Östersund and Tärnaby, Inga Marja Steinfjell, says that they have to hurry with language initiatives so the language does not die out. The biggest and most important struggle is to make an attitude change towards the South Sami language, about the value and use of the language. This attitude change must happen in the government, but also between the South Sami themselves. “We have to wake up people; every individual must take responsibility” (Inga Marja Steinfjell, my translation). The South Sami themselves must struggle and fight for the language, start to talk and use the language even if it is difficult. The interest in preserving the language grows; she states that families try to preserve the language in the families. Steinfjell says that it is important that they get the support to speak and practice the language, especially the children, and their parents.

The school has an important role for language conservation and the school policy has big impact on a language in general. The school has played the main role for the language shift from Sami to Norwegian during the Norwegianisation period. The right to have Sami as a subject at school is one of the most important measures to preserve the Sami language (Todal 2002:215).

In 2003, a South Sami fulltime daycare was finally opened in Snåsa. The daycare was established after an initiative from many active South Sami parents who wanted their children to have the South Sami language as a daily language, and a place where the children were able to practice the language in daily basis. The municipality was very positive towards the parents' initiative and a fulltime South Sami day care. The municipality had the responsibility for the finance and the daily operation. The children had already been offered a couple of hours a week language stimulation in the South Sami language in a Norwegian daycare in Snåsa. Before they established the fulltime daycare, the parents had started an open daycare where parents and children met and talked South Sami, and here they started to plan the fulltime South Sami daycare that was soon established thanks to the parents. The south Sami parents had for many years before tried to establish a permanent fulltime South Sami daycare, with no luck. In 1992 they almost opened a daycare, but at that time they could only seek for

money for one year, and that was too risky for the parents that needed a fulltime day care for more than one year at the time. The first South Sami day care was actually an ambulatory day care in a caravan, a project with financial support from the then called Administration and Consumer Affairs²³ that lasted from 1982 to 1985 (I. Johansen 2009).

In 2005 *Aajege*, a South Sami language and competence center, was opened in Røros, south in the South Sami area. The center was the first South Sami language center, for the South Sami and the general population in the area. The aims of the center is to revitalize, preserve and strengthen the Sami language and culture, to develop and strengthen training in Sami language, culture and commerce, to contribute to increased collaboration and networking and increase knowledge about Sami culture and society.²⁴

Snåsa was incorporated in the Sami administrative language arena and got to be a bilingual municipality, and in 2008 *Gielem Nastedh* opened in there. This was a language and expertise office that had the aim to highlight, promote and vitalize the South Sami language in the municipality. In 2013 they got status as a language center from the Sami Parliament.²⁵ *Gielem Nastedh* has many projects targeting the south Sami children, and the other school children in the municipality. It is important to promote and educate the non-Sami in the area, so they too have an understanding for the language and culture. Some of the South Sami families are reindeer herders, and it is also important to promote the reindeer industry that uses a lot of the nature around and in the municipality.

The role of the language centers is to strengthen and support the use of the Sami language. The language centers are important domains where the Sami language can be used and developed. The language centers are vital in the most exposed areas. And the language centers intend to strengthen the use of the individuals for the daily use, who in many areas need an active achievement from the public institutions (Helander 2009).

The local newspaper in Snåsa, *Snåsningen*, started in 2009 with articles in South Sami language. The newspaper aims to have one page in South Sami in every issue. That makes the language visible for all people reading the newspaper, and most importantly the Sami themselves can read local news in their own language.²⁶

²³ Forbruker- og administrasjonsdepartementet

²⁴ http://www.samisk.no/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=55&Itemid=28

²⁵ <http://gielemnastedh.no/om-gielem-nastedh/>

²⁶ <http://snasningen.no/snasa/Srsamisk.html>

Gielearnie is the language and competence center in Røyrvik. The center was established when Røyrvik got incorporated into the Sami administrative language arena. The center has the same aim and tasks as the language center in Snåsa: increase awareness, conservation and development of the Sámi language through activities, documentation and visualization.²⁷

With all the institutions and new ventures and framework to maintain the South Sami language, the South Sami themselves have the possibility to get support to maintain the South Sami language. Thanks to the language center, the language can be visible in the local community become a natural part in the local community.

3.3.1 Language attitudes

If the people are going to make a language change and become bilingual, then there is need for more and several arenas where the language can be used and heard, as well as and magazines, websites and newspapers where it can be read. And there should be an offer for everyone, in all ages and genders. And they have to have the willingness to do an effort for the language.

“Revitalization of the Southern Sami language has become a topical issue right now. While I work on the subject, it has become more and more central political issue in the southern areas. Snåsa municipality has submitted an application to the Ministry of Culture to join in the Sámi administrative language area and in the autumn of 2005 a resource center for South Sami language and culture opened in Røros” (I. Johansen 2006:12 my translation).

Inger Johansen (2006) has documented in her thesis the situation of the language and the language attitudes that are changing. Inger Johansen (2006), Jon Todal (2002) and Jorunn Jernsletten (2000) write that it is in the South Sami area common that most of them use South Sami words while speaking Norwegian with each other. They have their own ethnolect when they talk (I. Johansen 2006). Example is in the reindeer herding where they use the Sami words related to the reindeer and the herding. Jernsletten (2000) points out that the Sami kinship words are still in use. The kinship terms in Sami are more descriptive than in Norwegian. The Sami kinship terms shows us a value that cannot be explained in Norwegian. This is something I also have noticed when being in the South Sami area. Inger Johansen (2006) writes that this is to show each other solidarity and make a borderline to the Norwegians. This also shows that the language did not disappear, and the case with the

²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/pages/G%C3%AFeleaernie/470432053032627?sk=info>

reindeer herding I believe is due to there being no suitable and describing words in Norwegian for the herding. Jernsletten (2000) explains why some of the South Sami words in some domains still are in use: "The extensive use of South Sami terms when speaking Norwegian, is one way to preserve some of the nuances that are not found in the Norwegian language" (Jernsletten 2000:56). Todal also mentions that it gives the children knowledge about the language and that they learn Sami words in some domains. But they would not likely be able to talk Sami with only those words; hence they need to learn more.

In 2001 a language incentive project started in Svahken Sijte, in the South of the South Sami area. This project was a five year project that aimed to strengthen the South Sami language among the children in Elgå in Engerdal municipality. Jon Todal was the leader of the project, and a book was published where the results are stated. The project started with a group of children in the daycare who are followed into the primary school. The initiative came from the South Sami parents who wanted their children to be active users of the South Sami language (Todal 2007). In this project they recruited the grandparents as recourse persons; they grew up with South Sami as daily language so they had a lot of important knowledge that was important for the project and the children. It is important that all generations are a part of the revitalization project, especially the elder. Though the grandparents were a little skeptical on how the project would go, they supported the project. (Todal 2007)

I have interviewed the leader of Gielem Nastedh, the language center in Snåsa municipality. The center has different projects: informal language cafés and also arranges integration weeks where children from all over the South Sami areas meet in Åarjel Saemiej Skuvle in Snåsa to learn and use the language. The parents joining their children during these weeks also wanted to have an opportunity to learn and use the language, and there has been focus on the adults, too. To make a language change it is important to focus on all the ages. It is also important to start while the children are young, she says. They have also mentor programs. At the program they include the elders in the South Sami education. She says that the South Sami who use the offer from the center are positive and happy with that. I have not encountered anyone negative.

I can see that the attitudes towards the language have changed in the local society as well as among the South Sami themselves. As we have read, many parents want their children to be bilingual, to master the South Sami language and Norwegian. The frames are set up, so the

language is seen and heard in more arenas, in the Sami administrative language arenas, at least.

3.4 Individual level

At this level I will focus on the South Sami themselves. Huss and Lindgren define the individual level as “private efforts to (re)learn the language through private studies, participation in courses etc., language choice in families, choice of language instruction for children, choice to participate (or not) in NGO-led activities, attitudes towards languages, bilingualism; parents’ clubs/cooperation for language purposes, etc., neighborhood childcare for language learning” (Huss, Lindgren 2011:13). This group is the individuals; they are of course affected at the local and national level, but the individual also sometimes do what feels right for them. “Concentrating on the individual level is to try to understand the most basic point of view: the user language, and put this in a broader analytical context”, (Å.M Johansen 2007:163). Hyttenstam, Stroud and Svonni (1999) define the factors in the individual levels as language choice and socialization. Language choice is when and in which domains the bilingual chooses to use the minority language and socialization, especially with regard on how the two actual languages are used in child-rearing.

At this level the individuals makes the decision of which language they are going to use in different arenas. Here they also decide which language they are going to use with their kids. The personal attitudes towards the language are shown here. And what they choose to do with it. Inger Johansen (2006) writes about a barrier and how difficult it is to start using a language where you usually use Norwegian. At this level they can decide to cross the barrier and start using the language.

In recent years, more and more young parents realized that Sami and Lule are threatened languages, and they set off on measures to improve the language situation (Todal 2009:149). This is the best way to perform revitalization according to Fishman (1991), namely through the informal language transmission in the families. The Sami families in Snåsa had also after their own initiative started an open daycare for the Sami families where the language was to be used so the children would have the language in more arenas than home (I. Johansen 2009).

Inger Johansen has written an article in the South Sami yearbook (2007), called “*The language as a life project*” (my translation). She writes about Anita Dunfjeld Aagård who has chosen to make her children bilingual as a life project for her. At the same time, when she

teaches the language to her children, she learns it herself. She has grown up with Norwegian as her home language, but always wanted to speak south Sami herself. That's why she wanted to give the opportunity to her children, the opportunity to speak the language that she did not get. The parents take the challenge and start talking Sami to their children. I. Johansen (2006) writes that all her informants said that it is easier to speak South Sami to children than to adults.

Not all families in the South Sami area choose to do as Anita and take back the language at home. There are different ways of giving the children the Sami language. An example can be found in Tysfjord, where parents send their children to the Sami daycare even if they don't use the language as their home language (Tjåland Braut 2010:40). I don't know if that is the case in the South Sami daycare in Snåsa, but I will note that even though not all parents choose to speak Sami to their children at home, this does not mean that they don't care about the future of the language. The culture and unity with other Sami is also important. Rasmussen and Nolan who have researched on language transmitting say that:

“[b]oth those who transmit and those who do not transmit Sami languages think it are right and important to transmit the languages to the children. While the former think they are doing what is right, the latter are struggling with a guilty consciousness and, furthermore, they are held responsible by their children and other Sami for the loss of the languages” (Rasmussen/Nolan 2011:48).

There are also parents who put the children into second language education at school so the children will have some knowledge about the language (Rasmussen/Nolan 2011). “Lack of use of Sami does not seem to mean that the language does not matter to those who do not use it” (I. Johansen 2008:53 my translation).

“We see today a growing willingness to strike position for South and Lule also in private life. Many families where Sami has been weak for some time now want the next generation to be balanced bilingual. The future of Lule and South Sámi languages will be determined by how well these families succeed in the revitalization work (Todal 2009:150, my translation). In the next chapter I will come closer to those families that have made the South Sami language their home language.

3.5 Conclusion

Vital changes came to be in the South Sami community during the last decade – the decade of revival. The chapter falls into levels to easily see the development. I start with the international/national level, the level where government and international laws are situated. The 90s saw the revitalization period for the Sami in Norway. The ILO 169 was ratified, and in 1992 the Sami language was equalized in the Sami administrative language arena. After year 2000 things started happening for the South Sami language as well. The biggest changes are that two South Sami municipalities are incorporated into the Sami administrative language area. That gives the South Sami rights to have all public papers in South Sami. The Norwegian government signed The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 that strengthened the rights for the Sami. One thing I will point out is that much of the development that has happened during this decade has already happened in the 90s in the Northern Sami area.

At the local level where the Sami administrative language is applicable, the Sami language and culture has been visible for Sami and non-Sami. The Sami have more offers in their own language, and there are institutions and arenas where they can meet and use the language. The children have their own South Sami daycare where they are able to learn and use the language on a daily basis.

At the individual level the South Sami are aware that the language may die out if they don't keep it alive. The attitude toward the language was negative or suppressed before, but now it is changed. Today many South Sami are motivated to keep the language alive. And with all the support and establishment in the local community it is easier to make the effort to keep the language alive. They take initiatives to keep the language alive.

4. The home as an arena for language revitalization

“It lays in the awareness that the language is the foundation, and if the language fails, something substantial fails in our culture” (Holm Bull 1979, my translation).

In the previous chapter we could read about the changes regarding the status of the South Sami language, brought about by the South Sami themselves, the government and the non-Sami living in the area. In this chapter the focus falls on the home as an arena for language revitalization. I will focus on those families that have made a language shift, from Norwegian to Sami. I write about the challenges and the motivation for doing the language shift.

What kind of processes have the parents gone through before they chose to do a language shift at home? What are the challenges and benefits during this process? And what role has the home in a revitalization process? I have explained this at the individual level in Chapter 3, the choices the individual makes regarding the use of the language. It is a conscious choice to start talking South Sami to the kids. I will focus on the awareness about the situation of the language; to do a language shift concerns also awareness.

To understand how the South Sami language transmission has occurred in my selected families, I investigate: 1. the grandparents today, who have grown up with South Sami as a home language, especially in their childhood, in a time where the Sami language did not have any value outside the home. When starting school they had to speak Norwegian, and most of them continued to use Norwegian outside the school and at home as well. 2. The parent generation who has grown up with Norwegian as the strongest language. The South Sami language has always been near and many have a wish to master the Sami language. They also want their children to be bilingual. 3. The children that have South Sami as one of their home language today.

I have talked to four families, one grandmother and one aunt. In one of the families both parents are South Sami, in two of the families one of the parents is South Sami and the other is North Sami, in these families the children speak both north and south Sami, and Norwegian as a third language. In the fourth family, one of the parents is South Sami and the other is Norwegian. In this family the children speak Sami and Norwegian.

4.1 The home as an arena for language revitalization.

Joshua A. Fishman (1991) has defined 8 stages of reversing language shift as shown in Chapter 1, where stage 6 is “[t]he intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighborhood: the basis of mother tongue transmission” (1991:395). Grenoble and Whaley say the same: “The intergenerational transmission of a language is typically, and appropriately, used as a benchmark for whether a language will maintain its vitality into the indefinite future” (2006:6). The intergenerational transmission that Fishman and Grenoble and Whaley talk about is happening in the family or with other close caretakers. Fishman uses the term reversing language shift when groups or individuals are going back to their native language. When I say language shift, I mean the same – the parents are taking back home the language that their parents had as a child language, the South Sami language.

Hyltenstam and Stroud (1991) claim that during the child’s first years it is above all the parents or other caretakers who are the language models for the child. After a while there are others who will affect the child’s language development. And then those of the same age play a bigger role for identification and language models, than the home. I see that this effect comes later when the children socialize with friends. This is why the other arenas where the language is used are so important. I will come back to this topic later.

Fishman (1991) explains how important the home, the family and the neighborhood are for the mother tongue transmission; the informal conversations at home are important, too, as well as the intergenerational family members such as grandparents. The grandparent generation has a lot of knowledge about culture and the language, which is useful for the next generations, the parents and the children. Nils Øyvind Helander (2009) also explains how important the home is for the language transmission:

“The home has a fundamental role in the language arena. If we are going to talk meaningfully about the language's future, we cannot avoid the topic of the home as the language arena with the most basic sense. This is where the language is taught as a mother tongue and thus forms a solid basis for further language development” (Helander 2009:138 my translation).

“The core of language preservation is of course that individuals use the language, and above all in a natural way when raising children, and transmits it to the next generation” (Hyltenstam, Stroud and Svonni 1999:91).

As explained in Chapter 2, most of the South Sami started to use the Norwegian language at home, and the language lost many domains where it was used under the Norwegianisation process and assimilation. The school affected the use of the language hard. The language ended up being something that the elders knew, but was not used and transmitted further. In some places the language was only used during reindeer herding, and between people when they did not want others to understand. The language that is used at home is for many the language that is closest to the heart. We have also seen that the home language cause different personal issues, like embarrassment and a personal burden during the life under the Norwegianisation. That is one of the reasons that the Sami language has not been transmitted to further generations.

4.2 The parent's language in childhood

My informants, mainly the parent generations grew up mostly with Norwegian as the home language, because they were born in a time where it was not common to transmit Sami to the children.

All of the parents that I have spoken with have always heard the language in their childhood from the elders; their parents, the grandparent generation, know the language. They have all had the language at home, but not as their strongest language. Some of them spoke Sami when they were children, but when they grew up, they switched to Norwegian or Swedish. “When I was a little girl I spoke Sami, when I got older, we turned to Norwegian” (Informant 3). The south Sami language was not a foreign language at all. Most of them used south Sami words while talking Norwegian as explained in Chapter 3. They all had heard their grandparents use the language, and they all had some at school. Most of the parents went to the Sami Schools in Snåsa or in Hattfjeldal. All of them understood a lot of South Sami, but they did not use it, nor knew the language fluently. The Norwegian language was the strongest language in this context.

“When I was young, there were not so many that knew the language ... or used it” (Informant 3).

As seen in Chapter 2, the language was a “private language” in the early 1900, that is, it was only used at home or if there were people who were not supposed to understand. The language was “private” and was only used at home for a period, and not in other arenas. When the language was private, it was so private in many places that it was not transmitted further. Also pointed out by I. Johansen (2006). For the parent generation today before they

became parents the language was also used among those in the same age if they were at party's or if there where someone that should not understand what they were saying.

4.3 Motivation to do a language shift at home

“Many have asked me “why do you speak Sami to your kids? Do they learn Norwegian? Isn't it a burden for all of you? Then I answer, yes and no. It is natural for me” (Informant 3).

To be able to do a language shift at home, parents have to be motivated to do that. When I was doing my interviews, everyone expressed that they had always wanted to master the South Sami language and to be able to communicate easily in both South Sami and Norwegian. The South Sami language has always been close to heart, the language meant a lot to them even though the language had not been their strongest language, or an active language. Some of them have missed to master the language, and felt that others also had expectations that they should master the language. And because of longing for the language, they want their children to be in command of the language. “I want to give them the language” (Informant 1). There are a lot of feelings attached to the language because of that. When they got children it was an easy way to do the language shift they wanted for themselves and for the children.

As I have seen, there are three main factors that motivate these parents to do a language shift from Norwegian to Sami. The first is that they want to start using the language for their own benefit because they have always wanted to master and to use the language.

“I wanted to speak Sami, but I didn't dare. I always hoped that someone would tell me to speak Sami, to answer them in Sami, but no one did. I understood, if I got children, then I could decide which language we were going to talk” (Informant 5).

Inger Johansen (2007) and Todal (2002) both write that their informants had a wish to be a part of a South Sami language community; my informants expressed the same wish. But it is difficult. The South Sami and other Sami I have experienced are polite when there is someone who doesn't know the minority language, and then they speak Norwegian, which everybody knows.

The second factor is that they don't want their children to experience the loss of the language as they did, and they want their children to master the language. “When I think of my childhood, I have always missed to know the language. Now I have given them that, they would not at least miss it” (Informant 1). Language is a matter of identity. Todal (2002) writes

that we can see that the language is an important mark for the Sami identity, and this is why so many parents in the North Sami areas in the 1990 wanted their children to learn Sami even they did not have Sami as their home language. The language is also a boundary marker, maybe not to clearly distinguish themselves from the Norwegians, but to get into the Sami language domains. Inger Johansen (2007) also writes that the language is a cultural identification for the South Sami. Rasmussen and Nolan have also pointed out that the parents don't want their children to experience what they did:

“...he never actively spoke Sami, but when his first child was born he started to speak Sami overnight. Today, his children are bilinguals, with very good competence in Sami. He says: I don't want my children to experience the same as I did: to have the feeling of not belonging anywhere” (Rasmussen/Nolan 2011:47).

The third factor is that they want to keep the language alive for their children for the future. All the parents I have talked to have awareness that the South Sami language is already endangered and can die out if they don't transmit it further on. During the last decade, the decade of revival, the awareness appeared at all levels in the society: the macro level, the local level and the individual level. Awareness in this case is about keeping the language that belongs to the ancestors alive, keeping alive a language that is defined as endangered.

“I do hope that my children will speak Sami to their kids again...What if the language dies out? What are we then? A people without a language? We cannot all be a part of reindeer herding. The language is also important, language and culture goes together” (Informant 3).

They feel the responsibility. Todal (2002) writes about “loyalty to the language”. “Those working for turning for language shift, feel a loyalty to the minority language, even people who do not even speak the language in particular may well feel such loyalty” (Todal 2002:22, my translation). “Now I have given them the language, then they can choose themselves if they want to use it or not” (Informant 1).

The leader of Gielem Nastedh, the language center in Snåsa, also said they have the spirit “that we can do this.” Inger Johansen also says that all her informants were conscious people that explained that they would do what they could to keep the language alive (2008:52).

I asked all the families whether it was a conscious choice to start talking South Sami to their children; all of them answered that it was. “...in our family there has been a lot talk about language” (Informant 1). They also answered that they did not have any choice; they had to

start talking Sami to them. “Yes it was a conscious choice, but also a natural choice” (Informant 3). It was also natural to speak the Sami language to them. In some of the families it came more automatically to start using the language, but at the same time it was a conscious choice. “It was not an option to start talking Norwegian to them when they were born, it would have been weird if we had spoken Norwegian to them” (Informant 3).

“Before I became a mother, I attended courses to learn Sami in the weekends. And then I only talked Sami, and I was so exhausted, but I learned so much. And I wanted to learn so I could be able to talk Sami to my children” (Informant 5).

These quotes explain that there are differences in the families; in some families it came more automatically to speak Sami, than in other families they had to work more to make Sami as a daily language, where they needed to work more to be bilingual. And that was depending on how much the Sami language was transmitted to the parent generation and how much the family around used the language.

“...when my brother got his first baby, then we started to speak Sami to the baby, so when I got children it came automatically that I and my family were going to speak Sami to them, it was no talk about something else...” (Informant 4) The quotes and examples show that is a conscious choice to start talking Sami to their kids; for some of them it was a natural choice as well. The family has also an effect when starting using the language.

4.4 The children as a part of revitalization process

Inger Johansen (2007) writes that all her informants said that it was easier to talk south Sami with children, than those in the same age, that it was very difficult to start talking Sami if they are used to talking Norwegian to each other. Todal (2002) also mentions that it is difficult to change the language you talk to with your closest ones. He writes in his PhD (2002) about language shift in a North Sami village, Karasjok:

”It was in contact with new people who began to use the Sami language, and that was when the family got new family members, that the daily language in the home changed. In multilingual families language question are relevant when new a family member is born. Then it may be time to establish a new linguistic practice” (Todal 2002:204, my translation).

Referring to Todal, it is easier to do a language shift with “a new one”. One of my informants told me that his oldest son had asked him: “why don’t you talk Sami to uncle, when I do?”

(Informant 1). My informant did not know what to respond, he just had to explain that it is difficult to start talking Sami with people you always have been talking Norwegian to.

“I do speak Sami with my husband’s siblings, but sometimes...I don’t know if it is with purpose that we start speaking Norwegian with each other. The kids sometimes ask why we speak Norwegian to each other, because we always speak Sami with the kids. I think it is like that because in the beginning we talked Norwegian between us adults” (Informant 3).

For my informants it was the same that Todal (2002) writes about – it is difficult to change the language that you use with your family. And when you become a parent then you can start talking to you child, a new person. Yet another example, a South Sami woman that is married to a South Sami man told me that they used to talk Norwegian with each other before they got children. When the children were born then they started to talk south Sami with each other as well. Now it would be weird if they started to talk Norwegian to each other.

Inger Johansen (2008) addresses this “home language strategy”. That means in this case that the Sami who want to start speaking Sami choose to start Sami with their children when they are born. Then they define a language arena for themselves and their family. This is exactly what my informants have done. “When I started to talk Sami with my oldest, then my sister started to talk Sami with her and my mum as well, and I started talking Sami with my mum. My uncles also started to talk Sami. This was a “language revitalizer” (Informant 5).

“Parents have the power to define the linguistic practices of the child, and thus change their linguistic practices by creating new language situations or a “micro-language community” in the home and family” (I. Johansen 2007:151 my translation).

When I asked why the revitalization process came, one of my informants answered that “it was because of awareness, but also the generation change. The children are the tool for the revitalization” (Informant 1).

To start using the language with their own children is a safe way for the parent generation to make language relations. The home as an arena is safe for the parents themselves and the children. And by including other family members, the children’s position is vital. The children makes the adults speak and use the language.

4.5 Challenges in a revitalization process.

“I knew that I have to start speak Sami to them once my oldest was born. If I did not start right away then I would not have managed to speak Sami at all” (Informant 1).

When doing a language shift, there are many challenges to face. To do a language shift is a mental challenge as well as a practical one. One challenge is to cross a language barrier. Both Inger Johansen (2008) and Todal (2007) write about a language barrier that the speakers need to cross. These barriers are something that has followed them from childhood until they grew up. The barriers come from expectation from themselves or other Sami that they should and could speak Sami. The feeling that they should master the Sami language, the feeling of something lost when they don't know how to speak Sami correctly. Some of them are also embarrassed of not talking Sami at all. They were scared of saying something wrong, or not grammatically correct (I. Johansen 2008:55). There is something called “language police”, that if you say something wrong then someone comments on that. In the movie *Firekeepers* (Ragazzi/Kramvig 2007) Lawra tell that if you try to use the language, and say something wrong, then you get “whipped”. I. Johansen (2008) informants say that they don't have the same problem with e.g. English; it is only when it comes to the South Sami language they have the fear, because there are a lot of feelings related to the South Sami language. “After four months I spoke Spanish, and the South Sami language that I have always heard, had as a school subject, had exams in, I did not dare to talk. I decided to start talking” (Informant 5).

My informants express the same; they had to get used to hear themselves talking Sami. “I was glad that we were so much alone with my oldest son, because then I got used to speaking Sami loudly” (Informant 1). They had to dare sometimes to say something not grammatically correct; they had to dare talk Sami to people they did not dare to talk to before and accept that they maybe sometimes say something wrong. “I read many children books in South Sami to practice my language and how to use it; the baby fell asleep and I continued reading...” (Informant 1). Huss (1999) points out that there is a practical problem regarding choosing the minority language as a home language, If the language has been lost or weakened. They have to re-learn the language. “Of course, I could have done more; I could have studied the language. I presume I would be better off if I studied the language” (Informant 1).

Another challenge was when the children got older, when they got more friends outside the family and school. Then they started to talk more Norwegian in their daily life. At the same time the South Sami language gets more and more complicated. “I remember I was driving

my car with my oldest son, when he asked me about astronomy. I don't know so many words about that in South Sami, what should I do then, speak Swedish?" (Informant 1). The Sami children also started to speak Norwegian between themselves. It was a concern for the parents that wanted their children to develop their Sami language. Even if there are children at the same age that they could talk Sami with, they chose to speak Norwegian. One of the parents told me that the Sami parents had made arrangements with the children about a motivation prize if they spoke Sami among themselves. They told me that they noticed that the minority language easily got ignored by the majority language. In many situations when living in a society where Sami is a minority language, it loses its function. Hyltenstam and Stroud explains that:

"During the child's first year it is above all a parent or other close ones that are the most prominent language model for the child. Then gradually the circle of individuals expands and affects the child's language development. Children of the same age play a very big role for identification and language models" (Hyltenstam/Stroud 1991:110, my translation).

That is exactly what happened in the South Sami arena. The Sami children were still a minority, so when they participate in leisure activities, the children easily turned to Norwegian. Rasmussen and Nolan (2011:48) write that "Liv could not stop the ongoing language shift when Norwegian was the common language of interaction with children in the neighborhood". That explains how strong the majority language is, and it shows how easily the minority language loses ground.

And the last challenge was when realizing that they as parents were not able to make the Sami language their children's strongest language alone. They needed more arenas where the language was heard and used. The grandparents and family were important resources with school and daycare and other domains. "I think that I taught them and helped them as much as I can, and then I hope that the school can help us with the rest, so they get interested" (Informant 1).

"It is a conscious choice to speak Sami with my children. But I would have never made it on my own; I had to include my family, and family members that don't speak Sami to the project as well. My husband is not Sami, but he has attended South Sami classes and I have asked his family members if we could use the Sami relation terms when talking to them. That is to show to the children that this is important, to show them that this is not only something we do at home" (Informant 5).

Leena Huss writes that it is not guaranteed that the minority home language becomes the child's own language or become strongly bilingual (Huss 1999). Then it speaks for itself that the process of giving the children the South Sami language is easier if they live close to the family and if in addition they can take advantage of other South Sami language domains. If they are living far from these facilities, the parents have to loop up for other opinions, as media and books. The school system can also be a challenge if the children are not going to one of the two Sami Schools, Åarjel Saemiej Skuvle or the one in Hattfjelldal.

“Since I as a child lived in the boarding school, I did not want my children to do that, I wanted that they could live home. But I do regret that I did not send her to the Sami school from first grade” (Informant 3).

“I have sometimes wondered if it was worth fighting for a language that has not so many speakers, it is a challenge in contact with school, fighting for Sami lessons for the children. All schools are not so supportive and understanding” (Informant 3).

Is it possible to save a language that have few speakers and they are living spread? It looks like with the same history, the same goal there should be possible. If the individuals do what they are able to and don't give up even there are challenges to face.

4.6 Support to do a language shift

All of the parents said that they needed support from other arenas to give the children an active South Sami language. To make the language strong and make it an active language then there is the need of many arenas where the language is heard and used. The Sami day care and school are important arenas. The families that had access to those valued it highly. “The language will be better when they are in the Sami School, than in a Norwegian school” (Informant 3). “And if the transmission at home is strong, and the language education at school is good, then the children's language will be strong” (Todal 2002:215 my translation).

“Traditionally the home has been the child's main arena for language acquisition. Gradually daycares are given a central role as a language educator and currently teaches many children a second language in the Sami language daycare so well that they can achieve nearly native language skills” (Helander 2009:138 my translation).

All these families are living in a time where South Sami can be heard and seen in other arenas, like language centers in Røros, Snåsa and Røyrvik, media – mostly Sami Radio, children's programs on television and books. The offer is not much, and we can really hope

for more. There are now more and more children's books, and now finally the south Sami children also have their own children program²⁸ once a week. It is important that the language is visible. It is not much, but it is a beginning. Some of the children are at school in Áarjel Saemiej Skuvle in Snåsa, and for the one family living outside the South Sami area will be without saying more difficult when the language is not visible and a part of the daily life outside the home.

“Public and private use of an endangered minority language are closely linked together. Parents are not as eager to use the language with their children if it is totally missing in the public sphere, in schools and in the media. That is why revitalization inside and outside the home needs to go hand in hand” (Huss 1999:26). As my informants say, all support is important, and in special the support from the elder family members. They have knowledge that the young don't have any more.

“In the work for South Sami language among children, it was important that they could meet the language in various domains outside the kindergarten and school. The grandparents' language and cultural knowledge was therefore very important” (Todal 2007:49 my translation).

One of my informants told me that when they decided that the relatives also were supposed to speak south Sami to their children, they were all positive. They wanted the young family members and the elders to start talking.

“We had to decide that our relatives that knew the language should start to speak South Sami to our children, we told them that we had decided for them that they were going to speak Sami to our children. As a consequence, the language is used more in the family as well” (Informant 1 and 2)

They explained that it was better to use the Sami language you had than only speak Norwegian. And they had to explain that if they talked Sami to them then they would have more people to talk Sami with and have a Sami language relation to.

When I asked if it was important that close relatives talked south Sami to their children then one of my informant said that for him it was not important; he had already decided to speak south Sami. If he did not speak the language fluently, there was risk to speak “child-Sami” so having the relatives around was very beneficial. “The language gets more and more

²⁸ <http://www.nrk.no/trondelag/far-barne-tv-pa-eget-sprak-1.11366284>

complicated the older the children get, and that is challenging” (Informant 1). Then it is good to have support from the elder; they can help them with the language. “They can also teach their children, give them a richer vocabulary“(Informant 1). He felt that when they decided to speak Sami to their children it gave the other family members and relatives a positive push to use the language more. And the relatives took back the language that many of them had forgotten or was not being used.

Rasmussen and Nolan write that some of their informants experienced negative attitudes: “Some of the Sami-speaking informants mentioned negative attitudes both on the local level and even in their own families as the main obstacle for the transmission of Sami to children” (Rasmussen and Nolan 2011:49). My informants did not have any negative attitudes from the family, and my informants, those who were in Snåsa on a daily basis met an understanding from the local level, also the Norwegians in the society. One of the families living outside Snåsa municipality said that they did not get so much understanding from the municipality and local level.

All the parents see the importance that the grandparent generation also talks Sami to the children. And when I talked to the grandmother she was so happy that the times had changed and her daughter was using South Sami at home with the children. She told me that it was a different time when her children were born; it was not common to use and to transmit the language. She remembered when she was a little girl, she did not know Norwegian. “It is the greatest joy to be able to speak Sami with my grandchildren” (Informant 6). The other informants also told me that their parents started to talk Sami with their grandchildren; it was also natural when the parent’s generation had started to use the language. “When my mother got to be a grandmother, she also started to only speak Sami, and she also started talking Sami to me, we had always talked Norwegian before” (Informant 3). The leader at the language center in Snåsa also told me that they invite the elders to the daycare and to different arrangements where they could share their knowledge and tell stories. They also have “mentor programs”, where the elders and the participants at the Sami-course are connected so they can practice to use the language.

“When I see our uncle who has been through the Norwegianisation process, he had worked so hard to deny the Sami and go over to Norwegian, and now he is taking back the language. I think he feels it is good to know that he is a big resource for our children” (Informant 1).

The parents were happy that they got the support, and that the grandparent generation did not argue for not using the language. “They think that it is funny to speak Sami with the children, sometimes if I am alone visiting them then they are quiet, if the children are also there, then they talk more...” (Informant 1).

Jernsletten (2000) writes that the contact between grandchildren and grandparents leads to a bilingual situation in some cases. The grandparents with South Sami as their mother tongue speak with grandchildren with Norwegian as mother tongue. It is not Norwegian, but a Norwegian with South Sami words and expressions, then the grandparents has to translate stories to Norwegian. “A Sami narrative works on Norwegian, since the shape can be transferred to another language. But the important nuances in word choice are still gone when the grandparents must convey stories they experienced in Sami through the Norwegian language” (Jernsletten 2000:56 my translation). This is why the grandparent generation feels the joy of speaking Sami with the children, they can tell stories in their original form in a language they know.

“The interviewees who transmitted Sami to their children often spoke of the difficulties they encountered, but they never indicated that they regret their choice” (Rasmussen/Nolan 2011:47). My informants expressed the same, when hearing the children speaking Sami it was all worth it. They did not want the language to be only home language, and the language would not be a natural and common for the children if they did not have other language domains and support from family members.

4.7 Sami as home language

According to Fishman (1991) and Helander (2009), the home is important for the language, the informal transmit at home gives the language a fundamental basis. Todal (2002) also writes that there is no other factor that is so vital for the language future than those families using the language as a daily language. “There is no life for the language to develop if not brought home, and for this to happen the preschool children need help from their parents to make a language shift” (Tjåland Braut 2010:72). The parents told me that one of the goals of turning the language to a home language is to make the language important for the children as well. “And I hope that the kids also think that language is important, and they have expressed that” (Informant 3). When the children are getting older it was easier, because then they could explain to the children the situation for the language, they could tell them why it was important to use it. One of the parent also expressed that she hoped they would see the value

of preserving it as well, and transfer it to the coming generation. Tjåland also states that “[i]f the new generation speakers develop a positive attitude towards the language, they would be more likely to transmit the language” (Tjåland Braut (2010:68).

“It would not be ‘us’, if we had talked Norwegian at home. It was easy for us because the grandparents at both sides spoke the language” (Informant 3).

One consequence of more arenas is that the language is changing; many of them that use the language learn it at school; they learn new words, they learn other words. And different dialect disappears. As one of my informants says, “it becomes an institution language, but of course, it is important and good that people are learning the language” (Informant 3). Other informants expressed the same “I can see that our uncle has problem with the new words and that the language has got “new”, he continues thinking, that it has to be that way” (Informant 1). Another informant is also reflecting over the changing language: “What is the alternative? That the language dies out?”(Informant 3). When the language is used at home language, and then is the language natural and common. They don’t have the barrier that the adults have had.

Todal (2005) says that so long the language is documented, so long there are people willing to do the effort of keeping it alive and so long there is support to start using the language the future for the language looks bright. Then the future for the language is safe. There are still many that are native speakers of the language, so the conditions are there to keep the language alive. And we can see, many are doing the effort. Many see the importance of keeping the language alive.

4.8 Conclusion

My informants, the parent generation, decided to speak South Sami to their children even though the language was not their own strongest language. My informants have now South Sami as their home language, or one of their home languages. In the south Sami society awareness about the language has risen; the individuals know their own role in the revitalization process, and individuals wish to be bilingual for themselves and for their children. The motivation to do the language shift is that they wanted their children to be bilingual and they wanted to talk Sami with their own kids. To make the language change they have faced a lot of challenges. There are many challenges connected to keeping alive the language when they are living close to the majority language. The home is one of the most important arenas if a language is going to be kept alive and further transferred. Other arenas

and people that talk the language outside the home is important, but the intergenerational language transmission at home is fundamental.

5. Conclusion

As shown in Chapter 2, most of the South Sami were bilingual in early 1900. They talked South Sami at home and with each other; they were in command of Norwegian, and they communicated in Norwegian with the non-Sami (Hermanstrand/Kosmo 2009). The South Sami people are living close to the Norwegian society and they have always been in contact with each other. In this period a Norwegianisation was going on, and the Sami culture was suppressed and stigmatized. During the Norwegianisation, the South Sami culture was vulnerable because they were few and living among the Norwegians. The Sami language was avoided at school due to political reasons and attitude in the society as a whole. The language was badly affected by the Norwegianisation because of the situation at school. It was common for Sami people to be embarrassed of their culture and origin, and to deny their background in contact with non-Sami. The language and culture lost their value. The Sami felt that it was important to know the Norwegian language and culture if they wanted to get ahead in life and get a good job in the Norwegian society.

After years of suppression and stigma, in the 70s an Indigenous movement arose in the world. The world's Indigenous people started to mobilize and fight for their culture, values and language. The movement fought for recognition and rights to protect their culture and future. In conjunction to the Alta Case, a Sami movement also started to fight for the Sami culture and language (Eidheim 2000). This movement and the engagement made political changes. The Sami Parliament was established in 1989, and the Sami Culture and Language got a new status among the Sami themselves and the Norwegian government. In 1992 many municipalities in the North Sami area got incorporated into the Sami administrative language arena. However, the Lule Sami or South Sami municipalities did not get incorporated into that area. The condition for the North Sami language got better because of language centers and other organization, which were established in connection with the incorporation. The language also got better conditions in the school system. The Lule and South Sami language were behind with the development. The UNESCO published a report declaring the condition of the Sami languages, and stating that the South Sami language was endangered. A language is seen as endangered when the language is not transmitted to the younger/children generation. This report was also published in the Sami media and that opened the eyes for many: the South Sami themselves and other Sami. All the Sami languages are listed as

endangered, and as an example, the last Pite Sami speaker in Norway died three generations ago.²⁹

The South Sami language turned for the grandparent generation of today out to be a “private language”, so private that it was not transmitted further to the younger generation. In many endangered languages, like the South Sami, the grandparent generation still has knowledge about the language, but it is passive and they have not transmitted it further. The intergenerational transmission enabling to learn the language naturally at home that Fishman (1991) and Grenoble and Whaley (2006) write about, is fundamental.

The South Sami parent generation grew up with Norwegian as their strongest language; the South Sami language was for many not in active oral uses. They knew and had a lot of Sami words while talking Norwegian with other Sami. And they had the South Sami language as a school subject. As explained in Chapter 3, the South Sami language was never forgotten, words have always been in use and they parents heard the grandparent generation use the language.

Then finally, the Decade of Revival came for the South Sami, as written in Chapter 3. The Lule and the South Sami got aware of the situation of the language and started to work to change the negative development. In 2006 the first Lule Sami municipality, Tysfjord, got incorporated into the Sami administrative language arena, and two years later – in 2008 – the first South Sami municipality, Snåsa, got incorporated into the Sami administrative language arena. The second municipality, Røyrvik, was incorporated into the area in 2013. The South Sami language and culture got a big rise. The attitude towards the language changed, and it got a new status among the Sami themselves and the non-Sami in the area. Many institutions were established, and people started to work to keep the language alive. The political support was very important. During this period, many families wanted to take back the South Sami language by starting to use the South Sami as a home language. And those are my informants. My aim is not to find success, but to find their motivation and the challenges they met. Their success was my point of departure of the selection.

“There is a revitalization going on, and it's good that more people will learn and study”
(Informant 3).

²⁹ <http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap>

5.1 Why did the parents decide to talk Sami to their own children?

Why does the parent generation want to take back the Sami language that is not their strongest language and make it their home language? To answer the question I will write about exterior and interior factors that have motivated them into the decision. As pointed out before, many Sami, not only South Sami, see the importance to preserve the Sami language. Many of them want to start talking to their children, but not all have managed to do that. Those families often send their children to Sami daycare and the children have Sami at school, even they don't have the language at home.

Linguistic Kendall King asks the question: why do parents make a language shift? His answer is:

“This is both a difficult research question and a painful practical issue. This decision is linked to ideologies about particular languages, as well as more general beliefs about language learning and bilingualism. The decision is also connected with local, culture-specific ideas of what it means to be a good parent.” (King 2007:16)

Language ideologies have changed in Norway and Sápmi during the last 100 years from negative to positive; we have also seen that bilingualism was seen as negative for the children in the 1970s. To give the children only one language was the best, now we have seen that the opinion about this matter has changed. Now it is positive that children have many languages from birth. The discussion if you are a bad or a good parent by making the children bilingual mentioned by King is a discussion that cannot be answered in this thesis. In this connection, Rasmussen and Nolan have an informant who says “Parents who don't speak Sami to their children don't know what their responsibilities as parents are”. (2001:46) Maybe the informants themselves have an opinion about their responsibility as a parent that have affected the decision of doing the language shift. They knew how it is to grow up without Sami as an active language, and they have now given their own children the basis of the language as a home language. The children have now the opportunity to choose later in life if they will use the language or not. For them it has become natural to speak and use the language. And that was also a goal for many of the parents.

The main interior factor during this time which I believe was the hardest, they experienced that their native language and culture was not valued. It was not valued among themselves and others, the non-Sami. They experienced the suppression in school, and in meetings with local and government offices, they should not use their language and show their culture. This

development led to many of the Sami was embarrassed of being Sami and many of them did everything to deny their own culture. One of the interior factors is that the parent generation has felt the loss of their forefathers language, that they want to take it back and they want their children to be in command of a language that they themselves did not have. But the barrier to start using the language is high. According to Todal (2002) it is easier to start talking a new language with someone “new”, like your own children. The fact that the language can be extinct has also given many the “push” to start talking Sami to their children. It is important to keep the language alive for the future and at least for their own children to have the language of their forefathers.

Before the awareness about the language situation and revitalization process started, we have seen that exterior factors such as the attitude from the government and school had a huge negative effect on the language. The Norwegianisation had an impact not only for the use of the language, but also the Sami identity got negatively affected. The local inhabitants, the non Sami were affected by the government’s attitude and they looked negatively at the Sami language and culture in the area. The Sami themselves were ashamed of their own identity, origin and culture. The language lost its value among the Sami as well.

These processes did not only affect the South Sami, but the whole Sami society. The South Sami culture and language was and is still vulnerable because they are few and living spread in a big area.

The main exterior factor since 1970s is the revitalization process that is ongoing not only in Norway, but in the whole world. Linguists are aware of the many minority languages in the world that are vulnerable; many are extinct and others are seriously endangered like the South Sami language is (UNESCO³⁰ and Ethnologue³¹). The attitude from the state politicians and the local habitants also has an effect if the parents want or see the value in speaking Sami. It is vital that the Sami people are recognized as Indigenous people in Norway. The political goodwill from the Norwegian government and politicians, the funding and the establishment of Sami institutions is important. I can here mention the Sami Parliament. It is important that the Sami languages have an official status in Norway equally to Norwegian. The law that came in 1992 was a victory. As told, the attitude from the Government affects the people. The non-Sami living close to the Sami gets positive towards the Sami establishment and that the

³⁰ <http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap>

³¹ <http://www.ethnologue.com/about/language-status>

Sami are more visible in the local area. It is easier if people around have an understanding for the importance of preserving a minority language. One important aspect I also will point out is the connection between the indigenous peoples around the world that I think has given strength to keep alive the many minority languages and cultures.

The exterior and interior factors are connected to each other. As I see it, the exterior factors have given the interior factors the support to make the language change. Without the exterior support it would be more difficult to reach the goal, to make South Sami a home language. And that is something that Hyltenstam and Stroud (1991) focus on, namely, the society level that affects the language.

5.2 What kind of challenges are there in the homes regarding language revitalization?

When doing a language shift at home, from Norwegian to South Sami as described in this thesis, there are a lot of challenges. Here I divide them into exterior and interior challenges to make it easier to understand. The parent generation that has decided to do a language shift is starting to use a language that is not their strongest language as a home language. As I see it, the biggest challenge for the parent generation is to overcome the barrier to start talking and start using the language, at home and among those people where the barrier has been applicable before. As discussed in Chapter 4, many of these adults wanted to be invited into a language domain where they could use the language, but because of the traditions of being polite and showing understanding for those who don't use the language it was very difficult. These families have created a new language domain; they started talking Sami to their own children. This is a language domain what the parent generation can have control. I. Johansen (2007) and Todal (2007) have written about the barrier and the wish to being invited into a language domain where they also can use the language.

When the parent generation has the Norwegian language as their strongest language, they are then doing the language shift in a learning process; they are learning the South Sami language at the same time. They may lack words and they may teach their children wrongly. The parents have different ways of handling this, some with dictionaries and others reading books. And then other family members can direct and teach the children as well.

The main exterior challenges when doing a language shift and turning a minority language into a home language is connected to the importance of the support from others. There is need for other domains where the language is used to make the children functionally bilingual. All

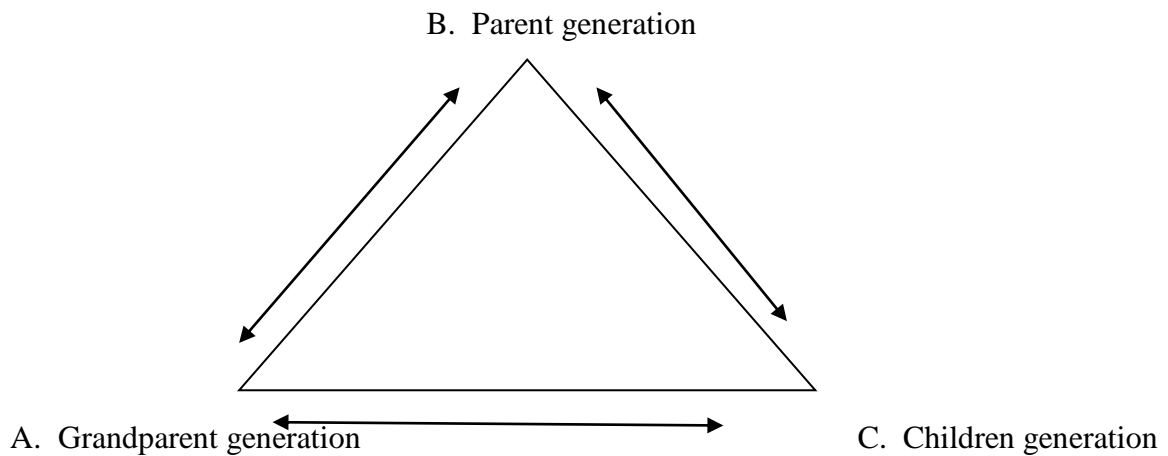
my informants had family that supported their process; they also said that they believed that the grandparent generation liked to use the language again, especially with children.

One consequence of the fact that so many are learning the language at school and at language courses is that the language changes. One of my informants called it “institution language”; another called it “school language”. This may make it difficult for the grandparent generation to follow the development in the language, and it may make it difficult for them to understand the language. But they all agree that it is necessary and positive that more and more want to learn the language, and keep the language alive. The opposite is tragic, if the language dies out. I am aware that if I had chosen a different group of informants the challenges they faced would have been different.

5.3 What role does the home play for language revitalization?

As shown before, Fishman (1991), Todal (2002) and Helander (2009) write that the home is fundamental for the language to survive. The intergeneration transmission in confident surroundings is important for the languages future. As Tjåland Braut (2010) writes, a language will not develop to be a natural language if it is only used at daycare or at school. When a language is used at home, it becomes natural to use it and the language stays passive when it is not in use. The grandparent generation has been able to take it back and make it as an active language again. They have been able to make the passive language into an active language.

Intergenerational language shift



The model I made to visualize the interaction between the generations. The model shows that all the three generations stimulate each other. As the point of departure in this model, they are all positive to making a language change, so the stimulation is a positive impact for them all. If for instance the grandparent generation would not have been positive to taking back the language, both the parent generation and the children generation would be affected by this. There is an opportunity to get language stimulation from other domains if there is an offer for that.

The children generation: has Sami as their home language. They stimulate the parent generation by also learning the language at school or daycare. Here there are differences connected to where the family lives. When living outside the South Sami society, the children are only stimulated at home. All my informants say they get support from the grandparent generation. The children generation stimulates the grandparent generation to take back into use a language which has been passive for years.

The parent generation: has grown up with Norwegians as their strongest language; they have always heard the South Sami language, and may have had it in school. They have wanted to be in command of the language, but found it difficult to enter the language arena that existed. They decided to start speaking Sami with their own children and simultaneously created their own language domain that they have control over. They face hard work and challenges.

The grandparent generation: knows the language from childhood; the language has been passive and hidden away. They retrieve the language with the grandchildren. They support the process and give the children a better vocabulary. They see the importance of keeping the language alive.

Jon Todal explains that one of the reasons why his informants for his doctoral dissertation – two women in each family in Karasjok, in the North Sami area – managed to make a language shift. “A major strength for turning the language change was obvious that the language had never been far away in these families. It was found in both families’ people who spoke Sami fluently, and these seem to mobilize and to deliberately use the language for the younger generation in 2000” (Todal 2002:205 my translation). I see the same in the South Sami area. The language has always been close, even it wasn’t in active daily use. The grandparent generation in my selected families knew the language from childhood, and was positive to start using the language again, and is a big part for the language revitalization process. During the Norwegianisation process the grandparent generation suppressed the south Sami language. When the revitalization process began in their family, they started looking at themselves differently, with gladness as a resource for the parent generation and the children generation. The value of the language changed. The conditions for the language have changed and their linguistic knowledge is a tremendous resource in the process.

To succeed they all had to face the challenges of doing a language shift. The biggest challenge is to cross the language barrier, to start talking and use the language on a daily basis. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Todal (2002) and I. Johansen (2008) write that it is difficult to start using the South Sami language with those in the same age as oneself. It is easier to start talking Sami with someone “new”. The parent generation that always wanted to use the language experienced it as easier when they had their child to talk to in a language domain that is their own. It made the motivation bigger and stronger. After establishing the Sami language sphere at home and the language practice with the child they had to make it public and exercise when others were around. That was also a barrier: to use the language in the presence of others from their own age group.

When they are doing a language shift, they are in a learning process. In some of the families they had to accept that they are in a learning process and may sometimes say something wrong or not know the exact wording. This is one of the challenges they faced, and there the grandparent generation offered good help. The parent generation has explained to their kids so

the children generation also is aware of the situation they are in, why it is important, and so they are aware if someone corrects the language they have.

The family and grandparents are thus very important. Moreover, for those families living outside the Sami administrative language arena it is not so easy; it is easier for those families that are in the Sami administrative area because the inhabitants in the municipality have more knowledge and understanding for the Sami people and the Sami language. The language centers arrange different activities and arrange meeting points where the language is in focus, which is important for the development of the use of the language. To have the children in Sami daycare and have the possibility to be a part of a bigger South Sami community and have access to the linguistic offers outside the home is an enormous support for the parent generation. “Overall thinking about the future of the Sami language must be based on the interaction between home, school and community” (Helander 2009:138 my translation). The communication between the grandparent generation and the children generation takes place in one language, and not in a bilingual situation (Jernsletten 2000). That gives the grandparents an opportunity to tell the children stories from their childhood in their own language.

“My children express that today it gives high status to master South Sami language, especially if you speak it at home, as other young Sami people are interested in the language. Before it was reindeer that provided status” (Informant 3).

“And we think that as long as they have the language at home, that we have given them the basis. They don’t have the barrier for talking as we had, they can talk; for them it is natural” (Informant 1).

We can see from these quotes that the children generation sees the value of the language. The families in my thesis have succeeded with the language shift; they have made the South Sami language as their children’s home language. They have provided the language for the future, the language has become a natural language for the children and among my selected families. The children have made Sami language relations to other family members. The future of the language is much brighter, and I do believe that our heart language will continue living and hopefully get more speakers. We can see that children are a safe arena for language development. It is important that the children learn and use the language if it is going to survive for the future. I myself am doing my best to keep the language alive.

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Appendix: Informants

Informant 1: South Sami man

Informant 2: North Sami woman, married to South Sami man

Informant 3: South Sami woman

Informant 4: South Sami woman

Informant 5: South Sami woman

Informant 6: South Sami grandmother

Informant nr 7: South Sami aunt

Informant 8: Leader, Gielem Nastedh Snåsa