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Presents

Northern Sami

Part 1

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Introduction

Northern Sami is a Sami language of the Uralic family of languages. It is spoken by 25 000 people in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland. It is an official language in Norway, and a recognised minority language of Finland and Sweden.

Family

Northern Sami is but one of the many Sami languages that are spoken in northern Scandinavia. The other Sami languages are Southern, Ume, Pite, Lule, Kemi, Inari, Skolt, Akkala, Kildin and Ter. Lule is the second largest with 1500 speakers and Southern and Inari Sami both have 500 speakers.

Grammar

Northern Sami, like its Uralic relatives, is an agglutinative language. This means that it is made up of small parts which combine with the main word to contribute extra meaning. Words can get really long as suffixes (word endings) are added on to the main word. It is also highly inflected which means that the verb changes form itself, rather than relying on helping auxiliaries.

Phonology

Northern Sami uses different vowel length distinctions as well as gemination (where consonants are pronounced longer than usual) on almost all consonants giving it quite an interesting rhythm when spoken. It has 38 consonant phonemes (speech sounds) and 10 different vowel sounds. Consonants go through some complex changes due to the presence of certain other consonants or certain vowels.

Cases

A case is a modification to a noun that indicates the role the noun plays in a sentence. Northern Sami has 7 cases. These cases are marked in Northern Sami by a change to the ending of a noun and sometimes also changes to the vowels of the noun.

Pronouns

Nominative (subject)

I - mun

You (s) – don

He/she - son

We (two) - moai

You (two) - doai

They (two) - soai

We - mii

You (plural) - dii

They - sii

Phrases

The IPA transcription appears after the phrase

Buorre iđit /buorːe iđit/ - Good morning

Buorre eahket /buorːe æ^hket/ - Good evening

Bures /bures/ - Hello

Mo dat manná? /mo dat manːa/ - How are you?

Dat manná bures, giitu /dat manːa bures giːtu/ - Fine, thank you

Mii du namma lea? /miː du namːɑ læ/ - What is your name?

Mu namma lea ____ /mu namːɑ læ/ - My name is ____

Juo /juə/ - Yes

A-a /ɑʔɑ/, li /iː/ - No

Mun in huma davvisámegiela /mun in huma davːisaːmegiela/ - I can't speak Northern Sami

Mun in ádde /mun in adːə/ - I don't understand

Hupmago oktage dáppe eanǵalsgiela? /hupmago oktage dapːe æŋǵalsgiela/ - Is there someone here who speaks English?

Gos don leat eret? /gos don læt eret/ - Where are you from?

Mun lean ____ eret /mun læn eret/ - I am from ____

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This PDF is a product of Rolf Weimar, creator of Steve the vagabond and silly linguist

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