



Attempts of reversing language shift on the example of a Swedish dialect Elfdalian

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Elfdalian has gained much attention among linguists and laymen for the last 30 years since it is one of the most peculiar Swedish dialects, so different from the standard Swedish that it could be regarded as a separate language. With around 3000 speakers its existence is nowadays severely endangered. Numerous attempts have been made in order to preserve this unique language variety. I did a questionnaire research last autumn in order to examine what linguistic consequences the attempts so far have had. A fierce debate is being held between Sweden and The Council of Europe whether Elfdalian should be acknowledged as a minority language according to *The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. Such a decision would entail special protection and would raise Elfdalian's status.

In the presentation I focus my attention on Fishman's GIDS scale and analyze Elfdalian's current position in the language maintenance process. How threatened is actually this Swedish variety and are there any chances to improve the situation? Since Elfdalian does not have any official status in Sweden it is extremely difficult to struggle for reversing language shift – it requires work from the local society as well as from the government.

I have compared the results from my questionnaire to the results from earlier researches of Sven O. Hultgren and John Helgander which gives an interesting insight in the process of change that Elfdalian has undergone for the last 25-30 years. Such a comparison leaves no doubts that on the one hand, language shift towards the standard Swedish is nowadays a widespread process, but on the other hand, linguistic awareness and feeling of common identity among local people is considerably stronger than 30 years ago. Would it be enough to preserve this fascinating vernacular?

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