

Thalia Primikyri  
Karolina Schild

## Northern Saami

### **Linguistic features (Dryer and Haspelmath: 2013)**

Northern Saami is a language with fixed, non-weight sensitive initial stress and trochaic rhythm type (Itkonen 1955). It is a strongly suffixing language (Bartens 1989). Nominal plurality in Northern Saami is coded in the plural suffix (Bartens 1989) and obligatory for all nouns (Sammallahti 1998b). The language has a unique affixal associative plural (Honti 1997). There are neither definite nor indefinite articles in Northern Saami (Bartens 1989).

Indefinite pronouns are interrogative-based (Bartens 1989). The language has 6-7 cases (Bartens 1989), marked in case suffixes (Bartens 1989), asymmetrical case marking is additive-quantitatively asymmetrical (Nickel 1994). Nominal and verbal conjunction are identical (Sammallahti 1998). Northern Saami is a language with tense-aspect suffixes (Bartens 1989). It has morphologically dedicated second singular and second plural imperatives (Bartens 1989, Sammallahti 1998a). The prohibitive uses the verbal construction of the second singular imperative and a sentential negative strategy found in (indicative) declarative (Bartens 1989, Sammallahti 1998a). The language has a maximal imperative-hortative system but not a minimal one (Inktoken 1969). Situational possibility and epistemic possibility are expressed by verbal constructions (Bartens 1989). There is no overlap between situational and epistemic modal marking (Bartens 1989, Sammallahti 1998a). Northern Saami is an SVO language that uses postpositions, has prenominal adjectives and genitives (Bartens 1989). The morpheme signalling clausal negation in declarative sentences is a negative auxiliary verb (Bartens 1989). Negative indefinites co-occur with predicate negation (Bartens 1989). Polar questions are formed using a question particle (Bartens 1989). The complement subject is left implicit (Bartens 1989). The words “hand” and “arm” are denoted by a single word, but there are two separate words for “finger” and “hand” (Sammallahti 1998b). The word “tea” derives from Min Nan Chinese “te” (Malherbe and Rosenberg 1996). Northern Saami has only preverbal negative morphemes and no minor morphological means of signalling negation (Bartens 1989).

### **Written form:**

- “Čieža čappa čáhppes cizáža, čohkkájit ja čuhket čázi, čađa čoddaga čoavjái čoliide”  
Seven beautiful little black birds sat and sipped water through their intestines into their stomachs

- “Gos leat ceakkos gáissát ja eanemus muohta?”

Where are the steepest mountains and the most snow?

- “Loavttán buorebut jiekŋačázis go geassebáhkasis”

I like ice-swimming better than hot weather

(Source: <http://sayitinsaami.yle.fi/>)

### **Audio recordings of Northern Saami:**

In this link ([https://omniglot.com/soundfiles/udhr/udhr\\_northernsami.mp3](https://omniglot.com/soundfiles/udhr/udhr_northernsami.mp3)) there is an audio recording of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by Ivvár Máhtte Eira Strand.

*Transcription:*

Buot olbmot leat riegeádan friddjan ja olmmošárvvu ja olmmošvuoigatvuođaid dáfus. Sii leat jierbmalaš olbmot geain lea oamedovdu ja sii gálggaše leat dego vieljačagat.

*Translation:*

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

(Source: <https://omniglot.com/writing/northernsami.htm>)

Also, in this video from YouTube with English subtitles [WIKITONGUES: Lene and Børre speaking Northern Sami](#), we can see two people speaking Northern Saami and they are also wearing Saami's folk costumes.

(Source: <https://youtu.be/hd5MB1W5Rg8>)

Moreover, in this video from YouTube with English subtitles [WIKITONGUES: Irena speaking Northern Sami](#), we can see a non-native speaker, a Russian woman, that has learned speaking Northern Saami.

(Source: <https://youtu.be/wjwQkOzzSAg>)

### **Pictures from the region:**

Figure 1: Distribution of Saami languages in Scandinavia

(Source: <https://blogs.loc.gov/international-collections/files/2019/12/SAMI-MAP.jpg>)



Figure 2: Distribution of Saami languages in Norway

(Source:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321030271/figure/fig2/AS:560214714667010@1510577004373/Sami-settlements-and-where-different-Sami-languages-are-spoken-in-Norway.png>)

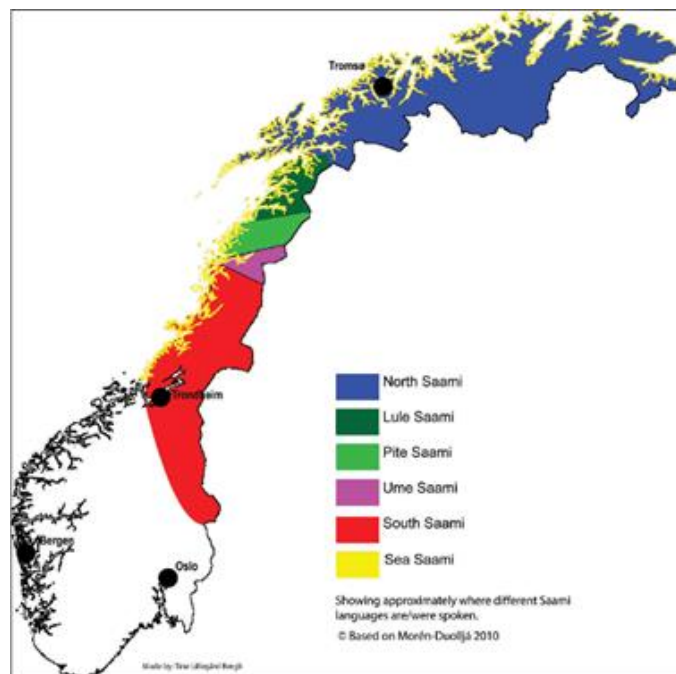


Figure 3: Map showing the distribution of the population of Saami speaking people in Norway

(Source: <https://i.pinimg.com/564x/5a/4e/4b/5a4e4b86f1ff2fb7745c283b72049a56.jpg>)

Kart 6. Personer innohatt i Sametingets valgmanntal kommuneris per 2008-2015

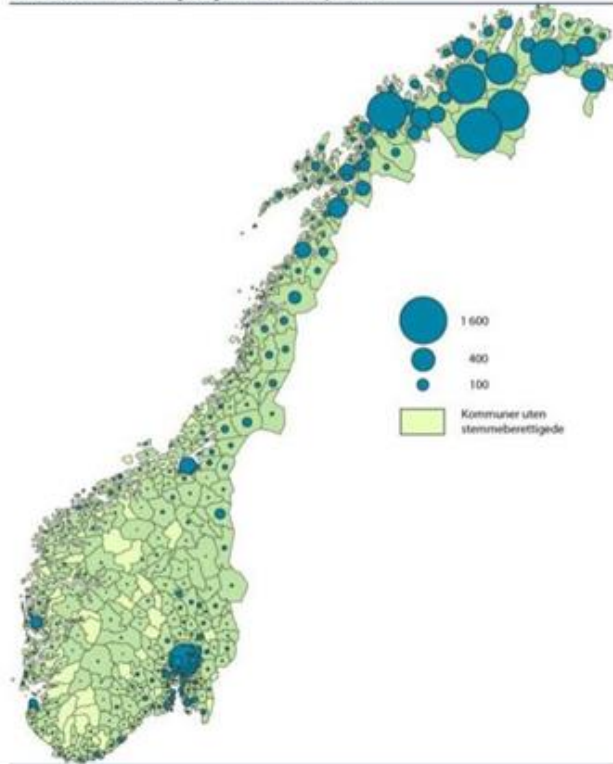


Figure 4: Map showing the distribution of Saami languages in Scandinavia, the number of people speaking them and their language skills

(Source: [https://nordregio.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/10133\\_saami\\_language\\_EN.jpg](https://nordregio.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/10133_saami_language_EN.jpg))

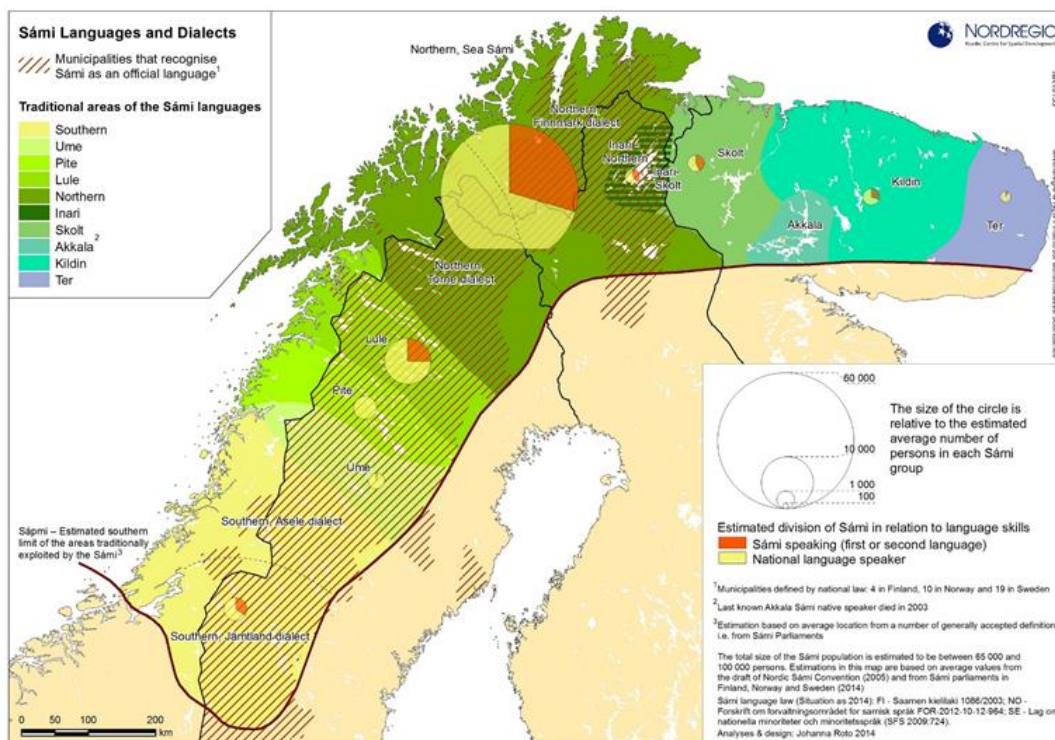


Figure 5: Saami folk costumes

(Sources:

[https://theodora.com/wfb/photos/norway/man\\_in\\_sami\\_norwegian\\_national\\_costume\\_finnmark\\_north\\_norway\\_photo\\_johan\\_wildhagen-innovation\\_norway.jpg](https://theodora.com/wfb/photos/norway/man_in_sami_norwegian_national_costume_finnmark_north_norway_photo_johan_wildhagen-innovation_norway.jpg),

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/69/Sami\\_woman\\_with\\_white\\_reindeer.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/69/Sami_woman_with_white_reindeer.jpg),

<https://img.17qq.com/images/crehwcqsrx.jpeg>)



## References:

Bartens, Hans-Hermann. 1989. *Lehrbuch der saamischen (lappischen) Sprache*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag.

Dryer, Matthew S. and Martin Haspelmath (eds.) 2013. *The World Atlas of*

*Language Structures Online.* (<http://wals.info>)

Honti, László. 1997. "Numerusprobleme. Ein Erkundungszug durch den Dschungel der uralischen Numeri". *Finnisch-Ugrische Mitteilungen* 54.

Itkonen, Erkki. 1955. "Über die Betonungsverhältnisse in den finnisch-ugrischen Sprachen". *Acta Linguistica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 5.

Itkonen, Erkki. 1969. *Lappische Chrestomathie mit grammatikalischem Abriss und Wörterverzeichnis.* (Hilfsmittel für das Studium der Finnisch-Ugrischen Sprachen, 7.) Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.

Koivula Katri, Nillas Holmberg, Moustache Coys LTD, Lille Santanen, Hannu Karisto and Laura Vehkaoja. 2016-2018. *Say it in Saami.* (<http://sayitinsaami.yle.fi/>)(April 10, 2021)

Nickel, Klaus Peter. 1994. *Samisk grammatikk.* Karasjok: Girji.

Sammallahti, Pekka. 1998. *The Saami Languages: An Introduction.* Karasjohka: Davvi Girji.