

**ARTICLE** **OPEN ACCESS**

# Language Ideologies in Meänkieli Teaching and Learning Resources

**Riitta-Liisa Valijärvi** 

Uppsala University, Sweden / University College London,  
United Kingdom

## Abstract

Meänkieli is a minoritised and endangered language traditionally spoken in Northern Sweden. This study analyses linguistic variation in a selection of contemporary Meänkieli teaching and learning resources (TLRs) and discusses the language ideologies and the sociopolitical context connected to the variation. In a complex assemblage of perspectives and practices, this study identifies four ideologies behind variation in TLRs: two more purist ideologies (traditional, standard language) and two inclusive ideologies (post-traditional, translanguaging, polynomic). Using a close reading method, both explicit and implicit expressions of variation are examined in the data set that consists of a grammar, five school textbooks, one phrasebook, one online platform, and two dictionaries. The analysis of implicit views on variation focuses, for example, on Swedish loan words and certain key grammatical forms. The grammar book in the study is governed by standard language ideology with traditional and post-traditional elements. The school textbooks, similar to the grammar book, are based on the authors' Torne Valley variety, the most widely-used regional variety of Meänkieli, and use Swedish to a varying degree following a translanguaging approach. The innovative or interactive mainly digital materials are polynomic and post-traditional. One of the dictionaries and the phrase book brings in varieties outside Sweden, while the other dictionary includes regional varieties of Meänkieli in Sweden. Instructional and experiential TLRs are more likely to follow a standard and balance traditional and nontraditional language, while exploratory and elicitive materials are more polynomic and post-traditional. The study concludes with a summary of the results and suggestions for further studies.

**Key words:** Meänkieli; TLRs; standard language ideology; translanguaging; polynomy; purism; post-traditional

Journal on Ethnopolitics and  
Minority Issues in Europe  
**Vol.24, No.3, 2025**

pp.66–90

**DOI:**

<https://doi.org/10.53779/RIVA0808>

**AUTHOR:**

Riitta-Liisa Valijärvi, Uppsala University,  
Sweden / University College London,  
United Kingdom

[riitta-liisa.valijarvi@moderna.uu.se](mailto:riitta-liisa.valijarvi@moderna.uu.se)  
[r.valijarvi@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:r.valijarvi@ucl.ac.uk)

**LICENCE:**

Copyright (c) 2025  
Riitta-Liisa Valijärvi



This work is licensed under a creative commons  
attribution 4.0 international License.

## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore language ideologies behind linguistic variation in the teaching and learning resources (TLRs) for Meänkieli in the context of language revitalisation. Meänkieli is a minoritised language traditionally spoken in Northern Sweden by 20,000–70,000 people. It is closely related to Kven in Norway and Northern Finnish dialects in Finland. Meänkieli became separated from the Finnish dialect continuum in Finland when the border was drawn between Finland (then a grand duchy of Russia) and Sweden along the Torne and Muonio rivers in 1809. The speakers in Sweden were subject to assimilatory and colonial policies of the Swedish state between 1880–1950, which led to the language becoming endangered (SOU, 2023).

Many endangered and minoritised languages like Meänkieli are characterised by regional, intergenerational, situational, and free variation on all levels of the language (phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis, style/register/genre). They are often not fully standardised and may contain loanwords from a majority language or be subject to code-switching (e.g. Fishman, 1991; Sarhimaa, 1999; Grenoble & Whaley, 2005; Sulkala & Mantila, 2010; Lane, 2015). Furthermore, younger speakers reclaiming and learning the language of their ancestors and other new speakers use language differently from older generations, which can cause tensions between new ways of speaking and perceived authenticity (cf. O'Rourke et al., 2015; Sallabank, 2018). Linguistic variation thus poses a challenge to language revitalisation, including the production of TLRs. At the same time, in contexts where many community members mostly use the majority language and the number of qualified teachers is low, the need to rely on existing resources can be higher. These challenges highlight the need for effective and fit-for-purpose TLRs that always involve conscious and unconscious decisions about linguistic variation that are guided by internalised language ideologies.

Against this background my research questions are: What kind of variation can we detect in Meänkieli TLRs? Which language ideologies are behind the variation? TLRs refer to all types of materials that can be used to teach or learn a language. A prototypical example of a language teaching and learning resource is perhaps a textbook written by a teacher in the target language that contains exercises with keys, illustrations, and accompanying audio materials, but the concept can include, for example, interactive online exercises or audiovisual materials (McGrath, 2016). This study involves a close reading of written print and online TLRs, rather than interviews or surveys with users, or classroom observations of the use of TLRs.

In the next section, I will first provide more information about Meänkieli. In the following section, I will define the term language ideology, explain the theoretical framework, and examine various language ideologies based on previous literature. In the subsequent section, I provide information about the method followed by a positionality statement and a discussion of the limitations of the method. The next section introduces the data set, while the following section consists of the analysis and discussions of TLRs. The final section contains a summary and suggestions for further studies.

## Meänkieli in Sweden

Meänkieli experienced a revival and reclamation in the 1980s, when it became clear that children in schools could not be taught standard Finnish. At this point, Meänkieli had diverged too much from Finnish, partly because it had not undergone the standardisation that Finnish had (see Valijärvi et al., 2022 for a detailed account and bibliography). The impact of the assimilatory policies of the Swedish state have led to the fact that most fluent speakers of Meänkieli are now older and bilingual (Arola et al., 2013). The middle generation has passive knowledge and may be in the process of reclaiming their language, while some of their children are learning Meänkieli in nurseries and preschools, at school, or from their grandparents. Meänkieli is used in the private sphere, in connection with traditional pursuits such as fishing, but also in literature, news media, and official documents.

Meänkieli has been one of the national minority languages in Sweden since 2000 alongside Finnish, Romani Chib, Sámi varieties, and Yiddish. This means that Sweden has committed to supporting and promoting Meänkieli, and those who speak the language have the right to use it when communicating with authorities as well as in education and cultural pursuits. These rights are regulated the Swedish Act on National Minorities and Minority Languages 2009:724 (Sveriges riksdag, 2009). Sweden has also ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages but has received repeated criticism for the support it provides for the national minorities (e.g. CoE, 2020). Today, speakers of Meänkieli still feel forgotten or unseen (e.g. Lipott, 2015; Poromaa Isling, 2020; also Spetz, 2021).

There have been many positive developments, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalainens that handed it in its final report in 2023 (SOU, 2023). Many people with knowledge of Meänkieli identify as Tornedalians, Kvens, or Lantalainens depending on their preference. There are various top-down and bottom-up active efforts to revitalise the language, including a state-funded language revitalisation centre, summer camps, advancements in language technology, artists singing in Meänkieli, and the development of various TLRs, such as school textbooks, films, a grammar, and dictionaries (Valijärvi & Kangas, forthcoming). Young people are reclaiming their language online (Ackermann-Boström, 2021), and the members of the middle generation are discussing identity and language loss in the media (e.g. Kolu, 2024).

Previous studies on variation and ideologies in Meänkieli have focused on the language ideologies governing the language use in community publications (Molnár-Bodrogi 2015), challenges of standardisation more generally (Mantila, 2010; Lainio & Wande, 2015), codeswitching and divergence from Finnish over time (Paunonen, 2018), features of written Meänkieli in light of contact with Swedish (Sulkala, 2015), lack of documentation and corpora and the challenges this poses to grammatical descriptions (Valijärvi & Blokland, 2022), and multilingual practices on the Meänkieli radio station Meänraatio (Kolu, 2023). However, the role of variation and ideologies in Meänkieli language TLRs has not been studied in detail so far.

It is worth noting that a variety also known as Meänkieli is spoken in Finland (e.g. Vaattovaara, 2009). It is seen as a dialect of Finnish and lacks official status, like other Finnish dialects. This Finnish Meänkieli is not taught in schools in Finland, nor is it seen as being in need of revitalisation. The Finnish Meänkieli of social media, newspaper articles, and novels has been influenced by standard Finnish, which is why it may seem distant or challenging for those speak Swedish and want to reclaim the language of their ancestors. Furthermore, Meänkieli in Sweden has three regional varieties: Torne Valley, Kiruna (Kieruna/Lannankieli), and Gällivare (Jellivaara). Out of these, the Eastern variety by the border, Torne Valley, is the most widely-used one. Note that I am using the word ‘dialect’ in the Finnish context, and ‘variety’ in the Swedish context following established conventions.

### Theory: language ideologies

Language ideology could be defined “as beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation states” (Kroskrity, 2010). These different stances are attempts to rationalise language use in one way or another. The field of language ideology research is interdisciplinary and focuses on a range of topics from how the ethnography of speaking and power relations are negotiated in situations of language contact or coloniality, to how language policy and planning measures promote/demote or standardise languages and language varieties (e.g. Schieffelin et al., 1998).

Language ideologies are always bound to their specific context and are inherently linked to the sociocultural experiences of the speakers, or in this case, the authors of the TLRs. Individuals, various interest groups, and nation states all have their own beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and the value of different of varieties (Kroskrity, 2004). Therefore, language ideologies should be

“conceived as multiple because of the plurality of meaningful social divisions (class, gender, clan, elites, generations, and so on) within sociocultural groups that have the potential to produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group membership.” (Kroskrity, 2004, p. 503)

The complexity extends to multilingual practices in communities, which Kroskrity (2022) calls *language ideology assemblages*. The term *assemblage* is useful in the description of hybrid forms of language, such as the mixing of Meänkieli and Swedish, or Meänkieli and standard/regional Finnish. Kroskrity (2022, p. 273) theorises on the dynamics of “linguistic ideologies, practices, and political-economic structures” and shows that two minoritised language communities in the United States (Western Mono and Village of Tewa) have very different approaches to language revitalisation due to the dominant language ideologies in each community. Western Mono is more oriented toward variationism and syncretism and therefore more willing to accept hybrid forms of language and language technology, while Tewa is more oriented toward purism and an inherent connection between language and identity,

and therefore is less interested in technologies and audiences outside the village (Kroskrity, 2022, p. 286). Overall for Kroskrity (2022, p. 296) language revitalisation and documentation are sites of ideological contact in which Indigenous communities and nation states take part in globalised language endangerment and revitalisation efforts. Using language ideologies as the theoretical framework in the analysis of TLRs can help to untangle these ideological connections and assemblages, and thus ultimately support language revitalisation efforts.

Following a Kroskrityan approach, this study aims to synthesise sociopolitical concerns (language ideologies), applied linguistics (language revitalisation), and linguistics (specific linguistic forms). The secondary sources below and the ideologies discussed in them have been chosen because of their relevance for an endangered and marginalised language like Meänkieli in anticipation of the analysis of TLRs.

Stances toward variation are taken in minoritised-language communities in response to standardisation efforts, effects of language shift (the loss of speakers and attrition), language contact (influence from the majority), and regional variation (e.g. O'Rourke & Walsh, 2015; Gal, 2018; Ó Murchadha & Flynn, 2018a; 2018b; Lane et al., 2018). We can identify four opposing and overlapping discourses or forces in ideologies connected to variation in the literature: traditional, post-traditional (including translanguaging), standard language, and polynomy (Table 1). These four broad approaches will be discussed in detail below.

**Table 1.** A suggestion to summarise four interconnected variation ideologies in endangered-language contexts

	<b>Purist</b>	<b>Inclusive</b>
<b>Primarily spoken</b>	Traditional	Post-traditional, incl. translanguaging
<b>Primarily written</b>	Standard Language	Polynomy

Traditional ideology is connected to authenticity and purism (e.g. Sallabank, 2018). Traditionalists see the way of the older generations as authentic and correct, while changes in the language and influence from contact languages is as something to be avoided. There is an idea of restoring of language and society to pre-shift conditions (Romaine, 2006; Ó Murchadha & Flynn, 2018a), which is creates a situation that is challenging for new speakers whose language may show more influence from the contact language and not contain all the complex grammatical forms (cf. Hornsby, 2017). In the case of Meänkieli, adopting this ideology could manifest itself in the avoidance of Swedish loanwords and syntactic structures. The traditional ideology may extend to text genres to be taught or included in materials. In other words, folklore genres or traditional themes (e.g. nature, hunting, fishing) may be preferred in the TLRs.

The second ideology, standard language ideology, is also purist in nature. According to this approach a standardised version of the language is correct, logical, authoritative, and legitimate in opposition to incorrect, illogical, unauthoritative, and illegitimate varieties (Lippi-Green, 2012; Milroy & Milroy, 2012). Here one regional variety of a minoritised language

may be favoured over others, and any deviation from a proposed standard is condemned. The matter may lead to heated debates over what is allowed and acceptable, and what is not. In the case of Meänkieli it could involve certain spellings (e.g. the third person plural *-va* or *-vat* or the phrase *se oon* or *soon* 'it is'), acceptance of certain Swedish-origin loanwords (e.g. whether to use the Swedish-origin *frykti* or the Finnic-origin *hetelmä* 'fruit').

In addition to purism, what the first two approaches have in common is that they follow language hierarchy by stigmatising certain types of language use. They are prescriptive in nature by setting out rules about correct use that often excludes variation (e.g. Berry, 2021). They assume a monoglossic (Vetter, 2013; Tan & Mishra, 2020) or essentialist (Childs et al., 2014) reality where languages can be fully standardised and kept clean and pure from influences. These ideologies date back to nationalist notions of one language, one people (Woolard, 1998). For legitimacy and a raised status, a standard written form is important, and the speaker community may not want to lose traditional ways of speaking, but focusing on these two pursuits may exclude non-traditional, and new speakers, or users of non-standard varieties. The advantage of purism is that this way of thinking can create monolingual environments that strengthen the use of the language in cases of language shift, while standardisation brings the language to new written domains.

The third approach is polynomic or pluricentric – i.e., in favour of regional variation. Through democratisation and destandardising ideologies, all varieties are treated as equal (Fairclough, 2001). Various polynomic models have been developed for minoritised languages that involve allowing different spellings and listing all variant forms or vocabulary items (e.g. Clyne, 1992; Blackwood, 2011; Ó Murchadha, 2016; Jaffe, 2019). In the case of Meänkieli in Sweden, this type of model would include the use of all three regional varieties in writing and perhaps bringing the language closer to the closely-related Finnish dialects on the other side of the border or to the Kven language. Here the concepts of *lumping* and *splitting* are useful (cf. Greenberg and Croft, 2005): some may choose to lump several varieties together, while others may choose to separate them and treat varieties as separate languages. In the case of Meänkieli, this could be keeping Meänkieli in Sweden separate from the Meänkieli dialect of Finnish (splitting) or bringing it closer (lumping). Alternatively, it could involve developing own standards for the Kiruna (Kieruna/Lannankieli) and Gällivare (Jellivaara) varieties (splitting) or merging them with the most widely-used Torne Valley variety (lumping).

The fourth broad ideology is linked to the third ideology as it also takes a descriptive approach (Berry, 2021), acknowledging language use as it is, and focuses on syncretic use instead of historical correctness (Whaley, 2011). In this type of thinking, there is accepted awareness about the fact that language changes (Kristiansen, 2014). It caters more for new speakers or L2 learners, and could be seen as being emotionally and pedagogically justified. In this ideological approach, learners or speakers are encouraged to use their full repertoire in the spirit of translanguaging – i.e., the use of learners' and speakers' multilingual repertoires, (García & Wei, 2014; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017) and encouraging hybridity (Sanchez-Stockhammer, 2012). In practice, this may also mean focusing on the indexical function of a language (Lüpke, 2016),

and the role of language in reclamation for individuals and the community (Leonard, 2012). In other words, in a post-traditionalist approach one acknowledges the fact that language has symbolic value (e.g. Amery, 2001; Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 2018) and instead of focusing on correctness or forms, the aim is to maintain linguistic and cultural heritage. The key element here is affect (e.g. Arnold, 1999) – i.e., feelings around language, the use of greetings or words, and inclusivity. Pedagogically, this may in addition to translanguaging involve simplification of language – i.e., learner language or allowing for new speakers’ language use with forms that could be regarded as incorrect from a certain perspective. For example, Holton (2009) has connected simplification of grammar or creolisation of language to sustainable revitalisation.

All four broad approaches are linked to linguistic modes and genres. Spoken language is at the centre of many non-traditional and traditional approaches, while polynomic models and standard-language discussions centre on written forms of a language. Although language ideologies are omnipresent, they should not be seen as static or autonomous. Language ideologies change and overlap depending on the situation, and stakeholders’ interests and intended audiences. In the case of TLRs, the individual authors’ and creators’ stances may change over time, and the outputs may reflect several, overlapping, or competing ideologies at once because of the tensions between personal preferences, community interests, and state or publisher policies.

**Method, limitations of the study, and positionality**

According to Kroskrity (2010), language ideologies are either explicitly articulated or embodied in communicative practice. Thus, the analysis of ideologies in Meänkieli TLRs involves an identification of *explicit* approaches to variation and the examination of variables that indicate in a more *implicit* way the approach the resource has adopted. More specifically, the method involves a close reading of the TLRs. Close reading is used in literary and cultural studies, as well as in history (Ohrvik, 2024) and education (e.g. Hogan, 2025). It follows the tradition of hermeneutics, where parts of the text are connected to the whole and our preunderstanding and interpretation of the text is revised when we gain knowledge about the context (e.g. Schmidt, 2006). Therefore, TLRs are seen in this study seen as textual products that are read or used repeatedly and for detail, while simultaneously interpreted in their cultural, historical, and political context. Table 2 links the variables under scrutiny to the ideologies discussed in section 3.

**Table 2.** Linking variation to ideologies in TLRs

Purist	Inclusive
<i>Traditional</i> Use of older fluent speakers’ forms	<i>Post-traditional, incl. translanguaging</i> Innovative grammar and younger generations’ repertoires Use of majority language
<i>Standard Language</i> Consistent spelling Certain forms and words promoted over others	<i>Polynomic</i> Regional variation

Choosing which genres to include in the TLRs is also an ideological choice, as noted in the theory section: more traditionally-minded authors might include traditional oral genres like fairytales, while proponents of a standard language ideology might include pieces of literature or texts from the public realm that follow their or otherwise established spelling recommendations. The inclusion of innovative grammar or regional forms appears to be linked to more interactive online platforms or reference resources, as the analysis shows.

Considering the scope of the journal and its readership, I will not be analysing grammatical forms in detail. Instead, I will be focusing on the explicit statements and certain sample forms in each item in the data set, while connecting them to the sociopolitical context and ideologies. I also acknowledge my positionality as an outsider, a Finnish-speaking Finn who has been involved in the revitalisation and teaching of Finnish, a closely-related language, in Sweden for over two decades. In addition to my role as an educator, I approach the dataset as a documentary linguist and grammarian interested in variation. At the next stage, my interpretations of the data should be triangulated with surveys and interviews with community members and the creators of the TLRs. This is because language ideologies are not objectively identifiable and always involve an interpretation and reading of data. This pilot study of TLRs paves way for reception studies of TLRs.

The translations of the passages into English are mine. In some cases, the original Swedish and Meänkieli quotes have been left out to save space. There are minimal ethical concerns, as the materials exist in the public sphere. I have not included images from the materials for copyright reasons.

## Data

Taking the broadest possible perspective on TLRs, these would include objects or drawings. The purpose of such objects is to encourage speaking and learning (McGrath, 2013, p. 4). This study, however, focuses on written materials in print and electronic form, namely textbooks, websites, grammars, and dictionaries, that may (or may not) contain authentic texts or audio (McGrath, 2016). The study of images and audio-visual materials is beyond the scope of this study, as is the role of teachers and editors. For a summary of the literature on the role of educators in minoritised-language contexts see, for example, Ó Murchadha & Flynn (2018a; 2018b).

Furthermore, the creators of TLRs may vary, and they may be authored by both teachers and learners (see McGrath, 2016, p. 9). The target audience and the user setting of the resources are additional factors to consider: some materials are intended for children, while others are for adults; some are for formal education settings, while others are for self-study or to be used reference; some are for second-language or heritage-language learners, while others are developed for L3 speakers. Tomlinson's (2001, p. 66) division is helpful in revitalisation settings:

"The materials can be *instructional* in that they inform learners about the language, [...] *experiential* in that they provide exposure to the language in use, [...] *elicitative* in that they stimulate language use, or [...] *exploratory* in that they facilitate discoveries about language use." (italics mine)

TLRs would ideally contain rich and meaningful input of language in use and raise positive feelings, help learners feel at ease, and achieve impact through novelty, variety, and achievable challenges (Tomlinson, 2008). This is why they are of central importance in language revitalisation contexts, where negative feelings among learners include anxiety and shame (cf. Abtahian & Quinn, 2017).

Table 3 contains a selection of the widely used TLRs currently in use and constitutes the dataset of this study. The dataset has been mapped onto Tomlinson's (2001) functions listed above. These TLRs have been chosen using purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) based on the author's knowledge of the Meänkieli revitalisation context and to ensure spread across target audiences and the types of materials. The dataset is by no means exclusive, but it is information-rich. The study excludes authentic fiction, poetry, music, television, and cinema. Although authentic materials can be used to teach and learn languages, they are not primarily designed to be used as TLRs and require more teacher input. One should perhaps also note here that TLRs for Meänkieli are more limited than for some of the other national minority languages in Sweden. For instance, for Finnish, Yiddish, and North Sámi, there are international resources that learners in Sweden can use.

**Table 3.** A selection of contemporary written verbal Meänkieli TLRs

Resource	Audience	Format	Approach
Pohjanen (2022). <i>Meänkieli, lärobok, historik, texter</i>	Adult learners	Grammar explanations and examples, text samples	Instructional, experiential
Nylund et al. ([2007]2012). <i>Meänkieli</i>	Schoolchildren	Book with texts, images, and a grammatical sketch and a vocabulary	Instructional, experiential
Persson & Kruukka (2015). <i>Meänkieli årskurs 1-3</i>	Schoolchildren ages 6-9	Book in PDF format with exercises and illustrations	Instructional
Sampakoski (2015). <i>Taksi ja Max: Ensiaskelheita meänkiehleen åk 1-3</i> (translated by Persson & Kruukka)	Schoolchildren ages 6-9	Book in PDF format with exercises and illustrations	Instructional, elicitive
Sampakoski (2020a). <i>Lukukoira Max ja sen kaveri Taksi</i> (translated by Erkheikki)	Schoolchildren grades 1-9 (ages 6-16)	A PDF book in Meänkieli only with audio and a teacher's guide	Experiential
Erkheikki & Redebo (2024). <i>Tule sieki! Läromedel i meänkieli för åk 6-9</i>	Schoolchildren (ages 12-16)	Book in PDF format with exercises and illustrations	Instructional, elicitive
<i>Polarbibblo</i>	Children 0-18 years	Interactive page with texts and activities	Elicitive

Resource	Audience	Format	Approach
Filipson (2019a). <i>Puhu meänkieltä! En fräsbok på meänkieli</i>	Young people aged 16-25	Phrasebook	Experiential, exploratory
Winsa: <i>Meän sana</i>	Anyone	Online dictionary	Exploratory
Meän akateemi – Academia Tornedaliensis: <i>Meänkieli ↔ ruotti sanakirja</i>	Anyone	Online dictionary	Exploratory

### Analysis of variation and language ideologies in Meänkieli TLRs

The analysis in this section is arranged in the following subsections: Bengt Pohjanen's grammar; the five textbooks; and the phrasebook, the interactive website and the two online dictionaries. Each subsection ends in a summary discussion.

#### Bengt Pohjanen's reference grammar – standard language with variation

Pohjanen's (2022) book *Meänkieli – grammatik, lärobok, historik, texter* [Meänkieli – grammar, textbook, history, texts] is prescriptive in nature, which is also evident in the fact that a previous edition of it was called *Meänkieli rätt och lätt* [Meänkieli easy and correct] (Pohjanen, 2017). In other words, it aims to provide rules for the language and advises on correct usage. It contains an introduction with views on language policy, vocabulary lists, dialogues in Meänkieli and Swedish translations, and sample texts from a wide variety of genres and in Meänkieli translations. The grammar explanations and prose are in Swedish. The following quote shows how the standard language ideology is explicitly stated in the book:

- (1) Does Meänkieli exist as a uniform language? Does not one speak differently from village to village? In Tärendö one's *selkä* is hurting when one has backache while residents of Kassa have problems with their *sölka*. Which is actually correct? [...] We also have a language board that functions since a decision has been made about that already in the 80s. [...] It enriches and is always correct when you speak and chat, tell [stories] and preach. But when you use Meänkieli written language, you have to check in a grammar and a dictionary so it's correct. (Pohjanen, 2022, p. 31)

Pohjanen also often explicitly compares the language with Finnish, as example (2) shows. Comparisons with Swedish (example 3), English, and other European national languages are also made, as if to show that Meänkieli is equal to them, a national language with its own rules.

- (2) Example: *merkki* 'sign': plural: *merkissä* 'in signs' (not *merkeissä* like in Finnish) (Pohjanen, 2022, p. 55)

The comparisons to Finnish also serve the purpose of drawing the line between Meänkieli and Finnish. The desire or need to do this can be understood considering Meänkieli's history, the fact that the variety once was part of the Finnish dialect continuum and became separated in 1809 when the border between Sweden and Finland (then a grand duchy of

Russia) was finalised. For a long time, Meänkieli was called ‘Finnish’ or lumped together with Finnish and not seen as a language in its own right. This status as a contested language still lingers despite its status as a national minority language of Sweden (cf. Tamburelli & Tosco, 2021). This is partly because Meänkieli is, at least for those Finns living close to the border, mutually intelligible and many Meänkieli speakers know Finnish, having learned it in school or from relatives. Furthermore, marriages with Finns across the border and the Laestadian revivalist church (the language of which was Finnish) contributed positively to the vitality of Meänkieli (see Hytlenstam & Salö, 2023). Indeed, it may be sometimes difficult to draw a line between Finnish and Meänkieli in Sweden, or between the Meänkieli in Sweden and the Finnish variety called ‘Meänkieli’. In Pohjanen’s grammar, however, the border between Meänkieli and Finnish is drawn clearly and firmly, as example (2) shows.

Pohjanen’s standard language ideology applies to vocabulary as well, although it is unclear what the difference a loanword and a Swedish word is in example (3).

- (3) Will Torne Valley Finnish become its own language by mixing in Swedish words? That question is asked every now and then in letters to the editor and discussions. My answer is of course no. Meänkieli is such a rich language that you don’t need to use Swedish words. You can however borrow words. *Skräddade* ‘tailor’ has become *kraatari*. That’s fine, whereas “*skräddari*” is not a loan at all but shoddy use of language. *Auto* in Finnish is a loan from *auto* (self) and *bil* comes from *mobil* (movement). Us Tornedalians have borrowed *piili* (bil) from Swedish. (Pohjanen, 2022, p. 128)

Despite his seemingly hard stance on standard language, Pohjanen acknowledges and accepts variation in certain areas, such as names, as example (4) shows. Yet even there, the difference between spoken and written language is highlighted.

- (4) Many Meänkieli speakers have Swedish first names and Finnish surnames. Bertil does not fit well into the mouth of a Meänkieli speaker. The soft *b* sound is missing, and we prefer not to want the last letter in a word to be a consonant. The Meänkieli form of Bertil is Pärtili or Pärtti. Bengt is Pänkti. Granberg is pronounced Kramperi. In written language we use the forms Bertil (alt. Berttili), Bengt (alt. Pänkti) and Granberg (alt. Kramperi). (Pohjanen, 2022, p. 78)

When it comes to implicit expression of language ideologies, we can note some traditional tendencies. For example, Pohjanen has included an archaic and rare comitative ending *-ihne-* as in *tavaroihneen* ‘with his/her things’ (Pohjanen, 2022, p. 77) and certain non-finite forms (e.g. *vahattua* ‘having waxed’, p. 53). This implies that his standard language is closer to standard Finnish, at least in terms of grammar.

More implicit concessions to variation are made. For example, the bilingual reality of Meänkieli is clear, as in example (5). The Swedish has been translated into English while the Meänkieli phrases have been left in italics.

- (5) This grammar will help us find the rules for Meänkieli and help us understand how the language is constructed. Meänkieli is not an easy language to learn but you can learn it.

*Sano poka poijes! Dare to speak! It's worth it! Kyllä se kannattaa. We try and test. Freistaama ja pruuvaama. Do come along too! Tule sieki fölhjyyn! (Pohjanen, 2022, p. 32)*

Even in vocabulary, some variation is allowed. Pohjanen (2022, p. 129-132) lists, for example, the following parallel forms, sometimes with alternative spellings such as *šinka/shinkka* 'ham', sometimes both a Swedish and a Finnish origin word are used such as *feeperi/kuume* 'fever' (cf. Swedish *feber*, Finnish *kuume*), or simply a synonym is listed *mysikantti/muusikkeri* 'musician'. This means that that standard promoted is not a static strict monolith and the author is aware of variation and promotes or allows it to a certain degree.

When it comes to grammar, Pohjanen (2022, p. 155-157) acknowledges some free variation in the use of the formal subject *se* 'it'. For example, he first compares Meänkieli's formal subject with Swedish, English, and Finnish in line with his task of raising Meänkieli's status, and then goes on to say that the pronoun can be left out or included (6). This formal subject is the *se* 'it' in *se oli pussipimeä* 'it was pitch black' (Pohjanen, 2022, p. 156).

- (6) The occurrence of the pronoun *se* 'it' in a role of a formal subject can be encountered in Finnish dialects but it is nowhere near as frequent as in Meänkieli. Here, both the absence of a subject and the use of the pronoun *se* as a formal subject is possible in Meänkieli. (Pohjanen, 2022, p. 157)

To summarise, Pohjanen promotes a standard written language for Meänkieli, which is linked to his output as a novelist and poet (cf. Heith, 2012; Molnár-Bodrogi, 2022). In his instructional and experiential prescriptive grammar, Pohjanen sets out rules for the language and compares it to other national languages like Swedish and Finnish. He draws a line between Meänkieli and Swedish/Finnish, thus highlighting the independent status of Meänkieli. His written standard language is based on his variety, the Torne Valley variety, and does not allow polynomic variation. He does, however, acknowledge the language is changing and accepts certain Swedish loanwords and structures in a nod to non-traditional speakers (or perhaps, even the majority of speakers in some cases), while at the same time promoting certain traditional forms. His use of Swedish as the matrix language also acknowledges the reality of many Meänkieli speakers.

### **Traditional and post-traditional school textbooks school textbooks**

This section contains an analysis of the five textbooks created for school settings (see Table 2). They contain both traditional and non-traditional elements, and are all based on the authors' or translators' own language use, which in all cases is the Torne Valley variety. The factors under analysis are the explicit stances to variation and the use of Swedish and traditional/non-traditional vocabulary and grammar.

The widely used book *Meänkieli* by the three Nylund sisters (Nylund et al., [2007]2012) contains illustrations and various text genres, such as songs, recipes, information about animals, stories, poems, lists, proverbs, and riddles. Swedish is used minimally for grammar explanations and in the vocabulary list at the end, and occasionally for items such as ordinal

numbers (Nylund et al., 2012, p. 27) and translations of poems and songs. The preface states explicitly:

- (7) Rules have not been decided for Meänkieli yet and we have used the language that has been spoken and is spoken around us. We are grateful that we got this rich language from our parents. (Nylund et al., 2012, p. 6).

By following this principle, the sisters have been able to leave both regional and other variations out.

The book takes uses many Swedish-origin everyday words, as illustrated by Table 5. This means that the ideology is non-traditional, inasmuch as Finnic-origin words can be regarded as more traditional.

**Table 5.** A selection of Swedish-origin loan words from Nylund et al.'s (2012) textbook. Finnish has been included for comparison.

English	Swedish	Nylund Meänkieli	Finnish
garage	garage	karasi	autotalli
neighbour	granne	kranni	naapuri
brown	brun	pruuni	ruskea
volleyball	volleyball	vollipallo	lentopallo
computer	dator	taattori	tietokone
cream	grädde	kretta	kerma
jeans	jeans	jinsit	farkut
armchair	fåtölj	fotölji	nojatuoli
party	fest	fästi	juhlat
plastic bottle	plastflaska	plastipullo	muovipullo
to clap	klappa	klapata	taputtaa
to Hoover	damsuga	tamsyykata	imuroida

Variation is highlighted in some areas of vocabulary when a Swedish-origin loanword and the Finnic version of the word is provided. For example, the diagram with family members includes both the Swedish-origin words *pappa* and *mamma*, and the Finnic words *isä* and *äiti* ('father' and 'mother', respectively), and the two variants are listed for other family members. The same applies to some of the names for rooms, clothes, names of months, and certain celebrations: *paatrymmi/pesohuone* 'bathroom' (cf. Swedish *badrum*, Finnish *pesuhuone*), *kostyymi/puku* 'suit' (cf. Swedish *kostym*, Finnish *puku*), and *fepryaari/helmikuu* 'February' (cf. Swedish *februari*, Finnish *helmikuu*). This non-traditional approach to vocabulary matches the complex reality and offers alternative ways of saying the same thing.

In terms of the grammar, the textbook makes simplifications for the target audience. It does, however, contain traditional elements. Rare non-finite verb forms are used in the texts, for example, *maatessa* 'while lying down'. All cases have been listed but the rarer comitative has not been used in the texts. However, verbal derivation, which could be regarded as

a traditional feature, is rich: *haukahti* ‘barked’ (momentaneous), *pyörähti* ‘turned around’ (momentaneous), *marsiskeli* ‘marched’ (frequentative), *istuskeli* ‘sat’ (frequentative), *istahti* ‘sat down’ (momentaneous), and *nostelit* ‘lifted’ (frequentative) appear in the book. The formal subject *se* ‘it’, discussed in the previous section, is used, e.g. *Se oon pyhä*. ‘it’s Sunday’.

To summarise, the Nylund sisters’ book cements Meänkieli as an independent language, despite claiming it is not based on a standard. It is based on their own way of speaking from the Torne Valley variety, and takes a pedagogical approach by including short sentences and texts with illustrations. Swedish is used for the grammar explanations and a mild translanguaging approach is evident in the translations of some songs and poems, which can be sung or recited in both languages. The vocabulary is often Swedish-origin or parallel forms are listed in a non-traditional way; there is occasional non-traditional variation in the forms and syntax, while the presence of rich derivations and non-finite forms show traditional tendencies.

Persson & Kruukka’s (2015) *Meänkieli årskurs 1-3* has been developed for school children in classes 1-3 (ages 7-9). The authors state that they used the language of their hometowns, and written the language down as it is spoken (8).

- (8) When we were making this material, we used the language that is used in the localities where we ourselves are from. Each and everyone changes the words so that they feel like their own. We have mainly tried to write exactly as the language is spoken (Persson & Kruukka, 2015, p. 4)

They encourage users to adjust the language as they see fit.

The book uses Swedish as the matrix language and contains information about the national minority and its history. The 16 chapters are followed by games, poems, and songs. The grammar in connection with the chapters is explained in Swedish. Everything is translated into Swedish apart from the teacher resource pages, and the children are gradually introduced to the language. Example (9) shows the digestible amount of Meänkieli (marked in bold as in the source) in a Swedish matrix.

- (9) I want dad to teach it to me but he says he can understand Meänkieli but he cannot speak it so well. He hasn’t learnt to read and write in Meänkieli either. I live in Kiruna. In Meänkieli you say like this: **Mie asun Kirunassa**, or I am from Kiruna, **Mie olen Kirunasta**. [...] I think it’s a bit difficult with certain sounds, but my teacher says that when I’ve learnt it, I will think that it’s very easy as one writes as one speaks. **Helppo – Easy!** (Persson & Kruukka, 2015, pp. 15-16)

The language of the student pages turns to Meänkieli after the introduction, while the exercise instructions are in both languages. Meänkieli is in bold, followed by the Swedish translation.

- (10) **Viskakkaa täärninkiä vuoron perhään.** *Kasta tärning turvis.* ‘Cast the die taking turns’ (Persson & Kruukka, 2015, p. 44)

Variation is present in the alternative ways of saying things in Meänkieli, such as different ways of talking about a headache (11).

- (11) *Mulla on pää kipeä. [...] Mulla särkee päätä. [...] Mulla on päänsärky.* ‘My head is aching’ (Persson & Kruukka, 2015, p. 82)

Some vocabulary items are provided with synonyms: *ilkeä, häijy* ‘mean’, *lehti/vapa-aika* ‘free time’ (Persson & Kruukka 2015, p. 84; p. 129).

There are occasional non-traditional forms in the longer texts. For example, the use of the uninflected plural of *popyläarit* ‘popular’ instead of the translative *popylääriksi* (12).

- (12) *Hänen kakot olit kovat eikä koskhaan tulheet yhtä popyläarit ko Uuven Maijan kakot.* ‘Her dumplings were hard and never became as popular as Uusi Maija’s dumplings.’ (Persson and Kruukka, 2015, p. 150)

To summarise, Persson & Kruukka’s (2015) *Meänkieli årskurs 1-3* contains Swedish as a matrix language and thus supports language reclamation and beginner learners. It offers alternative ways of saying the same thing in Meänkieli. The longer texts contain some non-traditional elements.

Erkheikki & Redebo’s (2024) *Tule sieki!* is a new book for years 6-9 (ages 12-16) who already know the basics of the language. It consists of 12 thematic chapters with a grammar point in each. The themes are relevant to young people, such as music, make up, sport, and dating. Each chapter has a text with vocabulary and oral and written exercises, and concludes with a cultural text in Swedish. The authors explain their choice of variety and their stance on variation in example (13).

- (13) Meänkieli has three regional varieties: Torne Valley, Gällivare and Lannankieli. We have decided to focus on the first one. But Meänkieli is not a standardised language. It has many varieties and the words and expressions may vary from one village to another. For this reason, one has to say that almost everything is “correct”. We have used the variety that is used in Torne Valley where we are from (Pajala and Övertorneå) but each person can choose the words that feel best to them. [...] Meänkieli is a very vibrant language, and it is developing all the time. New words come through borrowing from Finnish, Swedish and English (Erkheikki & Redebo, 2024, p. 3).

In other words, the authors are aware of the other varieties but have chosen to focus on their own variety. They highlight the correctness of all expressions and the dynamic nature of the language in a non-traditional and polynomic way.

The analysis of implicit views on variation reveals the following. Only Swedish names of the months are provided. Both genitive and nominative subjects are used in necessary (‘have to’) constructions – e.g. *mie häävyn* ‘I have to’ (p. 20) and *teän häätyy* ‘you (plural) have to’ (p. 47). The former is more typical of Meänkieli, while the latter is also used in Finnish. Object forms are occasionally missing, as in example (14) where English words are used.

- (14) **Mie prukaan tilata medium**, mutta joskus **small**. ‘I tend to order medium but sometimes I order small.’ (Erkheikki & Redebo, 2024, p. 26)

To summarise, *Tule sieki!* uses Swedish for explanations and cultural topics. The book has little variation, possibly because of careful proofreading and copyediting, but it encourages each person to use their variety.

Sampakoski's (2015) *Taksi ja Max: Ensiaskelheita meänkieleen äk 1–3* (translated by Persson & Kruukka) and Sampakoski's (2020a) *Lukukoira Max and sen kaveri Taksi* (translated by Erkheikki) are books that have been translated from Finnish into Meänkieli. The principle of using Swedish in the beginners' book (Sampakoski 2015) is explained in example (15).

- (15) Because of the linguistic background of the pupils, all the chapters begin mainly in Swedish. The goal is for the pupil to learn and experience the story, and then they will want to use Finnish in the themes and the accompanying games and playing activities. (Sampakoski, 2015, p. 6)

The translators' comment can be found in example (16). This is not unusual: Finnish materials are often adapted to Meänkieli in classrooms and some teachers are fluent in both languages. The languages have a similar structure and Swedish influences the languages in similar ways (e.g., the use of the formal subject *se* 'it'). Translation may influence the language, of course:

- (16) It was not possible to translate everything and that's why we decided that we will leave those parts as in the original material. Some Finnish words were strange in Meänkieli and there we have used Finnish words. We have done our best and hope that this resource will be used in schools. Paula and Gerd (Sampakoski, 2015, p. 7)

The translanguaging approach adopted in the book can be illustrated with the following example (17) where Swedish has been translated into English.

- (17) Taksi doesn't understand. What do you mean nothing? There is a roof. **Katto**. It's good to have **katto** when it rains. And there are walls **seinät**. It's good to have **seinät** when it's windy. And a door, **ovi** so that you can come in and go out. **Sisäle ja ulos**. (Sampakoski, 2015, p. 30)

Sampakoski's (2020a) other book is a reader for more advanced pupils with the same characters, the two dogs Taxi and Max. The accompanying teacher's guide explains the reasoning behind the language use as example (18) shows.

- (18) Many children's books and other texts aimed at children are quite difficult in terms of their vocabulary and sentence constructions for many Meänkieli children, and then the desire to read Meänkieli is reduced. For the language to be preserved, it is still important that a child reads Meänkieli happily. This reader has been made taking into consideration the needs of Meänkieli children. (Sampakoski, 2020b, p. 3)

The book is written almost entirely in Meänkieli and contains metalinguistic discussions about variation, such as the length of words *villa* and *omakotitalo* that both mean '(detached) house', but the former is from Swedish and the latter from Finnish (19).

- (19) – *Mihin met muutama? Taksi kysy. – Vilhaan, murfaari sano. Hään meinasi tietekki o-ma-ko-ti-ta-lo-a, mutta siinä sanassa oli murfaarin mielestä liian monta pukstaavia.* 'Where are we

moving to? Taksu asked. – To a house, grandfather said. He meant of course a detached house but that word had too many letters in grandfather's opinion.' (Sampakoski, 2020a, p. 8)

The names of the months are Swedish loanwords and 'library' is *piploteekhi* rather than the Finnic *kirjasto*. However, there are some complex non-finite forms, such as the purposive construction *saaajakseen* 'in order to get' (p. 58), possessive suffixes like *-nsa* 'his/her/their' in *sateenvarjoansa* 'his/her/their umbrella' (in the partitive case) (p. 52), and conjunctions like *jotta* 'so that' (p. 55), that are reminiscent of standard written Finnish. In Meänkieli, these would most likely be the more analytic *ette sais*, *hänen/sen sateenvarjoa*, and *ette*.

Finnish influence is part of variation in Meänkieli, but it is often not discussed in materials or teaching contexts. To summarise, the beginners' book uses Swedish and a translanguaging approach, while the reader echoes Finnish elements because of the way it has been produced (translated from Finnish).

Overall, printed instructional and experiential textbooks, especially for school use, need to provide a model for language use rather than allow all variation. The authors have solved this by using their own variety and including some variation. The Nylunds' textbook is a balancing act between more traditional and Finnic vocabulary and Swedish loanwords and less-complex language suited for textbooks. Unlike the Nylunds' textbook, the other textbooks in the dataset use Swedish as the matrix language. Sampakoski's book has been translated from Finnish into Meänkieli, which is evident in the language used. Some of the micro-level variation can be explained with the complexity of language ideologies: i.e., deciding which form to use.

### **Innovation and inclusivity in a phrasebook, an interactive website, and two online dictionaries**

This section contains an analysis of innovative and inclusive polycentric and post-traditional resources, the first of which is Filipson's (2019a) *Puhu meänkieltä – en frasbok på meänkieli* [Speak Meänkieli – a phrasebook in Meänkieli]. Filipson is a graphic designer who wanted to innovate Meänkieli teaching and learning materials by creating a phrasebook as part of her BA in graphic design; her parents both spoke the language, but she did not learn it herself. Filipson looked for inspiration in Indigenous (Sámi, Inuit) language phrasebooks (Filipson 2019b). Filipson (2019b) is very aware of the lack of materials and the need for modernisation so that young people aged 16-25 can relate to the materials and pass the language on. She says:

(20) Based on my own experiences on a Meänkieli language course, I want to create a phrasebook for young people. The phrasebook should have good language, be preferably in several of the different varieties of Meänkieli, be inclusive and in youth language. (Filipson, 2019b, p. 5)

The practical innovation is the striking and user-friendly visual design, topics relevant to young people, and the inclusivity of varieties, namely the colour-coded locations: Pentäsjärvi, Neistenkangas, Matarinki, and Pello. The towns are all in Torne Valley, but what is innovative is that even Pello (on the Finnish side) has been included. The design solution would easily

allow for more regional varieties to be included. There are no grammatical explanations, which could reflect anxiety relating to grammar noted in second-language learning (cf. Dewaele & Li, 2022; Ainsworth & Bell, 2020) and linguistic insecurity in cases of language shift, where younger speakers' speech differs from that of older generations (Abtahian & Quinn, 2017).

*Polarbibblo* (a short version of 'polar library') curates an interactive collection of materials for children aged 0-18, and is available in Swedish, Finnish, Meänkieli, and four Sámi languages. It is maintained by the Norrbotten county library services. The approach in the materials is post-traditional and polynomic. There are quizzes, stories, videos, and an option to post your own stories. The texts are checked by editors for content, but the grammatical forms in them are not changed.

There is a great deal of variation in spelling and the grammar used by the people who post on the website. In example (21) the spelling and grammar are close to the written standard Torne Valley variety, although the Swedish *stuga* 'cabin' is kept as it is. In (22) there are various non-standard solutions, such as the lack of object ending (*virra veti piili* 'the stream pulled the car' instead of *virra veti piilin*), no consonant gradation (*kertoin* 'I told' and *mahtuin* 'I fit' instead of *kerroin* and *mahuin*), *se ki* instead of *seki* 'her too'. Example (23) shows writing where the spelling is non-standard (*tukän* instead of *tykkään* 'I like, I think', *päigat* instead of *paikat* 'places'). I intend to analyse the texts posted on *Polarbibblo* in more detail in a future study.

- (21) *Sporttiluvalla met olema olheet faffan stugalla ja meän stugalla. Ensin met lähimä kotia koulusta ja söimä klassia ja sitten illala met kattoima Talang-prukramin tv:stä.* 'During the winter holiday we have been at grandpa's cottage and our cottage. First we left home from school and ate ice-cream and then in the evening we watched the Talang programme on TV.' <https://www.polarbibblo.se/meke-se/lue-kuuntele-ja-katto-filmia/kertomuksia/piitraaki/?id=11627> (28 April 2023)

- (22) *Viimein piili tippui vettheen ja virra veti piili veen alle. [...] Mie kertoin koko tarina alusta lopphuun. [...] Minun syän löi vähän hiljempi nyt. [...] Mie mahtuin sinne niin mie alkoin konttata. Sillä aikaa mie hunteerasin missäs Vilma oon. Attele jos se ki oon cellissä? [...] 'Finally, the car fell into the water and the stream pulled the car under water. I told the whole story from beginning to end. I fit there so I started to crawl on all fours. Meanwhile I thought about where Vilma was. Imagine if she is in a cell?'* <https://www.polarbibblo.se/meke-se/lue-kuuntele-ja-katto-filmia/kertomuksia/piitraaki/?id=6000> (21 July 2021)

- (23) *Me tukän että Ukrainan pitä saha enämpi medeciniä ja että roti ja mut päigat voibi avta Ukraina. Ja että Ukraina voibi saha enembi apua. Ja että Ukraina voipi saha rauhan.* 'I think that Ukraine should have more medicine and Sweden and other places can help Ukraine. And that Ukraine can get more help. And that Ukraine can have peace.' <https://www.polarbibblo.se/meke-se/lue-kuuntele-ja-katto-filmia/runoja/piitraaki/?id=7174> (18 March 2024)

A children's book on the website, *Missäs oon Noran pulkka?* [Where is Nora's sled?] is available in the three regional varieties, Torne Valley, Lannankieli, and Jellivaara. It is unclear, however, how consistent the use of regional features has been or whether the differences are caused by idiolects or simply different translation choices. This resource has

great potential to expand on the polynomic and post-traditional content, and it serves the next generation of speakers.

Finally, two online dictionaries have taken an inclusive, polynomic approach to variation. Meän akateemi – Academia Tornedaliensis: *Meänkieli* ↔ *ruotti sanakirja* ([språk.isof.se/meänkieli/](http://språk.isof.se/meänkieli/)) has included all the three regional varieties and any other variations in a word, while Birger Winsa's *Meän sana* (<https://meankielensanakirja.com/en/>) includes Finnish dialects and Kven. The graphic solution in *Meänkieli* ↔ *ruotti sanakirja* is to include all versions of an entry, such as the verb 'to speak' *puhua* (Je, Kie, To), *puhhua* (Je), *puhhuu* (Je). Je stands for the Jellivaara variety, Kie for Kieruna/Lannankieli, and To for Torne Valley. Birger Winsa, on the other hand, explains his choice as follows:

- (24) Around 60% of the vocabulary is from Swedish and Finnish Torne Valley. The rest are from Finnish Lapland, Kven language, and Jellivaara Finnish. But as all Northern Finnish dialects belong to the same dialect group, almost all the words that are used in Swedish Torne Valley have a wide distribution in Northern Finnish dialects, and of course in Finnish Torne Valley. For this reason, there is little reason to separate the Meänkieli that is spoken in Swedish Torne Valley from Northern Finnish dialects. It's better to combine, and for Meänkieli to keep and develop, close contact to Finnish and Northern Finnish dialects and speakers of Meänkieli on both sides of the river. <https://meankielensanakirja.com/fi/about> (Accessed 16 July 2025.)

Winsa's dictionary represents lumping, while the Meän Akateemi dictionary splits the varieties; yet both are polynomic.

To summarise, the electronic dictionaries are both polynomic. This is possible because databases and websites are more exploratory and dynamic, having more space than printed books. Additionally, unlike printed textbooks, these dictionaries have been created to be used as reference tools rather than provide a model for a certain kind of language use. Filipson's (2018a) phrasebook shows how polynomic ideology can be realised in practice by using graphic design. Polarbiblo's website contains non-traditional and learner language, as well as the inclusion of regional varieties. It seems that exploratory and elicitive TLRs are linked to polynomic and nontraditional forms of expression.

## Summary and conclusions

This study set out to investigate the following research questions: What kind of variation can we detect in Meänkieli TLRs? Which language ideologies are behind the variation? The analysis of implicit variables revealed a great deal of micro-level variation in the use of standardised vs non-standardised forms, regional varieties, Swedish vs Finnic loanwords, traditional vs nontraditional grammar (e.g. formal subject, possessive suffixes, momentaneous verbs), influence from Finnish, and the use of Swedish as a matrix language.

The grammar and the textbooks in the dataset are based on the Torne Valley variety, and some of the authors state explicitly state that they have used their own variety in the TLR. Pohjanen's grammar book, on the other hand, explicitly sets out to provide a standard for Meänkieli. The alternative polynomic materials include interaction with speakers and

non-standard language use (*Polarbibblo*), all three varieties within Meänkieli (Meän Akateemi dictionary), or the inclusion of the Finnish varieties and even Kven (*Meän sana*). In addition to standard language ideology and polynomy, there is a balancing act between traditional (containing a wide range of complex grammatical forms or Finnic vocabulary) and post-traditional (allowing learner grammar or grammar, and Swedish-origin vocabulary and structures) perspectives.

This intricate assemblage of variation and ideologies (cf. Kroskrity, 2022) can be explained by language contact, the authors' personal preferences, the type and purpose of materials, and the resources available. Meänkieli is situated in the border area between Sweden and Finland, which is why these two languages influence its structure and vocabulary. Some TLR authors prefer to use a standard, while others prefer their own language or to expand the concept of Meänkieli to varieties outside Sweden. TLRs designed as prescriptive grammars or school textbooks need to be more consistent than digital resources as they are primarily instructional and experiential – i.e., they are meant to provide a model for a type of language use. Digital TLRs are exploratory or elicitive and can include variation and interaction – i.e., be more oriented toward polynomic and non-traditional ideologies. Limited resources in the production of TLRs mean that sometimes they are translated from one language to another, which can lead to interference from another similar language.

This study has focused on a selection of widely used Meänkieli TLRs. Further studies are needed on Meänkieli audio-visual materials and the use of the Meänkieli resources in the classroom, as are surveys and interviews among teachers and learners of Meänkieli about the TLRs, the awareness in the Meänkieli community about different language ideologies, and the effectiveness or appropriateness of different approaches to variation in the context of revitalisation. It would also be desirable to conduct systematic and quantitative studies on variation in other contexts where Meänkieli is used.

## Endnotes

- 1 I am using Finnic here to refer to the branch of Finno-Ugric languages that – for example – Finnish, Estonian, Karelian, and Meänkieli belong to. This is to avoid claiming that the words in Meänkieli come from Finnish, which is not true and undermines the status of Meänkieli as an independent language.

## References

- Abtahian, M. R., & Quinn, C. M. (2017). Language shift and linguistic insecurity. *Language Documentation and Conservation*, 13, 137–151.
- Ackermann-Boström, C. (2021). 'Språket fick jag inte med mig som liten'. Ungameänkielibrukarens samtal om språkbevarande på sociala medier. *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap*, 42(4), 32–50. <https://doi.org/10.55870/tgv.v42i4.6052>
- Ainsworth, S., & Bell, H. (2020). Affective knowledge versus affective pedagogy: The case of native grammar learning. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 50(5), 597–614. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2020.1751072>
- Amery, R. (2001). Language planning and language revival. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 2(2-3), 141–221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664200108668023>
- Arnold, J. (Ed.) (1999). *Affect in language learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Arola, L., Kangas, E., Pelkonen, M., & Winsa, B. (2013). *Meänkieli Ruottissa: Raportin yhtheenveto ELDIA-projektissa*. Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz.
- Berry, R. (2021). *Doing English grammar: Theory, description and practice*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108325745>
- Blackwood, R. (2021). Language beliefs and the polynomic model for Corsican. *Language Awareness*, 20(1), 17–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2010.529912>
- Genoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2017). Minority languages and sustainable translanguaging: Threat or opportunity? *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 38(10), 901–912. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2017.1284855>
- Clyne, M. G. (Ed.) (1992). *Pluricentric languages: Differing norms in different nations*. Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110888140>
- Dauenhauer, N. M., & Dauenhauer, R. (1998). Technical, emotional, and ideological issues in reversing language shift: Examples from Southeast Alaska. In L. A. Grenoble & L. J. Whaley (Eds.), *Endangered languages: Current issues and future prospects* (pp. 57–98). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139166959.004>
- Dewaele, J.-M., & Li, C. (2022). Foreign language enjoyment and anxiety: Associations with general and domain-specific English achievement. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 45(1), 32–48. <https://doi.org/10.1515/CJAL-2022-0104>
- Filipson, B. (2019a) *Prata meänkieli*. Luleå University of Technology.
- Filipson, B. (2019b). *Prata meänkieli. Hur grafisk design kan bryta traditioner kring meänkieli*. BA dissertation, Luleå University of Technology. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1336542/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.
- Gal, S. (2018). Visions and revisions of minority languages: standardization and its dilemmas. In P. Lane, J. Costa, & H. De Korne (Eds.) *Standardizing minority languages: Competing ideologies of authority and authenticity in the global periphery* (pp. 222–242). Routledge.

- García, O., & Li, W. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137385765>
- Greenberg, J. H., & Croft, W. (2005). *On lumping and splitting in linguistics and biology*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199257713.003.0007>
- Grenoble, L. A., & Whaley, L. J. (2005). *Saving languages: An introduction to language revitalization*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615931>
- Heith, A. (2012). Platsens sanning. Performativitet och gränsdragningar i tornedalsk litteraturhistoria och grammatik. *Nordlit*, 30, 71–85. <https://doi.org/10.7557/13.2373>
- Hinton, L., Huss, L., & Roche, G. (Eds.) (2018). *The Routledge handbook of language revitalization*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315561271>
- Hogan, P. (2025). *Hermeneutics: Understanding educational experience*. Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004724495>
- Holton, G. (2009). Relearning Athabascan languages in Alaska: Creating sustainable language communities through creolization. In A. Goodfellow (Ed.) *Speaking of endangered languages: Issues in revitalization* (pp. 238–265). Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Hornsby, M. (2017). Finding an ideological niche for new speakers in a minoritised language community. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, 30(1), 91–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2016.1230622>
- Hyltenstam, K., & Salö, L. (2023). Språkideologi och det ofullbordade språkbytet: Den språkliga försvenskningen av det meänkielitalande området. In *Som om vi aldrig funnits. Tolv tematiska forskarrapporter*, SOU 2023:68 (pp. 9–152). SOU.
- Jaffe, A. (2019). Standardization(s) and regimentation: Polynomic orthodoxies and potentials. *Language & Communication*, 66, 6–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2018.10.008>
- Kolu, J. (2023) ‘Terhveisiä ja toivemysiikkiä meänkielelä, ruottiksi ja suomeksi’: Monikielisiä käytänteitä vähemmistökielisessä Meänraatiossa. *Lähivertailuja*, 33, 82–115. <https://doi.org/10.5128/LV33.03>
- Kolu, J. (2024). ‘Är jag bara på låtsas?’ – ummikkos reflektioner kring meänkieli och Tornedalsidentitet. In D. Jansson, I. Melander, G. Westberg, & D. Y. Falk (Eds.) *Svenskans beskrivning* 38 (pp. 48–68). Örebro University.
- Kristiansen, G. (2014). Introduction: Pluricentricity, language-internal variation and cognitive linguistics. In A. Soares da Silva (Ed.) *Pluricentricity: Language variation and sociocognitive dimensions* (pp. 1–16). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110303643.1>
- Kroskrity, P. V. (2004). Language ideologies. In A. Duranti (Ed.) *A companion to linguistic anthropology* (pp. 296–517). Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996522.ch22>
- Kroskrity, P. V. (2010). Language ideologies. In *Handbook of pragmatics online*, 14, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1075/hop.14.lan6>.
- Kroskrity, P. V. (2022). Multilingual language ideological assemblages: Language contact, documentation and revitalization. *Journal of Language Contact*, 15(2), 271–301. <https://doi.org/10.1163/19552629-15020002>

- Lainio, J., & Wande, E. (2015). Meänkieli today: To be or not to be standardised. *Sociolinguistica*, 29(1), 121–140. <https://doi.org/10.1515/soci-2015-0009>
- Lane, P. (2015). Minority language standardisation and the role of users. *Language Policy*, 14(3), 263–283. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-014-9342-y>
- Lane, P., Costa, J., & De Korne, H. (Eds.) (2018). *Standardizing minority languages: Competing ideologies of authority and authenticity in the global periphery*. Routledge.
- Leonard, W. Y. (2012). Framing language reclamation programmes for everybody's empowerment. *Gender and Language*, 6(2), 339–367. <https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.v6i2.339>
- Lipott, S. (2015). The Tornedalian minority in Sweden. From assimilation to recognition: A 'forgotten' ethnic and linguistic minority 1870–2000. *Immigrants & Minorities*, 33(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2014.896539>
- Lippi-Green, R. (2012). *English with an accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203348802>
- Lüpke, F. (2016). Pure fiction – the interplay of indexical and essentialist language ideologies and heterogeneous practices: A view from Agnack. *Language Documentation & Conservation*, 10, 8–39.
- Mantila, H. (2010). The relationship between variation and standardisation in the creation of a new standard language. In H. Sulkala & H. Mantila (Eds.) *Planning a new standard language. Finnic minority languages meet the new millennium* (pp. 54–73). Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- McGrath, I. (2013). *Teaching materials and the roles of EFL/ESL teachers: Practice and theory*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- McGrath, I. (2016). *Materials evaluation and design for language teaching* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748694822>
- Milroy, J., & Milroy, L. (2012). *Authority in language: Investigating Standard English*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203124666>
- Molnár Bodrogi, E. (2015). Kieli-iteolokioita vähemistöavisissa. *Virittäjä*, (2015)4, 525–558.
- Molnár Bodrogi, E. (2022). *'Kieli on sielun sormenjäljet': Pohjois-Fennoskandian ja Romanian suomalais-ugrilaisten vähemmistöjen kielinarratiivit identiteetin rakentajana*. PhD dissertation, University of Oulu.
- Ohrvik, A. (2024). What is close reading? An exploration of a methodology. *Rethinking History*, 28(2), 238–260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2024.2345001>
- O'Rourke, B., & Walsh, J. (2015). New speakers of Irish: shifting boundaries across time and space. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 231, 63–83. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0032>
- Ó Murchadha, N. P. (2016). The efficacy of unitary and polynomic models of codification in minority language contexts: Ideological, pragmatic and pedagogical issues in the codification of Irish. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 37(2), 199–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2015.1053811>

- Ó Murchadha, N., & Flynn, C. J. (2018a). Educators' target language varieties for language learners: orientation toward 'native' and 'nonnative' norms in a minority language context. *The Modern Language Journal*, 102(4), 797–813. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12514>
- Ó Murchadha, N., & Flynn, C. J. (2018b). Language educators' regard for variation in late modernity: Perceptions of linguistic variation in minority contexts. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 22(3), 288–311. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12286>
- Ó Murchadha, N. & Ó hIfearnáin, T. (2018). Converging and diverging stances on target revival varieties in collateral languages: the ideologies of linguistic variation in Irish and Manx Gaelic. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 39(5), 458–469. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2018.1429450>
- O'Rourke, B., Pujolar, J., & Ramallo, R. (2015). New speakers of minority languages: The challenging opportunity – Foreword. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 231, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0029>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Paunonen, H. (2018). Tornion murteesta meänkieleen: Reaaliaikainen tutkimus Ruotsin Ylitorniolta 1966–1992. In S. Brunni, N. Kunnas, & S. Palviainen (Eds.), *Kuinka mahottomasti nää tekkiit: Juhlakirja Harri Mantilan 60-vuotispäivän kunniaksi* (pp. 15–161). University of Oulu.
- Pohjanen, B. (2017). *Meänkieli rätt och lätt: grammatik och lärobok i meänkieli*. Barents.
- Poromaa Isling, P. (2020). Young Tornedalians in education: the challenges of being national minority pupils in the Swedish school system. *Education in the North*, 27(1), 92–109.
- Romaine, S. (2006). Planning for the survival of linguistic diversity. *Language Policy*, 5(4), 443–475. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-006-9034-3>
- Sallabank, J. (2018). Purism, variation, change and 'authenticity': Ideological challenges to language revitalisation. *European Review*, 26(1), 164–178. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798717000400>
- Sallabank, J., & King, J. (2021). What do we revitalise? In J. Olko & J. Sallabank (Eds.) *Revitalizing endangered languages: A practical guide* (pp. 33–48). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108641142.003>
- Sanchez-Stockhammer, C. (2012). Hybridization in language. In P. W. Stockhammer (Ed.), *Conceptualizing cultural hybridization: A transdisciplinary approach* (pp. 133–157). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-21846-0\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-21846-0_9)
- Sarhimaa, A. (1999). *Syntactic transfer, contact-induced change, and the evolution of bilingual mixed codes: Focus on Karelian-Russian language alternation*. Finnish Literature Society.
- Schieffelin, B. A., Woolard, K. A., & Kroskrity, P. V. (Eds.) (1998). *Language ideologies: Practice and theory*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195105612.001.0001>
- Schmidt, L. K. (2006). *Understanding hermeneutics*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1017/UPO9781844653843>

- SOU. (2023). *Som om vi aldrig funnits. Tolv tematiska forskarrapporter - Aivan ko meitä ei olis ollutkaan. Kakstoista temattista tutkintoraporttia*. 2023:68. SOU. <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2023/11/sou-202368/>
- Spetz, J. (2021). *Nationella minoriteter 2020: Vad vet Sveriges befolkning om dem?* Isot. <https://isof.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1559951/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Sulkala, H. (2010). 'Työpaja heitethiin yhteisellä tansilalla.' *Keelekontaktid ja meänkeel. Eesti ja soome-ugri keeleteaduse ajakiri*, 1(2), 317–339. <https://doi.org/10.12697/jeful.2010.1.2.17>
- Sulkala, H., & Mantila, H. (Eds.) (2010). *Planning a new standard language: Finnic minority languages meet the new millennium*. Finnish Literature Society.
- Sveriges Riksdag (2009). Lag (2009:724) om nationella minoriteter och minoritetsspråk [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2009724-om-nationella-minoriteter-och\\_sfs-2009-724/](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2009724-om-nationella-minoriteter-och_sfs-2009-724/)
- Tamburelli, M., & Tosco, M. (Eds.) (2021). *Contested languages: The hidden multilingualism of Europe*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/wlp.8>
- Tan, Y.-Y., & Mishra, P. (2021). *Language, nations, and multilingualism: Questioning the Herderian ideal*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429451911>
- Tomlinson, B. (2001). Materials development. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages* (pp. 66–71). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667206.010>
- Tomlinson, B. (2008). Language acquisition and language learning materials. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *English language teaching materials: A critical review* (pp. 3–14). Continuum.
- Vaattovaara, J. (2009). *Meän tapa puhua: Tornionlaakso pellolaisnuorten subjektiivisena paikkana ja murrealueena*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Valijärvi, R.-L., & Kangas, E. (forthcoming). Meänkielen elvytyksen haasteet ja käytänteet Ruotsissa. In S. Virtanen, O. Tanocz, & I. Kivinen (Eds.) *Vähemmistökielipedagogiikkaa*. Finnish Literature Society.
- Valijärvi, R.-L., Blokland, R., Kangas, E., Ackermann-Boström, C., & Kuoppa, H. (2022). Meänkieli. In L. Grenoble, P. Lane, & U. Rønynland (Eds.) *Linguistic Minorities in Europe online*. De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/lme.18469972>
- Valijärvi, R.-L., & Blokland, R. (2022). Meä keele eripärad grammatikakirjutuse vaatevinklist. *Keel ja Kirjandus*, 8–9, 264–278. <https://doi.org/10.54013/kk776a8>
- Vetter, E. (2013). Teaching languages for a multilingual Europe – minority schools as examples of best practice? The Breton experience of Diwan. *International Journal of The Sociology of Language*, 223, 153–170. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2013-0050>
- Warner, N., Quirina Luna, Q., & Butler, L. (2007). Ethics and revitalization of dormant languages: The Mutsun language. *Language Documentation and Conservation*, 1, 58–76.
- Whaley, L. J. (2011). Some ways to endanger an endangered language project. *Language and Education*, 25(4), 339–348. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2011.577221>
- Woolard, K. A. (1998). Simultaneity and bivalency as strategies in bilingualism. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 8(1), 3–29. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.1998.8.1.3>