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Learning the Sámi language outside of the Sámi core area in Norway

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ABSTRACT
We analyze how the implementation of the Norwegian policy on the Sámi language in school has shaped some Norwegian-speaking Sámi youths' experiences and challenges of language learning. The research was conducted in Alta, Finnmark county. The youths interviewed in this study have had education in the Sámi language for the larger part, or for the entirety, of their primary and secondary education. Semi-structured interviews were used to cover important topics, in thematic narratives. In the youths' narratives, "a hidden transcript" (Scott, James C. 1990. Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press) seems to permeate. They experienced Sámi language learning to be in Eidheim's ([1969. "When Ethnic Identity Is a Social Stigma." In Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference, edited by Fredrik Barth, 39–57. Boston: Little, Brown and Company], 49) terms a "closed Sámi sphere". We argue that in this particular context the schools' institutional frames and practical implementation lead to sphering of what is considered Sámi and what is considered Norwegian. This makes it difficult, or maybe even impossible, for these youths to obtain the level of fluency in the North Sámi language that they strive for.

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Sámi language; identity; hidden transcript; language learning; Indigenous youths

Our goal is to analyze narrations of some Sámi youths' experiences of language teaching and learning in a city located outside what is regarded as a Sámi core area. We argue that the implementation of a national educational policy reinforced former local practices from the 1950s and 1960s, where Sámi and Norwegian language occupied different "spheres". As a consequence of policies that aimed to assimilate minorities into the Norwegian culture during the post-World War II period, the Sámi language had been relegated to the private sphere. In areas that had previously been bilingual and multilingual, the majority Norwegian language totally dominated in public spheres, with the exception of the interior of Finnmark County (Eidheim 1969, 49). This continued sphering of languages makes it difficult for youths to achieve their desired level of language

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mastery in Sámi, especially when living and learning outside those areas where the Sámi language dominates (Rasmussen and Nolan 2011, 48).

In the ethnically heterogeneous area of Finnmark, in Northern Norway, where many people can trace their descent to different ethnic groups, family relationships are not always a sufficient criterion for attributed ethnicity. Even if most of the youths interviewed can trace their descent to the Sámi speaking areas in inner-Finnmark, being Sámi must often be "proved" or "achieved" by demonstrating competence regarded as Sámi, in contrast to Norwegian. Being Sámi is often not regarded as an either–or, but rather as something measured as more or less, and the benchmark of measurement is often linked to language competence (Thuen 2003, 279; Kuokkanen 2006, 2; Hansen et al. 2008, 102, 112; Hermansen and Olsen 2012, 211ff.; Albury 2015, 523; Nystad et al. 2017, 4, 10, 12; Andersen and Olsen 2018, 54 ff.; Berg-Nordlie 2018, 53–54). Therefore, the school's success in helping pupils learn the language can have a strong impact on the identity of youths who identify as Sámi while living outside those areas where the Sámi languages dominate.[1] This is because Sámi classrooms outside of the "core area" represent one of the few opportunities, and often the only opportunity, where pupils can practice the language in the everyday life.

Albury (2015, 329) describes the Norwegian language policy as tending to reserve the Sámi language for the Indigenous population, rather than making it a matter for the majority population. The core of what Albury (2015, 325), in terms with Rata (2007, 80), labels a policy tending toward "neotraditionalist" in its ideology, is that in practice, the Sámi language is limited to the administrative area, and thus territorialized. Neotraditionalist language policies that limit language learning to the Indigenous can thus be set on a continuum with biculturalism: "meaning indigenous language and culture may be shared and accessed outside the ethnically indigenous group" (Albury 2015, 319).

The city of Alta has more than 25 percent of the population in Finnmark County, and it borders two of the municipalities where Sámi is the dominant language. Furthermore, Alta is also at the periphery, because even if the majority of the population regard themselves as Norwegian, a substantial part of the population traces their descent to coastal Sámi culture, which is also a population that has strong links to the interior where the Sámi language still dominates. Additionally, many people also emphasize their heritage from the Kven culture, which today is protected as a National Minority.

Here, we discuss the experiences of young Sámi who trace their descent from the Sámi-speaking areas and have grown up in a regional centre where the Norwegian language and local culture dominate all public spheres (Olsen 2007, 84). These youths' narratives of experiences in school, as well as in the rest of their everyday lives, seem to contain a "hidden transcript" (Scott 1990, 4) that contradicts the official policy of the importance of learning Sámi. The youths interviewed in this study have had education in the Sámi language for the larger part, or the entirety, of their primary and secondary education. In addition, most of them have Sámi-speaking close relatives whom they regularly meet. Still, it seems difficult, if not entirely impossible, to gain their desired level of fluency in a language that, for a majority of the coastal Sámi population, was lost two or three generations ago.

We first give a brief introduction to the colonial processes in Finnmark, and the institutional consequences of ethnic revitalization, before we describe the Norwegian language policy. Then we sketch out our theoretical and methodological approach

before presenting and analyzing the interviews conducted with the youths. Finally, we discuss how the institutional practices in the Norwegian schools perpetuate what Eidheim (1969), more than fifty years ago, described as a development of separate Sámi and Norwegian spheres.

Norwegianization, Sámi revitalization, and institution building

Historically, three languages were common in Finnmark: Kven, Norwegian, and Northern Sámi. This is a linguistic categorization that hides that bi- and multilingualism were frequent among the inhabitants, as well as intermarriage, and similar practices in terms of economic adaptations, dress, and inhabiting the same local communities (Maliniemi 2009, 16; Pietikäinen et al. 2010, 3). From the 1850s and onwards, the Norwegian government pursued a policy called *Norwegianization* that aimed to make the Sámi and Kven citizens, both culturally and linguistically, Norwegian (Eriksen and Niemi 1981, 47–48, 61; Ryymin and Nyyssönen 2012, 550−551, 556; Zachariassen 2012, 27). It is generally understood that Norwegianization was the least severe in the inland, as Norwegians mainly settled along the coast (Rasmussen and Nolan 2011, 35). Nevertheless, the main changes of the sociolinguistic situation in Northern Fennoscandia was “brought about by the processes of modernization” (Pietikäinen et al. 2010, 6).

In Finnmark, the main change of ethnic identification and language shifts, even if with important local variations (Maliniemi 2009; Ryymin and Nyyssönen 2012), came in the post-World War II period by way of modernizing processes when the area was fully integrated into the developing Norwegian Welfare State. On the coastline and in the fjords, at that time, the Sámi language was mainly used by older people in closed Sámi spheres, while public spheres were dominated by the Norwegian language and cultural values. Being Sámi was a “stigma” that was supposed to be hidden (Eidheim 1969, 41), and most people viewed the future as one of integration into majority Norwegian society. In the interior of Finnmark, the main language was still Sámi, even if language shift had taken hold among some individuals (Andersen and Olsen 2018, 49). In general, with some local variations, people born on the coast and in the fjords in the late 1950s and onwards did not learn the Sámi or Kven languages, while Northern Sámi was still the dominant everyday language in the interior.

Another major change that occurred as a consequence of integration into the welfare state is that people moved away from many of the small settlements to other places all over Norway or to regional centres. Such regional centres, as in the case of Alta, are inhabited in part by first-, second-, and third-generation descendants of the coastal population Eidheim (1969) describes, as well as by people from Sámi-speaking areas in the interior. In addition, there are people originating from the south of Norway. The children and grandchildren of people from places where Kven and Sámi languages had been in use, grew up in places that were Norwegian and where nearly all spheres of life are dominated by the Norwegian language (Olsen 2007, 81). In the late 1970s and the 1980s, a major change in the relationship between the Norwegian state and Sámi society occurred as a result of the political struggle of the Sámi ethno-political movement. This struggle for Sámi selfhood helped the Sámi to become recognized as an Indigenous people and also had institutional success. The Sámi Act was passed in 1987; the Sámediggi (the Sámi parliament) came into being in 1989; Norway ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, ILO

Convention 169, in 1990; and the Finnmark Act was passed in 2005. The latter handed ownership of 95% of the area of Finnmark back to the local population. Still, old divisional lines seem to have been perpetuated by institutional practices.

The Sámi Language Act made the Sámi language equal with Norwegian as an administrative language in six municipalities. Subsequently, six new municipalities have been added. A new education act was approved by the Norwegian Parliament, making education in Sámi an individual right for all Sámi children in the entire country. In the administrative area, children have an individual right to education with Sámi as the language of instruction and following the Sámi educational plan. Outside the Sámi administrative area, classes following the Sámi educational plan with one of the Sámi languages as the language of instruction shall be provided if enough pupils demand it. Today, such classes are found in Alta, but this had not been an opportunity for the group of youths we interviewed. For them, the option was Sámi as a first or second language, or Language and Culture as a third level and, locally, often referred to as a "third language" within the frame of the Norwegian educational plan at the time, with all other subjects taught in Norwegian. The pupils interviewed for this article, followed this Educational plan until 2006/ 2007. It was then replaced with a new Norwegian educational plan called Kunnskapsløftet. In the new curriculum, Sámi as a second language is divided into 3 levels. The first level is Sámi as a second language 2 (highest level), Sámi as a second language 3 (replaces what was previously called Sámi Language and Culture), and Sámi as a second Language 4 (for those who start with Sámi Language in high school).

One must actively choose education in the Sámi language, while Norwegian is compulsory. The exception is in those municipalities included in the Sámi administrative area. The consequence is that in Alta, according to the Sámediggi Electoral Registry in 2019, which is only surpassed by Tromsø and Guovdageaidnu in numbers of registered Sámi inhabitants, pupils have no education in the Sámi language if their parents did not actively choose Sámi language instruction themselves.[2]

For many years, the municipality of Alta has pursued a policy of having many small schools for grades 1–4 or 1–7, before gathering the pupils into two schools for grades 8–10. There is also one high school run by the county authorities. Following the Norwegian educational plan, Alta does not provide Sámi language learning as an integrated part of the ordinary schedule. Sámi language is an additional subject for which pupils leave their ordinary class (while the other pupils have the ordinary subjects), or is outside the ordinary school schedule. Being outside the ordinary structure of the school has had an impact on many of the youths' experiences of Sámi language learning.

Theory and method

This article is the result of ongoing research on language learning on the border of the Sámi core areas. In 2011, we interviewed mothers who had or have had children in Sámi language classes in Alta (Hermansen and Olsen 2012). As stated above, in Alta, Sámi language learning in school is an individual right, which parents must actively choose early in the child's life. Therefore, the risk and responsibility for the consequences of such a choice is put on the individual (Beck 1992, 136; Hermansen and Olsen 2012, 220). The risk is that the level of mastery in Sámi has an impact on others' – and often on one's

own – measurement of the learner's Sámi identity; additionally, taking the Sámi language might have a negative influence on the compulsory subjects.

The Sámi language is not a collective matter for the majority population in Norway. As Albury states, the policy of the Norwegian state is that the Sámi language is territorialized, based on the logic that "the traditional Sámi territory was considered generally definable by the state" (2015, 325). This is reflected in the fact that outside the administrative area, learning Sámi has been an additional undertaking which is taken by choice. If one looks at this geography-based language policy as a kind of "territorialization" (Albury 2015, 325), in contrast to a policy of biculturalism that "emphasizes indigenous language as an interethnic post-colonial interest" (Albury 2015, 329), the Norwegian language policy is neotraditionalist because it tends to reserve the "indigenous language for indigenous folk for indigenous self-determination" (2015, 329). With reference to Rata (2007), Albury views the ideological underpinnings of a neotraditionalist language policy as a broader indigenous self-determination perspective for post-colonial healing and for reinforcing a distinct identity. The neotraditionalist perspective on identity claims a close relation between language and identity, in contrast to perspectives that rather view language as a matter of power relations and not an essential part of identity (May 2012). As May put it, an essential relationship between language and identity "simply cannot be assumed, not least because of language shift and loss,[…], which may already have led many group members to abandon the minority language in question and/or any identification they may have had with it" (2012, 8). Nevertheless, that such a relationship cannot be assumed does not mean that language can be, and often is, made important for an identity, as in the case of our informants. But such a relationship is best understood as a result of power relations.

As Sharma and Gupta (2006, 11) claim, it is through the many everyday encounters with the "banal practices of bureaucracies" that people experience the state. In this case, pupils experiencing the practices by institutions which are often contradictory and sometimes diverse in the ways they delimit the entities they are supposed to serve (Gupta 2006; Sharma and Gupta 2006). What characterizes these institutions, like schools, is that they must make some boundaries and take measures that are assumed to be most in line with the intentions spelled out in policy documents. The institutional boundary-making and applied measures have some practical implications, but they include some – often hidden – ideological assumptions that Scott (1990, 4–5) has labelled a "*hidden transcript*" in the everyday encounters with institutions like schools. Much like the concept of "hidden curriculum" used by Paul Willis (1977) in his seminal study of cultures of resistance and reproduction of class relations in school, Scott's use of transcript also addresses cultural reproduction of power relations. For our purposes, the concept of hidden transcript seems more fertile than analyzing reflections on a single topic in a school career without observational data or the analyses of documents on informants' social backgrounds with the exception of ethnicity.

The concept of hidden transcript applies to those discourses that take place "offstage" among both the dominated and those dominant in a society. As Scott states, "The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript" (1990, 4). Regarding the official statements on Sámi education as a public transcript, we pay attention to Scott's (1990, 14) emphasis that it is not a complete division

of the spheres of the hidden and the public. These separate discourses come together in informants' recollections from the classroom by speech acts, a whole range of practices, as well as organizational structures permeating everyday life in school – thereby revealing some ideological assumptions influencing the relationship between the Norwegian state and Sámi society. It is such hidden transcripts that we aim to analyze in the narration of those practices recalled from encounters with an educational policy where the teaching of Sámi language occurs.

Qualitative methods were used to collect data. We interviewed nine young adults, three men and six women, who have had Sámi language education as part of their schooling in primary, lower and upper secondary grades. The number of research subjects necessary depends on the purpose of a study. The aim of this study was to ascertain the pupils' experiences with Sámi language class. When interviewing number nine, the interview yielded limited new information. Following the snow-balling method, after each interview, we asked if the interviewee could come up with some names of other pupils that might be willing to be interviewed. After four interviews, fewer new names came up, indicating that relatively few pupils in the age group have had education in Sámi as a second language for a longer period of time, that is, in the time span we were interested in. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) concludes that when it comes to the number of subjects necessary for a study, it depends on the purpose of a study, and that new interviews might be conducted until a point of saturation, where further interviews yield limited knowledge (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 148). Even if there were few interviewees, the local school structure made it so that we got narratives from many of the 1–4 and 1–7 schools, and from both of the secondary schools in the town centre. The interviews were held in the Norwegian language.

The interviews were semi-structured to ensure that some important topics were covered. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) call the semi-structured interview "a manuscript that more or less structures the interview". We wanted to cover certain topics concerning different aspects of their own experience with being pupils in the Sámi language class, while still allowing space for topics the interviewees brought up themselves.

Both researchers were present at the interviews, with one exception. The interviews lasted between 25 minutes to a little over an hour and were conducted face to face, except for two interviews which were conducted over Skype. All of the interviewees have had most of their primary and secondary education in Alta. With the exception of one, all of them have family relations in municipalities where the Sámi language is dominant – either having grandparents or both or one parent from what is regarded as the Sámi core area. Some had attended Sámi kindergarten. All of them have had the Sámi language as a school subject, at levels one, two, or three, or as a foreign language in high school. Several of them had switched between different levels, either for personal, or out of practical reasons for themselves or for the school. Other changes were more strategic: changing to an easier level could increase their chances to earn a good mark when potentially sitting for exams. Since exposure or lack of exposure to the Sámi language was an issue in the research, we aimed to find informants with a family background from the coastal area. With only one exception, we were not successful. This probably indicates that taking Sámi at a minimum of second level and continuing through the main parts of first and secondary school usually necessitates having close relatives who have mastered the language and that having Sámi-speaking relatives is an incentive. This also potentially

reflects a conflict of what being Sámi implies – which is more prominent in Alta than many other places. As Berg-Nordlie (2018, 55–56) claims, there are divergences about the importance of learning the Sámi language among Sámi living in Alta. Some see the importance as a question imposed from "outside" by people without a background in the local coastal Sámi culture, while others, usually originating from the core areas, see it as a core element of ethnicity.

All the informants were willing to be interviewed once more, and to read and comment upon transcripts and texts. Today they use Norwegian as their first language. In their self-evaluation, only one claimed to be fluent in Sámi, but needed a couple of days to update the vocabulary and grammar, five claimed to be able to make themselves understood and have a conversation in Sámi at different levels, two did not speak but understood when spoken to, and one did not understand much at all.

The interviews were partly transcribed and analyzed separately by both researchers. Rather than undertaking a textual analysis, we were interested in thematic narratives that situated the individual within moral, social, and historical habitats (Cohen and Rapport 1995, 7). As several of the interviewees said, their experience of the Sámi language education was a topic they had not talked much about, if at all, neither with peers nor relatives. This might explain that the suggested themes in the interview guide, in spite of its rather loose structure, to a large degree coincided with the themes which the analysis provides. No one seemed to have had an "established" narrative, thus their experiences and these interviews can be understood as providing an opportunity, as well as a structure for, the informants' own reflections.[3]

One of the researchers is herself Sámi and she has two children who have had Sámi language learning in the local school, while the other researcher's children have never attended such classes. The first researcher, born and raised locally in Alta, descends from what is now labelled the Sámi core areas and had a parent who spoke Sámi as a first language but never passed it on to the children. This implies that her family history, in general, has a strong resemblance with the family history of many of those interviewed. The other researcher is Norwegian, born in the southern part of Norway, and has children who have attended the same schools as the first researcher's children. His only contact with Sámi language education is the two times he responded negatively on forms sent from school, asking if his children should have education in Sámi. One of the researchers' local background, age of children, gender, and thereby involvement in formal and informal networks in relation to children's activities, made it so that this researcher had more knowledge of the background of the many of the informants and was known by several of the interviewees. The other researcher had much less knowledge, but had some knowledge of family relations for a couple of the interviewees. This is because he had not been brought up locally and because his own children were older. Except for one interviewee, he was not known to any of them beforehand.

Learning Sámi on the periphery?

After asking for background information, the first topic was guided by desire for narration on the interviewees' career in the Sámi language classes. As in interviews conducted with mothers seven years earlier who had children that were approximately the same age as

the interviewees (Hermansen and Olsen 2012), this also digressed into stories about how the Sámi language class was organized, something that seems to have been an issue in families.

That Sámi language class is an addition to the other required coursework which does not seem to be tightly integrated in the ordinary structures of the school has had an impact on the pupils' motivation, in particular when entering levels 8–10. Several pupils struggled in other subjects where they received less instruction because they had to leave the class for Sámi instruction. Pupils could miss subjects they liked, and because the Sámi teaching could be located elsewhere than at their own school, some pupils missed the break because of the time necessary to walk there. Another issue for the interviewees is that most of the girls, but none of the boys, remember comments being directed at them from other pupils when they would leave other classes to go to Sámi class. One described them as "a little bit nasty comments from people trying to be funny"(Interview 3). But soon their peers became mostly accustomed to them leaving class, even if they expressed some envy because Sámi language learners were not required to have the otherwise compulsory teaching in New Norwegian (*nynorsk*) at levels 8–10.

Furthermore, most of the interviewees felt that Sámi education was not a concern for other teachers who were teaching the ordinary subjects. "There were never any questions about, yes, what did you do in the Sámi class, or how's it going in Sámi class? They [the teachers], I think, were more preoccupied with their own subject" (Int. 3). Once more, this lack of integration into the rest of the school was a feature expressed by several of the pupils, as well as in previous studies with parents who described the Sámi education as a "bubble" outside the ordinary school (Hermansen and Olsen 2012, 218). In contrast, one interviewee recalled having a teacher in the Sámi class who was also the interviewee's contact teacher in the ordinary class. According to the interviewee, this probably meant that because he was integrated as an ordinary teacher in other subjects, he had a better understanding of the pupil's overall situation at school, and thereby, provided better teaching.

When asked the reason for quitting the Sámi language class, one respondent answered:

> Because we didn't learn anything Sámi! We were eating biscuits and playing cards. We didn't have any teaching in Sámi because we were playing cards in Norwegian. And when [the teacher] asked if we wanted biscuits, [the teacher] asked in Norwegian. We hardly spoke any Sámi. If we did, it was only when we came and when we left. (Int. 5)

According to the interviewee, this was a gradual development that caused more and more pupils to quit, and by the end of year 6, only a third of what had been a relatively large Sámi class remained. The class was scheduled rather randomly. Sometimes it took place when the ordinary class had Norwegian, and at other times when the subject was English. As the interviewee recalled, it was not systematic. Sometimes they even used breaks from the ordinary schedule, and once, even the lunch break, so they did not even get time to eat. Asked what the interviewee felt about having Sámi after the ordinary school day, the answer was: "It was no fun. Shall we play something when we get home? No, I have to stay at school for one more hour. It was … it was not always fun" (Int. 5).

For the interviewee, it was important to stress that the teachers were not to blame. It was the school which created the plans and schedules, and when the Sámi teacher

became sick, not much effort was put into getting temporary teachers. When they had temps, they did not always speak Sámi. This was a general problem that came up in all of the interviews. There were few qualified Sámi teachers, often only one or a few at each school, and the temps often faced a tough job in a subject where they were not always qualified. Several of the youths stated that they started over and over again with the same material. Good teachers were remembered, but few blamed individual teachers for the problems. The following transcript from the previously quoted interview is rather representative of these opinions:

> In one way, I do not blame the teachers. I blame the school and those higher up. Those who in a way, those at the munici[pality] – the school, they too have someone above! So, I blame the school and those above them for that some people do not speak Sámi and that pupils quit because the Sámi teaching is so bad. (Int. 5)

At a certain point in time, this interviewee's school was expanded and received many new pupils. Because, according to the interviewee, there were only 30–40 pupils in total taking Sámi, and 400 other pupils, it did not seem like the school leaders cared about the Sámi classes. They probably had enough other worries. Unsurprisingly, most of the interviewees had once or more quit or wished to quit the Sámi language class because of the lack of qualified teachers, poor organization, or the feeling that this additional subject caused problems for other subjects.

That the Sámi language learning is not a part of the ordinary school in places where the Norwegian Educational Plan is followed might also have some unintended consequences for some pupils. A woman who had Sámi in school from level three to the first year in high school was still, she reported, not able to speak Sámi. Still, she saw something good with this organization being outside the ordinary. As she put it:

> I'm very, very glad that I have had, eh, but since my parents haven't grown up as Sámi, I have struggled.[4] Because people do not think of me as Sámi. But I have always thought of myself as Sámi. Because I have left the ordinary class to be with the Sámi pupils. For my identity, it has been very important to be in a Sámi class […] That it has been such a division. It probably sounds strange. For me, I am glad for it. It has been very important, because then I in one way have been able to experience myself as a Sámi pupil and a Sámi! (Int. 4)

These experiences can be understood as consequences of a neotraditionalist ideology that seemingly makes it difficult to integrate the subject in the quotidian schedule of the school in places outside the areas regarded as Sámi. Such a policy renders the Sámi language a matter for the Sámi, and not for the majority (Albury 2015, 325), and probably does not fit into a heterogenous and multi-ethnic local context.

In many ways, the Sámi language classes can be described using Eidheim's (1969, 49) term as a "closed sphere". In this case, it is not a sphere made up of kin and neighbours who speak Sámi like in Eidheim's case, but a public, organized sphere where many – or most – never gain the desired command of the language. Being a part of this sphere might strengthen some of the youths' identity, because many of them, in their own opinion, do not speak Sámi well enough. Furthermore, the other pupils' lack of knowledge and limited teaching about Sámi subjects in the ordinary school might reinforce the feeling of being Sámi. Nevertheless, none of the interviewees expressed any feeling of being a group in the sense that they necessarily made friends with other pupils having Sámi language classes. Friends might also have attended Sámi language classes, but

the relationships were usually established in ordinary classes and neighbourhoods. Of course, in a town like Alta the other Sámi pupils often were acquaintances, at least, if they were at the same age, and some had more contact with each other than others. Still, the idea of Sámi language as a measurement of Sáminess, in the classroom, went together with the practical implementation where different levels of language skills and grade levels often were mixed, which did not foster a feeling of communality. As one youth said; "the mood created in a Sámi classroom, among those who, in a way, do not speak that language, it is not a feeling of togetherness in that sense. You try to follow and understand what is being said". (Int. 9) Probably the presence of this measurement can explain the common opinion that Norwegian was too much in use in class and that there was too little emphasis on oral presentations in primary and secondary school. As one of the interviewees said; "In secondary school I didn't dare to talk Sámi when [in Sámi classes where] pupils with Sámi as a first language were present". (Int. 1)

For most of the interviewees, high school was a different experience than the previous years. The organization was better, and as one of them said, Sámi was organized as every other foreign language and you worked with it in the same way as an ordinary subject. Those with Sámi as a second language were put in one class and also in the ordinary teaching. An interviewee who had intended to start at that level had missed this, and ended up with Sámi as a foreign language. Even if this initially was an emotional setback, she realized that it suited her level and claimed that in one year the class reached the same level as those who had Sámi as a second language from grades 8–10. She ascribed this achievement to good and stable teachers. In addition, many of the other pupils had had Sámi at levels 2 or 3 previously, and like her, needed to repeat. Additionally, with a larger class than the four to five pupils she was used to previously made it easier to work in class. In high school there was also a different attitude – neither those "nasty comments intended to make fun" nor the feeling that learning Sámi was a little bit embarrassing, that had popped up in many of the female interviewees' narrations about secondary school. Learning Sámi in high school was cool. The fact that the high school in Alta attracts people from other parts of the county which might increase the number of pupils who, in one way or another, have Sámi as a subject might have an impact on attitudes. Rather than being a result of the attitude of the school owner – in the case of the high school it is the county, and for grades 1–10 it is the municipality – the improvement that several of the interviewees talked about was probably a result of a different organization where Sámi becomes integrated into the ordinary activities.

It is important to stress that these interviews do not give an account of how the Sámi language classes actually were organized nor the teaching conducted in the period of time here under consideration. These are recollections based on the interviewees' situation in the present, coloured by their own perceptions of how they should have obtained a mastery of the Sámi language. They seem to have rather high expectations of the school, probably because there were so few other places for these youth to practice Sámi. In Alta, the main language is Norwegian, and youths become dependent on parents' language skills. Those who have a Sámi-speaking parent or close relatives living nearby might get help with their homework. Because homework is quite important in the Norwegian educational system, this gives some pupils's an advantage. When asked whether she got any help with the homework, one pupil said that she had to do the job herself and there was little cooperation with classmates. She always felt she lagged

behind her classmates who had Sámi-speaking parents. She struggled for most of the time as a second-language pupil and had finally, at the teacher's advice, changed to Sámi as a third language – both to pass the exam and to secure better marks when applying for high school. She described this as a personal letdown. The difference in parents' language skills was a topic that was not discussed among the pupils during their school years. When asked, she said, "No, not particularly. Because we, at least I, felt it a little bit embarrassing. Or it is very unfair I think. So, I don't think we talked much about it". (Int. 4)

One of the interviewees claimed that a teacher in a class with pupils at different levels in Sámi paid more attention to the pupils who were most fluent: "[The teacher] in one way, paid more attention to those who understood most Sámi. [I felt] that I wasn't Sámi enough, or something. Just because I didn't speak Sámi!" (Int. 2) Whether this is a feeling caused by the teacher's attitude is hard to say. It might just as well be ascribed to the teachers' necessary adaptation to the organizational frames and scarce resources provided for Sámi language learning.

In either case, the stories can be analyzed as a hidden transcript (Scott 1990, 14) that permeates the classroom, where officially the value of learning Sámi is supposed to dominate. For many of the interviewees, the Sámi language teaching did not seem to be as important as other subjects. As one of them claimed, they would never have had such long periods without qualified temps or without a teacher in subjects like math or Norwegian. In that way, the interviewee gives the impression of the importance of Sámi language classes to him. Even if he did not say it outright, the school's practice of having no or unqualified temps for a long period appears as a hidden transcript of the importance of him learning Sámi.

For those with Sámi-speaking parents, the language was used at home to varying degrees, but often as a mixture of Norwegian and Sámi. In the cases we encountered, this ranged from the mother speaking Sámi and the youth answering in Norwegian, to a mixture of both languages. For this group, Sámi was seldom the common language in the close family, because the level of command among the different family members, parents and siblings as well, might vary dramatically. Visits to relatives living in Sámi-speaking areas brought exposure to the language, but even here, this exposure varied: some relatives, either out of lack of command of Norwegian or mostly consciously, only spoke Sámi to them, or Norwegian was used as the common language.

Still, those who have Sámi-speaking relatives usually get more exposure to the language, and this along with having a Sámi-speaking parent probably provides an advantage, even if not enabling most of them to become fluent in the language that many of them point out as the ideal.

It also has not seemed to be common for school-age youths in Alta to speak Sámi with friends. After reflecting on this, one man first claimed that there seldom were settings where all his friends spoke Sámi. Therefore, Norwegian was used so as not to exclude anyone. Asked directly if they spoke Sámi in contexts where they knew that everyone spoke and/or understood some Sámi, he said, "No. Actually not. We are so used to speak Norwegian, so we do not think – we do not remember that now it is only us, now we can speak Sámi. We do not think about it".(Int. 5) This socio-spatial division that youths made, a sphering or separating out the contexts of where the Sámi language has a place (Eidheim 1969), was also encountered among Sámi as well as Norwegians. One of the interviewees claimed that in contexts like Sámi festivals, there is an expectation of

being able to speak Sámi. According to her, the same socio-spatial division was common among youths living in Alta who regarded themselves as Norwegians:

> Why learn Sámi? No one understands it. It is – I don't know exactly. Either you are Sámi [you speak the language] or you are not. But then there are so many that are both, who do not speak Sámi good enough – or feel they do not speak it good enough! (Int. 2)

For these youths with Norwegian as their first language but with strong ties to Sámi-speaking communities, there seem to have been rather few possibilities for practising the Sámi language during their time of primary and secondary education. In general, the Sámi language has, to a certain extent, been used at certain times between particular family members, usually a mother and child, in the close family if the parent speaks Sámi. With one exception, they have been exposed to the Sámi language on visits with Sámi relatives, even if Norwegian often influences these contexts too. Finally, the Sámi language teaching in school is a sphere where the Sámi language is supposed to dominate, but as these pupils have experienced, this is not necessarily what happens in practice.

Discussion

If language competence has become the benchmark for measurement of Sáminess, this put a heavy burden on the school that is supposed to help youths in their language acquisition (Thuen 2003, 279; Kuokkanen 2006, 2; Hansen et al. 2008, 102, 112; Hermansen and Olsen 2012, 211ff.; Albury 2015, 523; Nystad et al. 2017, 4, 10, 12; Andersen and Olsen 2018). For youths of the generation we describe who grew up outside the core area, the school's implementation of its responsibility for language education has not been successful. As demonstrated above, these youths mainly attribute this lack of success in language education to the organization of Sámi language classes as an additional subject outside the ordinary every day in school. According to the interviewees, this organization seems to lead to less attention being paid to Sámi language classes, thus giving them the impression that the "ordinary" subjects in school are prioritized. There seems to be a great discrepancy between publicly espoused principles, found in policy documents and institutional guidelines, and the interviewees' narrations of experiences with learning Sámi in school. As the interviewees point out, this is not a problem that necessarily relates to the teachers nor the school administration's attitude. Rather it appears to be what can be described as a structural problem. We understand this structural problem in line with Albury, who states:

> However, in the case of Norway, neotraditionalism produced a territorialized policy whereby the most generous of Sámi language rights are only available in a defined administrative area. This perceives Sámi language as matter for Sámi in the traditional Sámi area, and not for Norwegians. However, many Sámi reside outside the administrative area and do not have access to these same rights. (2015, 329)

Furthermore, neotraditionalism and its claim of a close relation between language and identity then becomes a problem, since language retains elements of its symbolic function as a marker of the idea of clear-cut ethnic boundaries. This is what we see as a hidden transcript in the stories told by the interviewees. In this case, it seems to be "clear that the frontier between the public and the hidden transcripts is a zone of constant struggle" (Scott 1990, 14), which goes on in the quotidian in school. But this is not as Scott pointed out,

"between dominant and subordinate". Rather, there seems to be a hidden transcript that permeates from the neotraditionalist informed practices of measuring, mapping, and division into administrative units for bureaucratic purposes and with best of intentions, and into the practical enactment in school. This is a hidden transcript that for these pupils represents a contradiction: it says they should be able to speak Sámi, and yet they should not. If they are Sámi they are supposed to speak the language, but because they are outside the Sámi areas, or on the border, they should not. This is a hidden transcript found in the organization of the school as well as in "those little bit nasty comments, meant to be funny" or in the attitude that Sámi is irrelevant, which they might encounter in the class context.

The school's way of separating the Sámi language class from the ordinary everyday life of the majority, as well as for those taking Sámi language classes, then goes together with what has been described as separate Sámi and Norwegian spheres in the quotidian in this area (Eidheim 1969, 49; Olsen 2007). In public spheres in the local community, Norwegian dominates all interactions, while the Sámi language is relegated to private spheres, some organizations, and the school's Sámi language classes. This makes it challenging to obtain a level of language fluency that seems to be the ideal for the youths we interviewed. Furthermore, in that way these divisions continue to manifest features of a local culture that Eidheim (1969) connects to the history of Norwegianization. Creating division between the Sámi and the Norwegian that 40 years later could still be found in everyday life in the municipal centre as well (Olsen 2007).

Such "neotraditionalist" and territorializing tendencies in Norwegian policy might be strengthened by the Sámi Language Committees' proposals for a new Sámi language policy. Their recommendations are the following: four municipalities would become an area for language *preservation*; six municipalities that today belong to the Sámi administrative area should become an area for language *revitalization*; and that two larger towns and two cities shall have particular *obligations* in relation to the Sámi language (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet 2016, 20). The suggested territorialization becomes a little bit odd when considering the statistics of the Sámediggi Electoral Registry for 2019 (Sámediggi 2019). Here, Alta is the municipality with the third largest Sámi population, and in percentage compared to the rest of the population, it is by far the largest Sámi population outside the core area, only outranked by one municipality where Sámi is spoken by the majority and by the city of Tromsø, where the Sámi make up a much smaller part of the population. Still, Tromsø is included in the Sámi Language Committees' proposal, together with Oslo, Trondheim, and Bodø. The three latter by numbers and in terms of percent of population are by far beyond Alta. The danger of the new proposal is that in the heterogeneous and multicultural populations on the "Sámi periphery", Sámi language might be relegated to particular spheres that are regarded as irrelevant for the Norwegian speaking majority. This sphering seems, at least for those youths we have interviewed, to create obstacles for gaining the desired mastery of Sámi language for pupils living outside the what is regarded as Sámi core areas.

Notes

1. Sámi consists of ten (some claim 11 or 14) different dialects, not all of them mutually understandable. North Sámi is by far the most common and used by approximately 90 percent of Sámi speakers in the two northernmost counties, Troms and Finnmark.

2. Norway has no statistics on ethnicity, so the voluntary enrolment in the Sámediggi Electoral Registry (SER) comprises the only reliable statistics for people over 18 years old. Criteria for enrolment include, objectively, a minimum of a great-grandparent who spoke Sámi, and subjectively, regarding oneself as Sámi. There are many and varying estimates of the Sámi population, but they "suffer from grave deficiencies" (Pettersen 2011, 187). Some researchers have estimated the Sámi population in Norway at 100,000 and Sámi speakers at 25,000 (Rasmussen and Nolan 2011, 36). Other estimates tend to vary between 50,000 and 100,000 Sámi in total in Finland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden, and with the majority living in Norway. In any case, based on the SER criteria, there is no doubt that a much larger percentage of the population than those who have enrolled fulfil the objective criteria, and, probably to a lesser extent, the subjective criteria.
3. The interview guide started out with a topic on where the informant had lived and parents and grandparents career of residence. With the aim of getting a chronological recollection, the next topic introduced questions about experiences with Sámi teaching from kindergarten to high school. Then they were asked about how they were motivated for starting and continuing in the Sámi language class, before they were asked what significance this education has had. The later topic also introduced issues on matters outside the school, in family and among friends, their self-evaluation of language mastery, and when and where they today used the Sámi language.
4. This implies that the parents, as so many others in this area, never learned Sámi from their parents, and regard themselves as both Sámi and Norwegian.

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