

Multilingual dynamics in Sámiland: Rhizomatic discourses on changing language

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Abstract

Multilingualism in indigenous language communities brings forth tensions and creativity related to language change. In this article, taking dynamic multilingual indigenous Sámi language practices as a focus of ethnographic and discourse analytical research, I examine rhizomatic discourses on changing language in multilingual Sámi spaces. Based on longitudinal research on multilingualism in Sámiland, I will argue that the interlinked discourses of endangerment, commodification and carnivalisation simultaneously circulate across Sámi spaces, and structure language practices and experiences. Furthermore, multilingual dynamics can lead to both contestation and creativity in language practices, and may call into question various established perceptions and definitions of language and of related concepts.

Keywords

Multilingualism, language change, Sámi languages, periphery, rhizomatic discourses, endangerment, commodification, carnivalisation, nexus analysis

Introduction

This article¹ focuses on transitions brought about by multilingualism in Sámiland, a transnational area in the extreme north of Scandinavia stretching across Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. This area, also known as *Sápmi*, *Lapland*, *Laponia* and *North Calotte*, is often regarded as a ‘periphery’ from the perspective of the southern, urban ‘heartlands’ of the nation states concerned. However, Sámiland has a long history as a central nexus of mobility, multilingualism and mixed ways of living, which have been intensified by the current processes of globalisation. This makes the area a dynamic space for multilingual contestation and creativity and, consequently, a crucial site for understanding the multilingual complexities related to the indigenous Sámi languages. Underlying these complexities are changing language practices, and these changes may be variously understood and conceptualised.

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My aim is to examine discourses on changing language in evolving multilingual Sámi contexts from the perspective of transdisciplinary discourse studies, especially nexus analysis (cf. Pietikäinen, 2010; Scollon & Scollon, 2004). I will focus on how multilingualism, and especially the position of the Sámi languages, is discursively constructed in transforming Sámi contexts, and also on the question of what are the conditions and consequences of the different ways of constructing multilingualism and Sámi languages for people's language practices and experiences. To draw on the Deleuzian idea of mapping the connections and disconnections between and across different pathways (cf. e.g. Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Honan, 2004), I will focus particularly on the rhizomatic nexus of discourses that seem to figure in language practices and in experiences in the evolving multilingual Sámi contexts. I will draw on discursive and ethnographic data collected in the context of two research projects² on multilingualism in Sámiland over the last 10 years. In the next section, I will provide some background on the kinds of multilingual dynamics experienced in Finnish Sámiland. I will then discuss the discourse approaches adopted in this article, especially in terms of nexus analysis, before moving on to discuss in greater detail the rhizome of three discourses circulating in Sámi multilingual spaces. I will end with a discussion on peripheral multilingualism as a way of moving forward in the examination of current issues in multilingualism in indigenous and minority language contexts.

Multilingual transitions in Sámiland

This article begins with the premise that all language use is characterised by an ongoing process of change, but that this change may be encountered, conceptualised and managed differently in different situations. In the context of indigenous and minority languages, language change has often been seen in terms of language shift, endangerment and loss (see e.g. Nettle & Romaine, 2000; *Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003*). At the same time, there is also a growing body of research that is examining language change through the lens of multilingualism in indigenous and minority language practices and experiences, often prompted by current flows of globalisation and mobility (Coupland, 2010; Heller, 2003, 2011; Jaffe 2007; Pietikäinen, 2010; Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes, 2013).

The multiplicity present in researching and conceptualising multilingualism in indigenous and minority language contexts can, in my view, be fruitfully theorised in terms of concurrent and conflicting language ideologies. Drawing on the work of language ideologies in multilingual contexts (Blommaert, 1999; Heller, 2011; Hill, 2002; Irvine & Gal, 2000; Jaffe, 2007; Kroskrity, 2000), language ideologies are here understood as discursive constructs on the nature and meaning of languages, historically embedded and locally appropriated. Language ideologies thus carry and convey articulations and beliefs about the nature, value and function of languages, and are at the same time embedded in the actual language practices of individuals and communities. Using this definition, I wish to emphasise the diachronic nature of any particular language ideology, its situational manifestation, and the impact it can have on actual language practices. The idea of a language-ideological struggle implies the simultaneous existence of various language ideologies, particularly in contemporary evolving multilingual situations, where language boundaries and norms are often dislocated, in flux, or undergoing renegotiation (cf. Jaffe, 2009; Meek, 2007; Nevins, 2004). This makes multilingual indigenous sites fluid and complex spaces for various ideological conflicts and contestations, and consequently they become important and revealing sites for examining evolving notions of multilingualism and other related concepts.

Based on previous research on multilingualism in indigenous and minority language communities (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Heller, 2011; Jaffe, 2007; Kelly-Holmes, 2013; Pietikäinen,

2008, 2010, 2013; Pujolar, 2013), we can see at least two language-ideological processes at work simultaneously, structuring how multilingualism is understood, and consequently impacting how individuals experience ‘languages’ and talk about them. One powerful conceptualisation, born and bred within the ideological framework of nation states and national languages, has been the idea that languages are autonomous, unified entities – often described as formal linguistic codes – with an ‘essential’ or natural relationship with a particular territory or with the collective identity of a particular group, and essentially ‘different’ and ‘separate’ from each other (Jaffe, 2007). Consequently, multilingualism can be perceived as a kind of ‘parallel monolingualism’ (Heller, 1999). At the same time, an alternative, more heteroglossic, ideological formation can be detected. This manifests itself, for example, in discourses about plurilingual identities and about competencies or ‘polycentric’ and ‘polynomic’ languages and language practices (Jaffe, 2009; Pietikäinen, 2010). As Bakhtin (1981) suggests, language can be imagined in terms of coexisting socioideological ways of speaking, which may emerge in a situated fashion, but which may also echo past history. This heteroglossic perspective sees language as a practice, highlighting its expressive and communicative functions, as opposed to its linguistic form (cf. Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Pennycook, 2010). It can be argued that this perspective also captures the experiences of many multilingual speakers more appropriately by recognising the inherent diversity and hybridity that characterises multilingual living (Kramsch, 2009; Pietikäinen et al., 2008). Furthermore, this understanding of language seems to be in accord with – or perhaps even to grow from – the various material and ideological shifts associated with the processes of language change.

In the dynamic multilingual context of Sámiland, two shifts are particularly relevant as regards to language change. Firstly, the Sámi languages, in a similar way to many other indigenous and minority languages, share a history of language shift that has disrupted conventional links between language practices, belonging and identity. Before the Second World War, Sámi languages were used as the primary means of daily interaction in the community. However, the historical and social trajectories of Sámi in the last 50 years have changed the languages from being (strong) community languages into endangered languages, known only by a few people. Today it is estimated that among the approximately 60,000–80,000 Sámi people, only half speak one of the nine Sámi languages. The dominant language is Northern Sámi, with approximately 30,000 speakers throughout Sámiland; other Sámi languages have as few as 250–400 speakers each (Aikio-Puoskari, 2005; Kulonen, Seurujärvi-Kari, & Pulkkinen, 2005). In practice, this means that the role a Sámi language plays varies from speaker to speaker. Whereas for some, the Sámi language is a daily resource for communication, for others it is studied at school or encountered later in life, or is perhaps a register used only for ritual purposes. In addition, Sámi languages have been affected by the processes of standardisation and normalisation, as well as by the acquisition of basic linguistic rights, all of which affect how indigenous languages and multilingual resources are valued. In the current sociolinguistic environment of Sámiland, Sámi is a part of multilingual repertoires and practices. There are no monolingual Sámi speakers remaining, and the level of Sámi skills varies from speaker to speaker and from situation to situation. This means that Sámi language spaces and practices are subject, by necessity, to various, often conflicting, language ideologies, norms and realities.

Secondly, Sámiland is a site of emerging multilingualism, related especially to economic changes and mobility. From the point of view of language change, globalisation can be seen as a new kind of order, impacting how language is constructed and what kinds of language practices are evolving (Coupland, 2010). As in many other minority language communities (Heller, 2011; Jaffe 2007; Pujolar, 2006), Sámi communities are undergoing an economic change from being a mainly

primary-sector-based economy to one with a heavy emphasis on the tertiary sector – tourism now being one of the main sources of revenue. Contemporary socioeconomic changes, mobility and new economic structures open up new markets for Sámi languages, at the same time that they give rise to conflict and uncertainty about who can legitimately claim and exploit these languages. Together with varying European Union (EU) support, this has changed the need, motivation and opportunities for both indigenous and multilingual language practices, and has caused flux in language practices in Sámiland.

Importantly for the argument I wish to develop in this article, it can be seen that Sámi languages have reached a critical tipping point as they undergo changes emerging from and responding to these pressures, but also the in relation to the opportunities created by the recent transitions and developments. Multilingualism in indigenous contexts brings forth tensions and challenges with regard to how languages are understood, while on the other hand it leads speakers to seek novel solutions for using their linguistic resources in new situations, and for developing novel language practices. This view on multilingual complexities echoes the recent theorisation of language as emergent from local language practices, and multilingualism as a social, historical, economic and political phenomenon (Coupland, 2010; Pennycook, 2010). Taking dynamic multilingualism as a starting point, language is seen in this article as a historically and socially situated resource, which is both discursively constituted by, and constitutive of, the epistemologies of how languages and their speakers are defined, and how these concepts are appropriated, challenged and negotiated in the actual language practices. In this article, I will explore the potentialities of this moment for Sámi languages by examining how indigenous languages and multilingual resources are valued and used in the tension that arises between ideological contestation and linguistic creativity. The aim is to explore how people manage the competing frameworks for understanding the value and meaning of both specific indigenous and minority languages and multilingual practices and identities. The article therefore focuses on what happens in situations where multiple, competing language ideologies are simultaneously at work. In such contexts, speakers are compelled to take up stances in relation to old and new, traditional and emerging ways of using languages, and by doing so, to contribute to the making of language boundaries and categories. These processes are not abstract, but rather affect people experiencing and using languages in particular ways and making a variety of linguistic choices. This kind of research is particularly urgent in multilingual indigenous language contexts, where different kinds of conceptualisations of language, language boundaries and speakers have great impact on what counts as a ‘language’, who counts as a ‘speaker’ and who gets to make the relevant decisions. To capture these multilingual dynamics, and the ways in which they are potentially linked, my methodological move is to examine the rhizome of discourses in an attempt to understand how and why languages come to be constructed in the way they are, and what people are doing with their language resources.

Methodology: A rhizomatic discourse analysis

I have adopted a rhizomatic discourse analytical approach in order to examine discourses on multilingualism in Sámiland, drawing in particular on the transdisciplinary discourse analysis known as nexus analysis, which was introduced by Scollon and Scollon (2004). Nexus analysis is a form of multidimensional discourse analysis that aims to analyse the complexity and multiplicity of situated language practices by examining the simultaneous coming together of participants, discourses and interactional normativities at any moment of language use. To capture these ideas, Scollon and Scollon use the term ‘nexus’, by which they refer to ‘a point at which historical trajectories of people, places, discourses, ideas, practices, experiences and objects come together to enable some

action which in itself alters those historical trajectories in some way as those trajectories emanate from this moment of social action' (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, pp. 159, for applications see e.g. Hult, 2010; Kauppinen, 2011; Pietikäinen, 2010; Pietikäinen, Lane, Salo, & Laihiala-Kankainen, 2011). This methodological move also makes use of the Deleuzian conceptualisation of *rhizome*, a construct that sees the processes and events to be observed in terms of *flow* and *dis/connections* (see e.g. Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Honan, 2004). Rhizomatic approaches (e.g. multisided ethnography or nexus analysis) aim to trace the changing trajectories and circuits of language resources, while on the other hand such approaches also make it possible to capture the connectivity and interaction between and across the resources – the end result of which is often contestation and creativity.

I have focused on one particular multilingual Sámi site, a Sámi village called Inari, as a nexus of multilingual dynamics. The village itself is small, with approximately 750 inhabitants, and may appear very peripheral from the perspective of capital cities. It is, however, a central Sámi village in Finland, hosting the Sámi parliament, the Sámi media, the Sámi museum, Sámi education, day-care and various Sámi cultural and art activities. Inari is also a growing tourist destination, with Sámi culture as its major selling point. The village can be seen as a nexus of many current and overlapping multilingual processes related to, for example, new economies, globalisation, mobility, minority, and indigenous language rights and revitalisation, each impacting how languages are discursively constructed and resulting in emerging ways of organising and exploiting these resources. As these concepts are under continuous construction, overlapping, conflicting and even paradoxical understandings and criteria exist with regard to what is considered desirable or undesirable multilingualism in the indigenous community.

The complexity of this kind that is present in multilingual Sámi contexts can, I would argue, be fruitfully theorised and analysed in terms of rhizomatic discourses on multilingualism and language change. This is because discourses carry and convey articulations and beliefs about the nature, value and functions of languages, and they are, at the same time, embedded in the actual language practices of individuals and communities. Drawing on critical discourse analytical work (Blackledge, 2008; Fairclough, 1992; Lazar, 2005; Milani, 2010; Pietikäinen, 2003) and a Foucauldian view of discourses (see e.g. Mills, 1997), I use the concept of a discourse to refer to a historically embedded, relative stable, yet flexible way of signifying events, practices and relations through semiotic resources. A particular discourse conveys a particular kind of rationality and logic, which in turn structures language and other semiotic practices and experiences. Hence a discourse is always articulated in relation to social action, which in turn is embedded in a wider matrix of various historical, political, ideological and economic processes (see e.g. Pietikäinen, 2010; Pietikäinen & Mäntynen, 2009). This view of a discourse underlines the critical approach that I adopt here: all discourses about language and their speakers are fundamentally political, historical and situated, hence helping to illustrate the local, lived conditions and the consequences of multilingualism in a particular time and space, and to highlight the ways in which they may be connected to other transitions and practices. Discourses capture semiotic aspects of the social and moral order in the structuring of relations, differences and boundaries on social, economic and political grounds – rather than, say, linguistics. This echoes the Hymesian view of language as including linguistic, social and discursive aspects (see e.g. Hymes, 1996; Pietikäinen & Mäntynen, 2009), adopted also in the three-dimensional model of discourse in the work by Fairclough (1992) and elaborated, for example, in current articulations of language as local practice (Pennycook, 2010). A rhizome of discourses in a particular time and space is not a closed or unchanging unit, but is rather an open system, emerging and transforming in the course of interaction. Consequently, the interrelationships between discourses and their networked characteristics are implied and are

seen in connection with historical, social, economic and political practices and processes. As Honan (2007) explains in talking about applying the rhizomatic approach in education research, discourses operate in rhizomatic ways – they are not linear or separate, but instead, any text, sign or speech act potentially includes several interlinked discourses, which are connected to and across each other. Thus, a rhizomatic discourse analysis traces the lines of trajectories that connect different discourses.

The ethnographic and discursive data used here is based on my longitudinal ethnographic and discourse analytical research into Sámi languages and multilingualism in the Finnish Sámiland. To examine a rhizome of discourses on multilingualism in Sámi contexts and their trajectories and cycles, I will draw on a set of data consisting of interviews,³ background questionnaires, linguistic landscape data, on-site observations, photographs, and audio and video recordings of several sites in the village of Inari. The ethnographic nature of this research means that it was carried out in cooperation with individuals and institutions in Sámiland. These have been important and valuable resources in planning, carrying out and reflecting on this particular research project. The individuals appearing in the data used here have given their permission to be recognised (e.g. by their connection to place, product, language practices, names, etc.). However, to emphasise how the discourses circulate through these sites, rather than the individual decisions and experiences, I have anonymised the participants to some extent, and have left out some directly identifying details. For the discourse analysis, I will next focus on three interconnected and simultaneously operating discourses in Inari regarding language change, and will examine their rhizomatic figurations. These are as follows: (1) the discourse of Sámi language endangerment; (2) the discourse of commodification; and (3) the discourse of carnivalisation, each of which has their own rationality and logic as regards to how languages and their relations are constructed. Together they form a rhizome of discourses on changing language and multilingualism in Sámiland.

Discourses on multilingualism in Sámiland

Discourse of Sámi language endangerment

One powerful discourse circulating across Sámi language spaces in Inari is the discourse of Sámi language endangerment. The core rationality of this discourse is that language change – here referring to the declining number of indigenous language speakers and domains of Sámi language use – is a result of a strengthening of the position of the majority, national language of Finnish, which now endangers the Sámi languages. From this perspective, multilingualism has tipped the balance between the languages in a direction unfavourable to indigenous languages, and has led to a language shift. This presents a threat to the vitality of the Sámi languages and to Sámi language practices. Consequently, various revitalisation activities are needed to ‘save’ Sámi languages. This particular discourse can be seen as a localised version of global discourses of endangerment, familiar from many minority language contexts (see e.g. Duchêne & Heller, 2007; McEvan-Fujita, 2011).

The discourse of Sámi language endangerment places heavy emphasis on the ‘pre-language-shift’ era, which in the Sámi context refers to the time before the Second World War. This discourse is frequently employed when the shift of Sámi languages from strong community languages into ‘small’ languages within the national imagination of language relations and hierarchies is described. This discourse of Sámi language endangerment is particularly visible in contexts in which the fixedness of language boundaries is emphasised. In Inari, these contexts include some domains of Sámi politics, education and media, and aim at reversing the endangerment process by placing Sámi languages back at the centre of language practice.

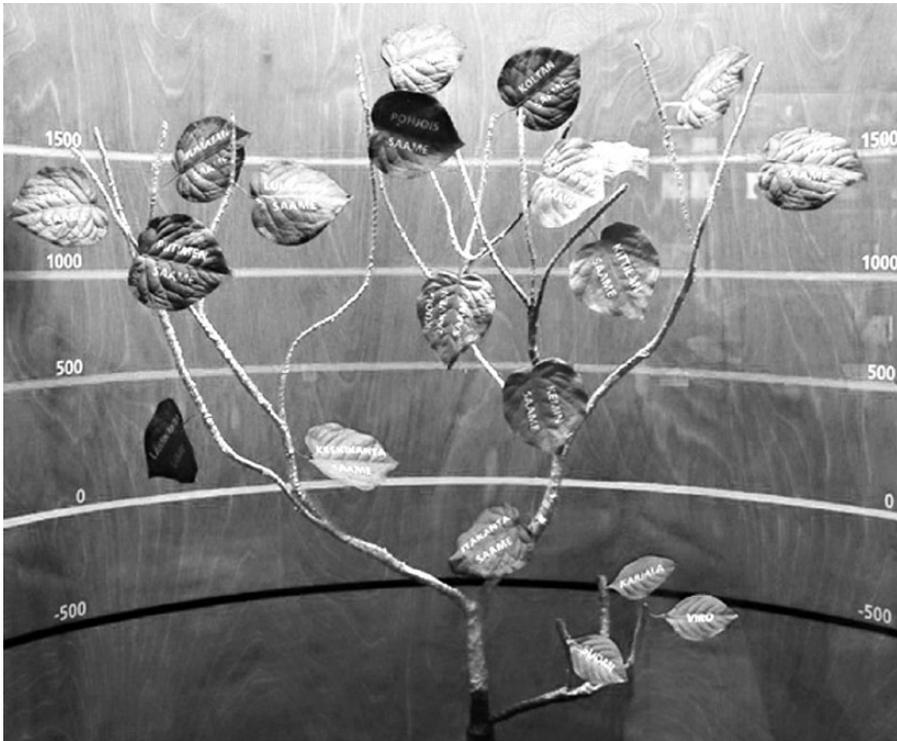


Figure 1. Sámi language tree, SIIDA museum in Inari.⁴

In a similar way to many other minority language contexts (see e.g. Jaffe, 2007), the discourse of endangerment has also shaped the political and social contexts in which Sámi language rights have been articulated and practised. It also structures many Sámi language revitalisation strategies and activities. The Sámi revitalisation movement, which has been particularly strong since the 1970s, aims at strengthening and renewing the position and value of Sámi languages. In an attempt to reverse language hierarchies and to strengthen the use of Sámi languages in public domains, several conscious language-policy decisions have been made. For example, the Sámi media in Inari prioritises Sámi-only language practices (see e.g. Pietikäinen, 2008), the Finnish Sámi parliament uses all three Sámi languages besides Finnish, most official signs in the village are bilingual (in Finnish and Northern Sámi), and some also display other Sámi languages (see Pietikäinen et al., 2011).

A multimodal example of this discourse can be found operating in the exhibition of *Siida*, the National Museum of the Finnish Sámi, depicting Sámi language change. Figure 1 is taken from the introductory exhibition and it is called the ‘Sámi language tree’. It illustrates the processes of language development and change over a timescale of 2000 years.

In this picture, a representation of Sámi languages and their historical change is constructed. The representation makes use of the widely circulated metaphor for language families, which draws on the tree model of language origination, typical of historical linguistics. Each language is described by one leaf, and their relative positions to each other are constructed through their positions on the tree. Furthermore, the colouring of the leaves indicates the perceived vitality of the

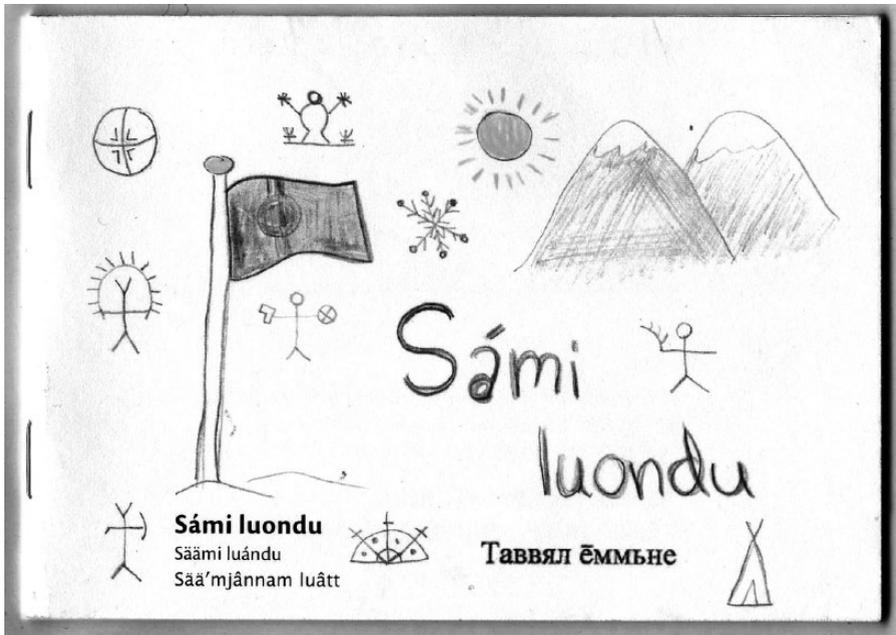


Figure 2. Multilingual Sámi storybook.

languages. The withered brown leaves represent those Sámi languages now categorised as dead, and the shades of green colour index the relative vitality the living languages in terms of their speakers. The accompanying text gives a short description of the relationship of Sámi languages to other Finno-Ugric languages (e.g. Finnish and Estonian), and to Finno-Sámi proto-languages. Sámi languages are portrayed here as being immobile, and the language boundaries as fixed. There are no indexes to language contact or to multilingualism, which are effectively ‘erased’, to use the terminology of Irvine and Gal (2000). The central assumption in this discourse is the assumption that the cultures dies when the languages dies. This is articulated particularly by the enumeration of speakers – a practice that, as Jaffe argues (2007, p. 61) ‘critically depends on the presence of clearly-bounded languages, that can be counted, lost, described and saved’.

Another typical cycle for the discourse of Sámi language endangerment is the instances where the standard language practices are valued. This discourse typically advocates a powerful model of linguistic practices that makes standardisation, full competence and the use of standard variants the centrepiece of Sámi language practices. It legitimates a particular kind of language practice, exemplified here in a multilingual storybook written by a multilingual Sámi pupil.

Figure 2 illustrates a page from this multilingual storybook, whose author is a 10-year-old girl, whom I will call Tiina. She receives Northern Sámi language education in a primary school in Finnish Lapland, and revealed in a background survey that she has Northern Sámi, Finnish, Inari Sámi, Skolt Sámi and English in her linguistic repertoire. She took part in a multimodal and multilingual literacy activity,⁵ designed and carried out with teachers in two multilingual Sámi classrooms in the school year 2010–2011. The goal of this activity was to make visible the various linguistic resources the children have at their disposal, and to increase awareness of the

multilingualism presence in the classroom. The aim was also to develop ways of enhancing Sámi language practices without delegitimising multilingual practices. Methodologically, the activity relates to a growing body of research, using visual and multimodal research strategies in ethnographic and discourse-analytical work on language practices, literacy and multilingualism (see e.g. Hélot and Ó Laoire, 2011; Hodge & Jones, 2000; Mavers, 2007; Nikula & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2008; Pietikäinen, 2013; Pietikäinen et al., 2008).

In this particular activity, the children were invited to make their own storybooks, and to choose their own topic and also the languages into which their story, originally in Sámi, would then be translated (for more details, see Pietikäinen & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2013). Tiina wrote her story about Sámi nature in the Northern Sámi language. The other three languages are also Sámi languages, so we have in the picture a Northern Sámi text, handwritten first by Tiina, and then a printed version, checked by the teacher, and subsequently translated into Inari Sámi, Skolt Sámi and Kildin Sámi. The result is a beautiful book full of iconic images of Sáminess, such as the Sámi flag, ornaments, reindeers and a very carefully and correctly produced Sámi story, which has been equally carefully translated into the other Sámi languages. These multimodal and multilingual choices in Tiina's book have at least two types of impact. On the one hand, they value the internal – and often disregarded – multilingualism between various Sámi languages in the community. They may also to some extent upscale the smallest Sámi languages, seldom used in print or in storybooks. On the other hand, these choices and the way they are represented in the book draw on ideas of bounded languages and fixed language boundaries. Tiina did not opt for mixed language practices – like some other children in the classroom – but instead she produced her book within the dominant framework of the school language policy and language practices, thus subscribing to the rationality circulated by the discourse of endangerment.

As Tiina's choices indicate, the discourse of Sámi endangerment structures language practices and choices. It has also played a crucial role in Sámi language speakers' experiences of language domination and the conceptualisation of what a legitimate variant of language and speaker is. The unintentional consequences of this discourse are that it may impose hypercorrect standards (Bucholtz, 2001) and a form of linguistic purism, causing potential speakers to withhold their Sámi spoken voices or to turn away. One example of this type of experience is voiced in the following story from an interview with Kalevi, a 60-something multilingual Sámi man. Kalevi was born into a multilingual Sámi family in which two Sámi languages were spoken, together with Finnish. This means that, for the whole of his life, Sámi languages have been part of Kalevi's multilingual repertoire, but their relative positions have undergone changes. In his childhood in 1950s Lapland, he experienced Finnish-only education, which was the sole option at the time. Sámi languages were devalued, and even stigmatised, in school language practices (Aikio-Puoskari, 2005; Lehtola, 1997). Due to the long distances between home and the school, many children lived in dormitories and did not see their families for months. This was the case for Kalevi. As the use of Sámi languages was discouraged and even forbidden in school, many Sámi children did not use their Sámi resources, and some even lost their skills altogether. The language shift from dominantly Sámi language practices to dominantly Finnish language practices is typically located in this time period.

In Kalevi's case, the results of the schooling experiences manifested in a relatively typical situation in terms of skills in Sámi. While he is considered to be a native speaker of Sámi – and as such, a very much appreciated 'language reservoir' for the community – he does not have literacy skills in Sámi. This sparked his interest later in life in taking part in Sámi revitalisation classes, designed to revitalise and expand Sámi skills among the languages' speakers. Below is an extract of his interview regarding his language biography. In the extract,⁶ he gives his account of taking part in this course, and of the event that stopped him going there after two days:

Example 1.

(1) Kalevi: *Onkohan tässä (.) joku kuus, seittemän vuotta sitten oli (.) onkoha se sev verran aikaa nii inarissa oli saamen (.) kielikurssi ja (.) ja se oli tarkotettu yleensä semmosille jotka on jo ennestään jonku verran puhuu*

Haastattelija: *Mm.*

Haastateltava: *ja minähän menin sitten sinne kielikurssille kans ja tuota (.) olin minä kaks päivää siellä mutta en mie kolomantena päivänä ennää menny (sin).*

Haastattelija: *mikäs siinä oli*

Haastateltava: *eh heh heh no ei siinä oikiastaan ollu sen kummempaa mutta siinä vain tuli vähä ku tuota (.) se oli joku sana mie en muista mikä sana se oli (.) mutta ku mie (.) mie sitten sanoin että ko (.) että niinku täällä mejän perällä se sanothin niinku (.) tietyllä tavalla se sana*

Haastattelija: *hmm.*

Haastateltava: *ne taas sitten jotka tuota (.) vetivät sitä kurssia ni ne sano että taas tuola inarinjärven perällä että heillä heillä se sanottiin näi ja kyllä se on oikhen mitä siellä heillä sanothin niin et niinku sen oikheen. Ni en mie sinne kurssille ennää lähe heh heh että enhä mie lähe uutta opetelemhan sinneh heh*

Haastateltava: *[niij just]. Aiva*

Haastateltava: *että se riittää mulle mitä mä olen oppinu aikoinani siihej jäi se minun kie – sen kie – se kielikurssi eh heh heh päättyi.*

Kalevi: Well, this was maybe (.) some six, seven years ago (.) Perhaps that long ago there was a Sámi language course in Inari and (.) it was meant in general for those who have spoken at least a bit of Sámi before.

Interviewer: *Mm...*

Kalevi: ...and I went there, to this language course and well... (.) I went there for two days, but on the third day, I didn't go there anymore.

Interviewer: *Why was that?*

Kalevi: (laughs) Well, it wasn't really anything in particular, but there was something... (.) There was this word ... I can't remember which word it was (.) but I said it there (in the class) in the way the word is said here where I come from (.). There's a particular way to say that word here.

Interviewer: *Mm...*

Kalevi: 'Then, the people who (.) were teaching that course, well they said the word in the way they say it there, at the other end of Lake Inari. And they said that this is the right way, the way they say it. So I didn't go to that class any longer (laughing) to learn new ways.

Interviewer: *[right]. All right...*

Kalevi: *What I learnt in the old days is enough for me. That is where my language class ended (laughing).*

(Interview from 2008.)

Here we can see the tensions between different language constructions and norms, especially with regard to the delicate ideological boundary between what is perceived as standard, and what is the

vernacular or dialect variant of a particular language, as well as who is a native or non-native speaker of the language (cf. O'Rourke, 2011). The different norms related to standard and vernacular language variants manifest in Kalevi's account as tension about the 'correct pronunciation' of one particular word. Now, years later, Kalevi says that he does not even remember what the word in question was, but he remembers vividly the disagreement about the 'right way' to speak. This tension can be seen emerging from the core language-ideological questions as regards to who owns the language and who gets to decide (Coupland, 2003; Heller, 2011). In the language class, Kalevi wanted to hold on to his way of pronouncing the word. This can be interpreted as a discursive constructed stance of his ownership of the Sámi language. Similarly, the teachers at the class wanted to hold on to their view of what is standard pronunciation. Both versions are equally constructed and ideological, and they illustrate the ways in which many Sámi language speakers need to navigate a changing language environment with changing standards and norms.

Kalevi's decision was to leave the course and to refuse to change his standards or norms. His experience illustrates the unintended effects of imposing one language standard in a situation where language boundaries are in constant flux, which is often the case in indigenous and minority language contexts.

The tendency of the discourse of endangerment to reinforce the norm of using one particular standard variant of the Sámi language, and to erase diversity, contributed to a construction of a superstandard Sámi in a situation where the standard itself is in fact constantly evolving, due the endangerment of various variants of Sámi. Furthermore, superstandard Sámi contributes to a gap between the ideological use of standard Sámi and the multilingual and diverse language practices among the language speakers within the community. This can lead to ideological language tensions, as many Sámi speakers struggle with the ambivalence brought about by the contrast between their own dynamic language practices and the dominant (boundary-oriented) ideologies of language and identity. In the cycle of discourse of endangerment, language choices and boundaries can easily become politicised and policed. Within the regime of this discourse, some language practices come to be seen as more authentic than others, an issue at the heart of the next discourse.

Discourse of Sámi commodification

While the discourse of Sámi language endangerment figures in the domains of Sámi identity politics and language rights and revitalisation, there is another discourse, circulating Sámi resources in the novel domain of new economics, especially to the niche markets of heritage tourism, Sámi handicrafts and elements of popular culture. I call this a discourse of commodification, and it is a discourse that attempts to emphasise the shift away from questions of identity and politics to issues of products and profits (cf. Heller 2003, 2011; Leeman & Martínez, 2007; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010). It circulates a shift from a political order to an economic order. The discourse of Sámi revitalisation operates mostly within institutional domains and political frameworks, while the discourse of commodification circulates through relatively unregulated spaces, such as popular culture, marketing and tourism. These less-regimented moments and encounters structure and reconfigure multilingual practices and experiences in different ways. The discourse of commodification licences novel and creative language practices and temporal attachments and appropriations, and by doing so unties the essential link between territory, language and identity that is essential to the discourse of endangerment. In these transitions, new meanings, markets and usages for Sámi languages are opened up.

One such site of tension in Finnish Sámiland has been the use of Sámi symbols and languages in Lapland tourism (see e.g. Länsman, 2004; Saarinen, 1999). Tourism transforms heritage Sámi



Figure 3. The Gielas Hotel in Sámiiland.

resources into a commodity that can be displayed, marketed and experienced. It also creates a flux in language practices. The use of Sámi languages in tourist spaces can be perceived and experienced as anything from a chance to increase awareness and appreciation of the indigenous language, to ‘selling out’ the Sámi heritage. One example of these tensions is the case of using a Northern Sámi name for the new, up-scaled hotel and conference centre in a tourist resort near to Inari village. The name of this new hotel (see Figure 3) is *Gielas*, a northern Sámi word referring (in many explanations) to a narrow ridge, probably referencing here the geographical formation of the area.

So far, hotel names in the Saariselkä resort area have been in Finnish, and related either to nature (e.g. *Tunturihotelli* = mountain hotel, *Riekonlinna* = castle of willow grouse), to one of the key selling points of Lapland, or to names of (often international) hotel chains with an English name combined with the place name (e.g. *Hotel Holiday Club Saariselkä*).

The use of a Northern Sámi word for the name of the finest and newest hotel in the area is interpreted as both a high point and low point of Sámi language practices. On the one hand, it is seen as an index of a positive shift in the perceived value of Sámi languages: no longer stigmatised resources, but emblems of originality and authenticity. Furthermore, this kind of visibility is seen as an opportunity to raise language awareness. On the other hand, various critical commenters have pointed out that most tourists will not recognise *Gielas* as a Sámi word, but will take it as word from Finnish or another language (or perhaps a made-up word), and that it is exactly this kind of usage of Sámi that detaches and moves the languages from their original communities and practices, to be deployed elsewhere, often in a mediated form and for economic gain, but not for the benefit of the Sámi people (Pietikäinen, 2010). In the Sámi context, for example, these practices may be seen at the same time as high points or low points of the new Sámi languages practices.

The discourse of Sámi commodification is also articulated in translocal, multimodal practices in various Inari tourism spaces. With translocality, the local, indigenous resources are combined and



Figure 4. A restaurant sign in Inari.

mixed with global resources, resulting in multivoiced, stylised performances (Coupland, 2007), with a capacity to address multiple, mobile audiences. An example of this aspect of the discourse of Sámi commodification is provided in the following example, which is at the same time one of the first instances of the usage of Inari Sámi in advertising. Figure 4 shows the public sign of a hotel restaurant in the village of Inari.

The multimodal design of this sign makes use of a combination of resources.⁷ First of all, the overall oval shape of the sign is borrowed from the traditional Sámi shaman's drum, a valued part of Sámi cultural practices and tradition. Also, the fish figure is a replica of a sign that appears on the Sámi drum. Next, the colour red in the sign is one of the four main Sámi colours, and is used in the Sámi Flag and on Sámi dresses, for example. Finally, the language choices and hierarchy in the sign index reflect the language policy within this particular hotel. The name of the restaurant, *Aanaar*, is an Inari Sámi word meaning 'the name of the village'. Placing an Inari Sámi word in the highest and most visible position in the language hierarchy, together with the use of a large type-face, simultaneously marks this particular location as an indigenous Sámi place and lends a sense of authenticity and originality to the restaurant. The Finnish and English words for restaurant make the function of the place clear to national and global visitors. The usage of these languages marks this place as a site of mobility.

The particular multimodal and multilingual choices represented in this sign open up various interpretations. Firstly, they illustrate a strategic mobilisation and recycling of indigenous, local and global resources. As a result, we have a translocal, multivoiced sign that can speak indigenous language on a global scale. Alternatively, the viewer can read the sign simply as referring to a good fish restaurant, taking the oval shape as an index of a plate, and the fish to refer to the rivers and lakes next to the restaurant. Finally, and similar to the case of the Hotel Gielas, the use of Inari Sámi in the sign can be seen as a deliberate political language act, aiming at establishing the greater visibility and use of Sámi languages, or as an empty, emblematic use of authentication resources.

The translocal characteristics of the discourse of Sámi language commodification illustrates, in my view, the rhizomatic work on how the commodification of indigenous resources can easily become politicised. The trajectory of the Sámi resources from political spaces into new economic practices blurs traditional categories and boundaries. The cycle of discourse of commodification moves Sámi languages from identity politics into different spaces and practices, and in doing so blurs the boundaries between Sámi language revitalisation practices and economic development practices, two spaces previously kept apart. This movement also gives rise to tensions with regard to 'proper' or 'respectful' ways of using Sámi resources, partly as a result of political struggles and revitalisation practices.

Discourse of carnivalisation

While the discourse of Sámi language endangerment continues to have currency in the fields of language policy and linguistic rights, and as the discourse of commodification captures many of the transitions brought about by novel types of mobility and the new economy, a new kind of multilingual and multimodal discourse is emerging that can be called a discourse of carnivalisation. The term 'carnival' is adopted here from Bakhtin (1968, p. 10), who says that 'carnival can be seen as a temporal liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order'. At the local level of Inari, the discourse of carnivalisation circulates novel ways of contextualising and materialising Sámi languages, beyond the existing and traditional categories, practices, genres and modalities. The carnival discourse may include multimodal designs, humour, irony and language play, as we shall see below.

Bakhtin (1968) further argues that carnival creates situations where regular conventions are broken or reversed, and a different kind of dialogue becomes possible. I would like to argue that the discourse of carnivalisation in the Sámi context provides a way to address multiple norms and diverse realities by creating polyphonic performances, which are important for new identities and creative language practices (cf. Blackledge & Creese, 2010). Such polyphonic performances, as we shall shortly see, test and tease the prevailing norms, employing both fixity and fluidity to create a polyphonicity that plays with previous orders and norms, and whereby former opposites collide and merge with each other and where humour and reflection can be used both as a resource and a commodity. To illustrate this argument, I will turn next to one example of the discourse of carnivalisation in Inari. This polyphonic performance comes from the space of tourism fantasies and paradoxes. Tourism in Finnish Sámiland is one of the main sources of income, with Sámi culture as its major selling point. Tourism is intertwined with the everyday practices and material culture of Inari, a village with a considerable range of tourism services, attractions and facilities (see Pietikäinen, 2013; Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes, 2011).

This particular example of the discourse of carnivalisation comes from a Sámi tourism enterprise focusing on the concept of a reindeer farm. Their main product is a guided tour of a reindeer farm – a paradox to begin with, as reindeers are for the most part untamed animals, but are now farmed and fenced off for the benefit of the tourism business. This attraction is very successful, with over 10,000 visitors annually – a very large number in a village of 750 people. The typical guided tour of a Sámi reindeer farm lasts about 90 minutes and follows an established script of activities, including feeding reindeer, driving a sledge pulled by a reindeer, drinking tea or coffee, hearing traditional Sámi stories and singing (joiking), together with souvenir shopping (for more details, see Pietikäinen, 2013). One of the highlights for many tourists seems to be learning the art of lassoing a reindeer. This particular activity is, I would argue, an example of a polyphonic carnival performance, and I will focus on that aspect next.

The lassoing activity centres around the idea of the tourists learning the ‘key skills of a reindeer herder’, employed to catch a single reindeer from a running herd. In the tourist version, the ‘reindeer’ is a wooden, immobile model, which the tourists try to ‘catch’ by throwing the lasso from a distance of approximately 20 metres. In this interaction, the key participants are the host, the lasso teacher and the tourists. What is especially interesting in terms of the discourse of carnivalisation is the use of Sámi language and other Sámi resources in this interaction. The teacher is an older Sámi man, a skilful lasso thrower wearing Sámi dress. The image of ‘real Sáminess’ is further reinforced by his language use. Regardless of his multilingual repertoire, here he chooses to use mainly Sámi, a language totally incomprehensible to most of the visitors. The following extract is an example of what the teacher says in the teaching interaction when demonstrating lassoing to members of a large group of international tourists. The tourists, who come from various European countries, stand opposite the teacher, follow his instructions, and attempt to throw the lasso.

Example 2.

Jaahaa. Ensinnä pitäs muka näyttää niinku. Na nuuvt ... tästä lentää tuonne.

(in Finnish: ‘All right. So first I should show you this). Like this ... (in Finnish: it flies from here to there.)’)

Na nuuvt.

All right.

Puáđáh-uvks njuárostiđ?

Are you coming to throw the lasso?!

Tain njuárostiđ.

To throw this

Naa. Mun njoomâm tunjin taam suoppânj. Kalga uáiniđ maht tunjin kiává, fattiuh-uv tun poccuu

Well, I’ll coil this lasso for you. We’ll see how you manage, and if you can catch the reindeer.

Lah-uv kuáassin njuárostâm?

Have you ever thrown a lasso?

Väädiba tiegu tiem kiddâ tienávt.

So hold it like this.

– tun piettäáh vala táágu. Tääl piejah kiedâ teehi tuáhá, punjistâh já táágu leggistâh. Tot punjist oovdân ko tyenávt.

... keep holding this. Now pull your arm back, bend it, and throw the lasso. It turns forward when you do it like this.

Next

Na nuuvt. Kalga uáiniđ maht tunjin-kas kiává, fattiuh-uvks tun poccuu kiddâ. Lah-k kuáassin njuárostâm suoppânjáin? Lah-k fattim kuáassin poccuu kiddâ? Toppiiba tiem tienávt –

All right. Let’s see how you manage. Will you catch the reindeer? Have you ever thrown a lasso? Have you ever caught a reindeer? So, hold it like this.

As this extract illustrates, the teacher talks almost entirely in Sámi – in inviting the tourists to take part, in explaining various throwing techniques to them, and in asking them about their previous experience with lassoing. However, he also uses Finnish at the beginning, before turning to Inari Sámi, and there is also one instance of the usage of English, in encouraging the next tourist to step forward by saying ‘Next’. My observations of the host repeatedly carrying out the lasso lesson (almost 20 times during this particular visit) make it apparent that he uses Finnish and English when needed, but does most of his performance in Inari Sámi. After some hesitation, most of the tourists appear to take part in the activity rather enthusiastically, if with some self-consciousness indicated by their facial expressions and laughter. The tourists typically respond to the teacher’s speech in Sámi with a mixture of laughing, cheering and replying to him – either non-verbally (nodding, gestures) or in their own language. Learning a Sámi activity (lassoing) through an endangered indigenous language by a Sámi man wearing Sámi dress is a rich point of authentication on the visit (see Pietikäinen, 2013).

During the lassoing performance, most of the tourists react with laughter to the situation of being taught in an unknown language while gently being forced to perform a probably unfamiliar task. This relates at least partly to the ambivalent role of Sámi in the situation. In this performance, Sámi is treated by the host as an instrumental resource for teaching lassoing, but in the interaction with the tourists, it is transformed into an emblematic resource: part of the experience of being in an authentic Sámi place and interacting with an authentic indigenous Sámi person. These two overlapping functions of Sámi mark a point of carnivalism and laughter. We can laugh along with the participants, and perhaps we can also laugh at them. We can recognise the use of theatre during the tour, while at the same time appreciating this chance to learn more about Sámi culture and witness some of it with our own eyes. My argument is that this performance – like the whole tour – is constructed through a strategic mixture of resources from Sámi culture, local traditions, global cultural tourism genres and the management of time and people into an ambivalent polyphonic performance that deliberately and strategically avoids the previous categories, and offers a temporal point of reflection, as well as crossings between the categories and laughter.

Through this discourse of carnivalisation, Sámi cultural resources are reinvented, relived and renegotiated. In this carnival discourse, the various and often rival languages and practices can come together with all the various social, political, ideological and economic values and functions attached to them. The discourse of carnivalisation manifests itself in the deliberate displacement and subversion of the dominant, established interaction orders, rules and norms, and simultaneously plays with and against these norms. The discourse can be simultaneously reflective, critical and humorous, allowing ambivalent voices to address diverse audiences, and to try to articulate the ongoing, ever-shifting, multidimensional, heterogeneous and ambiguous aspects that constitute the current local Sámi predicament and its diverse realities. For a moment, carnivalisation defines the relationships between participants and categories.

Conclusions: Multilingualism on a geographical periphery

The rhizome of discourses on changing language and multilingualism, as it emerges in the language experiences and practices of Inari, illustrates the various but interlinked ways of understating and practising multilingualism, and in particular the shifting position of indigenous languages within multilingualism. The powerful discourse of Sámi language revitalisation operates across institutional and political spaces, structuring people’s language practices and experiences. The discourses of commodification and carnivalisation, on the other hand, temporarily open up appropriations of novel ways of using Sámi resources, especially in the spaces of the new economy and cultural markets. Together, these discourses circulate different rationalities regarding the conditions and consequences of multilingualism.

These discourses also show how both normativity and diversity have particular and changing values in the emerging multilingual indigenous language contexts. On the one hand, establishing clear linguistic boundaries and categories plays a critical role in the work of identification, differentiation, and political and cultural legitimation for speakers of indigenous and minority languages. On the other hand, idealised models of bounded and autonomous languages conflict with the hybrid, mixed and changing multilingual practices and identities that characterise the lived reality of indigenous and minority language speakers. As a consequence, fixity and fluidity are both valued, while also being objects of constant renegotiation.

The rhizomatic discourse approach adopted in this article to changing language in emerging multilingual indigenous language contexts foregrounds the practices and experiences of multilingual indigenous language users, who are constantly faced with multiple choices. These choices are governed not only by the normative frameworks that are in operation in each context, but also by the different understandings and constructions of what counts as language: what the speakers believe they ought to talk about, and how they describe how they talk (cf. Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Kramsch, 2009; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). The construction of different linguistic resources (e.g. majority and minority languages, first and additional languages, mother tongue and foreign languages) and the relationships between them are present in all multilingual interaction. From the perspective of multilingual Sámi contexts, it seems that this dynamicity needs to be taken as a starting point. Thus, multilingualism can lead to both contestation and creativity in language practices, and can call into question various established perceptions and definitions of language and related concepts. The ways in which they are defined in a particular time and space are extremely revealing in terms of understanding the discourses of contemporary multilingualism.

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2. These projects were 'Northern Multilingualism' and 'Peripheral Multilingualism', both funded by the Academy of Finland. I also wish to warmly thank all the informants, who made the research possible.
3. The interviews were collected by a team of researchers, including Leena Huss, Sirkka Laihiala-Kankainen, Sari Pietikäinen and research assistant Hanni Salo.
4. I am very grateful to Sámi museum SIIDA for allowing me to take this picture to be printed in this article.
5. I wish to thank Brigitta Busch for introducing this activity, and for her help in this subproject, and Leena Huss for her collaboration in designing the data collection in the Sámiland. My warmest thanks go to all the pupils, teachers and parents.
6. The extract from the interview has been edited for readability. The transcription of the interview interaction represents all the words spoken that could be identified. Audible paralinguistic communication, such as laughter and pauses, are represented in single parentheses. In the English translation, idiomaticity is a higher priority than literal translation.
7. Personal communication with one of the designers of the sign.

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