NORTHERN VOICES: EXAMINING LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN RECENT SURVEYS ON AINU AND SAAMI

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This paper takes a look at a number of recent surveys targeting Ainu and Saami speakers and learners in Japan and Finland respectively and examines whether or how factors such as prestige, status, and corpora, all linked to language revitalization, are reflected in the results and informants' testimonies. Finally, the future of these languages is considered from the viewpoint of the recent theoretical framework of "Superdiversity".

В статье рассматриваются результаты обследований, проведенных среди носителей айнского и саамского языков, а также изучающих эти языки соответственно в Японии и Финляндии. В статье анализируется насколько такие факторы, как престиж, статус и корпуса, которые имеют отношение к языковой ревитализации, отражаются в результатах обследований и представлениях информантов. В заключение, будущее этих языков рассматривается в рамках недавно введенной в научный оборот теории супердиверситета.

1. INTRODUCTION

Two decades ago UNESCO's *Red Book on Endangered Languages* defined Hokkaido Ainu as nearly extinct, Sakhalin Ainu as possibly extinct, and Kuril Ainu as extinct (Janhunen 1993). Of the eleven Finno-Ugrian Saami/Sámi languages listed by Salminen (2009),[1] less than ten still have speakers left. The UNESCO *Atlas of World Languages in Danger* currently defines Hokkaido Ainu as critically endangered, Kuril and Sakhalin Ainu as extinct, North Saami as definitely endangered, Inari, Lule, Skolt and South Saami as severely endangered, and Pite and Ume Saami as critically endangered. While North, Inari, and Skolt Saami speakers in Finland have a constitutional right to "maintain and develop

1 In accordance with UNESCO and The Institute for the Languages of Finland, in this paper the spelling *Saami* is favoured over *Sámi*. The latter orthography, where used, is maintained in the names of institutions (e.g. museums) and titles of and quotes from (semi-)official translations of relevant legal and other documents.

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their own language and culture" (Sámi Language Act 2003), the Ainu languages in Japan are not protected by language legislation.

The Japanese government only relatively recently accepted the "Resolution Calling for the Recognition of the Ainu People as an Indigenous People of Japan" (2008) which included the following specific reference to language, "Ainu people are an indigenous people who have lived around the northern part of Japan, especially in Hokkaido, *with a unique language* as well as religious and cultural distinctiveness" (emphasis added). Although the "Law for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture and for the Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and the Ainu Culture" (1997/amended 2006) includes the Ainu language, it is deemed only as another cultural element: "*The Ainu Culture* in this law means *the Ainu language* and cultural properties such as music, dance, crafts, and other cultural properties which have been inherited by the Ainu people, and other cultural properties developed from these" (emphasis added).

Ainu is generally considered to be a language isolate, consisting of divergent dialects categorised into Northeastern and Southwestern dialect groups. The UNESCO *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* lists Hokkaido Ainu as critically endangered with 15 speakers (based on Vovin 1996, a source not directly consulted for the present paper), and both Sakhalin and Kuril Ainu as extinct. Little is known about Kuril Ainu, while the last known speaker of Sakhalin Ainu, Take Asai, passed away in 1994 (Murasaki 2012). Though now inhabiting mainly the northernmost Japanese island of Hokkaido and some large metropolitan areas, besides Hokkaido, southern Sakhalin, and the Kuril islands, Ainu populations formerly occupied areas on Japan's main island of Honshu and the southern part of the Kamchatka Peninsula (Bugaeva 2011: 74).

In Japan questions on ethnicity and language competence are excluded from censuses, so corresponding statistical information is absent and the actual number of Ainu speakers hard to evaluate. Recent suggestions include: "native speakers: none, passive knowledge: 10–100?, non-native speakers: 20–30?" (Tangiku 2012); "unknown (5?)" (Shiraishi 2010), and "less than 5" (Idutsu 2007). Currently, speakers of Ainu – or those with some knowledge of the language(s) – should be conceived as a continuum that includes archival speakers, latent/old bilinguals, semi-speakers, token speakers and, perhaps most importantly, L2/heritage language learners with alternating degrees of competence (Heinrich 2012; Martin 2011). Notably, today many – if not most – learners of Ainu are ethnic Japanese, *wajin* 和人 (BC2012: 3).[2]

2 Acronyms refer to the surveys and reports used as primary material. The list of primary sources

The proportion of the Japanese population having some Ainu heritage is equally unclear. Recent estimates include 100,000 persons (Bugaeva 2011), at least 20,000–30,000 or possibly 50,000 (Tangiku 2013), and an "unknown" number (Satō 2012). Although a Hokkaido government survey on the living conditions of the Ainu listed 23,782 persons as "Ainu residing in Hokkaido" in 2006, in 2013 the same survey was reduced in scale and targeted only 16,786 people "not representing the entire Hokkaido Ainu population" (HKS06; HKS13). Due to *kaitaku* 開拓 'development', as reframed by Japanese elites and officials at the time, the proportion of Ainu population on Hokkaido decreased rapidly from 12% in the 1870s to less than 1% a few decades later. The Ainu Association of Hokkaido presently has roughly 3,200 members.[3] Satō (2012: 30–31) remarks that, for various reasons, trying to provide a valid answer to the question on the number of Ainu speakers creates a feeling of discomfort: no official statistics exist, surveys could violate the speakers' privacy and result in discrimination, and, despite the Japanese government's 2008 declaration recognizing the indigenous status of Ainu people, it is yet to "create a new law to help the Ainu recover their status" (Okada 2012: 12). Satō further notes that any person posing this seemingly simple question about the number of Ainu speakers simultaneously reveals their ignorance of its actual "weight" and complexity.

Saami languages, the closest immediate relatives of the Baltic-Finnic group, belong to the indigenous languages of Europe and are spoken in four countries in the northern regions of Europe in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia. The Institute for the Languages of Finland (2007) enumerates ten known Saami languages. These are categorised in the Western group of South, Ume, Pite, Lule, and North Saami, and the Eastern group, represented by Inari, Skolt, Akkala, Kildin, and Ter Saami. These languages are mutually unintelligible and rely on their own standard written forms and orthographies.[4] In this paper, the focus of comparison with Ainu languages (*ainu itak*) is on the Saami languages spoken in Finland, namely North Saami (*davvisámi*), Inari Saami (*anarâškielâ*), and Skolt Saami (*sää'mǩiõll*), ranging from definitely endangered North Saami to severely endangered Inari and Skolt Saami, as defined by UNESCO.

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can be found at the end of this paper. Unless the source was published in English or a (semi)official translation is available, all the English translations are by the author.

3 In Japan 5,000–10,000 people of Ainu heritage are estimated to reside in the Tokyo metropolitan area. It has also been suggested that more Ainu may in fact now live in areas other than Hokkaido (Watson 2014: 69).

4 Cf. 'mother'/'lynx': *äiti/ilves* (Finnish); *eadni/albbas* (North Saami); *enni/iïlvâs* (Inari Saami); *jeä'n'n/riïss* (Skolt Saami) (Sámi musea Siida 2006).

In contrast to the position of Ainu in Japan, The Sámi Language Act (2003) in Finland ensures the "*constitutional right* of the Sámi to maintain and develop their *own language* and culture" (emphasis added). More specifically, they have the right to "use their own language before the courts and other authorities, and it is the duty of public authorities to secure and promote the linguistic rights of the Sámi" (RGA13). These linguistic rights are mainly clustered in the Saami homeland in the northern part of the Province of Lapland, comprising three municipalities, Enontekiö/Eanodat, Utsjoki/Ohcejohka, and Inari/Aanaar, and parts of the municipality of Sodankylä/Soađegilli. Since 1994 it has been possible to register Saami as a "mother tongue" in the official population register, but, given that only one language can be registered, the register does not offer an accurate account of the Saami language situation (AL08).

In basic education, Saami can be the language of education and can be taught both as the mother tongue and foreign language. In the northern Saami region, children who know Saami should have a right to instruction mainly in Saami, but reality often differs from legislative ideals. The highest political Saami organ in Finland, the Finnish Sámi Parliament, is elected by Saami every four years.[5] On an international and European level, Finland is further committed to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992), in force since 2008, thus recognizing that "the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages in the different countries and regions of Europe represent[s] an important contribution to the building of a Europe based on the principles of democracy and cultural diversity within the framework of national sovereignty and territorial integrity". Although the Charter does not name any specific European "regional or minority languages",[6] Finland's latest periodic report on the application of the Charter (2010) mentions Saami along with Swedish, the other official language, which is spoken by roughly 6% of the population.[7]

Depending on how "Saami" is defined, the total Saami population in the four countries numbers between 60,000 and 100,000, of whom roughly 10,000 live in Finland (The Institute for the Languages of Finland 2007, Ministry of Education and Culture 2012). Although the vitality of Saami languages can be estimated more positively than that of Ainu, in Finland Saami is spoken by no more than half of the Saami population. North Saami is reported to have at least 2,000 speakers in Finland, and Inari and Skolt Saami approximately 300

5 See The Act on the Sámi Parliament (974/1995), Section 3 for the definition of "Sámi".

6 At the time of the writing of this article in January 2015 the "Languages covered" link on the Council of Europe website did not lead to any site discussing the Charter.

7 Finland's 5th periodic report was due in March 2014, but was not yet available on the Council of Europe website at the time of the writing of this paper.

speakers each (Sámediggi 2014).[8] Compared to the present condition of Ainu, as well as to that of Ume, Pite, and Ter Saami, the current situation of Saami languages spoken on Finnish soil thus appears somewhat more optimistic.

2. ISSUES IN LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Regarding the revival of the Ainu language, Nakagawa (2009) cites the following oft-mentioned core concepts of language revitalization efforts: prestige, status, and corpus. The actions he suggests for prestige planning include areas such as dissemination of information, education of educators, and establishment of a national research institute. Establishment of a system to educate ethnic Ainu language instructors is specifically highlighted. He furthermore links prestige planning to status planning, ranging from concrete measures such as the use of Ainu in official documents or Ainu and Japanese side by side in official road signs. Moreover he calls for the creation of shared spaces (*ba* 場) for communication, contact, and knowledge creation, and which would enhance available opportunities for ethnic Ainu to learn and come together. Additional emphasis is put on corpus planning including the dissemination of texts, creation and dissemination of teaching and reference materials, and, through the creation and management of audio and audiovisual archives, production of environments in which anyone can access existing Ainu language corpora and collections.

As noted by Nakagawa and others in the literature, one core challenge in the field concerns the creation of "a social environment that will facilitate [language revitalization] activities" (Tsunoda 2004). Related to this, Tsunoda cites a number of problems: (i) dispersion of the population; (ii) inadequate funding; (iii) shortage of learning materials and human resources; (iv) pressing social problems and needs; (v) dialects and standardization; and, finally, (vi) *certain types of language attitude* (emphasis added). The following sections will now focus on the implications of this last item and examine the core question: (*How*) *are the major requisites cited by Nakagawa and others reflected in language attitudes as evidenced in recent surveys on Ainu and Saami languages?*

In sociolinguistic literature, attitudes are frequently discussed in relation to identity. Examples include accounts of younger generations being uninterested or even ashamed of languages or dialects deemed "old-fashioned", "provincial" or

8 "With approximately 20,000 speakers in Finland, Norway, and Sweden, North Sámi is the most widely spoken of these languages. [...] Inari Sámi is spoken exclusively in Finland. Skolt Sámi is spoken in Finland and in Russia." (Sámediggi 2014)

"uncool" versus representatives of the older generation preferring to take their language to the grave rather than letting it become "corrupted" by the younger generation – thus sometimes leading to situations in which (heritage) language learning may be confined to the mere teaching of isolated vocabulary (Tsunoda 2004). On the other hand, as Coulmas (2005: 201) notes, language planning itself is a notion strongly predicated on Western scholarship and conceptions of language centered "on languages as entities *rather than speakers and their communication requirements*" (emphasis added).

The present investigation might be criticised as comparing apples with oranges – after all, what are the common denominators of Ainu and Saami languages and populations other than: a geographically "northern" location, fragmentary overlaps in "worldviews" due to accommodation to comparable living environments and conditions, somewhat analogous agonizing histories of suppression followed by ongoing land disputes and social and economic hardships, and the label of the languages now being severely/critically endangered or extinct? Whilst recognising the obvious limitations of sporadic survey results as representations of the actual realities of any particular language community or language user, this paper focuses on two main points: (i) the communication and other requirements as directly expressed by users or learners of Ainu and Saami, and (ii) the evidence or non-evidence of the concepts of prestige, status and corpus in their testimonies, and/or reported attitudes towards these concepts.

Finally, this brief comparison attempts to interpret the available survey results taking into account the diverging situations of the Saami and Ainu: the former covered by official language legislation and, to a certain degree, still supported by intergenerational transmission, and the latter lacking an official status and having declined to a situation in which the language has no longer been spoken as a "community language" since the 1960s (Bugaeva 2012: 462). The surveys and reports used as primary sources in this investigation are listed at the end of this paper. The selection criteria were simple: they had to be readily available and recent, that is, published within the past decade of the 21st century.

3. LINGUISTIC REALITY AND ATTITUDES

Let us start our exploration by juxtaposing quantitative information extracted from the sources.[9] In line with the phrasing of the Ainu Cultural Promotion

9 Due to space limitations, the scope and target groups of the cited surveys and reports cannot be outlined here. This is due to the fact that the number of respondents in individual sources varies depending on the questions, that is, the same target group may not have responded to all the

Act (1997/2006), the local Hokkaido government included the Ainu language in questions about culture and cultural activities. When asked "What kind of Ainu culture do you know (that exists)?", the multiple choice answer selected by 264 respondents of 508 was Ainu language, which was comparable to other answers such as musical instruments, traditional dance, embroidery, and wood carving (HKS13). Although, of respondents living outside Tokyo, over 60% do not participate in cultural activities, the most popular activities relate to music and dance, followed by festivals/ceremonies, embroidery and, finally, language (ASS11). This said, less than 4% of the respondents said that they would be able to teach Ainu, 37% confirmed to know it to some extent but would not be able to teach it, and 60% stated that they have some experience or know it a little from books (HKS13). Interestingly, over 50% think that the Ainu language is the future area of most importance – which is more than it was seven years earlier in a similar survey – but nevertheless less than 10% always participate in available language activities (HKS13). As for actual language proficiency, less than 1% of the middle-aged respondents can hold a conversation, 6% of all ages can speak a little, 44% know Ainu a little but cannot speak it, and nearly half cannot speak or understand the language at all (HKS13). 55% responded somewhat vaguely that they want to learn the language if there is an opportunity, over 30% that they do not want to learn it, and only less than 10% definitely want to learn it (HKS13).

When asked in another survey about involvement in Ainu language, only 5% said they are involved, while more than 63% never are. The language domain mentioned most, by close to 10%, is rituals/ceremonies. The vast majority in this target group, however, apparently has no direct contact with Ainu culture (CAIS10). Other domains indicated in the surveys include: regional language classes, government-supported Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture (FRPAC) language classes and events, Ainu culture association meetings, home, Internet, Ainu Speech Contest, neighbour's home, Ainu association meetings, non-language courses, private language classes, work, and school/university. Vocational schools, meetings of regional bodies and city hall/town offices do not get any mentions (BC12). All the respondents in one of the surveys stated to be making some use of Ainu in the classroom as well as various events in the form of greetings or even daily conversation (BC12). Those who have not learnt Ainu in

questions included in the original questionnaires. As the number or respondents in individual surveys ranges from a mere couple of dozen to a few hundred, observations reported here cannot be generalised to the entire populations. Readers interested in more detail are invited to examine the primary sources listed at the end of the paper.

courses have acquired some knowledge from someone who knows (about) Ainu, audio materials, other learning materials, or an Ainu language radio course (BC12).

In questions targeting intergenerational transmission, language, music, dance, history, and embroidery were considered as the most valuable elements of "Ainu culture" to be passed on by over 60% (ASS11). Roughly one third feel proud of Ainu culture, but an equal number of respondents, and more than half of those under 30, have no particular feelings of pride (ASS11). In another study, pride in culture was expressed by nearly 50%, particularly in the areas of history and Ainu customs and way of life, while the proportion of those who are not proud was equally circa one third, and, again, almost half of those under 30 (CAIS10). Interestingly, outside Hokkaido 40% or more feel proud of Ainu culture, values, worldview, and history, which prompted appeals for more places of learning in a number of responses (ASS11).

As mentioned above, unlike the Ainu in Japan, in Finland the Saami population have a constitutional right to maintain their language and culture. A survey targeting the educational needs in Saami languages and culture found that 45% of those who responded would like to study the Saami languages, particularly writing and vocabulary. More than half expressed a need for cultural education, especially history, and one fifth of the informants would even be interested in acquiring a Master's Degree in Saami language or culture (MR10). Although the number of Ainu learners of Ainu language and culture has been slightly increasing in Japanese higher education over the past years (Nakagawa, pers. comm. 2014), mentions of tertiary level education were scarce in the examined Ainu surveys.

Another clear distinction between Ainu and Saami, attributable to the diverging legal statuses, concerns mother tongue instruction. Whereas Ainu is excluded from school education, Saami is taught both as the mother tongue and as a "foreign" language, and its inclusion in the school curricula is deemed important. Furthermore it is used in day care, sometimes also outside the Saami region, where its use is otherwise for the large part confined to the home environment (AL08). Very concrete language learning needs are expressed frequently in the surveys, and direct reference to the language is made as a core component of Saami identity. Many informants living outside the Saami region testify that maintaining the language is hard, but support is sought in media, literature (including children's literature, published mainly in Norway), Saami association meetings (for example conversation circles), and frequent contact with relatives. Language transmission to the next generation is considered important, but younger speakers nonetheless use more and more Finnish even with Saami-speaking friends and siblings (AL12; RT12).

Important services in Saami include: day care, basic education, care of the elderly, radio (mainly in North Saami) and TV news (in Nordic cooperation), children's programmes (*Unna Junná* since 2007), emergency centre, courts, employment offices, and the social insurance institution (AL08). Much like in the examined Ainu surveys, establishment of a Saami cultural centre in one's home region is mentioned as a concrete need by some (AL08). Strong domains of language use in Utsjoki/Ohcejohka, which is the sole Finnish municipality with a Saami majority, comprise traditional occupations, Saami events, the Saami parliament, and Saami Education Institute courses. Weak domains are those in which Saami and Finnish are used side by side: the community assembly, the congregation, and adult education courses (AL12). Additionally Saami, North Saami in the case of Utsjoki/Ohcejohka, is sometimes used in the private sector such as in shops, restaurants, the post office, and bank, and to a limited extent in the public such as doctor's appointments and at the library.

Intriguingly, although available, most respondents have not used any official documents translated into Saami (AL12): "Translation serves language legislation, not the people around it." Although status planning, encompassing measures such as the translation of official documents into endangered languages, is called for in the literature, some Saami language users appear less convinced and instead assert that: "All the energy should be invested in what is still alive and strengthen that" (MR10). Though citations such as these represent no more than sporadic individual "voices" they can offer pointers for topics in need of more scrutiny in particular contexts, and underscore the necessity to "localise" language planning efforts in varying linguistic situations.

4. OPENNESS OF THE COMMUNITY

Although much more factual information could be extracted from the studied surveys and reports, the sections that follow now turn the spotlight on one key factor in revitalization movements: the speech community's openness towards diverse language users and learners. Using the language, regardless of how recently or unsystematically learnt or how limited one's proficiency may be, is unquestionably the core factor pertaining to the fate of any language on this planet. In order to increase the domains of use of threatened languages, more speakers and users are needed. If intergenerational transmission is weakening or has come to a halt, the only way to increase the number of language users is to educate them.

In this connection Satō (2011) points out that, besides scholars, "people interested in Ainu" range from "regular Ainu language fans", to "Ainu language *otaku*" ('people with obsessive interests'), "believers/devotees", and even "founders of

religious sects" (*kyōso* 教祖). Thus, compared to other (foreign) language learning in the Japanese context, there exists a large variety of aspiring people with very varying interests, beliefs, and attitudes. This poses a particular challenge to Ainu language education in general. On the one hand, the "charm" of the Ainu language is explained through the notion that it offers something for everyone and is easy for Japanese speakers to approach at the beginner's level. However, others underscore that it is hard or even impossible for (non-Ainu) learners to "fully grasp" the Ainu worldview. Still others remark that "knowing things like language does not make us Ainu" (CAIS10). Despite such diverging attitudes, cultural learning spaces that also involve non-Ainu and hence offer opportunities to learn together, are seen as an indispensable element of Ainu language revitalization (CAIS10). In higher education Ainu classes are offered at least at seven Japanese universities, including three major universities outside of Hokkaido.[10] The absolute number of Ainu language learners in various language classes is increasing.

This said, pursuing a Master's degree, let alone an academic career with Ainu in Japan is complicated and national-scale research institutes are reluctant to establish posts in the field. Not only this, but a fresh survey report commissioned by the Agency of Cultural Affairs (BC12) provides alarming information on the difficulties currently experienced by agents involved in the promotion of Ainu language: not only is the number of elderly bilingual/semi-speakers extremely limited, but more than half of the Ainu community classes once organized in 14 locations throughout Hokkaido prefecture have been either closed or radically affected due to discontinued assistance from the Hokkaido Prefectural Board of Education.[11] Satō (2012: 33) adds that it has become hard to involve remaining elderly Ainu speakers in language courses, particularly in bigger towns. While in some courses eager *wajin* learners can be commuting to classes from distant locations, local Ainu may not have similar means or possibilities to enrol. For many Ainu, battling with employment conditions, health risks, and everyday livelihood still represent a reality that overrides language revival activism.

Saami has been a language of education in Finnish schools since the 1970s and at present "[a]ll primary and lower secondary schools within the Sámi Homeland

10 In Hokkaido: Hokkaido University, Sapporo University, Hokkaido University of Education, and Asahikawa University; in the Kanto area: Chiba University, Waseda University, and Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (BC12: 132). Bugaeva (2012: 500, fn. 6) adds to this list Hokkaido Gakuin University, Sapporo Gakuin University, and Tokyo University (occasional courses).

11 Assistance was discontinued in 2009 in connection with an incident of "unsatisfactory dealing with finances" and following an inspection targeting 19 branches of the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, a process which raised criticism among those affected (BC12: 12–14). For more information, see Oono (forthcoming 2017).

provide education in the Sámi language" (Sámediggi 2014). All the three Saami languages of Finland can be included in the national Matriculation Examination organized at the end of secondary education.

In Finnish compulsory education Saami was studied in 2012 as a "long foreign language" (A1) by one single pupil, and by 29 pupils as a "2nd long foreign language" (A2).[12] In upper secondary school, a shorter foreign language curriculum of Saami (B2) was followed by six pupils (SUKOL 2012). Of more than 30,000 students who completed upper secondary general education a year later, Saami was studied as a foreign language by only nine pupils in total (Official Statistics of Finland 2013). In the period 2006–2015 a handful of students registered annually for exams in the three Saami languages in the Matriculation Examination: "short" North Saami 5–13; North Saami as mother tongue 4–14; "short" Inari Saami 1 (2015); Inari Saami as mother tongue 2 (2015); "short" Skolt Saami 3 (2014) and 1 (2015); Skolt Saami as mother tongue 1 (2012), 1 (2013), and 4 (2014) (Ylioppilastutkintolautakunta 2015). Remarkably, in recent years there has thus been examinees also in the "definitely endangered" Inari and Skolt Saami, which can be interpreted as a faint, yet promising signal of success of language revitalization efforts (cf. Olthuis, Kivelä & Skutnabb-Kangas 2013). In 2018 all the three languages will be included in the electronic format of the Matriculation Examination (Grönholm 2015).[13] In higher education Saami can be studied at three Finnish universities: Oulu, Lapland, and Helsinki.

In the examined surveys and reports, the Saami languages in Finland are generally seen as an extremely positive asset, but some critical voices can also be attested, specifically regarding the sufficiency and availability of language education and its methodology, the education of language educators, and the implementation of language legislation. Individual remarks refer to internal hierarchies within Saami communities and point out, for example, possible tensions between the more widely available and strongly represented North Saami vis-à-vis the more vulnerable Inari and Skolt Saami (Olthuis, Kivelä & Skutnabb-Kangas 2013).

Many respondents reflect on their identities and ponder whether it is "possible to be Saami without language". Experiences of discrimination in two different contexts are also mentioned: non-fluent/L2 Saami speakers versus fluent Saami speakers on the one hand, and Saami speakers versus Finnish speakers on the other. These situations, pertaining to the intimate relationship of language and

12 "A1 language is a common (compulsory) language started in grades 1 to 6. A2 language is an optional language started in grades 1 to 6. [...] B2 language is an optional language started in grades 7 to 9 (at least six courses in upper secondary general school)." (Statistics Finland)

13 Electronification of the national Matriculation Examination will take place in phases, starting from autumn 2016 and stretching until 2019 by when all the test subjects should be included.

power, prompt less fluent and non-speakers to ask whether one has to know the language in order to be acknowledged as "Saami enough". Echoing demands along the lines of "It is important that Saami is spoken correctly" (AL12), some respondents make reference to conceptualisations such as "real Saami", "basic Saami" or even "super-Saami" and "hyper-Saami" (MR10).

To sum up, the importance of language as a "constituent" of Ainu or Saami identity is thus well attested, but the possible role of language as "solely" a symbolic or cultural element can also be identified. Identifying the goals and balancing the needs and wishes of aspiring learners of varying backgrounds can therefore be seen as one key factor in further revitalization activities. Even within specific language "communities", such as the Ainu and Saami, increasing internal diversity and manifestations of "urban" or "diasporic indigeneities" (Watson 2014: 33) necessitate responsive language revitalization actions. Watson's remark relating to the Ainu minority in Tokyo is equally valid for the nearly two thirds of the Finnish Saami now living outside the traditional Saami Homeland (Sámediggi 2014): "Continuity with the past is then less about a formal connection with knowledge at an intellectual level (i.e. the learning of historical facts and cultural technique), than it is about experiencing a felt attachment." (Watson 2014: 115) Striking a balance between (urban) young speakers/learners – or non-speakers – and those bound to tradition is challenging. While in Japan Ainu ethnicity nowadays can connect to manifestations of "cool metroethnicity" (Maher 2006) enabling young people to decide to "start being Ainu" (Holtan 2011), and in Finland youth idols such as Inari Saami rapper Amoc (Mikkâl Antti Morottaja) gain popularity, "the idea that nothing natural or particularly intrinsic to Indigenous culture could find expression in urban migration continues to dominate" (Watson 2014: 30).

Katsuragi (2011: 209), focusing on Japanese language policies, offers another noteworthy line of thought as he speaks of "a kind of multicultural detachment opposed to ethnic absolutism" and further argues that, in the Japanese context, the concept of "multiculturalism" is conceived as "*aesthetic* rather than political" (emphasis added). How should language planners and other stakeholders then tackle "metroethnic coolness", "aesthetic multiculturalism", or the idea of "culture as accent" in revitalization efforts? It would appear that in the globalising world, more flexibility towards differing modes, degrees, and goals of "knowing" and learning a language must be called for (Blommaert & Backus 2012, Blommaert & Rampton 2011). If not, as one Ainu survey informant remarks, "[w]hen the elderly speakers are gone, only researchers and scholars will be able to speak Ainu" (BC12).

As Satō (2011) notes, scholars in the field, however, are often faced with similar dilemmas: "How can you be a scholar if you cannot speak the language well?" is only one type of question frequently asked, while others directly challenge

their work: "it's [linguists'] passion that some exotic, endangered language is researched. A nice merit in the CV. [...] It's wonderful that our language is interesting, but that requires time and involvement from us, but what do we actually benefit from that? Do we really get anything back?" (MR10) The sentiment of having been "robbed twice", first by the dominant population, later also by researchers is not an uncommon opinion. However, although some respondents consider current revitalization measures in the case of Ainu merely as patchwork (CAIS10), others outline that, by shifting the focus increasingly to concrete and practical topics, the chances that scholars are able to bring something valuable back to the community will highly increase. As a consequence, yet another balancing act enters the equation regarding the social construction of the roles of scholars versus laypersons: being closely entangled with power, identity, self-image, and emotional involvement, language itself is a core element of this. Hence, as Wilton and Stegu (2011: 5) remark, "a continuum (or categories with permeable and negotiable boundaries) is more appropriate when it comes to language issues than a strictly dichotomous distinction".

Lending an ear to the voices of the concerned language users, be it native speakers or heritage/L2 language learners, provides common ground for both parties, "experts" and "laypersons" alike. In the case of Ainu, despite the fact that most respondents seem to have noticed increasing interest in Ainu culture and language in recent years, many are still unsatisfied with Ainu learning methods (BC12). In language education, Ainu associations as well as the FRPAC are considered as the most influential organizations, but many call for the improvement of learning materials highlighting the need to include more daily conversation, create suitable materials for various learners, levels and regions (dialects are highly valued), and to not only teach basic nouns but also "difficult verbs and grammar". Both daily conversation and oral tradition are valued, representing direct associations to language corpora. As for Saami, the lengthy wish list includes, among others: courses about traditional occupations taught in Saami; language mentors; inclusion of language for daily contexts; language examinations; ("critique-free") language courses; inspiring and innovative learning materials; immersive language nests for younger children; activities bringing together elderly and young speakers; meetings with other indigenous people(s); writing and (intensive) conversation courses; language planning; and finally, information on the influence of language contact (with Finnish). Areas of further research needs that are listed include: modern "Saaminess" and culture; identity; migration; equality issues; teaching of Saami as L1 and L2; Saami language use (daily use, modern dialects, status, revitalization methods, language attitudes, media language); health and wellbeing (AL12; MR10; OKM12).

This said, besides such views connecting for the large part to corpora and status, it would naturally be naïve to overlook the role of the dominant population in the concerned regions. Whilst the attitudes of the dominant population in Finland towards the Saami have in recent years developed from depicting the latter as "jolly hard-drinking reindeer herders" towards, in some reported cases, even excessive positive interest, the Ainu still face continuous discrimination and even denial in Japan. As recently as August 2014, a Sapporo-based Hokkaido assemblyman, Kaneko Yasuyuki, reportedly Tweeted: "There are no such people as the Ainu anymore, are there?" (Yamayoshi 2014). The attitudes of the dominant population are in turn directly reflected within the Ainu minorities, where there exists "a wide gap in awareness between ordinary Ainu and those promoting social movements" (CAIS10).

5. LANGUAGE AS A LOCAL PRACTICE

To recapitulate: What can we learn from the examined Ainu and Saami surveys regarding the prospects of these languages in the future? Factors such as continuity (*keizokusei* 継続性), living conditions, and education (BC12), and those pertaining directly or indirectly also to status, prestige and corpora, can be listed as shared concerns. It would, nonetheless, seem important to highlight yet another common concern, namely the adaptability of these languages to the requirements of contemporary lives. To give just one example, as Pitkänen-Huhta & Pietikäinen (2012) demonstrate, the youngest Saami speakers and learners are apt at creating new literacy practices. Given that the era of monolingual speakers is long gone, it is rather multilingual language use as *action* which would merit additional attention. Similarly, a better dialogue between linguists focusing on language as a *system* and those interested in what actual users *do* with language could be a first step. Echoing also Coulmas (2005), the focus must be redirected towards the *language users*, heterogeneous and dispersed as they may be, allowing and – better yet – encouraging them to make use of the various resources at hand within local "norms". In this orientation, language is best understood as an emergent social act and "a material part of social and cultural life rather than [...] an abstract entity" (Pennycook 2010: 2).

In the case of young speakers or learners, for example, linguistic studies of attrition typically focus on "children, or heritage learners, whose heritage speech is characterized by *incomplete or interrupted acquisition*" (Grenoble 2010: 141, emphasis added) – thus defining the "norms" of the language in question from above as something immutable and largely unreachable, handed down by the elderly (archival) speakers in the "authentic" form. Referring to the case of some

Ewenki adults learning Russian in an "imperfect" manner, Grenoble continues that "[f]rom a linguistic standpoint, this is an interesting population, as *for some individuals it is unclear what is L1 and what is L2*" (emphasis added). It is symptomatic that such "imperfect learning" or "confusion" is further analysed in medical terms: "To what extent is [code-mixing] a *diagnostic of* attrition?" (Grenoble 2010: 142, emphasis added) (cf. for example "symptoms *diagnostic of* cancer"). Who still wonders why scholars armed with their questionnaires and video cameras may at times encounter resistance "in the field"?

Although the cases of Ainu and Saami cannot be paralleled with the situation of the Ewenki as described by Grenoble, "poly-languaging", as analysed within the framework of "Superdiversity", could perhaps be suggested as a novel theoretical tool or framework of analysis. "Superdiversity" as a descriptor for new forms of socio-cultural and socio-linguistic diversity has recently been discussed in a number of pivotal studies focusing on new types of speakers and learners, degrees of language ownership and "poly-languaging" (Blommaert & Backus 2012; Blommaert & Rampton 2011). Within this framework every language user, irrespective of their proficiency, is at the core and is seen as an active agent making use of their personal linguistic repertoire. Thus, rather than focusing on individual subjects as an outcome of power, with particular socio-historical and ethnic "baggage" and henceforth as members of a "fixed" language community, the spotlight is on the latent or available "niches" that compose the modern social environment in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Following this line of thought, rather than falling back on the weighty term "identity", the identification of such niches among the Ainu and Saami, for example, could then be accompanied by the following question: What can be determined, or "enregistered", as adequate resources for the specific niches, and is language one of them? If so, what type of language, and who has access (L2 learners, linguists, token speakers, idealized "traditional" (native) or "legitimate" speakers, etc.)? From this perspective, status, prestige, and corpora are likely to invite very diverse associations ranging, for example, from the aforementioned Inari Saami *ráp-artista* (*ráppejeaddji*) Amoc's (Mikkâl Antti Morottaja's) lyrics to the recitation of Ainu *yukar* (epic poetry) or the mastery of the terminology related to reindeer herding or embroidery. Language revitalization activities, then, could be conceived as a continuum, ranging from small steps, aimed at the maintenance of at least some functional links between languages and linguistic repertoires of choice and their respective environments, towards a complete preservation or restoration of language ecology in its full social, cultural, and ecological context (Gruzdeva & Länsisalmi 2014).

Finally, to conclude this short exploration, let us borrow the candid words of two "Northern Voices" found in the surveys discussed, the first Saami and the second Ainu: "It can never be emphasized enough that these languages cannot be compared to other languages." (AL12) "Maybe one day children will be able to speak Ainu, even if their parents cannot. We should start by doing what we can." (BC12)

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