

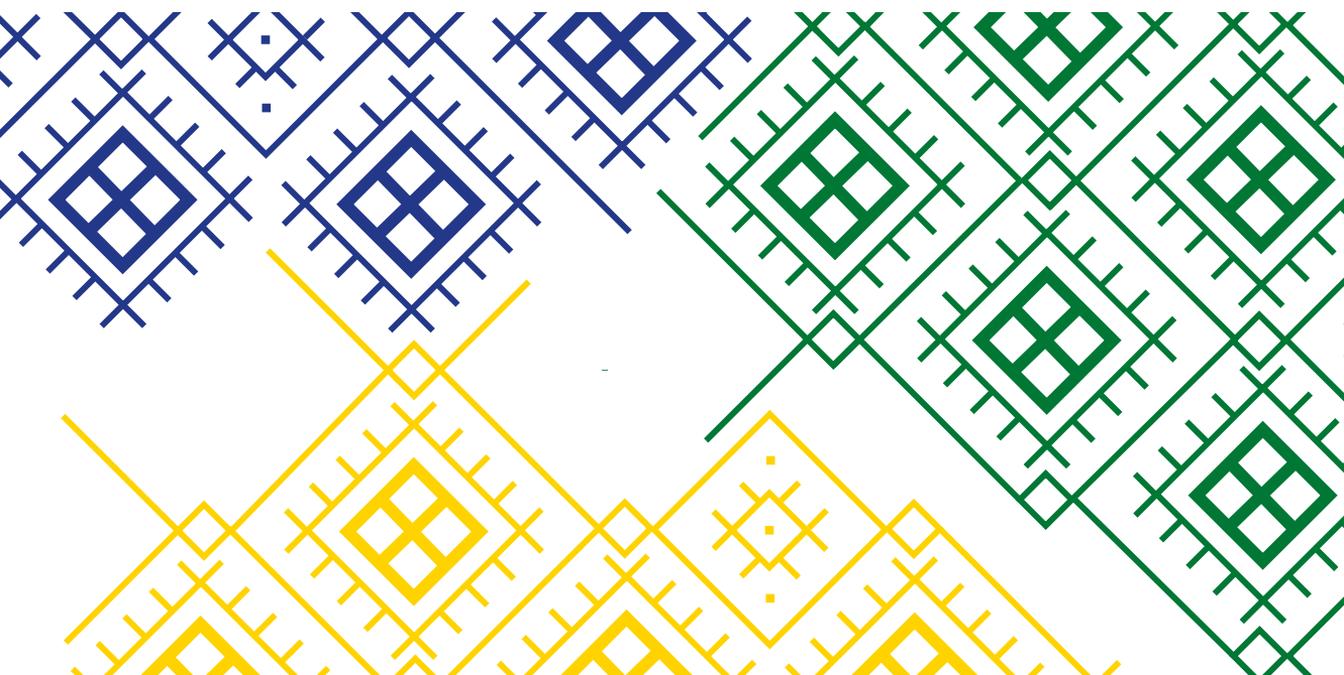
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Special issue

Indigenous knowledge and languages in interaction –
Amazonian and Arctic approaches

Guest editors

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Justino Sarmento Rezende Tuyuka Dupó
Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen

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Foreword to the special issue: Indigenous knowledge and languages in interaction – Amazonian and Arctic approaches

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This special issue connects Indigenous studies, linguistics, and Indigenous anthropology in Amazonian and Arctic contexts. These two regions have unique cultural and ecological diversity, and their own challenges and opportunities related to the vitality of Indigenous languages and traditional knowledge systems. Besides Indigenous knowledge and languages in diverse contemporary contexts, this special issue also looks at methodological and ethical approaches, as well as new language technologies developed to support the study, renewal and vitalization of Indigenous languages in both regions.

The collection of texts results from the exchange project “Indigenous Studies on languages, traditional knowledge and the environment within Amazonian-Finnish collaboration,” funded by the Team Knowledge Finland program of the Finnish National Agency for Education. The project enabled knowledge synergy between the UH–University of Helsinki, UFAM–Federal University of Amazonas located in Manaus, and UFPA–Federal University of Pará located in Belém, Brazil. Between 2022 and 2024, it supported teaching and research visits, seminars, and workshops for faculty members and doctoral students. For many researchers, particularly for those travelling to Northern Europe or South America for the first time, this was a significant and transformative experience.

To make universities diverse, it is important that different Indigenous researchers can participate actively in academia beyond the regions and countries where their territories are located. While preparing our Foreword, one of us guest editors, Justino (Sarmiento Rezende Dupó), a Tuyuka scholar, contextualized the current Amazonian situation of Indigenous researchers with his personal experience and view:

“Over years and decades, countless people from diverse cultures, territories, and nationalities have enriched my life journey, which I began in a small village called Onça-

igarapé in 1961. My entry into university opened the door to a broad range of knowledge and led me to engage with different academic spaces both nationally and internationally. Between 2023 and 2024, I participated in the knowledge exchange project between the three universities: University of Helsinki (Finland), Federal University of Pará and Federal University of Amazonas (Brazil). I participated in two exchanges, one in Finland and one in Manaus.

The act of leaving one's own country and arriving in another is, in itself, a profound learning experience building interculturality and internationalizing knowledge. For us Indigenous people—Silvio Sanches Barreto (Bará), Rosijane Fernandes Moura (Tukano), Justino Sarmiento Rezende (Tuyuka) and Francisco Apurinã—who are researchers in training, it was a great linguistic challenge, because we didn't speak English. Yet, the linguistic difficulties were overcome through the presence of Brazilian colleagues, who spoke English, and people who spoke Portuguese. Thus, linguistic bridges were built, and, through them, we were able to take our Indigenous knowledge to professionals from another continent. And, from there, we managed to internalize the knowledge of the Sámi people as well as the research results of researchers carrying out studies with Indigenous peoples from different areas.

The collaborative project between the researchers from the three universities resulted in a reciprocal enrichment. Each researcher shared the knowledge developed over many years of study, acquired through extensive travel and long-standing relationships with numerous interlocutors in the field. The Brazilian Indigenous participants and Sámi researchers contributed with specific knowledge from their respective peoples. Every exchange period served to share life experiences and research practices. With a distinct life trajectory, each researcher continues advancing, deepening, and making visible knowledge they carry.”

This reflection stresses, on the one hand, the challenges faced by Amazonian Indigenous researchers in accessing higher education and overcoming language barriers, and on the other, the efforts to build bridges that bring different Indigenous knowledge systems to new academic spaces.

Despite the vast distance between the continents of our universities (UH, UFPA, and UFAM), during the exchange, there were no barriers to understanding the deep connections between Indigenous languages, ways of knowing, and ecological perspectives. Interconnections of biodiversity, and cultural and linguistic diversity have been evident for a long time, and this special issue celebrates the richness of Indigenous languages and their unique capacity to carry specific philosophies, ecologies, and socio-cosmologies.

The special issue includes four peer-reviewed articles and eight essays. Each contribution is shaped by the authors' personal experiences and dialogues with different interlocutors. The texts evoke multiple sensory dimensions (flavors, scents, sounds, and images) and guide readers through a variety of territorialities where knowledge of different peoples emerges. They take us to the Brazilian Amazon, with contributions from José Carlos Almeida Cruz, Jimena Bigá, Marília Ferreira and Tereza Tayná Coutinho Lopes, Justino Sarmiento Rezende Dupó, Silvio Sanchez Barreto, and Tânia Hachem, Sidney Facundes and Antônio José de Souza (Wātu), and to Fennoscandinavia, with the contribution by Hanna Ellen Guttorm.

In the accelerated process of change, the vitality of Indigenous languages and knowledge remains at risk. Yet, this vulnerability also gives rise to feelings of resistance and further

valuation of Indigenous languages and knowledge systems. Examples of these transformations and preservation efforts are addressed in the contributions by Jaqueline Wajuru and colleagues, Gessiane Lobato Picanço, and Jack Rueter and Niko Partanen. Some of the texts are shorter but reflect key topics discussed during our exchange project, such as Francisco Apurinã's text on the Indigenous heritage objects repatriated from museum collections to their original communities.

The themes of this special issue remain open to further development, deepening, and renewal. We hope that future collaborations will continue to expand academic dialogue between Amazonian and Arctic peoples. The investments that the universities make in academic exchange projects can encourage researchers to rethink their research methodologies, educational practices, and means of establishing research grounded in care and linguistic sustainability. Languages, traditions, knowledge systems, and societies are constantly evolving, and most importantly, a growing number of Indigenous scholars are entering universities and graduate programs, becoming researchers who bring their own epistemologies to a wide range of academic fields.

This introduction and Justino Rezende Sarmiento's text were translated from Portuguese by Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen and the texts by José Carlos Almeida Cruz and Silvio Sanchez Barreto were translated by Luiz Costa. Several texts in this special issue were revised by Mark Shackleton and Abi Graham.

We would like to express our gratitude to the reviewers, and to the Finnish National Agency for Education for its financial support. Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen extends her thanks to her project co-leaders Sidney da Silva Facundes (UFPA) and Thiago Mota Cardoso (UFAM) for collaboration. We are also grateful to the EDGES project for allowing a further synergy between our institutions, and finally, to the Dutkansearvi Sámi Language and Culture Research Association for opening this space to our special issue. In this way, the Dutkansearvi journal is also better able to reach researchers in different continents.

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