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# Portraits of Three Language Activists in Indigenous Language Reclamation

Nancy H. Hornberger

University of Pennsylvania, [nancyh@gse.upenn.edu](mailto:nancyh@gse.upenn.edu)

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In an approach inspired by portraiture and 'history in person,' this paper portrays three women Indigenous language activists engaged in language reclamation, highlighting the mutually constitutive nature of language and the enduring struggles of Indigenous peoples that are crucibles for forging their identities. *Neri Mamani* breaks down longstanding language and identity compartmentalisations in Peru by assuming a personal language policy of using Quechua and engaging in Indigenous practices in public, urban, and literate spaces. *Nobuhle Hlongwa* teaches a university course on language planning through isiZulu medium and is a key figure in advocating for, negotiating, and implementing multilingual language policy at her university and in South Africa. Though discouraged by the politics of language policy, *Hanna Outakoski* stays in the fray for the sake of Sámi language, as university teacher of Sámi, activist for Sámi at the municipal level, and researcher in a cross-national multilingual literacy assessment of Sámi youth. Though the portraits give only a glimmer of the rich and complex lives, scholarship, and commitment of the three women, they demonstrate the power of individuals in shaping language landscapes, policy, and assessment; and the implementational and ideological paths and spaces for language reclamation opened up as they do so.

## **Keywords**

ethnography, bilingual education, implementational and ideological spaces, language policy, PROEIB-Andes

## **Disciplines**

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# Portraits of three language activists in Indigenous language reclamation

Nancy H. Hornberger

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## Abstract

In an approach inspired by portraiture and ‘history in person,’ this paper portrays three women Indigenous language activists engaged in language reclamation, highlighting the mutually constitutive nature of language and the enduring struggles of Indigenous peoples that are crucibles for forging their identities. *Neri Mamani* breaks down longstanding language and identity compartmentalisations in Peru by assuming a personal language policy of using Quechua and engaging in Indigenous practices in public, urban, and literate spaces. *Nobuhle Hlongwa* teaches a university course on language planning through isiZulu medium and is a key figure in advocating for, negotiating, and implementing multilingual language policy at her university and in South Africa. Though discouraged by the politics of language policy, *Hanna Outakoski* stays in the fray for the sake of Sámi language, as university teacher of Sámi, activist for Sámi at the municipal level, and researcher in a cross-national multilingual literacy assessment of Sámi youth. Though the portraits give only a glimmer of the rich and complex lives, scholarship, and commitment of the three women, they demonstrate the power of individuals in shaping language landscapes, policy, and assessment; and the implementational and ideological paths and spaces for language reclamation opened up as they do so.

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In an approach partly inspired by portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) and ‘history in person’ (Holland & Lave 2001), this paper portrays three women Indigenous language activists engaged in language reclamation, defined by Leonard (2012:359) as ‘the larger effort by a community to claim its right to speak a language and to set associated goals in response to community needs and perspectives’. Each in her own way plays a leadership role in what Hornberger & King (1996:440) called ‘bringing [a language] forward’ to new uses and new users. I seek to portray perspectives, experiences, and voices of these individual Quechua, South African, and Sámi Indigenous language activists in their social and cultural contexts, as emergent and shaped in part through dialogue with me (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) and to highlight the mutually constitutive nature of language and the enduring struggles of Indigenous peoples that are crucibles for the forging of their identities (Holland & Lave 2001).<sup>2</sup>

As an ethnographer of language education policy and practice in multilingual classrooms, schools, and communities, I have always paid much attention to context, consistent with the principles and precepts of my field. Yet, as I reflect on that work and on what I have learned in doing it, I am aware that at the center of those contexts and of my ethnographic gaze has been the individual actor. Whether writing about pupil participation and teacher techniques as criteria for success in an experimental bilingual education program in Peru, successful contexts for bilingual literacy in two Philadelphia elementary classrooms, ideological paradox and intercultural possibility in Andean bilingual education policy and practice, the continua of biliteracy as an ecological framework for understanding multilingual language policies, voice and contentious educational practices in Indigenous language revitalisation, or methodological rich points in the ethnography of language policy, I have consistently found inspiration and illumination in the actions and philosophies of individual teachers, learners, and language activists I have had the privilege to know (Hornberger 1987, 1989, 1990, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revised and expanded version of my chapter, ‘Portraits of language activists in Indigenous language revitalization’, written in honor of Elana Shohamy and her work for the volume edited by her colleagues: Spolsky, Bernard, Ofra Inbar & Michal Tannenbaum (2015).

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to the three activists, whose real names and stories I tell here with their permission and encouragement. I use first and last name interchangeably, in recognition of both the personal and scholarly dimensions of the portraits.

Drawing on a conceptual framework situated in language policy, I relate the three Indigenous activists' work to linguistic landscape, literacy assessment, and multilingual language policy, highlighting the role of the individual actor in them. Critical and ethnographic language policy research going back to the 1980s (early work includes Ruíz 1984; Hornberger 1988, 1996; Tollefson 1991; Schiffman 1996; Jaffe 1999) has brought increasing attention to the language ideologies, structures of power, agentive resistance, and unintended consequences of language policy. In a review of this work, Hornberger & Johnson (2011:285) argue that a primary focus is on the creative and complex ways that 'local actors can agentively interpret, appropriate, and/or ignore [language] policies'. In recent decades, critical ethnographers of language policy make increasingly explicit the interplay between the hegemonies of policy and the power of language policy actors (Johnson 2013) and, as Hornberger (2013:118) suggests, assert a commitment to 'transforming lives through language practices'.

From a critical language policy perspective, linguistic landscapes and language tests can be understood as language policy mechanisms for organising, managing and manipulating language forms, language use and language learning (Shohamy 2006, building on Kloss' 1969 and Cooper's 1989 classic corpus-status-acquisition language policy typology, Schiffman's 1996 distinction between overt and covert language policy, and Spolsky's 2004 language policy model of language practices, beliefs, and management). With a focus on the hegemonies of language policy, critical language testing research documents ways in which language tests serve as tools in maintaining and perpetuating the dominant knowledge of majority groups by failing to recognise or validate minority group learners' previous language or content learning and by enforcing majority languages and knowledges (Shohamy 2001, 2004). With a focus on the power of language policy actors, linguistic landscape research documents the symbolic construction of public space not only by public authorities but also private entities. As individual actors negotiate considerations of public attractiveness, identity expression, and competing sociopolitical forces in the public deployment of linguistic signs, they agentively shape and influence the linguistic landscapes in which they carry out their lives (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006; Hult 2009; Gorter 2013).

Multilingual language policies which recognise ethnic and linguistic pluralism as resources for nation-building have the potential, as I have written elsewhere (Hornberger 2002:29-30), to:

open up new worlds of possibility for oppressed Indigenous and immigrant languages and their speakers, transforming former homogenizing and assimilationist policy discourse into discourses about diversity and emancipation.

While these policies are not without their challenges, I argue (Hornberger 2002:45) that:

linguists and language educators must work hard alongside language planners and language users to fill the ideological and implementational spaces opened up by multilingual language policies; and as researchers to document these new discourses in action so as to keep those ecological policy spaces open into the future.

In pursuit of both of those goals, we turn now to consideration of the three women Indigenous activists and the ways they work hard to fill ideological and implementational spaces for Indigenous language reclamation through linguistic landscape, multilingual language policy, and literacy assessment, respectively.

## **2. Neri Mamani and linguistic landscape in the highland Andes**

A Quechua language activist whose vision for Quechua language reclamation recurrently calls attention to linguistic signs that mark public space is Neri Mamani. She is a bilingual teacher, teacher educator, researcher, and advocate for Indigenous identity and language reclamation across rural, urban, and peri-urban spaces of the Andes. Mamani grew up in southern highland Peru and, at the time I met her in 2005, was a bilingual intercultural education (EIB) practitioner enrolled in the PROEIB-Andes master's program for Indigenous educators at San Simón University in Cochabamba, Bolivia. PROEIB-Andes, founded in 1996, serves the Andean region of South America, enrolling Indigenous bilingual intercultural educators whose languages range from Quechua, with several varieties and millions of speakers, to Amazonian languages with far, far fewer speakers – all of them, nonetheless, persistently marginalised and endangered (Hornberger 2013; Hornberger & Coronel-Molina 2004; Hornberger & King 2001; López 2006, 2008).<sup>3</sup>

Neri's early pride in her family's Quechua roots coexisted with a rural/urban, Quechua/Spanish, Indigenous/Western dichotomy, but later evolved into recognition and advocacy of the importance of using Quechua

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<sup>3</sup> My ongoing thanks go to Luis Enrique López, founding director of PROEIB-Andes, and to all the faculty, staff and students there who have so warmly welcomed me over the years, beginning even before the master's program was officially launched and continuing to the present. My very special thanks go to Neri Mamani for our friendship and conversations together. The following paragraphs draw from my interviews with Neri on 11 September 2004, and 20 and 28 June 2005, and from my participant-observation with her cohort during 2004-2006.

and maintaining rural Indigenous cultural practices in educational, urban, and employment spaces. She grew up in the town of Sicuani but maintained contact with the rural community of her birth, Callalli, during school vacations when she stayed with her grandparents there, herding sheep and alpacas. She and her sisters would dress in the colorful hand-embroidered clothing typical of the region, automatically changing out of it to return to their studies in Sicuani. A sharp distinction between Spanish language, Western dress and urban space on the one hand, and Quechua language, Indigenous dress, the countryside and agricultural work on the other, existed for Neri as a child, but without a conscious sense that this represented 'Indigeness'.

Through her experiences, mobility, studies and work as bilingual teacher, teacher educator, and researcher, those distinctions gradually blurred in her practices even as her identity became more consciously Indigenous. Now, she assumes a personal language policy of using Quechua and engaging in traditional Indigenous practices in public, urban, and literate spaces in her daily life in order to break down longstanding language and identity compartmentalisations. Although these linguistic and cultural practices do not perhaps constitute what scholars have characterised as linguistic landscape in its usual sense of visible written signs, they are, in my estimation, visible and audible expressions of the symbolic construction of public space – expressions of identity consciously influenced by considerations of public attention, presentation of self, and contestation of underlying power relations.

Mamani argues that the use of Quechua is a highly visible marker of Indigenous identity and that strengthening of both depends on daily use of Quechua as a viable language of communication in public spaces:

If we don't use our language, talking on the phone, writing on the Internet, riding public transport, ... going to the supermarket, ... who's going to do it? Language is perhaps the most noticeable, most visible, strongest marker of cultural identity.

She acknowledges schooling as a transformative site for shifting the language's indexical value away from exclusive association with rural life and agricultural labor. As a student in a prestigious master's program that includes an Indigenous language requirement as a criterion for admittance, and in which she and her peers deploy a complex and fluid set of linguistic resources in their academic work, Neri is keenly aware of the benefits of a multilingual repertoire.

Furthermore, she and her PROEIB peers see their use of Indigenous languages as going beyond dichotomised, diglossic, domain-restricted use in education, to visual, aural, digital, expressive, tangible uses in public spaces. They intentionally engage in local cultural practices in Cochabamba and at



sites of Indigenous heritage throughout the Andes. Neri's master's thesis research in what she calls a 'peri-urban' Quechua-speaking community at Cusco's periphery reinforced for her the close connection between language reclamation and cultural practices. Musing on an elder's narration of wedding practices in an 'exquisitely sweet' Quechua she fears will be lost along with the cultural practices, or on the traditional practices and festivities surrounding the handing on of the mayoral *vara* 'baton' in some Cusco communities, or the *faena* 'communal work day' at her own fieldwork site involving all community members in replacing water pipes, she contemplates the continuity and change in language and cultural practice around Indigenous tradition and worries about loss of these practices:

No one shirks their obligation, in fact. I think this is already being lost in the cities. If you don't want to go, you don't. Let's say for the school *faena* 'work day' – I don't go and I just pay the fine. But in the community, no, everyone shows up.

Mamani believes that devolving and protecting Indigenous resources (Smith 1999) includes public cultural practices like these, as much as language on the one hand, or natural resources and material artifacts on the other.

Neri insists that interculturality is not some unattainable ideal, but lived practice in public space; it is cultural dialogue between cultures co-present and interwoven in the same space, co-existing not as separate, pure cultures but with mutual dialogue and respect. She remarks on fluid practices such as an Indigenous person like herself wearing Western clothes or young girls from remote highland Chumbivilcas gathering firewood for their family as they walk with her in the hills of their peri-urban community in Cusco, a habit and task built in to the life of a rural child but not typically part of a city child's thinking. On the other hand, she observes the permeation of 'Western' ways in Indigenous people's thinking and is concerned that urban Indigenous youth grow up without a conscious sense of their Indigenous roots or identity. She advocates for consciousness-raising efforts to counter that trend:

There may be many Indigenous people who don't know they are Indigenous ... in the cities, for example. Migrants come, their children grow up, now they think they are from Cusco... They no longer identify with their community, where their parents came from, their grandparents... Maybe they were born there, but now, they have nothing to do with their past. I say for people like that there should be some awareness-raising, maybe, of who we are, some recognition ... do something so that they too realise that yes, they are Indigenous.

It is not that Neri rejects any and all Western influences. She agrees with Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) Indigenous project of critically reading Western history, but this does not mean for her that 'everything Western since the Conquest is now no good'. Rather, she emphasises notions of dialogue and encounter – the fluid movement, mutual respect and influence among cultures.

Though Neri has a philosophy of language reclamation and articulates and enacts it forcefully, she does not claim to know definitively what it means to be Indigenous. She reflects that PROEIB students engage in continual and never fully resolved conversations, inside and outside class, about Indigeneity. Latent racial and ethnic discrimination surfaces even among themselves at times. Someone points a finger at someone else for not being 'pure' Indigenous, for being too citified. Others identify themselves not as Indigenous, but Amazonian, for example; they start classifying themselves and each other or questioning each other's practices:

We are continually questioning ourselves, our acts, our way of saying things, of dressing, of eating, everything. At times, there are colleagues who don't want to eat a little food from the street, let's say... They'll say – No, I don't want to go to the market because it stinks there... Then, immediately someone comes out and says – what kind of Indigenous person are you? It's true, just like that. And we're always in this... So, the person who hears that also says – oh, you're right. And so, he/she is obliged to reflect and the next minute says – ok, let's go.

Neri's account vividly demonstrates the day-to-day construction of Indigenous identity within the master's program, as she and her peers negotiate linguistic and cultural practice across educational and public spaces. Neri herself is not immune to these questionings and self-questionings; it is in her daily practice and constant self-reflection that she works out what it means to her to be an Indigenous person and a Quechua speaker in the private, professional, and public spaces, the linguistic landscape, of Cusco and the Andes.

### **3. Nobuhle Hlongwa and multilingual language policy at University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

In keeping with South Africa's multilingual language policy of 1996 and the increasing attention to implementing it at higher education levels (Hibbert & van der Walt 2014), faculty of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in Durban, South Africa approved in 2006 a language policy affirming respect for all of South Africa's official, heritage, and other languages, and elevating the status and use of isiZulu at UKZN in recognition that it is spoken by 80%

of KwaZulu-Natal's population (Kamwendo, Hlongwa & Mkhize 2013). Professor Nobuhle Ndimande-Hlongwa has been integrally involved in efforts to promote isiZulu as medium of instruction at UKZN throughout her academic career, both before and after the policy's approval.<sup>4</sup>

As former Head of the School of IsiZulu Studies and Dean of Teaching and Learning in the College of Humanities at the time of my 2010 visit, but also as language teacher, teacher educator, and researcher, Professor Hlongwa has undertaken a range of initiatives to advance the use of isiZulu at UKZN. She participated with colleagues in a three-year interdisciplinary faculty research project funded by the South Africa-Norway Tertiary Education Development Program (SANTED) and directed toward development of discipline-specific modules in isiZulu, isiZulu terminology development, and translation activities (Engelbrecht et al. 2008, 2010; Wildsmith-Cromarty 2008; Engelbrecht & Wildsmith-Cromarty 2010; Ndimande-Hlongwa, Balfour, Mkhize & Engelbrecht 2010; Ndimande-Hlongwa, Mazibuko & Gordon 2010; Ndimande-Hlongwa & Wildsmith-Cromarty 2010). Among the strategies we discussed at some length in 2010 during a meeting with the newly appointed Dean of Humanities and Head of isiZulu Studies was the development of an institution-wide isiZulu Terminology Development Platform, an interactive electronic clearinghouse and website for dissemination and feedback across the university and out to the public. This was a kernel of an idea I later learned had been put into action the following year (R. Dhunpath, personal communication, 14 November 2011).

As language teacher and teacher educator, Hlongwa developed a graduate language planning seminar taught through the medium of isiZulu for which she wrote and published an introductory textbook, *Ukulelwa Kolimi* (Ndimande-Hlongwa 2009). A lively discussion one afternoon in her seminar with 15-20 master's students who are also schoolteachers surfaced issues pinpointing language policy mechanisms that Nobuhle, her colleagues, and students continually grapple with. These include:

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<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Deputy Vice Chancellor Renuka Vithal and Director Rubby Dhunpath of the University of KwaZulu-Natal Teaching and Learning Office for graciously inviting, organising, and hosting my 2010 visit as consultant to the multilingual language policy initiative, and to all the faculty, staff, and students (former and current) who welcomed and met with me during my stay. My particular thanks go here to Nobuhle Ndimande-Hlongwa for generously sharing her time and thoughts with me. The following paragraphs draw from my visit in August 2010 and email exchanges since then.

- the difficulty of categorising South Africans' language proficiencies as first language (L1) or second language (L2) and the need to deconstruct such designations;
- rural and urban varieties of isiZulu and codeswitching/translanguaging practices;
- school learners writing Zulu-ised English words rather than pure isiZulu in their isiZulu-medium classes;
- reactions of parents to new school policies of teaching isiZulu-medium rather than English in the primary grades;
- stigma students experience for doing a master's in isiZulu; and
- need for mother-tongue-based multilingual education in schools and at UKZN to counter the hegemony of English, not to replace English with isiZulu, but in an additive model.

Ongoing tensions of particular significance for Nobuhle and others in implementing UKZN's multilingual language policy revolve around the special role of isiZulu and the School of isiZulu Studies. There are concerns lest isiZulu become the sole, rather than primary, focus of UKZN language policy. This raises questions like: what about other South African official, marginalised, and heritage languages? What about languages spoken by immigrants or foreign students, such as French, Portuguese, and kiSwahili? There are concerns about the appropriate role for the School of isiZulu Studies in the implementation of isiZulu-medium teaching across the university: isiZulu faculty expertise is clearly central to the undertaking, but they are neither enough in number nor do they necessarily cover all areas of expertise required to meet the need. Nobuhle herself is undeniably stretched to the limit in her multiple roles as teacher, researcher, and dean. A 2011 reorganisation creating a School of Arts and within it an African languages Cluster housing both isiZulu and kiSwahili may go some way toward addressing these tensions (N. Hlongwa, personal communication, 19 July 2013).

Nobuhle is the only university professor in her family. Conscious that her family is proud of her, she also feels the weight of personal responsibility for them. Her commitment is not just to her academic field and the promotion of her language, but above all to her family and her people, a heavy burden at times. Nobuhle is in great demand and feels the weight of responsibility to keep the language policy moving ahead. Indeed, with her growing number of publications, Hlongwa's national, and international, career is taking off; she serves as executive member of the International Council on Indigenous Place Names, member of the Ministerial Advisory Panel on the development of African Languages in Higher Education, and is a Commissioner on South Africa's Linguistic

Human Rights Tribunal. She is, in short, a key figure not only in the implementation of isiZulu at UKZN, but of multilingual language policy in South African higher education more generally.

#### **4. Hanna Outakoski and literacy assessment in Sápmi, Scandinavia**

Hanna Outakoski bears the name of the village in which she was born and raised in the far north of Finland, deep within the Arctic Circle, a part of the world known to Sámi speakers as Sápmi, and stretching across northern Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Russia. This wide expanse of tundra is the centuries-old home to the reindeer-herding Sámi people. Hanna's father and grandfather spoke some Sámi with her from early on, but she became fluent in Sámi when she began to spend extended time beginning at age 7 or 9 with her reindeer-herding relatives who spoke only Sámi at home (an opportunity her younger brother did not get, to his regret). Outakoski recently earned her PhD at the University of Umeå, where she is adjunct lecturer in North Sámi language and a strong advocate for Sámi language and people. This is a role she is inevitably drawn to, though one not always comfortable for her.<sup>5</sup>

Hanna comes from a long line of teachers; her parents and grandparents were teachers and indeed her grandfather's grandfather founded the school in Outakoski. At the University, she teaches beginning, intermediate, and advanced North Sámi to new beginners and mother tongue heritage learners, developing and continually updating her own materials; she also designed and piloted a virtual course for distance learning on the *Second Life* platform. Hanna travels long distances to meet with her students, often taking the train nine hours each way. Though Umeå is in the north of Sweden, most of her students are even further north and widely dispersed, so she locates her courses in different towns each year to reach as many as possible and travels long distances to meet with them. North Sámi is the largest Sámi group, numbering about 35,000 of the approximately 100,000 Sámi. While no accurate count exists of the

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<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to Görel Sandstrom, Head of the Department of Language Studies, University of Umeå, for inviting, appointing, and hosting me as Visiting Professor beginning in 2012, and to faculty, staff, and students there for very warm hospitality from the first day. Among the several colleagues who are collaborating with me, my special appreciation goes to Hanna Outakoski for her unfailing warmth, generosity, and tenacious dedication to the development and promotion of Sámi language and Sámi language education. The following paragraphs draw from my visits in the summers of 2012-2015 and ongoing email exchanges and research collaborations.

total number of speakers of Sámi's nine varieties, Hanna estimates that about two-thirds of North Sámi speak the language.

Another consequence of the relative distance of Umeå from the heartland of the Sámi-speaking population, and a source of frustration for Hanna, is that the municipality has provided little offering in Sámi, despite Sweden's seemingly favorable 2010 policies on National Minorities and National Minority Languages (Swedish Code of Statutes 2009:724). Umeå municipality chose to interpret 'basic knowledge' of Sámi to mean that the learner must already know how to read and write Sámi in order to qualify for mother tongue instruction. This is an interpretation nowhere in the law nor in the European Convention underlying the law, which had the effect of excluding a lot of Sámi children in Umeå who might otherwise have received instruction in their mother tongue, including Hanna's own sons who were at the time too little to have learned to read and write, even though they spoke a little and understood almost everything. Hanna, together with other Sámi and representatives for Finnish and Meänkieli that are also included in the national minority languages law, spoke out via the media and in person with municipal officials and eventually:

got the municipality to change the political decision they had made about mother tongue teaching! ... great news for our kids and a great achievement... this time the Sámi fought together with the Finns and we did get our say in the matter. (H. Outakoski, personal communication, 30 September 2012)

Though discouraged by the politics of language policy, Outakoski stays in the fray for the sake of Sámi.

A fluent speaker of Finnish, Swedish, and English in addition to North Sámi, Hanna and her husband are raising their two young sons multilingually as well. Since Umeå had no Sámi language instruction nor immersion pre-school (a language reclamation strategy difficult or impossible to realise for the widely dispersed Sámi population), Hanna enrolled the boys in Finnish immersion pre-school since Finnish is also part of their heritage and so that they could learn another language in addition to Swedish. Though they have now reached school age and are in Swedish primary education, Hanna continues to speak with them mainly in Sámi, while their father uses Swedish and the boys move fluidly across Sámi, Swedish, and Finnish, which they continue to use with a local Finnish-Swedish family network Hanna has helped to create and sustain. She purposefully spends a lot of time with them in 'Nature' which for her is an important part of being Sámi. She worries that her children need to be closer to other Sámi speakers in order to become fluent speakers and is looking for ways for her family to spend more time in the far north. As for so many Indigenous language activists, her roles as teacher, researcher, and

advocate are sometimes at odds with those of parent and intergenerational transmitter of her language; like Nobuhle, Hanna is also stretched in her many roles and responsibilities, and at the same time is unquestionably a powerful actor in language education and policy for Indigenous language reclamation.

Outakoski is a key player in the *Literacy in Sápmi* research project (a three-country study of youth multilingual literacy), by means of a literacy assessment in which youth at 13 schools widely dispersed across Sápmi wrote texts in each of their three languages: North Sámi, English, and the national languages. They each wrote one descriptive and one argumentative text on laptops (with a keystroke logging program installed) that Hanna brought with her to the sites.<sup>6</sup> Ongoing data analysis by the research team takes up a number of questions relating to multilingualism, language reclamation, and literacy development, illuminating aspects of the policy and curricular contexts, academic and identity contents in the texts and in the linguistic landscape, and features and fluency of biliteracy development in the youths' texts (Hornberger & Outakoski 2015; Lindgren et al. 2016; Outakoski 2015; Outakoski et al. in press).<sup>7</sup>

This is not an assessment study in the usual sense of individual assessment. Given that these are children of a national minority and Indigenous heritage in a context of contested minority/language politics, there will be neither identification of nor comparisons between individual writers or schools, but rather any comparisons made will be across languages, countries, text types, or anonymised case studies. It is a descriptive, qualitative study, not a standardised, quantitative one. Yet given its purposes of shedding light on the kinds and characteristics of writing in which Sámi-speaking youth engage in today's world, the study offers possibilities for a democratic, inclusive assessment, carried out in collaboration and cooperation with the youth and their teachers, headmasters, and families. It is designed to provide space for youth to incorporate their own local knowledge in their writing in any or all of their three languages, and protecting and guarding their rights through anonymity.

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<sup>6</sup> This comes to a total of six texts per youth in roughly four age categories (9, 12, 15, and 18 years old) who study or have studied North Sámi as a subject in school.

<sup>7</sup> My thanks go to Kirk Sullivan, Eva Lindgren, Asbjørg Westum, and Hanna for permission to mention the project and for including me in it.

## 5. Final reflection

Though these brief portraits give only a glimmer of the rich and complex lives, scholarship, and commitment of the people portrayed, they demonstrate the power of individual Indigenous people in shaping language landscape, policy, and assessment, and the implementational and ideological paths and spaces for Indigenous language reclamation opened up for themselves and others as they do so (Hornberger 2002, 2005). Neri Mamani breaks down longstanding language and identity compartmentalisations in Peru by assuming a personal language policy of using Quechua and engaging in traditional Indigenous practices in public, urban, and literate spaces. Nobuhle Hlongwa teaches a university course on language planning through the medium of isiZulu and is a key figure in advocating for, negotiating, and implementing multilingual language policy at her university and in South Africa. Though discouraged by the politics of language policy, Hanna Outakoski stays in the fray for the sake of Sámi language, as a university teacher of Sámi, activist for Sámi at the municipal level, and researcher in a cross-national comparative multilingual literacy assessment of Sámi youth.

I hope the portraits convey in some small way the depth and inspiration Neri's, Nobuhle's, and Hanna's lives and words hold for me and for many other linguists, language educators, language planners and language users as we continually seek to open and sustain multilingual intercultural spaces of Indigenous language reclamation.

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