

Valijärvi, Riitta-Liisa & Joshua Wilbur. 2011. The past, present and future of the Pite Saami language: Sociological factors and revitalization efforts. *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* 34(3), 295–329.

The past, present and future of the Pite Saami language: Sociological factors and revitalization efforts

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Our paper is a report on the past, current and future state of the endangered Pite Saami language (aka: Arjeplog Saami) spoken in Swedish Lapland. Our primary data come from interviews with Pite Saami individuals and our field observations. We estimate the vitality of Pite Saami based on the UNESCO Language Vitality Scale, taking into consideration factors such as the number of speakers, language attitudes and the quality of documentation. We also discuss the possible reasons for the decline of Pite Saami, report on the speakers' views of other Saami languages and Swedish, consider whether there is a specific Pite Saami identity, describe revitalization efforts already taking place, and discuss the future prospects of the language.

Keywords Arjeplog Saami, endangered languages, language documentation, language policy, language sociology, minority languages, language revitalization, Pite Saami, Saami, Sweden

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pite Saami is an endangered Finno-Ugric language spoken in and around Arjeplog municipality in Northern Sweden. Pite Saami has not been spoken across the border in Norway for several generations, although some Pite Saami speakers settled there in the past. Pite Saami is also known as Arjeplog Saami as the area it has traditionally been spoken in coincides to some extent with Arjeplog municipality, including parts of the Pite River, Skellefte River and Lais River drainages. We prefer the more frequently used term *Pite Saami* (as opposed to *Arjeplog Saami*) – *Pite* for short – partly because it is also the first choice of the Saami individuals that we interviewed. Ultimately, however, neither term accurately describes the geography of the area traditionally inhabited by Pite Saami speakers.

No survey of the sociological status of the language and its speakers has been conducted previously. A need for such a survey is highlighted by the fact that

Lehtiranta (1992) erroneously claimed in the abstract of his book about Pite morphophonology that the language has died out. Indeed, it continues to be spoken and many speakers are even interested in revitalizing their language.¹

The purpose of our study is to describe the current state of the Pite Saami language focusing on the following sociological factors: where, when and by whom Pite is used, and what the language signifies for Pite Saami speakers and their identity. We estimate the degree of vitality of Pite Saami based on the UNESCO Language Vitality Scale (UNESCO 2003:7–16) relating factors such as national policies, number of speakers, attitudes toward the language and the use of the language in media and official contexts to its chances of survival. Furthermore, we identify some of the reasons for the decline of the Pite Saami language and account for the ways in which the Pite Saami people view their past. Finally, we discuss the methods that have been used to revitalize Pite Saami so far, what its future prospects are, and how ethnic Pite Saami individuals themselves envision the future of the language. Various sociolinguistic factors, historical developments and possible future developments are linked to findings in the literature about language endangerment and revitalization. Our study thus illustrates the particular complexities of language endangerment and revitalization in the Scandinavian context.

2. THE SAAMI LANGUAGES AND PITE SAAMI

The Saami languages belong to the Finno-Ugric branch of the Uralic language family.² They are spoken in the Northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland, and on the Kola Peninsula in Russia. They are most closely related to Baltic-Finnic languages, such as Finnish and Estonian. The Saami languages form a language continuum in which the speakers of neighboring varieties understand each other and share linguistic features.

A total of around 25,000 people speak one of the ten Saami languages traditionally posited by Saami scholars (see Sammallahti 1998:1–2; Rasmussen & Nolan 2011:36–37). The ten languages are listed in Figure 1, which shows where the varieties were spoken historically. One should bear in mind that many speakers have left these historical territories and moved to larger towns elsewhere.

Five Saami languages are spoken in Sweden, namely North Saami with 6,000 speakers, South Saami and Lule Saami with 500 speakers each, and the critically endangered Pite and Ume Saami languages with very few speakers (<http://www.sprakradet.se/>).

Pite Saami is sometimes considered a dialect of Lule Saami (Angéus Kuoljok 2003). This issue is very sensitive as a language should have the same rights and resources as other languages, whereas someone might claim that a dialect should not have access to the same resources for economic or other reasons.

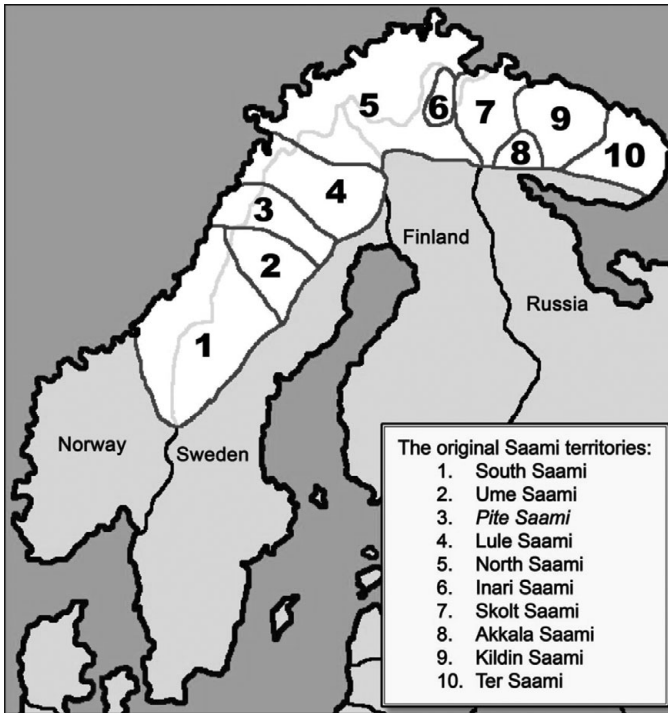


Figure 1. Map of the ten varieties of Saami (based on Bull & Rießler (2007:7) and used with permission).

Hyltenstam (2007) lists different criteria for distinguishing a language from a dialect. Dialects are usually said to have a shared lexis, grammar and written language, and to be mutually intelligible. Unlike languages, dialects are not standardized, and dialects fall within political-administrative boundaries, whereas languages do not. Furthermore, the attitudes that the speakers of a linguistic variant have themselves vis-à-vis their variant determine whether outsiders should consider the variant as a language or as a dialect. We shall return to the speakers' views about the Pite Saami language and the neighboring languages in Section 6.

Linguistically Pite Saami is not radically different from Lule Saami or Ume Saami: the bulk of the vocabulary is the same and only some suffixes are different. The patterns of morpho-phonological changes in Pite Saami fall between Ume and Lule, as one would expect in a language continuum. A detailed dialectal and linguistic survey is beyond the scope of our present study. More information about dialectal differences between Saami languages can be found in Larsson (1985:161–162), Lehtiranta (1992:143–145) and Sammallahti (1998:20–21).

Historically Pite has been regarded as a separate language. Lagercrantz (1926:3), for instance, used the term *Westlappisch* or *Schwedischlappisch* to refer to Pite and

Lule together and he worked on the *Mundart* or ‘dialect’ of Arjeplog. Possibly the fact that the early scholars of the language, Ignác Halász and Israel Ruong also worked on the variety spoken in Arjeplog gave it prestige and the status of being its own entity. Furthermore, the later Lule Saami standardization did not attempt to include Pite Saami.³ Grundström’s (1946–1954) Lule Saami dictionary did not include Pite forms or pronunciations which are peripheral from the point of view of Jokkmokk, nor were they included in Korhonen’s (1979) pocket dictionary. This supports our assumption that Pite Saami should be treated as a full-fledged language and not a dialect.

3. MATERIAL, METHOD AND INTERVIEWEES

Our primary data consist of eight in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted in Swedish in Arjeplog municipality in June, July and August 2009.

The approach is qualitative due to the small number of interviewees. A list of the questions that were asked can be found in Appendix 1, however, the interviewees were also encouraged to speak freely outside the topics. The interviews lasted between 20 and 50 minutes.

Quotations from the interviews are used to illustrate first-hand the attitudes and views of Pite Saami individuals. The original quotes are provided in Swedish along with English translations and the alias of the interviewed person appears within parentheses after the quote. The approximate figures come from our fieldwork observations, while historical data come from previous studies.

Altogether eight individuals – three women and five men – were interviewed. Two of the people interviewed were around 30 years of age. These younger interviewees are the children of Pite Saami speakers who themselves learned or started to learn the language as adults.⁴ One of the interviewees was over 80 years old, while the other five were around 60 years old. Apart from the two younger speakers, all the other interviewees learned Pite at home from their parents and other relatives, and spoke only Pite before beginning school, which was a Swedish-speaking school without any instruction in Saami.

The names of the interviewees have been altered following the ethical guidelines of social research (e.g. Israel & Hay 2006). Table 1 includes the aliases, the approximate ages and the genders of the interviewees. All interviewees signed an ethical consent form. The interviewees were informed about the use of the interviews for an academic publications such as the present paper.

4. DEGREE OF VITALITY OF PITE SAAMI

This section relates the situation of Pite Saami to the Language Vitality Scale of the UNESCO ad hoc group of linguists (UNESCO 2003:7–16). Pite Saami has been

Alias	Age (years)	Gender
Anna	80	Female
Emma	30	Female
Eva	55	Female
Jimmy	33	Male
Jon	60	Male
Karl-Johan	60	Male
Lars-Erik	60	Male
Ulf	60	Male

Table 1 The aliases, approximate ages during the time of the interview, and the gender of the interviewees.

classified as CRITICALLY ENDANGERED, the main criterion for which is that ‘the youngest speakers are grandparents and older and they speak the language partially and infrequently’ (UNESCO 2010). This is the highest degree of endangerment before EXTINCT. This classification depends on additional factors which are discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.1 Absolute number of speakers

According to the UNESCO (2003:8) Language Vitality Scale, the absolute number of speakers of a language is an indication of its chances of survival: a language with a very low number of speakers tends to be more endangered than a language with a larger number of speakers, although this is not always the case. Very small groups can be stable over time, whereas a large number of speakers can go through a very rapid generational shift and the language can die out quickly.

Based on our data, we currently estimate that there are approximately 30 speakers of Pite Saami living today.⁵ We have been able to confirm a minimum of thirteen speakers, three semi-speakers, one fluent non-native speaker and an additional 28 individuals who are reported to be Pite speakers. Most of these people are over 60 years old. The youngest confirmed native-speaker was born in 1977. It is naturally difficult to define who is a speaker of an endangered language and who is not. The main issues that complicate matters in this context are bilingualism, language obsolescence (i.e. the structural changes in the endangered language), and not being able to observe all speakers first hand.

All the native speakers of Pite Saami are also fully fluent speakers of Swedish. There are degrees to how fluent each speaker is in each of the languages that he/she knows. Hansegård (2007) lists criteria for knowing a language which include fluency, width and range of vocabulary, reading and writing skills, creative use of the language, intellectual argumentation in the language, and the use of the language for affective functions. Most Pite Saami people do not use the language for reading and writing

or intellectual argumentation in the academic sense, or in the public sphere. Some Pite Saami people have limited vocabulary or trouble remembering and using words actively as they do not use the language on a daily basis. This is illustrated by quotes (1)–(4), which are the responses the interviewees gave when asked to estimate their own language skills.

- (1) *jag tycker att jag pratar ju, jag tror jag pratar flytande . . . det är vissa ord som jag glömmer men då tittar vi i dom här ordböckerna, aha det var så och då kommer jag ju på det* (Eva)

‘I think that I speak, well, I think that I speak fluently . . . there are some words that I forget but then we look in these dictionaries, ah, that’s how it was, and then I remember it’

- (2) *jag tycker att det är lätt men det finns mycket att lära sig än och visst glömmer man massa ord när man inte pratar hela tiden* (Lars-Erik)

‘I think that it’s easy but there’s still a lot to learn and sure you forget a lot of words when you don’t speak all the time’

- (3) *tala det går väl ganska bra, om man säger så här vardagssamiskan men om då det kommer att bli några mera specialord och sånt där vad, då kan det, men så är det med alla språk* (Karl-Johan)

‘speaking is quite okay, if we are talking about everyday Saami but if there are some more special words and stuff like that, then it can, but that’s the case with all languages’

- (4) *man känner till dom flesta orden . . . utan att fråga nån* (Anna)

‘you recognize most of the words . . . without asking anyone’

It has been noted that when a language becomes endangered, it not only loses speakers and domains, but it also becomes structurally impoverished (Campbell & Muntzel 1992; Dal Negro 2004). This happens through intensive language contact: the majority language is spoken more often and starts to influence the structures of the minority language. For example, Svonni (1993) has noted that, in the North Saami of younger speakers, more marked grammatical forms are not used correctly, i.e. in the manner expected by the majority of more conservative speakers, and the syntax of North Saami is heavily influenced by Swedish. The same applies to Pite Saami, and although it is outside the scope of this study to account for the structural changes in what could be called, ‘modern’ Pite Saami, we can say that e.g. the dual person and some of the case suffixes are not used by all Pite Saami speakers. Language obsolescence can lead to language shift, yet we do not want to exclude people who use a more analytic, more Swedish-like variant of Pite from the list of speakers.

In addition to the confirmed speakers, there are those people who can be classified as receptive bilinguals (Wei 2000:5), i.e. those who understand the Pite Saami language in its spoken form but do not use it themselves. In addition, we are aware of at least three individuals who are in the process of learning the language as adults. One of them has gained a fairly high level of fluency but still feels that he has not mastered all the forms, as quote (5) illustrates.

- (5) *det tar tid, det svåra är att vara spontan utan att tänka efter, för att oavsett vad jag ska säga så måste jag tänka på vilken form jag ska använda och det gör att jag inte helst säger så mycket* (Jimmy)

‘it takes time, it’s difficult to be spontaneous without thinking, because no matter what I’m going to say, I have to think about which form I should use and because of that I don’t say so much’

Jimmy also pointed out that those speakers who learned the language as children are less worried about grammar and making mistakes.

4.2 Proportion of speakers in the total population

The UNESCO Language Vitality Scale (2003:9) states that if all the people in the reference population speak the endangered language its chances of survival are greater than if the minority constitutes a very small part of the overall population. The proportion of Pite speakers is extremely small relative to the total Swedish population and even within the Arjeplog community, which has approximately 3,100 inhabitants. There are speakers of North Saami, South Saami and Lule Saami in the Arjeplog community as well, and these languages have a fairly high visibility. For example, the local museum Silvermuséet has signs and brochures in Lule Saami but not in Pite, although this is mostly due to the lack of a Pite Saami orthography. Furthermore, Saami-language radio and television programming tends to be in North Saami or occasionally in Lule or South Saami, but never in Pite Saami. Local day care for children provides mother tongue classes in North Saami, and some nurses who look after the elderly are trained in North Saami.

In summary, the Pite Saami people who live in towns in Lapland or elsewhere are surrounded by Swedish speakers. Even at home, Swedish tends to dominate as Pite Saami speakers have often married a non-Saami and they have not used the language with their children and only use it when speaking to other Saami speakers on rare occasions.

4.3 Intergenerational language transmission

Fishman (1991) identifies intergenerational transmission as the most important factor in the survival prospects of an endangered language. In other words, if the endangered language is still learned by children, it can survive.

The youngest speaker of Pite Saami speaks the language to his two children when he is at home; the children also speak the language with their grandparents, yet the two children are going to North Saami classes at a day care center in Arjeplog. Another interviewee said that she speaks Pite Saami with her grandchildren sometimes and she sings to them in Pite Saami. But otherwise, we are not aware of any other children who are exposed to Pite Saami on a regular basis at all.

4.4 Trends in existing language domains

The UNESCO Language Vitality Scale (2003:9–10) states that if the minority language is the language of all interaction, thinking, creativity and social contexts, it is more likely to survive than a language that is only used in very limited contexts, such as in traditional festivals or other special occasions.

Pite Saami is still used at home between (adult) children and parents, between husbands and wives, and when meeting relatives, even on the phone. It is also used when herding reindeer, hunting or fishing. However, it appears that in all of these contexts and between all Pite Saami speakers, Swedish is also used somewhat regularly. Furthermore, the interviewees reported that they use Pite Saami with those acquaintances that know any variety of Saami in town or at Saami events. These occasions to speak are regarded with joy and pride, as quotations (6)–(7) show. In example (8), Karl-Johan talks about a tendency for inter-Saami conversations to be conducted in Swedish with some Saami flavor. We have also observed that a conversation may begin in Saami but then the speakers switch over to Swedish because they feel more confident in Swedish.

- (6) *om jag träffar nån äldre same som jag vet pratar samiska så börjar jag prata samiska för jag tycker det är roligt* (Eva)

‘if I meet an older Saami who I know speaks Saami I start speaking Saami because I think that it’s fun’

- (7) *samiska jag pratar så fort tillfälle ges, när jag träffar samer, umgås med dem* (Lars-Erik)

‘I speak Saami whenever given the chance, when I meet Saami people, socialize with them’

- (8) *fast det blir ju mest svenska som vi pratar men i alla fall brukar vi inleda, ja, prata lite samiska, fraser* (Karl-Johan)

‘although it’s mostly Swedish that we end up speaking but in any case we tend to initiate things, yes, speak a little Saami, phrases’

Pite Saami is also spoken with linguists who have come to Arjeplog to work on the language. For instance, the Pite Saami Documentation Project has gathered

recordings with speakers concerning a variety of topics and genres such as local and personal histories, food, childhood memories, conversations, descriptions of traditional objects, Saami pastimes and livelihood, and traditional tales, in addition to collecting purely linguistic data.

Pite is occasionally used in religious contexts: some of the active Pite Saami speakers have read the scriptures in Pite Saami in church as part of the service by adapting the Lule Saami bible text to Pite, or they have translated a North Saami hymn into Pite Saami and sung it at a funeral. The local pastor (a Swede) is very positive about Saami and has plans to include it in the service more often, e.g. once a month. One Pite activist often explains local history and etymologies of local place names at various public events and even at weddings. However, Pite is not used in any official context, i.e. in education, government or public offices.

The Pite situation is a typical instance of what Fishman (1967) calls EXTENDED DIGLOSSIA, where the high prestige language, i.e. Swedish, is used in all official domains and in writing, whereas the low prestige language, i.e. Pite, is used in private domains. Extended diglossia does not necessarily lead to language loss and the situation can be stabilized; it is crucial that the minority language maintains a meaningful function in culturally important domains (UNESCO 2003:11). In the Scandinavian context the use of a minority language only for certain functions was labeled as SEMI-LINGUALISM by Hansegård (1968), however the term implies that the speaker of a minority language in Swedish Lapland is not fully fluent in any language, which is obviously not the case.

The fact that Pite is used when engaging in culturally important Saami activities, such as reindeer herding or religious ceremonies, strengthens the position of the language. Yet the number of speakers who regularly use Pite Saami in the private domain is extremely small. On top of this, Swedish is far too dominant in the private domain as well. This makes the language critically endangered, even if the status of Pite may on the surface appear more vital than, for example, the state of a language that is used only in ceremonial contexts.

4.5 Response to new domains

The survival of an endangered language further depends on how well it responds to new domains (UNESCO 2003:11–12). By new domains we mean the new social contexts in which the endangered language can be used, such as non-traditional jobs or education and new media, which include newspapers, Internet, TV and radio. The UNESCO Language Vitality Scale (2003:11) predicts that if the language is used in such new domains and in new media it has a better chance of survival.

There are Saami language programs and daily news broadcasts on the radio and on television in Sweden co-produced with and broadcast in Finland and Norway. In Sweden there is a monthly magazine called *Samefolket*, dealing with Saami cultural

and social issues written in Swedish and to a small extent in Saami, and a quarterly youth magazine *Nuorat*, written primarily in Swedish. In Norway there are several daily newspapers in Saami. Most of the Saami programs and articles are, however, in North Saami, although Lule and South Saami are also used. North Saami is particularly used in politics.

However, Pite Saami is not used on television, on the radio or in newspapers. Pite is used to a small extent on the Internet by Peter Steggo, whose father is a speaker of Pite and who has himself learned the language as an adult. Steggo has transcribed Pite Saami stories and posted them on his blog called 'Muvárbbbe' [My heritage] (<http://arbbe.blogspot.com/>). The Pite Saami Documentation Project has a website (see <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/psdp/>), which includes some linguistic material and helps to raise awareness of the language. (See Appendix 2 for a list of relevant websites.)

Saami languages are taught at various institutions and at various levels in Sweden. Both Umeå University and Uppsala University offer courses in North Saami, South Saami and Lule Saami. *Samernas utbildningscentrum* [The Saami people's education center] in Jokkmokk organizes language courses for adults and for high school students in North, South and Lule Saami, courses for Saami interpreters and courses in traditional handicraft, food and reindeer husbandry (<http://www.samernas.se/>). Saami languages can be studied in distance learning courses online. There are so-called *sameskolor* [Saami schools] and day care centers in five municipalities in Sweden; however, Arjeplog is not one of these.⁶ In other schools, Saami students can choose an integrated program which includes the study of Saami language, and courses in history and crafts with a Saami orientation (<http://www.skolverket.se/>).

Pite Saami is, however, not taught at all in the official education system. Pite Saami courses did, however, take place, for example, in the summer of 2009 and again in 2010. These consisted of a two-week intensive course in Pite Saami with a strong focus on reading and writing skills for a beginner group and an advanced group. Participation was limited to a small and selected number of ethnic Pite Saami people. Section 8 below contains more information about Pite Saami courses.

4.6 Materials for language education and literacy

The survival of an endangered language is dependent on the materials available for language education and literacy (UNESCO 2003:12). Good teaching and learning materials may help to increase the number of speakers and spread the language to new domains. Literacy in the language gives it higher status (Grenoble & Whaley 2006). This does not, however, mean that illiterate people cannot revitalize their language. Literacy can be seen as a supportive measure. It can be seen as particularly useful in Sweden in a context where people are used to learning by means of the written word.

Pite has no established orthography, nor are there any dictionaries or textbooks. Instead, Lule Saami textbooks or materials developed by the course leaders have been

adapted for use in the few Pite Saami courses that have been organized in 2006–2011. There are older text collections, recordings and grammars, which are not accessible to the average Pite speaker either because they are only available through archives for a fee, or written in metalanguages not understood by most speakers, e.g. Lehtiranta's (1992) grammar and text collection in Finnish, Lagercrantz's (1926) grammatical description and Ruong's (1943) dissertation in German, and Halász's (1893, 1896) work from the 1890s in Hungarian.

That said, a Pite Saami wordlist project is being carried out by a group of Pite Saami speakers in Arjeplog. The wordlist consists of Pite Saami headwords and Swedish translations; in addition, grammatical information and English and Norwegian translations are provided for a number of entries. Upon completion, this wordlist should be useful as a Pite Saami pedagogical resource and as a reference for creating an orthography standard for both the creation of future educational materials and for everyday use.

One should bear in mind that teaching materials are not enough. Even if they were, qualified teachers are needed also, and the fourth evaluation report on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages criticizes the lack of teacher training in the official minority languages in Sweden (ECRML 2011:11).

4.7 Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies

The UNESCO Language Vitality Scale (2003:12–14) states that the future of an endangered language depends on the policies that support it and the general attitudes of the dominant society toward the endangered language.

Sweden has an explicit official minority language policy. Sweden signed and ratified the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on 9 February 2000 (Council of Europe 2011). Saami (all variants) has been one of Sweden's official minority languages alongside Meänkieli, Sweden Finnish, Yiddish and Romani since 2000 (Svenska språknämnden 2003). Until recently, Saami could be used when dealing with authorities and in court only in Kiruna, Gällivare, Jokkmokk and Arjeplog municipalities (<http://www.sprakradet.se/>). The new law regarding national minorities and minority languages came into effect on 1 January 2010 (Regering 2008). It is different from the previous law, which can be seen more as an acknowledgement of Saami rights, because the new law aims to keep the languages alive. The number of municipalities in which Saami can be used officially has been increased as a result and the law emphasizes the need to provide care for both children and the elderly in Saami.

Receiving minority language status was good for the Saami languages in Sweden in various ways, even prior to the new law; thus, for instance, the number of hours

that Saami TV and radio programs are broadcast has increased, Saami education is supported, there are online Saami dictionaries, and Saami place names are being studied. The general attitude in Swedish society toward Saami and Saami language appears to be relatively positive, which the interviewees also confirmed. Thus, one can say that the implementation of Sweden's minority language policy is constructive.

The new status as a minority language and the new legislation have, however, had little effect on Pite Saami. This is partly because the law treats the five Saami languages spoken in Sweden as a single entity under the term *samiska*. The law thus does not specifically support PITE Saami as an autonomous minority language, which leaves much room for interpretation of how to implement Saami language support at a local level. For instance, in Arjeplog municipality, home to many Pite Saami people, it is possible to receive municipal services in North Saami but not in Pite Saami. Courses in North Saami are arranged for nursing home employees and day care classes are conducted at least partly in North Saami. Official documents are translated into Lule, North and South Saami. Similarly but at a regional level, the website of the Swedish Saami Parliament, *Sametinget*, is in North, Lule and South Saami.

It is also worth noting that the fourth and latest Committee of Experts' evaluation report on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Sweden states that 'it has become increasingly clear that there is a need to differentiate between at least three languages, North, Lule and South Sami, for example in the field of education' (ECRML 2011:5). Pite Saami is not mentioned.

4.8 Community members' attitudes towards their own language

A positive attitude among the speakers of an endangered language is essential to the survival of the language for the simple reason that if the speakers feel ashamed about their language or otherwise negative toward their language, they will stop speaking it (UNESCO 2003:14–15).

Our impression is that many Pite Saami speakers and people of Pite Saami origin have a positive attitude towards their language and language revitalization efforts. The positively minded people are naturally the ones that an outsider researcher comes into contact with. That said, there are also those who are indifferent to the survival of Pite and those who perhaps would want to be more active but have other commitments. We have not heard of anyone actively supporting language shift towards Swedish but, in practice, an indifferent attitude will lead to language shift. One of the biggest obstacles for regaining one's language can be an attitude considering some grammatical structures to be too complicated or difficult, as example (9) shows.

- (9) *vad folk är rädda för när dom ska läsa dom här kurserna är grammatiken* (Eva)
'what people are afraid of when they're going to take these classes is grammar'

The positive attitude that we witnessed seems to be a recent phenomenon: before the 1990s Saami speakers in Sweden were shy about their language whereas now it seems everyone wants to be a Saami, as Karl-Johan says in example (10).⁷

- (10) *nu är det ju väldigt positivt . . . det är många som vill vara same, för 50 år sen var det ingen som ville vara same, idag vill alla vara same* (Karl-Johan)
 ‘now it’s very positive . . . there are many people who want to be Saami, 50 years ago nobody wanted to be a Saami, now everyone wants to be a Saami’

4.9 Type and quality of documentation

If an endangered language has been well documented, its chances of survival are increased (UNESCO 2003:16–17). Documentary linguistics is a fairly new sub-discipline of linguistics; its purpose is to provide a ‘lasting, multipurpose record’ of the linguistic practices of a certain speech community (Himmelman 2006:1). This is often done by collecting video and audio recordings, texts, pictures, wordlists, etc., which can then be used to create language learning materials for revitalization purposes. The situation for Pite Saami may appear positive in this respect, as there is a wealth of material from the late 19th century until the present day; however, a good portion of these materials does not meet modern linguistic documentation standards, and much of it is inaccessible to Pite Saami community members because it is in Hungarian, Finnish or German.

The Hungarian scholar Ignác Halász worked with a Pite Saami consultant Else Britta and her family in Norway. and published, inter alia, a text collection (Halász 1893) and a vocabulary list with a short section on grammar (in Hungarian) (Halász 1896). Karl Bernhard Wiklund, professor of Finno-Ugric languages at Uppsala University, collected some phonological and morphological data from speakers of Pite Saami which can be found in his studies on consonant gradation (see e.g. Wiklund 1914). The Norwegian linguist Just Knud Qvigstad collected a few stories from a Pite Saami speaker in Norway, and they appeared in his text collection (Qvigstad 1929). The Finnish linguist Eliel Lagercrantz worked with two consultants and published a grammar (Lagercrantz 1926), vocabulary material in his West Saami dictionary (Lagercrantz 1939) and Pite texts as part of his Saami text collections (Lagercrantz 1957, 1963), all of which is in German. Israel Ruong, who was a professor of Finno-Ugric languages at Uppsala University, was a native speaker of Pite Saami and made recordings and extensive notes which can be found in archives in Sweden. Some of the recordings are transcribed in Lehtiranta’s (1992) book in Finnish. Ruong published his thesis on verbal derivation in Pite Saami in German (Ruong 1943).

At the moment, at least three Pite Saami documentation and description projects are in progress. *Insamling av pitesamiska ord* [Collection of Pite Saami words] is funded by the European Union and the Saami Parliament, and is run by *Arjeplogs sameförening* [the Arjeplog Saami association]. The aim of the project is to produce

a wordlist and, eventually, language learning materials; in the process, a standard orthography should also result. The project has already collected several thousand words. The Pite Saami Documentation Project directed by Joshua Wilbur was funded (2008–2011) by the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages fund. The expected outcomes are an extensive documentation of Pite and a forthcoming Ph.D. thesis consisting of the documentation corpus, a grammatical description of the language and a detailed analysis of morpho-phonological alternations in Pite. The Pite Saami Documentation Project has recorded both monologues and conversations with the remaining speakers in both audio and video, in addition to collecting grammatical information via elicitation sessions. The data are in the process of being transcribed, translated and annotated. Finally, the current study is part of a post-doctoral project funded by Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskaps-Samfundet [Royal Society of Humanities] in Uppsala.

5. REASONS FOR THE DECLINE OF PITE SAAMI

Languages can become endangered due to a natural catastrophe like a flood or an earthquake, or to extreme political circumstances such as war or genocide; more often, however, endangerment is caused by a combination of complex socio-economic, political, and cultural factors (see Fishman 1991; Nettle & Romaine 2000). Precursors to the latter cause include the introduction of a Western education system (Aikhenvald 2002), suppressive ideologies, such as the ONE STATE – ONE LANGUAGE ideology (Dorian 1998), and the need to know the majority language for economic reasons (Dorian 1981).

The main reasons for the state of endangerment that Pite is currently in are the arrival of the Swedish school system and the negative, often hostile attitude among the majority population toward speakers of any Saami language in the past. The early missionary and assimilatory ideology of the 17th and 18th century, and the later racist or segregational ideology which reigned in Sweden until the 1950s, led Saami parents to cease talking Saami to their children in order to fit in and provide better social and economic prospects for them as well as to prevent their children from being discriminated against; speaking Saami was not allowed in schools, and linguistic assimilation to Swedish followed (Hyltenstam & Stroud 1991:114–152; Huss 1999). These historical facts are echoed in quotes (11) and (12).

- (11) *det var väl fullt att kunna prata samiskan, då har föräldrarna för att skydda barnen mot det svenska samhället så har man dels inte lärt dom samiska för att assimileras i det svenska samhället . . . och sen finns det också dom föräldrar som varken har berättat vilken härkomst man kommer ifrån, man har inte ens berättat att man är same (Lars-Erik)*

‘it was horrible to know how to speak Saami, so parents, in order to protect their children against Swedish society, they didn’t, on the one hand, teach them Saami in order to be assimilated into Swedish society . . . and then there are also parents who haven’t even mentioned which background you come from, you haven’t even been told that you are a Saami’

- (12) *så där för 50 år sen så var det liksom litegrann fulgt att tala samiska och att vara same, det var inte vackert, och man blev som mobbad på nåt vis . . . det var många som nästan bytte identitet, dom tog, bytte namn* (Karl-Johan)
 ‘about 50 years ago it was kind of a bit ugly to speak Saami and be a Saami, it wasn’t beautiful, and one got bullied in a way . . . there were many who almost changed their identity, they took, they changed names’

Urbanization and intermarriage, and the resulting isolation and missed opportunities to speak the language have also contributed to the endangerment of Saami. Anna discusses the problems with intermarriage in (13).

- (13) *jag tror att det är just det här ingiftet som gör mycket, att gifter man sig med en icke-same, speciellt om det är en kvinnlig en, och så måste prata det språket som hon eller han kan* (Anna)
 ‘I believe that it’s exactly this intermarriage that does a lot, that if you marry a non-Saami, especially if you’re a woman, then you have to speak the language that she or he [the spouse] knows’

The arrival of North Saami speakers in Arjeplog in 1919 as a result of what is known as *tvångsförflyttning* [enforced migration] during which the borders between Sweden and Finland-Russia closed, may have speeded up the decline in the number of Pite Saami speakers, as the newly arrived North Saami restricted the reindeer herding opportunities of the local population. In addition, one could even speculate that the presence of the North Saami speakers accelerated language shift by requiring the local Pite Saami people to adjust their language practices to either North Saami or Swedish in order to make communication with them possible.

Finally, the fact that the Pite Saami population has always been small has made it more vulnerable. Only rough estimates can be given of the number of Pite Saami speakers. According to Wiklund (1921:6), there were approximately 600 Saami in Arjeplog in 1910, at most half of whom spoke Pite Saami. Manker (1953) estimates that the number of Pite-Saami-speaking reindeer herders was approximately 70 in the 1940s. Lehtiranta (1992:9) estimates that the overall number of Pite speakers was below 150 in the 1940s. Our interviewee, Jon, estimates that 50 years ago (i.e. in 1970), 50 people spoke Pite Saami along the Pite river. He says that at that time Pite was spoken everywhere in town and on farms.

The loss of the language is a cause of frustration and regret for the younger Pite Saami people, as illustrated in examples (14) and (15).

(14) *jag sade ju det, vad tokigt, först tar dom av, dom språket, och sen så ska man lära sig det igen* (Emma)

‘as I said, how stupid, first they take it away, the language, and then one should learn it again’

(15) *jag har jobbat inom vården här i Arjeplog också det har varit många äldre som dom går tillbaka till och kan bara prata samiska, och då har jag tänkt, varför kan jag inte, så enkelt det hade varit att förstå varanda liksom* (Emma)

‘I have worked in health care here in Arjeplog and there have been many old people who have gone back and can only speak Saami, and then I’ve thought, why don’t I know how to, it would have been so easy to understand each other’

However, despite the above, everything that is Saami is now experiencing what one of the interviewees calls a renaissance: there is great pride in being a Saami, which is what Ulf expresses in (16).

(16) *nu har det ju blivit förändring i samhället också och nu jag är stolt när jag får prata mitt språk* (Ulf)

‘there’s been a change in society and now I’m proud when I get to speak my language’

Unfortunately, with the small number and advanced age of the available Pite speakers, this renaissance has likely come too late to cause a reversal of this trend.

6. PITE VS. SWEDISH AND OTHER SAAMI LANGUAGES

When asked to compare Saami and Swedish, or the connotations the two languages have for them, the interviewees said that Saami was more expressive, often only one word was needed when in Swedish more are required, as quotes (17) and (18) show (see also Korhonen 2007:215–224). Examples of words that do not have simple, one-to-one English or Swedish equivalents are: *sjkilttjot* ‘to form ice on the lichen’, *sjuohppit* ‘to catch reindeer with a lasso’, *skidnak* ‘a thin, sick reindeer’ and *tjalkak* ‘a reindeer calf only a few weeks old’. It was considered easier to speak about snow and weather in general in Saami, and stories in Saami were considered better (19).

(17) *kanske måste jag få förklara mig mer i svenskan än vad jag kanske behöver i samiskan . . . ibland måste man nästan skriva en roman* (Jon)

‘maybe I have to explain more in Swedish than what I might need to in Saami . . . sometimes you have to almost write a novel’

- (18) *så mycket mer beskrivande, den beskriver mycket mer, med ett ord kan du beskriva mer* (Emma)
 ‘it’s so much more descriptive, it describes much more, with one word you can say so much more’
- (19) *det går inte riktigt att översätta till svenskan och få med den här knorven som kanske innebär att man skrattar åt den eller den som är lite poäng i hela berättelsen* (Lars-Erik)
 ‘it’s not possible to translate to Swedish the thing that maybe would make you laugh or be the main idea in the story’

Expressing oneself was said to be easier in Swedish because Saami is used so rarely:

- (20) *att uttrycka sig går ju lätt . . . enklare på svenska än på samiska, så att svenskan är ju enklare . . . för mig, jag har ju sen sju års ålder pratat svenska* (Karl-Johan)
 ‘to express oneself is eas . . . simpler in Swedish than in Saami, so that Swedish is simpler for me, I have been speaking Swedish since I was seven years old’

Jimmy was enthusiastic about how much more regular Saami grammar is in comparison with Swedish, in which words are hardly inflected at all.

- (21) *jag gillar att det är regelbundet även om det är jätte svårt så är det väldigt regelbundet* (Jimmy)
 ‘I like the fact that it’s regular, although it’s difficult, it is very regular’

The interviewees said it was difficult to use Pite when speaking about things not related to Saami culture, such as television programs.

Speakers of Pite reported that they can understand Lule Saami very well. The main difference is found in pronunciation, as quotes (22) and (23) show.

- (22) *jag tycker många ord är lika, det är bara uttalet som är lite olika* (Eva)
 ‘I think that many words are the same, it’s just the pronunciation that is a little bit different’
- (23) *det är nog några bokstäver det är skillnad* (Karl-Johan)
 ‘there are some letters which are different’

In (24) Jon feels that the two languages melt together and, in (25), Jimmy thinks that there are dialects of Swedish which are more different from each other than Pite and Lule Saami are.

- (24) *jag tycker att dom är så nära varandra att dom bara flyter ihop* (Jon)
 ‘I think that they are so close to each other that they just flow together’

- (25) *om man jämför med svenska så känns det som det finns ju svenska dialekter som är så olika standardspråket att dom borde vara, att det skulle kunna vara olika språk . . . jag kanske inte tycker det är ett eget språk* (Jimmy)
 ‘if you compare [it] with Swedish, then there are Swedish dialects that are so different from the standard language that they should be, they could be different languages . . . I perhaps don’t think that it’s a language of its own’

Lule was said to have different vowel and consonant changes, and one interviewee felt that the pronunciation of Lule is ‘mer utdragande’ [more stretched out] (Anna).

The interviewees reported that they can understand a little bit of North Saami as well, although some words in North Saami look similar but have a different meaning. They also reported that the local North Saami in Arjeplog understand Pite as they have lived there for a long time. Anna went to school with North Saami children and can understand the language for this reason as well as due to exposure while working with reindeer along with North Saami families. North Saami was said to resemble Finnish more than Pite Saami does and is spoken more quickly than Pite; ‘den drar mer mot finskan och man pratar snabbare’ [it sounds more like Finnish and you speak (it) faster] (Karl-Johan) and for this reason it is difficult to understand North Saami. Two interviewees reported having been able to speak Pite with an Inari Saami speaker. Ume Saami was not understood by some of the speakers and they grouped it together with South Saami. Some of the interviewees would rather not focus on the differences between the languages, as in (26).

- (26) *jag vet inte varför man ska skilja på pitesamiska och dom övriga samiska* (Lars-Erik)
 ‘I don’t know why one should differentiate between Pite Saami and the other Saami languages’

7. PITE SAAMI IDENTITY

Andrea Amft (2000:162–188) has studied a variety of aspects of Saami identity and how a Saami person is defined. Two main definitions emerge from the study: a person can be regarded as a Saami either because they own reindeer and are Saami by birth or because of an emotional attachment to the Saami community.

The first view relates to two laws: *Rennäringslagen* [the reindeer husbandry law] and *Sametingslagen* [the Saami Parliament law]. According to *Rennäringslagen* (<http://www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/19710437.HTM>) from 1971 if you are of Saami origin and a member of a *siida* or *sameby* [Saami village], you have the right to herd reindeer. According to *Sametingslagen* (<http://www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/19921433.HTM>) from 1992: you can vote if you regard yourself as a Saami AND (i) you prove that Saami has been your home language, OR (ii) one of your parents or

grandparents has or has had Saami as a home language, OR (iii) you have a parent that is on the Saami Parliament voting register.

The idea that a proper, authentic Saami should have reindeer and be a nomad was promoted in the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (see Amft 1998). This idea was based on racial/biological arguments that the Saami were a lower race and not physically suitable for e.g. farming; for this reason they could only survive as reindeer herders (see Lundmark 1998:77ff.). The state treated the reindeer-herding mountain Saami people differently from other Saami by creating so-called 'nomad schools' for them; the other Saami were meant to assimilate to the rest of the population (Sjölin 1996; Svonni 2007; see also Pääkkönen 2008). Possibly for this reason, reindeer herders have a better knowledge of Saami than non-reindeer herders. In addition to reindeer, fishing, hunting, the environment and the natural world are important for Saami identity (Ruong 1982). External symbols of this identity are the traditional Saami handicraft (*duodji*), the traditional clothing, Saami singing (*jojk*), the Saami dwelling (*kåta*) and language.

The same reindeer vs. no-reindeer dichotomy is present in the Pite Saami community. When a Saami has reindeer, his or her identity is self-evident:

(27) *jag har ju fått tillhöra en sameby hela tiden, jag har min identitet med renar och allt, så jag är en väldigt lyckligt lottad man i det fallet* (Jon)

'I have always been able to be a member of a Sameby, I have my identity with reindeer and all that, so I'm a very lucky man in this instance'

Language becomes a marker of identity in the absence of reindeer or the other symbols, as quotes (28)–(31) show.

(28) *jag har språket i mitt hjärta och det är det som jag tycker är det viktigaste i det samiska, jag är ju inte en renskötande same, vi har ju haft kor, vi har levt som småbönder* (Eva)

'I have the language in my heart and that's the most important thing in all that's Saami, after all, I am not a reindeer Saami, we had cows, we lived as small-scale farmers'

(29) *det är en slags identitet, språket* (Eva)

'it's a kind of an identity, language'

(30) *vi har fått lära oss att det samiska är nåt att vara stolt över . . . jag har aldrig känt mig särskilt samiskt, och att kunna samiska stärker ens identitet* (Jimmy)

'we learned that all that's Saami is something to be proud of . . . I've never felt particularly Saami, and knowing the language strengthens one's identity'

(31) *både pitesamiska och det samiska . . . stärker ju min identitet* (Lars-Erik)

'both Pite Saami and all the Saami things strengthen my identity'

The Pite Saami language is of great personal importance for the interviewees, as evidenced in (32)–(33).

- (32) *det är ju mitt modersmål och betyder ju mycket för mig, och jag vill ju gärna bevara det* (Karl-Johan)
 ‘it’s my mother tongue and means a lot to me and I would like to keep it alive’
- (33) *det betyder så mycket så, ojoj, jag skulle ju aldrig vilja bli av med den, det är hela mitt liv* (Anna)
 ‘it means so much, ooh, I’d never want to get rid of it, it’s my entire life’

Another dichotomy in Saami society is the difference in the role that language skills play in determining identity between younger and older generations. According to Amft (2000:164–165), older generations think that those who speak Saami are Saami, whereas younger generations feel one does not have to speak the language to be Saami. They think that only Saami people have the desire to learn Saami. Young Saami have double identities: they can be members of both the majority community and the Saami community, as quotes (34) and (35) show.

- (34) *jag är både same och svensk* (Eva)
 ‘I’m both a Saami and a Swede’
- (35) *jag vet inte riktigt om jag är svensk eller same, jag har bott i södra Sverige . . .*
 (Emma)
 ‘I don’t know if I’m Swedish or Saami, I’ve lived in Southern Sweden’

A special Pite Saami identity is a new concept. The interviewees tended to identify themselves as Saami in general and not specifically as Pite Saami. However, PITE SAAMI was the name of the language for the interviewees. One person thought that there was no such thing as a Pite Saami identity. When pushed to state why someone is a Pite Saami, the interviewees talked about the connection to (places in) Arjeplog, the fact that they all come from the same place, or that they are members of certain families. One interviewee mentioned the traditional Pite clothing as part of the identity. Quotes (36) and (37) summarise the general discussion about Pite identity.

- (36) *man tänker nog mera i dom samiska termerna, och att då språket är lite eljest, jag vet inte, jag känn-, naturligtvis att att man känner en större samhörighet till nån som pratar exakt samma språk som jag* (Jon)
 ‘one thinks in Saami terms, and the language is a bit different, I don’t know, I feel, naturally you feel a greater sense of belonging to those who speak exactly the same language as me’

- (37) *man vet att man kommer från Arjeplog, man känner att även om det finns skillnader inom Arjeplog när det gäller språket, så pratar man samma språk, och att man är same och att man är släkt med varandra* (Jimmy)
 ‘you know that you’re from Arjeplog, you feel that even though there are differences within Arjeplog when it comes to the language, you still speak the same language, and that you’re a Saami and that you’re related to each other’

Jimmy continues by saying that he does not think that Lule Saami feel differently about their identity and the connection between the members of a group of Saami is strengthened by the fact that the speakers know each other or know about each other.

As for the Saami language to the north, Lule Saami, according to Evjen (2005), the term *Lule Saami* was previously used only to refer to the language; the use of the term to refer to the Lule Saami people or ethnic group goes back to the ethnopolitical and ethnocultural ideologies of the 1970s. The Saami themselves started using the term in the 1980s, when the Lule Saami developed their own textbooks and designed their traditional costumes, and the Lule Saami center *Árran* was established. The movement can be seen as a reaction to the political and cultural dominance of the North Saami people and the North Saami language (Evjen 2005). The Pite Saami people have followed the Lule example: in 2002, a Pite Saami center *Duoddará Ráffe* was established in Beiam in Norway. Example (38) shows a reaction to the dominance of the North Saami language.

- (38) *jag är glad att jag inte har lärt mig nordsamiska . . . då hade jag kanske kommit fel* (Eva)
 ‘I am happy that I didn’t learn North Saami . . . then I would have maybe gone the wrong way’

However, all the interviewees agreed that one can be a Saami without knowing the language as it should be a choice whether one wants to speak the language or not. Nonetheless, speaking the language was, according to Eva, ‘dubbelt så roligt’ [twice as much fun].

8. REVITALIZATION AND THE FUTURE OF PITE SAAMI

There are various reasons why endangered languages should be saved. Languages are tools of artistic expression and part of peoples’ cultural heritage (Hale 1992). Different languages provide us with botanical, biological and geographical information and insight into human cognition (Nettle & Romaine 2000; Harrison 2007). Pite Saami has, in a manner similar to the other Saami languages, rich reindeer-related terminology and detailed and accurate vocabulary for describing the local geography. Most importantly, linguistic diversity can be considered a human right from the point of view of the speakers (Skutnabb-Kangas 2008). Furthermore, Pite Saami speakers

should have the right to use their variety and receive support for this. Directly or indirectly forcing the Pite Saami people to speak another language would be a violation of their human rights (see United Nations 1948; Skutnabb-Kangas 2008).

How can an endangered language be revitalized? Revitalization programs can involve, for example, the development of an orthography, improvement of literacy of the speakers, and introducing the language to new domains. Orthography development could work particularly well in the Swedish context, in which the speakers of the minority language and people interested in learning the minority language are literate in Swedish already. Revitalization programs may involve formal teaching in schools or evening classes, or may be conducted through immersion programs. Campaigns aimed at improving the speakers' attitudes and giving the language market value have been known to be successful (Grenoble & Whaley 2006). For instance, revitalization programs that are usually referred to as being successful concern the languages Hebrew, Maori, Hawaiian, Welsh, and Cornish.

Literacy can support revitalization by giving the language prestige and empowering the speakers (Grenoble & Whaley 2006:113–118). There are, however, arguments against literacy in the endangered language context: shifting from an oral to a written culture can lead to the loss of the oral culture and transitional literacy can lead to the loss of the endangered language (Grenoble & Whaley 2006:118–122). One has to consider the speakers' attitudes and goals, the usefulness of literacy, support for literacy, and the continued use of the language in its spoken form (Grenoble & Whaley 2006:122–129). The Pite Saami interviewees regarded speaking as the most valuable form, as in (39):

- (39) *att läsa och tala, tala är viktigast, att läsa är inte riktigt lika viktigt men viktigt ändå . . . att skriva kommer sist* (Karl-Johan)
 'reading and speaking, speaking is most important, reading is not quite as important but still important . . . writing comes last'

Most of the interviewees had not written anything in Pite. A few of them wrote down an occasional message or used written Pite Saami when doing language work, such as teaching or working on translations and the word list. Since there is no standard, those who write Pite write it the way it sounds using the Swedish alphabet or a mixture of Swedish and Lule Saami spelling rules:

- (40) *jag vet inte om jag stavar rätt men jag skriver som det låter* (Eva)
 'I don't know if I spell [a word] correctly but I write [it] the way it sounds'

The interviewees said that they would use a dictionary or read stories if they were published but they are not sure whether they would write on their own.

Literacy requires orthography development and standardization of the language. Without standardization, an endangered minority language may become idiosyncratic and cannot be understood by a large number of speakers (Grenoble & Whaley

2006:130). Many Pite speakers acknowledge the fact that one single standard is needed, but there are disagreements about what this standard should look like.

Pite Saami has been classified as having three dialects by Lehtiranta (1992) and Sammallahhti (1998:21). We did not conduct a dialect survey as part of our study but our interviewees and language consultants did comment on some language-internal differences. For instance, the central and southern dialects have an umlaut *aa* > *ee* before the past tense marker and the northern dialect does not; in the southern dialect an */t/* is used instead of */d/* or */ð/*. In the North people say *buris* for 'hello' and the people in the South *burist*, and some everyday items have different names. Northern speakers tend to share more features with Lule Saami than southern speakers. The interviewees themselves thought that the differences between the different varieties were small.

There is also disagreement about how to represent certain sounds orthographically. For instance, should 'lamp' be written as *lámmpo* or *lámppo*? Should the common greeting be spelled *burist* or *buris*, the latter reflecting a more northern Pite pronunciation and the same as Lule Saami? Ultimately, the question is whether the system should be based on the Lule Saami orthography, to bring the two languages closer to each other and not complicate things by the inclusion of an additional Saami orthography, or be as different from Lule as possible in order to emphasize the autonomy of Pite Saami as a language.⁸ As often in minority language contexts, many Pite Saami seem to regard their individual dialect variant as the only 'true' one, although there are more moderate views, as voiced in (41).

- (41) *man var mer att en samiska ska vara den rätta, den, min dialect men så känner jag inte jag idag, jag tycker att det är roligt med alla andra* (Eva)
 'people thought that one Saami should be the right one, this, my dialect, but I don't feel this way anymore, I think that it's fun with the others'

Such differing opinions about orthography have contributed to a delay in the publication of a word list by the local Saami association in Arjeplog, and consequently the publication of language learning materials. However, a workshop entitled Orthography and Language Technology: Opportunities and Challenges for Pite Saami was held in May 2011 in Arjeplog to give interested individuals the opportunity to discuss a variety of aspects concerning Pite Saami orthography.⁹ It resulted initially in the distribution of a limited number of copies of a preliminary wordlist to workshop participants and members of the language community in order to elicit their comments, suggestions and other feedback.

Similar orthography issues have occurred with, for example, the Athapaskan languages in Northwest Territories of Canada, in which case agreement on a standard orthography was not reached because of a strongly felt need to reflect dialect identity in the writing system (Rice 1995). Identity and emotional factors can override practical concerns. A possible solution to the problem of standardization and orthography might be the use of a multidialectal orthography in which the standard

orthography would match one dialect in a certain aspect and another dialect in another (Simons 1994). One could also agree that all speakers write the language in the way that they pronounce it without imposing a strict standard.

During the last decade, Pite Saami study circles have been organized in Arjeplog and Piteå in Sweden, and even in Beiarn in Norway, where the language ceased to be spoken several generations ago. The teachers or study circle leaders have not only been activists but also linguistically and pedagogically trained Pite Saami individuals. The courses have been attended both by people with more advanced skills and by complete beginners wanting to regain their language and explore their cultural heritage.

One study circle for senior citizens took place in Innervik in 2004. There were no materials and only some words were written on the board. The teacher said that she taught no grammar, but conversation and phrases instead, which is what the participants wanted to learn. A short course was also organized in Beiarn in 2006. It helped to strengthen the identities of the local Saami. The third study circle took place in Piteå in the spring of 2007 and the material used for the course was *Sámásta* (Nystø & Johnsen 2000), a Lule Saami book. According to a personal comment by the teacher Peter Steggo, it was relatively easy to use the book because the differences between Lule and Pite Saami are small enough to not significantly impede understanding. A fourth intensive study circle was organized at the end of June 2009 in Arjeplog with funding from the Saami Parliament. It lasted for eight days and consisted of daily five-hour reading and writing study sessions. There was a beginners' group and a more advanced group. The Lule Saami book *Sámásta* was again used together with old recordings and transcribed texts. Grammar explanations and general conversational skills were included in the course. The participants found the course useful and they felt that their language skills had been activated, they remembered more words, were able to read, and they said that they would be using more Saami in the future. One participant in the beginners' course describes her feelings as follows:

(42) *jag har börjat känna mer och mer för det samiska ... genom språket som jag håller på att lära* (Emma)

'I have started to feel more and more for all things Saami ... through the language that I'm learning'

As Lule Saami materials can be used for teaching and learning Pite, it would at first seem like no Pite Saami materials are needed. Some are more experienced in reading Lule, like Eva, in (43), but the difficulties faced by Lars-Erik and Ulf, expressed in (44) and (45), respectively, highlight the need for a special Pite orthography and Pite texts.

(43) *jag gör så att jag uttalar på pitesamiska* (Eva)

'I do it like this: I pronounce things in Pite Saami'

(44) *ja det är ju lättare att läsa, i alla fall för mig och dom som pratar pitesamiska, då kan man kanske härleda ordet och ljuda ut det på det nåt sätt, det tar tid med det lulesamiska* (Lars-Erik)

‘yes, it’s easier to read, at least for me and those who speak Pite Saami, then one can figure out the meaning of the word and make out the sounds in some way, it takes time with the Lule Saami [way]’

(45) *det kan vara svårt med deras, när man läser då en text och det står då på lulesamiska då kan man liksom följa det, och vad står det här egentligen, skulle det har stått på pitesamiska då skulle det inte varit nåt problem . . . och det tycker jag här på museet, varför står allting på lulesamiska, dom måste ju förändra detta* (Ulf)

‘it can be difficult with theirs, when you read a text and it’s in Lule then you can follow it, and what it actually says, but if it had been in Pite, it wouldn’t have been a problem at all . . . and I think that here at the museum, why’s everything in Lule, they should change it’

The interviewees said that the Saami themselves, especially the organizers of courses and study circles, activists, the Arjeplog Saami Association and the Saami Parliament, and the church have all been good for the Pite Saami language. When asked about the most suitable forms of revitalization, the Pite Saami interviewees identified intensive language nests, Pite Saami nurseries and study circles several times a year as the best options. They said that more courses should be organized for anyone who is interested, not exclusively for Saami people, and young people and children should be included as well. According to the interviewees, the old people who were not allowed to speak in schools should be allowed to study their language now instead and it should be spoken in nursing homes.

The lack of an orthography is seen as an obstacle, especially for beginners who would benefit from being able to write and have written materials that they could use at home. Earning money with Pite skills was seen as a possibly positive factor although the interviewees had practical concerns about this. One interviewee was frustrated by the fact that the government’s Saami *konsulent* or advisor in Arjeplog is a speaker of North Saami. Some wanted Pite to be spoken in official contexts, such as at the Saami Parliament, and in the media. At the time of writing, in the early 2010s, the media are mostly in North Saami and the news is mostly about Norway. Children’s programming in Pite Saami would be appreciated, as would a Pite Saami hymnal. One interviewee thought that Pite cannot be used in any other contexts as it is too specialized. Jimmy’s comment in (46) shows the same concern:

(46) *även om man skulle kunna få alla som bryr sig att lära pitesamiska så kanske skulle man ändå inte få ihop en sån mängd att Sveriges Radio eller Sveriges Television hade velat sända saker* (Jimmy)

‘even if you managed to get everyone who cares to learn Pite Saami, maybe even then you wouldn’t manage to get together a sufficient number of people that Swedish public radio or television would decide to broadcast things [in Pite Saami]’

Ulf felt that the language should be marketed better:

(47) *kanske marknadsföra det språket som talas i dom här områdena, det är ju väldigt viktigt så att inte till exempel nordsamiskan får ta över, skulle det hända, då är det ju katastrof, då dör pitesamiskan ut* (Ulf)

‘maybe marketing the language that is spoken in this area, that’s very important so that for example North Saami doesn’t take over, if that were to happen, then it would be a catastrophe, then Pite Saami would die out’

The most important revitalization measure is speaking:

(48) *och varje gång man träffas så pratar man . . . får man inte prata då revitaliserar man inte* (Lars-Erik)

‘and every time we meet then we talk . . . if you’re not allowed to speak then you can’t revitalize’

Based on our interviews, the older speakers are fairly confident about the survival of Pite Saami, as shown in examples (49)–(52).

(49) *jag tror att den ska överleva, jag vill och jag tror* (Eva)

‘I believe that it will survive, I want it and I believe it’

(50) *jag hoppas ju att den kommer att överleva genom att man får flera kurser så att ungdomar kommer med i kurserna, kan bli intresserade och föra det vidare, så är vi bara gammelstötar, så förvinner vi och då försvinner samiskan* (Lars-Erik)

‘I hope that it’ll survive by getting more language courses so that young people can take the courses, can become interested and carry it further, if it’s just us old-timers, if we disappear, then Saami disappears’

(51) *ja, jag tror det, jag tror att den gör det, nu håller dom, vi har ju vaknat upp kanske i klockan elva men det är ju en timme kvar, så jag tror att vi överlever* (Karl-Johan)

‘yes, i believe that, now they are, we have woken up maybe at 11 o’clock but there’s still one more hour left, so I think that we will survive’

(52) *intresset idag har ändå blivit så stort bland ungdomarna, på den svenska sidan åtminstone, dom kommer att föra språket vidare* (Jon)

‘the interest has in any case grown so much among young people, at least on the Swedish side, they are going to carry the language further’

Younger people whose parents are speakers of Pite Saami but who do not speak it themselves feel a greater urgency and are less hopeful:

(53) *då måste vi lägga på ett kol . . . alvarligt jag tror det kommer att försvinna om det är så få idag* (Emma)

‘then we have to turn it up a notch . . . seriously, I think that it’ll disappear if there are so few people today’

(54) *jag tror att det kommer att dö ut . . . med pappas generation, dom är ju dom sista som kan* (Jimmy)

‘I think that it will die out . . . with my father’s generation, they are the last ones that know [the language]’

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Our survey shows that there are a number of Pite Saami speakers left who are proud of their variety of Saami. The interviewees either use it regularly whenever they meet a Pite-speaking Saami, or even a North Saami or a Lule Saami. They would like to use it more often and continue developing their skills. Several interviewees are more comfortable speaking Swedish, and often switch to Swedish after initial greetings, but their attitudes are generally positive. The interviewees said that a main advantage of Pite Saami was its ability to express culturally relevant topics succinctly and precisely.

Indeed, many interviewees are proud of their Saami heritage, and even feel that all things Saami are becoming popular. According to them, this is in stark contrast to the situation approximately 50 years ago, in the 1960s, when Saami had low status. The interviewees attributed the decline of Pite Saami to intermarriage and to the fact that parents wanted to protect their children from the formerly negative attitude of the Swedish society towards Saami. The younger interviewees felt frustrated about having lost their language and having to try to learn it as a second language.

An interesting and unexpected finding was the interviewees’ views about the existence of a special Pite Saami identity. They said that this identity has to do with a certain way of speaking, feeling connected to a certain place (Arjeplog), being a member of a certain family or simply knowing other members of the community. One interviewee thought, however, that there was no special Pite Saami identity.

Further positive factors affecting the language’s status are: the at least theoretically supportive Swedish legislation and implementation of the Swedish minority language policies, a generally positive attitude among the remaining Pite Saami speakers, the fact that the language is still spoken in some culturally important domains and in the private domain, the quality and amount of documentation and the fact that language courses and study circles are organized occasionally.

Nonetheless, it is obvious that the Pite Saami language should be classified as critically endangered as the number of speakers is extremely low, intergenerational transmission is hardly taking place, and there are no good materials for language teaching and learning, nor is teacher training taking place. In fact, the Pite Saami people currently still feel marginalized, even within the Saami context, as indicated in (55):

- (55) *från vissa håll är man beredd att offra pite och umesamiskan till exempel* (Jon)
'certain instances are ready to sacrifice Pite and Ume Saami for example'

This marginalization relates to the fact that Pite is sometimes classified as a dialect of Lule and the fact that it is not specifically mentioned by name in Swedish law. Our interviewees acknowledged the fact that the neighboring languages Pite and Lule Saami are very similar. We learned that the interviewees do not want to learn the dominant North Saami language.

Our view is that Pite Saami is a distinct language: although it is not radically different from the neighboring languages phonologically, morphologically and lexically, its speakers regard it as a language of its own, and historically it has also been regarded as one. In accordance with policies and agreements at the national and international level, with the treatment by the Saami linguistic community as well as with the wishes of the members of the language community themselves, Pite Saami should be recognized as a language in its own right. This would eliminate the feeling of alienation and successfully promote revitalization in the future. With this in mind, the strong motivation that our survey has detected among language community members to revitalize Pite Saami is a valuable resource which should be taken advantage of as much, and as soon, as possible. It is also our opinion and recommendation that efforts and resources should be urgently invested in the documentation and revitalization of Pite Saami.

Pite Saami interviewees wanted not only to speak but also to read the language, which is why the development of an orthography is important. An important finding of our study is that using Lule Saami materials is not a suitable option: some interviewees reported that using Lule materials is hard and they would prefer Pite materials. There are disagreements about which orthography to choose, but we hope that by supporting a dialog in the community by organizing orthography workshops, for example, a solution can be found.

Objectively, however, the revitalization of Pite Saami may appear very difficult, if not impossible, because of the small number of people involved. The older interviewees in our study were positive about the survival of the language, whereas the younger interviewees who do not speak the language have a somewhat negative view and they feel the urgency of the languages situation. With this in mind, it is important to point out that a revitalization program should have realistic goals, even if they do not include full fluency for future generations. For example, Grenoble & Whaley

(2006:48) claim that the Cornish revitalization program was successful in the south-west of the United Kingdom because full fluency in the language was not expected. At a minimum, these goals should include retaining the language as a marker of identity, allowing people to relate to their linguistic heritage without requiring fluent language skills. The situation of the Kurna people in South Australia, who have reclaimed their language and use it to sing songs, for printing signs and for greetings and kinship terms (Amery 2000), could also be used as a model.

Ultimately, all aspects of the revitalization of Pite Saami, like the revitalization of any endangered language, should happen on the terms and conditions of the people themselves (see e.g. Hill 2002), on ethical grounds and to ensure maximum success. We hope that this study clearly shows the priorities of the community and can thus be utilized in planning future activities in support of the Pite Saami language.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their useful comments, and Eszter Tarsoly for help with the translation of Halász's book titles.

APPENDIX 1. DATA COLLECTION: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Undersökning av pitesamiskan [A study of Pite Saami]

Namn [Name]:

Datum [Date]:

Språket: användning [Language: use]

- (1) Vilka språk talar du?
'How many languages do you speak?'
- (2) Vilka språk förstår du?
'How many languages do you understand?'
- (3) När/i vilket sammanhang talar du pitesamiska?
'When/in which context do you speak Pite Saami?'
- (4) Med vem/till vem talar du pitesamiska?
'With whom/to whom do you speak Pite Saami?'
- (5) Hur lärde du dig pitesamiska?
'How did you learn Pite Saami?'
- (6) Vilket och vilka språk talade dina föräldrar?
'Which languages did your parents speak?'
- (7) Hur väl kan du pitesamiska?
'How well do you speak Pite Saami?'

Språket: värderingar och uppfattningar [Language: values and perceptions]

- (8) Heter språket pitesamiska? Finns det några andra namn åt språket?
‘Is the language called Pite Saami? Are there any other names for the language?’
- (9) Vad betyder arjeplogsamiska, samiska, lapska?
‘What do Arjeplog Saami, Saami, Lappish mean?’
- (10) Hur skulle du beskriva pitesamiskan (jämfört med svenskan, nordsamiskan, lulesamiskan, umesamiskan)?
‘How would you describe Pite Saami (in comparison with Swedish, North Saami, Lule Saami, Ume Saami)?’
- (11) Hur nära släkt är pitesamiskan med lule och ume samiskan?
‘How closely related is Pite Saami to Lule and Ume Saami?’
- (12) Vilka är skillnaderna mellan lule/ume och pite?
‘What differences are there between Lule/Ume and Pite?’
- (13) Finns det dialektala skillnader inom pite? Ge exempel.
‘Are there dialectal differences within Pite? Give examples.’
- (14) Hur skulle du beskriva dialekterna?
‘How would you describe the dialects?’
- (15) Hur reagerar folk när du talar pitesamiska?
‘How do people react when you speak Pite Saami?’
- (16) Kan du förstå andra samiska språk?
‘Can you understand other Saami languages?’

Identitet [Identity]

- (17) Vad betyder pitesamiskan för dig?
‘What does Pite Saami mean to you?’
- (18) Finns det en pitesamisk identitet?
‘Is there a Pite Saami identity?’
- (19) Vad hör till en pitesamisk identitet?
‘What belongs to a Pite Saami identity?’
- (20) Kan man vara pite och inte tala språket?
‘Can one be a Pite Saami and not speak the language?’

Historia [History]

- (21) Varför finns det så få talare idag?
‘Why are there so few speakers today?’
- (22) Vad har varit bra för språket?
‘What has been good for the language?’
- (23) Vad har varit dåligt för språket?
‘What has been bad for the language?’

Framtiden och revitalisering [The future and revitalization]

- (24) Tycker du att pite ska revitaliseras/återlivas?
'Do you think that Pite should be revitalized?'
- (25) Vilka typer av aktiviteter skulle stödja pitesamiskan?
'Which types of activities would support Pite Saami?'
- (26) Skriver du ner pitesamiska? Hur skriver du det? Finns det ett bestämt sätt att skriva? Ska det finnas ett sätt att skriva endast för pitesamiskan?
'Do you write Pite Saami? How do you write it? Is there only one set way of writing? Should there be one way of writing only for Pite Saami?'
- (27) Använder du en ordbok nu? Skulle du använda en pitesamisk ordbok om det fanns en sådan?
'Do you use a dictionary now? Would you use a Pite Saami dictionary if there was one?'
- (28) Har du tagit en kurs i pitesamiska? Vad gjordes under kursen? Var kursen bra för din pitesamiska?
'Have you taken a course in Pite Saami? What was done on the course? Was the course good for your Pite Saami?'
- (29) Har pitesamer i allmänhet en bra inställning mot sitt språk?
'Do Pite Saami people in general have a positive attitude towards their language?'
- (30) Har utomstående en bra inställning?
'Do outsiders have a positive attitude?'
- (31) Behövs det erkännande från någon instans?
'Is acknowledgement needed from some instance?'
- (32) Skulle det hjälpa om man kunde tjäna pengar på kunskaper i pite?
'Would it be helpful if one could earn money with Pite Saami skills?'
- (33) I vilka nya sammanhang skulle språket kunna användas?
'In which new contexts could the language be used?'
- (34) Vad tror du att kommer att hända med pitesamiskan? Hur/i vilken form kommer det att överleva?
'What do you think that will happen with Pite Saami? How/in which form will it survive?'
- (35) Vem kommer att tala pitesamiska i framtiden?
'Who will speak Pite Saami in the future?'

APPENDIX 2. USEFUL WEBSITES

All websites listed here were accessed on 24 January 2012.

Peter Steggo's website dedicated to his Pite Saami ancestors

<http://arbbe.blogspot.com/>

Joshua Wilbur's Pite Saami Documentation Project

<http://www2.hu-berlin.de/updp/>

Saami Education Centre in Sweden

<http://www.samernas.se/>

The Swedish National Agency for Education

<http://www.skolverket.se>

The Language Council of Sweden

<http://www.sprakradet.se/>

Rennäringslagen [the reindeer husbandry law]

<http://www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/19710437.HTM>

Sametingslagen [the Saami Parliament law]

<http://www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/19921433.HTM>

NOTES

1. 'Revitalization' here refers here to the attempt 'to increase the relative number of speakers of a language and extend the domains where it is employed' (Grenoble & Whaley 2006:13).
2. These are also known as Sámi, Saami, Lappish or Lappic languages. Until fairly recently the Saami people (*samer*) were known in Sweden as Lapps (*lappar*) and the language was called Lappish (*lapska*) instead of Saami (*samiska*). It is now generally regarded as politically incorrect to use the terms *lapska* or *lappar*. Most of the interviewees did not mind which term was used, whereas two people preferred the term *Saami*.
3. The Lule Saami orthography was initially developed by Karl Bernhard Wiklund for his beginners' book in Lule Saami (Wiklund 1915) and is based on the variant spoken in Jokkmokk.
4. The two younger interviewees are not included in the total number of speakers presented in Section 4.1.
5. Data on speaker numbers were gathered during numerous fieldwork trips to Arjeplog between 2008 and 2011.
6. Specifically, five municipalities are: Karesuando, Kiruna, Gällivare, Jokkmokk and Tärnaby.
7. See Rasmussen & Nolan. (2011:38–41) for an overview of language attitudes and policies in Fenno-Scandinavia.
8. Lule Saami scholar Bruce Morén-Duolljá (personal contact and presentations at the Winter School of Saami Language Documentation and Revitalization and the workshop Orthography and Language Technology: Opportunities and Challenges for Pite Saami) has emphasized the shortcomings of the Lule Saami orthography, suggesting that this would be a reason not to adapt Lule Saami orthography.
9. The workshop was made possible by the Saami Documentation and Revitalization Network with funding from NordForsk, and was organized by Joshua Wilbur and other participants of the Pite Saami Documentation Project.

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