

Stories and lessons from Indigenous education

Prof. Nancy Hornberger, The Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania,

USA

In this paper, I tell four stories illustrating lessons I have learned in my work with Indigenous communities, language activists and educators over the past four decades. Ethnographers' stories are the fruit of painstaking, detailed, and often long-term participant observation, interviewing, and document collection in specific places, with the goal of understanding, analyzing and interpreting peoples' ways of speaking, doing, being, thinking, and feeling *in that place*. Ethnographers' stories are also informed by the ethnographer's own ways of speaking, doing, being, thinking, and feeling, as well as by a store of theoretical and empirical research – in my case my own and others' research on bilingualism and bilingual education, sociolinguistics, anthropology of education, language policy and planning, and Indigenous language revitalization, and the conceptual framework I have developed and worked with, written and published about--the Continua of Biliteracy contexts, media, content, and development.

The stories I tell here come from the highland Andes across several decades, the Amazonian rainforest in the 1990s, and Sápmi in the global far north in the 2010s. The lessons highlighted are: (1) National multilingual language education policy opens up ideological and implementational space for Indigenous education. Local actors fill those spaces when they appropriate, interpret, and at times resist OR expand beyond those policy initiatives. (2) Communicative repertoires in Indigenous education go beyond multilingual speaking and writing to include also graphic, artistic, gestural, kinesic, digital and other communicative modes. The multimodal, multilingual ecology of languages, which characterizes language learning and teaching practices in these spaces offers potential to strengthen each participant's communicative repertoire while simultaneously fostering peer interaction and cooperative learning. (3) Indigenous education affords spaces for reclaiming, reaffirming, and revitalizing Indigenous ways of speaking, doing, being, thinking, and feeling. (4) When classroom practices are effective in fostering dynamic development of Indigenous learners' language and literacy, it is perhaps because of using their language in ways that mediate voice, as expressed through dialogism, meaning-making, access to wider discourses, and the taking of an active stance. Indigenous voices thus activated can be a powerful force for constructing more just and democratic societies in our globalized and intercultural world.