

- **Sociological factors and constraints of use and status of Romani language in Finland**

Kimmo Granqvist

University of Helsinki

Sociolinguistics workshop Tallinn April 25, 2014



1.1 Introduction

Romani belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of the Indo-Iranian subfamily of the Indo-European family of languages.

- It is one of the Indic languages spoken outside India by itinerant groups that originally migrated from the Indian subcontinent;
- It has been spoken exclusively in Europe since medieval times;
- Since the 19th century, some Roma have also migrated to the Americas and elsewhere, too.

Estimates about the numbers of speakers (there are no reliable figures about the number of speakers of Romani):

- According to the most conservative estimates 2.5 million speakers (2000–2004);
- According to Matras (2002, 2005:2) upwards 3.5 million speakers in Europe and 0.5 million elsewhere in the world;
- According to Zatreanu & Halwachs (2003: 5) 4.6 million speakers.



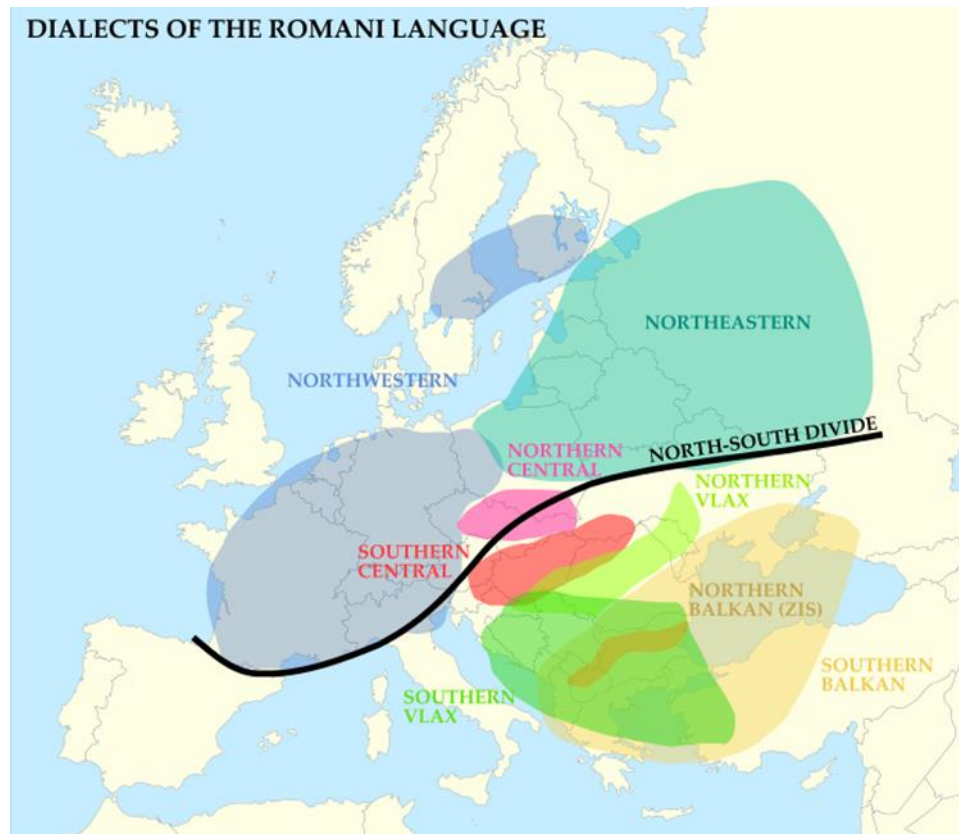
1.2 Introduction

- Some scholars mention 60 dialects.
 - But actually it is also difficult to enumerate the dialects of Romani (the ambiguity of the criteria defining a dialect).
- Descriptions and classification of Romani dialects have traditionally relied on the **genetic model**.
 - The model accounts for dialectal variation by proposing that a single variety splits into several varieties, which grow further apart with time, and then divide further in the same fashion.
 - This is the assumption behind the classifications of Romani dialects by Bakker (1999), Boretzky (1999; 2000a; 2000b), and extensively in Boretzky and Igla's (2004) atlas of Romani dialects. (Bakker 1999; Boretzky 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Boretzky & Igla 2004.)



1.3 Introduction

- **A consensus classification grid:**
 - Differentiates around 4-5 principal divisions among dialect groups, with further sub-divisions:
 - 1) Balkan Romani;
 - 2) Vlach;
 - 3) Central Romani;
 - 4) Northern dialects.
 - Seen hierarchically equal dialects groups (Bakker & Matras 1997).



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Romany_dialects_Europe.svg

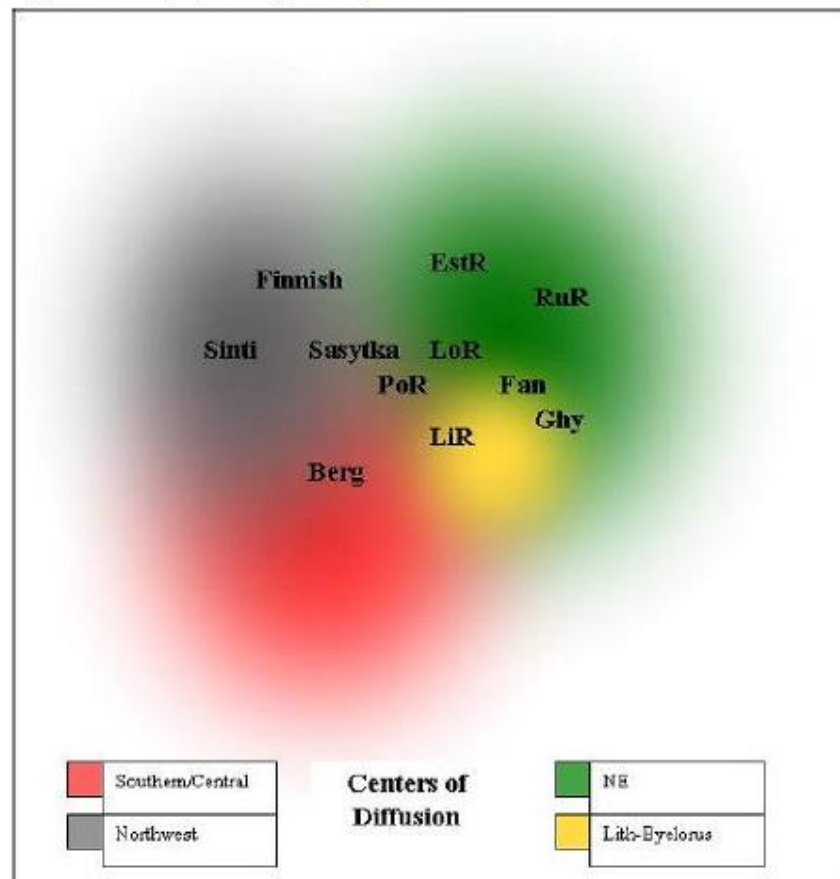


1.4 Introduction

A competing, **geographical diffusion model** has been proposed by Matras (2002):

- The model proposes that the variation among dialects is subject to the geographical continuum and is best accounted for by assuming linguistic contact between the speakers of adjacent territories.
- This model has been applied to the NE group in Tenser (2008).

Figure 7.9 Geographical diffusion spaces





1.5 Introduction

- Roma have been documented in Finland since 1559.
 - An earlier migration from Estonia in the early 1500s has suggested by to Fraser (1992a).
- According to **the consensus classification grid**, Finnish Romani (FR) belongs to NW dialect group (together with Sinti) of the meta-group of Northern Romani dialects (Bakker 1999).
- FR shares conservatisms and innovations that characterize other Romani dialects.



1.6 Introduction

- Nevertheless, Finland constitutes a geographically isolated periphery, far away from the innovation center of the dialect group in the German-speaking areas of NW Europe
 - Many northern innovations are not found/ or late attested in FR (Granqvist 2011b);
 - In addition many **changes induced by contact** with Finnish as well as **FR-specific innovations** (Granqvist 2011b, 2013a).



2.1 Status of FR

- In Finland, the institutionalization of Romani has undergone a **development from negative institutionalization protection of linguistic privacy.**
- The basic right reform of 1995, 17 of the Constitution, observes that the Sami, as an aboriginal people, and the Roma and other groups are entitled **to develop and maintain their own language and culture.**
- The linguistic rights of the Roma are supported even by other legislation, including Day Care Act, School laws, the law on the Institute for the Languages of Finland, a legislation on the national broadcasting company YLE etc.



2.2 Status of FR

- The two EU charters that Finland ratified and that came into force in 1998 have been central for the status of Roma and the Romani language in Finland.
- When Finland ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Romani was regarded a non-territorial minority language.
(<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ChercheSig.asp?NT=148&CM=8&DF=&CL=ENG>).
- However, Finland does not apply to Romani but the two first parts of the Charter, not part III that contains concrete measures to promote the use of regional or minority languages in public life:
 - all levels of education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life and transfrontier exchanges.



2.3 Status of FR

Romani language policies and chains of responsibility

(http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=39503&name=DLFE-10533.pdf):

Policy	Responsibility	Participating actors
Development of the Romani language teaching and teachers' training	Ministry of Education and Culture, National Board of Education	Institute for the Languages of Finland, Romani Language Board, UH
Extending and strengthening the Romani language teaching in primary and adult education	Ministry of Education and Culture, National Board of Education	Municipalities, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, Institute for the Languages of Finland, UH
Strengthening realization of the linguistic rights of the Roma	Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Culture	Institute for the Languages of Finland, UH, National Board of Romani Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture, National Board of Education
Supporting the development of Roma culture and bringing it to the fore	Ministry of Education and Culture	National Board of Romani Affairs, Roma NGOs
Strengthening of the inclusion of Roma minority and visibility of the Romani language and culture in YLE's programming activities	YLE	National Board of Romani Affairs, Regional Boards of Romani Affairs



3.1 FR in its speech community

a) Surveys on the amount and domains of use of FR:

1. A nation-wide survey of the living circumstances of the Roma, carried out by the Social research office (1954):
 - 3 569 Roma or persons living with them
2. Raino Vehmaa's PhD thesis *The group character and acculturation of the Finnish Roma* (1961):
 - 89 Roma in Saarijärvi and Viitasaari areas (Central Finland), 88 Roma living in Helsinki
3. A survey on the social and educational situation of the Roma, carried out by the Helsinki Welfare Office in 1979:
 - The heads of 185 Roma households or their spouses. The Roma households totalled at least 550 persons.
4. Henry Hedman's survey on the amount and domains of use of Romani (2009):
 - 306 Roma in Finland and Sweden in 2004–2005.



3.2 Insights into Romani in Finland vs. Burgenland (Austria)

b) The latest Finnish survey **Hedman (2009) vs. Halwachs, Ambrosch & Schicker (1996)**:

- Based on the same questionnaire, similar sample sizes (Finland 306 replies, Burgenland 320 replies).

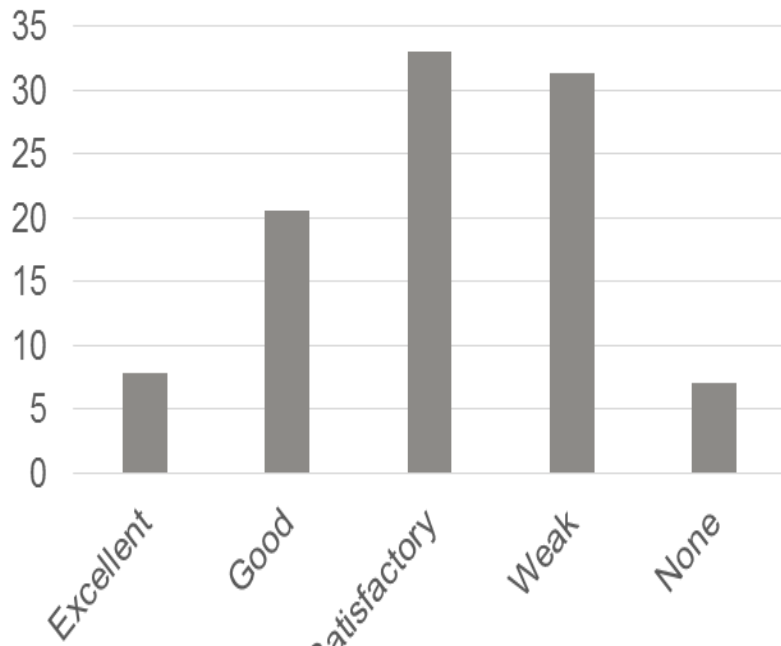
A small-scale revitalization project carried out in Finland 2005-2008.
New extensive revitalization projects planned for 2015-2018.

A successful revitalization project carried out in Burgenland in the mid 1990s;
Survey conducted before the revitalization project was carried out.

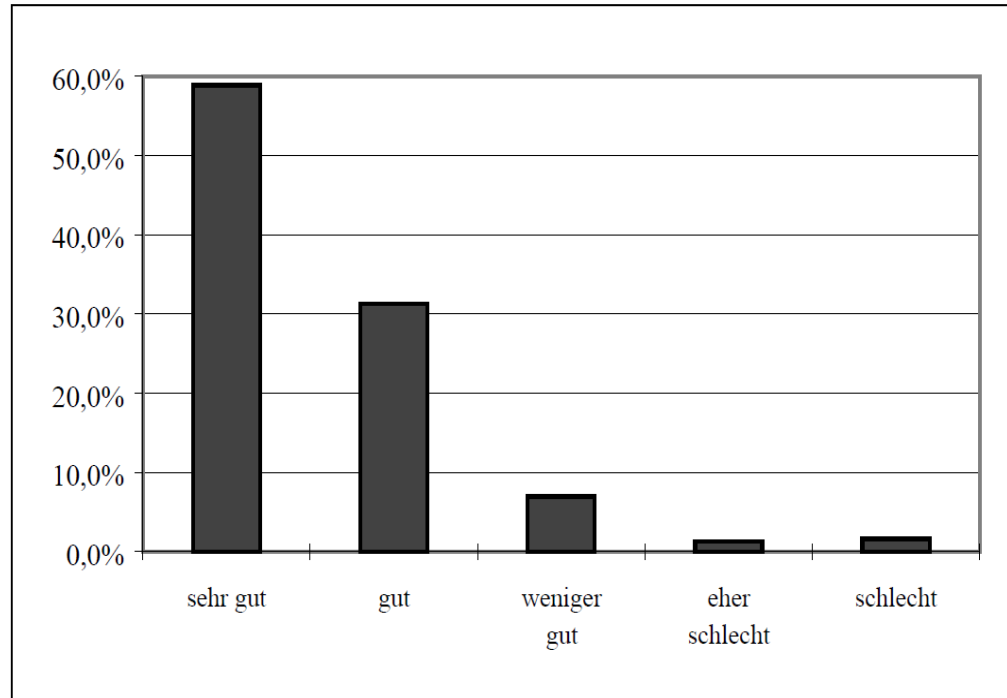


3.3 Insights into Romani in Finland vs. Burgenland

Self-assessment



(Hedman 2009: 24.)

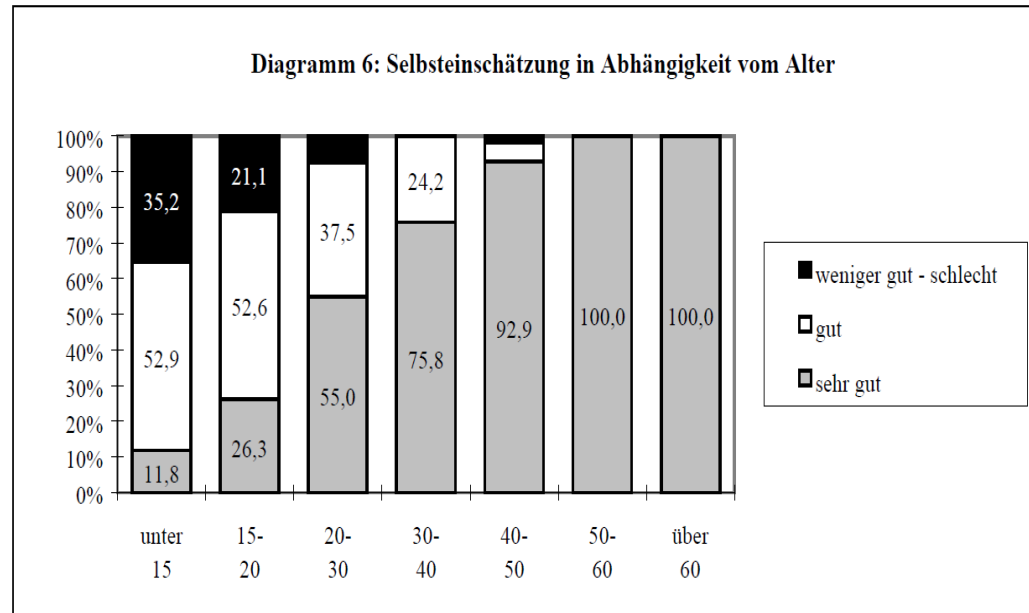
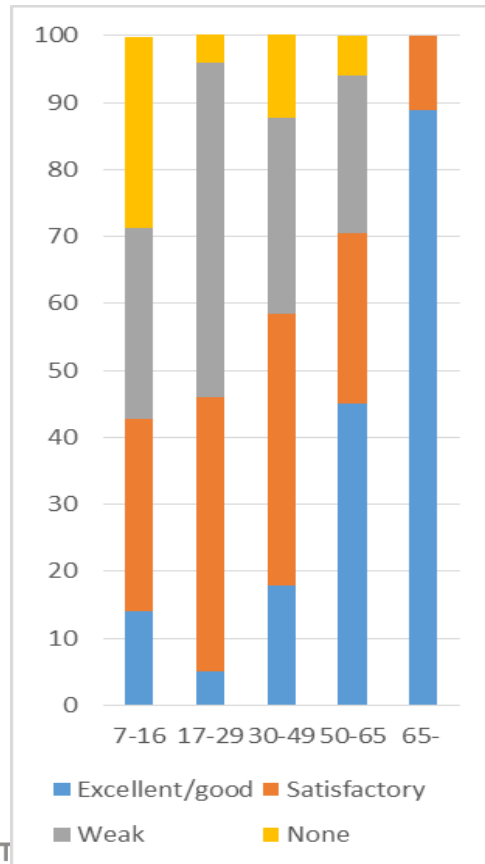


(Halwachs, Ambrosch & Schicker 1996: 56.)



3.4 Insights into Romani in Finland vs. Burgenland

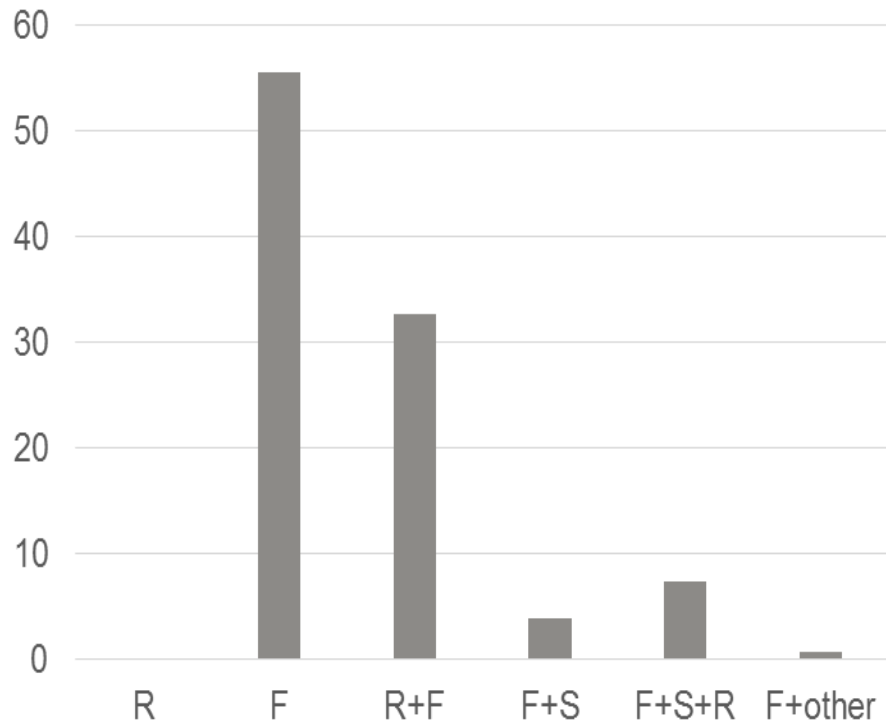
Insights into Romani in different age-groups:



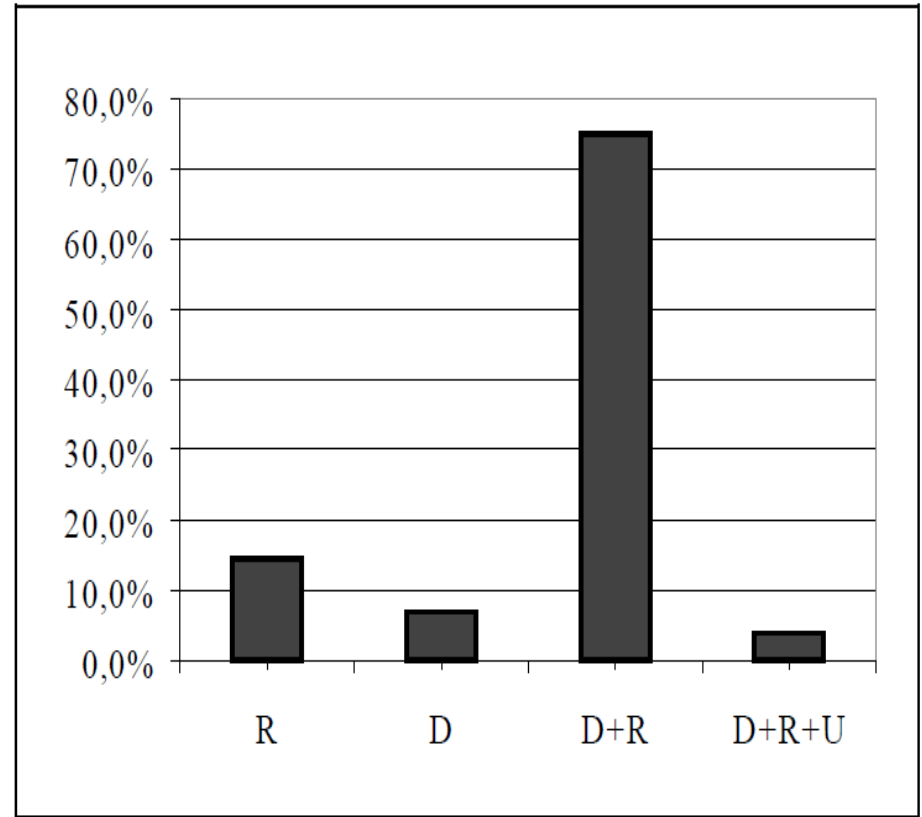
(Halwachs, Ambrosch & Schicker 1996: 7.)



4. Home language of the Roma in Finland vs. Burgenland



(Hedman 2009: 30..)



(Halwachs, Ambrosch & Schicker 1996: 35.)



5.1 Some language attitudes of the Roma in Finland vs. Burgenland

a) Mother tongue

- The true mother tongue of the Finnish Roma has been Finnish since the end of the 20th century (Thesleff 1899).
- According to Borin & Vuorela (1998: 59), all Finnish Roma speak Finnish as their mother tongue.
- According to (2009: 32), the mother tongue of virtually all informants was **Finnish**. In addition, **Romani** was the second mother tongue of **11.4 %** of the informants. Four informants gave **Swedish** as their mother tongue.

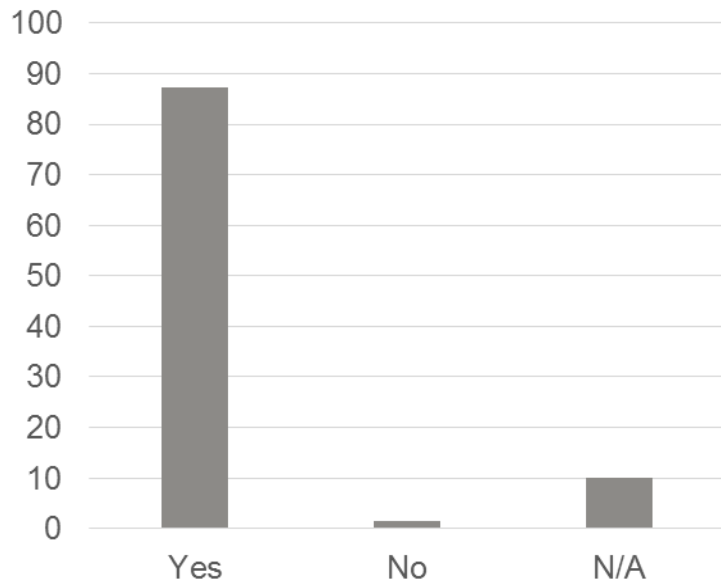
R	290	91,8%
D	15	4,7%
D+U	1	0,3%
D+R	9	2,8%
D+R+K	1	0,3%

(Halwachs, Ambrosch & Schicker 1996: 55.)

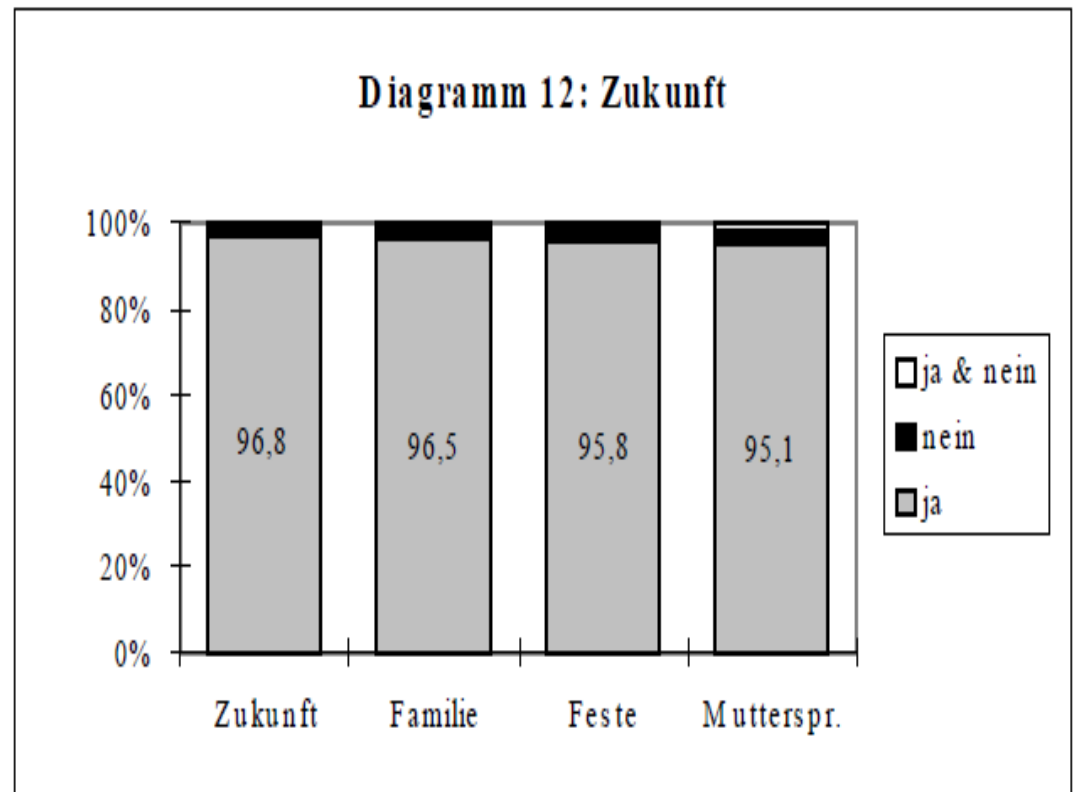


5.2 Some language attitudes of the Roma in Finland vs. Burgenland

b) The use of Romani in the future:



(Hedman 2009: 58.)



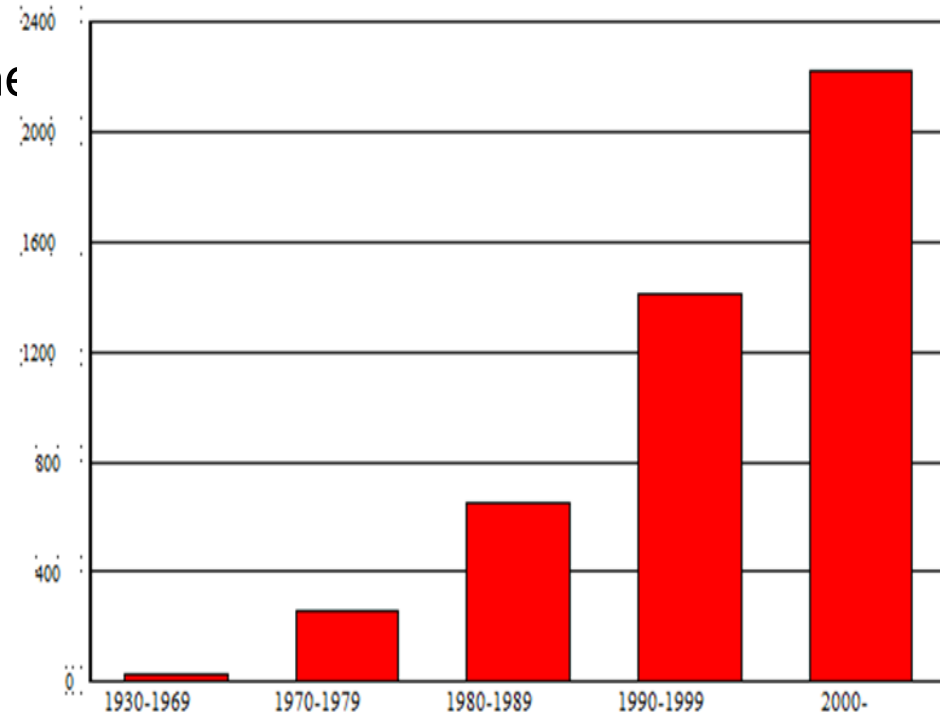
(Halwachs, Ambrosch & Schicker 1996: 17.)



6.1 Public usage and ownership and of FR

Predominantly an oral language of the Roma community used within the family (as elsewhere in Europe, cf. Halwachs 2010);

- ⇒ Late and limited written usage (Granqvist 2009).
- ⇒ Late and limited functional expansion (cf Halwachs 2012).
- ⇒ Late and slowly progressing codification; rapid language change; lots of lectal variation (Granqvist 2013).



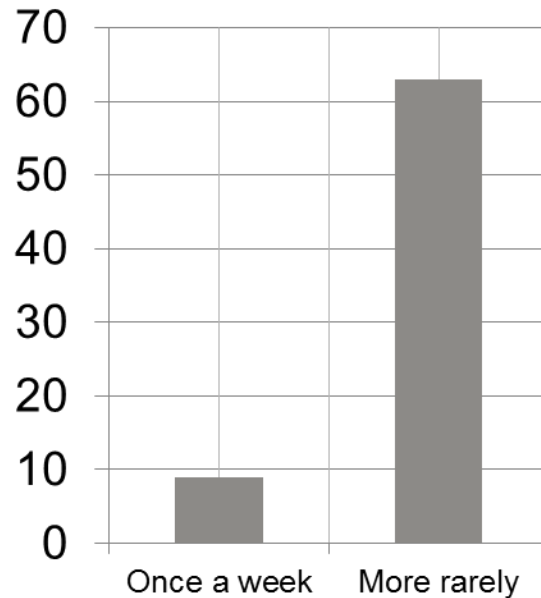
The growth of literature in FR 1930-2007, in printed pages (Granqvist 2009).



6.2 Language ownership and public usage of FR

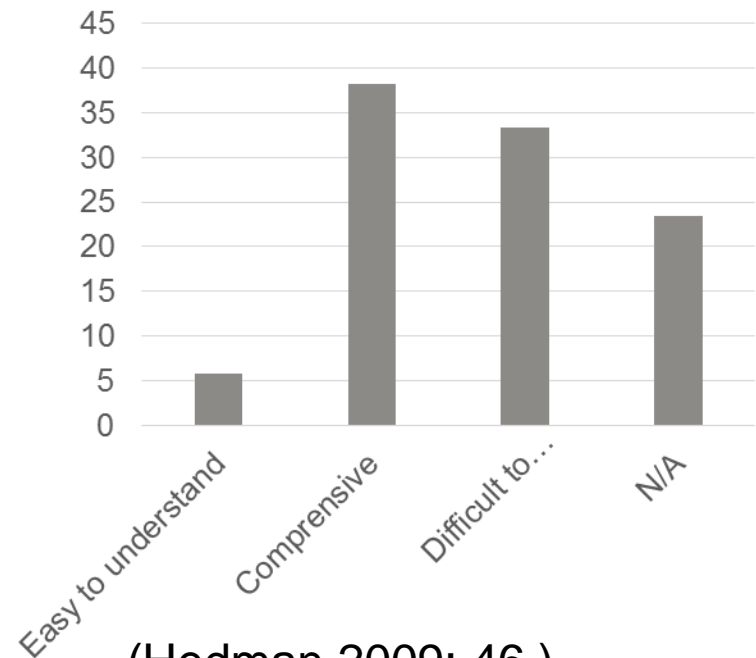
Rather symbolic functions of written FR (cf. Halwachs 2012):

Reading Luke's Gospel



(Hedman 2009: 46.)

Understanding Luke's Gospel

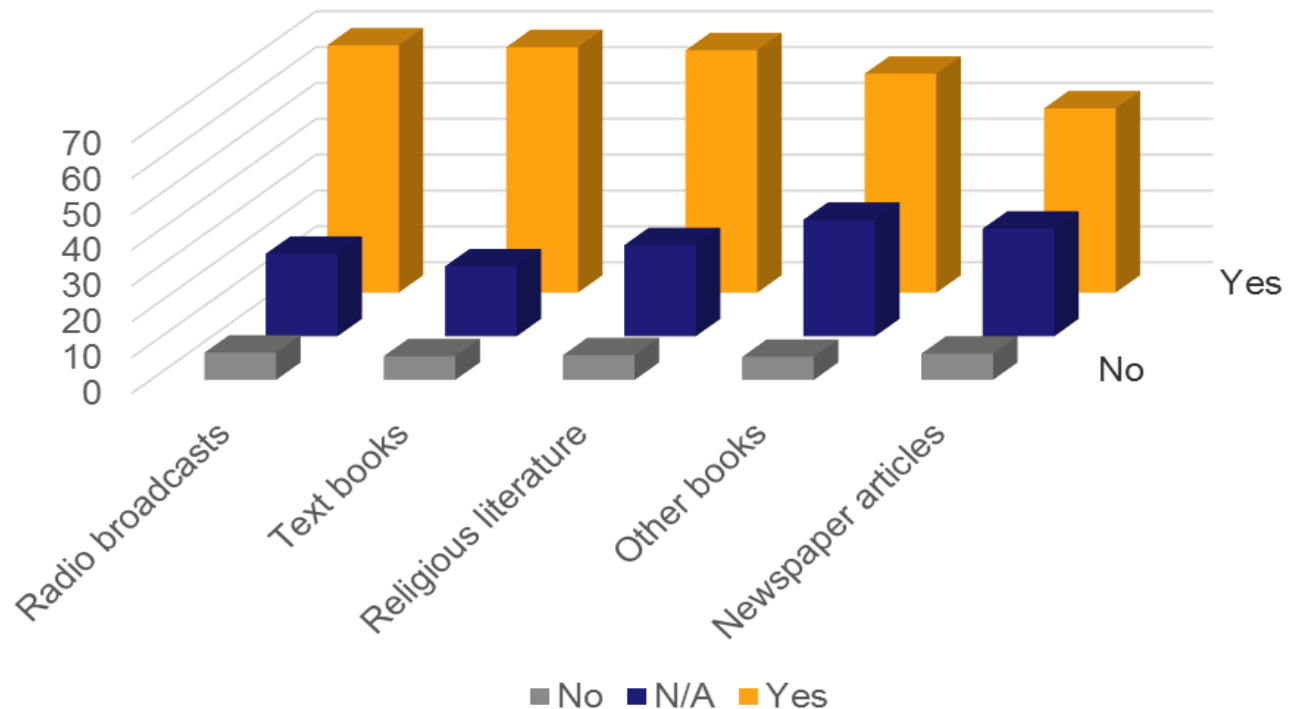


(Hedman 2009: 46.)



6.3 Public usage and ownership and of FR

Wishes about public use of Romani
(Hedman 2009: 57)





6.4 Public usage and ownership and of FR

Language of identity (e.g. Leiwo 1999):



- a symbol of cultural identity (Åkerlund 2002: 126; Hedman 2004: 43).
- a border that separated the Roma from gadže (Hedman 2004: 42).
- a means of discussing family's internal matters in strange places
- a means of maintenance of discipline, as a medium of exhortations, pieces of advice (Hedman 2004: 43–5).
- a means of warnings when negotiating business or dealing with authorities (Hedman 2004: 43–5).

A "secret language" (e.g. Valtonen 1968: 241-254; Sammallahti 1972: 31-32; Leiwo 1999: 129; Hedman 2004)



5. Some conclusions

- The legislation today protects fairly extensively the position of FR, but actually the rights guaranteed by the law do not materialize or they are not fully utilized.
- Excellent or good insights into FR are rare expect among the elderly Roma (upwards from 65 years) - cf. in Burgenland among 75% of the Roma of at least 30 years of age.
- FR is rarely a home language (never exclusively). – cf. in Burgenland 90%.
- Finnish is the true mother tongue of virtual all Roma (FR never exclusively) – cf. in Burgenland 90%.
- In FR, literary materials are scarcely read and understood.
- Nevertheless a majority of the Finnish Roma wishes FR to be used in the future in both spoken and written forms (similarly in Burgenland).