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Language maintenance through corpus planning – the case of Kven

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History : received : 2017-10-31 accepted : 2018-07-27

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ABSTRACT

The Kven language that is spoken in northernmost Norway was officially recognized as a language in 2005. The history of the language community dates back to the sixteenth century according to tax books. There is still an ongoing discussion among certain language users, whether Kven is in fact a language or one of the Finnish dialects. The language planning of Kven has started in 2007 by determining the orthography and choosing principles for the standardization. This article discusses the history of the process that led to the recognition of Kven as a language and reviews the progress of the language standardization until the present. The principles of language planning are reviewed through document analysis – earlier literature, minutes or summaries and participant observation of the language board’s meetings, and expert interviews – and analysed according to Lars S. Vikør’s language planning model. Some of the preferred features seem to follow the language planning ideology of the Norwegian standards – Bokmål and Nynorsk – in terms of allowance of variation and parallel forms as well as dialectal diversity.

KEYWORDS

Minority language; language planning; corpus planning; revitalization

Introduction

Northern Norway has typically been a trilingual area, where the Sámi, Kven and Norwegian peoples have lived side by side for centuries. Despite the historical connection these communities have, the situation of the languages differs greatly. The Sámi have

been recognized as an indigenous people in Norway, meaning that the state of Norway recognizes the Sámi as the “original” inhabitants of the country. The ILO convention no. 169 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples, which Norway ratified in 1990, gives the Sámi and the Sámi languages that are spoken in Norway a more privileged position than the rest of the minority languages hold. The Sámi Act of 12 June 1987 was enacted in order to support the maintenance of Sámi languages and culture at the administrative area of the Sámi languages. Norway ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) in 1993, and it entered into force in 1998. Further description of the languages covered by the charter is provided below. Kvens have also been granted a status as a national minority in Norway.

The first Kvens have been documented to inhabit coastal areas in Northern Norway, according to the oldest tax books, from the 1520s. However, the main wave of immigration came from Northern Finland to Norway during the 1700s and 1800s (Niemi 1994). The estimated number of Kvens today varies greatly, from a few thousand to 10,000 (Lane 2011), since in Norway there are no statistics that are based on ethnic affiliation. The language itself gained status officially as an independent language as late as 2005. This article discusses the development of the status and corpus planning processes of Kven. Since the language planning of Kven is still a relatively new phenomenon, this article can be characterized rather as descriptive than analytical.

In this paper, I will discuss how the current written standard language of Kven has developed. I analyse the language planning of Kven with a corpus planning model developed by Lars S. Vikør (2007, 2011). I will also review how the written standard can or could contribute to the future of the language.

Sociolinguistic situation in Norway

In this article, I will concentrate on the language planning of Kven. It is nevertheless noteworthy to be conscious of the general sociolinguistic situation in Norway in order to compare the processes in language planning in the Norwegian context. In the following subsection, I will present the current circumstances of both Norwegian language standards Bokmål and Nynorsk as well as Kven.

Short introduction to the Norwegian standard languages

Three dialect continua can be distinguished in Northern Fenno-Scandia: the Scandinavian, the Sámi and the Finnic continua (Huss and Lindgren 2005). The Scandinavian dialect continuum includes Swedish, Norwegian and Danish, each of them mostly mutually intelligible, and defined as languages according to the nation-states they origin from. Nevertheless, Norwegian has two standardized written languages, Bokmål and Nynorsk.

Both Bokmål and Nynorsk are taught as written forms throughout the country, and all pupils with Norwegian as their mother tongue will learn them both in the school. The central bodies of the state are neutral in terms of the language standard, in other words both standards are equal. However, in written materials (e.g. websites, reports, job announcements) both standards have to be represented by at least 25%. The inhabitants of Norway (both Norwegians and other nationalities) have a right to use either one of the written standards with the state authorities. In practice this means that one chooses the preferred standard for communication, and will receive/send all written documents, forms etc. in his/her chosen standard. The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation NRK (*Norsk rikskringkasting*) is obliged to issue a minimum of 25% of its written material in Nynorsk, but in practice that amount is seldom materialized (NRK annual reports 2002–2011).

Kven in Norway

Kven belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family and the Finnic dialect continuum. The areas where Kven is spoken are located in northernmost Norway, in the counties of Troms and Finnmark. To be more specific, the municipalities of Storfjord, Nordreisa and Kvænangen in Troms, Alta and Porsanger in Western Finnmark, Sør-Varanger and Vadsø in Western Finnmark are the central areas for the Kven language (Rasmussen 2005).

The oldest documentations of the Kvens are references to a Finnish-speaking minority in Northern Norway in medieval documents. Tax books from the early sixteenth century also confirm the existence of the Kven population (Niemi 1994). The Kvens, as well as the Sámi population, have gone through a strong stigmatization and even discrimination based on their linguistic identities and due to racial theories. Norwegian legislation prohibited people who did not speak Norwegian from buying land from 1869 until as late as until the 1960s (Eriksen and Niemi 1981, 73–81), and Kven and Sámi children have been denied speaking their mother tongue at school during the years of norwegianization 1850–1940 (Niemi 1994).

Kven language is according to analysis by Bull and Lindgren (2009) hierarchically in a lower position in relation to Norwegian, Sámi, standard Finnish and Meänkieli. Until 2005 Kven was regarded as a Finnish dialect. The lively discussion as to whether Kven should be recognized as a language or considered as a Finnish dialect culminated after Norway ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages in 1993, entering into force in 1998. Languages that are protected under part III oblige the state more than part II by being more detailed; part II can be seen more as advisory. By part III protection the state must commit itself to at least 35 items listed in the Charter, including areas such as education, jurisdiction, media etc., whereas provisions in part II are more general and not as binding from the state's aspect (Spolsky 2004, 123). What is notable is that the Charter aims to protect and develop

minority languages as abstract subjects, but it does not refer to the protecting, covering or including of the speakers of these languages (Grin 2003, 10; Henrard 2003, 50–51; Nic Craith 2003, 59).

Norway has ratified the Charter by including four languages in it: Kven (Kven/Finnish) and Sámi as territorial languages, and Romani as a non-territorial language. Sámi is the only language protected under parts II and III in the Charter, the rest of the languages are covered by part II. As a comparison, the neighbouring Nordic countries, Finland and Sweden, have protected their territorial languages (Sámi and Swedish in Finland and Finnish, Meänkieli and Sámi in Sweden) under part III and non-territorial languages (Romani, Russian, Tatar and Yiddish in Finland; Romani and Yiddish in Sweden) under the Charter's part II.

In its first report to the European Council in 1999, Norway was unable to name clear measures taken to encourage the Kven language use, partly due to the fact that the charter used the term Kven/Finnish for the single language. This implied unclarity of terminology, and the expert committee recommended that the state of Norway clarify the status of Kven as a first measure (Lane 2011). Professor Kenneth Hyltenstam from the University of Stockholm was requested to prepare a thorough analysis of the state of the Kven language in the early 2000s. The report, *Kvenskans status*, was finalized in 2003 (Hyltenstam and Milani 2003) and presented to the Norwegian Ministry of municipal and regional issues as well as the Ministry of culture and church (*Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet* and *Kultur- og kirke departementet i Norge*). The report was announced for comments and opinions, especially regarding chapters 6 and 7, Conclusion and Evaluation, on the website of the Ministry of Culture and Church in November 2003, with a deadline set to 15.6.2004. The discussion and comments can be read on the website of the Ministry of Culture (Høringsuttalelser). On 27 April 2005, Kven was finally recognized as a language by the government of Norway. However, the discussion about whether Kven should be a self-contained language, a Norwegian-Finnish variety or a Finnish Peräpohjola dialect,¹ is still ongoing.

The recognition of Kven as a language led to the establishment of the Kven institute, *Kvensk Institutt* in Norwegian, *Kainun Instituutti* in Kven, in 2007. The institute functions as a national centre for Kven language and culture, and it is responsible for developing and documenting the language and making it known to the public. The same year the language council, *Kieliraati*, was founded. Its members were selected based on academic linguistic competence, as well as pedagogical and cultural knowledge in the Kven language. The aim of the language board was advisory, to propose and give optional recommendations to the language board, *Kielitinka*, concerning language standardization. The members of the language council are language users with experience of using Kven in different domains, and it is the body that makes the final decisions about the written language and the grammar.

Theory of language planning

General introduction to language policy and planning (LPP)

The term *language planning* was first introduced in the 1950s. According to Cooper (1989), Uriel Weinreich was the first to use the term in a seminar at Columbia University in 1957, but Einar Haugen introduced it to the academic literature in 1959 (Haugen 1965, 188). Haugen presented his first model of language planning in 1966, but as several scholars suggested improvements to his model he revised and announced it in 1983, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Einar Haugen's (1983, 275) model of language planning.

	Form (policy planning)	Function (language cultivation)
Society (status planning)	1. Selection (decision procedure) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. identification of problem b. allocation of norms 	3. Implementation (educational spread) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. correction procedures b. evaluation
Language (corpus planning)	2. Codification (standardization procedures) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. graphization b. grammatication c. lexication 	4. Elaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. terminological modernization b. stylistic development

The outline has stayed unchanged, but Haugen defined it to be more detailed, according to suggestions by J.V. Neustupný and Joan

Rubin (Haugen 1983, 269–270). By *selection* Haugen means, for example, the decision of choosing between languages (or varieties). This phase includes first of all identifying the problem concerning the language(s) and the allocation of norms to solve the existing problem or conflict of previous norms. Selection is followed by *codification*, giving a form to the language. This phase includes graphization, grammatication and lexication. By *implementation* the norms that have been created are spread to the language users and learners. At this stage, the language users evaluate the norms and they can be corrected. In the *elaboration* phase the spread of language norms continues and they will be modernized and further developed. (Haugen 1983, 269–276.)

Cooper (1989) distinguishes between language planning on three levels: status planning and corpus planning according to Haugen, and additionally *acquisition planning*. Cooper's definition for acquisition planning is "organized efforts to promote the learning of a language" (Cooper 1989, 157). In practice this can mean measures to ease foreign language learning of e.g. immigrants in a new country, improving possibilities of language maintenance of bilingual immigrants etc., language nests where monolingual speakers (usually children) learn a lost language from older speakers, or simplified language and/or transcription of a language to ease language learners' ability to use the media. Cooper defines acquisition planning according to goals and means and methods. Later in this article acquisition planning will be discussed from the perspective of Kven.

The overt goals for acquisition planning, according to Cooper (1989, 159), are:

- a. acquisition as a second or foreign language
- b. re-acquisition by populations for whom the language has been either a vernacular or of specialized function, or
- c. language maintenance.

In the case of Kven, the two last goals are relevant; Kven has not had a written language standard before the late 2010s and the written language has been developed in order to enhance language maintenance.²

As a means to attain the above-mentioned goals Cooper proposes creating or improving (1) opportunity, (2) to create or improve incentive to, or (3) creating or improving both opportunity and incentive for learning a language (Cooper 1989, 157). With Kven, the two first alternatives are the most relevant. The first alternative, opportunity, is divided into direct and indirect methods. Direct methods include for example classroom instruction, self-instruction material distribution and availability of literature and media in a simplified variety of the language. The indirect method however concentrates on impacting the speakers' mother tongue into a state where the target language is easier to learn, for example Cooper names the Soviet rule of applying the Cyrillic script in most of the minority languages in order to help the minority language speakers to learn Russian. Another example is creating or improving incentive for learning a language, e.g. by setting prerequisites for employment concerning certain obligatory languages skills.

Grin (2003, 43–44) describes conditions for language use as *capacity*, *opportunity* and *desire* (willingness), also abbreviated as *COD*. These conditions somewhat overlap Cooper's opportunity and incentive in the acquisition planning model. Grin proposes these three conditions as fundamental for the use of any language, especially according to the goals named in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. By *capacity* Grin does not want to specify the level of linguistic competence more than by describing it as "adequate". *Opportunity* in his terms means domains for language use, and *desire*, or willingness, illustrates positive atmosphere for (minority) language use in bi- or multilingual communities.

The three levels of language planning (status, corpus and acquisition planning) can be seen as independent, but in most efficient language planning at least two of them are used simultaneously (Fishman 2006). Generally, they are occupied by separate organizations, however often in cooperation with the language community. For instance, status planning is typically a process including legal and/or political decisions, whereas corpus and acquisition planning are organized by non-governmental organizations, language communities, language/minority organizations, academics etc.

Principles of language planning

In this article I will discuss the language planning of Kven through the systematized principles of Lars S. Vikør (2007, 2011), premised mainly on the corpus planning of Nynorsk and Bokmål. These principles are nevertheless applicable also to other languages, see, e.g. Vikør (2011). The models from 2007 and 2011 differ to some extent from each other according to the relevance of the principles in a given language, but I will discuss them through the model and definitions according to the model of 2011.

Vikør's model is divided into four categories: internal linguistic principles, principles that are related to attitudes toward other languages, principles that concern the relationships between the language and its users, and principles deriving from societal ideologies (2011, 319–322). Table 2 describes the complete model with the above-mentioned categories and their sub-categories.

Table 2. Corpus planning principles (Vikør 2011, 319–322).

Internal linguistic principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. phonemicity b. morphophonemicity c. simplicity d. etymology e. invariance f. stability
Principles related to attitudes toward other languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. rapprochement (adaptation) (mutual and unilateral) b. reaction (purism)
Principles concerning the relationships between the language and its users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. majority b. liberality c. prestige d. counter-prestige e. usage f. esthetism g. rationalism
Principles derived from societal ideologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. nationalism b. traditionalism c. democracy, egalitarianism d. liberalism e. modernity f. authority

The first group, internal linguistic principles, is equivalent to Einar Lundeby's categorization of *internal* and *external principles* (1974). This category describes the ideal conceptions of what a language or a language standard should be like (Vikør 2007, 151). The three remaining categories correspond to Lundeby's external principles. *Phonemicity* stands for orthographic spelling, i.e. grapheme corresponding a phoneme in orthography. *Morphophonemicity* stands for consistency in spelling of morphemes, even if they are not pronounced consistently. *Simplicity* means that the language planning takes into account the structure of the language contra language users, for example by preferring the phonemicity principle, if it enables more regularity and transparency in e.g. grammar rules. *Etymology* principle means loyalty to the original spelling conventions, even though pronunciation might have changed over the years. *Invariance* does not allow any variation in spelling of words and forms, and there are no parallel forms available. *Stability* in orthography allows no change in spelling.

In the second cluster, Vikør defines only two possible principles that are related to attitudes toward other languages: *rapprochement (adaptation)* and *reaction (purism)*. Rapprochement can according to Vikør be either *mutual* or *unilateral*. Unilateral rapprochement is more common; usually, the less prestigious language uses the more prestigious language as a model for standardization. As an example, Vikør (2011, 320) names the rapprochement of creole languages towards the standard languages that they originally derive from. The rarer mutual rapprochement presumes favourable conditions for co-operation between language groups with somewhat equal prestige. Reaction (or purism) can also be found in two stages; total and partial. Total purism aims to keep the language completely "pure" from all influences, whereas partial purism discourages influences from particular languages, mostly from those currently and earlier in dominant and oppressive position (Vikør 2007, 2011).

The third group of principles describes the relationship between the language and its users. By *majority* Vikør means that the language planning is based on choices between alternatives that the majority of speakers use. *Liberality* is the opposite of earlier

described *invariance*; it encourages variation in spoken language and in written language proximity to one's own spoken language. *The prestige principle* highlights the forms with the most prestige in the society, in order to improve the esteem of the language. *Counter-prestige* is self-evidently the inverse of the prestige principle and aims for the promotion of lesser prestige. *Usage principle* directs towards language planning where changes in usage are acknowledged. The "beauty" of a given language is promoted through the *estheticism principle*. As Vikør (2011) explicates, this principle is not unambiguous, as "beauty" is defined by subjective impressions and therefore reflects sociolinguistic attitudes in the language community. *Rationalism* strives to advance efficiency, rationality and economic aspects in a language. Here Vikør names standardization of technicals³ and general corpus planning as practical examples (2011).

The fourth group of principles derives from societal ideologies. *Nationalism* obviously aims to promote the language's national character. One distinctive aspect of this principle is *national historicism*. *Traditionalism* seeks to preserve the tradition of linguistics, literature or culture by avoiding all innovations. This principle can be nationalistically motivated, but not necessarily. Language planning that is performed by democratic institutions and seeks to further social equality instead of developing an "elite language" is conducted with the *democracy or egalitarianism principle*. *Liberalism* is somewhat the antithesis of democracy but should not be confused with *liberality* – liberalism accepts strong regulation of the language, if it is supported by forces opposed to the government. *Modernity* aims at meeting and fulfilling the requirements of the modern culture and technology, and with *authority* one strives for societal unity by conducting language planning in an authoritarian manner. (Vikør 2011)

Discussion

In this section, I will discuss the principles of Kven language planning by first analysing it on the general level (status, corpus and acquisition planning), and then by using the model by Lars Vikør. As my material, I will use previous articles and descriptions regarding the language planning of Kven, as well as participant observation in the recent language board meetings, document analysis of the earlier minutes of meetings, and expert interviews of the language board's consultants – Anna-Riitta Lindgren and Eira Söderholm. The minutes or summaries of the language council's meetings cover the years 2008–2010. The participant observation of the meetings started in November 2012 and consists of three meetings (one absence) and is completed with expert interviews and personal communication with Eira Söderholm.

Status and corpus planning of Kven

The status planning of Kven started after Norway ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. The language gained a status as a separate language from standard Finnish, which raised a question of standardization. Already in the comments appointed to the report *Kvenskans status* (The Status of Kven) (Hyltenstam and Milani, 2003³⁴) [AQ1] those opposing the acceptance of Kven as a language were concerned that raising the status would lead to a decrease in the funding for teaching standard Finnish in Norwegian schools. In this section, the corpus planning of Kven will be discussed based on minutes, summaries, and other documents of the language organs' meetings, provided by the Kven institute. I have also included items discussed in a seminar concerning the future language planning of Kven, organized by the Kven language board and Kven institute in Tromsø on 19–20 November 2012. The above-mentioned information has been supplemented with personal communication with Anna-Riitta Lindgren, a member of the former language council, and Eira Söderholm, the current consultant of the language board.

Standard Finnish has been taught in Northern Norway since the 1970s as an effort to strengthen the language of the minority that at that time was considered Finnish and as today Kven. But standard Finnish and Kven are so diverse that it has no revitalizing effect on the Kven language learning (Söderholm 2010a). Kven has been taught in the University of Tromsø since 2006, and University of Oslo has had some courses as well. Since 2005 when Kven was separated from Finnish, children with Kven/Finnish background in the municipalities of Troms and Finnmark have had a right to learn Kven/Finnish, if there are at least three Kven/Finnish pupils in the elementary schools (Opplæringslova § 2–7). Due to the division of languages (Kven/Finnish) the schools may choose which one of the two languages they prefer, which has led to a situation where Finnish is more dominant and preferred to Kven in the school-specific curricula.

The complete lack of teaching material in Kven led to the conclusion that a common written standard language is needed. The first educational material in Kven was produced in the 1980s. Terje Aronsen, the retired head of education at Kven institute, prepared material for elementary school, first in Finnish and later in Kven. Later in 2005–2006 Eira Söderholm and Terje Aronsen produced a course material called *Aikamatka* (Time Travel) for the first Kven course held at the University of Tromsø. The written language course material was based on the language variety on the first novel of Alf Nilsen-Børsskog, *Kuosuvaaran takana* (Behind Kuosuvaara, 2004) [AQ2], namely the Børselv dialect.

In April 2007 *Kieliraati*, the advisory language council, was established. It consisted of 5 ordinary members, who all were either linguists or had Kven as their mother tongue, or both. The function of the language council was to prepare alternative proposals to the later established language board – *Kielitinka* concerning a textbook language standard of Kven. The language board was founded the following year, April 2008, and its members were language users of diverse dialects of Kven. Their task was to discuss the

alternatives presented by the language council and make the decisions that would serve the language users in the best possible way. In 2010 the mandate of the language council came into its end and was no longer renewed, and since then the language board has been the only Kven language-planning body.

The language board had its first assembly on 24 May 2007. The aim of standardization was to prioritize school, media, cultural life and religion as the most valuable domains in the revitalization of Kven. The first optional recommendations that the language board prepared concerned the main guidelines of standardization. It prepared five alternative texts for the language council, from which they chose the text samples that were the most suitable ones in their dialects. The alternative text samples that the language council prepared represented:

- Language used in the course material *Aikamatka*, in other words the Porsanger-dialect
- Language as close to Meänkieli as possible⁴
- Language as close to standard Finnish as possible
- Language as far away from Finnish as possible, with forms used in Kven dialects
- A compromise between the Kven dialects.

The language council chose the text closest to Meänkieli, as well as the compromise between the Kven dialects. The latter principle includes an option for parallel forms, a practice that is widely used in Bokmål and Nynorsk. It gives the language user a wider range of morphological options to choose from, so that the divergent dialectal backgrounds will not restrain anyone from writing. (A summary of standardization measures until 2009 by Irene Andreassen; Lindgren 2009, 120.) Regarding orthography, the language council decided to recommend the Finnish orthographic system, with some dialectal additions, that are discussed later in this section (Lindgren 2009, 120).

In the first meeting of the language council in April 2008, it was decided that the written standard of Kven is primarily a textbook standard language for teaching, based on compromises between the different Kven dialects and on Meänkieli,⁵ as the educational material needed to be developed in a uniform language. Those who can actively use the language may write it in their own dialects, but with a common orthography. The principles of the orthography would be decided later.

In their second meeting in March 2009, the language council chose the principles of the common orthography. The orthographic principle should follow the Finnish model, with additional graphemes š and ě corresponding to the speech sounds [š] and [ě] can be used in appropriate places in certain dialects by those language users who find it natural for the language. These graphemes were chosen particularly because they can also be found in North Sámi. The graphemes were chosen to enable the use of default keyboards that are installed in the Norwegian computer operating systems. The vowels ä and ö that are not found in Norwegian written standards have been used in the Kven place name signs since the place name law entered into force in 1991, so the use of these graphemes remained unchanged (Decisions of the Language Council, 2008–2010).⁶ Söderholm (2006b, 37) describes the decisions behind the orthography mainly as practical and orthographic; the language should be written as it is pronounced. In cases where she has had to decide whether to write single or double consonants (C or CC), she has used the consonant gradation⁷ as the deciding factor; if there is no noticeable difference in the pronunciation between C and CC, the orthography will follow the grammar rules.

The planning of the written standard has first been based on literary texts by Terje Aronsen, Agnes Eriksen's poems, Alf Nilsen-Børsskog's novel *Kuosuvaaran takana* (2004) and short stories by Just Qvigstad (1925); morphological studies by Johan Beronka (1925), Marjut Aikio (1981) and Anna-Riitta Lindgren (e.g. 1974 and 1993), as well as a phonological study by Martti Rapola (1939). A wide collection of various dialectal interviews and language samples, both transcribed and un-transcribed, have been included in the linguistic material later on in the process (Söderholm 2006b).

and the members of both the language board and language council.

Acquisition planning of Kven

The language planning of Kven has lately sought successful models and tools for revitalization and standardization. The Sámi, who have a longer history in language planning and revitalization projects, but a similar background in the historical perspective, are seen as a successful example by the Kvens. With Kven the motive for creating the written language has primarily been enhancing language acquisition (Söderholm 2006b). Below I describe some other measures taken lately to promote competence and domains in Kven.

Concerning linguistic measures, *Giellatekno Centre for Sámi Language Technology* at the UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, are developing a free online dictionary for Kven and Bokmål and vice versa as well as a morphological analyzer for Kven to complement the online dictionary. Giellatekno has also developed a free downloadable *kvääni-norja-kvääni* (Kven-Norwegian-Kven) dictionary for both Windows and Mac platforms. Cooperation with Giellatekno is planned to be continued, even though the dictionary project has

uncertain funding.

There is a continuous need for more written material, such as educational material and children's books. During the past few years the situation has however improved. The Kven Institute translates and produces written material and has been responsible for organizing the first language nest in Lakselv, Porsanger in co-operation with UIT – The Arctic University of Norway and *Norske Kveners Forbund* (The Norwegian Kvens Association). The language nest will be expanded to a whole Kven section in autumn 2018. The counties of Finnmark and Nord-Troms are also planning to start language nests in Kven. UIT – The Arctic University of Norway received recently funding for starting a dedicated study programme for education more Kven teachers, and it expanded its Kven study programme from a year-long study to a full MA programme. The government of Norway also announced in April 2018 that it will finance the establishment of three new language centres in order to encourage the revitalization of Kven.

On 19 June 2012, the Kven Institute published a guideline leaflet for Kven orthography, *Allmenn innføring i skriving av kvensk* (General Introduction to Writing in Kven) (KI 2012). The aim of the leaflet is to give the everyday users of Kven language a short introduction to the principles of orthography giving short explanations on the dialectal and variational forms as well. The grammar of Kven (Söderholm 2014) was finally published in December 2014. It is the first comprehensive description of the language, and it is also written in Kven. The Norwegian translation was published in December 2017.

The internal linguistic principles

Starting with the internal linguistic principles in Vikør's (2011) model, the emphasized principles are *phonemicity*, *morphophonemicity*, *simplicity* and *stability*. The phonemicity principle follows the Finnish orthography, and according to Eira Söderholm (Söderholm 2006a; language council meetings in November 2012 and June 2013) it helps to bring transparency to the grammar rules, even though the pronunciation does not follow the spelling in all dialects. The same rule applies to the morphophonemicity principle. For example, the grapheme *đ*, which is often not pronounced at all, helps the language learners and speakers to perceive certain grammar rules regarding conjugation in Kven. In the last attended language council meeting (June 2013) the principle of *simplicity* was highlighted. Until now the language council has accepted variation as a stressed principle in standardization in order to ease the language learning. The simplicity principle however does not overrule the stability in orthography, or the above-mentioned phonemicity and morphophonemicity.

The principles that relate to attitudes towards other languages

Reviewing the principles that are related to attitudes toward other languages, both rapprochement and reaction can be found in relation to Kven language planning. In its start-up meeting the language council defined the principles for standardization by choosing between five text samples. The features chosen were remoteness to Finnish standard language (purism), proximity to Meänkieli and co-operation with Meänkieli language planning body (rapprochement), and compromise between the most spoken Kven dialects. In practice this can be confirmed by observing the language council's meetings: firstly, the presented alternatives are reviews by the representatives of the different dialects, and in unclear cases the language council asks the consultant about the standardized forms in Finnish and Meänkieli. Rapprochement towards Meänkieli and purism towards Norwegian as can also be found in hesitant attitudes toward Norwegian forms vs. Finnish or Meänkieli forms.

The principles concerning the relationships between the language and its users

Within this category there are two principles that are mainly applied in the standardization of Kven. The most apparent principle is *majority* in this category. The standardization and language planning are confided to the language council that currently has five members representing the most spoken dialects. The earlier language board, and at present a language consultant, prepare a selection of choices based on the distribution and frequency of the topic in question, for example concerning a morphological feature or lexicon. The members of the language council collaborate by first choosing from the presented alternatives the one that they recognize as their "own" language, either consciously or unconsciously. In cases where there is too much variation, they choose the closest one to all the suggested forms.

Liberality is demonstrated by the level of acceptance regarding *parallel forms*.⁸ This allows the language users to write Kven as they consider is consequent to their dialect, and the language council justifies this principle with language revitalization. The different dialects also show variation within the lexicon, which demands not only morphological but also lexical parallelism. A concrete example of the parallelism is the verb "to go, to leave", that has as many as five possible infinitive forms: *lähtee*, *lähteet*, *lähteä*, *lähteät*, and *lähtiä* (Söderholm 2014, 187). Liberality has been one of the most applied one of the Vikør's principles.

During the language council meeting in June 2013, a new principle was taken into consideration while the last decisions concerning the Kven grammar were made – *rationality*. The newly published grammar contains parallel forms of some words, to enable as much language use as possible, especially for those who already have some or good skills in Kven. In this meeting, the language council discussed the language acquisition for those who do not necessarily have previously acquired skills in Kven. With broad variation and numerous parallel forms, they might regard the language too complicated. This view is topical, as according to Lane

(2011) the younger generations do not learn Kven at home, since the most active and skilled speakers are over the age of 60.

The principles deriving from societal ideologies

The first ideological principle somewhat reflects the stigmatized history of the Kvens. As a counterpoint to Vikør's *nationalism* a distinctive ideology has always been present in the language council's meetings. I suggest to call this principle *minoritism*. The language council often wants to avoid forms that are related to Norwegian or standard Finnish. In unclear cases, the language council prefers to have Meänkieli language samples as its model. This principle relates also to the earlier described *rapprochement*, in which language planning follows some other language(s), usually a language the "new" language has diverged from. In this case, the minority wants to express the uniqueness of themselves and their language.

The rather radical approach that allows the language users to speak and write in a variety of dialects could in Vikør's earlier definitions be categorized as *anarchism* (2007, 188, 234–235). Vikør explains this principle simply as: "Alle bør snakke og skrive slik dei vil, utan noen form for normering eller ytre påtrykk" (Everyone should speak and write the language as they want without any form of standardization or outside pressure) (2007, 188). This principle is similar to the liberality principle, but in my view, they can be distinguished as liberality belongs to the group of principles describing the relationship between the language and its users, whereas anarchism represents societal ideologies, or as Vikør puts it: "Prinsipp som er avleidd av *generelle samfunnsideologiar og kulturelle haldningar*, der språksynet går inn om ein del av eit større ideologisk kompleks" (Principles that derive from *general societal ideologies and kultural views*, where the viewpoint of a language can be a part of a larger ideological unity) (Vikør 2007, 151; emphasis in the original.)

Conclusions – the future of Kven?

Andreassen (2005) fairly asks if the Kven language has a future. The statistics and prognosis of Unesco do not look too promising, but she is hopeful, if the means of language planning encourage language use among the younger generations. As the expert committee reviewing Norway's report on how the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages has been executed since the previous review, the recommendation given to Norway regarding Kven is to promote the status of the language especially in education and in the media (Recommendation of the Committee of the Council of Europe on the application of the Charter by Norway, 2015).

The long distances and scattered settlement of the Kvens pose a serious challenge for the future of the Kven language. The spoken language, as probably none of the languages of the world, is not homogenous: there are several dialects within Kven. These facts highlight the importance of the minority language media. *Ruijan Kaiku* (Echo of Norway), is a monthly newspaper written in Kven, Finnish and Norwegian. The editor of the newspaper, Liisa Koivulehto, often requests articles or any kind of texts written in Kven, as there are not enough linguistically competent journalists available. NRK, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, broadcasted one weekly 12-minute news programme in Kven and Finnish in Northern Norway until December 2017. The broadcasts can still be listened to online at NRK's new Kven website, NRK Kvensk/NRK Kvääni (www.nrk.no/kvensk) that was launched in December 2017. Mostly thanks to the contribution of language activists, often as voluntary work, there are more available domains for Kven language use than before. Facebook groups and sites as well as websites concerning issues and discussion about the Kven minority, and the local Kven associations have also arranged forums for language use, for example, language cafés where people meet and speak Kven.

Typically, small threatened or endangered languages have to struggle also for financial funding. In Norway, the Sámi languages are protected as indigenous languages, which ensures stable funding on all sectors. Kven and the other national minority languages share a common allotment of the state's budget, and each yearly allotment has to be divided into practically all projects with the exception of project-targeted grants. More literature, especially children's books and a daily, or even weekly newspaper are needed, more and broader radio broadcasts should be available. Some experts and Kven activists see the ratification of part III in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages as the answer. It would oblige the state of Norway to contribute more funding to Kven language maintenance. Others have suggested that centralizing funding to the Culture Fund of Norway (*Norsk kulturfond*), or even establishment a new foundation dedicated to national minority languages, would ensure guaranteed funding for projects and associations in the future, concerning both language and culture maintenance.

The foundation of the Kven Institute and the language council has raised the awareness of Kven as a language. Of Grin's (2003) conditions for language use – capacity, opportunity and desire – all are threatened in Kven's case. Capacity refers to the amount of Kven speakers – that is decreasing. Opportunity points to the few and limited domains where Kven can be used to be imposed to. Desire indicates the willingness to learn Kven – that is statistically stated to be decreasing,⁹ but unofficially the interest towards the language is thankfully increasing. Since Kven belongs linguistically to the Finno-Ugrian language family, it is even more difficult to learn for speakers of Norwegian as Norwegian as North Germanic language is typologically quite different.

An encouraging sign for the future of Kven is the work of the language board, which has become concrete in the form of the Kven grammar. The state of Norway seems to take this kind of achievements into its consideration when evaluating the status of the

language contra the funding that is reasonable to be granted. The next step in the corpus planning will be lexicography. The Kven Institute has received a few grants for developing electronic applications for language learners and users, such as an electronic dictionary, a morphological analyzer that helps to identify and translate declined words, as well as a spell-checker. The Norwegian language council, *Språkråd*, has also taken more active steps towards Kven by for example promoting the language during the campaign “Language Year 2013” (*Språkåret 2013*). The principles that were discussed above illustrate the language planning of Kven as a dynamic and democratic process, where revitalization, the Kven community and uniqueness of the language are primary motives for the work. The state funding has always played a key role in the revitalization and language planning projects, and lately the growing awareness of this linguistic minority has somewhat managed to improve the situation. Nevertheless, the responsibility for the future of Kven crucially lies in the hands of the Kvens themselves.

Notes

1. Peräpohjola dialects are western dialects of Finnish spoken along the border between Finnish and Swedish Lapland. ✗
2. KI (2018). ✗
3. According to *Svenska Akademiens ordbok* (Dictionary of the Swedish Academy) a technolect is defined as a specialized language of a specific occupational group, jargon (SAOB). ✗
4. Meänkieli (“our language”) is also a Finnic language closely related to Finnish and Kven, and it has a status as a national minority language in Sweden. ✗
5. About the proximity of these two languages, see e.g. Söderholm (2010b). ✗
6. This document is a summary of decisions regarding Kven standardization, provided by the Kven Institute. ✗
7. Consonant gradation means that the number of consonants decreases or increases between the last and second last syllables of a word that in being inflected or conjugated, for example kukka - kukan (‘a flower – a flowers). ✗
8. Parallel forms are common in both Bokmål and Nynorsk, meaning a wordform written in two or more slightly differing spelling, e.g. *mogleg* and *mogeleg* in Nynorsk for English “possible”. ✗
9. According to a report by Norway’s Ministry of Education (Nygaard and Bro 2015) the amount of Kven/Finnish students has gone down since 2005. ✗

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author [AQ3].

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