



Enhancing language revitalization through transdisciplinary collaboration

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Outline

Introduction

Applied Linguistics

Assessment

Proficiency Guidelines

Communicative Competence

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
ACTFL



















Discussion

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The Arctic



Arctic peoples subdivided according to language families

 Indo-European family	 Isolated languages (Ketic and Yukagir)
 Germanic branch	 Eskimo-Aleut family
 Uralic family	 Inuit group (of Eskimo br.)
 Finno-Ugric branch	 Yupik group (of Eskimo br.)
 Samoyedic branch	 Aleut branch
 Altaic family	 Na-Dene family
 Turkic branch	 Athabaskan branch
 Tungusic branch	 Eyak branch
 Chukotko-Kamchatkan fam.	 Tlingit branch

Arctic circle
Arctic boundary according to AMAP
Arctic boundary according to AHDH

Notes:
Areas show colours according to the original languages of the respective indigenous peoples, even if they do not speak their languages today.
Overlapping populations are not shown. The map does not show exact boundaries between the individual language groups.
Typical isolated languages, which are not traditional Arctic languages are not shown (Danes in Greenland, Russians in the Russian Federation, non-native Americans in North America).



My work in the Arctic

- ▶ in Greenland: Kalaallisut (Unangan-Yupik-Inuit language, majority language, robustly spoken but potentially vulnerable due to small speaker population (50,000), rapid urbanization, high levels of multilingualism)
- ▶ in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Russia:
 - ▶ Sakha or Yakut: (Turkic), 450,000 speakers, (slight) majority language in Sakha Republic
 - ▶ Even and Evenki: (Tungusic) reindeer herders & hunters; a larger percentage of the Even population speak (5656 of 15,071) than Evenki (4802 of 21,008)
 - ▶ Tundra Yukaghir: less than 50; Forest Yukaghir: 5
 - ▶ Chukchi: (Chukotko-Kamchatkan), 5095 speakers



РУССКИЙ

AN ARCTIC COUNCIL PROJECT

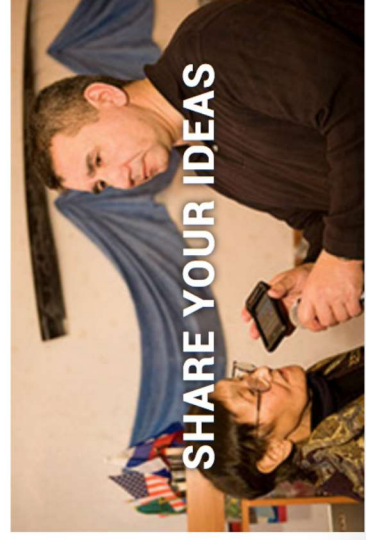
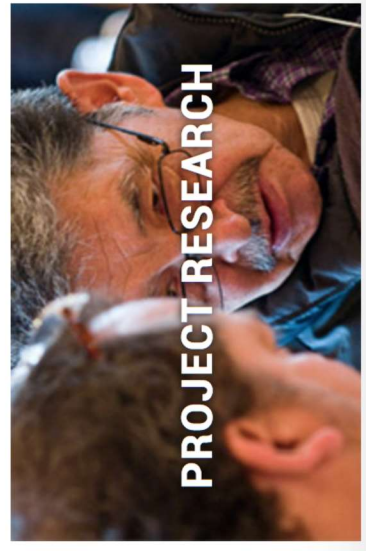


ARCTIC LANGUAGES
VITALITY

THE PROJECT ASSESS PROMOTE ENGAGE CONTACT



ASSESSING, MONITORING, AND PROMOTING ARCTIC INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES



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Introduction

- ▶ Language revitalization takes many forms
 - ▶ school programs
 - ▶ community-based programs
 - ▶ summer camps
 - ▶ family language planning
 - ▶ one-on-one learning (e.g. Master-Apprentice)
- ▶ Revitalization programs differ and may
 - ▶ involve differing age groups
 - ▶ involve speakers with differing levels of proficiency
 - ▶ have various goals
- ▶ Languages vary in terms of vitality

Common goals include:

- ▶ increasing the number of speakers
- ▶ increasing the proficiency of speakers
- ▶ increasing the domains of language use
- ▶ improving self-esteem

Note: these are not the only goals, and we will be revisiting this list all week long, I predict (at least I will)



- ▶ Language ecologies differ
- ▶ Language revitalization programs differ

A common element in many is the **adult learner**

- ▶ parent generation that has grown up not knowing the target language
- ▶ efforts are undertaken to teach these adults the language through some sort of structured learning environment

Some concepts

Terminology

- ▶ target language (L2)
- ▶ dominant language (L1)
- ▶ inter-, multi-, transdisciplinarity

Acquisition paths

- ▶ structured/formal language education
 - ▶ (versus unstructured, “mother’s knee” or “natural transmission”)
- ▶ Focus today: teenage & adult L2 learners

Inter-, multi- or transdisciplinary?

- ▶ Often these three terms are used interchangeably



Inter-, multi- or transdisciplinary?

- ▶ Often these three terms are used interchangeably
- ▶ *alternatively*, **transdisciplinarity** can be distinguished from multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity
- ▶ inter- and multidisciplinary are used interchangeable although one could argue that
- ▶ *maybe*: **interdisciplinarity** goes a step further in also implying that disciplines need to truly integrate their research work and outcomes.
- ▶ *in contrast*: **multidisciplinarity** could mean that different disciplines are represented in a common project but they work relatively independently from one another **and**
- ▶ not a lot of integration and actual exchange and cooperation between the disciplines takes place.



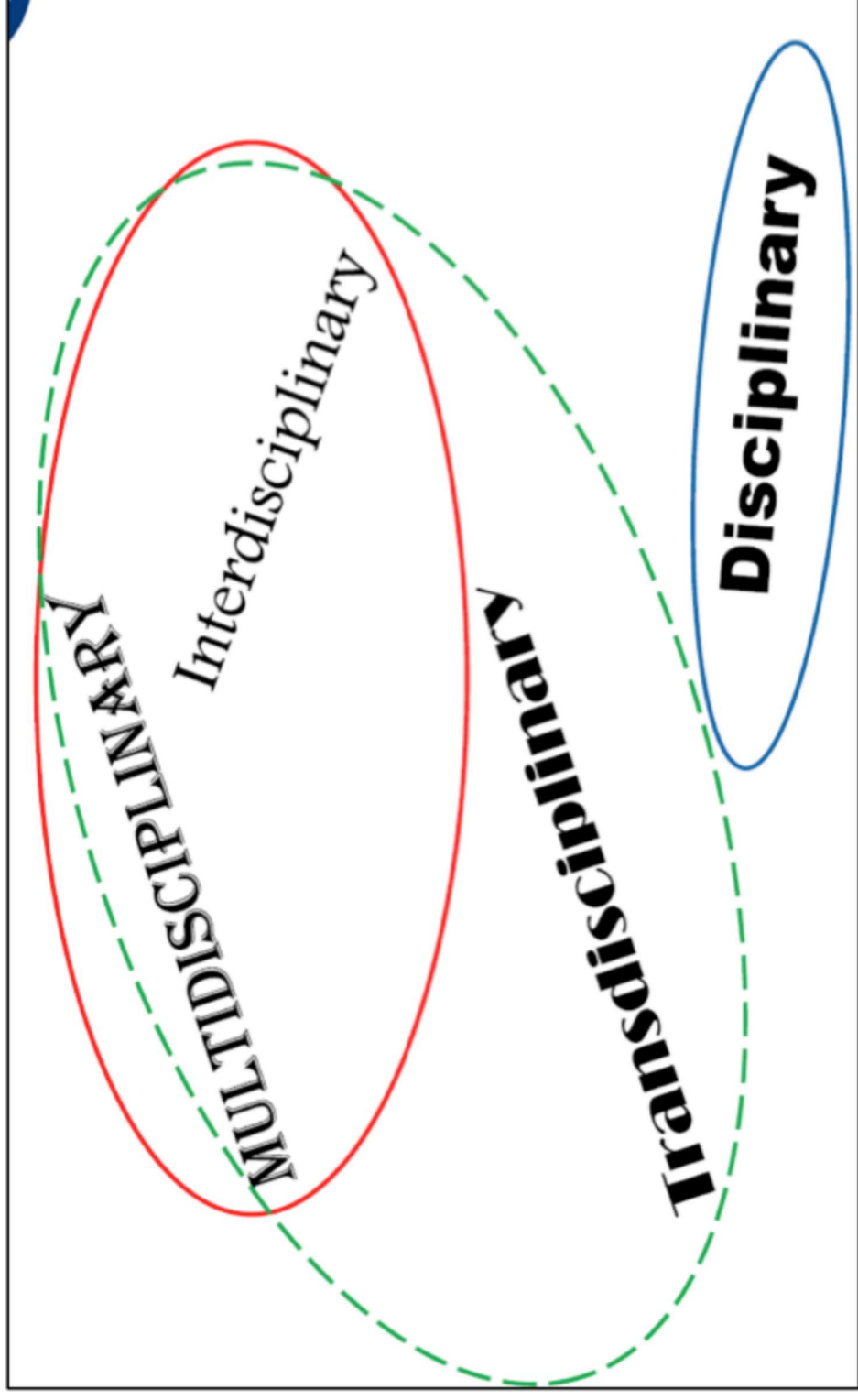
- ▶ Transdisciplinary research: cuts “across disciplines, integrating and synthesizing content, theory and methodology from any discipline area which will shed light on the research questions” (Russell 2000)
- ▶ **Researchers invent new science** together by exploring research questions at the intersection of their fields through joint research projects (Gray 2008)
- ▶ transdisciplinarity promotes new “theoretical, conceptual, & methodological reorientation” (McMichael 2000)

Interdisciplinarity in the Arctic

- ▶ Arctic researchers are increasingly required to use inter-/multi-/trans-disciplinary approaches to research
- ▶ one example: *Belmont Call for Proposals on Arctic Observing and Research for Sustainability* states:

“all proposals must integrate across the natural sciences and social sciences and should include an interdisciplinary, multinational approach, demonstrate strong relevance for user needs, and examine a variety of coupled interactions and feedbacks among relevant systems”

- ▶ **transdisciplinary research** is appropriate when your research is not or not only about science delivering solutions mono-directionally (i.e. only for scientific purposes), **but** when it is (also) about co-development where science is only one piece of the puzzle, **and** where the aim is to co-develop a range of options that support societal transformation pathways (Stephens 2015)

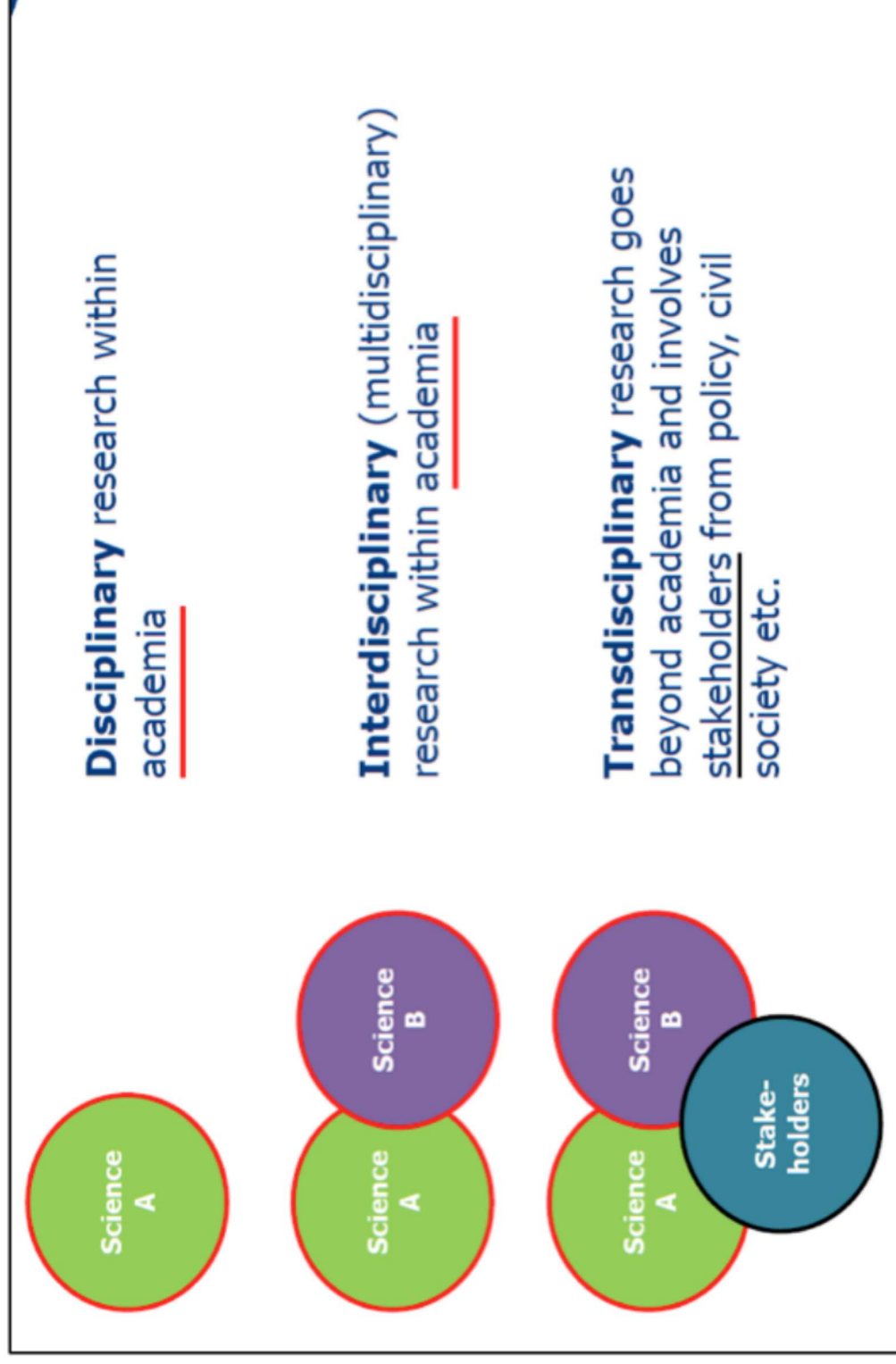


[Kathrin Stephen](#) | The Arctic Institute

The Solution

Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) puts at *the core of its transdisciplinary approach the engagement of societal stakeholders in all phases of the research process*, where it appears sensible and possible to do so.

These phases range from topic identification and process design to generation of solution-oriented knowledge to discussion with societal stakeholders.



(Stephen 2015)



- ▶ For which questions is inter- and transdisciplinary work sensible, relevant and possible?
- ▶ For which are such approaches not recommended?
- ▶ How to share the burden between disciplines in such approaches?
- ▶ How to avoid silo knowledge or how to achieve true integration of different disciplines and with societal knowledge and concerns?
- ▶ How to inform each other about assumptions, ideas, models, approaches, concepts etc.? How to convey the general thinking behind one's work, the "101" of each subject or how it generally works?
- ▶ What is the context-dependent "right" relationship between disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work?

(Stephen 2015)

Partners

- ▶ Non-academic partners
- ▶ Academic partners, but which disciplines?

Applied Linguistics

- ▶ multidisciplinary approach to practical problems presented to learners and speakers of language
- ▶ In a strong interpretation, stands at the intersection of:
 - ▶ formal linguistics
 - ▶ speech pathology
 - ▶ sociology
 - ▶ psychology
 - ▶ anthropology
 - ▶ cultural studies
 - ▶ education

(Pennycook 2001)

Beginning with Assessment

- ▶ Much current foreign-language teaching in the US is based on teaching communicative competence
- ▶ Creating college language competency assessment and work backwards to create the curriculum
- ▶ This involves: setting goals
- ▶ and then assessing if you have achieved them

Daily Formative Assessments in Second Language Acquisition

The teacher sets the following **Instructional Target**:

- ▶ Students will speak spontaneously about an unexpected (but familiar) topic for one minute using sentences that are meaningful, appropriate, and comprehensible.

To help students meet the instructional target, the teacher has the students practice different “language functions” that cross topics and situations.

Concrete example

Ask the 5 Ws — Plus Which and How: Student is directed to address a topic and ask: Who, What, Where, When, Why, Which, and How. For example, the topic is “the neighborhood” :

- ▶ (Who?) The tall man lives here.
- ▶ (What?) He drives a blue car.
- ▶ (How?) He goes fast.

(Tuttle 2012)



Zoom In:

- ▶ Student is asked to start broadly with a topic and then pick something or someone to “zoom in on” to give focus and details.
- ▶ Sarah selects the strategy of zooming in and practices this strategy for the topic of describing her family. Sarah brings a family picture to class or uses her phone to show a picture of her family.



Go to the Voki site (<http://voki.com>). Voki is a program to create speaking avatars (i.e., a graphical representation of the user, such as a businessperson or a dog). They record their voice. Students report that they often re-record themselves several times to improve their quality of speaking.



www.voki.com

CREATOR PRESENTER CLASSROOM TEACH APP PRODUCTS PRICING

FAQ | Support | Log In

SPEAKING CHARACTERS FOR EDUCATION

EDUCATE, ENGAGE, ENJOY!

TRY IT - IT'S FREE

▶ WATCH THE VIDEO



The screenshot shows the voki.com website. At the top is a navigation menu with the following items: CREATOR, PRESENTER, CLASSROOM, TEACH, APP, PRODUCTS, and PRICING. Below the menu are links for FAQ, Support, and Log In. The main content area features a dark purple background with the text: "CREATE YOUR OWN HUNDREDS OF CUSTOMIZABLE AVATARS". Below this text are two orange buttons: "TRY IT - IT'S FREE" and "▶ WATCH THE VIDEO". The background of the banner is filled with various colorful, stylized avatars, including a blue-skinned man with a beard, a woman in a pink dress, a man in a top hat, a woman in a fur-lined coat, a man in a gold helmet, a woman with wings, and a blue unicorn.

The students are asked about specific topics and situations, with communicative goals such as:

- ▶ socializing,
- ▶ providing and acquiring information,
- ▶ expressing personal feelings and opinions, and
- ▶ getting others to adopt a course of action.



Proficiency Guidelines

Why look at proficiency guidelines?

- ▶ Proficiency guidelines informed by research in language acquisition, psycholinguistics, education
- ▶ Communicative language teaching

National and Regional Guidelines include:

1. CEFR = Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
2. ACTFL = American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages



Communicative Competence

- ▶ Communicative competence: includes cultural knowledge and knowledge of social conventions
- ▶ Knowing how to speak includes: knowledge of turn-taking mechanisms, appropriateness of nonverbal behavior, and so on.
- ▶ Documentation of communicative practices aimed at teaching such competence will bring about a rich documentation of language as culturally-situated and culturally-mediated, an ethnography of communication
- ▶ Proficiency guidelines aimed at teaching & assessing **communicative competence**

(Savignon 2002)



Communicative Competence

Theoretical foundations of CEFR & ACTFL informed by:

- ▶ concern with speech communities & integration of language, communication, & culture
 - ▶▶ *language as social behavior*
- ▶ context of situation viewed as central to understanding language systems & how they work (see Halliday, Firth, Hymes)



Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

- ▶ adopts an action-oriented approach
- ▶ language users are social agents who develop general & particular communicative competences while trying to achieve their everyday goals
- ▶ “proficiency levels” should be dropped in favor of *competence profiles*
- ▶ emphasis on **discursive repertoire**: genres a speaker can use, to varying degrees & for various purposes, at a given moment
- ▶ communicative profile aimed at in language teaching must include **all the genres** a learner is expected to be capable of using



ACTFL

Advantages to ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines:

- ▶ lots of levels
- ▶ differences in levels pretty clearly defined by ACTFL (guarantees some sort of uniformity)
- ▶ training available to administer ACTFL proficiency test, certification
- ▶ take into account cultural awareness & knowledge, culturally appropriate language use
- ▶ designed for oral and for written language, including:
 1. listening
 2. speaking
 3. reading
 4. writing



ACTFL

Existing materials & networks

ACTFL: used in the US for Foreign Language (FL) & Second Language (SL) teachers for “major” languages

- ▶ realistic guidelines for outcomes
- ▶ guidelines for assessing outcomes & achieving goals
- ▶ methods for training to assess proficiency
- ▶ ACTFL Performance Descriptors: guides for teachers
- ▶ pedagogical materials for major languages are developed with ACTFL guidelines in mind
- ▶ iteachers are trained with ACTFL in mind



ACTFL

ACTFL Proficiency Levels

**Distinguished
Superior
Advanced**

- ▶ Advanced High
- ▶ Advanced Mid
- ▶ Advanced Low

Intermediate

- ▶ Intermediate High
- ▶ Intermediate Mid
- ▶ Intermediate Low

Novice

- ▶ Novice High
- ▶ Novice Mid
- ▶ Novice Low



ACTFL

Context-based Learning

Context-based learning suggests that we should be doing revitalization (and documentation) in natural settings which things “happen” in the language, with local and/or external experts

Such settings in the Arctic might include:

- ▶ hunting
- ▶ berry-picking
- ▶ fishing
- ▶ camping
- ▶ kaffemik
- ▶ socializing at stores
- ▶ beading



ACTFL

Case study #1: Documenting plant knowledge in Greenland

My collaborator: Simone S. Whitecloud, PhD Biology





ACTFL

Reconstructing plant knowledge: Qassiarsuk school



ACTFL

Good & bad tea



Qajaasaq (Ledum groenlandicum)

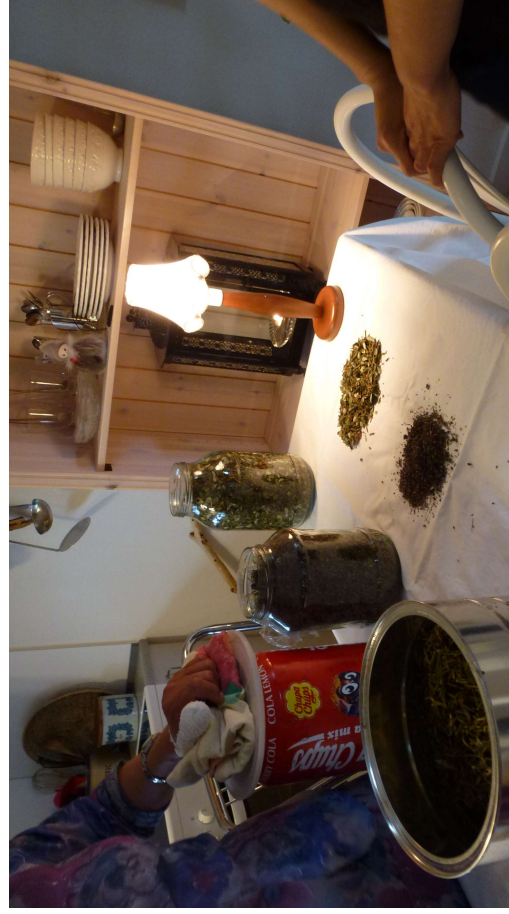
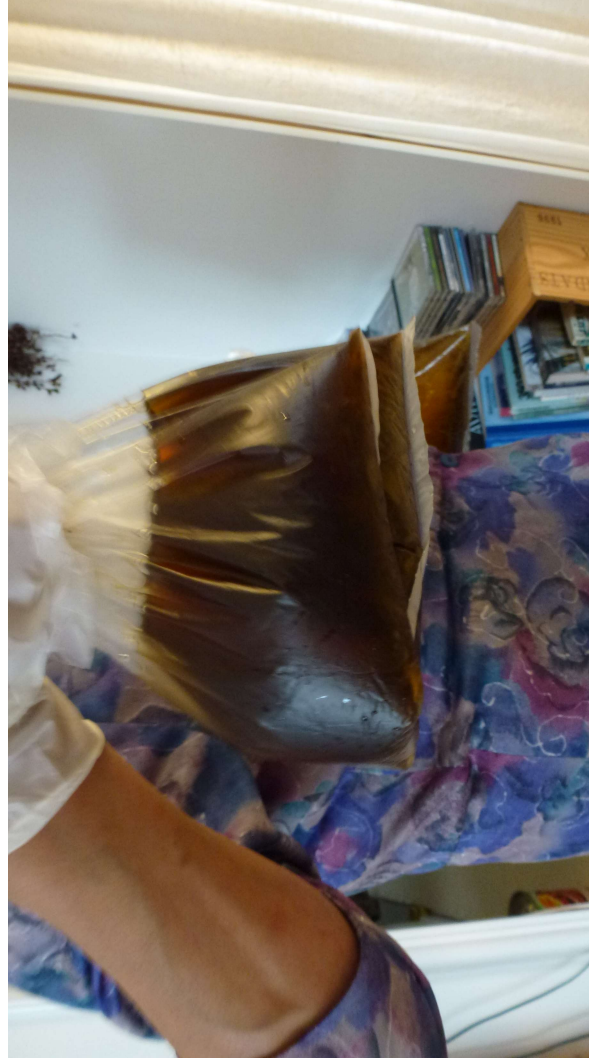
Avalaaqiaq (Betula nana)





ACTFL

Nanortalik plants





ACTFL

#2: The International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry

reindeerherding.org/herders/sami-norway/

Reindeer Herding

A virtual guide to reindeer and the people who herd them

About us News Herders Challenges Projects Gallery Assn of World Reindeer Herders

Sámi – Norway

- What is Reindeer Husbandry?
- Sámi – Norway
- Sámi – Sweden
- Sámi & Finns – Finland
- Sámi – Russia
- Nenets
- Chukchi
- Eveny
- Evenki (Russia)
- Evenki (China)
- Komi
- Koryak
- Khanty
- Mansi

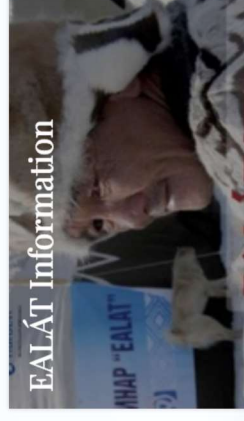
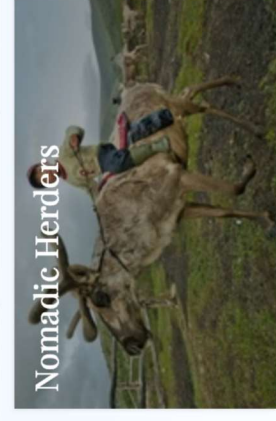
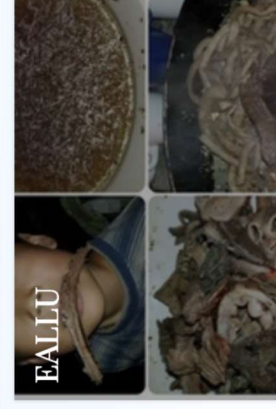
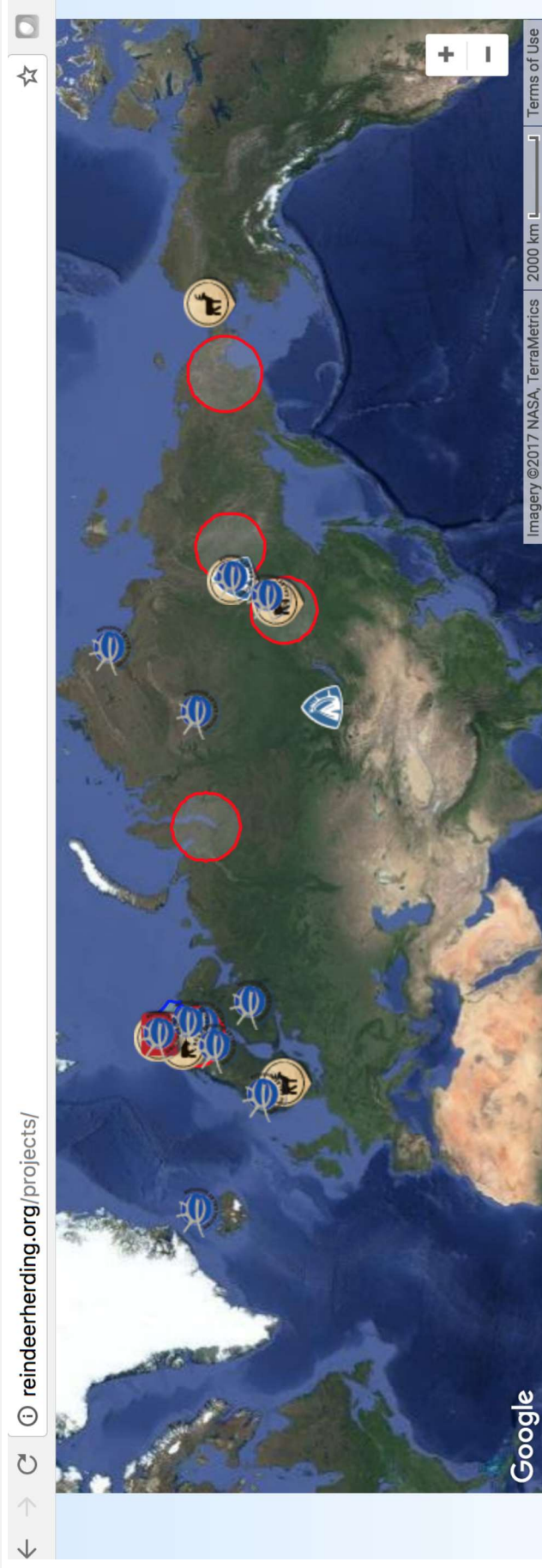
Sámi – Norway

The map displays Northern Europe, including Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, and parts of the United Kingdom. Three gold circular icons are placed on the map: one in Norway, one in Sweden, and one in Russia. The map is labeled with 'Norwegian Sea', 'Baltic Sea', and 'North Sea'. A 'Satellite' dropdown menu is visible in the top left corner of the map area.



ACTFL

International collaborations



Discussion

Some challenges:

1. Transdisciplinary research
2. Finding research partners
3. Context-based learning in realistic language settings



Some challenges:

1. Transdisciplinary research is inherently challenging
 - ▶ How do we find partners in the other disciplines who are willing to commit to sustained engagement?
 - ▶ How do we truly engage non-academic researchers and other stakeholders in true and meaningful ways?
 - ▶ When is it appropriate (well-advised) to conduct transdisciplinary research, and when is it not?



Special attention needs to be given to integrating university-based research and local expertise

- ▶ absence of process skills (e.g., decision making, problem solving, conflict resolution, information exchange, coordination, and boundary management) has also been noted as a crucial detriment to collaboration
- ▶ can lead to failure to resolve questions of legitimacy, ameliorating power differences, and integrating diverse aims.
- ▶ university engineers helping to solve irrigation projects in Ecuador favored their own expertise over local knowledge from the community that ultimately proved essential to the project's success (Bouwen et al. 1999)



Repeat questions

- ▶ For which questions is inter- and transdisciplinary work sensible, relevant and possible?
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- ▶ What is the context-dependent "right" relationship between disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work?

Some challenges:

1. Transdisciplinary research is inherently challenging
2. Natural settings may be multilingual (or the dominant language may dominate)
 - ▶ do we insist on monolingualism?
 - ▶ do we embrace the bi- or multilingual nature of the setting?
 - ▶ accept or reject code-mixing?
 - ▶ if language learners are in a mixed language environment, will they ever improve their L2 skills in the target language?

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