

Indigenous languages of the North: A comparative analysis of the language situations in Topolinoe in Sakha and Guovdageaidnu in Sápmi

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Abstract

This article examines the situations of two Indigenous languages in two Indigenous communities of Topolinoe in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) of the Russian Federation and Guovdageaidnu in Norway. The goal of this research was to assess the present situation of the heritage languages in these communities, which include the Even language in Topolinoe and the Sámi language in Guovdageaidnu. The materials analysed in this article were collected using questionnaires, which contained questions about the level of language proficiency, language use and linguistic identity. We also conducted freestyle interviews with seven informants in Topolinoe. The article is of comparative nature, and we consider similarities as well as differences in these communities.

Keywords: Indigenous heritage languages, Indigenous language proficiency, Sámi language, Even language, linguistic comparisons, Indigenous education

Introduction

Topolinoe

Topolinoe is a rural settlement located at a distance of 700 km northeast of the capital city of Yakutsk of the Sakha Republic in the Russian Federation. The main occupation of the population is reindeer husbandry, which employs about 60% of the population¹. In 2014, there were 913 residents in the village². According to the information received from Nadezhda Klysheyko-Kladkina, the mayor of Topolinoe, the Evens, an Indigenous people of the Sakha Republic, make up 82% of the total population of the village. The construction of the village began in late 1960s (Ulturgasheva, 2012). In 1976, the village was officially recognised as the centre of the sovkhos (state farm). Before that time, there was a village called Tompo³, which was set up by the state for reindeer herders and was located 25 km west of Topolinoe. Tompo

¹ Oral information received from Nadezhda Kladkina-Klysheiko, the mayor of the village

² Oral information received from Nadezhda Kladkina-Klysheiko, the mayor of the village

³ The settlement was named after the river. The traditional name of the river in the Even is Tomkoruk, but the Soviet authorities perceived this name as Tompo and it was entered on the map becoming the official name of the village and the river. Topolinoe is a Russian name.

residents were resettled in Topolinoe, the relocation occurred until the mid-1990s (Ulturgasheva, 2012).

Guovdageaidnu

Guovdageaidnu is a municipality in Finnmark, the northernmost county of Norway. In the municipality, there are several settlements, the largest of which has given its name to the municipality. Guovdageaidnu is the centre of the municipality. According to the Central Statistical Office, 2,914 residents were registered throughout the municipality (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2015). In 2012, there were 377 effort-years among herders in Guovdageaidnu⁴ (Totalregnskap, 2013). A large percentage of the municipality's population is Sámi. In a survey conducted from 1998 to 1999, 93.2% of junior high school students in the municipality replied that the language of communication with peers was the Sámi language, and 88.8% of those surveyed responded that Sámi was the first or one of the first spoken languages in the family (Dannemark and Johansen, 2001). Most of those who speak the Sámi language also speak Norwegian and are bilingual at a level where they can use both languages in all necessary situations. In 1997, Nils Øivind Helander suggested that, "Today, the majority of those who speak Sámi are bilingual because they also speak Finnish or Norwegian or Swedish or Russian [and] in the border areas many speak three languages" (p. 151).

Statement of purpose

Belolubskaya (2012) describes the situation of the languages of the indigenous peoples of Sakha and concludes as follows⁵:

In the current context exists serious problems in the current linguistic situation:

1. Languages of minority peoples of the North are close to extinction;
2. A lack of a center of communication;
3. A decrease in interest of the language and the culture, deterioration of the value of the role of national languages for the preservation of the ethnicities of the North;
4. Loss of the links between generations which has an impact on the functioning of the language;
5. A decrease in the number of elementary schools which results in children using a different language for communication as of a very young age;
6. The language is only preserved by older generations;

⁴ Data as of this writing (08/19/2015)

⁵ English translation based on French text.

7. In elementary schools there is a decrease in the number of schooling hours for the supposed reasoning of optimization in general schooling”. (Belolubskaya 2012: 218E)

The language is a unique value, it's the only type of formative culture of the people to which it belongs, because it keeps its history, its secular mythology, and its ancient traditions. Because, simply, without language there's no ethnicity.

Fishman (1991) defines eight stages in describing the state of languages in society based on observations of the various approaches to language revitalization. Stage 8 is particularly vulnerable, while the language of the Stage 1 is the least vulnerable:

- Stage 8:** The language is used only by elders and it is not used in everyday life.
- Stage 7:** The language is used in everyday life in the existing society but only by elders.
- Stage 6:** The language is the natural language of communication between children and adults.
- Stage 5:** Some can read and write the language.
- Stage 4:** The language is used in primary schools and in the media.
- Stage 3:** The language is used in workplaces as well as in the presence of those who do not speak the language.
- Stage 2:** The language is used in the local record keeping.
- Stage 1:** The language is used at all levels of public life but there is no security that can be given by the political independence.

Fishman and Belolubskaya point out many of the same factors. Belolubskaya writes that the more traditional Sámi languages are used only by elders and that the lack of communication between generations leads to languages becoming vulnerable (points 4 and 6). This linguistic situation corresponds to stage 7 on Fishman's scale, as the language is used in everyday life in the present society but only by the elders. Belolubskaya also mentions the lack of media using the languages of the peoples as well as the weak position of the languages in preschool education and schools due to a reduced number of native language preschool education institutions and a reduced number of lessons instructed in the native languages in other schools. These factors are listed in Fishman's stage 4. Fishman says that if the language is not being passed on from one generation to another, the language naturally becomes very vulnerable. If the language is not transferred in a natural way, the possibility of implementing public measures in order to achieve a level of language vitality where the language can be used in office work, professional fields, and the media becomes limited. Such measures have more chances to succeed if the language is a natural way of communication between children and adults and is at one of the stages from 6 to 1 according to the Fishman's scale. It follows that it is worth working on language

communication between generations if possible: This, in turn, will effectively make strengthening the language usage in the media, schools, and preschool education more effective.

Belolubskaya also writes about attitudes towards the languages and notes a very low interest in languages and cultures and the role of language in the preservation of the peoples (2012). Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) examines the role that attitude can play in determining bilingualism and puts attitude as one of four types of criteria to use in assessing bilingual people. According to Skutnabb-Kangas, the fact that a person may identify himself or herself with a language that he or she speaks is a criterion of bilingualism. In the Sakha Republic today, it is undesirable and particularly unrealistic to have an Even monolingual environment. In order to be part of a larger society, it is necessary to know the Russian language, though it is also desirable to speak the Sakha language. Thus, the development of bilingualism or multilingualism is the only possible way to save the Even language and, according to Skutnabb-Kangas, bilingualism provides a sense of belonging to the language. Such views mentioned by Belolubskaya and Skutnabb-Kangas are not included in the Fishman's theory of stages.

We wanted to find out whether Belolubskaya's description of the language situation of the Indigenous peoples of Siberia can be applied in respect to Topolinoe. We also wanted to compare the linguistic situation in Topolinoe and Guovdgeaidnu, and to discover similarities and differences in these two populations. We hope that such comparative studies may inspire work on the development of the Even and Sámi languages and promote their usage in everyday life.

Methodology

We interviewed three Even high school students and four adults to gather information on the language situation in Topolinoe. The adults are the directors of the school in Topolinoe, a representative of the older generation, and include a reindeer herder and a schoolteacher. We received written parental permission to interview the students. We produced a questionnaire in order to discover whether the views of the interviewed students were common among other young people and to obtain information about the spoken language, their attitude towards the language, and the use of the language among young people. We used a questionnaire developed by Johansen (1986) as a basis. Dannemark and Johansen used this questionnaire in 2001 as well. We developed a new version of the questionnaire in Norwegian and had this version translated into Russian.

We compiled the following table⁶ to gather information about the informants' level of language proficiency as well as the occupation of their parents. This table is not a part of Johansen's questionnaire (1986) or the questionnaire by Dannemark and Johansen (2001).

	My command of understanding oral speech					My command of speaking				
	Very high	High	Fairly high	Poor	Very poor	Very high	High	Fairly high	Poor	Very poor
Even										
Sakha										
Russian										

	Yes	No
Mother works in reindeer husbandry (tick 'yes' or 'no')		
Father works in reindeer husbandry (tick 'yes' or 'no')		

Table 1: Language proficiency and parents' occupation⁷

All students at the school study Even, Russian, and Sakha, and therefore, we decided not to include "no command at all" of understanding and speaking any of the three languages as an optional answer. In order to get information about the languages spoken daily, we asked the following questions⁸:

- What language / languages do you speak with your friends?
- What language / languages do you speak with your sister(s) / brother(s)?
- What language / languages do you speak with other children and young people?
- What language / languages do you speak with your mother or another person replacing her?
- What language / languages do you speak with your father or another person replacing him?

⁶ See appendix

⁷ The students were given questionnaires in Russian. See appendix

⁸ The students were given questionnaires in Russian. See appendix

- What language / languages do you speak with your grandparents?
- What language / languages do you speak with other adults?
- Which language do you feel most belonging to?
- What language / languages did your mother or person replacing her (with whom you have lived most of your life) speak as her first language(s)?
- What language / languages did your father or a person replacing him (with whom you have lived most of your life) speak as his first language(s)?
- What language(s) will be spoken in Topolinoe in 50 years?
- What language(s) will be used most often? Number the languages in order of priority, if you choose more than one language.

The school principal in Topolinoe permitted 15 students to participate in the survey and distributed questionnaires to these students. These students were from six different classes of the high school. All the classes were to be represented, and we wanted the number of girls and boys to be equally represented. Apart from these conditions, the distribution of the questionnaires was random. All 15 of the students completed and returned the questionnaires. We received parental permission that the students could complete the questionnaires and that the results could be used in our scientific research and published.

We used the same questionnaire, with minor modifications, to collect information about the command of the language, the attitude towards the language, and language use among junior high school students in Guovdgeaidnu. The school principal gave permission to conduct the survey, and we had written parental consent for the students to participate in the survey and for the results to be used in our scientific research and published. The students in Guovdgeaidnu received a Sámi version and a Norwegian version of the questionnaire⁹. The students themselves chose which version they would like to complete. Two questions in the Sámi version were formulated slightly different from the Norwegian version. One of the questions in Norwegian version was as following: *Hvilket språk / hvilke språk fører du størst tilhørighet til?* which translates to, 'Which language/languages do you feel greater belonging to?'. In the Sámi version, the following wording was used: *Guđe gillii/gielaide dovddat gullevažvuoda?* which could be translated as, 'Which language/languages do you feel belonging to?' Thus, in the Sámi version there is no degree of comparison added to the word 'belonging'. It means that it may be difficult to compare the answers directly. However, we believe that the answers still give us important information about the students' sense of belonging. At the same time, we must realize that those informants who responded to the questionnaire in Norwegian perhaps feel a sense of belonging to other languages than those mentioned in the questionnaire. The last question in the questionnaire is formulated in Sámi as follows: *Guđe giela/gielaid jáhkát geavahuvvot eanemusat? Nummiraste gielaid jus jáhkát eambbo go ovttá geavahuvvot*, meaning, "In your opinion, what language / languages will be used most? Number the languages in order of

⁹ See appendix

priority, if you think that more than one language will be used". The Norwegian formulation runs like this: *Hvilket språk / hvilke språk tror du vil bli brukt mest? Nummerer språkene hvis du tror flere enn ett språk vil bli brukt*, which reads, "In your opinion, which language will be used the most? Number the languages in order of priority, if you choose more than one language". The prospect of the future is only expressed in the case with the Norwegian wording. We also see that some informants understood the question differently than we did when we made the questionnaire. Our intent was to learn how informants would picture the situation in 50 years from now, but the formulation in the Sámi version suggests that we are asking about the situation today. From the responses, we see that one part of the informants understand the question the way we intended, and the other part of the informants understand the question as if asked about the current situation. Due to these differences in the understanding of the questions, we decided not to include the responses to the last question in the discussion of the subject.

Results

Use of the Even language

In the aforementioned freestyle interviews with three students of the school in Topolinoe, we particularly asked whether they speak Even, and if so, who they speak Even with. We also asked whether they think the Even language will be used in a lesser or greater degree in the future. All three students said they spoke Even with their grandmothers, and one of the students named other adult family members (their mother and grandfather) with whom they spoke Even in the family. All three students said they use the Even language during the Even language classes, and one of the students also referred to Even culture classes. All three students indicated that they speak Russian with their friends. One of the students said that he speaks Even with his friends occasionally. All three students said they are interested in continuing to learn the Even language. All three students identified their belonging to the language. One student said, "that it is important to be able to speak the native language". Another student said, "that he does not want not forget his native language", and the other student said, "that it is very important to be able to speak the language". One of the two students who used the term "native language" also stated that they speaks Even with his mother. Another student, who used the term "native language", answered that he speaks Even only with his grandmother, and his parents speak Russian. All three students explained their wish to continue learning the Even language because they feel a belonging to the Even language despite the fact that only one of them speaks Even as their first language.

We interviewed four adults in Topolinoe, including the school principal, a teacher of traditional Even crafts, one herder aged between 40 and 50 years, and one representative of the older generation. All four believe that the Even language will be used in the settlement in the future,

they also expressed their strong desire for active use of the Even language. All four stated the importance of the relationship between people and their language. The oldest informant of the group put it this way: "If we lose our language, we will disappear as a nation, and that would be a great tragedy". The reindeer herder who was interviewed said that today people are proud that they are Evens, and that this is a condition for keeping the language in the future. The oldest informant's opinion is that young people experience, "a psychological barrier" to start speaking the Even, and that they do not take the Even language seriously. In her opinion, it is necessary to break this barrier before children begin to speak the Even language: "We have to work with this psychological barrier, and start speaking the Even language, then the language can be transferred". The school principal stressed that when the Even language is used in preschool education and in school, it leads to the Even language not being something unfamiliar to the younger generation of Topolinoe. She said that many consider the Even language to be their mother tongue, and she gave examples of how young people have started to speak Even in an environment where the majority speak Even even if they have not used Even as a language of communication in Topolinoe. According to her, the fact that the youth start speaking Even is a result of the Even language having a definite place in the preschool education institution and in school.

Information from the questionnaire

The questionnaire provided information about the students' command of language and the occupations of the informants' parents in Topolinoe.

	My command of understanding oral speech					My command of speaking				
	Very high	High	Fairly high	Poor	Very poor	Very high	High	Fairly high	Poor	Very poor
Even	1 g	3 g 1 b	2 g 4 b	1 g		1 g	1b	4 g 1 b	2 g 1 b	
Sakha	1g		2 g	1 g 2 b	2 g 1 b	1 g			2 g 2 b	3 g 2 b
Russian	8 g 6 b	1 b				7 g 4 b		1 b		

	Yes	No
Mother works in the reindeer husbandry (tick)	4 b 1 g	3 b 7 g
Father works in the reindeer husbandry (tick)	4 b 2 g	3 b 4 g

The table includes the information based on the selected choices, with abbreviations g = 'girl', b = 'boy'.

Table 2: Information provided by the informants from the school in Topolinoe about command of language and occupation of parents.

Information about occupation

The 15 informants from Topolinoe were asked about the occupation of their parents or guardians and whether or not they are engaged in reindeer husbandry. Three boys indicated that both of their parents are engaged in reindeer husbandry. One boy and one girl pointed out that only their mothers are engaged in reindeer husbandry, and one boy and two girls pointed out that only their fathers are engaged in reindeer husbandry. Thus, eight informants in total indicated that either one or both of their parents are engaged in reindeer husbandry. None of the parents of the seven other informants is engaged in reindeer husbandry. As noted above, about 60 percent of the population is engaged in reindeer husbandry.

Self-evaluation of the command of languages

Fourteen out of 15 informants answered that they understand spoken Russian and speak Russian at a "very high" level. One informant said that his level of spoken Russian is "high" and that his understanding of spoken Russian is "high". Twelve out of 15 informants indicated their level of understanding the Even language, and 10 informants indicated their level of speaking the Even language. One of the informants said that she understands and speaks Even at a "very high" level. Four informants said that they understand Even at a "high" level, six informants said that they understand Even at a "fairly high" level, and one informant said that she understands Even at a "poor" level. One informant said that she speaks Even at a "high" level and three informants said that they speak Even at a "poor" level. Nine out of 15 informants assessed their level of understanding of the Sakha language and 10 informants assessed the level at which they speak Sakha. One informant said that she understands the Sakha language at a "very high" level, two informants said that they understand the Sakha language at a "fairly high" level, three informants said that they understand Sakha at a "poor" level, and three informants said that their proficiency of understanding is "very poor". One informant expressed that she speaks Sakha at a "very high" level, and this was the same informant who said that she understands Sakha at a "very high" level. Four informants stated that their fluency in Sakha is "poor" and five informants stated that their Sakha fluency is "very poor".

Responses show that, except one informant, all the informants who assessed their levels of all three languages indicated that their level of proficiency in Russian is higher than that of the Even and Sakha languages. This applies to both understanding and speaking the languages. One of the informants pointed out that she has "very high" command of all three languages. The students evaluated their level of knowledge of the Even language higher than their level of knowledge of the Sakha language.

An aim of schooling in Topolinoe is that after high school, students master the Even language at such a level that they are able to communicate in Even in all situations. In our study, seven out of 15 informants assessed their knowledge of the Even language to be at least "very high". Two informants said that they speak Even "poorly" and none of the informants indicated that they speak "very poorly". Six of the informants who rated their level of both speaking and understanding Russian as "very high" have not specified their levels of the Even language. When these students do not assess their knowledge of the Even language, it can be assumed that they do not find their knowledge of the Even language to be satisfactory. Based on responses to the survey, we can say that the aim set by the school has not been achieved. There is a big difference in the assessed level of knowledge of Russian language and of Even. However, about half of the informants assessed their mastering of the Even language as a means of communication as satisfactory.

Language of communication

The students' responses give the following information about the language of communication amongst the different participants of communication:

	Speak Even with both parents	Speak Even with only one parent		Speak Even with siblings	Speak Even with one or more grand-parents	Speak Even with friends
		With mother or an adult replacing her	With father or an adult replacing him			
Girls	4	1		3	3	1
Boys	1	1			5	1
Total	5	2		3	8	2

Table 3: Language of communication of the informants from the school in Topolinoe according to informants' responses.

Twelve of the 15 informants indicated that they speak Even with others. Five informants reported that they speak Even with one or both parents. Six informants speak Even with a grandparent but not with their parents. Of those informants who speak Even with their grandmother or grandfather, two of them (a girl and a boy) also speak Even with their friends. This girl also speaks Even with her siblings.

Linguistic identity

The question "To which language / languages do you feel belonging?" was included in the questionnaire because we wanted to find out whether the following statement from Belolubskaya can be applied to Topolinoe: "baisse d'intérêt pour la langue et pour la culture, dénigrement de la valeur et du rôle des langues nationales pour la préservation des ethnies du Nord"¹⁰ (Belolubskaya 2012, pp. 218-219). Ten informants indicated their belonging only to one of the three languages. Five of them indicated the Even language, one indicated Sakha, and four indicated Russian. Three informants indicated their belonging to two languages, one of them indicated Even and Sakha, and two others indicated Even and Russian. Thus, eight informants indicated the Even language to be the only one or one of the two languages to which they feel a greater sense of belonging.

¹⁰ Lack of interest in the language and culture, underestimation of the value and the role of languages for the preservation of northern peoples

Six out of eight informants indicated that the Even language was their first or one of the first languages they started to speak at home. One informant indicated that both parents speak Even at home, three informants said that only their mothers speak Even at home, and one informant expressed that only their father speaks Even. Two other informants, who were not taught Even by their parents, answer that they speak Even with their grandparents. Two informants, whose one or both parents have taught them to speak the Even language at home, indicated that they feel stronger belonging to the Russian language. Three informants learned Russian as their first language at home from their parents. These informants indicated that they do not use the Even language in the situations specified in the questionnaire. None of these three informants feel a greater belonging to the Even language. Thus, there seems to be a correspondence between languages that have been spoken in families traditionally and the languages the informants feel a greater belonging to.

In the school of Topolinoe, all subjects, except the classes of the Even language and Even crafts and culture, are taught in Russian. The principal of the school spoke of the barriers to teaching the Even language more extensively:

The plan was to teach all subjects in the Even language, but we do not have enough resources, and thus we had to stop the project. In addition, we employ teachers who come from other regions who do not speak the Even language. Moreover, the state requirements say that in order to teach school subjects in Even, we need textbooks in the Even language. Today, we don't have such books.

The principal explained that they are developing Even language lessons as a language of communication in daily life. For the time being, the Even language is taught in a conventional manner, as a subject. In Even language classes, Even language and literature are taught, and communicating in Even is not focused upon.

Informants from Guovdageaidnu

We asked all the students of junior high school (aged 12 to 15) in Guovdageaidnu of the academic year 2014 to 2015 to take part in a survey similar to the one conducted in the school in Topolinoe. We did not ask them about the occupation of their parents, but all other questions on the questionnaire are identical to the ones we used in Topolinoe. We excluded the question about the occupation of their parents as the principal of the school requested this. She pointed out that it was undesirable to focus on the occupation of parents, and we followed her advice. 56 junior high school students of Guovdageaidnu responded to the questionnaire. There are 100 students in that school and all of them were invited to participate in the survey. We do not know the reasons why some of the students did not participate in the survey. We can assume the

following: 1) The students had no desire to participate, 2) Parents did not allow their children to participate, 3) Students were not at school on the day of the survey. We still believe that the results provided interesting information about language preferences of young people in Guovdageaidnu. Out of 56 responses, 25 were given by girls and 27 were given by boys.

It is not possible to determine the gender of four of the informants: One wrote "who knows", two others wrote "other" and one indicated both genders "boy / girl". Just before the time of survey, the issue of gender identity was widely discussed in the Norwegian media in connection with the Norwegian Ministry of Health publishing a report regarding gender (Rett til rett kjønn¹¹, 2015). The report indicated that some people find it hard to identify their gender using the traditional gender categories. This event may explain why these four students decided not to answer "boy" or "girl". We had formulated the question in such a way that informants could give other possible answers unforeseen by us. If we had included only two options to tick off, we would not have known that some students wished to respond differently. In the table below, we introduce the three gender categories, "boy", "girl", and "not identified".

Self-assessment of the level of language proficiency

	My command of understanding oral speech					My command of speaking				
	Very high	High	Fairly high	Poor	Very poor	Very high	High	Fairly high	Poor	Very poor
Sámi language	40 (18 g, 19 b, 3 n)	12 (6 g, 4 b, 1 n)	3 (1 g, 2 b)			35 (16 g, 17 b, 2 n)	14 (5 g, 8 b, 1 n)	3 (3 g)	2 (1 g, 1 b)	
Norwegian language	36 (18 g, 15 b, 3 n)	12 (4 g, 7 b, 1 n)	2 (2g)	1 (1b)		30 (15 g, 12 b, 3 n)	11 (5 g, 5 b, 1 n)	8 (3 g, 5 b)		1 (1 b)

The table shows information from the completed questionnaires, with abbreviations g = 'girl', b = 'boy', n = 'not identified'.

Table 4: Self-assessment of the level of language proficiency of high school students in Guovdageaidnu¹²

¹¹ The right of a correct gender identity

¹² The questionnaire has parallel text in Norwegian and Sámi. See appendix

Forty of the 56 informants rated their understanding of the Sámi language as "very high", 12 informants rated their understanding of the Sámi language as "high", and three rated their understanding of Sámi as "fairly high." None of the respondents answered "poor" or "very poor". Thirty-seven informants said they speak the Sámi language at a "very high" level, 14 at a "high" level, two at "poor", and no one answered "very poor".

We cannot know how each informant understands the various levels of language proficiency, but it is possible to assume that those who live in a bilingual society and rate their proficiency of the spoken language as "fairly high" are able to communicate in this language in various situations. This is confirmed by the answers to other questions in the questionnaire. All three informants who responded that their proficiency of spoken Sámi is "fairly high", also said that they speak Sámi with different groups, "with friends", with "other children", and with "other adults". One of the informants indicated that she speaks Sámi with her mother; one speaks Sámi with her father, grandmother, and/or grandfather; and one speaks Sámi with her grandmother and/or grandfather. One of the informants rated his proficiency of spoken Sámi as "poor", even though he said that he speaks no language other than Sámi with his mother. Out of the 56 informants, only one does not speak Sámi with others. Twenty-seven out of 56 informants say that they understand spoken Sámi and Norwegian equally well, 25 of them understand spoken Sámi and Norwegian at a "very high" level, and two of them understand both languages at a "high" level. Twenty-two informants indicated that they speak both languages equally well, 21 at a "very high" level, and one at a "high" level.

Language of communication

	Speak Sámi with both parents	Speak Sámi with one of their parents	
		With mother or other adult replacing her	With father or other adult replacing him
Girls	19	5	3
Boys	14	4	3
Non-identified gender	3		1
Total	36	10	7

Table 5: The number of informants from Guovdageaidnu who indicate that they speak Sámi with their parents.

All informants identified what language they speak with their parent(s) or guardian. Fifty-four of the 56 informants in Guovdageaidnu indicated that either one or both parents speak Sámi with children at home or that Sámi was one of the first two languages at home. One boy and one girl indicated that both parents speak a different language at home; in this case, we are referring to the Norwegian language. 53 informants say that they speak Sámi with one or both parents. Thus, except in one case, all parents who have acquired the language as children have passed it to the next generation. The informant who said that he does not speak Sámi with his parents even if they both have Sámi as a first language said that he speaks a language other than Norwegian with his parents. The same informant said that he speaks Sámi with others and with his grandmother and/or grandfather, but does not speak Sámi with his parents. Fifteen informants reported that they grew up in a bilingual environment speaking Sámi with one of their parents, and another language with the other parent. According to the responses from the informants, the sex of the Sámi speaking parent seems to be of no importance for the transition of the language. The informants reported that they speak Sámi with this parent regardless of their gender.

Linguistic identity

Feeling of belonging						Language situation in a family				
1 language only			2 languages		3 languages	Monolingual			Bilingual	
S	N	OL	S+N	S+OL	S+N+OL	S	N	O L	S-N	S-OL
17 b						17				
	3 b					1			2	
		1 b							1	
			4 b			1			3 ¹⁵	
				2 g				1 ¹⁴		1
15 g						11			2	1
	4 g						2		2	
			5 g			3			2	
					1 g					1 ¹⁵
1 n						1				
			3 n						3 ¹⁶	

S - Sámi, N - Norwegian, OL - other language not Sámi or Norwegian.

Table 6: Sense of belonging to the language of the informants from Guovdageaidnu.

Fifty-five out of 56 informants indicated their linguistic belonging. Twelve informants felt a sense of belonging to both Sámi and Norwegian. None of these informants come from a home where Norwegian is the only language in use. Eight of them (three boys, two girls, and three of unspecified gender) indicated a Norwegian-Sámi bilingual family background. Four informants that indicates their linguistic identity as Sámi and Norwegian expressed a Sámi language family background, including one boy, three girls, and one of unspecified gender.

Forty-eight informants feel belonging only to the Sámi language, or to the Sámi language and one other language. Seven informants feel belonging only to the Norwegian language. These seven informants filled the Norwegian version of the questionnaire. As the question of linguistic identity is formulated differently in the Norwegian and Sámi versions (see para. 1.3), it is possible to assume that those who indicated their belonging only to the Norwegian language may have responded differently if the question was worded in the same way as in Sámi version. In any case, these seven informants indicated that they feel a stronger belonging to the Norwegian language. Only two informants out of seven, both of them girls, responded that they come from families where Norwegian is the only language in use. Both girls feel a belonging to the Norwegian language; four out of the seven informants (two boys and two girls) who reported that they only feel belonging to the Norwegian language expressed that they have Sámi Norwegian bilingual family backgrounds. One of the informants who said that they feel belonging to Norwegian has a monolingual Sámi family background.

Neither of the two girls with a Norwegian monolingual language background reported a feeling of belonging to the Sámi language. The number of respondents is too low for any direct conclusions.

Discussion

In Topolinoe the Even language is used as a natural language of communication in some families. However, the most common language of communication in the families is Russian. Four of 15 informants speak Even with one or both parents, and another two informants speak Even with one of their parents: in both cases, they speak Even with their mother or the person replacing her. Thus, six out of 15 informants indicated that the Even language is used as a natural language of communication between their parents and adults in the family. Six informants reported that they speak Even with their grandmother and/or grandfather. Ten informants indicated that they live in families in which the Even language is used as a natural language of communication between children and adults. Based on this information, we can assume that, in some families, the Even language is passed from older generations to younger generations. According to Fishman (2001) when the language is passed down from adults to children, it is easier to maintain than if the language spoken only by the elderly. The role of some of the grandparents also seems to be important in the transmission of the language to the younger

generation. This means that the language is passed from adults to children even in cases where parents do not speak the same language with the children. Based on the information obtained from the questionnaires, we can assume that the Even language in any case is not at a more vulnerable stage than stage 6.

All students in the school in Topolinoe learn to read and write in Even. The Even language is not used in other subjects, except for the Even language lessons and the Even crafts and culture classes. In the Even language lessons, the degree of its application as a language of communication and not only as an object of study varies. We visited a few lessons of Even language in different classes, and the way of instruction varies greatly in different classrooms. In some lessons, the instruction focused on the oral use of the Even in teacher-planned activities, whereas in other classes, all oral communication was in Russian. In the latter case, the Even language was an object of study, not a spoken language. The crafts classes are designed only for girls and nothing of the same kind is offered for boys. Children from reindeer husbandry families are enrolled in nomadic schools near the reindeer herds in certain periods of the year. In the nomadic schools, the Even language is used as a natural working language to a greater extent than in the main school. In these schools, the boys are trained in traditional reindeer husbandry classes, where the Even language has a strong position. Thus, students from reindeer husbandry families receive more in-depth training of the Even language than those students who do not have access to the nomadic school. In the interviews with the teacher and the principal of the school in Topolinoe, we learned that there is a desire to make Even language the language of instruction in school subjects too, but the situation with school textbooks has not allowed it. In Soviet times, there were still some textbooks in the Even language. Today, according to the answers of some informants, it is very difficult to get books published, even if there are manuscripts of books ready to be published. The reason for this is that the publication of textbooks is not funded by the state, as in Soviet times. The publication of textbooks is funded by the profits from the sales of books, and the publication of textbooks in Indigenous languages is not profitable. The Even language is a school subject, and is the language of instruction in crafts and culture classes, but the Even language is not used as a language of communication in other lessons in the school of Topolinoe. This form of teaching is, by Baker's definition, a weak form of bilingual education, since this form obviously is not sufficient to achieve functional bilingualism or multilingualism (2006). Based on the information obtained from interviews, questionnaires, and our observations, we can conclude that in this respect the Even language is at stage 5 by the Fishman scale.

Fishman (2001) uses the term 'heritage language' in referring to the language a person has a close relationship with but does not necessarily speak as a first language. This term is also used in translation in other languages (Johannessen and Salmons, 2012). Even if a person does not master a language, he or she might feel belonging to it if the language is spoken, or used to be spoken, in the family. Such languages can also be called heritage languages. Van Deusen-Scholl

(2003) notes that those students who have a strong sense of cultural attachment to the language because the language was used or is used in the family may have a great interest in learning this language. She uses the term 'heritage motivation' for this special kind of motivation. In his study of the revival of the Sámi language in Norway in the 1990s, Todal (2002) found that many parents who wanted their children to learn the Sámi language in school attributed their desire to their historical attachment to the language. Todal uses the term 'the continuation motive' (*kontinuitetsmotiv*) for this reasoning.

In research on multilingualism, two kinds of learning motives are often pointed out: an integrative motive and an instrumental motive (Todal, 2002). The integrative motive involves a desire to "høyre til ei viss språkgruppe¹³" (Todal, 2002, p. 108), whereas the instrumental motivation refers to the desire to get the "economic, career, and school benefits from the project" (Todal, 2002, p. 102). The desire to learn the language in order to remain ties with one's family, both former generations and living members of the family, can be attributed to the integrative motive, since the purpose of learning a language is a desire to belong to a group which speaks the language or used the language in the past.

The interviews with three students in Topolinoe point to the fact that they see the value of a language for «la preservation des ethnies du Nor"¹⁴ (Belolubskaya, 2012). While learning the language, they maintain contact with the ethnic group to which they belong, and learning the language of the group strengthens their belonging to the group. One might assume that they consider Even to be their native language, but this also applies to those who do not speak Even as their first language. It also seems that the interest in the Even language in Topolinoe is greater than what Belolubskaya describes as typical for the Indigenous languages of the Sakha Republic. These three students seem to demonstrate an understanding of the value of the language to its people, the value which, according to Belolubskaya, is underestimated by the Indigenous peoples of the North of Sakha. This understanding was also demonstrated by the four adults who we interviewed.

Responses to the questionnaire, completed by 15 informants, indicate that some of the young people in Topolinoe feel close connection with the heritage language in the settlement. Janet Holmes (2001) writes that,

... there are certain social factors which seem to retard wholesale language shift for a minority language group, at last for a time. Where language is considered an important symbol of a minority group's identity, for example, the language is likely to be maintained longer. (p. 64)

¹³ belong to a certain language group

¹⁴ Preservation of the peoples of the North

Thus, the Even language seems to have promising possibilities for survival in Topolinoe. However, the number of our informants is small and thus we cannot say how representative our findings are. Dannemark and Johansen (2001) have analysed the language situation in Guovdageaidnu based on questionnaires answered by junior high school students in Finnmark from 1982 to 1983 and from 1998 to 1999. These questions were similar to the questions that were asked in Topolinoe and Guovdageaidnu in 2015.

In 1998 to 1999, 93.3% of the informants used the Sámi language as the only or as one of two or more languages when communicating with friends. As of 2015, this number was 91.1%. The response rate in 2015 was lower than in the assessment conducted from 1998 to 1999, and thus the numbers cannot be compared directly. However, the responses in the 2015 assessment indicate that the language situation is stable. In 1998 to 1999 survey, informants were asked what language or languages they had acquired as their first language or first languages at home. In 2015, the informants were asked to specify what language they speak with their parents or guardians. Questions asked in 1998 and 1999 compared with those asked in 2015 are not identical, but we think that the answers give comparable information. In 1998 and 1999, Sámi was the only first language or one of the first languages at home for 88.8% of the informants. In 2015, 91.2% of the informants spoke Sámi with at least one of their parents. Thus, it seems that the number of informants who speak Sámi at home had increased in 2015. As the numerical data appears to be stable, we can assume that the conclusion of Dannemark and Johansen (2001) are still valid: "Dersom vi forholder oss til lover og regler, kan samisk i det samiske forvaltningsområdet i dag plasseres inn på stadium 1 i Fishmans skala¹⁵" (2001, p. 61). Dannemark and Johansen compared the situation in 1998 and 1999 with the situation of 1982 and 1983, saying "Mens den første informantgruppa [ungdomsskoleelever 1982/83] hadde vokst opp i et samfunn der samisk først befant seg på stadium 5 og så på stadium 4"¹⁶ (Dannemark and Johansen 2001, p. 61). Dannemark and Johansen further wrote that "Selv om en utifra offentlige lover og regler kan si at samisk i dag befinner seg på stadium 1, er det likevel nødvendig å ta visse forbehold med hensyn til de stengsler som språkholdninger setter. Fremdeles er det slik, som Joks og Andersen nevner (Joks og Andersen, 2000), at det ikke fullt ut er akseptert av alle at samisk skal ha status på linje med norsk i alle sammenhenger¹⁷" (2001, p. 61). This also applies to the state of the Sámi language today.

¹⁵ If we adhere to laws and regulations, the Sámi language in the Sámi administrative area belong at stage 1 of Fishman's scale

¹⁶ (...) whereas the first group of informants [senior students of 1982-83] grew up in a society where the Sámi language in the beginning of the period was at the fifth stage, and then at the fourth stage.

¹⁷ Even if existing formal rules and laws may give reason to conclude that the Sámi language is at the first stage, language attitudes form limitations that must be taken into account. Not everybody accepts, as described by Joks and Andersen (Joks and Andersen 2000), that the status of the Sámi language should be totally equal to the status of the Norwegian language in all contexts.

Sámi in Norway and Evens in Russia are defined as Indigenous peoples. Annexation of the Sámi lands to the Norwegian State and the lands of the Evens to the Tsarist Russia can be seen as colonization. The Norwegian government has stated that the Norwegian state has been established on the territory of two peoples, Norwegians and Sámi while the ethnic relations in Tsarist Russia were much more complex (Haarmann, 2000). During the reign of Ivan the Terrible, Russians started an expansion of territories outside the Russian lands that until then had formed the Grand Duchy of Moscow (Haarmann 2000). The result was the emergence of a multi-ethnic society in which Russian chauvinism appeared (Haarmann 2000). In Tsarist Russia, church and state were regarded as united, and conquering new souls for the church became an important task for the expanding state and, according to the dogmas of the regime, turning people into Christians also meant turning them into Russians (Haarmann, 2000). Ethnic Russians soon started to regard the Russian language, culture, and way of life as superior to languages and cultures of other peoples in the new multi-national state. In this multi-national state, the only possibility to improve one's social status was to become assimilated into Russian culture and the Russian language (Haarmann, 2000). Standardisation and consolidation of the linguistic norms of the Russian language in the 18th and 19th centuries created preconditions for the Russian national language to occupy more and more new domains at the expense of languages of other peoples of Russia (Haarmann 2000). In the 18th century, Russia started to focus more on Western Europe, and, as elsewhere in Europe including Norway, history and the construction of historical traditions in order to create a national culture became an important task (Haarmann 2000). As Haarmann notes, “die historische Dimension in der Identität des Russentums stärkte das kulturelle und sprachliche Selbstbewußtseins”¹⁸ (2000, p. 778). The ethnic composition of Russia was much more complex than in other European countries, and in the conquering of new lands in the 19th century, the ethnic Russians formed the minority. Despite this, the ethnic Russians were perceived as the constituent people in the country, and the national self-awareness of Russians led to an increased assimilation process of non-Russian peoples of the Empire (Haarmann, 2000). In the period before the First World War, the cultures of the peoples of Russia began to flourish. In the post-revolutionary period, much was done to strengthen the regional cultures, and languages that had previously been non-literary then became written standards. For Vladimir Lenin, the equality of peoples and their writing was a condition for a state without social differences (Haarmann, 2000). The Russian language was not considered the state language, but it remained the language of communication between the peoples of the state (Haarmann, 2000). After Lenin's death in January 1924, the Soviet Union became more centralised, and Lenin's ideas about equality of peoples started losing ground. The Cyrillic alphabet was introduced into the languages that used the Latin alphabet during Lenin times, and the Russian language was introduced as a language of instruction in all educational institutions.

¹⁸ The historical dimension of the identity of Russianness strengthened the cultural and linguistic self-conscience.

In Norway, as well as in Russia, the main policy was a nationalistic policy, the purpose of which was the establishment of Norwegian as the only language. In Norway, after World War II, the government renounced the policy of Norwegianisation. After 1961, it became legal to teach the Sámi language as well as to teach in the Sámi language. Nevertheless, the Sámi language has retained its position as the dominant language in everyday conversations up to the present days in Guovdageaidnu. The Even language was the dominant language in the old village of Tompo despite continued policy of Russification. In the 1970s, despite the fact that the policy of Norwegianisation was weakened and officially was over, the Sámi language in Guovdageaidnu and the Even language in Topolinoe continued to destabilize. However, we know that youth from both monolingual Sámi and bilingual Norwegian-Sámi families used to speak Norwegian more than now. This fact is often explained by the negative attitude to bilingualism among researchers on multilingualism. At the same time, this period also coincides with the time when the Norwegian language prevailed due to the presence of a mine and military base in Guovdageaidnu. Thus, the Norwegian language was the language that was used in a completely different way and much more in the public sphere compared to before and after that time. Strangely enough, this coincided with the introduction of the Sámi language in schools as the language of instruction and as a school subject. Strengthening the position of the Sámi language in schools did not lead to a simultaneous strengthening of the Sámi language as the language of communication in the village. Perhaps it was easier to identify with the Norwegian language because many people spoke Norwegian in the village. In the 1980s, the situation in Guovdageaidnu changed since the number of soldiers at the military base were reduced and the mine was closed.

In Topolinoe as well as in Guovdageaidnu, there is a wide spread notion that the language depends on the reindeer husbandry. In Topolinoe, the majority of those who we interviewed think that the strengthening of reindeer husbandry is needed to maintain the language. In Guovdageaidnu, Sámi is the language of everyday communication, even for the majority of those who are not engaged in reindeer husbandry. The Sámi language is used in public areas, since many municipal employees of any profession speak Sámi language and, therefore, can speak Sámi with colleagues and customers (Dannemark and Johansen 2001). This applies, for example, to service areas like shops, schools, childcare centres, hospitals, churches, banks, and municipal offices. If those who speak the Sámi language had continued to work only in the primary industries, the Sámi language would not have won new fields of communication. Today, proficiency of the Sámi language gives employment opportunities in many other areas, rather than just in agriculture and reindeer husbandry, and the fact that many members of other professions speak the Sámi language probably strengthens the position of the Sámi language in the society. Hyltenstam, Stroud and Svonni (1999) write:

En befolkning vars språk och kultur är starkt sammankopplad med en enda livsstil, dvs en starkt homogen grupp, är språkligt och kulturellt sårbar och känslig för hastiga förändringar. Om gruppens kultur är uppbyggd kring ett enda näringsfång eller en viss

religiös riktning och om denna "kulturbas" överges, kan hela kulturen riskera att slås ut. En livskraftig minoritet i dagens moderna sasmhälle behöver en viss grad av heterogenitet; deltagande i varierade aktiviteter möjliggör en allsidig användning av språket¹⁹. (p. 75)

In an interview with a woman who is a reindeer herder in Topolinoe, we asked if she thinks that the inhabitants of Topolinoe would speak Even in 20 years. She replied, "Everything depends on education. I think it depends on how the training will take place and whether there will be a sufficient number of teachers who speak the language and teach the language". The Even and Sakha languages are taught in the school of Topolinoe, but the level of knowledge of the Even language is higher than that of the Sakha language. This can be explained by the fact that the Even language in Topolinoe has a very different place than it does the Sakha language. Therefore, it is easy to assume that the strengthening of the language as the language of communication in the village is a necessary part of the work on the revival of the language, along with the strengthening of the language in the school.

Conclusion

The languages that adults speak very little or do not speak at all with their children is strongly threatened. We see a clear difference between Topolinoe and Guovdageaidnu in how the heritage language is the language of communication between the generations. The Even language has fewer domains in Topolinoe than the Sámi language in Guovdageaidnu and therefore, the Even language is more threatened. Living in an environment where there are two or more languages leads to many situations where one has to choose a language. If one language is selected more often than the others, this can lead to a loss of language proficiency, and this will weaken the use of the spoken language. A language that is used in many different social and academic domains or spaces has, of course, a better chance of survival than a language with fewer social and academic domains and spaces. It is also likely that introducing the language to new academic domains will strengthen the language. In teaching models where the purpose is to teach a language other than the heritage language, the heritage language is often perceived as an obstacle that distracts and delays the learning of the language of the majority. Also, in cases where the heritage language is used as an auxiliary language, the heritage language ceases as soon as the student begins to understand another language without translation. When trying to strengthen the links between new knowledge and the heritage language, the heritage language will be involved in many cognitive processes. Those who are accustomed to using their heritage

¹⁹ The people whose language and culture are strongly linked with a particular way of life, i.e., a strong homogeneous group is linguistically and culturally vulnerable and sensitive at times of rapid changes. If the culture of the group is built only on a specific industry or religion, then the whole culture may crash if the cultural base disappears. A strong minority in modern societies requires a certain degree of diversity; participating in various aspects of society allows extensive use of the language.

language in order to understand phenomena of a new language will develop a better proficiency of the heritage language and also gain a deeper metalinguistic understanding.

To save a heritage language as a functional language in all spheres, all means taken to achieve this goal can help to achieve this objective in the long term. In speaking of schools where the first language of the pupils is a language other than English, Cummins writes that "even in an English-medium instructional context, teachers can create an environment that acknowledges, communicates respect for, and promotes students' linguistic and cultural capital" (2006, p. 63). Our impression is that administration and teachers of the school in Topolinoe really want to make the Even language and culture an important part of the daily school life. The Even language and symbols of Even culture are used on signs and posters in the school, as well as on costumes, and in other cultural phenomena. In the junior high school of Guovdageaidnu, the language is strengthened by the fact that the training is conducted in the Sámi language. Both schools share the desire to preserve and strengthen the language, and students support this commitment.

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