

The birth of the Kven language in Norway: emancipation through state recognition

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Abstract

This article investigates and applies the concept of language emancipation to the situation of the Kven language in Norway. This is done from a historical perspective by addressing the role of language in the ideological construction of the Norwegian nation-state, and from a contemporary perspective through the analysis of the consequences of Norway's ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This ratification has led to the recognition of Kven as a language. Through describing the historical development of Norwegian language policy with regard to Kven, this article discusses how this case is an example of nationalist or modernist language emancipation progressing to the contemporary situation where language emancipation processes reflect language policies which are in favor of Kven. This discussion is carried out in the context of current language ideology theory and shows that nationalist language emancipation is being reapplied in the contemporary language emancipation context. This is particularly the situation in the process of the standardization of Kven which, despite the best intentions of those involved, may result in a standard which not all Kven speakers can identify with.

Keywords: Norway; Kven; minority language policies; dialect vs. language; language shift.

1. Introduction

The Kven language of northern Norway has up to the early years of the 21st century been subject to prejudicial language and cultural policies due to its close ethnolinguistic relationship with Finnish, particularly in the context of Norway's nationalist language emancipation development.¹ Indeed, the Kven are still viewed as immigrants in Norway even though they have been present in Norway long before the establishment of its northern borders. However, the

Kven language has recently acquired recognition by the Norwegian state through its inclusion under Norway's ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This article investigates and applies the concept of language emancipation, both in its nationalist and in its contemporary post-ethnic renaissance conceptualization, to the situation of the Kven language in Norway. This will be done from a historical perspective and address the role of language in the ideological construction of the Norwegian nation-state, and from a contemporary perspective through the analysis of the consequences of Norway's ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This paper concludes by addressing the pitfalls that must be faced and understood in the particular language ideological infrastructure that a group such as the Kven find them themselves in today, which can potentially lead even the most well-intentioned proponents of contemporary language emancipation awry.

2. Norway's official policy vis-à-vis regional and minority languages

Norway ratified the European Charter for regional or minority languages in 1993, and the Charter entered into force in 1998. Four languages are protected by the Charter: Sámi, Kven, Romanes and Romani.² All four languages are protected by Part II³ of the Charter, but only the Sámi languages have also been granted protection by Part III. The majority of the Sámi population in Norway speaks North Sámi, and North Sámi has a stronger linguistic infrastructure than Lule Sámi and South Sámi (see Rasmussen and Nolan, this issue).

Norway is a fairly young nation-state, having gained independence from Sweden in 1905. The idea of Norway as a nation-state emerged in the 19th century at the height of European National Romanticism. Prior to this period, the attitude towards minorities had been influenced by the ideals of the Enlightenment and the state had been regarded as a combination of various groups inhabiting the same territory. The emergence of the Norwegian nation-state in the 19th century was strongly influenced by German ideas of nationalism: the nation was defined in terms of ethnicity, and language was the outward sign of ethnicity as Cabanel (1997), quoted in Endresen (1997: 236), wrote: "the spirit of a nation lies in its language". Thus, language became the defining criterion of the nation. Norway was seen as a homogenous, monolingual country in spite of the presence of historical minority groups. The traditional minorities were small and inhabited rural areas which were far from the centers of power. The historical minorities were also border minorities: they crossed the national borders, had relatives and contacts in Sweden and Finland and were part of larger international communities. Thus, their lifestyles did not fit the idea of the nation-state of the 19th century which conceptualized the state as a well-

structured, clearly defined, homogenous and integrated entity. In this period immigration increased and the Norwegian authorities started to use the term immigrant also to encompass the historical minorities and they came to be perceived as foreigners. From 1814, the Norwegian Constitution granted citizenship based on the grounds of *jus soli*: a person who earned a minimum income, had lived in Norway for a minimum of five years and had the right to vote could become a Norwegian citizen. This changed in 1888 when a specific law for the acquisition of citizenship was introduced, basing citizenship on *jus sanguinis* or ethnicity. Though part of the background for the new law was to limit foreign ownership of land and industry (Kjeldstadli 2007), it also contributed to forming the Norwegian nation as the state was based on ethnic and cultural belonging.

The official national policy was to Norwegianize the historical minorities, employing different strategies towards the northern and southern minorities. The policies towards the Roma and Romani (or Travelers) were directed towards their way of life, aiming at making them give up their lifestyle of traveling to become settled. The Scandinavian countries were also heavily influenced by Social Darwinism, in extreme cases leading to Roma and Romani children being removed from their families and home environment to be brought up in orphanages or being offered for adoption to Norwegian families. Also, Romani women were sterilized, sometimes by force. The last incident took place as late as 1977 (Haave 2000). The prevailing attitude of the time was that the Roma, and Romani in particular, were of an inferior race and as such they needed help and protection from the more advanced majority culture. This attitude inspired the establishment on the so-called Fantefond in 1855, a fund which aided the Roma and Romani to establish legal businesses (Niemi 2003a).

From the 19th century, language played a greater role in the Norwegianization process of the northern minorities. This was possibly because of aspects of national security and financial interests in the Northern areas as the rights to the northernmost part of Norway had been disputed for a long time, and in periods its inhabitants paid taxes to three different states. The Kven were particularly regarded with suspicion because of their close proximity to a potential “homeland”, namely Finland. Thus, their language could serve as a potentially dangerous bridge to Finland-Russia.

However, initially, the Dano-Norwegian authorities regarded the Kven as a valuable contribution to Norwegian society because they had skills and knowledge that complemented those of the Norwegian and Sámi population: they were highly skilled foresters and farmers. Written sources from the 18th century portray them as honest, clean and hardworking, and both the Kven and the Sámi were referred to as “nations” (Niemi 2003b). When the idea of Norway as a nation-state arose, the attitude towards the northern minorities changed;

now they were described as “foreign nations”. The borders between Norway and Finland-Russia had been newly established and the Kven’s loyalty to the Norwegian nation was in particular questioned as they had a mother tongue other than Norwegian and many of them did not speak Norwegian at all. Thus, the Norwegian authorities feared that Finland would use the Kven as a “bridge” to lay claims on this part of Norway. Due to the perceived threat of Finland, and by association also Russia, this was referred to as the “Finnish danger” (Eriksen and Niemi 1981). Thus, during the 19th century the image of the Kven was transformed from that of a nation to that of immigrants. The efforts in the north were directed towards Norwegianization through linguistic oppression leading to a range of efforts to Norwegianize the Kven.

Boarding schools where the use of Finnish and Sámi was strictly forbidden were established to ensure a Norwegian environment. In 1940 there were twenty-one such boarding schools in the two northernmost counties of Norway where the total population was estimated at approximately 100,000. Niemi (1997: 73) quoted in Huss (1999: 89) describes the role of the school in the following manner: “the main battle was over language and identity, the main battlefield was the classroom, and the rank and file soldiers were the teachers”. Churches were built in the traditional Norwegian style, and only the Norwegian language was used. Until 1964 only people who could prove that they could speak Norwegian were allowed to buy land (Eriksen and Niemi 1981), and Norwegian farmers from the south were given land in the northern areas to ensure a Norwegian presence. People who received mail, newspapers or books from Finland were under surveillance by Norwegian authorities because they feared that Finland or indeed the Soviet Union might use the Kven to gain influence in the North.

The Norwegianization process was strengthened after the Second World War (WWII). When the German Army retreated during the autumn of 1944, they burned everything: houses, barns, stables, boats, bridges, only churches were left behind. After the war, the Norwegian state provided money for rebuilding the region, and in order to receive money one had to apply in Norwegian. Prefabricated houses designed by architects from the South were built, and the most visible signs of the previous building style and the material aspects of the Kven culture were gone. The region now looked Norwegian.

The period after WWII was characterized by Scandinavian social democracy: the Norwegian Welfare State was founded on the idea of equality and homogeneity. Knowledge of the Norwegian language was the key factor to success as forms and applications had to be completed in Norwegian, and a successful application brought privileges. Thus, knowledge of Norwegian became linked not only to success, but associated with privileges and modernity.

In 1959 the ban on the use of Finnish and Sámi in schools was removed (Primary School Education Law 1959). In theory pupils were allowed to use

their mother tongue, but in many villages children were still punished if they spoke their mother tongue. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Sámis demanded recognition as an indigenous people and eventually they gained the right to Sámi tuition. In 1989 the Sámi Parliament was established and Sámi became an official language in 1992 (see Rasmussen and Nolan, this issue). These developments seem to have influenced the Kven awakening to some extent: “if they could do this, so can we”. For the Kven most of the efforts centered on language: they wanted to be recognized as having linguistic rights.

The other historical minorities in Norway began to request acceptance, probably inspired by the Sámi revitalization movement and the international focus on the cultural and linguistic rights of minority cultures. In 1998 the Norwegian Parliament ratified The European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, recognizing the Kven, Forest Finns, Roma and Romani as national minorities. This ratification and the ratification of the Charter defined a new position for the national minorities and their languages: they were now recognized as a part of Norwegian culture and heritage. This process had a particularly strong impact on the situation of the Kven language. The Sámi language already had received a degree of recognition through the International Labour Organisation’s 1989 Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples which was ratified by Norway in 1990. But the Kven had no linguistic rights prior to the ratification of the Charter, though the language had been taught at one local school. After the Charter entered into force, the language was still regarded as Finnish and called “Kven/Finnish” by the Norwegian authorities and standard Finnish was taught in schools. In many ways this can be seen as one of the first steps to the emancipation of the Kven language; through the ratification of the Charter, Kven speakers had gained rights even though their language was still perceived and construed as being foreign in its origins.

3. Norwegian national policy and public attitudes vis-à-vis Kven

The view of the Kven as immigrants and consequently as a foreign element in Norwegian society prevailed even after the ratification of the treaties. The Framework Convention gives no definition of “national minority”, and each state has been left to specify what minority groups it recognizes. In the Norwegian context, a national minority is defined as a group with longstanding ties with the state, thus implicitly excluding immigrants (White paper 80, 1997–1998). In spite of the Kven being recognized as a national minority, a political advisor for the Norwegian Government participating in a seminar on Kven research and politics at the University of Tromsø in 1999 declared that he did “not care whether the Kven had come during the 16th century or the 19th

century. The Kven were immigrants because this was what the Norwegian Government had decided” (Megard 1999: 83). This statement followed a presentation in which the advisor had argued that the Kven were immigrants and that their status and rights were therefore comparable to those of other immigrant groups.

The description of the Kven as immigrants is prevalent in numerous government publications, even after Norway ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1998. The media frequently refers to the Kven as immigrants, as in an article in the newspaper *Aftenposten* September 6, 2005: “The first Kven immigration to Northern Norway occurred before the northern national borders were drawn in 1751 and 1826.” This comes across as a contradiction in terms as it is difficult to see how someone can be an immigrant, if they do not cross a national border.

After the ratification of the Charter, Finnish attained a status as a second language⁴ in the schools in the two northernmost counties of Norway, and pupils in this area could choose to study Finnish instead of one of the two official Norwegian written standards. Approximately 1000 pupils opted to study Finnish. In April 2005, Kven gained recognition as a national minority language and not a dialect of Finnish, but most of the schools teach standard Finnish as Kven does not have a written standard and there are no text books in Kven.

The European Charter sets out the objectives and principles on which policies, legislation and practice should be based (see Huss 2008) including the provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of regional or minority languages at all appropriate stages (Part II, Article 7, paragraph f). Norway ratified the Charter for Kven/Finnish and as a part of the monitoring cycle, the Committee of Ministers at the European Council repeatedly pointed out that as Norway’s official report did not distinguish between Kven and standard Finnish, the Committee found it difficult to evaluate the exact measures carried out by the Norwegian authorities vis-à-vis the Kven language (Committee of Experts’ 1. Evaluation Report, 2001: 9).

The reason given by the Committee of Ministers for the need for clarification of the status of the Kven language was to improve the situation for the language in conformity with Part II of the Charter. They also stressed the importance of reaching a conclusion quickly as unnecessary delay may have grave consequences for Kven, and they recommended that the government should rapidly clarify the status of Kven as a language in its own right or as a variety of Finnish and consult with the representatives of the Kven on this matter before a decision was made. The Norwegian government commissioned a report on the status of Kven which concluded that, based on linguistic and socio-political criteria, Kven should be regarded as a language and not a dialect of Finnish (Hyltenstam and Milani 2003). The report was distributed to relevant organizations which were invited to comment. This sparked a lively de-

bate in the local and national media which basically focused on two themes: whether Kven should be regarded as a language in its own right and not a dialect of Finnish, and whether it would be desirable to name such a variety Kven as this used to be a stigmatized term. Some maintain that Finnish should continue to be used as the written language, while local spoken varieties should be referred to as Kven. Others reject the term Kven totally because of negative connotations, and some of these have started employing the term “Kainu” instead of Kven. *Kainu* is a Finnish word which refers to the northern area of the Gulf of Bothnia and it has been claimed that it has the same etymological root as the Norse *hvein* — low, wet ground. However, it is not likely that the Norse *hvein*, developed into *kven* as this sound change (hv > kv) is not attested in any other words (Lane and Theil 2003). Still, for some Kven, the term *Kainu* is an alternative both to the term *Kven*, if it is seen as stigmatized, and the term *Finnish* which is associated with the modern nation-state of Finland. In many ways this debate echoes the discussion of the early 1990s when the term Kven used as a name for the group of people was debated (Niemi 2001). After assessing comments from relevant parties, including the Kven Association, the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs issued a press release in April 24 2005 containing the following message: “The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs proposes: Kven is to be recognized as a separate language and is to be protected under Part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.” Thus Norway recognized Kven as a language primarily as a consequence of the monitoring system which followed the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and almost all the measures taken by the Norwegian authorities to promote and develop the Kven language have arisen because of pressure from the Council of Europe.

Norway’s periodical reports to the Council of Europe estimate that there are between 10,000 and 15,000 Kven. However, this number is likely to be too low as a cardiovascular survey conducted in Troms and Finnmark in 1987 showed that 25% of the population in Finnmark claimed Finnish ancestry. Therefore, based on ancestry, the Kven population in these two counties is more likely to consist of 50,000 to 60,000 people. In all three periodical reports sent to the Council of Europe to date, the Norwegian authorities estimate that the number of speakers of Kven “vary from 2000 to 8000, depending on the criteria and methods used” (see Rasmussen and Nolan, this issue). Norway’s initial periodical report from 1999 also states that no censuses have been carried out recently on the Kven as an ethnic group, and there are therefore no statistics showing the number of people who speak Kven. A recent study (Rasmussen 2005) estimates that the number of speakers of Kven and Finnish in the two counties exceeds 10,000, but no official surveys have been conducted to determine the number of Kven speakers. However, there is no doubt that Kven is a threatened language: the children growing up today are monolingual

Norwegian-speaking, apart from those who study Finnish in school, and according to my knowledge, there is no intergenerational transmission of the Kven language.

Most of the native speakers of Kven have never learned to read and write their mother tongue and due to the lack of contact with Finland, the majority is not familiar with modern written Finnish and find reading Finnish a challenge. The University of Tromsø offered a course in Kven for the first time during the spring semester of 2005. Almost 50 students enrolled some of whom were adult native speakers of Kven who wanted to get the opportunity to learn to read and write their mother tongue. However, there is no written standard for Kven, nor are there any textbooks, grammars or dictionaries. A group of researchers are working on developing material, but due to the lack of funding, progress is slow. This has serious consequences for the teaching of Kven in primary and secondary schools as well. As mentioned above, pupils in the two northernmost counties have been given the opportunity to study Finnish as a second language, though some schools are developing courses in Kven or are including Kven in their Finnish tuition.

Norway's third periodical report from March 2005 on the implementation of the European Charter was written before Kven was recognized as a language, but an addition to the report was presented to the Council of Europe in September 2005. Here, the Norwegian authorities still seem to regard Kven as a variety of Finnish in spite of recognizing it as a language. Tuition in Kven is still seen as a part of Finnish as a second language, though Norway promises to ensure that Kven is mentioned in the new curriculum for Finnish as a second language which currently is in the process of being developed. However, for most practical purposes, it still regards Kven as Finnish. No concrete plans for funding the development of the Kven language are mentioned, and in spite of the complete lack of teaching materials for Kven, the addition states that "both the structural linguistic differences and the cultural and social circumstances specific to Finnish and Kven can receive adequate attention in current education practice" (Addition to Norway's third periodical report: 2).

Even though Kven has been recognized as a language in its own right and has been granted a new name, it is unclear to what extent the language's position has been improved. The recognition of Kven as a separate language carries considerable symbolic value. At the same time, the Norwegian authorities continue to equate Kven with Finnish by only teaching standard Finnish and not making allowances for developing teaching material for Kven or for teacher training. This solution is financially less demanding for the Norwegian authorities as one can continue to use Finnish text books, grammars and teachers instead of developing material for Kven. By recognizing that Kven is not a dialect of Finnish, but not making any practical efforts to bear the consequences of this decision, the official Norwegian comments and actions signal

that Kven still is regarded as Finnish and not as a language in its own right. Thus, the ideological discourse of the Kven as Finnish immigrants is still present, though more implicit than in the 1990s. In Fairclough's (1995) terms the Norwegian authorities have the power to control the production of texts as they have the power to decide whether Kven will be recognized as a language by giving it a new name. By conceptualizing it as still belonging to the domain of Finnish as a second language, the discourse of Finnishness is reproduced. During the period of assimilation the goal was to Norwegianize the Kven, but today it seems that the Norwegian authorities for pragmatic reasons would like the Kven to be as Finnish as possible. If the Kven are conceptualized as originally Finnish, the fulfillment of obligations following the ratification of the Charter will be less demanding because one can continue current educational practices, i.e. using Finnish educational materials.

The ratification of the European Charter has had a profound impact on the status of the Kven language as this has provided the national and regional minorities with the possibility of bypassing the national level. Prior to the ratification of the Charter, dialogue only took place between the Kven and representatives of the Norwegian government. But after the ratification, the Council of Europe has entered the arena and has empowered the Kven through the close monitoring cycle. This has led to more extensive contact between the representatives of the Kven and the national authorities. Thus, the ratification of the European Charter and the Framework Convention has considerably improved the situation and protection of the Kven language and has also strengthened revitalization of Kven culture.

A central aspect of Lindgren and Huss's (this issue) definition of language emancipation is the improvement of the position of an underprivileged language through political efforts and language planning. The concept of language emancipation is relevant for the situation of the Kven language as outlined above as Norway's ratification of the Charter has had a profoundly positive impact on the situation and status of the Kven language. The language is valorized and has acquired increased status both within and outside the group, though it is losing ground in the private sphere as it is no longer spoken to children (Lane 2010; Storaas 2007).

4. The situation of the Kven language today

Fishman (1991) points out that the survival of a minority language depends on its intergenerational transmission, and the Kven communities in Norway are undergoing either language shift or the shift has come to completion and the communities are monolingual Norwegian. This disruption of intergenerational transmission can be seen as a choice that the speakers make, but in reality they

do not always have a choice. Their choice of not passing on the Kven language did not happen in a vacuum and the speaker's choices have to be analyzed with reference to the socio-political context. In a situation of language shift, two languages usually do not co-exist on an equal footing; one of the languages tends to be socially and/or politically dominant, and thus the power relations between the speakers of the national language and the minority language are unequal. In Fairclough's (2001) terms, comments such as basing the decision on what is seen as "best for the children" illustrate that their choice was influenced by the ideology of Norwegianization (Lane 2010). Fairclough (2001: 27) describes ideological power as the power to project one's practices as "common sense". Those who have power can exercise and keep it through *coercing* (by exercising power overtly) or through *consent* (by convincing others to go along with them). The Norwegianization policies were carried out both through coercion and consent, and as a consequence the practice of speaking only Norwegian to children became natural. A discourse type can become so dominant that it is seen as natural and legitimate "because it is simply *the way of conducting oneself*" (Fairclough 2001: 76). This is illustrated by the situation of the Kven language as hardly anyone disputed the importance of speaking only Norwegian to their children.

Language shift has often been described as gradual characterized by diminishing use of the minority language across generations. However, in many of the Kven communities, the shift has been abrupt; a case in point is the process of shift in Bugøynes, a small Kven community in north eastern Norway (Lane 2010). In Bugøynes, the population was almost exclusively Kven-speaking until the 1970s when they stopped speaking Kven to their children, but they continued speaking Kven to each other. The norm in many families used to be that communication was carried out in two languages as the adults spoke Kven to each other, but only spoke Norwegian to their children. Thus, most of those who were born after about 1960 were spoken to in Norwegian and only spoke Norwegian. Today, almost everyone over the age of 60 still uses Kven as one of their everyday languages, whereas many younger people are passive bilinguals because they grew up in homes where Kven was spoken daily, but did not use the language themselves. Their level of comprehension is fairly high, but apart from a few fixed expressions they do not use Kven actively. However, many actually manage to communicate in Kven when they meet people from Finland, and some people in their early 40s have told me that they use Kven when they do not want their children to know what they are talking about (Lane 2006).

In Bugøynes, a somewhat generalized description of contemporary language use would be the following: if you are a male older than 50 or female older than 55 you speak Kven, otherwise you tend to speak Norwegian (Lane 2006). See Table 1.

Table 1. *Bugøynes*

	Older speakers	Middle generation	Younger speakers
Older speakers	Kven	Kven	Norwegian
Middle generation	Kven	Kven (Norwegian)	Norwegian
Younger speakers	Norwegian	Norwegian	Norwegian

In Bugøynes, Kven will be used only when speaking to another Kven speaker. People of the “middle” generation, approximately 60 years old, are the first generation who did not speak Kven to their children. They will almost exclusively speak Kven up to their parents’ generation, usually sideways to people their own age, but not down to their children’s generation. In Bugøynes, the general rule seems to be: If people who use Kven as one of their everyday languages meet, they will only speak Kven. The situation in Bugøynes is typical for many Kven communities as the language shift proceeded or is proceeding elsewhere in a similar manner. Many Kven express a sense of loss because they did not pass on the language to their children or did not learn the language in the case of the younger Kven (Sollid 2005; Storaas 2001; Lane 2010). Nevertheless, parents say that they did what they thought was best for their children (Lane 2010). Norwegian was associated with progress and modernity and the Kven language was devalued. Bourdieu (2000 [1982]: 471) uses the notion of “the linguistic marketplace” to describe situations where only one kind of language is permissible and others are of no value, and he describes how this becomes internalized as practice to the extent that one does not question the role and dominance of the official language.

During the period of Norwegianization, the Kven language was seen as not having any value as Norwegian was the only language that would get one anywhere in the modern world. Thus, the Kven language had no place in modern society and basically only Norwegian carried prestige and value, so people tried to speak Norwegian as best they could, but their Norwegian was not considered “proper” Norwegian. Thus they were in a position of double shame: their mother tongue was worthless, and they could only try to replace it with another language they were not socially perceived as being able to master, as illustrated in the following example: “we used to say that (.) yeah Mum and Dad said you can’t speak Norwegian, nor can you speak Finnish (.) you’re like [pause] you don’t know anything (.) don’t know anything properly (.) linguistically putrid” (Lane 2010: 41).⁵ This illustrates how the feeling of shame and inferiority has been passed on to the extent that it became internalized or part of people’s “historical bodies” (Scollon and Scollon 2004). Through their encounter with Norwegian officialdom mainly through the educational system, the Kven frequently experienced that their mother tongue was devalued and this was one of the reasons why they did not pass it on to their children. The

internalization of such negative experiences influences the individual's perception and evaluation of their culture and background. In turn, the practices resulting from this process get passed on to their children's and grandchildren's generation, either directly by practices that take part in identity construction, or indirectly, by not paying any attention to one's cultural background. Practice is embedded in the historical development of a society (Norris 2005) to such an extent that people do not always question their actions and take for granted certain behavioral patterns, such as only speaking the majority language to children.

While the Kven experienced that their language was stigmatized, they have still taken pride in their language, referring to it as "old Finnish" or "our Finnish" and thereby possibly implying that it is more genuine and original than the modern Finnish spoken in Finland (Lane 2006). Today, as the pressure to Norwegianize the minorities in the north has lessened, knowledge of Kven becomes an asset again, mainly because it opens up for communication with Finland for business purposes. Thus, while Kven used to be of little value on the linguistic marketplace, its importance has increased. Power relations are less asymmetrical and other discourses have emerged, and currently people question and challenge the previous policies of assimilation. Major factors contributing to this are also more trade with Finland, inspiration from the world-wide ethnic revitalization movement, and the ratification of the Charter and the Framework Convention. These international treaty ratifications by the Norwegian state are of great importance as the Kven have been granted linguistic and cultural rights and have also been recognized as having a place in the Norwegian nation.

There is a growing interest in the Kven language and culture, both by Kvens and in mainstream society at large, and many Norwegians express surprise that they have not heard about this group of people before. Thus, a revalorization has occurred. In Norway it is common to use national costumes for special occasions like Norway's national day, baptisms, weddings etc. In 2002 a Kven costume was designed, based on photographs from the period 1880–1920 (Aarekol 2008). Finnish musicians have gathered local songs and published CD's, Kven speakers have started writing stories in their local Kven dialect and the first novels written in Kven have been published, and a pop/rap-CD has been released. There has also been recent immigration from Finland which has enforced the position of Kven. Finland is one of the main trade partners of the North, and speaking Kven is an asset as this facilitates communication with business partners and customers from Finland. Kven is now used in the media, mainly in a Kven monthly newspaper, a weekly radio broadcast and on the internet on sites maintained by the Kven Institute, in some church services, and to some extent in the schools. The latter is a very important arena, but due to the lack of linguistic infrastructure most schools teach standard Finnish.

Whilst, as mentioned above, Kven has no dictionary, official grammar or text books, the Kven Institute is in the process of developing web-based materials. Kven is also taught at the University of Tromsø, using a grammar based mainly on one of the Kven dialects. This grammar will be revised and rewritten once the decision on the standard has been made. However, the financial resources allocated to the corpus planning for Kven are limited and progress is slow. Developing a dictionary, writing a grammar, making teaching materials for the schools and providing teacher training are substantial and time consuming tasks, and there are many challenges embedded in this process. Lindgren and Huss (this issue) point out that language planning presupposes a relatively high level of education and therefore is often carried out by a well-educated group who functions as a driving force in the emancipatory process. This is the case for Kven emancipation as several of those who are engaged in the emancipatory processes are well-educated Kven. The challenge this brings about is that they, in a sense, have a double role: they are Kven themselves, but through their education they have left the small Kven settlements and live in larger centers.

4.1. *Standardization of Kven*

The standardization of Kven is not an undisputed process and there are many opinions articulated in a wide range of local media. Some do not approve of using Kven as a term for their language but favor standardization; others maintain that it would be better to write standard Finnish; some express concern that elements from their dialect might not be incorporated in the new standard to a sufficient degree, and a number of Kven welcome both the standardization process and the term used for the language. Those who criticize the standardization process frequently state that the Kven involved in this process are removed from the grassroots and carry out planning according to their ivory tower position. There might be some degree of truth in these statements; however, without the well-educated Kven, the status of the language probably would not have been improved.

One of the most significant outcomes of the recognition of Kven as a language, and not only as a dialect of Finnish, was a process of standardization and language planning which are two central elements of the emancipation of the Kven language. The Norwegian government provides funding for a national centre for the documentation of the Kven language and culture, and a precondition for this funding was the establishment of a Kven Language Council whose role is to develop strategies for the standardization of the Kven language. The Council has outlined different options such as developing a compromise strategy based on a wide spread of Kven dialects, choosing forms

which are common to most dialects, taking one of the dialects as a starting point or developing a standard which is close to Meänkieli (a Finnic language very similar to Kven spoken in the Torne Valley in Sweden). These strategies will be presented to a group of language users representing different dialects and domains such as the educational sector and media, who will then make the final decision as to which standard is to be used. The process is intended to facilitate democracy and also empower the language users themselves through their participation in the decision-making process.

5. Conclusion — The multifaceted aspects of the emancipation of the Kven language

The status of Kven as an officially recognized minority language in Norway has led to several developments which can be viewed as language emancipation. The Kven language has got official, though limited, status through legislation and is used to a greater degree in domains where it has not been previously used. All these developments can be seen as part of an emancipatory process, but the most significant contribution to the emancipation of the Kven language has been Norway's ratification of the European Charter and the change in status which came about as a consequence of this ratification. This has prepared the ground for a revalorization of the Kven language and culture.

The ratification of the Charter can be seen as a two-step emancipation process: first, the minority language acquired recognized rights, but was still seen as not fully Norwegian; second, Kven was recognized as a language and not a dialect of Finnish. This latter recognition resulted in corpus planning aimed at developing a modern infrastructure for the Kven language. These processes, in combination with national minorities being included in the new school curriculum, have led to increased media interest and consequently the Norwegian majority "discovered" the Kven and it has begun to see them as a part of Norwegian culture and history.

The situation of the Kven language therefore meets many of the conditions outlined for language emancipation (cf. Lindgren and Huss, this issue) and thus the concept of language emancipation is relevant in the context of the Kven language. There were grassroots revival efforts prior to the Charter's ratification, but these efforts did not have any political support on the national level and therefore had no impact on language legislation. The Kven were Norway's silent minority, but the ratification of the Charter forced the Norwegian authorities not only to recognize the Kven language, but also to undertake at least some measures designed to protect and promote the language, though as outlined above progress was slow.

This emancipatory process also gave the grassroots movement some leverage to influence the process and facilitated dialogue with the Norwegian au-

thorities as the constraints on agency changed. Human agency is constrained by larger-scale societal forces (Blommaert 2005), and from this perspective language emancipation can be seen as a process which aims at changing and influencing these large-scale forces by improving the situation of an underprivileged language through political efforts and language planning (Lindgren and Huss, this issue). The new status of Kven, resulting from and continuously being influenced by the emancipatory processes outlined above, provided new tools, or what Scollon and Scollon (2004) refer to as mediational means, for social actors to improve the situation for the language. In order for Kven to be used in a written form in more public domains, such as the school and the media, some degree of standardization is necessary which in itself improves the status of a minority language in the modern world, where only written languages tend to be seen as “proper” languages, both by official authorities and by the speakers of the language themselves.

However, a potential inherent problem with the standardization process is whether the language users themselves will accept and identify with the standard chosen. Though many Kven who still speak the language express a sense of joy and recognition when they read texts written in Kven or Meänkieli and realize that writing their language is possible, the flip side is that the establishment of a standard can potentially create a new type of stigma. The Kven experienced that they fell short when their linguistic abilities were measured up against standard Finnish, as their Kven language did not correspond to the “proper” Finnish, even though they spoke Kven fluently and used it for all domains of their everyday lives. They tried to speak Norwegian as best they could, but their Norwegian was not “proper” Norwegian because of the Kven sub-stratum.

When standardizing a minority language, one risks establishing a standard that the language users themselves experience that they cannot meet. Standardization which was supposed to be emancipatory and empower minority language speakers may create a new form of stigma for those who feel that they cannot live up to the codified standard, described by Gal (2006) in the following manner:

... the speech of minority speakers whose linguistic forms are not included in the new minority standard comes to seem inadequate, and perhaps even inauthentic, from the perspective of that new standard. Thus, by the nature of the standardisation process, every creation of a standard orientation also creates stigmatised forms — supposed “nonlanguages” — among the very speakers whose linguistic practices standardisation was supposed to valorise. (Gal 2006: 170–171)

The standardized minority language might also not be accepted by the minority language users themselves, resulting in a situation where the variety taught in

schools might not be accepted as authentic. Romaine (2007: 125) describes how a 40 year old Gaelic speaker says he does not want Gaelic to be kept alive by making it artificial.

These are important challenges that proponents of language emancipation have to face and understand as positive intentions might not have the envisaged effect. Still, there are measures which can be employed to counteract such effects; one of the most crucial is including grassroots representatives from the minority language community in the standardization process as is done for the standardization of Kven.

The emancipation of Kven highlights the connection between ideological structure and human agency. Individual social actors do have the capacity to act, but their actions are constrained by larger-scale forces which can be changed and transformed by language emancipation. Thus, the process of language emancipation can provide new mediational means for action and by this empower social actors. However, language emancipation is a multi-faceted process as the situation of the Kven language illustrates. The emancipatory processes which have affected the Kven language are in the process of creating new structures and discourses which affect the life and habitus of the language users. Social actors orient their actions within frames of meanings (Giddens 1984: 285), and our actions are constrained by these frames and structures which in turn are maintained or changed by action. From this perspective, language emancipation can be seen as a process situated between structure and agency, and a further study of language emancipation can shed more light on the mutually constitutive relationship between social action and societal structure, and the tension between the processes of continuity and change.

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Notes

1. I wish to thank colleagues participating in the network funded by New Opportunities for Research Funding Co-operation in Europe: "Social aspects of language diversity" for constructive and encouraging comments.
2. Romanes is the language spoken by the Roma people, and Romani is the language of the Romani people / Travellers. The languages are related, but Romani is more influenced by Norwegian as its speakers have lived in Norway for several centuries.
3. The Charter is divided into two main parts, a general one containing the principles applicable to all the parties and all regional or minority languages (Part II), and a second part which lays down specific practical commitments which may vary according to the state and the language (Part III). See http://www.coe.int/t/e/legal_affairs/local_and_regional_democracy/regional_or_minority_languages/1_The_Charter/_summary.asp

4. The Finnish as a second-language subject curriculum shall protect the right of Finnish-speaking Norwegian pupils (Kvens) to tuition in Finnish, cf. Section 2–7 of the Education Act.
5. In Norwegian: “før sa vi at (.) ja mamma og pappa sa ikke kan du norsk og ikke kan du finsk (.) du e sånn [5 second pause] du kan ingen ting du (.) kan ingenting ordentlig (.) språkforderva.”

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