

STRATEGIES OF LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION IN SCANDINAVIA

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Abstract

During the course of some decades, especially since the 1960s, minorities in Scandinavia have experienced important changes in their life, changes that have influenced considerably their identities and language choices. Unfortunately, linguistic assimilation has already taken place in the case of many minority groups, but, on the other hand, there are still local communities which have maintained their mother tongue.

The situation of the Tornedalians (Finnish population living in the valley of the Tornio river in Sweden) and the Kvens (Finnish population in Norway) is very little known, because, due to the assimilation policy practised by the Swedish and the Norwegian government, respectively, they have been considered as non-existing minorities up to the near past.

Both the Tornedalians and the Kvens have lived for centuries outside the area where primarily Finnish dialects have been used. They have not been acquainted with standard Finnish in Finland, and if that is to be considered the norm, then, by that standard, their own languages could always be judged the *lesser*. This frustration persists without end, until such time the Tornedalian and the Kven language came to be accepted as independent from Finnish.

In this study I would like to present some of the most important sociolinguistic factors which have influenced the development of the Tornedalian and the Kven minority identity and the rise of the status of their language.

Key words: ethnic minority, language and identity, linguistic emancipation, language planning, language revitalization.

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