

Pite Saami Language Attrition

a case study



Joshua Wilbur
University of Tartu

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overview

- Pite Saami: the state of things
- the linguistic landscape of Arjeplog (contact language situation)
- indications of attrition in language structures
- examples from the Pite Saami corpus



Pite Saami Language Attrition

a case study

caveat

I am:

- **not** an expert at language attrition
- just a linguist who has researched Pite Saami extensively

you are:

- future experts in language attrition in Uralic languages

so:

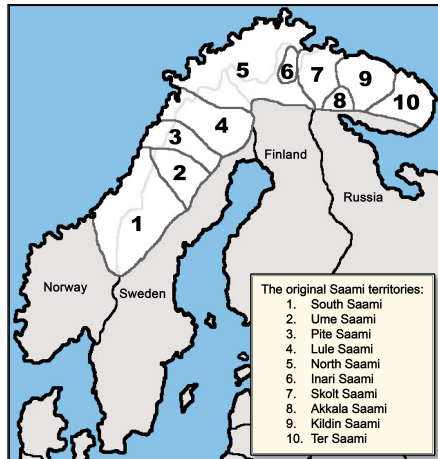
**I'll provide the data and the context,
together we can think about attrition in Pite Saami**

Pite Saami

the state of things

the Saami languages

	<i>language</i>	<i>countries</i>	<i>appx. speakers</i>
1	South	S/N	600
2	Ume	S	5
3	Pite	S	40
4	Lule	S/N	1500
5	North	S/N/FIN	20 000
6	Inari	FIN	300
7	Skolt	FIN/RUS	400
8	Akkala	RUS	0
9	Kildin	RUS	200
10	Ter	RUS	5



Pite Saami (Arjeplog Saami, *bidumsámegiella*)

- Uralic → Finno-Ugric → Saamic...Pite Saami
- spoken by ~**35** individuals from Arjeplog/Árjepluovve in Swedish Lapland and adjacent areas in Norway
- almost all L1 speakers are at least 60 years old
- hardly taught to younger generations
- Swedish dominates in everyday life for most speakers
- all speakers are bilingual
(Pite Saami and Swedish/*Arjeplogsmål*)
- *official* orthography since August 2019
- no regularly produced media
- no formal language teaching

critically endangered
possibly facing language death

the Pite Saami corpus

the main source of data for today's talk

<i>type</i>	<i>sessions</i>	<i>tokens</i>	<i>duration</i>
spontaneous	73	34 106	18h09m
elicitation	83	11 663	47h25m
written	10	3 661	0h0m
total	156	49 430	65h34m

- other collectors' texts from 1893 (Halász), 1921 (Lagercrantz), various others throughout the 20th century
- my own recordings since 2008
- parts of the corpus are automatically tagged for lemma, part of speech, morphological categories and English gloss

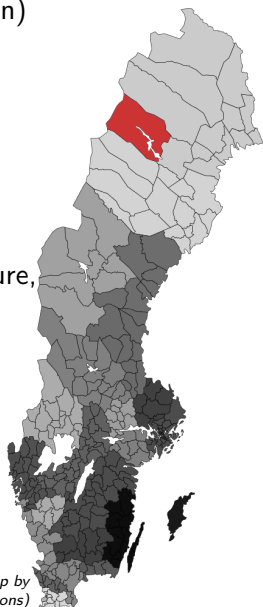
**the linguistic landscape
of Arjeplog**

Arjeplog municipality

- Sweden: Norrbotten (state), Lappland (region)
- 14,500 km²
- 2,707 inhabitants
- 0.19 inhabitants/km²
- main “town”: Arjeplog/Árjepluovve
- main industry: car industry (winter testing)
- traditionally: silver mining, tourism, agriculture, hunting/fishing, reindeer herding



google-maps • webcams



modified version of a map by
Lokal_Profil (Wikimedia Commons)

The languages of Arjeplog



two official languages

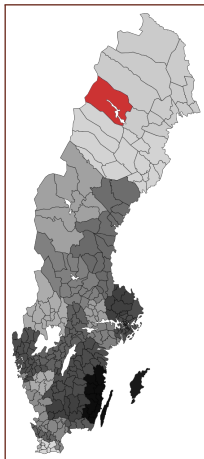


national (majority) language

Swedish

national minority language

Saami



(but which Saami language?)

The languages of Arjeplog



two official languages



national (majority) language

Swedish

national minority language

Saami

reality

Indo-European (North-Germanic):

- *Arjeplogsmål* (Arjeplog-dialect)
- standard Swedish

Uralic (Saamic):

- Pite Saami
- North Saami

others:

- English, German, Norwegian, Turkish, East African languages, etc.

The languages of Arjeplog

languages taught in school:

- standard Swedish
- English
- other large I-E languages
- (Saami for a select group)

languages regularly heard in public:

- standard Swedish
- Arjeplogsmål
- other languages of tourism/
car-testing (depending on the season)

languages seen in public:

- standard Swedish
- North Saami
- Pite Saami



Swedish

- language of schooling
 - language of mass media
 - language of many other Swedes living in Arjeplog
 - language required for many opportunities outside of northern Sweden
- etc.*

**the dominant language
in many important domains
for many generations**

Arjeplogsmål

- first Germanic-speaking colonists arrived in 1700s for silver mining
- first persistent colonization started ~1800
- settlers were mainly farmers from the Swedish east coast (some local Saami also became farmers)

“...at the beginning of the 1800s, most colonists had some knowledge of Saami ... and could often speak Saami.”

(Wallström 1943: 21)

- nowadays, speakers are (natively) monolingual
- many shared characteristics with other northern Swedish dialects, but also heavily influenced by (Pite-)Saami substrate

North Saami



forcibly relocated Karesuando North Saami in Ammarnäs

Ume Saami territory

North Saami

(in Arjeplog)

- mainly spoken by reindeer-herding families who were forcibly relocated from Karesuando to Arjeplog in 1920s
- unknown number of speakers in Arjeplog (probably more than Pite Saami)
- often used in reindeer herding
- frequently used in media, books, etc.
- *minimally* mutually intelligible with Pite Saami

language attrition
in Pite Saami language structures

the state of Pite Saami (summary)

Pite Saami seems to be facing language death (i.e., it is likely “moribund”)

- nearly universal break in intergenerational language transmission
- “gradual death” due to long-term, sustained language contact, and the resulting language shift to North Germanic
- stimuli for the decision to shift include:
 - enforcement of Swedish-only policies (at least in the past)
 - in/voluntary shift to Swedish

some structural examples where attrition may be relevant:

- dual verb morphology
- predicative possession
- derivational aspect/mood
- abessive case
- extensive “code-mixing”

dual verb morphology

- Pite Saami verbs normally inflect for 3 categories of number: *
singular, dual, plural

(1) *gunne muv áddjá ja áhkká*
where 1SG.GEN grandfather.NOM.SG and grandmother.NOM.SG
inijga gåddev
have.3DU.PST hut.ACC.SG

'where my grandfather and grandmother had a hut'

[pit090915.239]

dual verb morphology

- Pite Saami verbs normally inflect for 3 categories of number: * singular, dual, plural
- several instances of plural verb inflection, despite dual subject

(2) *ja* ***måj*** *dä* *ber* ***ságastime*** *sáme*
and 1DU.NOM then only speak.1PL.PST Saami.GEN.SG
gielav *danne*
language.GEN.SG there

'and we two only spoke Saami there'

[pit090702.436]

→ can this be explained as due to attrition?

predicative possession

- the “Saamic” way
(locative possessor, copula verb, nominative possessum)

(3) *ja* *muvne* *lij* *guäkkte* *vielja*
and 1SG.INE be.3SG two.NOM.SG brother.NOM.PL

‘and I had two brothers’

[sje19760500a.014]

predicative possession

- the “Saamic” way
(locative possessor, copula verb, nominative possessum)
- the “Germanic” way
(nominative possessor, *habeo*-verb, accusative possessum)

(4) *danne* *sáme* *idni* *buhtsujt*
there Saami.NOM.PL have.3PL.PRS reindeer.ACC.PL
giesen
summer.INE.SG

‘the Saami have reindeer there in the summer’ [pit100404.011]

predicative possession

- the “Saamic” way
(locative possessor, copula verb, nominative possessum)
- the “Germanic” way
(nominative possessor, *habeo*-verb, accusative possessum)
→ plenty of examples in heritage texts, e.g., from 1893:

(5) *idni* *sijá* *båtsoj-ielojd* *ja* *áj*
have.3PL.PRS 3PL.NOM reindeer-herdACC.PL and also
slihtur-ielojd
cattle-herdACC.PL

‘they have reindeer herds and also cattle herds’

[sje18930000a-halasz1893a-22.003]

- can this be explained as due to attrition?
or simply contact-induced language change?

derivational aspect/mood

Pite Saami derivational verb morphology:

- rich, complex and seemingly inconsistent (unpredictable); can express aspect, mood, etc.
 - see: Israel Ruong (1943) *Lappische Verbalableitung dargestellt auf Grundlage des Pitelappischen*
- loss of many such derivations, due to attrition?

in Ruong 1943		corpus hits
vádtset	'go, walk'	32
vádtsát	'start walking'	1
vádtsegâhtet	'start walking'	0
vádtsedit	'allow someone to walk; deceive'	0
vádtsadallat	'be deceived'	0
vádtsestit	'walk a short distance'	0
vádtselit	'walk a short distance quickly one time'	0
vádtselfidit	'walk back and forth constantly'	0
vádtsetjit	'go for a walk; walk slowly'	0
vádtsetjahtjat	'start going for a walk'	0
vádtsetstit	'jump up to go'	0
vádtsetstallat	'prance around, swagger'	0

derivational aspect/mood

Pite Saami derivational verb morphology:

- rich, complex and seemingly inconsistent (unpredictable); can express aspect, mood, etc.
 - see: Israel Ruong (1943) *Lappische Verbalableitung dargestellt auf Grundlage des Pitelappischen*
- loss of many such derivations, due to attrition?
→ preference for **phrasal equivalents**, due to attrition?

cf. 'start walking' = **vádt^sát**/**vádtsegáhtet** vs. **állget vádtset**


(6)	<i>bátsoj</i>	<i>älgij,</i>	<i>sidaj</i>	állget
	reindeer.NOM.SG	begin.3SG.PST	want.3SG.PST	begin.INF
	vádtset			
	walk.INF			

'the reindeer started, wanted to start to walk' [sje20150329b.096]

abessive

- Pite Saami has 9 cases (illustrated by this inflectional paradigm)
- abessive = “without”

	SG	PL
NOM	<i>juällge</i>	<i>juolge</i>
GEN	<i>juolge</i>	<i>juolgij</i>
ACC	<i>juolgev</i>	<i>juolgijt</i>
ILL	<i>juallgáj</i>	<i>juolgijda</i>
INESS	<i>juolgen</i>	<i>juolgijn</i>
ELAT	<i>juolgest</i>	<i>juolgijst</i>
COM	<i>juolgijna</i>	<i>juolgij</i>
ABESS	<i>juolgedak</i>	<i>juolgedaga</i>
ESS	<i>juallgen</i>	



JUÄLLGE ‘leg/foot’

abessive

- Pite Saami has 9 cases
 - abessive = “without”
 - during elicitation sessions, abessive wordforms were very inconsistent and speakers were very uncertain
 - in the spontaneous speech corpus, there is **only one attested instance** of abessive case and it is from 1921!
- can this be explained as due to attrition?

(7) *sâmes dâlven* *gu lidjin* ***biebmodak***
some winter.INE.SG when be.3PL.PST food.ABESS.SG
nâhkâm...
run_out.PTCP

‘one winter, when they had run out of food...’

[sje19210000a-lagercrantz1957a-426.006]

extensive “code-mixing”

- intrasentential switch of grammar between Pite Saami and Swedish/*arjeplogsmål*
 - particularly common in the speech of one particular family
- does this relate to attrition? if so, how?

(8) *jå, dállke'l buorak, hä ha ju varit gäjkes*
yes weather=be.3SG.PRS good this has well been dry.PRED
Sv PS PS Sv Sv Sv Sv PS

'yes, the weather is good, it has been dry'

[sje20130522.099]

(9) *jå men sen vi har gähthjam dav mav lä*
yes but then we have look.PTCP that.ACC.SG which.ACC.SG be.2SG.PRS
Sv Sv Sv Sv Sv PS PS PS PS

guvvum
record.PRF
PS

'yes but once we have looked at what you recorded'

[sje20170418.019]

**explore the Pite Saami corpus
for more examples**



Gijtov idnit!

<i>gijtov</i>	<i>idnit</i>
gijto-v	adne-t
thank-ACC.SG	have-PL.IMP

Joshua Wilbur

joshua.wilbur@ut.ee

Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics
Centre for Digital Humanities and Information Society
University of Tartu