Busy Intersections: A Framework for Revitalization

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A framework for revitalization*

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Busy intersections: A framework for revitalization. In *Africa's Endangered Languages,* ed. by Jason Kandybowicz and Harold Torrence. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Organization of the talk

- Background, the Samu
- Program-centric "Parking Lots" and learner-centric "Busy Intersections" (the (African) Marketplace)
- What we did any why, Hole-in-the Wall opportunities, parallel initiatives
- Evaluation, a report card
- Where we go from here, developing new literacies

Towns Surveyed as Part of MDP

AFRICA

Mediterranean Sea

Guinea

Sierra Leone

Gulf of Guinea

ATLANTIC OCEAN

INDIAN OCEAN

Senegal

Guinea-Bissau

Mali

Guinea

Conakry

Area Enlarged

Lungi

Sierra Leone

Côte d'Ivoire

Freetown

Liberia

ATLANTIC OCEAN

N
W — E
S

Morebaya River

Île Kabak

Forécariah River

Guinea

Forécariah

Melikhoure River

N-4

Yankanya

Matakan

Marara

Balaya

Benty

Caton

Palatougou

Kabendo

Karankone

N'Kompan

Mounkourou

Kigbali

Daragbé

Salatougou

Suribulomia

Pamalap

Maputolo

Rolope

Rotain

Morebaya

Tangbaya

Great Scarcies River

N-4

Kychom

Kassiri

Sierra Leone

Little Scarcies River

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Legend
- ‑·‑·‑ Country Boundary
- —— Roads

0   5   10   20
Kilometers

Erin L. Smith

Vlogs

[Lost Voices 1](#) Getting there
[Lost Voices 2](#) Dancing
[Lost Voices 3](#) Palm Oil
[Lost Voices 4](#) The children

Assessing emergent literacy practices (Reder 2013)

- How do new literacy practices emerge and expand as cultures come into contact?

- How do individuals with little formal education and/or literacy engage in these emergent literacy practices?

- How do learners draw on available cultural, linguistic and literacy resources as they engage with emergent literacy practices?

Bringing literacy into people's lives (Reder 2013)

- Bringing learners' lives into the classroom and using the learner's life as curriculum
- Widespread challenges in adult education suggest that we need to do something else that's equally important: bring literacy programs into learners' lives
- Giving literacy away involves designing programs that bring literacy support to people in life contexts (e.g., in health care) rather than bringing people to free-standing literacy programs
- Two lines of research are converging to suggest ways this can be realized: the *busy intersection model* and *practice-engagement theory*

The parking lot

- Recruit students
- Fill seats & retain students
- Programs provide services to students
- The longer students stay, the more they learn
- Pathways are within program
- Short-term proficiency gains are emphasized

Busy intersections

- Adults come to programs along different life pathways
- Programs are resources used by active learners
- How long students stay doesn't matter as much as the directions and tools they exit with
- Increased engagement in literacy practices is emphasized

Contexts of study

- literacy practices among the Vai of Liberia
- "Seal Bay", Inuit fishing village in Alaska
- "Newton", Hmong community in a western US city
- "Pleasantville", migrant Hispanic community in US
- Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning

Constraints on Mani literacy / revitalization

- extreme poverty (Sierra Leone always near the bottom in any ranking)
- the ravages of a civil war (1991-2002)
- the absence of responsible governance beyond the village
- a moribund educational setup with no resources
- work outside school more important than work within
- a devalued language and culture, language useful only to talk to the dogs and *les fétiches*
- time and distance, e.g., the isolation of Tangbaya
- traditional values and ideologies, e.g., lack of value attributed to Mani, resistance to outside influence

The Hole-in-the-Wall Initiative

Today's children need not only basic education, but also the ability to deal with an increasingly complex and connected world. We need to create inclusive educational solutions that address all sections of society and help transform them. Now, more than ever before, it is critical to look at solutions that complement the framework of traditional schooling. Minimally Invasive Education™ is one such solution – a solution that uses the power of collaboration and the natural curiosity of children to catalyze learning. (http://www.hole-in-the-wall.com/)

Alternative Education (the Khalkaji experiment and others) Young kids in this project figured out how to use a PC on their own — and then taught other kids. What else can children teach themselves? (http://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_shows_how_kids_teach_themselves)

Piloting literacy materials, the VDM 2012

Equipment provided

- Six small (laptop) computers
- Ten small cameras (with video capability)
- Audio recording equipment

Parallel streams of training

1. Tangbaya School: Marta teaching, Video Marta teaching
2. Letters from Tangbaya
- A photograph of a student (Amara),
- A brief paragraph introducing oneself (Mamudu)
- A recording of that paragraph (Sorieba)
3. Open computer lab
4. Camera exchange

A report card

- Mani literacy as it occurred in the classroom: D (parking lot) – students all "failed" exam
- "Letter" creation: D (parking lot) – no complete packages
- Computer literacy: C (Hole-in-the-Wall, busy intersection)
- Photography literacy: B (Hole-in-the-Wall, busy intersection) - video
- Documentation skills: C (Hole-in-the-Wall, busy intersection)
- Sustainability: D (due to failed (overly ambitious) technology)

Dimensions of emergent literacies

- Cell phones, texting
- Computers, the internet, email
- Photography, sharing photos
- Literature, folk tales, songs, history
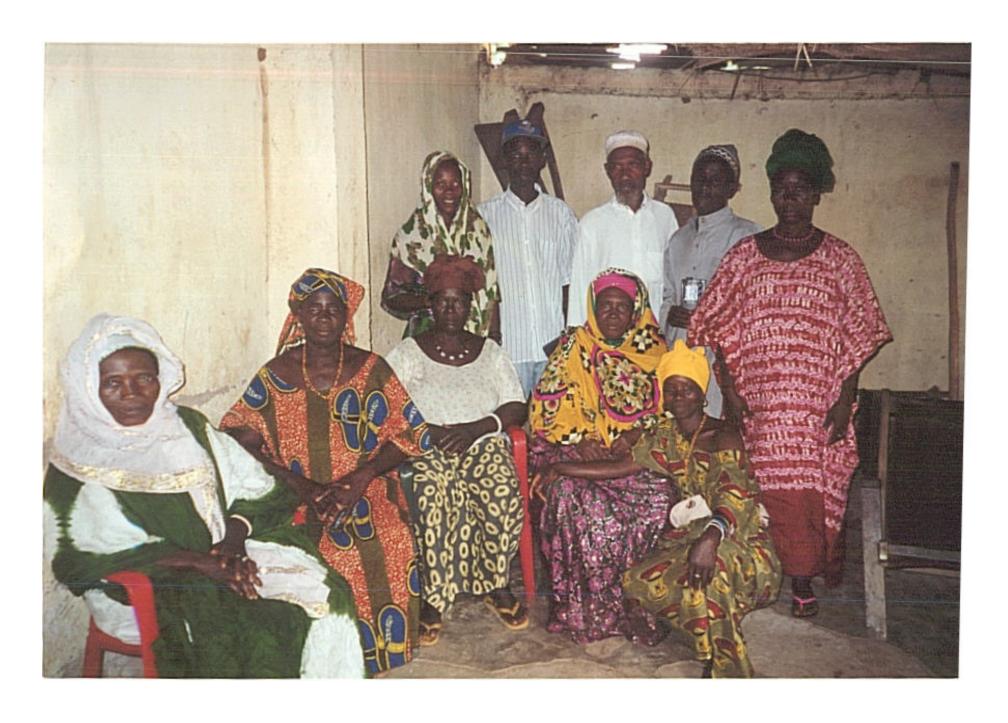- Music and dance (videos)
- Religious practices?

Figure 1 Imam Musah, his sisters, etc., N'kompan, Guinea, 2004

Goals and activities

- Practice-engagement model: Ongoing braided interaction between proficiency and practice that comprises literacy development
- Expand engagement of community members in literacy practices
- Enable more self-teaching and self-learning with appropriate support mechanisms
- Contextualize the setting and modality of instruction as well as its content, based on local models
- Engage community, collaboration at local level – concrete goals and rewards
- Set long-term goals
- Prolonged engagement to ensure sustainability (and prepare for withdrawal of external support)

Final questions

- Is revitalization what we (as (documentary) linguists) should do?
- And what about literacy? Is it necessary?

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