Elder South Saami speaker's innovative language vs. prescriptive language:
The impact on language description.

Richard Kowalik, PhD student, Stockholm University. Descriptive Grammars and Typology, Helsinki 27–29 March 2019

Outline

1. The language situation: different languages in use

2. Challenges of a descriptive grammar for South Saami

3. Example: Pro-forms – expansion in function, reanalysis, grammaticalization?

    – the relative pronoun

4. Possible solutions for these challenges

1. The language situation

- Who are the speakers?
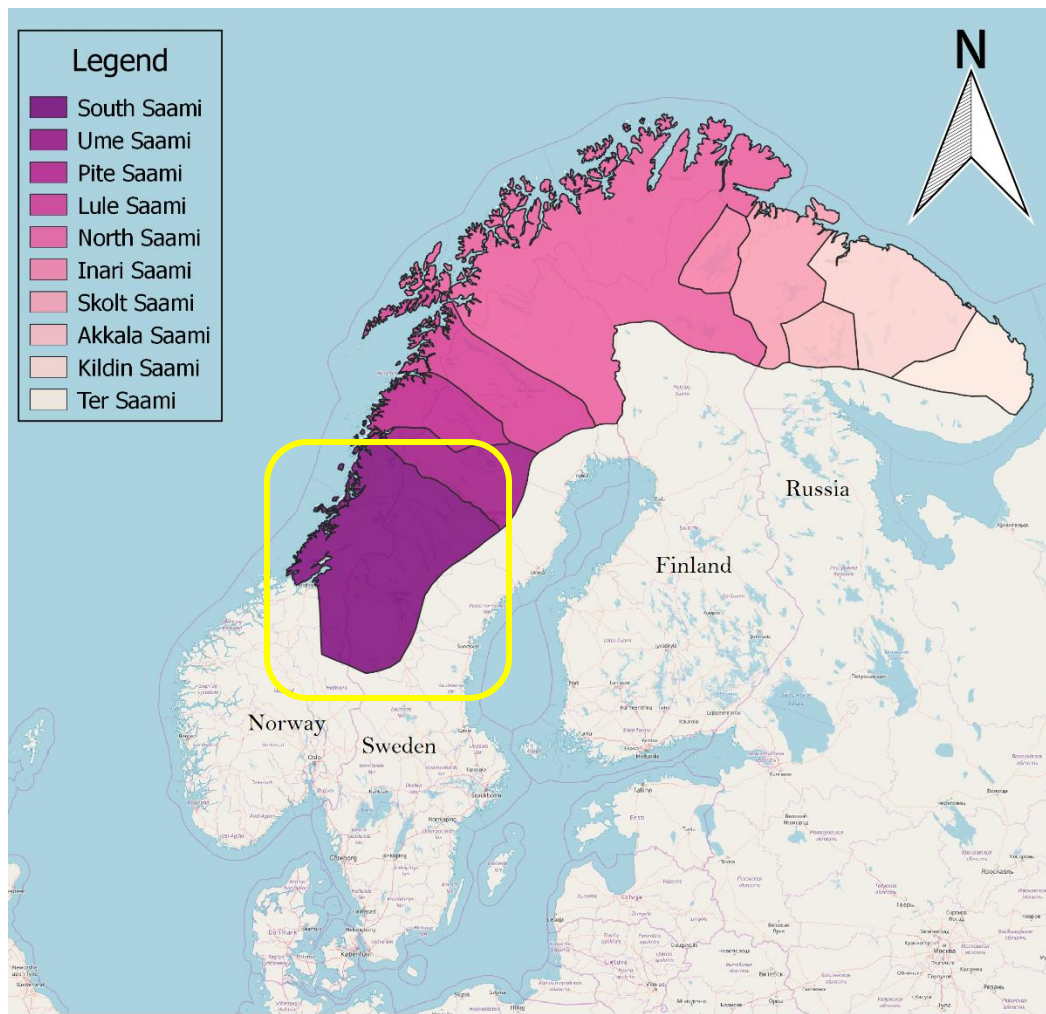
- What are the forces?

1. The language situation

The speakers

- Ca. 300–500 speakers
- Three generations:
  - 75+ years – the "native speakers"
  - ~50 years – the "lost generation"
  - ~20–30 years – L2-speakers. New self-confidence, new opportunities?
  - (new generation of native speakers?)

1. The language situation

The forces 1: Geography

– Large area! (cf. North Saami with its 16–18.000 speakers) However, no natural centre

– Long distance between speakers > variation, familiolects

Legend

- South Saami
- Ume Saami
- Pite Saami
- Lule Saami
- North Saami
- Inari Saami
- Skolt Saami
- Akkala Saami
- Kildin Saami
- Ter Saami

N

Russia

Finland

Norway

Sweden

The Saamic languages based on Sammallahti 1998.
Basemap: Wikimedia unlabelled layer.

0   250   500   750   1000 km

Stockholm University

1. The language situation

The forces 1: Geography

- Large area! (cf. North Saami with its 16–18.000 speakers) However, no natural centre
- Long distance between speakers > variation, familiolects

The forces 2: The standard language

- Official orthography since 1978
- Educational centres for the language (Snåsa, Røros, Lycksele,…) > teacher-based "familiolects"?
- Processes of standardization
- ➤ Insecurity among older speakers about their idiolect (!)

1. The language situation: summary

- Small & endangered language

- Broken tradition in its use

- Different lgs in use by older and younger generation

- Undescribed features

- Variation!

- Prescriptive forces and standardization

2. Challenges of a descriptive grammar for South Saami

- Many L2-speakers have some higher education/schooling in linguistics and are working with the language. Prescriptive language use.

  → *Potential readers of the grammar*
  – Deviation from the standard language can be perceived as incorrect

2. Challenges of a descriptive grammar for South Saami

- Many L2-speakers have some higher education/schooling in linguistics and are working with the language. Prescriptive language use.
  - → *Potential readers of the grammar*
  - – Deviation from the standard language can be perceived as incorrect
- Ongoing processes of language change (grammaticalization, e.g the particle-like use of the – usually fully inflected – negative auxiliary) among the older generation

2. Challenges of a descriptive grammar for South Saami

- General/Broad:
  - Deviation – is variation systematic?
  - Frequency – not all forms occur
- Specific/Narrow:
  - Gap between spoken & standard language
    - L2-speaker: conservative and/or heavily influenced by dominant language
    - Older speaker: innovative language, but also insecure about their idiolect/dialect

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami

- Pronominal DEMs, adnominal DEMs, adverbial DEMs, interrogative, relative, reflexive, two reciprocal, <u>logophoric</u>, indefinite pronouns
- Most of them inflect for case (7) & number (SG, (DU), PL), some for person
  – *At least prescriptively!*

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami

The relative pronouns

- – Identical with interrogative
- – Animacy distinction:

  gie 'who' > human

  mij 'what' > non-human animate & inanimate

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami

(1)   *gie*   *dihte?*
           INT.NOM.SG   3SG
           [+HUM]
           '**Who** is this?'

(2)   *mij*   *daate?*
           INT.NOM.SG   DEM.PROX.NOM.SG
           [-HUM]
           '**What** is that?'

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami

Example paradigms: *mij* 'what' and *gie* 'who' – **from the standard language**

	SG	PL
Nominative	mij	mah
Accusative	maam	mejtie
Genitive	man	mej
Illative	misse	mejtie
Locative	mesnie	mejnie
Elative	mestie	mejstie
Comitative	mejnie	mejgujmie

	SG	PL
Nominative	gie	gieh
Accusative	giem	giejtie
Genitive	gien	giej
Illative	giese	giejtie
Locative	giesnie	giejnie
Elative	giestie	giejstie
Comitative	giejnie	giejgujmie

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami – prescriptive use

(3)

Dah	*guaktah*	*fenomeen-**h***	**mah**
3**PL**	two.NOM.PL	phenomenon-NOM.**PL**	REL.NOM.**PL**

Haspelmath	*gohtje*	*equipolleente*	*jïh*	*antikausatijve*
Haspelmath	name.PRS.3SG	equipollent	and	anticausative

'These two phenomena, which Haspelmath calls equipollent and anti-causative […]' (SIKOR data)

→ *Agreement in number and animacy (inanimate)*

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami – prescriptive use

(4)   *Naan*   *almetj-h*   *eah*   *lyjhkh*
        some   human-NOM.PL   NEG.PRS.3PL   like.PRS.3PL

        almetj-idie   ***gieh***   *leah*   *jeatjhlaakan*
        human-ACC.**PL**   REL.NOM.**PL**   be.PRS.3PL   different

        'Some people don't like people who are different.' (SIKOR data)

→ *Agreement in number and animacy (human)*

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami – younger L2-speakers' use

29. januar kl. 11:33

Naaken gieh daejrieh mij Meråker lea saemiengielesne?

👍 2   3 kommentarer

(5)   *naaken*   *gieh*   *daejrieh*   *mij*   *[…]*
       someone   INT.NOM.PL   know.PRS.3PL   REL.NOM.SG

       'Someone who(PL) know(PL) what Meråker is in Saami?'

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami

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Illative	**misse**	**mejtie**
Locative	**mesnie**	mejnie
Elative	**mestie**	mejstie
Comitative	**mejnie**	mejgujmie

	SG	PL
Nominative	**gie**	**gieh**
Accusative	giem	giejtie
Genitive	**gien**	giej
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3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami

Example paradigms: *mij* 'what' and *gie* 'who' – **based on my data**

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Nominative	mij (76)	mah (4)
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Illative	misse	mejtie
Locative	mesnie	mejnie
Elative	mestie	mejstie
Comitative	mejnie	mejgujmie

	SG	PL
Nominative	gie (8x)	gieh (6x)
Accusative	giem	giejtie
Genitive	gien (3x)	giej
Illative	giese	giejtie
Locative	giesnie	giejnie
Elative	giestie	giejstie
Comitative	giejnie	giejgujmie

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami – native speakers' language use

(6)

dihte	*akte-m*	*aahkove-m*	*utnija,*
3SG	one-ACC.SG	grandchild-ACC.SG	have.PST.3SG

akte-m	***niejte-m,***	***mij***	*aaj*
one-ACC.SG	**girl**-ACC.SG	REL.NOM.SG	also

lij	*seamma*	*båeries*	*goh*	*manne*
be.PST.3SG	same	old	than	1SG

'She had a grandchild, a **girl**, **that** also was the same age as me.' [sma20170923d]

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami – native speakers' language use

(7)   *seamma goh*   **dah**   *{moderne*   *transitspår}*
       same   as   3**PL**   modern   transit.track.PL

       mij   *daelie*   *Bienjedaelie-n*   *bijre*   *gååvnesieh*
       REL.NOM.**SG**   now   Funäs-GEN.SG   around   exist.PRS.3PL

'The same as **these** modern 'transit skiing tracks', **which** now exist around Funäsdalen.' [sma20170922i]

{…} = Swedish

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami – native speakers' language use

(8) ***daah***   *Rutfjelle-n*   *maana-h*

DEM.PROX.NOM.**3PL**   Rutfjell-GEN.SG   child-NOM.PL

mij   *olgene*

REL.NOM.**SG**   outside

'**These** are the Rutfjell's chidren **that** are outside.' [sma20170922i]

3. Example: Pro-forms in South Saami

- Spoken language and standard language differs
- Ongoing processes of expansion in use/grammaticalization among the older generation
- Processes of standardization among younger generations

4. Possible solutions in the description: some suggestions

Two perspectives to be taken into acccount:

- Standardized vs. language in use
- Comparative/typological perspective

4. Possible solutions in the description: some suggestions

- Provide examples

- Transparency about the data
  - Be explicit about where the data comes from
  - Thick metadata

- Context of the feature
  - Other Saamic lgs, other lgs – possibly similar developments?

- State the knowledge about the feature

4. Possible solutions: Transparency

Making the grammar more accessible:

- Transparency about the data

- Focus on natural/free speech

- Provide context & examples

- *"What do we know, what do we not know"*

Gudtjien/Kiitos/Tack!

richard.kowalik@ling.su.se; PhD student, Stockholm University. Descriptive Grammars & Typology, Helsinki 27–29 March 2019