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Making linguistic choices at a Sámi University: negotiating visions and demands

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ABSTRACT

Sámi University of Applied Sciences (SUAS) in Norway is one of few institutions of higher education worldwide that mainly operates in an Indigenous language. According to the institution’s vision, Indigenous peoples’ values stand at the centre, and the Sámi language is heard and read daily. However, as an academic institution operating nationally and internationally, SUAS faces numerous expectations and demands that challenge its vision and language policy. This paper investigates how linguistic choices made for publications reflect SUAS’ vision and the academic communities the institution is a part of.

Drawing on policy documents, observation and interviews with staff and students, the paper shows how linguistic choices are influenced by discourses that circulate in different academic communities: local, national, international and Indigenous. It further shows how the language practices are shaped by and occur in the intersection of agency and structure. For the Sámi language to persist and develop, staff must publish in Sámi. Yet, there is a demand – and partly a wish – to also publish in English and Norwegian. The strategy for SUAS’ staff is to maintain a diverse language practice. Additionally, this study indicates that Norwegian national language policies do provide some supportive structures for revitalisation of Sámi.

INTRODUCTION

I have a dream that we in time may more clearly profile that we are an institution that can actually be the institution that in the Indigenous world can at least can take the lead as an example of how to build a higher education [institution] that benefits that society but still is an institution on par with – not the same as – but on par with – all other colleges and universities (rector, Sámi University of Applied Sciences, my translation)

The Sámi University of Applied Sciences (SUAS)¹ in Norway is one of few institutions of higher education worldwide that mainly operates in an Indigenous language. The institution’s overall language policy is that Northern Sámi should be the main language for...
all activities. Its vision is to be ‘a Sámi and Indigenous University where Sámi language is heard and read daily, and the values and mind-set of Sámi and other Indigenous peoples are at the centre’ (Strategiplan 2017–2021, my translation). Furthermore, the vision states that SUAS should become a leading institution in Sápmi, Norway, the Indigenous world and globally, and that the institution’s values are based on Sámi knowledge. The quote from the rector above illustrates that SUAS has a strong wish to be different from other institutions in international academia, while also ‘being on par with’ them. The tension this creates is most present when language choices are made.

Like many other Indigenous groups, the Sámi have experienced decades of oppression and policies of assimilation (Minde, 2005). When SUAS was established in 1989, Sámi students were given the opportunity of higher education in their own language for the first time. The backdrop was a long grassroots struggle in Norway on Sámi rights, taking place in tandem with similar movements internationally.

In recent years, there has been a trend to recognise the value of minority languages in education (see e.g. van Dongera, van der Meer, & Sterk, 2017). Academia, however, is not known for allowing minority languages to flourish. Today, research publishing is mainly done in international journals where English is the dominant language, and a scholar’s career depends in many ways on publications in English (see e.g. Holm, Jarrick, & Scott, 2015; Lillis & Curry, 2010). Lasagabaster (2015, p. 271) claims that in academia, ‘[t]he preeminence of English may jeopardize the existence of local or minority languages.’ He also states that institutions that use minority languages face the challenge of maintaining the use of this language at the same time as they should not miss the advantages of using English. SUAS is one such institution that has to find a balance between maintaining one language and taking advantage of opportunities provided by others. Thus, staff at SUAS have to deliberate between the vision for the institution and demands for internationalisation, as well as a need to be relevant nationally, when choosing which language to publish in. In other words; language choices are made in tension between agency and structures. Having to weigh different demands is not unique for institutions that use minority languages. Still, I claim that because of SUAS’ Sámi mandate and the institution’s position in both an Indigenous and a non-Indigenous academic community, studying choices made at SUAS provides new insight into the discourses influencing choices.

In this paper, I will investigate language choices in publications at SUAS as a window into language policy and practices. I ask how linguistic choices made for publications reflect SUAS’ vision and the academic communities the institution is a part of. The paper demonstrates that the linguistic choices made at SUAS do reflect these communities: the local, national, international and Indigenous. The findings reveal why and which majority languages may challenge the use of Sámi, while also demonstrating how the use of different languages side by side may lead to fulfilling SUAS’ vision. Furthermore, the paper shows that national and local language policies can support and contribute to the preservation and revitalisation of Indigenous/minority languages.

I start out by giving an account of the Sámi language context and Norwegian language policy, before providing a thorough presentation of SUAS. Then, statistics of linguistic choices in publications from SUAS will be presented. Lastly, an in-depth analysis on choices of Sámi, Norwegian and English respectively will be given in order to try to understand how these choices are connected to SUAS’ vision and discourses and structures surrounding the institution.
Background

The Sámi context

The Sámi are an Indigenous people who mainly live in an area in the north of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. They are a linguistic, ethnic and cultural minority in these nation states, and the area traditionally inhabited by them, is called Sápmi. According to The Council of Europe (2015), there are approximately 80–100,000 Sámi people, and 50,000–65,000 of them live in Norway. There are several Sámi languages, three of them spoken in Norway: Northern Sámi, South Sámi and Lule Sámi. All the Sámi languages are distinct from the majority languages in the respective countries. Both Sámi and Finnish are Finno-Ugric languages, Swedish and Norwegian are Germanic, while Russian is Slavic. All of the Sámi languages are endangered. Northern Sámi, the main language used at SUAS, is the biggest of the Sámi languages and is spoken in Norway, Finland, and Sweden.

From approximately 1850–1950, the Norwegian government led a fierce ‘Norwegianisation’ policy towards the Sámi population. The goal was to change the Sámi people’s values, culture and identity to become more Norwegian, as well as make them speak the language of the state (Minde, 2005). The policy had negative effects on Sámi language, culture, industry and identity. As a result, today only about half of the population who identify as Sámi speak a Sámi language. Most speakers of Sámi in Norway are at least bilingual, in that they speak both Sámi and Norwegian, and many are trilingual with English in addition.

As international networks and organisations raised Indigenous issues in the 40s and 50s, a discourse of language rights and legislation became central (Lane & Makihara, 2017). This eventually led to recognition of Indigenous peoples, including the Sámi. Thus, developments on the international level regarding Indigenous issues are essential when trying to understand the development from ‘Norwegianisation’ to the policy of today’s Norway. Now, Norway has ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The term ‘Indigenous’ is highly discussed and can be used with different meaning. In line with Lane and Makihara (2017), I emphasise self-identification and culture, as well as the political aspect. The Sámi in Norway identify themselves as Indigenous, and through the ratification of the charter, they have status as an Indigenous people. The Sámi act of 1987 and paragraph 108 in the constitution, added in 1988, form the legal basis for the national Sámi policy. According to the constitution, state authorities are obliged to ensure that the Sámi can safeguard and develop their language, culture and social life. In addition to international developments, these important Norwegian legislations were brought about by internal political affairs (e.g. The Alta affair, https://snl.no/Alta-saken). Today, Sámi and Norwegian are equal by law in some administrative areas in the country. In these 12 municipalities, children have the right to primary education in Sámi, and people are entitled to be served in Sámi by public agencies, and to use Sámi in the health care system and in religious services. However, outside this area, the Sámi languages have a much weaker position.

Some language policy and planning (LPP) frameworks take for granted that language policies are instruments of oppression, but as pointed out by Bouchard and Glasgow (2018), this is not always the case. This is important to note since such a starting point
will disrupt the reading of this study. The former policies regarding Sámi issues were an instrument of oppression, but the current Norwegian policies are not.

**Norwegian language policy in higher education**

According to governmental language policy, Norwegian should be the main language in academia, and English should only be used when needed (St.meld. 35: 2008). Nevertheless, several reports show that the use of English is dramatically increasing (e.g. Kristoffersen, Kristiansen, & Røyneland, 2014). Thus, actual language practices are not in line with the language policy. Rather, the number of MA theses written in English has increased from 9% in 1986 to 43% in 2016 (Schwach & Elken, 2018, p. 22), and 90.8% of PhDs are written in English (NIFU, 2018). A governmental white paper on research from 2012 highlights the need for increased internationalisation (Meld. St. 18, 2013). In practice, this entails an increased use of English. Discourses on English position English as the language in which international academia operates. These discourses can be traced backwards to e.g. (consequences of) the Bologna process (see e.g. Gregersen, 2014), and forwards to discussions currently taking place in Norway (see ‘The multifaceted role of English’). Thus, the discourses on English in national policy on language and national policy on research are contradictory. This leaves institutions in a difficult position. Similar tensions in policy are found in other Scandinavian countries (see e.g. Salò, 2016). One can claim that the governmental discourses bring to light ideological tension related to language use in academia.

There is no legislation on the use of Sámi in higher education. Yet, the whitepaper on language *Mål og meining – Ein heilskapleg norsk språkpolitikk* states that ‘Sámi should have a comparable function as a main language [at SUAS] as Norwegian has at other universities and university colleges’ (St.meld. 35: 2008, my translation). This means that this exact institution is exempted from the overall policy of having Norwegian as a main language. Thus, SUAS has a different linguistic mandate than other institutions. Still, the institution is faced with the same tension in policy, since Sámi is positioned as a language of higher education simultaneously as national research policy supports a system where rules and conditions are far from favourable for minority languages.

**Sámi University of Applied Sciences**

SUAS is situated in Kautokeino, a small town in the north of Norway. Almost all the inhabitants in the area speak Northern Sámi, and many important Sámi institutions are situated here (e.g. NRK Sámi radio and Sámi parliament, Department of Education). The institution was established in 1989. The education provided for Sámi pupils at the time was ‘insufficient in terms of not handling the linguistic, cultural and ethnic challenges’ (Keskitalo, 2009). This meant that there was a need to establish a teacher training college, and SUAS came into existence. The institution’s mandate was to safeguard Sámi culture, languages, and ways of living, and to strengthen the development of the Sámi society.

Thirty years after it was set up, the institution offers programmes in teacher training, Sámi/Indigenous journalism, Sámi duodij (art), reindeer husbandry, and Sámi language and literature. The list of programmes offered reflects SUAS’ aim to serve the Sámi society, through providing knowledge on and educate people in Sámi industry, culture and journalism. The institution combines traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge,
on all levels from bachelor to PhD. The material context at SUAS makes the university building a unique place, through architecture, handicraft, art and symbols that display Sámi culture and identity. Most of the research conducted is on Sámi languages, literature and education.

SUAS is a small institution nationally and internationally, but a significant one in the Indigenous context. It has approximately 200 students per year, with an all-time high in 2017/2018 with 270. According to governmental statistics, approximately 20% are international students. However, students that come from the Sámi parts of Sweden, Finland and Russia and identify as Sámi, are not perceived as international students by staff at SUAS. The institution also attracts some students from other Indigenous groups or with interest in Indigenous issues, from countries like Ecuador and the USA. Some of these students are doing a master in Indigenous journalism, the only programme taught through the medium of English. The programme, through e.g. the composition of students, clearly reflects SUAS’ wish to be relevant for all Indigenous peoples.

The group of staff at SUAS is also highly diverse and multilingual, and staff are as likely to come from the Finnish or Swedish parts of Sápmi as from Norway. Thus, SUAS makes up a highly multilingual environment. Northern Sámi is spoken by scientific and administrative staff, as well as by cleaning and kitchen personnel. It is used as the language of administration and management, and serves as the most common language for communication at SUAS. Proficiency in one of the Sámi languages is required for permanent positions at the institution. All courses, except from the master programme mentioned above, are taught in Northern Sámi. Here it is worth noting that SUAS’ mandate covers Northern Sámi only. Other higher education institutions have responsibility for the other two Sámi languages in Norway, implying that they should offer language courses and teacher education in these languages.

The language policies and practices at SUAS are constantly discussed, with the following pressing questions at the core: How well does the institution cater for students that speak Lule or South Sámi? Should SUAS offer courses in other Sámi languages? How about Sámi students that do not know any Sámi languages? The institution is open for students with Sámi languages other than Northern Sámi, but it has proved difficult in practice (NRK Sápmi, 2018). A challenge is that there are few speakers of the other Sámi languages, and thus also a lack of teachers. Additionally, speakers of the lesser used Sámi languages are often not as proficient in their languages as speakers of Northern Sámi are, due to a lower number of speakers and less educational support etc. In the end, what languages should be used and offered at SUAS is a question of resources and priorities. When one language is prioritised, others will necessarily be given less priority. Yet, as just stated, other Norwegian institutions cater for Lule and South Sámi. I would also point out that strengthening one Sámi language, and thereby research on Sámi issues, is likely to benefit users of other Sámi languages. This contributes to increasing the prestige of the Sámi languages, which is of great importance to users of Sámi (see ‘Indigenous language – local or global?’). One may ask if SUAS by prioritising Northern Sámi take part in creating and/or perpetuating a language hierarchy where Northern Sámi is positioned above the other Sámi languages – instead of rebalancing the cultural and linguistic hierarchy where Norwegian has had this hierarchised position. I would argue against this view by highlighting that it is not indifferent which hierarchy one is a part of. If Northern
Sámi to some degree can replace Norwegian’s position on top of the hierarchy, then the gap down to the other Sámi languages shrinks.

SUAS collaborates with institutions and scholars in all of Sápmi. Further, there is extensive collaboration with Indigenous institutions worldwide, mainly through World Indigenous Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC). WINHEC aims to bring Indigenous peoples together in order to achieve common goals through higher education. Through WINHEC, SUAS has gained formal status as an Indigenous institution. This status is important for SUAS, and in 2018, the accreditation was renewed. SUAS receive their main funding from the Norwegian government through The Ministry of Education and Integration. As other institutions, it also applies for research grants from the Research Council of Norway and other organisations.

SUAS’ language policy is not outlined in a language policy document per se, but language is present in more overarching policy documents. The most central is the strategy document Strategiplan 2017–2021. It includes the vision presented in the introduction of this paper, and several goals and strategic priorities, e.g. ‘be a leading institution in strengthen and developing Sámi as a language of science, education and management’ and ‘be a leading environment to learn and work on and with Sámi’ (my translations). The quotes illustrate how central Sámi language is for the institution. The content of the strategy document is also identifiable in participant’s reports on the institution’s policy. Moring and Markelin (2009, p. 103) claim that ‘Language awareness and language policy is consequently a main task for this college.’ Because Northern Sámi is virtually the one Sámi language used at SUAS, this is the language referred to when I discuss the use of Sámi at SUAS.

**Theory**

According to Ricento (2000), agency is one of the key factors that separates old and new LPP approaches. Nineteen years later, human agency is increasingly foregrounded, illustrating one of many shifts in LPP. I adhere to more recent developments in the field, and therefore include a wide scope of activities, actors and mechanisms in my view of language policy (LP). Therefore, this paper applies Johnson’s (2013, p. 9) definition:

> [a] language policy is a policy mechanism that impacts the structure, function, use, or acquisition of language and includes a) official regulations, b) unofficial, covert, de facto, and implicit mechanisms, c) not just products but processes and d) text and discourses across multiple context and layers.

In line with contemporary LPP, this paper is concerned with individuals’ role when analysing policy and practice. The participants in this study are staff and students at a university college. They are all seen as policy actors with potential to influence language policies and practices. When for instance academic writers choose which language(s) to publish in, they function as LP actors. An important question however, is to what extent and how the choices these actors make are shaped by structures and discourses in society. In their work on publishing practices in Portugal, Solovova, Santos, and Veríssimo (2018, p. 3) argue that ‘language of publication is not so much an author’s choice as a sociocultural compliance with community expectations, reinforced through repeated experiences and increasing expertise.’ What the authors here point to, are the structures surrounding the actor.
Individual agency and structures

Even though individual’s role in LPP has received more attention lately, there is still a division in the field between studies that emphasise structure and studies that emphasise agency (see e.g. Tollefson, 2013). This paper views the two as related to each other in complex ways, sharing Bouchard and Glasgow’s (2018, p. 9) view that ‘people are not simply acting at the ground level regardless of what happens around or above them: they are also embedded in broader structural and cultural realities, with their constraining and enabling potential.’ Agency is defined as the ‘capacity to act, combined with the contingencies of the environment within which such action occurs’ (Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller, 2012, p. 196). Since people may act as members of a group, agency is also negotiated and shaped through social networks, e.g. an academic institution or an Indigenous community. This is especially relevant when looking at the actors at SUAS, as they have a strong sense of belonging to the institution and a commitment to its visions. Individuals’ wishes and local language policy may thus overlap. Additionally, language policy can be seen as part of agency. Liddicoat claims that ‘language policy has often been considered as a part of structure […] rather than as part of agency […],’ and that this view assign agency to actors at the macro level and see ‘local actors primarily in terms of how their agency is constrained by policy documents or how it is responsive to them’ (2018, p. 149). In line with Liddicoat, this paper offers a different view as it demonstrates that language policy can be considered both as structure and agency, and further, that local actors exercise agency in relation to – and regardless of – policy documents. When referring to structures that constrain or enable agency, a range of factors are included: legislations, demands, implicit norms, discourses, visions, policies (overt/covert), financial support, and habitus.

All choices, including the ones seen as language policy actions, are to some extent constrained by structural and cultural realities. Still, they can be related to goals, set either by the individual making the choice, or by for example an institution or a government. By looking at statements regarding language choices through a language policy lens, it is easier to recognise how actions and choices are related to such goals. In the section ‘Indigenous language – local or global?’, I will refer to the notion of prestige planning (Haarmann, 1990). According to Baldauf (2005, p. 962), prestige planning is ‘directed at those goals related to the image a language needs to develop to promote and intellectualize that language(s).’ When applied in this study, the term prestige planning provides an understanding of choices that might seem unfounded in light of e.g. number of readers reached, but that are obvious when the purpose is known. Yet, it is important to note that academic writers, as other actors, might not be fully conscious of what influences their choices.

The role of place and history

Place has a central role in publishing, as underscored in this quote from Salö (2017, p. 135): ‘a comprehensive understanding of language-in-publishing entails taking into consideration the specific spaces of engagement in which researchers act.’ Thus, the choices made at SUAS must be seen in conjunction with the discourses in place where these choices are made. Discourses in place (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) refers to values, beliefs, and ideologies present in the place of action, and underscores that discourses
are part of ‘the situated context (place) that mediates the action’ (Hult, 2015, p. 224). An action, e.g. a choice of language for a publication, is discursively connected to the place of action and cannot be considered in isolation. This study focuses on which discourses are foregrounded when language choices are made at SUAS. In addition to applying Scollon and Scollon’s term, the paper shares Cresswell’s (2015) understanding of place as a dynamic product of social relationships that unfold in a space. I also see discourses as historically layered (Blommaert, 2005; Scollon & Scollon, 2004). People are positioned historically so that they speak from a point in history, and through speaking on history, they may influence the present. History is a reality that people are embedded in, and thus has the potential to influence choices. There is a parallel here to Bourdieu’s notion habitus, which refers to individuals’ predispositions to think and act in a certain manner and to make choices influenced by social norms (Bourdieu, 1977). In an Indigenous context where a history of assimilation and oppression is present, this is important to take into account. This paper, therefore, sees place and history as essential in the study of discourses.

Based on the position presented above, the term ‘choice’ is applied with a broad meaning in this paper. It refers to conscious and unconscious decisions made as a result of the individual’s wishes in combination with discourses in place, and broader historical, structural and cultural realities.

Data and methodological framework

The data for this paper has been gathered over two field work stays at SUAS. It consists of policy documents from the institution, on-site observation, and interviews. The policy documents and the observation provided crucial insight into language practices, policies and goals at the institution. This insight was used in the preparations for the interviews, but the data also informs the analysis. There are four central policy documents: Strategiplan 2017–2021, Årsrapport 2017–2018 (Annual Report), Tildelingsbrev 2018 (Letter of allocation), and Application to World Indigenous Higher Education Consortium for status as Indigenous institution. In the analysis, the policies presented in these documents are seen in relation to reported and observed practice. In addition to the local documents, national policy documents on language inform the study.

I conducted interviews with 11 participants: seven employees, three students, and one former rector. The first group included administrative as well as scientific staff, in addition to people from the university leadership team. All the interviews were conducted during the second field work stay, and they took place at SUAS. The participants were selected in order to gain insight into a range of experiences with the institution. Some were asked prior to my arrival at the institution, others were contacted during the stay. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian with Norwegian and Finnish-Swedish speaking participants and in English with one participant who did not speak any of these languages. Interview topics included among others SUAS as an academic and Indigenous institution, language practices, internationalisation and visions for the future. The interview with the administrative staff focused mainly on internationalisation, collaboration and the relation to the government. All the interviews were audio recorded, and I listened through the recordings several times, taking detailed notes on content and discourses. Then, the sections of the interviews that were relevant for this study were transcribed. The interview excerpts in this paper are translated into English by me.

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The analysis builds on the ethnography of language policy framework, which combines ethnographic and critical approaches to language policy (Johnson, 2009). The framework emphasises the power of both language policies and policy actors. Johnson argues that the ethnography of language policy should include both critical analyses of local, state, and national policy texts and discourses as well as data collection on how such policy texts and discourses are interpreted and appropriated by agents in a local context. (2009, p. 142)

My study includes these aspects, as it attends to policy texts, policy discourses and policy practices. The analysis of discourses is based on how they are constructed or played out in interviews with staff and students at SUAS and in policy documents. The need to take into account agents, goals, processes, discourses, and social and historical context (Johnson, 2009) has guided both the data collection and the analysis. The paper also shows numbers of publications, see below for information on how these were obtained.

**Language in publications: a window into language practices**

To establish what languages are used in publications written by staff at SUAS, I used numbers from the Current Research Information System in Norway (Cristin) which provides information on numbers and types of publications, as well as languages used in the publications. It is a comprehensive database that includes all types of scientific publications, as well as conference papers, reports, public outreach and dissemination. The numbers are based on self-reporting, meaning that researchers and other academics in Norway report their results to Cristin. Since SUAS is a small institution and the total numbers of publications will vary a lot from one year to another, Table 1 shows numbers from 2011 to 2017. There are two categories: total numbers of publications (TN) – including everything listed above, followed by numbers of publications that fulfil requirements for a scientific publication (SP).

The table shows that from 2011 to 2017, staff at SUAS published 80 scientific texts in English, 28 in Sámi, and 29 in Norwegian. Included in the table are also numbers of publications in Swedish and Finnish. SUAS is located in Norway, but the institution employs staff from other parts of Sápmi as well. As a consequence, staff at SUAS publish in Norwegian, Swedish or Finnish in addition to Sámi and English. In order not to skew the numbers of publications in the national languages, publications in Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish are counted together. By doing so, the proportion of publications in Sámi does not appear too high compared to publications written in the national language(s). Added together, the number of publications written in the three languages is 42. Thus, English is the most frequently used language, followed by main national languages.

**Table 1.** Number of publications from SUAS 2011–2017 divided by language (Source: Cristin, 2018).

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Table 2 shows the top 10 scientific publication channels for staff at SUAS. The table shows that the channel with the highest number of publications only allows Sámi. Sámi diedalaš äigeçála was established in 1994 – five years after SUAS – as the first Sámi scientific journal. The channel with the second highest number of publications is the multilingual journal Diedut. It publishes texts in the most central languages in Sápmi, and English. Scholar’s possibilities to publishing in Sami are influenced by the low number of scholarly venues available, which again influence the numbers of SP in Sámi. When looking at statistics that include all published material, the number of publication in Sámi rises (279) and are closer to the number of publications in English (291) and the three national languages (319).

As Salö (2015) illustrates, language used in a publication might not correspond with or at least not reflect the languages in use when that publication was constructed. Thus, Table 1 only represents the outcome of the process of construction. Yet, it is still the publication as the final product that has a potential to reach an audience.

Analysis

By looking at the institution’s visions, the communities it is part of, individual’s agency and discourses in place when linguistic choices are made, I now seek to explain the numbers presented in Table 1. As seen in the statement below, SUAS form part of many communities:

[SUAS] is a national institution in the Norwegian university sector [...] and we have recruited from all of the Sámi area also from Russia so that way we are more regional or international but we are also part of major international Indigenous networks that comprises the whole world [...] so depends on how you who’s glasses you see through (scientific staff 2)

The institution itself can be described as a close-knit community, while international and Indigenous academic communities are looser. When these communities are referred to in the analysis, they are mainly seen from SUAS’ and its staff’s perspectives.12

Indigenous language – local and global?

Kautokeino is a unique place in the sense that Northern Sámi has a strong position in the municipality, it is heard and read at the grocer’s and through local media, and SUAS is
only one of many Sámi institutions located here. Thus, the discourses in place value Sámi, and after decades of oppression, there is a strong revitalisation discourse. SUAS plays a central role in the revitalisation process, as expressed by one of the students in this study: ‘SUAS take part in building the Sámi language’ (student 1). Revitalisation implies both to build a language, as exemplified in the quote just presented, and to use it. SUAS’ role in the latter is seen in the following quotes:

we have to take back the language (scientific staff 2)

we are aware of how important it is for us to do this [=use Sámi] (university leadership staff)

The two quotes show that staff believe they have a mission to use and thus revitalise the language, and they take an activist stance towards Sámi. The formulation ‘take back’ in the first quote refers to history and that Sámi people in Norway today have other opportunities than their ancestors.

Institutional discourses mediate policy actions taken by individuals (e.g. Hult, 2005). At SUAS, one key institutionally circulating discourse is to choose Sámi when possible. Scientific staff 2 expressed that they were ‘well raised at SUAS,’ illustrating that they were socialised into a set of language practices at the institution. Studying there had given them, according to the participant, values and ideologies that inform their choices to write Sámi later in life. They use Sámi in the daily work at SUAS, a place where Sámi is valued, but also in social places where this choice is challenged. The language practices and social norms this participant were socialised into may now be understood as part of their habitus, and a key to resistance when the choice of Sámi is tested.

Several of the participants in this study highlighted how important it is that SUAS’ work has relevance for the Sámi community. This is in line with SUAS’ explicit policy, which states that research conducted at the institution should relate to the Sámi society and challenges it faces. An important outcome is that research ideally should be published in Sámi, as expressed by scientific staff 2: ‘being relevant is best done in and through Sámi [language].’ The local language policy appears to overlap with staff’s wishes, enabling use of Sámi. Another implication of the importance of being relevant, is that staff must disseminate their knowledge and expertise through channels that reach the common Sámi. Interacting with the wider Sámi community in Sámi is part of the social contract and hence the social practice at SUAS. As shown in Table 1, the proportion of publications written in Sámi is a lot higher for all publications (TN) than for publications that fulfil requirements for a scientific publication (SP). For TN, the number of publications in Sámi (279) are close to the number of publications in English (291) and national languages (319) (see Table 1). Included in the total number of publications in Sámi are for example several interviews in Sámi broadcasting. This demonstrates the importance of interaction with the Sámi community. Further, it shows the connection between choice of language, audiences envisioned and the goal of the dissemination. Included are also textbooks in Sámi, an example being Ohppojuvvon ja sohppojuvvon giella (Acquired and learned language) (Helander, 2016). The book targets students in Sámi teacher education and addresses topics like features of Sámi, orthography, and bilingualism. The publication meets needs in the Sámi society by providing textbooks in Sámi and also on the Sámi language and language situation. Thus, the publication may enhance the training of Sámi teachers, which in the next step may lead to Sámi schools providing better education
for Sámi pupils. When writing textbooks in Sámi, staff at SUAS act as LP actors as they disseminate vocabulary and intellectualise the language (see Baldauf, 2005). This is necessary in order to teach a language and teach through a language, essential activities for revitalisation of Sámi.

As Table 1 shows, staff at SUAS also write scientific articles in Sámi. In the period 2011–2017, 28 scientific works were published in the language(s). When taking into account the limited possible venues to publish in Sámi, this is not a small number. In addition, the group of potential readers for a scientific article in Sámi is restricted, also within Sápmi. Therefore, one may ask how writing scientific articles in Sámi – in contrast to popular science and textbooks – contributes to serving the Sámi society. Reaching out cannot be the main motivation, meaning that there has to be another explanation for choosing Sámi for this type of publication. From a LPP point of view, the choice can be understood as prestige planning for Sámi. Such planning relates either to language promotion or to intellectualisation of the language, e.g. by enhancing an image of it as a language of science (Baldauf, 2005). The importance of increasing the language’s prestige, or giving it value, was a recurrent theme in the interview data. One of the students emphasised this throughout the interview, with statements like ‘it is all about linguistic value’ and ‘we will give value to the Sámi language’ (student 1). The data from SUAS also includes statements more directed towards use of Sámi in publishing: ‘Sámi must be allowed to be a language of science14 also at a university level I think this is very important’ (scientific staff 2). The participants do not just point to the necessity of Sámi publishing in general, they highlight the importance of publishing at university level. In her article on choice of Sámi in academia, Henriksen15 discusses the use of Sámi in academia in relation to status increase: ‘[…] it is vital to promote the academic use of Sámi and thus provide Sámi society with additional linguistic benefits or ‘profit’ which can be used to raise the status of Sámi in society’ (2010, p. 48). She bases her view on a claim that ‘academic use of a language affects the status of this language in society in general’ (p. 48). By choosing to write scientific articles in Sámi, staff at SUAS exert agency to establish Sámi as a language of science. Scientific staff 1 emphasised that Sámi as an academic language is still undeveloped due to its young age, meaning that scholars are part of developing it. Since Sámi terminology can be passed down from one level of education to the next, participants see academic publishing as important for other language practices to take place. The most academic level of publishing can contribute to language acquisition and revitalisation. Thus, the academic writers at SUAS exercise agency as they write in Sámi in spite of potentially constraining structures.

The use of Sámi does not only have support locally; there are also circulating discourses in national policy and in the Indigenous academic community in favour of Sámi. These must be included when trying to understand the numbers in Table 1. Participants in this study pointed out that national legislations and financial support are important for the continued use of Sámi at all levels.16 Drawing on Hornberger, I suggest that the current national policy on language gives ‘ideological and implementational space’ (2002, p. 7) for the use of Sámi alongside Norwegian and English in academia. This is in sharp contrast to former policy towards the Sámi population. That national policy mostly aligns with local policy and individual’s wishes, enable the actors at SUAS to use Sámi. Furthermore, the analysis of the data shows that the Indigenous academic community offers international collaboration where Indigenous languages are valued. This serves
as an alternative to an international academic community where minority languages have a weak position. Thus, the Indigenous academic community can function as an enabling structure regarding use of Sámi, in contrast to the more constraining international academic community. The organisation WINHEC is particularly important, as it has accredited SUAS as an Indigenous institution. The wish to be part of an international Indigenous community influences, according to the analysis, staff at SUAS to choose Sámi – it is in many ways a demand. Additionally, the accreditation might provide legitimacy to the Sámi research environment and to Sámi as a language of science. Thus, membership in WINHEC can be seen as prestige planning for Sámi. Still, as will be evident later, the wish to be an Indigenous institution can also influence staff at SUAS to choose English.

National language – for Norwegian audience only?

In Norwegian language policy, there is a strong discourse on Norwegian as ‘threatened’ (Johansen, 2012). However, the data in this study demonstrates that this discourse of endangerment is not present at SUAS. This has partly to do with the history of Norwegian as a colonial language in the Sámi area, and partly with the institution being exempted from the policy of safeguarding Norwegian. SUAS has responsibility for Sámi, not Norwegian. The following quotes from the rector are on use of Norwegian at SUAS:

if I am to publish in a language other than Sámi I would normally do it in English so in a way I skip [my first language] (scientific staff 1)

since we have staff at least scientific staff from Finnish and Swedish side – and Russian side – English is more relevant to use so one skips Norwegian (rector)

Participants state that if they have to use a different language than Sámi, they would rather choose English than Norwegian. As the second quote shows, one of the reasons is that SUAS have staff from all over Sápmi. As stated by participants, it is an ‘all-Sámi institution,’ not a Norwegian one. The institution also aims at reaching readers in the whole Sámi area. When doing fieldwork at SUAS, I was asked in which language I would disseminate my findings and was encouraged to do so in English in order to reach the whole Sámi area. This illustrates one of the reasons why Norwegian is seen as less relevant for SUAS and its staff. In addition, it demonstrates how the institution’s visions to cater for all parts of Sápmi also applies to me as a researcher working on Sámi issues. Furthermore, the history of Norwegian as a language of oppression can be understood as part of staff’s habitus and thus seen as influencing language choices, as history condenses in human action (Blommaert, 2005; Scollon & Scollon, 2004).

Still, it is not the case that staff and students at SUAS ‘do not like Norwegian.’ Table 1 shows that Norwegian is as frequent in publications as Sámi, and the use of one of the main national languages (Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish) is higher than the use of Sámi. This contrasts with the participants’ statements about skipping Norwegian. Therefore, it is necessary to take a closer look at why staff at SUAS nevertheless publish in Norwegian (or other national languages). SUAS is a part of the Norwegian national academia, and as reported by two participants, all reports, letters etc. to the government must be written in Norwegian – even though the institution is established as a Sámi university college. This demand positions Norwegian as a central language at the national level,
and it goes against the institution’s explicit language policy stating that ‘Sámi should be the source’ (scientific staff 2). The governmental demand limits the scope of SUAS’ agency. There are also other publications written as a response to a governmental request, for example *Samiske tall forteller* (Sámi numbers tell). It is an annual report that contributes with statistical knowledge that can be used by the government and the Sámi Parliament in Sámi political work (Regjeringen, 2018). The publication is in Norwegian, and it serves to illustrate that the use of the language is not always a choice made by staff at SUAS, but rather by others. It further demonstrates how structural and cultural realities may constrain the use of Sámi.

Nevertheless, publishing in Norwegian does not necessarily have to be in conflict with SUAS’ visions. The book *Samisk reindrift. Norske myter* (Sámi reindeer husbandry. Norwegian myths) (Benjaminsen, Eira, & Sara, 2016) discusses conceptions/beliefs and realities regarding Sámi reindeer husbandry. The backdrop for the book is a situation where Sámi needs and traditions are in conflict with the Norwegian society on important issues like the numbers of reindeers and sizes of grazing areas. In line with SUAS’ visions the book sets Sámi mind-set and ways of living on the agenda, and calls for a management of reindeers that take into account traditional Sámi knowledge. The book can be seen as a form of activism for social change, as the authors exert their agency to impact the situation for Sámi reindeer herders. Since the publication targets a broader Norwegian audience, publishing in Norwegian is an obvious strategic choice. Hence, the choice is not motivated by language planning goals, but rather by goals related to other parts of SUAS’ visions.

*The multifaceted role of English*

English is the most frequently used language for publishing at SUAS, with 80 scientific works in the period 2011–2017. This is partly a result of demands from the outside, as illustrated here:

> there is pressure from UHR and NOKUT and right and it comes to the institutions and then it comes down to the researchers (scientific staff 1)

> to NFR everything is in English right (scientific staff 1)

The first quote points to demands from Universities Norway (UHR) and The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) regarding publishing (in English). The second refers to the fact that research proposals to The Research Council of Norway (NFR) have to be written in English. Both quotes position English as the valuable language in publishing and research grant proposals, two central activities in academia (see Lillis & Curry, 2010 for more on English for research funding). Additionally, the importance of EU funding demonstrates that Norwegian academia is oriented towards Europe. English is tied to internationalisation as part of institutional measures (e.g. foreign students and publications in high ranked journals as sources for funding).

Publishing is essential for an academic career today, and prestigious journals tend to operate in English only (see e.g. Holm et al., 2015; Lillis & Curry, 2010). Hence, English is probably the language with the highest prestige in international academia. As seen in the following quote, this is a familiar situation for staff at SUAS: ‘you know in this
academic world how strong pressure we have with English’ (scientific staff 1). This is an explicit and strong statement that demonstrates that staff at SUAS experience the same pressure to use English as other researchers in Norway do. This pressure results from structural realities that are hard for academic writers to ignore, and that consequently delimits their agency. Two other quotes also illustrate how staff at SUAS perceive the role of English in academia:

as academic scholars [staff] must also think about their career or that they must publish in English that is important it is really important (university leadership staff)

the risk that we will not be or that our employees or our professionals will not be referred to although they may be leading that area because you have chosen to write in Sámi because – it is not required of another researcher that then shall write about the same topic – that this researcher master Sámi in order to gain access – so that there is the risk of so therefore I believe that many professionals at least have chosen that strategy (rector)

The first of the two shows that even though research at SUAS ideally should be disseminated in Sámi, the leadership recognises the need to use English. Academic writers at SUAS are agentive, but the possibilities to use Sámi are bounded by structures. This is in line with discourses on publishing in the public debate in Norway. In November 2018, a Norwegian professor of phycology claimed that ‘In order to succeed in the system, you must write in English. Publishing in Norwegian is almost discrediting’ (På Høyden, 2018, my translation). If Norwegian is seen as discrediting, one can only imagine which position Sámi would have in the language hierarchy. The second quote refers to the importance of citation practices. The strategy the rector brings up is to publish in English in addition to Sámi. This is a response to a ‘publish or perish-discourse’ in international and national academia. Though not necessarily the most important motivation, it is a fact that by publishing in prestigious journals, staff at SUAS are more likely to be cited internationally. According to Bourdieu (1991, pp. 76–77), ‘the conditions of reception envisaged are part of the conditions of production, and anticipation of the sanctions of the market helps to determine the production of the discourse.’ The likelihood of being cited, or even read, is part of an obvious envisaged reception. When an author decides to use English, the decision may be based on calculations of profits based on structures in academia. In turn, the choice of English in publishing might reproduce hegemonic language structures (see Bourdieu, 1991). Yet, publishing in more than one language might counteract this.

**English for Indigenous collaboration**

Apart from the statements presented in the section above, participants rarely refer to the international academic community. In contrast, the presence of an Indigenous (academic) community throughout the interviews is striking. The administrative staff that participated in the study noted that ‘most often it is the Indigenous perspective that is important for us when it comes to internationalisation.’ The statement indicates that discourses of internationalisation seen in other parts of academia are modified at SUAS to almost exclusively mean international Indigenous collaboration. This is also signalled in the following quote from rector:

the Indigenous dimension is the first and so we are looking for we are looking for the global in it but it is not said that we refuse some researchers – or that one also have other contacts – but that the contacts we have they have relevance for what we stand for the profile we have
Rector highlights that staff can collaborate outside of Sápmi, as long as the work has relevance for Indigenous issues. The statement is in line with the institution’s vision: ‘values and mind-set of Sámi and other Indigenous peoples are at the centre’ (Strategiplan 2017–2021). The article ‘Reclaiming Sámi languages: Indigenous language emancipation from East to West’ (Rasmussen & Nolan, 2011), results from a collaboration such as the one described above. It is written by one scholar from SUAS and one from outside of Sápmi. It is on Sámi issues, and it is published in English in a prestigious journal. At SUAS, the use of English is not only connected to broader institutional discourses; it is connected to a common Indigenous discourse where English is used to communicate. Another publication that illustrates how staff at SUAS take part in scientific conversations on topics regarding Indigenous issues, is the chapter ‘Sámi place names, power relations and representation’ (Helander, 2014). It is part of an Australian book written in English. The choice of language was probably not Helander’s, yet, by using English she reaches a bigger audience working on Indigenous issues. The publication is also an example of a publishing practice where the same paper is published in two languages, as seen in a footnote on the first page of the chapter: ‘The original paper was published in Northern Sámi […] Minor revisions have been made for the English language version’ (Helander, 2014, p. 352). According to her academic profile, the author had presented her work at several international conferences before writing the chapter. Scholars are more likely to receive invitations to talk at conferences when they publish in English, and the other way around. This contributes to the structural favouring of English.

As pointed out by the former rector taking part in this study, ‘English has been a team-mate in internationalisation.’ They added ‘and maybe not so threatening’ compared to Norwegian. Here, the former rector’s statement must be analysed in light of history as the presence of – and pressure to use – Norwegian for centuries served to erase Sámi (Minde, 2005). This influences the discourses on Norwegian in Sápmi and at SUAS, but also the discourses on English. As seen, discourses in Norwegian language policy position English as a threat (Johansen, 2012). In the Sámi context however, Norwegian may as well fill this position. Norwegian (or other national languages in the rest of Sápmi) can still be viewed as a colonial language in Sámi communities, and throughout history Norwegian – not English – has challenged the use of Sámi. Minority languages may face more pressure from the majority language in a country than from bigger international languages (see e.g. Bull, 2012). The analysis thus demonstrates that staff at SUAS operate within various language hierarchies. Moreover, it shows that English is not the sole language challenging the use of minority languages.

Locally oriented language practices

It is important to note that Table 1 shows language use in one activity only, and that the process leading up to the final publication might rely on a wide range of linguistic recourses (see e.g. Salö, 2015). Based on the data from SUAS, it is obvious that different languages are used for different purposes. This is especially true for Norwegian and English, languages used almost exclusively for external communication. Internal communication, on the other hand, is in Sámi. This indicates that internal and external directed language practices are influenced by different discourses. Salö (2015) draws on
Bourdieu when he argues that an understanding of linguistic choices must account for both actor’s habitus and the social spaces where linguistic exchanges take place. Hence, when staff and students at SUAS are conducting linguistic practices that take place locally – between actors with many of the same dispositions – they primarily have to take into account this social place. Discourses that are salient in national language policy, e.g. the importance of safeguarding the language, are not relevant locally. An illustrating example is the linguistic landscape at SUAS, where the absence of written Norwegian is striking. Signage at the institution is in Sámi and English, not Norwegian. This example also serves to shed light on why participants claimed they ‘skip Norwegian’ in spite of the fact that they publish in the language. Skip Norwegian appears to be a good description of language practices apart from publishing, meaning the more locally oriented practices. Many of the choices made for the linguistic landscape and for teaching and administration are conscious deliberate as they result from thorough discussions, resulting in a language practice where Norwegian plays a minor role. The choices made for signing also illustrate the importance to safeguarding Sámi. Still, English is present in the landscape. According to several participants, this is due to the fact that the institution serves the whole Sámi area, including Sámi people that do not know Northern Sámi. Nevertheless, a participant (university leadership staff) reported that English is not used in everyday life. This is in line with what I observed throughout my field work stays. Thus, based on my analysis of reported and observed practice, I claim that Northern Sámi serves as the lingua franca at SUAS. Northern Sámi is the language for communication between people with different linguistic backgrounds, coming from different countries – in contrast to many other institutions of higher education where English plays this role. Thus, local agency in combination with supportive national policies have created a place where use of Sámi is enabled – in spite of other constraining structures.

**Conclusion and implications**

This paper has, by looking at language of publications, addressed language practices at SUAS. I asked how linguistic choices in publications reflect SUAS’ vision and the academic communities the institution is a part of. As demonstrated, understanding linguistic practices for publishing means taking into account the series of structures that influence choices, and how these constrain or enable agency. At the core of language policy deliberations at SUAS is a linguistic balancing act between several languages: English, Norwegian (or Swedish and Finnish) and (Northern) Sámi. However, it might be more correct to say that it is a balancing act between discourses, language policy goals, needs and visions, between agency and structures, and that language practices are a result of this act. SUAS’ staff engage in several academic communities, and some of the most salient discourses influencing language choices stem from the national and international level. Staff are thus embedded in numerous power hierarchies that ultimately influence their publication practices.

Even though languages are used for different purposes at SUAS, the language situation is not a diglossic one as Sámi is used for all activities. Staff and students in this study constantly highlighted the importance of using Sámi, also when publishing scientific articles, in order to ensure language value and prestige. In spite of constraining structures in
academia, staff use Sámi as an agentive response to the institution’s visions. The institution’s wish to serve the Sámi community – of which use of Sámi language is an essential part – is always present and often outweigh other considerations. This shows the power of SUAS’ vision and its language policy. Further, the paper has demonstrated how national policies can support and contribute to preservation and revitalisation of Indigenous/minority languages, through facilitating local and individual agency.

The study has demonstrated that it is possible to use an Indigenous language in academia, with English as a language for communication and dissemination, without undermining that Indigenous language. Thus it has showed that English’s dominance in academia does not have to jeopardise the existence of minority languages, contrary to what is suggested by Lasagabaster (2015). The high number of publications in English, and national languages, seems at first glance to clash with SUAS’ vision. However, the paper has demonstrated that Norwegian and English can be means to fulfil the vision through for example disseminating knowledge on Sámi issues to a national audience and collaborating with other Indigenous peoples. Thus, the choice of language must be seen in conjunction with the publication’s goal. Nevertheless, using Indigenous languages in academia requires hard work and some supporting structures. The Sámi journal Diedut, in addition to publishing papers in different languages, gives authors the freedom to publish their paper again in English in a different journal. This facilitates individual agency in publication practices. It was Diedut’s policy that made it possible for the researcher on place-names to disseminate her work both to a Sámi audience – and thus contribute to the development of Sámi as a language of science – and to international colleagues working on Indigenous place-names. However, many journals do not accept previously published articles. Holm et al. (2015) claim that trends in publication that favour internationalisation of research can lead to homogeneity. Such trends and institutional constraints in academia can hinder bilingual publication practices. Minority languages have a hard time surviving in academia, more so if their use puts researchers at risk of losing out on participation in international academic communities.

Hornberger (2002, p. 6) claims that multilingual policies ‘open up new worlds of possibility for oppressed Indigenous […] languages and their speakers, transforming former homogenizing and assimilation policy discourse into discourses about diversity and emancipation.’ In Norway, the government has to continuously counteract the results of former policy, and with governmental support, SUAS may take part in leading the way for minority languages in academia. Still, the fact that SUAS is positioned in a wealthy and democratic state means that many other Indigenous peoples cannot copy what the institution is and does. However, SUAS can be – and wants to be – a source of inspiration.

Notes
1. Northern Sámi: Sámi allaskuvla.
2. There are no official registration, so these are uncertain numbers.
4. In the legislation treated as one language.
5. See Johansen (2012) for an analysis of the white paper on language (St.meld. 35: 2008).
6. This is a comprehensive policy document on language by the Ministry of Culture.
8. See Markelin (2009, pp. 10–11) for more on this issue.
9. The terms ‘place’ and ‘space’ are used interchangeably in everyday conversations. As concepts, they are defined in different ways by different scholars. This paper shares Cresswell’s (2015) understanding of place as a dynamic product of social relationships that unfolds in a space. This is in line with Blommaert who sees place as a space filled with ‘social, cultural, epistemic, and affective attributes’ (2005, p. 222).
10. I am not Sámi myself and do not speak any of the Sámi languages. My entry point has been language activism, as I have worked on minority language rights in Norway in broader terms (see e.g. Thingnes, 2015).
11. In Cristin, the Sámi languages are counted together.
12. Lillis and Curry (2010) characterise seven communities that scholars write for. Even though this paper does not apply their division, it is worth noting that an academic Indigenous community is not part of these seven. This is not surprising, however, it illustrates how studying an Indigenous institution offers a new perspective on academic publishing.
14. ‘fagspråk’
15. See Henriksen (2010) for how she applies Theory of Science to justify the choice of Sámi in publishing.
16. The policy stems from the national level, but the rights to e.g. Sámi language education applies for 12 municipalities only. In the rest of the country, 10 pupils or more must ask for education through Sámi for it to become a right.
17. See WINHEC (2018) for accreditations standards.
18. Henriksen (2010) argues along the same lines.
19. ‘It is not like we do not like Norwegian or anything like that’ (scientific staff 2).
20. The participants says ‘originalspråk’ in Norwegian, but elaborates, saying that Sámi must be more than a language that is translated into.
21. Same name, but a different author than the one mentioned earlier.

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