

# 6 Language Standardisation as Frozen Mediated Actions

## The Materiality of Language Standardisation

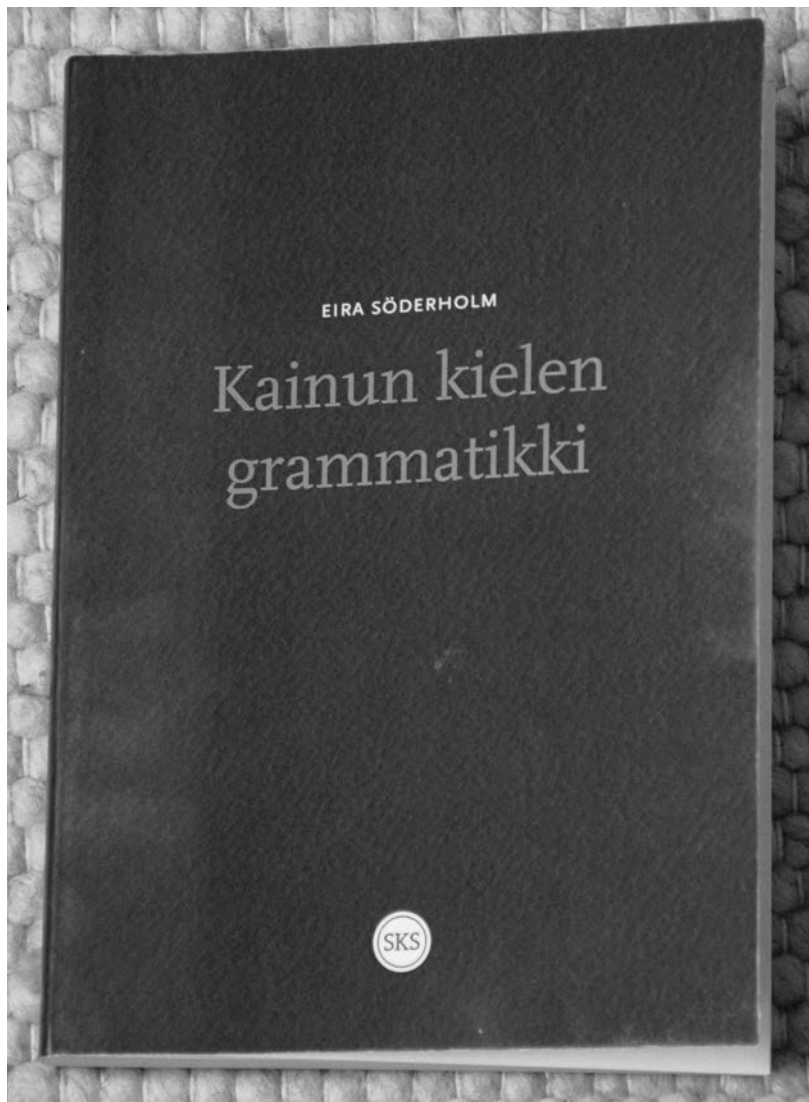
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### 1. Introduction

In June 2015, a padded envelope arrived in my mailbox at work. The envelope contained the book *Kainun kielen grammatikki*, 'A grammar of Kven' (Söderholm 2014)—the first grammar of my parents' mother tongue (Figure 6.1). Even though I was surrounded by Kven as the everyday language in my home village Pykeä<sup>2</sup> on the coast of northern Norway, I did not learn to speak Kven as a child due to my parents' belief that children were better off learning only Norwegian. I grew up as a passive bilingual: I understood Kven, but spoke only Norwegian. Later, as an adult, I embarked on the journey from a passive bilingual to a new speaker of Kven. This journey included studying and researching Kven as a linguist, coming to understand the prejudice experienced by my parents and their generation and seeing what was once considered 'dirty Finnish' become officially recognised as a language in its own right. Eighteen years later, receiving and reading the first grammar of Kven was a significant moment for me.

Reading a book is a common and ordinary social action, but for me, both from a personal and professional perspective, this was a very important moment. In this chapter, I will investigate this book as a 'frozen mediated action', resulting from cycles of discourse and a chain of previous social actions (Scollon 2001; Norris 2004). My analysis is guided by the following questions, based on Scollon and Scollon (2004), and Scollon and de Saint-Georges (2012): What are the actions going on here? What are the social actors doing here and why? What is the role of discourse in these actions? This moment when I picked up the book can be understood as a site of engagement—a point in time and space where separate practices come together, a moment defined by Scollon (2001, 147) as: 'the convergence of social practices in a moment in real time which opens a window for a mediated action to occur'. I will map cycles of discourse and the chains of social actions ultimately leading to the moment in space and time when I opened the envelope and held a grammar of the Kven language in my hands.

I begin with a description of the Kven-speaking community and the socio-political process which lead to the creation of a written standard of Kven. I



*Figure 6.1* Söderholm 2014: Kainun kielen grammatikki

then analyse the role of various social actors in the standardisation process, suggesting that the material outcome of standardisation may be understood as frozen action (material results of social actions taken in the past [Scollon 2001]) and as mediational means (a tool for social action [Wertsch 1991]). I discuss these characteristics of standardisation in relation to the grammar book. Finally, I analyse the reception of standardised texts by investigating

how social actors positioned themselves when they read texts written in Kven. I draw on my experiences as a new speaker, a linguist and a participant in Kven language planning over two decades.

## **2. From Dialect to Language—Recognition and Standardisation of Kven**

The Kven are a Finnic-speaking national minority<sup>3</sup> group traditionally living in the two northernmost counties of Norway, though today many live in other parts of Norway (Figure 6.2). Like many other minority groups, the Kven went through a period of linguistic oppression (Eriksen and Niemi 1981; Pietikäinen, Lane, Salo, and Laihiala-Kankainen 2010). They were not allowed to use their language at school, and during the first part of the 20th century, boarding schools where the use of Kven and Sámi was forbidden, were built. Until 1959, the use of Kven and Sámi in the educational system was forbidden. Until 1964, one had to speak Norwegian to buy land in the northern area, effectively excluding Kven from owning land and achieving social mobility (Lane 2010; 2015). One consequence of this oppression was a feeling of shame and a devaluing of the Kven culture and language. Many Kven speakers have expressed that they did not wish to place the same burden on their children as the one they had to carry, and therefore, they chose to speak only Norwegian to their children (Lane 2010). These oppressive policies and general processes of modernisation where Norwegian was seen as the language of progress and possibilities have led to language shift in all Kven communities (Lane 2010; Räisänen 2014). Language shift is a process in which ‘the habitual use of one language is being replaced by the habitual use of another’ in communities (Gal 1979, 1). Those born after around 1965 were largely raised speaking Norwegian, and Kven is no longer used in the majority of social domains. The notion of monolingualism as the natural state of being and the only way to social mobility (though people tended to spend their lives in Kven-speaking communities) led to widespread language shift. This devaluing has changed somewhat in recent decades, although negative attitudes to the language remain. As is the case for many indigenous groups, there has been a growing awareness and recognition of Kven language and culture during the last two decades. Initially, people studied Finnish, as there were no textbooks or courses in Kven, but courses in Kven at the University of Tromsø have been popular since they were offered for the first time in 2006.

Norway ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 1992, and the text entered into force in 1998. The Charter is a convention under the auspices of the Council of Europe. It is designed to protect and promote regional and minority languages as a part of Europe’s cultural heritage and to enable speakers of a regional or minority language to use it in private and public life<sup>4</sup> (see also Camps, this volume). According to the Charter, minority languages are languages traditionally used within



a State's territory, spoken by a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population, and are different from the official language(s) of that State. Dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of immigrants are not covered by the Charter. Each signatory country elects which languages the Charter applies to. Based on reports by the nation-states that have ratified the Charter and meetings with national authorities and representatives of the minority language speakers, the Council of Europe makes recommendations for improvements in national legislation, policy and practice. A repeated recommendation for the Kven language was for Norway to clarify whether Kven should be seen as a dialect of Finnish or a language in its own right (Lane 2011). The Norwegian government commissioned a report on the status of Kven. The report was written by Hyltenstam and Milani at Stockholm University (2003), and based on their conclusions, Norway decided that Kven should be regarded as a language (25 April 2005).

This was not an uncontroversial decision, and many (and often diverging) opinions were expressed in a wide range of local media. When talking to people in my home community, I noticed recurring statements regarding the Kven language. A frequently expressed opinion was that Kven is not a language, but rather a dialect of Finnish. Kven was often explicitly measured against standard Finnish and seen as falling short, illustrated by the use of terms such as *kjøkkenfinsk* 'kitchen Finnish' or even *paskasuomi*, 'dirty Finnish'. Thus, when Finnish was used as an implicit or explicit point of reference, Kven would be seen as lacking. For others, the recognition of Kven was a welcome development, as they felt that Finnish was quite different from their variety, and for many, the recognition of Kven also indexed their primary belonging to Norway and not Finland. Kven used to be seen as a derogatory term, so for some, both speakers and non-speakers of Kven, the term Kven still carries with it negative associations. An increasing number self-identify as Kven, but many refer to themselves as 'being of Finnish descent' or use no ethnic label. Not all Kven people use the term Kven for their language. Some perceive this as a stigmatised term, whereas others self-identify as Kven but are not used to the term Kven, as this is a relatively recent term for the language, and refer to their languages as 'our Finnish' or 'old Finnish'. When the language is referred to as Finnish, this is frequently modified in this manner. Some say '*Kainun kieli*' ('the language of Kainu'—seen by some as the Kven land of origin) or link the language to a place by using the name of a village, such as 'Bugøyne Finnish'.

As Kven was to be considered a language, the Norwegian government allocated funding to the Kven Institute, a national centre for Kven language and culture, so that they could initiate the standardisation process. For a 'proper' language having a written standard was seen as important, both by the authorities and the NGO the Norwegian Kven Association. This was seen as a way to counteract the oppression experienced by Kven speakers in the past and to make the language more accessible to a new generation

of learners. The standardisation process was carried out under the auspices of the Kven Institute, and in 2007, the Kven Language Council was established, and five linguists were elected to serve for a three-year period. Two of the members were Finnish researchers who had worked in Kven communities for decades, and the three other members were Kven (and Kven speakers). Having by then acquired fluency in Kven, I was one of the elected members, and I was one of those whose actions eventually contributed to the grammar of Kven. I became engaged in this project as an academic with a professional interest both in the corpus and status planning aspects of the standardisation process. Prior to conducting fieldwork for my MA thesis on language contact in my home village in 1997 and 1998, I did not see a need for a Kven written standard. Experiences in the field made me reflect on the issue, mainly because people refused to talk to me if I spoke standardised Finnish to them, stating that they didn't know 'proper Finnish'. I had studied Finnish at school and attended a language course in Finland, but I felt that no matter how hard I tried, I never wrote Finnish properly. My texts seemed to be littered with mistakes.

I have spoken to other Kven speakers who also had studied Finnish, either as a school subject or at language courses in Finland. They share my experience: We were told that because we were speakers (or passive bilinguals), and Finnish orthography basically has a one-to-one correspondence between sound and letter, we should write the way we speak. When we did, our texts were returned covered in red corrections. A man from my village described this as texts covered in 'red fly poop'. Only when I started systematically studying the phonological and morphological differences did I realise that most of what the teachers corrected were features of Kven dialects: shortening of word-final vowels, monophthongisation, loss of personal affixes on verbs, differences in the case system etc. This is not an uncommon experience for those who reclaim a minority language: You are expected to know 'your language', and part of the motivation both for the Norwegian Kven Association and the language planners involved in the standardisation of Kven was to develop a written standard closer to the varieties spoken such that mother tongue speakers and passive bilinguals would not feel alienated by the standard.

The mandate of the Kven language planning body was to outline the principles for the standardisation of Kven. The Kven language planning body was comprised of two parts: The Kven Language Council, consisting of linguists, and the Kven Language Board, with members representing various user groups (education, media and religious organisations). The Language Council's task was to make recommendations based on linguistic descriptions of Kven and dialect samples and to prepare documents and suggestions for the Language Board, who in turn made the decision. The council's recommendation was to establish a standard that could be recognised by different groups of users: Those who speak Kven and would like to learn to read and write their language, and so-called new speakers who acquire

the minority language outside the home through formal instruction, but also those who have grown up as passive bilinguals; that is, they understand Kven but do not speak the language (for discussions of the New Speaker concept, see O'Rourke, Pujolar and Ramallo (2015), Walsh and Lane 2014, O'Rourke (this volume) and Urla, Amorrortu, Ortega and Goirigolzarri (this volume)). Many of those who understand but did not speak Kven when growing up (such as myself and Henry, presented in a case study later in this chapter) have opted to study Finnish or Kven when courses in Kven became available from 2006. In line with Walsh and Lane (2014), I see passive bilinguals who have undertaken a journey from social actors with a receptive competence to using a minority language actively as an important type of New Speakers, particularly in indigenous settings. Such New Speakers are important in the standardisation of Kven, as this is one of key group of intended users of the written standard.

At a joint meeting of the Language Council and Language Board (18.-19.4.2008), the Language Board decided that the standard should be a compromise variety based on Eastern and Western Kven dialects, close to Meänkieli (a Finnic minority language spoken in Northern Sweden) and not artificially removed from Finnish (Andreassen 2009, meeting minutes). Meänkieli and Kven are similar both in terms of grammar and vocabulary, and many Kven speakers express that spoken Meänkieli is very easy to understand. Because there is more written material in Meänkieli and the number of speakers of Meänkieli is considerably higher than for Kven, the Language Council saw it as advantageous that the Kven standard is close to Meänkieli.

The Kven Language Board supported the recommendations of the Language Council; hence, the decision was that the standardisation should proceed based on these recommendations and the preliminary outline of Kven grammar was drawn up by the Kven Language Council during the period 2007–10. The Kven Language Board decided that preference should be given to patterns found in several Kven dialects, while allowing for some geographical variation (see Lane 2015 and 2016 for a discussion of this process). Though Norway is a relatively young nation-state, there is still a long history of language standardisation, both before and after Norway became an independent nation in 1905. Norwegian has two written standards—*Bokmål* and *Nynorsk*—and has been described as particularly tolerant of variation (Trudgill 2002), and Røyneland (2009) points out that there is a large degree of variation within the two written standards of Norwegian. In the light of this, it is not surprising the Kven Language Council and Language Board were in agreement on a standard encompassing variation and including forms from a wide range of Kven dialects, and in a brief written by the director of the Kven Language Council, the parallel to the variation in *Bokmål* and *Nynorsk* is explicitly mentioned (Andreassen 2009). However, the amount of variation was debated at the meetings of the Kven Language Council. A large degree of variation was seen as essential if those who speak

or understand Kven were to identify with and accept the standard, whereas a standard with less variation might be easier to master for new speakers who would learn Kven through education. In 2011, the Kven Language Council commissioned Eira Söderholm, who was one of the members of the Council, to write a grammar according to the principles approved by the Kven Language Board. The grammar is a descriptive grammar of Kven and is intended to serve the educational system.

The attitudes of members of the Kven community towards the standardisation throughout the standardisation process have been mixed. Some maintained that it would be better to write standard Finnish; others expressed concern that elements from their dialect might not be incorporated in the new standard. A number of Kven welcomed both the standardisation process and the use of the term Kven. Those who criticised the standardisation process frequently stated that the actors involved in this process were removed from the grassroots and carried out planning from their ivory tower (Lane 2011; 2015), and hence, that their efforts were primarily motivated by self-interest. The main axes of division are geographical: People in the Western parts generally use the term Kven and are positive to standardisation, whereas attitudes are more ambivalent in the Eastern areas, including my home village, Pykeä. In general, younger people are more positive to standardisation, also in the Eastern areas. In the Kven context, attitudes to the recognition and standardisation of Kven are closely linked. Those who favoured recognition saw a written language as the next logical step, both because they saw a written standard as contributing to making a 'proper language' and also because a written standard was seen as an essential part of teaching Kven (Lane 2015). Minority language standardisation is a complicated and often contradictory process (Gal 2006; Lane 2015), consisting of shifting, interlinked and at times competing top-down and bottom-up processes (Darquennes and Vendenbussche 2015). As mentioned above, there were discussions and sometimes controversies as to who had the right to take part in the process, but the aim and mandate for the Kven Language Council and Language Board were to ensure participation of Kven speakers and to develop a standard the speakers themselves would want to use (Lane 2016).

### 3. Historicity of Frozen Mediated Actions

One key goal of the standardisation of Kven was to initiate and implement processes that would lead to written texts, such as grammars, textbooks, novels and children's books. These material outcomes of standardisation can thus be understood as a result of a range of actions taken in the past. Texts (as other objects) can be seen as frozen mediated actions because they are the material manifestations of actions taken in the past. In the hands of users, they can also be seen as mediational means, or a tool through which to take actions.



In line with Scollon and Scollon (2004) and Wertsch (1991), I understand all action as inherently social and mediated, because action is communicated or mediated through symbolic and/or material tools. The term ‘mediational means’ was introduced by Wertsch (1991) and defined as semiotic tools ranging from language to material objects. Mediational means, including language, are seen as intrinsically linked to, embedded in and shaping both social and individual processes. Mediated action is seen as any action performed by a social actor through the use of mediational or cultural tools (Scollon and Scollon 2004; Lane 2014). Wertsch (1991, 12) emphasises the connectedness between the social actor and the tools used for carrying out an action in the following manner:

The most central claim I wish to pursue is that human action typically employs ‘mediational means’ such as tools and language, and that these mediational means shape the action in essential ways [. . .] Thus, the answer to the question of who is carrying out the action will invariably identify the individual(s) in the concrete situation and the mediational means employed.

The grammar of Kven is a result of chain of previous social actions carried out by Kven language activists, scholars and language planners. In Norris’s terms, this book is a frozen mediated action—a material result of social actions taken in the past and embedded in objects or our physical environment. Norris (2004, 13–14) defines frozen actions in the following manner:

Frozen actions are usually higher-level actions which were performed by an individual or a group of people at an earlier time than the real-time moment of interaction that is being analyzed. These actions are frozen in the material objects themselves and are therefore evident.

When I pick up the grammar of Kven in my office, the book becomes a mediational means for me as a researcher as I page through the book to get an overview of the grammatical descriptions it contains and how the author has dealt with dialectal variation. I try to get an idea of to what extent the author has followed the decisions by the language planners involved in the standardisation of Kven and read the introduction acknowledging her sources. As I read this, I picture the author who I know well from academic settings, language planning work and lively dinners, and, perhaps more importantly, I realise that I am reading a grammar not only *on* Kven, but also written *in* Kven, the language of my childhood. In my hands, this book becomes a mediational means or a tool for social action, including promoting, teaching and researching Kven and writing this chapter. I may use it as a tool in my academic work and also as a means for constructing and perhaps even visualising Kven identity.

Norris and Makboon (2015, 44) explain that ‘as social actors use, produce, and keep material objects, these multiple actions are embedded in the objects themselves’. Objects have histories and project possible futures and therefore cannot be analysed without including a time perspective (Scollon and Scollon 2004; de Saint-Georges 2005; Lane 2010). As I hold the grammar of Kven, I am aware that my past actions have contributed to and are embedded in this object. As an academic, I have done research on the Kven language for two decades, and I have also been actively involved in mapping and describing grammatical, phonological and lexical variations in Kven, developing the guidelines for the standardisation of Kven and compiling a large corpus of Kven dialects used by the author when she wrote the grammar.

As mentioned earlier, all social action is mediated. When social actions result in objects, these objects may be seen as frozen actions. Such frozen actions may at a later stage be used by social actors as mediational means for carrying out new social actions. Language promotion activities result in, potentially at least, various types of textual objects, such as dictionaries, grammar books, textbooks, novels, letters, newspapers and signs in public spaces. At each stage of the production of such texts, a wide range of social actors are involved; the choices made by those involved, including choices related to standardisation, form the outcome of the process which in turn limits or facilitates future action.

There were several key actions and actors involved in the recognition and standardisation of Kven, which contributed to the creation of the grammar. One of the first elements in this chain of social actions was linguistic fieldwork and grammatical descriptions. All the members of the Kven Council had worked in Kven communities for a long time and based their recommendations on patterns they had observed when doing fieldwork and linguistic analysis. Another major source of data was the Ruija corpus, a speech corpus from Kven- and Finnish-speaking areas in northern Norway, developed by me in collaboration with the Text Laboratory at the University of Oslo from 2007. The corpus contains 76 hours of speech with transcriptions from 12 towns and villages in the Kven region. The majority of the interviews were carried out during the period 2007–2009, though the corpus also has older recordings. These sources allowed the members of the council to map grammatical and phonological patterns of the Kven dialects.

Members of the Kven community who produced literary texts in Kven were also key actors in the standardisation process. Literary texts were used to establish a preliminary standard in order to teach Kven at the University of Tromsø in 2006. Eira Söderholm, the lecturer and author of the Kven grammar, started from a few texts, most of them produced by authors from Pysyjoki,<sup>5</sup> a village in the western Kven regional area (in reality favouring patterns close to the Pysyjoki dialect). She also took dialectal variation in various Kven dialects into account. This course in Kven drew on three novels published by an author from Pysyjoki.

Many Kven speakers in the Eastern dialect areas who were positive to the standardisation of Kven worried that their dialects would not be sufficiently reflected in the standard. Texts were also a significant influence in the creation of the grammar that Söderholm later wrote (Lane 2016). In the foreword to the grammar, Söderholm writes that the lack of research and academic publications on Kven grammar made the task of developing the grammar exceedingly difficult, and she chose to base the grammar on the texts written in Kven (Söderholm 2014) and used as a basis for the course mentioned above. However, in line with the decisions by the Kven Language Board, patterns found in other Kven dialects were also included. Aside from linguists and writers, a third group of actors who were influential in the standardisation process were the potential users of the written standard; therefore, the elected members of the Language Board represented different user groups (Lane 2016). The Language Council and Language Board were concerned with creating a norm that would be acceptable to users.

Developing a written standard always entails making choices of what to include and what to leave out, which ultimately translates to choices about *who* to include and *who* to leave out. Drawing on Woolgar (1991), I suggest that the design and production of a written standard amounts to a process of configuring its user, where ‘configuring’ includes defining the identity of intended users and setting constraints upon their future actions. When choosing to base the Kven standard primarily on the Western varieties, there is a risk that speakers of other Kven varieties may reject the proposed standard or parts of the standard and thereby position themselves as non-users; they may, for various reasons, oppose, reject or be reluctant to standardisation or even get excluded from the standardisation processes (see Lane 2015 for an analysis of non-users). They may also adapt their behaviour and conform to the inscribed user of the standard and start using features that are not part of their variety.

When we document and standardise languages, we inscribe and configure users. The decision to include, and thereby exclude, some grammatical forms is not a purely linguistically based choice. Users are inscribed in standards whether those who are involved in this process or not. An example from the standardisation of Kven was the inclusion of certain phonological traits primarily found in Pyssyjoki. This included the letter <d> (see Lane 2016). This letter represents an interdental fricative /ð/, a phoneme that has been retained by some Kven speakers in Pyssyjoki and is used by the writers from this village. This phoneme has not been retained in the Eastern areas, including my home village, where I have done most of my fieldwork. In the Kven grammar, dictionary and in most Kven texts, the letter <d> is used consistently. Though the choices were pragmatic (based on the availability of existing written material), the unintentional outcome is an inscription of a certain user or speaker of Kven. In a sense, the inscribed user is made visible in these texts.

Through chains of actions involving linguists, writers, planners and users, a written standard for Kven and later a grammar were designed. The

material outcomes of a published grammar and other texts which follow these norms have now given greater visibility to the actions and choices taken. Understanding these products implies tracing the history of actions and actors over several decades and seeing the outcomes of their actions as frozen mediated action. Once established, standards may appear fixed and immutable; however, this case illustrates the many negotiations that go into the creation of a standard.

#### 4. Reception of Standardised Texts

Reception, i.e. usage, is an integral part of the process of standardisation and thus is part of the chain of actions described above. As a language planner, I was interested in observing how actual or intended users react to texts. Do they identify with and accept the textual outcomes of the standardisation process? Do they distance themselves? Are they ambivalent? In order to investigate this, I selected one of the texts used as a basis for the Kven grammar and language course. The most comprehensive text is a trilogy written by an author from Pyssyjoki, but I was concerned that these novels may be too complicated as most Kven are not used to reading texts in Kven. Therefore, I chose a children's book—*Kummitus and tähtipoinka* (The Ghost and the Starboy) written by Agnes Eriksen from Pyssyjoki. I wanted to investigate how Kven speakers in Western and Eastern areas related to reading a text in standardised Kven. The fieldwork was carried out in 2014, before the grammar was published. Based on my engagement in the standardisation of Kven and contact with Eira Söderholm, I was well aware of the challenges the author had faced when working on the grammar, and I also knew which texts she had used as a basis for identifying grammatical and phonological patterns. The interviews were carried out by my field assistant Anna-Kaisa Räisänen, who is well acquainted with several Kven communities due to extended fieldwork periods in the area. Anna-Kaisa Räisänen is Finnish, but due to extensive fieldwork in Kven communities, she has adapted her Finnish to Kven. The interviews were conducted in Kven, with occasional switches to Norwegian, and participants were also asked what term they use for their language. I chose to use an assistant instead of conducting the interviews myself because my role in my home village and the other communities are quite different as I am still an in-group member in my village due to strong family ties, and I was concerned that my presence would influence the outcomes of the interviews.

I was interested in investigating how social actors who resist a Kven standard (Lane 2015) would respond to reading texts in Kven. In order to examine the reception of standardised texts, 35 people were interviewed and filmed while reading texts in Kven. The interviewees grew up in homes where Kven was the main language of communication, and most of them identified their mother tongue as Kven. The majority of these participants

had not read texts in Kven, but some had done a short course in standard Finnish. Apart from the letter <đ> (for /ð/), Kven and Finnish have similar orthography. All participants have some familiarity with Finnish orthography, as they sometimes shop in grocery stores on the Finnish side of the border, but many expressed that they found longer texts in Finnish challenging to decipher. In the interviews, the topic was brought up as making a *kirjakieli*, ‘written language’, and the abstract term standardisation was not used unless mentioned by those interviewed.

One participant was Henry, a man from my home village in the Eastern region who speaks Kven but uses Norwegian in the bulk of his social interactions. Like many born after 1960 (myself included), his parents spoke only Norwegian to him and his siblings. At the beginning of the interview, he says that his mother tongue is Norwegian, and when asked when he learned Finnish,<sup>6</sup> he explains that it is difficult to say because he grew up with the language in the home, but even though his parents spoke Finnish to each other, they spoke only Norwegian to Henry and his siblings. Henry used to speak Norwegian only with his mother, but as a number of other people of Kven background who were passive bilinguals, he has started speaking Kven in some contexts. Henry’s language trajectory has taken him from a passive bilingual to a point in time when his linguistic practices change and he starts to speak Kven. Hence, he represents an important type of New Speaker. A few years ago, Henry signed up for a one-semester Finnish course, and he says that his main motivation for studying Finnish was that his son had taken on Finnish as one of his school subjects, and Henry wanted to support him. When asked if he had heard about attempts to revitalise Kven, Henry says that when he studied Finnish for a semester, this was a frequent topic of conversation—‘that they tried to construct a language’. The interviewer follows up by asking, ‘What do you think about this?’ and Henry says (in Norwegian) that this might be interesting but to him this is a dialect, and he does not really know what the Kven language is: ‘*man vet ikke ka det e det sv—kvenske språket*’ (‘one doesn’t know what it is this Sv—Kven language’). He then goes on to say that there seems to be a strong influence from Sámi, a frequent statement in Bugøynes, and that this makes it foreign to him.

When reading a text in Kven, however, he takes a different stance. The interviewer says that she has texts in Kven: ‘*mulla on täällä pikku teksti joka on kirjoittanut kväänin kielellä*’ (‘I have here a short text that is written in the Kven language’) and places the text on the table. She asks Henry to read it, and he answers in Kven *kväänin kielellä*, ‘in the Kven language’ with rising intonation, indicating a question or possibly surprise, accompanied by a change of body position and gaze shift from the text to the interviewer. He reads the text, intercepted by a few questions of clarification. When Henry has finished reading, the interviewer asks him about his experience with reading Kven. Considering that Henry just has said that to him, Kven is experienced as foreign, it may seem surprising that he states that the text

he has just read is easier to read and understand than texts in Finnish. He answers using both Kven and Norwegian:

ei mie olen lukenut nii paljon [. . .] pian [. . .] mie ymmärä tään parempi niin tietenki [gestures towards text] [. . .] jo suomen kieli lukemanna on niin vaikea [. . .] tama on mere det mer sånn lydspråk minusta mer konkret lydspråk rett på sak [. . .] finsk blir det litt ner vanskeligere å forstå [. . .] mer endelser mere mere fremmede endelser som du ikke kjenner til [. . .] det her virker lettere å lese og forstå enn finsk [. . .] see on niin vaikea lukea suomea tama on helpompi [. . .] hvis det er lettere å lese er det lettere å ta det fram og prøve å lese

I haven't read that much [. . .] a little [. . .] I understand this better than of course [gestures towards text] yes reading Finnish is difficult [. . .] this is more [switch to Norwegian] it is more like sound language to me [switch to Kven] more concrete straightforward [. . .] Finnish it gets more difficult to understand [. . .] more endings more more foreign endings that you don't know [. . .] this seems easier to read and understand than Finnish [. . .] [switch to Norwegian] it is so hard to read Finnish this is easier [. . .] if it's easier to read then it's easier to take it (the text) out and try to read.

In spite of expressing an ambivalent attitude to the standardisation of Kven when explicitly asked about his opinion on developing a written standard for Kven, Henry's positioning changes when talking about his experience of reading a text in Kven. He describes the texts in Kven as easier to read and understand, as Finnish has endings that he finds difficult to grasp, and also says that the words in the texts he has read are more familiar: '*nämät sanat me tunnen*' ('I know these words'). Henry's reaction is in line with those of the other readers from Bugøyenes who also express a reluctance to the idea that Kven should be standardised or used in new domains, or, maintaining that the written standard should be Finnish, they still state that 'their Finnish' is not the same entity as Finnish.

Another participant, Anna, expressed an even stronger reluctance to the standardisation of Kven (see Lane 2015 and 2016 for further analysis), but, like Henry, she showed a shift in positioning when reflecting on the texts she read compared to talking about the standardisation of Kven in an abstract manner. When asked if she would like to read more texts in *Pykeä*<sup>7</sup> Finnish, Anna replied:

mhm se olisi mukava [smiles] joo .h se olisi mukava oppia omma omma kieli mitä sie ittet puhhut [looks at text on table] mull on viakkea puhua oikea mie en ossa lukkea oike suoma

mhm it would be fun [smiles] yes it would be fun to learn your own own language that you yourself speak [looks at text on table] for me it's difficult I can't read proper Finnish.

She expresses a positive attitude towards the texts, which represent her ‘own language’. Interestingly, when relating to material outcomes of the standardisation process, both Henry and Anna move from positions of non-users (rejecters/resisters) to users—Anna by saying that she would like more texts, and Henry by stating that it one would be more likely to read texts like the ones he has read because they are easier. Their reactions to the abstract idea of a standard differ from their reactions to the material manifestation of a standard, and this also characterised the reactions of others who expressed an ambivalent attitude to the standardisation of Kven

Social actors might oppose or express ambivalence to the idea of a standard for many reasons. In the Kven context, based on my preliminary analysis, I have identified some tentative reasons. Kven speakers in the Eastern areas have stated that they feel that Pysyjoki has received more than a fair share of attention and resources because the Kven Institute is situated there, and therefore, they expect features from the Pysyjoki dialect to be given prominence. It might also be the abstract notion itself that alienates some people, as illustrated by Henry’s comments above *‘man vet ikke ka det e det sv—kvenske språket’* (‘one doesn’t know what it is this Sv—Kven language’)—how can social actors assess or accept something if they do not know or understand what this something is? Another reason could be that many perceive written languages as something that has always existed, so imagining that a new standard can be made could be difficult. When I presented transcribed data at a gathering in my home village, one of the participants exclaimed, *‘men det går jo ikke an å skrive vårres finsk!’* (‘but it isn’t possible to write our Finnish!’). This was countered by one of the others present stating, *‘ho har jo akkurat gjort det’* (‘she has just done it’). This might indicate that standard language still to some extent is associated with national languages like Norwegian and Finnish and not ‘our language’.

## 5. Conclusion: Frozen Mediated Actions and Future Trajectories

Language standardisation may be analysed as a chain of social actions performed by individuals, organisations and official authorities in a given socio-political context, including documentation and mapping linguistic variation, development of dictionaries and production of textbooks and grammars. The grammar of Kven and texts like the one read by Henry and Anna are the material outcomes of these actions, and can be seen as frozen actions (Norris 2005). Interestingly, when relating to a physical object—a book written in Kven—both Anna and Henry’s positioning changes from expressing resistance or ambivalence. Anna embraces the idea of writing and reading ‘her’ language, and Henry states that this text is a lot easier to read than texts in Finnish.

Social actors can use these objects as mediational means for new social actions, such as designing methodology for fieldwork (the author), carrying out a sociolinguistic interview (the field assistant) and reading a text in Kven

(Henry and Anna). Mediational means may become tools for future social actions, and the uptake and use of the material outcomes of standardisation processes such as the grammar and text analysed in this chapter will shape the ongoing standardisation of the Kven language. Perhaps the language that my parents and Henry's parents did not speak to us when we were children will be acquired by a generation of new speakers. The languages we do not pass on, avoid speaking or reclaim are closely linked to our perception and construction of self, as underscored by Pavlenko (2005, 223) when she writes: 'The languages we speak, or refuse to speak, have a lot to do with who we are, what subject positions we claim or contest, and what futures we invest in'. My parents' generation invested in a future where there was room for one language only—Norwegian. Today, new speakers reclaim Kven because the language may be used in trade with Finland, but also as an act of identity. Thus, reclaiming Kven now opens up present and future possibilities.

## Notes

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2. The Norwegian place name is Bugøynes.
3. Norway has included Kven as one of their national minorities, protected by the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities under the auspices of the Council of Europe.
4. [www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/aboutcharter/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/aboutcharter/default_en.asp)
5. The Norwegian place name is Børselv.
6. In the beginning of the interviews, the interviewer asked what they would prefer to name their language; see section 2 of this chapter. Henry used the terms *mean kieli*, 'our language', and *vanha suomi*, 'old Finnish'.
7. Name of village: Pykeä (in Kven), Bugøynes (in Norwegian).

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