

Revitalizing Endangered Language through Online Learning Community

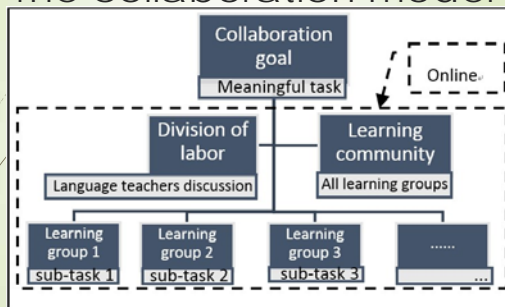
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Background

- All aboriginal languages in Taiwan are facing great threats.
- Mass communication and schools all use official language, Mandarin.
- The Council of Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan has proposed Aboriginal Skill Certification Examination as a strategy (extrinsic motivation).

Creating a desire to be part of a community and establishing virtual space for language practice are crucial for language revitalization.

The collaboration model



Research Questions

1. How does this model impact students' language learning motivation?
2. What are the difficulties and challenges when implements the model?
3. What can be done to improve the model?

Methodology

- SaySiyat, one of the indigenous peoples in Taiwan who has around 6,000 population, was chosen in this study.
- The meaningful task in the study was a summer camp.
- 7 qualified SaySiyat language teachers and 14 indigenous students
- Seven groups. Each group has one student from indigenous village, one student from urban area, and one language teacher

Research Design

- Seven topics about SaySiyat culture were selected for later development.
- These groups were formed six months before the summer camp, and expected to meet online at least once weekly.
- The language teachers met face to face monthly, and have a Facebook group.
- The camp site was an indigenous elementary school located in one of the major SaySiyat villages in Taiwan.

Data collection and analysis

- Interviews the language teachers.
- Observations of online interactions, occasional talks with the students, and the final evaluation form of the summer.
- The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed into words to find the pattern and themes.

Results

- 46 students and 10 teachers participated.



The challenges in language revitalization

- Lack of the atmosphere to speak SaySiyat at home.
- Lack of usefulness of SaySiyat in current society.
- lack of qualified language teachers.

Distance learning as a solution

- Solve the problems of transportation, classroom, and provide a channel for students to learn.
- Stability of internet connection and online teaching skills need to be improved.
- Cannot watch the mouth clearly which would influence their pronunciation.
- Students in the online environment were more focused on learning in comparison to the traditional classroom

How to become a language teacher?

- Six of the seven teachers were growing in a whole indigenous language environment before junior high school.
- Passed the language proficiency test.
- Participated in related SaySiyat project.

Summer camp reflection

- Effect was limited but better than nothing.
- More helpful in increasing the understanding of SaySiyat culture, as well as the awareness of being one member of SaySiyat
- Diverse interactions created a different learning experience than before.
- Another teacher thought the summer camp did increase students' learning motivation about SaySiyat language.

General suggestions

- The project should be continued.
- Technology is an opportunity for improvement.
- Funding is not the solution.
- Encourage more people to become language teachers.
- Language teacher training program needs to be well developed.
- Parents need to be educated, and relearn the language with their children.

Main ideas from the study

1. Family involved distance learning.
2. Language teachers recruiting and training.
3. Online learning partnership.
4. New company proposal.