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Creating Books for Use in Language Revitalization Classrooms: Considerations and Outcomes¹

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In this paper, I examine the development, implementation, and results of utilizing three types of storybooks in a language revitalization classroom for students ages 5-12 learning Teotitlán del Valle Zapotec, an indigenous language of southern Mexico. Although each method used for creating books in Zapotec generated a positive reaction from students and parents, I consider the ways in which each method facilitates student learning while also problematizing the cultural authenticity of the classroom. Based on classroom observations, a parent focus group, and student interviews, I conclude that the most effective method for storybook creation involved students creating their own book modeled on a pre-existing book written in the non-indigenous language. This student-created book generated sustained interest in the language and allowed for students to shape the materials into something that was culturally relevant for them personally.

INTRODUCTION

Language teachers today are confronting new challenges in addressing cultural diversity as globalization places students in ever-increasing contact with a multiplicity of linguistic and cultural groups. Some questions that arise are to what extent pedagogical materials for language teaching reflect this diversity of learners and how educators create an environment where students' identities are recognized and valued. For teachers of indigenous languages, developing pedagogies that support student learning in a culturally diverse environment is a particularly pressing issue. In this article, I consider these issues by examining the development, implementation, and results of utilizing three types of storybooks in a Zapotec language revitalization classroom for children ages 5-12 in Teotitlán del Valle, Mexico. While each method was met with positive reactions, I enumerate the ways in which the materials facilitated student learning, and I also interrogate their local relevance. Based on classroom observations, parent focus groups, and one-on-one interviews, I conclude that the storybook created by children, modeled on an existing book in a non-indigenous language, had the strongest and most long-lasting impact on learners.

COMMUNITY AND RESEARCHER BACKGROUND

¹ Para obtener una copia de este trabajo en español, favor de contactar a la autora por correo.

Teotitlán del Valle Zapotec² (TdVZ) is a variety of Western Tlacolula Valley Zapotec (Simons & Fennig, 2018) spoken in Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca, Mexico. In 2005 there were an estimated 198 monolingual and 3,601 bilingual (Spanish and Zapotec) speakers of TdVZ (Gobierno, 2010).³ In addition to the small speaker population, the persistence of racism in Mexico has led Zapotec language use to be stigmatized. Furthermore, Spanish is the language used in public schools.⁴ Many individuals who are now parents were physically and emotionally punished for speaking Zapotec in school, and as a result have focused on raising Spanish-speaking children in hopes that they will be spared from such traumatic experiences. Of 19 students I interviewed in 2018, 17 students reported at least one parent speaking Zapotec at home. However, only 5 students reported being able to speak Zapotec with confidence, despite their exposure to Zapotec at home and in the many public spaces throughout Teotitlán – including government meetings, the daily market, and religious celebrations – where Zapotec is frequently used. While both students and parents widely report that it is important to learn and use Zapotec, children also describe fears about speaking Zapotec publicly, as others may – and frequently do – criticize their Zapotec as being ‘mixed with Spanish’ and thus ‘incorrect’. These factors, among others, have led to a rapid shift in language use from Zapotec to Spanish, particularly within public spaces.

In response to this rapid language loss, a variety of language revitalization activities have been initiated. Several initiatives were established either through the municipal government or through widespread community efforts: the municipality sponsors a community language committee, *Didxih baa xteb gulas* (“Sacred word of the Zapotecs”); there is time set aside for using Zapotec at the public preschool; and Zapotec is offered as a language class at the high school. In August 2018, a cultural center was opened, featuring exhibits on modern Zapotec culture with trilingual explanations in English, Spanish, and Zapotec. However, these initiatives did not reach elementary school students.⁵ To address this shortcoming, five Zapotec language camps for children have been hosted since 2016.⁶ The first was hosted by Professor Kalinka Velasco Zárate (Velasco Zárate & Ramírez García, 2017), and I have hosted the subsequent camps, with the support of the municipal government and the public library (especially librarian Rosita Jiménez Lorenzo, a native speaker of Zapotec).

I am a native English speaker raised near Chicago who learned Spanish as a second language

2 In this paper, I use the term ‘Zapotec’ as a shorthand to refer to TdVZ.

3 In addition to Zapotec speakers living in Teotitlán, many individuals have emigrated both domestically and to the United States, creating a transnational or transborder community with complicated patterns of Zapotec, Spanish, and English language use. Such phenomena are common to many communities in Oaxaca, including the neighboring communities of San Juan Guelavía (see Falconi (2011, 2016) for a general overview, and Falconi (2013) for a specific discussion of storytelling practices) and San Lucas Quiavini (Pérez Báez, 2014). However, this study focuses on residents of Teotitlán del Valle who have not migrated to the United States, and an analysis of the larger transborder community falls outside of the scope of this work.

4 For an overview of language policies in Mexico, see Heath (1972). For a detailed examination of how Spanish-language education has impacted individual Zapotec-speaking communities differently, see Sicoli’s (2011) discussion of education in Santa María Lachixío and Asunción Mixtepec. Teotitlán shares some key features with Santa María Lachixío (where Spanish-Zapotec bilingualism has been maintained), including the general practice of linguistic endogamy and a long history of democratic community decision making.

5 At the time of writing, the Director of the elementary school had arranged with two members of the community language committee to begin teaching Zapotec classes after school beginning in late January 2019, but this initiative post-dates the design and implementation of the language camps.

6 The author has been involved in hosting four of the five camps: summer 2017, summer 2018, winter 2019, and summer 2019.

and is currently learning Zapotec. I became involved in Zapotec language work as an undergraduate researcher. From 2012-2015, I lived in Oaxaca City, and in 2013-2014, I completed two semesters of Zapotec language courses. Since 2015, I have been a PhD student at the University of California, Berkeley, returning to Teotitlán on average twice a year for periods between two weeks and three months in length to conduct language documentation and revitalization work. This included observing Professor Velasco Zárate's camp in 2016. Although her camp was well received, she declined to host the camp again. Instead, she and the community language committee encouraged me to host future camps. I consulted with the committee, received the approval of the municipal government, and began to host camps in summer 2017.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Revitalization

While language revitalization is similar in some ways to other types of L2 teaching, it merits special considerations. For one, language learners' goal may not be communication with other speakers (Grenoble, 2018; Hinton, 2011; Hinton, Huss, & Roche, 2018). In many language endangerment contexts there are few or no remaining speakers of the language (Bommelyn & Tuttle, 2018; Hinton, 2001a, 2018; Zahir, 2018) or speakers of the target language are bilingual, sharing a language with learners – as is generally the case in Teotitlán. Learning an endangered language, then, can be more about identity formation and cultural preservation⁷ (Grenoble, 2018; Hinton, 2018). Some learners are interested in learning vocabulary within a certain domain (e.g. kinship terms or cooking practices, see Zahir, 2018) or being able to perform certain activities or rituals in the language (Krauss, 1992). Thus, a key feature of any language revitalization project should be a process of “ideological clarification” (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998) to ensure that language teaching meets learners' goals.

Another key difference is that in most language revitalization contexts there are few teaching materials available and teachers or language activists must create their own (Hornberger & De Korne, 2018). This process raises a number of issues, from deciding which dialect or variety of the language to teach (Hornberger & De Korne, 2018) to creating an orthography (Munro, 2003) and designing materials that are locally relevant. When the teacher is not a member of the community – as is the case in these Zapotec language camps – this introduces other complications: How do the outsiders' assumptions influence the materials used in the program?

Intergenerational Language Transmission

For some, including many in Teotitlán, the goal of language revitalization is to restore natural intergenerational language transmission so that the language will be passed down within the family (Green & Maracle, 2018; Morgan, 2001; Warner, 2001; Wilson & Kamanā, 2001), including the reestablishment of local language socialization practices (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). But what has interrupted intergenerational language

⁷ The fact that most learners and speakers of Zapotec are also Spanish speakers can also make it hard for learners to find an environment of immersion in Zapotec, as any misunderstanding in Zapotec can be easily clarified in Spanish, and staying in Zapotec can be difficult.

transmission in the first place? The reasons for language endangerment are varied, but they can result from prejudice against minority language speakers (Dorian, 1998; Grenoble, 2018), official policies of suppression (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2018), and genocide (Grenoble, 2018; Sasse, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2018). Because language endangerment often results from traumatic experiences, language revitalization may require not only language teaching, but also healing (Leonard, 2007). This is certainly the case in Teotitlán, where many parents were physically and emotionally punished as schoolchildren for speaking Zapotec.

Language Attitudes

In addition, individuals may decide not to transmit their language to their children if they acquire an “ideology of contempt” (Dorian, 1998) towards the language. As a result of colonial and racist practices, individuals have been punished for speaking indigenous languages, and may have thus developed negative associations with the language. But the role of language ideologies in shaping language use is profound (e.g., Irvine & Gal, 2000; Kroskrity, 2006; Silverstein, 1979; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994), and language revitalization projects will not be successful in the long run if the negative language attitudes that supported language loss are not addressed (Beier & Michael, 2018; Bradley, 2002; Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998; Hinton, 2001a).

Types of Revitalization Initiatives

A wide range of programs have been implemented to address language endangerment, and each situation may call for a unique approach to reversing language loss. For language communities with sufficient funding, personnel, and government support, such as Māori (King, 2001; O’Regan, 2018) or Hawaiian (Warner, 2001; Wilson & Kamanā, 2001), a school-based language immersion program may be appropriate. Such a program requires gathering a wide range of teaching materials and qualified teachers. In a situation where there are not a sufficient number of potential teachers, one might participate in the Master Apprentice program (Hinton, 2001b; Hinton, Florey, Gessner, & Manatowa-Bailey, 2018), in which a speaker is paired with an apprentice and the partners engage in daily activities while immersed in the language. Another possibility is to create a school for adults who can become teachers once they have learned the language (Green & Maracle, 2018). At the level of the household or individual, language revitalization might consist of reclaiming domains (Bommelyn & Tuttle, 2018; Zahir, 2018), which entails learning the language necessary to communicate in a particular area (such as the kitchen or bathroom) and committing to using the language in that space. Of course, this is only a sample of the possibilities for language revitalization.

THE LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION CAMP

In consultation with the language committee and with the approval of the municipal government, I developed a language camp for children aged 5-12. This is a key demographic in the (re-)establishment of intergenerational language transmission, and it is a population that was underserved by existing language revitalization initiatives. Furthermore, the language camp model fits well with the students’ schedules: Although they are busy during the academic year, they are able to commit time to Zapotec language learning when done in short, intensive bursts, especially during school holidays.

The curriculum for the Zapotec language camps hosted in summer 2017 (16 hours), summer 2018 (20 hours), winter 2019 (22 hours), and summer 2019 (30 hours) involved two main types of activities: classroom language instruction on a communication-based instructional model (Supahan & Supahan, 2001) and naturalistic interactions with native speakers. The goal is that the classroom instruction will result in acquisition of language skills that will increase learners' confidence and interest in using Zapotec, which will in turn lead to positive attitudes towards the language. Then, interaction with native speakers in realistic situations will encourage learners to use the Zapotec they practice in the classroom in a wider range of contexts. Because the interactions are designed to simulate real interactions that native speakers can have with learners, learners will be able to continue using Zapotec at least in these contexts after the course is over. For example, in one lesson, students practiced asking the price of local fruits and vegetables in the classroom, then visited the daily market where they asked the same questions to Zapotec-speaking vendors. My goal as a teacher in these camps is to foster positivity about the Zapotec language, and my goal as a researcher is to understand what we can do as educators to facilitate acquisition of positive attitudes towards and increased use of minoritized languages.

THREE MODELS FOR CREATING BOOKS

Why Create Books?

Before discussing the features of each type of book created for the course, it is useful to question the premise itself: Why develop books for use in the classroom? The need for written materials for language instruction is often simply assumed (Lillehaugen, 2016), and many individuals in Teotitlán have noted – in focus groups, interviews, and casual conversation – that they hope for Zapotec books to be created through the camps. But we know that literacy is not a precondition for language learning. In fact, any child exposed to language will learn to speak before they learn to read and write, and many of the world's languages exist without writing systems. Although Zapotec has a long tradition of writing, there is not a universally accepted orthography (Lillehaugen, 2016).⁸ As a result, the creation of any written material in the language is not only a linguistic and pedagogical exercise, but also a political one. For example, one has to decide whether to use letters that are more similar to Spanish or English, or letters that are more similar to the orthographies of other Zapotecan languages (e.g., to use *x* or *sb* for the [ʃ] sound). Any decision may make it appear that an author is more or less aligned with movements such as Mexican nationalism or a pan-Zapotecan movement. Given these factors, it is not clear that writing an endangered language is always the most effective way to encourage language use (Hinton, 2014; Hollyman & Pawley, 1981; Lillehaugen, 2016; Rehg, 2004). So, the question remains: Should we aim to create written materials for language revitalization?

In my view, the answer to this question, at least in Teotitlán, is 'yes,' for two reasons: (1)

⁸ The history of written Zapotec is long but discontinuous. The first record of a Zapotec script dates to 600 BCE (the earliest documented writing in the Americas), but the script became obsolete between the 10th and 13th centuries CE (Urcid, 2005). Missionaries then wrote down the language, using a Latinized script, as part of their efforts to Christianize the Zapotec people, most notably Fray Juan de Córdoba, whose 1578 dictionary of Valley Zapotec is still used by community members in Teotitlán today. While colonial documents of this type are useful, there have been many changes to the language since the 1500s, and the writing system used by missionaries and others writing during that time is not standardized.

such materials have been requested by community members and (2) children in the course engaged with these types of materials in a productive way. Following the camps in summer 2017, summer 2018, and winter 2019, I conducted a focus group with parents of children enrolled in the language camps. A common thread that emerged each time is that parents want their children to gain literacy in Zapotec and have access to Zapotec books. These opinions were reiterated in one-on-one interviews with both parents and children. Under current models of best practices for research in language revitalization, research should be carried out in an empowering way, either with participants and researchers working together to determine program goals and methods (House & Howe, 2000; Peter et al., 2003; Richardson, 2017; Rice, 2009), or with participants determining these goals and methods independently (Czaykowska-Higgins, 2009; Hermes & Engman, 2017; Leonard & Haynes, 2010). In Teotitlán, parents and students identified the goal of literacy and the method of creating books as a way to reach their goal, and they encouraged my participation. Furthermore, my observations and evaluation of the outcomes of using books in the classroom have suggested that, despite some problematic aspects (discussed below), they are an effective tool in promoting child acquisition of Zapotec.

Having decided to create Zapotec books for use in the classroom, we then must determine what those books will look like, and what function they will have.⁹ Who is the intended audience, and, as a result, what language(s) will be represented? If Spanish or English appears alongside Zapotec, it may facilitate learners' understanding of the text, but it may also recreate a hierarchy whereby non-indigenous languages (visually) dominate indigenous languages (Meek & Messing, 2007). Furthermore, to what extent do the books reflect locally relevant material, and how and by whom is this material generated?

In considering these questions, we often find a tradeoff between local relevance and ease of production. For example, if we strive to create more locally relevant materials, using original Zapotec texts alongside illustrations and translations provided by community members, we may need to invest more time in identifying an appropriate story that can be woven into a communication-based instructional framework and brought to life as a book. On the other hand, we can create materials much more quickly by translating existing books into Zapotec. This allows students to access Zapotec-language materials rapidly, but it comes at the expense of introducing cultural assumptions from outside the community. In the sections that follow, I outline three types of storybooks that I used with students in January 2019, highlighting what I see to be their pedagogical strengths and weaknesses.

⁹ To date, a few books have been produced in Zapotec (funded by Francisco Toledo, a notable Zapotec artist from the Isthmus of Oaxaca), including a book of anatomy written by Zeferino Mendoza of Teotitlán and illustrated by Toledo and a compellation of Aesop's fables translated into several Zapotecan varieties (the author of the Teotitlán del Valle Zapotec variety is Janet Chávez Santiago). While these books are excellent resources, they are aimed at an older audience than the students in my class and have a limited print distribution. For these reasons, we decided to create our own books that would fit the specific needs of the students.

1 tui

A kabedx te bedih gai,
 "Zak xdilihl," riniium,
 chiru kazebih Beniit
 lo bii.

Un gallo canta,
 "¡Buenos días!"
 y Benita está
 volando.

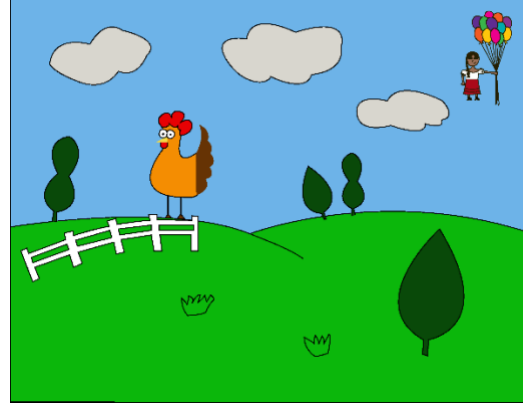


Figure 1: Pages from the book *Beniit kon xpejigan* (Lazo Martínez et al., 2018)

Creation of New Storybooks

One method for creating a book is to develop a new story in Zapotec, as was done in the creation of *Beniit kon xpejigan* ('Benita and her Balloon' by Lazo Martínez et al., 2018), shown in Figure 1. A member of the community language committee, Adrian Montaña, suggested the general format of the book, which was inspired by a similar book in Chipewyan (Children, 1984). Like the Chipewyan book, *Beniit kon xpejigan* describes a child flying over the town and counting the items seen below. The Zapotec adaptation, however, is not a translation of the Chipewyan, but rather reflects a new story in which practices (such as shopping in the local market) and objects (such as tortillas and tamales) commonly found in Teotitlán are highlighted. I worked with an undergraduate research assistant, Celine Rezvani, to create a storyboard in Spanish with illustrations. When I arrived in Teotitlán, I worked with four speakers of TdVZ, Isabel Lazo Martínez, Efraín Lazo Pérez, Trinidad Martínez Soza, and an anonymous speaker, to translate the book into Zapotec and edit the Spanish translation and illustrations to be more locally relevant. The Zapotec is written in the orthography proposed by the community language committee as it is the orthography with which the authors are most familiar.

There are several benefits to creating new materials through a collaborative process. For one, we have control over what language is presented to students. In this case, we chose to highlight number words as our topic, while also exposing children to more complex expressions than they might have been able to understand. The accompanying illustrations and Spanish translation facilitate comprehension of these phrases. We also included vocabulary related to the market, another topic covered in the course. Thus, I was able to use the book multiple times throughout the course in both 2018 and 2019, each time highlighting different aspects of the text, such as counting, market vocabulary, and verb conjugations.

Furthermore, the project was community-driven and collaborative. The idea was proposed by a language activist from Teotitlán, and the materials were developed with the input of speakers and researchers. I sought feedback on the final product from students and parents, and I left the book in the public library in Teotitlán for comment.

The main drawback of this method is the long timeframe required for completion, with the collaborative process requiring several rounds of back-and-forth between relevant parties as well as the potential for a lack of consensus leading to further delays. Additionally, the illustrations were labor intensive, and influence from people who are not members of the local community (namely, myself and Celine Rezvani) working on the storyboard and illustrations

introduces the possibility that they may not be very locally relevant.

Translation of Existing Materials by Community Members and Researchers

Another method that was used was taking pre-existing materials in another language (in this case English¹⁰) and translating them to the relevant language(s) (Zapotec and Spanish). By relying on existing materials, we eliminate the need to create original illustrations and are able to create the product faster. I selected *The Family Book* by Todd Parr (2003) to help present kinship terms. I chose this book because it was fairly abstract in its representations of families, using cartoon figures of humans and animals to represent different families rather than stereotypical images from the US, Mexico, or elsewhere. It also included simple sentences with kinship terms and adjectives, allowing the text to be used in lessons on both kinship and adjectives. I translated the text into Spanish, then worked with Trinidad Martínez Soza, Efraín Lazo Pérez, and an anonymous speaker to translate the Spanish into Zapotec (again, using the community language committee orthography) and to address some of the cultural issues that were presented by the original text, as I discuss below.

Parr is from Berkeley, California, where families often include adopted and mixed-race children as well as same-sex parents. This put us in a situation that highlights the inherently political nature of language revitalization work (and of pedagogical choices more broadly): We could omit certain pages of the book in order to present only examples of family types typically seen in Teotitlán, or we could present the book in its entirety and risk alienating people whose definitions of family do not include the types of families that we presented. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that not everyone involved in the project read these potentially controversial pages in the same way. Let me highlight this with a concrete example.

During the process of writing the Zapotec text, I expressed my uncertainty as to how we should handle the pages that read, “Some families have two moms or two dads,” which I interpreted as a presentation of same-sex parents. Two of the Zapotec authors commented that this page was completely unremarkable to them; in fact, it might make more sense if it read, “Some families have three moms or three dads,” as the terms for “mother” and “father” in Zapotec are sometimes extended to cover grandmothers and grandfathers. On the other hand, the page that explained that some children are adopted or have stepmothers or stepfathers was seen as odd. While it is not uncommon in Teotitlán for a child to be raised by non-biological parents or for parents to remarry, the idea that these parents are any different from biological parents, and thus merit special kinship terms, did not make sense in the local environment. As a result, we translated the page with two moms and dads, but decided to remove the page with adopted children and stepparents. However, when students engaged with the book, some students interpreted the page about having two moms or dads as representing same-sex couples, not a conflation of grandparent/parent as the Zapotec translators had assumed they would. Of course, such discrepancies in interpretation between older and younger members of the community is not limited to the context of works in translation, but we do see it appearing here.

Another drawback of this method is that we are limited by copyright law as to the extent

10 Another possibility would have been to translate or adapt stories produced in the community (such as traditional folktales; see Falconi 2013 for a discussion of such a practice in a nearby Zapotec community). While this is an approach that we hope to implement in the future, it requires extensive knowledge of TdVZ grammar and style, and thus we plan to implement it in a future iteration of the course when students have a deeper understanding of the language.

to which we can use and reuse previously existing materials. In this case, I added paper flaps to the copy of the book that I had purchased that allowed the reader to flip through Zapotec and Spanish translations above the original English, modifying the book that I had purchased in ways consistent with its copyright. Complications would arise, however, if community members ever wanted to produce such work on a larger scale or sell it, as this would require the original author and publisher to become involved.

Student-Generated Work

The final method that we piloted is student-generated books in Zapotec. In this case, I read the book *Oso pardo, oso pardo, ¿qué ves ahí?* ('Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?' by Martin & Carl, 2002) in Spanish. The book is repetitive, going through a number of animals of different colors and asking what those animals see. After reading the book, we worked together to translate the book to Zapotec. Each child was invited to choose their own animal and color and to illustrate it and add the relevant text in Zapotec. To link the pages together, the students chose the order that the pages would be presented in (Figure 2). The orthographies that students used were a combination of the community language committee orthography (which I used when presenting written materials in the class) and the students' individual choices in writing the language. I did not 'correct' any writing choices, as the presence of more than one proposed orthography in the community makes it difficult to say what the 'standard' spelling of any word should be. Furthermore, I did not want to discourage students' enthusiasm and independence by correcting their work; I instead encouraged students to read to me what they had written to make sure that they could read their own writing. However, I used the community language committee orthography when students asked me for assistance with spelling.



Figure 2: Two sequential pages from the student-created book (Images, 2018), with the text “White rabbit, white rabbit, what do you see? I see a red horse looking at me” (left) and “Red horse, red horse, what do you see? I see a purple cat looking at me.” (right).

One difficulty of an activity like this is that the instructor must find a way to present students with the necessary information in the target language in order to be able to carry out the writing task, unlike the previous models in which the books can be used as language input. However, a great benefit of this method is that it allows the students themselves to direct the content of the book. For example, one student chose to illustrate an animal that was not represented in the original text but which is an important part of life in Teotitlán: the turkey (Figure 3). Thus, students were able to engage their own cultural perspectives in creating their

product. Furthermore, students were proud of the work they had done; they asked to read the book on subsequent days of class and quoted lines from the book when asked in the interviews what they enjoyed about the course. The text was also linked to a task-based activity completed later in the course when students took a hike with friends and family while collecting information about local flora and fauna by asking each other, “What do you see?”



Figure 3: Image of a brown turkey from a student-created book (Images, 2018), with the text “Brown turkey, brown turkey, what do you see? I see a black horse looking at me.”

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Results

To evaluate the effects of each type of material, I recorded the language camps (when consent was given) and took notes on each activity. I observed a great deal of excitement among the students in creating and reading the student-created book, including students arriving in class on subsequent days asking for us to reread the book. Such sustained interest illustrates how the students were engaged with and motivated by the material. Though some excitement was also shown for the other books, it was mainly in the form of students volunteering to read the Zapotec text out loud or answer questions about the content of the storybooks when prompted by the teacher, rather than as the result of self-motivation.

Additional evidence comes from the focus group with parents following the camp and one-on-one interviews with all interested participants (9 students and 10 parents). Six parents and two children mentioned learning to write in Zapotec as a motivation for taking the course, and one child mentioned learning to read as a goal; both of these goals were supported by the creation of the collaborative book. While the other two book formats allowed students to read and learn writing by example, they did not promote student writing as directly as the collaborative book.

Furthermore, two students reported that they enjoyed the creation of the student book in their open-ended commentary on the course, and also spontaneously recited text from the story. This shows that, at least for some students, the books were effective both in teaching the language and in generating positivity around the language.

In language revitalization, particularly in Teotitlán, where students have access to native speakers and have the potential to learn the language through natural exposure, it is crucial that initiatives like the language camps promote positive attitudes around language use so that learners continue to use the language outside of class. For this reason, the collaborative story book, which generated a greater deal of student creativity and excitement than the other two

books, seems to have been the most successful.

Conclusion

While each language revitalization context is unique, most language revitalization projects require a great deal of time and effort, especially in the creation of pedagogical materials. When some of the participants involved are from outside of the traditional language community, it is important to consider how their participation might affect the materials that are created and the cultural assumptions that those materials bring with them. There is often a tradeoff between creating more culturally specific materials and producing materials quickly. This study showed that involving students in the creation of new materials can be not only an efficient way to generate locally relevant materials, but also a successful method of building excitement around language use that may result in increased engagement with the language outside of the classroom.

These findings are in line with previous research on task-based (Ellis, 2003; Riestenberg & Sherris, 2018) and student-centered approaches to language learning. Although the creation of the book was not itself task-based, it was linked to a task-based activity; perhaps the success of the student-generated book was furthered by completion of the task-based hiking activity which reinforced what the book introduced. Furthermore, the book-making activity was student-centered as learners were invited to determine how they wished to express themselves (similar to approaches reported by Cummins & Early, 2010).

While the present study focuses on learners of an indigenous language of Mexico, the results are applicable across a wider range of language learning environments. In all language learning contexts, teachers and students bring their unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds with them into the classroom. Thus, a critical consideration of how pedagogical materials and strategies can more fully reflect this range of individual identities within our classrooms will assist in building positive attitudes towards language learning and improving learning outcomes overall.

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