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ENGLISH IN NORWAY'S MULTILINGUAL NORTH

A rhizomatic view on encounters with
historical and transnational diversity

Florian Hiss

Introduction

Second to Norwegian, English is considered the most used language in Norway. Though it is not ascribed any official status in national language policies, the use of English plays an influential role, with respect to language practices and sociolinguistic relations and as part of a much broader linguistic diversity. Linguistic diversity has a central role in the history of Norway's northern periphery. The region is part of Sápmi, the homeland of the indigenous Sámi people. It has also been the home of the Kven people for many centuries, who are acknowledged as a national minority today. Despite official acknowledgment, the Sámi languages and Kven, which is closely related to Finnish, are minoritized and endangered in contemporary North Norwegian society. Multilingual encounters have been part of the everyday lives of many generations, as well as sociolinguistic struggles and assimilation pressure (e.g., Huss and Lindgren 2010; Pietikäinen et al. 2010; Truth and Reconciliation Committee 2033). The current sociolinguistic situation is shaped by large-scale historical processes which include a century of national linguistic and cultural assimilation politics against the Sámi and Kven population from the mid-19th century onward, later, an era of linguistic and cultural reclamation, and, more recently, increased international mobility. In recent decades, people from other parts of Norway, Europe, and the rest of the world have come to the region for study and work, as refugees, tourists, and for many other reasons. The extended use of English goes hand in hand with this recent development. As everywhere in the Nordic countries, English is also central in education, and many encounter English regularly through various media. As a result of the processes sketched above,

contemporary Northern Norway witnesses a multiplicity of sociolinguistic relations between languages and people with very different histories, different language political status, and contexts of language use.

Against this highly diverse background, the aim of this chapter is to explore the multifaceted role of English in the complex and dynamic multilingual surrounding of Northern Norway. Instead of comparing sociolinguistic categories or domains, I will scrutinize three cases of multilingual encounters and try to sketch a multiplicity of dynamic connections within and across these. This includes drawing connections among wildly diverse settings which are typically treated as belonging to rather distinct parts of the sociolinguistic system (e.g., the reclamation of minoritized languages and the impact of international English on a national language such as Norwegian). My approach is inspired by nexus analysis (Scollon and Scollon 2004) and rhizomatic thinking (Deleuze and Guattari 2013 (1980)). A “rhizome” is, in biology, a root network. It has multiple connections and extends in all directions. One of the most important features of a rhizome is that, unlike a tree, its roots do not come together in one central trunk, which dominates the whole system. Any part of a rhizome can be in the middle and connected to any other part. This choice of approach arises also from my own engagement as a researcher with sociolinguistic relations and practices in different social contexts in Northern Norway. One experience I have made is that, though English has never been the main focus of my research, it appears constantly in empirical data. Each of the three cases I analyze in this chapter involves English and other languages. I view these as parts of a vast, rhizomatic network. Each can be viewed as a central point of such a network, or a nexus of practice, in Scollon and Scollon’s (2004) terms. Nexus analysis is a discourse analytic approach that focuses on social action and investigates how various wider and closer contexts come together to shape that particular action.

This chapter is structured as follows: to map the sociolinguistic background, I begin with a brief sketch of linguistic diversity and the position of English in Norway, followed by an overview of the sociolinguistic setting in Northern Norway. Then, I explain the rhizomatic approach and present analyses of the three cases: tourists and locals as addressees of the linguistic landscape in the city of Tromsø; linguistic diversity in the workplace; and the encounter of Sámi, English, and Norwegian in research and higher education at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences (*Sámi allaskuvla*). I conclude the chapter by exploring connections across the separate cases.

Linguistic diversity and English in Norway

Recent publications on linguistic diversity in Norway draw a multifaceted picture with a multitude of languages and varieties, speakers and groups of speakers, contexts of use, policies, and developments on a societal macro level

with an impact on linguistic relations and practices (Bull and Lindgren 2009; Mæhlum 2020; Svendsen 2021). Globalization, transnational migration, and mobility within Norway are among these developments, but also national and regional history, ethnic revival, and the reclamation of minoritized languages.

Norway's new Language Act (*Lov om Språk*, in force since January 2022) provides an overview of all languages with some kind of official status (Ministry of Culture and Equality 2021, §§4–8):

- Norwegian is defined as the primary national language. The two written varieties, Bokmål and Nynorsk, are provided equal standing as written languages.
- Sámi languages are indigenous languages of Norway and of equal value to Norwegian. Sámi and Norwegian have equal standing within the Sámi administrative area according to the Sámi Act (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 1989).
- Kven, Romani, and Romanes are national minority languages and are granted protection according to part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe 1992).
- Norwegian sign language is acknowledged as the national sign language.
- Swedish and Danish are mutually intelligible with Norwegian. Everybody is provided the right to use these languages in contact with public authorities. These may respond in Norwegian.

In addition, Norwegian has a multitude of dialects, which are used actively in everyday life. Also, numerous transnational languages are in everyday use. As Norwegian authorities do not register languages in population statistics, there are no exact numbers of languages and speakers. Just like all transnational languages, English is not mentioned in the Language Act. English has a strong position in Norway's education system, which supports bilingual competence in Norwegian and English (e.g., Bull and Swan 2009; Svendsen 2021; see also Chapter 7). It has also been argued that English is becoming less “foreign” in countries like Norway because it is not only learned for purposes of international mobility or reading English texts but has multiple internal functions in the country (Phillipson 2007). Important arenas for the use of English are media, work and economy, and academia (Bull and Swan 2009; Mæhlum 2020; Simonsen 2004; Språkrådet and TNS Gallup 2015). Typical approaches to the role of English in Norwegian society and Norwegian language focus on English loanwords in Norwegian and the increasing use of English in certain domains (e.g., Bull and Swan 2009; Mæhlum 2006, 2020; Simonsen 2004). Such approaches highlight connections between English and relations of power, status, and prestige within certain domains of language use (Bull and Swan 2009, 236–237).

The sociolinguistic setting in Northern Norway

When considering the position of English in the wider sociolinguistic landscape of Northern Norway, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the region's historical diversity and its shifting and developing sociolinguistic relations. Northern Scandinavia (the North Calotte region) and many of its inhabitants have been multilingual for centuries (Bull and Lindgren 2009; Huss and Lindgren 2010; Pietikäinen et al. 2010). The region is part of Sápmi, the land of the Sámi (also spelled Saami or Sami in English), which covers central and northern parts of Sweden, Norway, and Finland as well as the Russian Cola-Peninsula. Most Sámi-speakers in Norway speak North Sámi, but Lule and South Sámi are also used in public contexts. While the Sámi are officially acknowledged as indigenous people of Norway, the Kven have the status of a national minority. Centuries ago, the ancestors of today's Kven people migrated from areas which today belong to Northern Finland and Sweden and settled along the North Norwegian coast. The Kven language is still relatively close to Finnish, especially northern Finnish dialects. However, both Kven and Finnish have developed independently over time. Since both Sámi and Kven are Finno-Ugric languages, when it comes to grammar and vocabulary, they are quite different from the Norwegian majority language as well as English.

Some communities are historically trilingual. Both Sámi and Kven were subject to national assimilation policies, which lasted from the 1860s until about 1960. One outcome of such policies was that using Sámi or Kven became socially stigmatized (Eidheim 1969). As a result, many Sámi and Kven parents ceased to speak their heritage languages with their children (Lane 2010), which led to language shift in favor of Norwegian in many communities (for an overview, see Huss and Lindgren 2010; Pietikäinen et al. 2010). Activism and political developments in the 1970s and 1980s led to the acknowledgment of the Sámi as indigenous people, the Sámi Act (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 1989), the foundation of the Sámi University of Applied Sciences in 1989 and of the Sámi parliament in 1992, and the acknowledgment of Kven as a national minority language in 2005. There are also strong, ongoing efforts to revitalize and strengthen the Sámi languages and some efforts to revitalize Kven. However, due to historical assimilation policies, many people with Sámi or Kven background do not speak Sámi or Kven.

The situation of the region's historical minority languages (i.e., Sámi languages and Kven in Northern Norway) has first and foremost been studied and described in their relation to the respective majority groups and majority languages (i.e., Norwegian in Norway). However, linguistic diversity in the region is undergoing major changes due to migration and transnational mobility. While historically people used to migrate from the northern periphery, the region has become increasingly attractive for work migrants, students, refugees,

tourists, and others from other parts of Norway, Europe and the world. Production industries in rural communities are, in particular, increasingly dependent on migrant labor. As a consequence, Northern Norway's population is linguistically more diverse than it was just a few decades ago, and speakers of the region's historical minority languages will not only encounter speakers of the national majority language but also of various transnational minority languages. There is no doubt that the presence of English (as a medium of communication or other type of semiotic resource) also plays a central role in this development. Several recent studies show that English is present in multiple arenas of everyday public and private life and in various ways part of multilingual practices, in the linguistic landscape (Johansen and Bull 2012; Pietikäinen et al. 2011), education (Sollid 2019), work and economy (Hiss 2018; Hiss and Loppacher 2021), research and higher education (Johansen and Bull 2012; Thingnes 2020b) and family life (Johnsen 2022). These arenas involve agents in multiple different roles such as tourists, locals, migrant workers, teachers, pupils, parents, children, and researchers. Stressing the complexity of such changing language practices, Pietikäinen (2015, 206) describes the North Calotte as a “dynamic space for multilingual contestation and creativity” and a crucial space for understanding multilingual complexities. With a view to the Sámi indigenous languages, she stresses that discourses of language endangerment, commodification (turning language, culture, nature or other things into commodities with economic value), local history and globalization intertwine in a rhizomatic way.

A rhizomatic approach

Against this background, I will now discuss three example cases from contemporary Northern Norway: language choices in the semiotic landscape of the city center of Tromsø; the social evaluation of linguistic diversity in regional workplaces; and language choices in a Sámi academic environment. All involve different genres of how linguistic and other semiotic resources are used to accomplish communicative and social actions, different agents, audiences, and sociolinguistic relations. Following Scollon and Scollon (2004), each of these can be viewed as a nexus of practice, a “point at which historical trajectories of people, places, discourses, ideas and objects come together to enable some action which in itself alters the historical trajectories in some way” (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 159). Inspired by Pietikäinen (2015), I also explore rhizomatic connections across the separate cases.

Any nexus of practice can be viewed as part of a wider rhizomatic network, as such “trajectories of people, places, discourses, ideas and objects” may come together at other points and intersect with others in a wider, multifaceted, changing, and dynamic sociolinguistic landscape. As outlined in the beginning of this chapter, Deleuze and Guattari (2013 [1980]) borrowed the term *rhizome*

from biology, where it describes a root network, typical of plants such as grass, potatoes, or ginger. For Deleuze and Guattari, rhizomatic thinking is essentially different from using trees as models of explanation (widely used in linguistics), where systems are governed by one central point and hierarchical relations. A rhizome, instead, has multiple connections and extends in all directions. There is no central point that dominates the rest. Any part of a rhizome can be in the middle and connected to any other part. In turn, any part of the rhizome is shaped by the multiplicity of its connections. This also means that any of the three cases can be viewed as the middle of such a wider network and, at the same time, as small instances of a much larger, highly complex, and continuously developing landscape of sociolinguistic relations, agents, places, actions, and practices. With the three cases as focal points of this study, the task is to map multiple connections across the wider landscape. A rhizomatic approach includes, in Honan's (2007, 536) words, the "teasing' apart of various discursive threads" within the example cases and, at the same time, treating all cases as "particular assemblages of meaning that inform others and each other, that do not stand alone (do not stand in the immovable sense at all), and only make sense when read within and against each other." One must also expect to find linkages that bring quite contradictory discourses together (Honan 2007, 536–537).

The three cases were selected because they represent contexts which have been identified earlier as important arenas for using English: tourism, working life, and academia. All three cases also involve historical and transnational diversity, and they exhibit contrasts in how the use of English is contextualized and contributes to the construction of sociolinguistic relations.

Case 1: Tourists, locals, and the linguistic landscape

The first case is based on observations of the semiotic landscape in public spaces in the city center of Tromsø, the region's largest city. Northern lights, the midnight sun, the spectacular landscape, nature experiences, the experience of the Arctic, and encounters with Sámi culture attract thousands of visitors from all over the world. Tourists arrive on cruise ships, by plane, or travel individually by car or camping car. The city of Tromsø with its harbor, airport, hotels, and attractions such as the Arctic Cathedral is an important hub for all kinds of tourists visiting the region. However, the streets, shops, and restaurants are not only used by tourists but also by the local population. Tromsø has inhabitants from more than a hundred different countries as well as many inhabitants with Sámi background. The city center is a highly multilingual space with various multilingual encounters, in spoken interaction and in the semiotic landscape.

As part of an ongoing research project, my colleagues and I have conducted research walks through the city of Tromsø at different points of time to document and discuss the representation of linguistic diversity in the dynamically changing

linguistic landscape. Briefly summarized, our observations reveal that both Norwegian and English are very visible. Sámi text is visible on some official signs and on numerous stickers, posters, and notices, which were likely put up by language activists or other groups or individuals. Other non-linguistic, often stereotypical, symbols of Sámi culture, such as traditional costumes, reindeer, and pieces of Sámi handicraft are also found in the exhibition windows of tourist shops. Pieces of text in other languages are found randomly.

Here, I focus on observations of the semiotic landscape in the surroundings of two shops and one restaurant, situated less than 50 meters from each other. Figure 9.1 shows the exhibition window of a tourist shop. Besides outdoor jackets, the window contains a mounted brown bear. The next window (not shown in picture) presents shoes and blankets and a mounted wolf. The notice on top of the rack states “Women’s softshell jacket, before: 799.-, now: 649.-”, in English only.

Figure 9.2 shows the entrance door of the same shop and part of the outer wall. Two small notices are taped to the door: one informing about opening hours, in English only, and one advertising for excursions which can be booked in the shop. The heading is “Your adventure starts here.” Below this heading is a list of different excursions: “northern lights, whale watching, dog sledding,



FIGURE 9.1 Exhibition window of the tourist shop.



FIGURE 9.2 Entrance door of the tourist shop.

reindeer sledding, snowmobile adventure, whale watching [sic].” The text at the bottom of the sign contains contact information, and there is a stylized reindeer head with large antlers in the lower left corner. The background picture shows a tourist group under the Northern Lights, and, below, two diving orca whales. This notice, as well, is written in English only.

The mounted animals in the exhibition windows as well as the outdoor clothing on sale express connections between the products and activities offered by the shop. This selection of objects in the exhibition window also constructs the region as an exotic and adventurous place.

The representation of Sámi culture is also included in this practice. Reindeer herding is part of the traditional livelihood of (parts of) the Sámi population and one of the most stereotypical symbols of Sámi culture. Reindeer sledding is a typical way of providing experiences of stereotypical Sámi culture to tourists. The stylized reindeer head refers to Sámi culture in a similar way. Inside the shop, one can also find Sámi souvenirs besides depictions of trolls and Vikings. Here, and at most other sites in the city center, Sámi languages are not used in tourism contexts. Thus, we see, on the one hand, instances of the commodification of Sámi culture as a product advertised to tourists. On the other hand, the absence of Sámi language (while other Sámi symbols are present)



FIGURE 9.3 Advertisement outside the supermarket.

can be seen as a consequence of historical assimilation policies. In the wider linguistic landscape, we observe that this status quo is contested by language activists through placing signs and stickers in Sámi in public spaces.

The sense of place constructed here clearly addresses tourists and differs considerably from how Northern Norway as a place is experienced by its inhabitants. For example, wolves and brown bears are, in fact, a rare sight, even though they can be spotted in remote wilderness areas. The use of English and Norwegian reinforces the contrast between tourists and locals as addressees. The large sign on the outer wall (Figure 9.2) states, in Norwegian only, *parkering forbudt* ‘parking prohibited.’ The text in smaller letters below states (in Norwegian) that owners will be held economically responsible for the towing away of cars. The supermarket on the opposite side of the street, shown in Figure 9.3, has *berlinerboller* ‘doughnuts’ and *knekkebrød* ‘crispbread’ on special offer, but the offer is only advertised in Norwegian. This distribution of text in English and in Norwegian suggests that these signs address two different audiences: tourists as customers of the tourist shop and locals as car owners and customers buying food in the supermarket. English and Norwegian, thus, seem to have very different functions and symbolically keep apart different groups of people. The linguistic practice we observe here can thus be described as diglossic: English



FIGURE 9.4 Bulletin board in the restaurant window.

and Norwegian, though used side by side, serve to address and construct two different groups of language users.

The clear differentiation between tourists addressed in English and locals addressed in Norwegian gets blurred, however, in the exhibition window of the restaurant on the same side of the street as the supermarket. Featured in Figure 9.4, the restaurant emphasizes its focus on high-quality regional products, and both locals and visitors come to eat here. The text, written with movable letters on a black bulletin board, is (mainly) in English. It does not provide information about prices or offers, but the language usage is playful and creative and centered around one of the products used in the restaurant, fish. The heading contains the name of the restaurant, *Mathallen* ‘food hall’ and what it offers, *delikatesser* ‘gourmet food,’ in Norwegian. The text below consists of four separate phrases in different font sizes. The first, “fish stories told here ... some true!!!” plays with the English metaphor *fish-story*, which refers to an extravagant or incredible story. This metaphor does not exist in Norwegian. Understanding the double meaning expressed here requires a certain knowledge of English. “Fifty shades of skrei” is an analogy to the book/film title *Fifty Shades of Grey*, based on the phonological similarity of *grey* and *skrei*. The Norwegian word *skrei* denotes cod from the Barents Sea which is caught during the winter season in the spawning grounds along the North Norwegian coast. *Skrei* has played a very

important role for North Norwegian economy, livelihood, and coastal culture for centuries, and it is known as a very delicious fish. This cultural and economic importance is also implied in “In cod we trust.” Here, knowledge of Norwegian language and regional culture is required to fully understand the puns. Though still in English, a sense of localness is constructed in a rather different way than in the tourist shop.

While part of the linguistic landscape can be described as diglossic practices, addressing one group in Norwegian and another group in English, only a few meters away, there is a playful and creative practice, which blurs linguistic and group boundaries. Thus, there is a non-univocal impression of the function of English in the linguistic landscape. Diglossic practices seem to exist side by side with practices that construct languages and language users in a both/and rather than either/or manner. The use of English in this case also connects with different constructions of local belonging, the commodification of indigenous culture, assimilation history, and language reclamation.

Case 2: Linguistic diversity at work

The second case is based on a study on workplace multilingualism in a Northern context.¹ Many workplaces are multilingual arenas because of work migration and international business relations (see, for example, Chapter 8). In addition, the historical minority languages, Sámi and Kven, play a role in regional work and economy. The data for this case are drawn from a telephone survey where we conducted short telephone interviews with representatives from 140 companies in the region. The survey provided quantifiable responses and interview recordings for qualitative analysis. As we called them on the phone, most of the respondents were staff working in the companies' offices, that is, leaders and administrators. One aim of the study was to map the use of and sociolinguistic relations between Norwegian, historical, and transnational minority languages and English in regional working life. Most respondents (89 percent) reported knowledge of English. According to their reports, Norwegian was used most often at work, followed by English, which was used considerably more often than any other language. Of the informants in the study, 4 percent described English as their main working language; 41 percent reported that they used English in some work situations, while Norwegian and, in a few cases, Sámi were the main working languages. Internal communication with migrant employees and communication with customers, contractors, delivery men, and tourists and, in some cases, reading documents in English, were reported as relevant contexts for using English.

Though Norwegian appears to be the preferred choice for most respondents (most of whom were Norwegians with local or regional roots), it is clear from the quantitative data that English has a peculiar status in North Norwegian

workplaces, compared to all other languages. However, quantity alone does not say much about sociolinguistic functions and status, or how the use of English is viewed in relation to other language practices. Here, the recorded interviews reveal a multifaceted picture.

All interviews were carried out in Norwegian. For practical reasons, I present English translations of the extracts. Extract 1 is from an interview with an administrator (here called Ingunn, a pseudonym) working in a research and development company. More than half of the staff in Ingunn's company (highly educated scientists and engineers) had an international background. Ingunn reported that English was used as a common working language in most work processes. As most of the company's customers were Norwegian, external communication mainly took place in this language. During the interview, Ingunn stressed the importance of speaking English to ensure equal integration of all employees.

Extract 1

Interviewer: Which different languages are used internally in the workplace? I mean, among the individual employees?

Ingunn: In principle, that's English. So that everybody can understand. So, all meetings, all information for everybody is in English. And they have as a requirement that one must be proficient in English. But if we have, for example, two from Nigeria. Or, we now have two from South Africa. So, they can likely also, both job-related and privately, speak Afrikaans or their language. Spanish if they are from Latin America, or Portuguese. But eh work-related in general, it's supposed to be English.

[...]

Ingunn: And at lunch, too. I mean, if there are only Norwegians sitting around the table and speaking Norwegian. But as soon as there comes a eh foreigner, (correcting herself) someone we know doesn't speak Norwegian, then also the lunch talk shifts over to English so that everybody will feel included. To be able to take part in the conversation.

The picture Ingunn draws of the multilingual practices in her workplace is unproblematic and positive. Inclusion and mutual understanding are the main motives in her account. English as the main working language seems to ensure equal participation. It does not only provide a shared medium of communication; other languages such as Afrikaans, Spanish, and Portuguese are also given space in the informant's account (by explicitly mentioning languages and speakers rather than for example, "other languages" and "the others") and are put on the same level as Norwegian. Moreover, in less formal settings, Ingunn stresses

the importance of speaking English for including colleagues who do not speak Norwegian. By talking about shifting between Norwegian and English during lunch, she shows that she is aware of the impact of language choices on the interaction order. Thus, choosing English as a means of inclusion is ascribed more than just a symbolic value.

The dataset, however, also contains examples where speaking English at work is presented as a common and necessary, though undesired, practice. Norwegian is considered the norm whereas English is used with those employees who do not speak Norwegian, typically with employees at the lower end of organizational hierarchies in production workplaces. As Angouri and Miglbauer (2014) have pointed out, such practices may mark the otherness of migrant employees; Dorte Lønsmann in Chapter 8 of this volume presents additional problems with the use of English in the Nordic workplace.

Kristian (also a pseudonym; Extract 2) is the local manager of a salmon processing facility, which employed workers from Norway, Poland, Lithuania, Afghanistan, and Somalia. In comparison to Ingunn, he also stressed the importance of English to enable a mutual flow of information. In his case, however, English language practices and requirements involve clearly hierarchical relations. In Extract 2, Kristian speaks about basic requirements of competence in English as a minimal solution.

Extract 2

Interviewer: How is it when you hire new employees? What kind of language competence do you expect from them?

Kristian: Before, we did not pose any requirements other than that they should understand us in at least English. But there is a little difference between the two things. [...] Before, it was like that, that if I said something in English they were supposed to understand what I said. Now we want them to be able to respond in understandable English. That's an essential difference. Because many understand English. But they cannot express themselves back on the same level. We must begin to take that into account.

Now we want them to be able to respond in understandable English. That's an essential difference. Because many understand English. But they cannot express themselves back on the same level. We must begin to take that into account.

Kristian differentiates between understanding English and expressing oneself in English. What he describes is the minimum requirement for enabling a somewhat effective flow of communication. For such minimal solutions, English, though very rudimentary, seems to be the key. Other alternatives such as Norwegian or the workers' own languages are not mentioned. The relationship between the informant and the employees in this case is a clear

top-down hierarchy, where the manager can decide about language requirements and evaluate employees according to these (which is expressed in the example). In comparison to Ingunn's account, inclusion is not mentioned as a primary goal.

In Extract 3, Ove (a pseudonym) is concerned with the integration of migrant workers. When asked about workplace language policies, he responds:

Extract 3

Ove: No, not more than that we, um, try to make our employees who don't speak Norwegian understand the value of, um, if you want to get, um, well integrated in Norwegian society, you have to learn Norwegian. Because speaking Norwegian is part of the Norwegian culture. They would find Norwegian friends and get integrated in a good way.

Ove stresses the importance of Norwegian as key to integration in Norwegian society. His concern is making his employees speak Norwegian rather than English at work. In comparison to both Kristian's and Ingunn's accounts, Ove foregrounds Norwegian society outside the workplace rather than the effective flow of communication at work or social relations in the workplace as the main reason for his argument. This account builds on an ideology of Norwegian society as linguistically homogeneous. Such an ideology contrasts with the linguistic reality of a society which has been linguistically diverse throughout its history (see Chapter 3), but it is shared by many of its members. Ideologies of contemporary Norwegian society as homogenous reproduce the same mindset which historically led to assimilation policies against the Sámi and Kven people.

The survey also shows that Sámi and, to a more limited extent, Kven are in use in some workplaces. However, in many cases the use of historical minority languages depends on individual speakers and often takes place at the intersection between professional and private relations (see Hiss 2019; Hiss and Loppacher 2021).

Extract 4

Interviewer: Does eh Sámi or Kven or Finnish language play any role for your work?

Kåre: No, well, eh it doesn't do anything for our work. It doesn't. But of course, they need to know Norwegian or English. I mean we don't manage to communicate in Kven or Sámi. Whatever that would be. So, it doesn't matter if they have that as a mother tongue but can speak another language. That's fine.

In Extract 3, Kåre (a pseudonym) is, like most informants, a speaker of the Norwegian majority language and does not speak Sámi or Kven. In his account, he expresses the view that the historical minority languages have little relevance for workplace communication. The two languages he considers relevant are Norwegian and English. Kåre constructs a clear contrast between the functions of Sámi and Kven on the one hand, and Norwegian and English on the other. As shown in Hiss (2019), Kåre is one of many respondents who report that neither Sámi nor Kven are used in their companies. Like many others, he also expresses a sense of respect for those who do speak these languages. A close analysis of respondents' reactions to the survey question about the use of Sámi or Kven (displayed in Extract 4) suggests that respondents feel responsible, wish to evade responsibility, or perceive a need for accounting for their responses because the topic is ideologically loaded and involves more general questions of responsibility for loss and preservation of historical minority languages in the region. This intertwines with interactional and professional responsibilities surfacing in the interview setting (Hiss 2019). While Norwegian and English are used much more than Sámi or Kven at work, this points to a relatively widespread underlying awareness of historical diversity. This way of explicitly or implicitly expressing responsibility with respect to historical minority languages differs from the ways in which informants such as Ove and Kristian contextualize the use of English. English appears as a necessary tool, but there is no need to express respect or responsibility for it.

To sum up, the survey data and the interview extracts discussed here reveal a multifaceted picture of English at work. The ideas and discourses which come together here partly compete with each other. English is framed as key to successful inclusion of all employees and equal participation. At the same time, it occurs as a necessary but undesired solution for ensuring a basic flow of communication. While informants highlight the importance of English for workplace communication (in contrast to Sámi and Kven in most cases), it is also subject to language ideologies of national homogeneity that prefer Norwegian.

Case 3: English, national, and indigenous languages in research and higher education

Case 3 describes language choices in the academic environment at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences (*Sámi allaskuvla*), which aims to use Sámi as the main working language. This case is based on a study by Thingnes (2020a, b). Educational institutions, including kindergartens, schools, and higher education institutions, are allotted key functions in current language political strategies for safeguarding and strengthening the use and sociolinguistic status of Sámi (Sámediggi 2018).

Henriksen (2005) discusses the use of Sámi, Norwegian, and English in research publications from a philosophy of science point of view. In the face of experiences of Norwegian losing ground in the domain of academic publication (in favor of English), and Sámi being under pressure in most domains of everyday life, Henriksen stresses that different languages (Sámi, national languages, and English) fulfill different purposes to reach different audiences in academic communication. Henriksen builds her argument on researchers' responsibilities to communicate results to different audiences and, in particular, to share knowledge with their own communities. She concludes that "these challenges can only be met by differentiating the use of academic language(s), and by recognizing the importance of using indigenous/minority languages for academic purposes" (Henriksen 2005, 133).

In her PhD project, Thingnes (2020a) studied the use of Nynorsk and Sámi and surrounding language policies in Norwegian institutions of higher education. In her analysis of the language policies and practices at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences in Govdageaidnu/Kautokeino, she describes an institutional language policy that aims at making Sámi the main language for all activities and a vision that views the institution as deeply rooted in the Sámi indigenous community and indigenous knowledge, values, and mindset and, at the same time, on par with other institutions in international academia (Thingnes 2020b, 153–154). For her analysis, Thingnes studied policy documents, conducted interviews with staff and students, and carried out a quantitative review of the staff's academic publications. Her findings show that the linguistic practices among the staff are largely in line with Henriksen's (2005) call for differentiating the use of academic languages: "[...] different languages are used for different purposes. This is especially true for Norwegian and English, languages used almost exclusively for external communication. Internal communication, on the other hand, is in Sámi" (Thingnes 2020b, 168). Thingnes (2020b, 166) stresses that English is the most frequently used language for academic publishing, also in the case of the Sámi University of Applied Sciences. At the same time, she shows that rather than constituting a threat to Sámi, English has a multifaceted role. On the one hand, she shows that staff "experience the same pressure to use English as other researchers in Norway do" (Thingnes 2020b, 167), for example, in international journals and research proposals. On the other hand, English is highlighted as a pivotal tool for indigenous collaboration, "connected to a common Indigenous discourse where English is used to communicate" (Thingnes 2020b, 168). As such, her informants experience English as less threatening to the use of Sámi compared to Norwegian. What Thingnes describes here nuances the picture of English as "bulldozer language" or "Public Enemy No. 1" with respect to global linguistic diversity (e.g., Heller and Duchêne 2007, 5) and underpins its importance for Sámi and other indigenous communities in a globalized world. In summary, the use and choice of English in this case is

formed by trajectories of discourses such as assimilation history and language reclamation, international academic communication, local community relations, and global relations with other indigenous communities.

Comparing the case studies

Until this point, I have discussed each single case separately and shown how a variety of discourses, relations, practices, people, and ideas come together in each of them. As such, each case can be understood as a nexus of practice. As a final step in this chapter, I now examine and discuss connections between and across the different cases as parts of a greater sociolinguistic landscape. Taking a rhizomatic perspective, I presume that each case as a particular assemblage of meaning informs – and is informed by – others and thereby does not stand alone, that is, that these “only make sense when read within and against each other” (Honan 2007, 536).

Comparing the three cases to each other, one can see commonalities as well as discourses that surface in particular ways in each of the cases. Despite all differences, the three cases display commonalities with respect to the position of English, which cannot be described in terms of simple linear relations or hierarchies.

In the case of the linguistic landscape in the city of Tromsø, we see a seemingly clear diglossic distribution of Norwegian and English in some of the signs in the surroundings of the two shops, which, again, gets blurred when we look at the way English and Norwegian are intertwined in the exhibition window of the restaurant. In the case of the workplaces (case 2), English appears, on the one hand, as key to collaboration and inclusion and, on the other hand, as a minimal and rather undesired solution, while Norwegian is considered key to social integration. In the case of Sámi academia, discourses of English being a threat to linguistic diversity encounter a reality in which English appears as less threatening than Norwegian (Thingnes 2020b) and plays a crucial role in academic exchanges between indigenous communities. In each of the cases, we recognize a multiplicity of connections surrounding the use of English, and, as we have seen, some seem quite contradictory. Taking the three cases together, the relations between English and other languages in Northern Norway appear as rather disorderly and dynamic – which supports the view that orderly multilingualism is a myth (Wee 2022). Hierarchies – placing English toward either the top or the bottom – seem to exist, but they are limited to particular contexts. This fits with the observation by Pietikäinen et al. (2011, 295) of nested linguistic hierarchies in the linguistic landscape of the North Calotte. Such a non-univocal picture of the position of English in different sociolinguistic contexts is also revealed in other Nordic studies. For example, Hult (2012, 251) analyzes the localization of English as a global language in Swedish education policy and

describes a discursive space where the negotiation of different views about the status of English plays out. Lønsmann (2015) shows how language ideologies of English as providing access to international business and Danish as a national language compete in a Danish company. Beiler (2023) identifies a gap between anglo-normative policies and a language regime that prioritizes Norwegian in language education, which shapes challenges for immigrant students.

Across the three cases discussed in this chapter and beyond, we see a widely diverse range of people, places, discourses, ideas, and objects, which come together at various points and affect the choice, use, and metalinguistic contextualization and evaluation of English and other languages. As noted, some of these may be in conflict with each other, which opens spaces for negotiation and dynamic developments. It is this multitude of circulating discourses – not only increased linguistic diversity – which makes sociolinguistic relations more complex. It is clear from the cases that English has a role in the complex sociolinguistic landscape of Northern Norway. This role needs to be described in terms of complexity and dynamic developments rather than orderly relations and linear hierarchies.

Note

- 1 Additional findings are published in Hiss (2019) and Hiss and Loppacher (2021).

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