Busy Intersections: A Framework for Revitalization

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Citation Details
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ICLDC 4, 26 Feb – 1 March, University of Hawai’i

A written version of this presentation is available from the author and will appear as,


* Work on Mani has been supported by grants from: the National Science Foundation (DEL 0652137); the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme, SOAS, University of London (MDP 0085); the Bremer Stiftung für Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie, Bremen, Germany; a Fulbright Award; and the Endangered Language Fund, New Haven, CT.
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
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?
References


