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Creating An At-Home Learning Tool For Chinese Language Immersion Students

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CREATING AN AT-HOME LEARNING TOOL FOR CHINESE LANGUAGE

IMMERSION STUDENTS

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Master of Art in Education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

I teach Kindergarten in a Chinese immersion school in the inner city. Most of my students' first language is English, and a few students' first language is Hmong, Spanish or Japanese. One of the challenges that parents face is being unable to assist their child at home with the target language learning and reviewing when they do not speak the target language themselves. It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to ensure the students are making adequate progress in school and at home. With that said, this situation prompted me to consider if there is a way I can provide a learning tool for parents to help their child learn or review Chinese language at home. This learning tool will lead students to accomplish their learning goals and improve their learning performance, while it also will reduce their anxiety about their second or third language learning pressure.

My research question is why it is important to provide an at-home learning tool for parents to help their child improve their Chinese language learning by connecting in-school learning with at-home reviewing materials. This focus area was chosen because I found that if I were the only person to help and support the whole class, it could cause some students to fall behind because each student has their own learning pace and strategies. As the only teacher in the classroom it is difficult to meet everyone's needs at all times. All of the above factors have contributed my passion to design an online learning tool for the kindergarten students whose parents will help them learn and review

Chinese language at home. Furthermore, it may be expanded into other grade levels as well in the near future.

Teaching Experience Background

I work at a Chinese Immersion school, which is the first of its kind in the urban public school system. Our program is K-5 and has been in existence for six years since 2011. All the teachers are native Chinese from China and they all have higher American education degrees. Since our school is quite new, we are constantly developing, refining and advancing the curriculum to meet the classroom needs. We all have different teaching styles, but truly work together as a team. As a kindergarten teacher, I am in an important role because I give the students their foundation in Chinese language for the next five years in our program. It is important not only to understand and adapt lessons for each student, but also to ensure that the progress they have made is sustainable to the next grade level and beyond. It is my hope that this learning research will benefit the students, their parents and their future teachers in our program.

This is my fourth year teaching kindergarten in my school. In kindergarten, we do parent-teacher conferences three times per year. The first meeting takes place before the school year begins. The second meeting takes place in November. The final meeting takes place in March. According to my four years of kindergarten teaching experience, the most popular question parents ask during conferences is how they can help their child learn or review Chinese language at-home. In the past, I always tell them that the Chinese language learning would be all my responsibility and they needed to help their child review math lessons and teach English at home. After the first three years of teaching, I realized that my classroom teaching alone would not be enough support for students to

fully learn Chinese language. This is especially true for any students who are struggling to keep up. It became clear to me that I need to find a way to involve parents as partners at home so they can assist their child with Chinese language learning. The questions I repeatedly ask myself are how will I facilitate parents who do not know the Chinese language to help their child at home and how much time would be adequate to spend on learning or reviewing Chinese at home. One of my coworkers shared a website in our staff meeting that she used in the upper grade class. My kindergarten team decided to use the same strategy to create a learning tool for our parents to help their child at home. I recommend this website to the parents in our first conference in the 2016-2017 school year. The feedback I received from parents was very or extremely positive. Parents enjoyed learning the Chinese language along with their child too. However, this webpage does not fully align with our curriculum and parents need more resources. Such as parents would like our teachers to add more key words in Chinese into each subject. They also want us to add more culture related topics in the website and so on. So I have decided to make my own webpage that will align with our school curriculum, confidently it will provide an at-home learning tool for parents to help their child to improve their Chinese language learning by connecting in-school learning with at home reviewing materials.

Here is an example of parents using the recommended webpage at home with their child. Two of my parents told me that they used this website to help their child review the vocabulary list. They made flash cards from all the vocabulary lists I sent home. They used the website to assist their child to remember the pronunciation of the vocabulary words which their child forgot how to pronounce. They also stated that it was

a very effective way for their child to catch up in memorizing vocabulary words. Although there were only two parents provided the feedback, but this piece of information is valuable and encouraging, it also validates that this tool is useful for both students and parents. They wish I could put more specific class content online that is related to our kindergarten curriculum. Their feedback has contributed to my ambition to create my own webpage.

Professional Perspectives

My personal philosophy is that all the children can learn and teachers need to focus on individual needs as well as teaching the entire class. My school district shares the same belief and that can be seen with the intervention program for students who need extra help in their learning. This program helps students and classroom teachers tremendously because students can move along in their own pace in understanding the content and catching up with the whole class. Meanwhile, Teachers can move on with the whole group.

Every student can learn as long as his or her needs are met by the teacher. Teachers should be aware of any students who may be falling behind and have a plan in place to help each student to succeed. My district, my state and the entire country have the same goal and that is to improve the performance of all students. My daily experience with individual students is the way I can personally work towards this larger goal. As I get better at this I will be able to be more efficient in helping students with the greatest needs.

One of the first challenges I had to face as a new teacher is the varied rate at which individual students learn. Also I realized that different children have different

learning styles. After teaching for four years, these two variables are continuing to be the greatest challenges. Students are different every year and they all are unique with individual needs. The skills I have now compared to when I started are much better, but as seen in my research question, it will always be an area of focus for me. I use many different teaching methods to give children access to the same learning target. After collecting data and using observation I customize lessons to individual students or groups of students based on which method they respond to best.

<p style="text-align: center">Project Plan</p>

All of background teaching experience motivates me to create an at home learning tool for parents to help their child improve their Chinese language learning by connecting the in school learning with at home review materials. My webpage will provide a learning tool for students to have their own learning pace and meet their own learning needs. It will benefit students who need to catch up with the whole class and students who are ahead and need more resources to be challenged. It will also provide a chance for parents to get involved in their child's learning. My plan is to create this website to start from kindergarten, and other grades can build up from the foundation I put in place. We can start by creating a basic tool and then add more learning resource for higher-level students. I anticipate if my school has a high quality-learning tool for parents at home, it will support all the students and school to become more successful.

I have some concerns about the current website that the school uses. Parents would like to add more learning contents that are related to our curriculum. From a long-term perspective, I don't know how long we can use this website and eventually it may become a fee based program. From the privacy standpoint, this is a public website it may

infringe on the privacy of my district curriculum. These concerns prompted the idea to self-develop a learning website that would be safe, free, and in alignment with my district curriculum.

Summary

I am a kindergarten teacher in the first Chinese immersion school in the urban public school. Our school is a fairly young program started in 2011 and one of the goals is to continue to advance its curriculum to become an exceptional Chinese Immersion School in our state. As a classroom teacher, one of the main objectives is to provide support and guidance for all students to reach the learning targets. Furthermore, it is imperative to assist those who are struggling to reduce the gap between the high and low achievers. Finally parental participation plays an important role in students' learning during and out of school months.

Our kindergarten team have made an online learning website for parents to assist their child to review the Chinese language at home and got positive feedback from parents who are using it. According to the privacy and future cost for fees to use this website, I would like to customize my own webpage to fit my kindergarten curriculum. My school supports my idea, and each grade level can follow my model. This means I am creating the template for my whole school to use in the future. This website project idea is coming from my research question, which is, why is it important for me to provide an at home learning tool for parents to help their child improve their Chinese language learning by connecting in school learning with at home reviewing materials?

In chapter 2, it reviews the pros and cons of a target language in Chinese as an at-home online tool. In this section, there are three parts including Language learning,

language immersion setting and enforcing at-home language learning. The literature map

is used to organize the research findings. In chapter 3, the main sections of the curriculum

are organized into a template for the website.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, the literature is reviewed to answer the research question, why is it ~~is~~ important to provide an at-home learning tool for parents to improve the Chinese language by connecting in-school learning with at-home reviewing. I chose this focus area for the reason that in a class of 23 students, undeniably there will be a range of levels of needs, and in target language achievement.

The literature review is divided into three parts to discuss and support the research question. The first section discusses language learning. The second section is language immersion setting. And the last is language learning reinforcing at-home. Those are the three parts that have emerged as dominant focus areas of this research. The first section is to encompassing the importance and benefits of online language learning at-home for students. Additionally, it will include the purposes for creating an at-home online Chinese language learning website, and some of the considerations taken during the process of building the website. In the second section, it encompasses the pros and cons of Chinese immersion setting, and reasons why immersion students need to use the at-home online language learning website for Chinese language learning. It testify that Chinese immersion setting not only create an authentic language-learning environment for students, but also it provides a good opportunity for students to experience the highly challenging content learning and assist students to reach at grade level or advanced level of achievement. In the last section, the discussion is on the important factors of parent-

teacher collaboration, parent involvement and technology use under parents' supervision, and lastly students will learn the language along with their parents.

Language Learning

The frequently asked question by parents who are looking for an immersion school for their child is when is the best time to learn a target language? (Asher & García, 1969, p. 334) To answer this question, Asher and García (1969) stated that all the researching theories support the idea that language learning during the early development stages of a child, which is if a person is exposed to a language at the young age; the person will have a greater opportunity to gain a native pronunciation. This article shows that children should start to learn a language at an early age to develop their native pronunciation, and immersion school setting provides the best language-learning environment for this outcome. Wells (2007) also pointed out that "Early language learning is important as an artifact to use for gaining all kinds of knowledge, establishing friendships and social contacts, joining in play and participating in all kinds of activities" (Sheridan & Gjems, 2017, p. 349). It shows that learning language at an early stage is not only good for developing children's native pronunciation, but also it is good for them to develop in the areas of comprehension, social skills and emotional skills.

The next question parents always ask is what they can do to help their children learn the target language at home when the target language is not their home language. Parents should support their child's language learning, even though they do not know the target language, because this will create a positive learning environment for their children's future language learning. Sheridan and Gjems (2017) mentioned, "An underdeveloped language skill makes it difficult for children to express their thoughts,

argue, make their voices heard and take part in different situations and contexts" (p. 352).

It proves that if children do not receive a developed understanding on language learning,

it will cause them to delay their development of knowledge learning. Parents'

involvement will provide a successful learning path for their children's language

learning. Tomasello (2003) also reported that the adults' involvement support the

understanding of the vocabulary and it is significant to children's language learning

(Sheridan & Gjems, 2017, p. 350).

Online Language Learning and Motivation

Motivation is a big factor in students' language learning process, especially for

young age learners. Motivation is the most valuable tool to help students succeed when

faced with challenging and difficulty situations (Pintrich, 2003 & Masgoret Gardner,

2003 as cited by Chai, Wong & King, 2016, p.170). Saadé and AlSharhan (2015) also

pointed out that teachers always utilize different strategies to motivate their students'

interest on language learning. This is a good way for students to have consistency on their

learning, and to increase their problem solving learning strategies. It is important for

teachers to understand how to motivate students while designing their online learning

tools. Just like a live classroom activity an online activity has to be carefully planned and

developed to captivate students thinking. Online language learning is one effective

method teachers use to create a positive learning tool for their students. It can also be

used for parents to assist and monitor their child's learning at home. "Motivated students

devote efforts to performing learning tasks, persist when they encounter problems, and

regulate their learning" (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003, as cited by Chai, Wong, & King,

2016, p.173). That is why teachers are interested in using the online language learning as

an instructional tool and often format the online lessons to resemble a game. Butler,

Someya and Fukuhara (2014) talked about three major reasons for educators like to use

games as their teaching methods. First, learning through games switches a traditional

teacher-centered model to a learner-centered model, where students would play an

important role in their own learning. Second, the factors show that games provide a better

understanding and learning for students. Finally, games have a great potential to manage

users and motivate their learning. This principal can also be applied when making a web

based language learning tool. Games can be used to draw the students into the site and

hold their interest. Students will be learning as they enjoy playing the games.

Besides the learning motivation, White (2006) identified "Four key 'pedagogical'

themes that emerged from research: course development, course evaluation, teaching

roles, and learner support" (Hockly, 2015, p. 308). In addition, White (2006) looked at

technologies used to deliver online language lessons and how to have online learners

contribute to the learning process. The idea is to recreate a classroom experience where

learning is a shared process with the teachers and students both providing learning

content (Hockly, 2015, p. 308).

How are teachers going to motivate parents to use the online language-learning

tool to support their child's language development at home? The answer is simply using

mobile technology to get parents to support the classroom learning. Pachler (2010) said

that mobile tools are able to exist in the real world and will help parents contribute to

their child's language learning at times that are meaningful and situations that fit the

content those teachers have designed. The modern day parent is very busy and it is

assumed that many adults use their smart phones to manage most aspects of their life. By

providing them with a tool that is able to be access from a parents' mobile device they can work with their child on the language lessons anytime and anywhere (Chai, Wong & King, 2016, p. 170). An example of how this would work is parents using the new vocabulary words about food while preparing or eating a meal. This is one of methods of teaching that teachers cannot provide in a classroom environment. Subsequently Parents will see the benefits of online language learning through observing their child's development and knowledge base. They also will see the connection between their child's learning to real life situations.

Online language learning is technological learning that includes multiple styles of learning activities. "In parallel with other languages, the communication modes in online Chinese teaching have expanded from mainly text to a combination of text, audio, and emotions" (Stickler & Shi, 2015, p. 55). Teachers can provide different online learning activities for students to practice and review their learning in school and at home. Parents can join in the online learning activities to assist with their child's learning needs and monitor their child's learning progress.

Online Language Learning Website

How are parents going to help their children with language learning at home if their home language is not the target language? An online language learning website is a wonderful solution to this problem. It is a learning tool for parents to help their children to learn and review target language at home. The online language learning website is not only for learning the language, but also to help combine the language with the culture (Son & Park, 2012, p.140). One of the purposes to build an online language learning website is to integrate the culture piece along with the target language. Learning a

language is a continuum process, a life long skill for students to use it in future, but learning the culture of the target language is an eye-opening experience for students to have in their life. It will help them become open-minded and be aware of many different cultures they will encounter through their life. The inclusion of a meaningful cultural content will further motivate students to continue to explore their Chinese language learning. People of all ages are naturally curious about other countries and cultures (Son & Park, 2012, p.140). Also, it is confirmed that the online language learning website does not take the place of the face-to-face learning. It is a tool for students to feel they are able to apply their classroom learning to their life outside of school.

Reading, writing, listening and speaking are very important factors, when people are learning a language. When an online language learning website is created, the designers need to pay attention to all of these aspects because they need to be incorporated into it and all these elements will directly relate to the success and usefulness of the website. One of the important skills in learning a target language is students need to remember the target language characters in kindergarten, so they can read books and write papers in later grade levels. They will spend a lot of time to remember the characters by learning in school and will need to review it at home. "In vocabulary learning, multiple meanings of high-frequency vocabulary need to be addressed. Technologies invoked to address these challenges include software developed to provide optimal scheduling of feedback and rehearsal opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of vocabulary learning" (Nakata, 2006, as cited by Levy, 2009, p. 771). Summer vacation is a big challenge for immersion students, because they do not have any resources that are related to their language-learning curriculum to

support their review at home. The benefit of online language learning is that, "audio and video files may be stored, managed, and distributed to provide for easy access for learning using conventional means plus more recent technologies" (Levy, 2009, p. 774). When students cannot recognize the characters they have learned, they might show their frustration, show their bad behavior to get teachers' attention and be negative on their learning. Online language learning website will be a good and useful tool for students to remember the characters in school and review it at home.

Online language learning website is a good tool for students to learn, but it needs teachers and parents to guide and monitor the technology use in school and at home. "In foreign language instruction at primary school, we tend to focus on the children's degrees of participation and enjoyment. We should also keep in mind that highly popular and enjoyable game may not necessarily lead to learning; careful monitoring seems necessary" (Butler, Someya & Fukuhara, 2014, p. 274). Teachers need to pay attention on effectively and carefully using the enjoyment of online activities to motivate students' learning, and to prevent the loss of the enjoyment of online activities.

Table 1 is showing the key elements that need to be taken into account when designing intercultural language learning websites.

Table 1

Principles For Intercultural Language Learning And Suggestions For Intercultural Language Learning Websites

General principal	Application in language learning	Suggestions for language learning websites
1. Active construction Learning involves the purposeful and active construction of	Exploring language and culture through active engagement.	• Have specific intercultural learning goals.

knowledge within a socio-cultural context of use.	Developing a personal, intercultural space with multiple dimensions.	• Provide a range of interactive tasks.
2. Making connections Learning is based on previous knowledge and requires challenges to initial conceptions that learners make connections, to reorganize and extend their existing frameworks of knowledge.	Comparing language and cultures and drawing connections and building the relevant bridges between home and target language and culture. Comparing existing knowledge of language and culture against new input.	• Provide a variety of resources (e.g., texts, graphics, audios, videos). • Make use of authentic materials. • Build connections across texts and contexts. • Present linguistic and cultural information.
3. Social interaction Learning is social and interaction.	Communicating across linguistic and cultural boundaries and recognizing them as boundaries and why they are constructed. Communicating about linguistic and cultural difference and similarity. Engaging with new conceptual systems through language.	• Present real language samples. • Provide communicative practices in the target language. • Include examples of cross-cultural difference (e.g., directness, politeness). • Stimulate learner interest in the target language and culture.
4. Reflection Learning involves becoming aware of the processes underlying thinking, knowing, and learning through conscious awareness and reflection.	Reflecting critically and constructively on linguistic and cultural differences and similarities, and questioning dichotomies. Reflecting critically and constructively on their own intercultural behavior. Articulating the multiple dimensions of their own intercultural space and identity.	• Encourage users to communicate and collaborate with other users. • Motivate learners to engage in interactive discussions. • Guide learners to take responsibility for their own intercultural learning.
5. Responsibility Learning depends on learners' attitudes and disposition towards learning.	Accepting responsibility for contributing to successful communication across languages and cultures.	• Guide learners to share their ideas and resources. • Promote reflection on language, culture

	Accepting responsibility for developing an intercultural perspective.	and learning. • Promote social involvement. • Provide practical feedback on learning. • Support self-assessment of intercultural learning. • Provide suitable tools for intercultural learning. • Avoid biased and offensive language and images.

Note. Adapted from Liddicoat et al., 2003, p. 47-51, as cited by Son & Park, 2012, p.137.

Online language learning website will be more effectively used if it is related to the school curriculum and directly meet students' learning needs. Shield and Kukulska-Hulme (2006) pointed out that "The website provides a means by which to offer learners access to up-to-date and easily-updatable course materials, activities, resources, and tutorial support "(p. 352). It also will judge the success rate of the website by monitoring feedback from parents.

Language learning at a young age provides an authentic language environment for children. Parents' involvement makes language learning more successful. Motivation is a big factor on students' learning outcome. Online language learning is a great method for teachers to motivate their students to learn in school and at home, furthermore, Online language learning website is a great tool for students to review in-school learning at home and a way for parents to monitor and assist their children's immersion learning. The next section will explain the strengths of language immersion settings that attract many

families to enroll in immersion schools. It will also address the fact that the students in language immersion settings need adequate parent support.

Language Immersion Setting

A language immersion setting is the most effective way for students to learn the target language because it provides an authentic language-learning environment for students and develops students' language learning skill. Fortune, Tedick (2008) and Genesee (2004) mentioned that language immersion programs are one of most effective language learning program models in schools. When these programs are done right they will provide considerable academic and educational benefits to students (Wesely, 2009, p. 270). Students in a language immersion program will increase their worldview because language cannot be separated from cultural awareness and understanding. "Each child deserves to know that an entire world exists beyond his or her own personal world, and they need to learn how to bridge these world effectively" (Soderman, 2010, p. 61).

Advantages Of Immersion Learning Environment

Dual-Language immersion schools are so popular recently in American education system and quickly get into parents' favor school choice lists (Butler, Someya, & Fukuhara, 2014, p. 427). Why do parents have favored in language immersion schools? Butler, Someya and Fukuhara (2014) pointed out, "Students who enroll in dual-language immersion programs perform as well as, or better than, their peers in core content areas by late elementary school"(p. 427). When parents choose an immersion school for their children, their goal is to provide an authentic language-learning environment. The first advantage of a language immersion setting is to reduce the possibility to acquire the accent of the target language. Asher and García (1969) cited in their article that all the

researching theories support the idea that language learning during the early development stages of a child, which is if a human's organism is exposed to a language at the young age; the human will have a greater opportunity to gain a native accent. Besides the accent, young learners in the immersion settings demonstrate a better performance on language learning over all. "The immersion students, at an early stage of their schooling, can attain high levels of performance in Mandarin" (Xu, Padilla, & Silva, 2015, p. 36). In general students who enter immersion programs from kindergarten have less of an accent than the students who enter the program at a higher-grade level. When starting from kindergarten almost always means that the students' language skills will be better than the students who enter the program at a higher-grade level. This is further evidence that starting language learning at younger ages has great benefit.

The second advantage of an immersion setting is it will assist learners to reach high academic achievement. "The potential of bilingualism to impact students' academic performance positively is manifested in the focus of observational immersion education research on academic achievement" (Watzinger-Tharp, Swenson, & Mayne, 2016, p. 3). In the immersion setting, the learning is very intensive and challenging for students. Under this condition, students do not only need to concentrate on the learning, but also they need to understand the target language at the same time. So students who are in the immersion setting, will develop better learning skills. One of the most important skills they develop form immersion programs is concentration. A strong concentration skill will affect all of the students' future learning not only in the area of language learning. Soderman (2010) talked about bilingual children receive higher levels of cognitive flexibility than are unilingual children in education settings. Also Soderman (2010)

enforced "It is a problem-solving, "knowledge-assembly" task in which children are required to pay greater attention to the context, interact flexibly with others, and decide over and over what is relevant and what is not. Children become more aware of the meta-linguistic structures of language" (p. 57). Language immersion settings help children have stronger learning habits and a high level of classroom engagement. Besides the better learning habits, learners will also benefit from making the connection between their second language and their first language. "As bilingual learners become more proficient at both languages they will have a better chance to understand, compare and learn the technical structure of both languages. This will give them a superior ability to apply their knowledge of the language both verbally and in writing" (Abbott, Caccavae, and Stewart, 2007, as cited by Soderman, 2010, p. 57). It is an effective strategy for learners to have the connection between their second language and their first language.

Improvements Of Immersion Learning Environment

Students need to practice their language learning daily in school and at home. Soderman (2010) mentioned, "An immersion model provides the best opportunity for children to attain high levels of proficiency in a target language, but only if children's everyday experiences are well constructed, engaging, and developmentally appropriate" (p. 57). The major challenge with immersion classroom learning is parents' ability to reinforce the in-school learning at home is limited. Likewise, it is equally important for the general academic K-12 learning to have parents guided learning to maximize students' learning potential.

Soderman (2010) pointed out, "Parents must be maintained as supportive allies through open communication and involvement in all aspects of the program" (p. 60).

Parents need to get involve in any programs to support their learners because it will be an effective way for students to learn if their parents assist them when they need it. Soderman (2010) also mentioned, "We've learned that without close and ongoing communication, parents of immersion students may lose their initial enthusiasm and advocacy changing their outlook into second thoughts about having their children cope with all of the challenges experienced during the initial phases of an immersion language-learning classroom" (p. 60).

Parents select immersions education settings because evidence points to the fact that learning is improved not just in the target language but also in over all academic achievement. The level of concentration and problem solving skills required for students to succeed in an immersion environment has a positive influence on the students for the rest of their life. Parent's involvement is very important when students are enrolled in a language immersion program. The next section addresses ways in which parents can be involved and supportive of students who are in a language immersion environment.

Reinforce At-Home Language Learning

Horvat and Baugh (2015) said, "Educators must strive to forge authentic partnerships with families and students in order to help them select appropriate placements for their children to meet the increased demands for parents support at home" (p.13). When teachers build a strong relationship with families, the corporation between teachers and parents will make the teaching and learning are not just on teachers and students. It will also be encouragement for the parents to be diligent with the their child on at home study and review. Horvat and Baugh (2015) also enforced, " Strong relationships between home and school can increase opportunities for students" (p.13).

Every student's learning pace is different, and at-home support will provide a flexible learning schedule for students. "There is growing interest in personalizing education for students, educators need to explore how to personalize or customize their expectations on parents" (Horvat & Baugh, 2015, p.13).

Parent-Teacher Collaboration

Teachers set up an expectation for their students. The purpose of this expectation is to help students challenge themselves and reach higher learning goals. "Early childhood educators with high academic expectations for children report that they are involved in more learning activities outcomes than colleagues with lower expectations" (Skwarchuk, 2009, p.196). To reach higher expectations, not only requires students and teachers' hard work, but also demands parents to join in the process. Parent-teacher communication is an effective method for language learning, because it is a great way for teachers and parents to know the students' learning process in school and at home. It provides immediate in-school learning feedback from teachers to parents and immediate at-home learning feedback from parents to teachers. This parent-teacher teamwork will allow a customized approach for each individual student to learn effectively. "Increase the quality and quantity of parental involvement in education in order to fully utilize its potential for optimizing social and academic outcomes for children" (Hornby, 2011, p. 387).

Besides the effective learning, teachers and parents need to provide a positive learning environment for young learners to prevent the learning barriers in future. It is commonly believed that our national education system has a long way to go in terms of connecting teachers, parents, students and schools in the overall education process

(Ludicke, & Kortman, 2012, p.168). It shows how important teachers and parents have a collaboration on students' language learning. "While creating more effective collaborative learning partnerships between parents and teachers is a significant outcome for all stakeholders, there have been specific benefits for the families of students with learning barriers, where parent-teacher collaboration can help ensure that the individual learning needs of the student are addressed" (Ludicke, & Kortman, 2012, p.157).

Parent Involvement

Why do parents need to get involved in their children's language learning? Manz, Gernhart, Bracaliello, Pressimone, and Eisenberg (2014) said that parents' activities at home supports a child's academic learning. Parents need to provide opportunities for their child to participate in activities that promote academic skills as well as family and moral values. Language learners will not be successful if they are learning by themselves at home, especially, young learners. They need their parents to provide an immersion environment at home for them to practice and review their learning. "Supportive home-based involvement is that which enable the child to successful participate in learning or school activities, such as providing appropriate space and materials for learning activities, adhering to bedtime routines, and establishing rules and expectations for school performance" (Manz, Gernhart, Bracaliello, Pressimone, & Eisenberg, 2014, p.172). When parents set up an at-home routine for their child, it is easy for their child to transition the routine concept from home to school smoothly. An at-home language learning website will be a transitional tool for students to make the connection with school learning at night, on the weekends, during vacations and when school is off. Also it will meet students' learning needs. "Parents and teachers valued the idea of improving

school operational processes to support transitions in the child's education and the communication of information concerning the child's learning needs" (Ludicke, & Kortman, 2012, p.167).

Parents Monitor The Technology Use At Home

The goal is to provide an at-home online language learning website for students to practice and review their language learning at home, because students need to practice the target language daily to achieve their academic learning goal. "There is an emerging consensus that the language learning process could be extended beyond the classroom, and that learners could be provided with opportunities to use the target language meaningfully and extensively in their daily life" (Chai, Wong, & King, 2016, p.170).

Nowadays students use the technologies inside and outside of classroom. The online language learning website can be used in the classroom too. So in this way students will already be familiar with the technology use at home. "The advancement of mobile technologies could potentially address the aforementioned problems that bedevil classroom-only language learning. Mobile technologies offer pedagogical affordances that educators can leverage to promote meaningful learning among learners, both inside and out side of the classroom" (Chai, Wong, & King, 2016, p.170). When teachers provide the at-home online language learning website for students to use, they need to pay attention on the effective and meaningful technology use part. "Mobile technologies can enhance authentic learning as they enable students to go beyond the classroom into the real world to learn" (Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler, 2013 as cited by Chai, Wong, & King, 2016, p. 172). When teachers teach the students the technology skills, the goal is not only to have the students use the technology skills in their language learning, but also

they want them to use it in the real life because language is used in the real world everyday. Also an at-home online language learning website will provide a good opportunity for students to develop their own learning pace. Plowman, Stephen and McPake (2010) pointed out that children's learning at home meant that they could switch items off and on, rewind and fast-forwarded (p.105) to follow their learning pace.

Technology use will motivate learners' interesting on language learning, but adults need to pay more attention on managing the technology use carefully. Their motivation for doing so was both in the interests of their children's learning at school, and in order to ensure that they were prepared for future demands of the workplace and, given the perceived importance of such potential benefits, these parents were prepared to accept and help their children to navigate safely the negative aspects of technology use (Davies, 2011). How long do parents need to provide the technology use daily at home? When parents decide to provide the technology use for their child, they need to have a plan to prevent the technology turns to a negative way. Chai, Wong and King (2016) cited that the intention to use the technology is to provide a positive learning environment for students to build up a self-regulated learning (p.172).

Parents' obligation is to manage and control their children's technology use and make the online learning have the most effective function. Plowman, Stevenson, McPake, Stephen and Adey (2011) indicated, "While it is clear that knowing how to operate and control technologies is important, the technologies we found at home have the potential to support early learning in diverse ways" (p. 366). Davies (2011) enforced, "The relative importance of rules in shaping family life as new media take on an increasing presence in the domestic ecology', and observed that 'parents, guardian, and other significant adults

in kids' lives spend a great deal of time managing their kids' opportunities to go online at home" (p. 325). If parents ignore the technology use, it will take away the benefits of at-home technology use from students and create a negative learning environment for students and parents. Davies (2011) pointed out in his article, "It was also cleat that many parents do not in fact actively and regularly monitor or mediate their children's internet and media use, nor involve themselves in their homework, whether using technology or not" (p. 330). It shows that parents need to spend their time on getting involved in their children's learning and monitor their children' technology use to make the learning more effectively. Davies (2011) also enforced, "Their motivation for doing so was both in the interests of their children's learning at school, and in order to ensure that they were prepared for future demands of the workplace and, given the perceived importance of such potential benefits, these parents were prepared to accept and help their children to navigate safely the negative aspects of technology use" (p. 333). Parents should encourage the technology use and assist their children to use it at home. Also they need to bring the positive thinking for their children to use the technology. "Celebrating the confidence of those young people who make use of technologies in order to construct their own paths of learning while regretting the impact on others of the overcautious perspectives of some parents and teachers or, just as reasonably, applauding the more discriminating approaches of those who take the reservations of their parents and teachers seriously, and worrying about the unquestioning preference for anything digital of some of their peers" (Davies, 2011, p. 334).

Parent teacher collaboration is a key to a successful language immersion program. Parent involvement will ensure that students are adapting, adjusting and succeeding in the

classroom and at home. Use of technology is an important tool for parents to assist with their children's development with a target language especially if it is not the parent's native language.

Summary

In the chapter 2, there are three main topics to support my research question and to provide the reasons for creating an at-home learning tool for parents to help their child improve their language learning by connecting in-school learning with at-home reviewing materials. The three parts are language learning, language immersion setting and reinforce at-home language learning. In the first section I discuss how language learning at a young age gives an authentic language environment. I also look at how parental involvement makes language learning more successful. I stress the importance of motivation as an important factor on students' learning outcome. I also look at online language learning as a method for teachers to motivate their students to learn in school and at home. I introduce the idea of an online language learning website as a tool for students to review their in-school learning at home and a way for parents to monitor and assist their children's immersion learning.

In the second section I address the idea that parents select immersions education settings because evidence points to the fact that learning is improved not only in the target language but also in over all academic achievement. I review the idea that the level of concentration and problem solving skills required for students to succeed in an immersion environment has a positive influence on the students life long learning. Parent's involvement is very important when students are enrolled in a language

immersion program. The third section looks at ways in which parents can be involved and supportive of students who are in a language immersion environment.

In the last section I focus on parent teacher collaboration as a key to a successful language immersion program. Parent involvement ensures that students will adapt, adjust and succeeding in the classroom and at home. Use of technology is an important tool for parents to assist with their children's development with a target language especially if it is not the parent's native language.

In chapter 3, the main sections of the curriculum are organized into a template for the website. When I design my website, I will divide my website into seven themes, which are Chinese language, Reading, Writing, Math, Social Studies, Science and Songs. Under each category, I will put the key words from in class learning on the website. So it will be easy for parents to find the categories the content to review. I will have one area just for all the songs we have learned in school. Throughout the whole planning, I may add something useful into my website. I will use the table 1 under the subtopic of online language learning website to start my website setup, because it provides the suggestions to create an online language learning website. Besides this subtopic, I will utilize all the findings from the chapter 2 to guide me to build my website.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

As a kindergarten teacher in a Chinese immersion school, I provide an immersion environment for students to learn and practice the target language according to the state standards and my district curriculum. My students have gained a tremendous progress learning Chinese language in school everyday. The goals are to improve students' learning in general learning understanding of the Chinese language, and to keep them at or above grade level pace in learning. My project goal is to increase my teaching effectiveness by developing online tools to increase students' passion or interest for Chinese language learning. In this chapter, I will share where the website idea comes from and what contents will be included in my website. I will also attempt to answers my research questions "Why is it important to provide an at-home learning tool for parents to help their child improve their Chinese language learning by connecting in-school learning with at-home reviewing materials?"

To answer this research question, I decided to create an online Chinese language learning website for the 2017-2018 incoming kindergarten students. This website will take the following considerations the environment where I work, the students who I teach, the parents who I collaborate with, and the curriculum I need to follow as I build my project. Finally, I will describe the contents of my learning website and the timeline of the project.

Setting

I teach kindergarten in an urban inner city school. My district is one of the biggest districts in the State. We have 37,110 students enrolled in our district. The district has forty-eight elementary schools, eight middle schools, seven high schools, three alternative schools and one special education school. There are about 6,500 teachers and staff. The school district also manages community education programs for pre-K and adult learners, including Early Childhood Family Education, GED Diploma, language programs and various learning opportunities for community members of all ages. In our district, students are from families speaking seventy different languages, and only four languages are used for most school communication. I teach at a Chinese immersion K-5 elementary school and we had187 students enrolled in our program in 2017. The demographics of my district and my school are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 District and School Demographics

Demographics	District Percentage	School Percentage
Hispanic/Latino	14.1%	12.3%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.1%	0.0%
Asian	31.6%	30.5%
Black/African American	26.7%	6.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific	0.1%	0.0%

Islander		
White	21.2%	33.7%
Two or More Races	5.2%	17.1%

Table 2. Describes the ethnic demographic of the enrolled students.

The school where I teach is a K-5 full day Chinese immersion elementary program and offers five specialist classes: English, physical education, art, science and music. Our school also provides special education for students who have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and English as second language learner program for students whose first language is not English. Our school is a full immersion program, so the English language instruction is only used in the specialist classes. Students do not begin formal English instruction in second grade. It is the responsibility of the parents to teach English at home prior to second grade. According to the demographic table, it shows that my school and district have diverse students.

I am the only person who can truly evaluate how my students are progressing in this Chinese environment, so this situation makes me consider if there is a way I can provide a learning tool for parents to help their child learn and review Chinese language at home. Even with the development of an effective at-home learning tool, there still needs to be parents' support and involvement to help students reach their learning goals. Without the tool I'm working to develop there is little chance that parents can help their children with anything related to content. I think that the project I'm developing is very important to all immersion settings.

Participants

For my project, I will create an online Chinese language learning website for my kindergarten students whose parents will help them learn and review Chinese language at home. My kindergarten students and parents will use this website in the future. Table 3 shows the demographics of my current class.

Table 3 Demographics of Participants

Demographics	Class Percentage
Asian	21.7%
White	39.1%
Black/African American	13.1%
Two or More Races	26.1%
Boy	47.8%
Girl	52.2%

Table 3. Describes percentage of participants for author's project.

Project Description

During my website designing, I divided the website into seven categories, they are Chinese Language, Reading, Writing, Math, Science, Social Studies and Songs. Those categories are matching with website design as well as the curriculum used in the school to provide familiarity and easy access on the website. Under each category, there are key words taught in class for parents to show their children which words they have learned in

school and to remind their children to use the new words at home. If students forget the words, it will help them to practice and memorize them with the activities in place. If students recognize the words, parents can use this website to assess their child's skill level. Besides the key words in each category, there are thirty-six Better Chinese books under the reading section; those thirty-six books are familiar book that they have read daily in their small groups. Additionally there are some videos on poetry and stories under the same category in the reading section for students to watch and review at home. I put on all the subject of kindergarten vocabulary lists and videos of Chinese character stoke writing in the Chinese language section. Students can review those Chinese characters at home by listening to the website, making flash cards and playing the word games. Also students can follow the videos to practice writing the order of the character stokes.

Likewise there is one section on the website dedicated to the songs we have learned in school. Those songs were loaded as MP3 or MP4. Learning language from songs is an effective way for students to remember and utilize new words. There is no password required for the website, therefore other grade level students from my school are able to access if they wish to review the materials. Finally this website will be updated annually to correspond to any changes in curriculum or feedback from the parents.

Rationale

My goal is to create an at-home learning tool for parents to help their child improve their Chinese language learning by connecting in-school learning with at-home reviewing materials. This website is for kindergarten students to relearn and practice their

Chinese language. Parents can use this website to assess their children's learning and participate in their children's learning process. The success in learning a target language takes more than a classroom teacher with good instructions; it also takes the support of parents and an effective tool to sustain children's learning at home. I am the only person who can truly evaluate how my students are progressing in this Chinese environment, so this situation makes me consider if there is a way I can provide a learning tool for parents to help their child learn or review Chinese language at home.

Timeline

The following Table 4 will help me to monitor my project progress.

Table 4. Timeline for Project based learning

Peer Reviewer	May- July, 2017
Write Chapter 4 and Project	July, 2017
Rewrite/ Revise	July-August, 2017
Complete All Pieces of The Capstone	The end of July/ The beginning of August, 2017
Round Table Presentation	August, 2017
Apply The Project	2017-2018 school year

Table 4. Describes the timeline of author's project.

Summary

In chapter 3, it presented the background setting of my district, school and my class level. It described the demographics of my school, my district and my classroom. It also showed the participants, procedures and timeline of my project. I have made a clear case for why my project is important and why it will be effective. In all elementary school learning environments, parent involvement and support is important to students' success. The language immersion setting puts up a barrier that could prevent many

parents from helping their child with learning at home. My website will take down this wall and also create a forum for teacher parent collaboration.

In chapter 4, I will present what I have learned as a teacher, researcher and learner in my chapter 1, 2 and 3 writing. I will reflect on the process of creating the website. I will also recite the most important finding from chapter 2 and show the reasons. I will show the limitations of my project and implication of my project in chapter 4 too.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Overview

I teach in a Chinese immersion school, most of my students' parents are unable to assist their child at home with the target language learning and reviewing when they do not speak the target language themselves. It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to ensure the students are making adequate progress in school and at home. This situation compelled me to consider a way to provide a learning tool for parents to help their child learn or review Chinese language at home. Besides the benefit parents and child working together, this learning tool will lead students to accomplish their learning goals and improve their learning performance, and it also will reduce their anxiety about their second or third language learning pressure. These are the reasons I chose to focus my research on answering this question: why it is important to provide an at-home learning tool for parents to help their child improve their Chinese language learning by connecting in-school learning with at-home reviewing materials.

Summary of the literature review

I divided my literature review into three parts. I started with the language learning because the focus is how to provide an effective learning tool for parents to help their child learn or review the target learning at home. Under the findings of the language learning section, it is best to learn a language at an early age to develop the native pronunciation, and the immersion school setting provides the best language-learning

environment for this outcome. This finding has built a better understanding on the importance of immersion school setting.

The online language learning website is not only for learning the language, but also to help combine the language with the culture (Son & Park, 2012, p.140). One of the purposes to build an online language learning website is to integrate the culture piece along with the target language. Learning a language is a continuum process, a life long skill for students to use it in future, but learning the culture of the target language is an eye-opening experience for students to have in their life. It will help them become open-minded and be aware of many different cultures they will encounter through out their lives. The inclusion of a meaningful cultural content will further motivate students to continue to explore their Chinese language learning. People of all ages are naturally curious about other countries and cultures (Son & Park, 2012, p.140). Also, it is confirmed that the online language learning website does not take the place of the face-to-face learning. It is a tool for students to feel they are able to apply their classroom learning to their life outside of school. When a language is taught, the culture of the language is automatically blended into the learning. This finding made me realize that language learning and culture are interwined with each other.

Under the findings of the language immersion setting section, I found that a language immersion setting is the most effective way for students to learn the target language because it provides an authentic language-learning environment for students and develops students' language learning skill. Fortune, Tedick (2008) and Genesee (2004) mentioned that language immersion programs are one of most effective language learning program models in schools. When these programs are done right they will

provide considerable academic and educational benefits to students (Wesely, 2009, p. 270). There are two advantage of immersion learning environment. One is to reduce the possibility to acquire the accent of the target language. The other is to assist learners to reach high academic achievement. Also, there are some improvements of immersion learning environment. I have learned that reinforcing the in-school learning at home is limited. This challenge answered my research question, which is to provide a learning tool for parents to help their child learn or review the target language at home.

Under the findings of enforce at-home language learning section, I found that parent-teacher collaboration is a customized approach for each individual student to learn effectively. It is needed to be a positive learning environment for young learners to prevent the learning barriers in future. I also found that parent's involvement support and increase their children's learning success. "Supportive home-based involvement is that which enable the child to successful participate in learning or school activities, such as providing appropriate space and materials for learning activities, adhering to bedtime routines, and establishing rules and expectations for school performance" (Manz, Gernhart, Bracaliello, Pressimone, & Eisenberg, 2014, p.172). I also have learned that technology use at home is a wonderful method for children to practice the target language daily and assist them to achieve their academic learning goal. However, parents need to pay close attention when managing technology use at home to prevent the potential negative aspects.

Description of the project

During my website designing, I divided the website into seven categories, they are Chinese Language, Reading, Writing, Math, Science, Social Studies and Songs. Those

categories are matching with website design as well as the curriculum used in the school to provide familiarity and easy access on the website. Under each category, there are key words taught in class for parents to show their children which words they have learned in school and to remind their children to use the new words at home. If students forget the words, it will help them to practice and memorize them with the activities in place. If students recognize the words, parents can use this website to assess their child's skill level. Besides the key words in each category, there are thirty-six Better Chinese books under the reading section; those thirty-six books are familiar book that they have read daily in their small groups. Additionally there are some videos on poetry and stories under the same category in the reading section for students to watch and review at home. I put on all the subject of kindergarten vocabulary lists and videos of Chinese character stoke writing in the Chinese language section. Students can review those Chinese characters at home by listening to the website, making flash cards and playing the word games. Also students can follow the videos to practice writing the order of the character stokes. Likewise there is one section on the website dedicated to the songs we have learned in school. Those songs were loaded as MP3 or MP4. There is no password required for the website, therefore other grade level students from my school are able to access if they wish to review the materials. Finally this website will be updated annually to correspond to any changes in curriculum or feedback from the parents.

Limitations of the project

This project design was laid out to create a website based on learning resources for immersion students to review curriculum at home with the assistance of their parents. This plan along with the classroom curriculum standards formed my final product.

Overall the project was a great success, however there were a few challenges I faced. The biggest challenge was finding online resources that clearly matched the set of curriculum standards required for the immersion program. After much work, I was able to find quality resources that met the curriculum standards and fit them into my project plan. The challenges I foresee happening when implementing the website learning tool would be parents' lack of interest in using the tool. Or the parents are interested in using the tool may not know how to use it effectively. To overcome this, the website will be explained and demonstrated to the parents at the first parent - teacher conference before school begins, and then send reminders in newsletter to follow up with questions and concerns they may have. If parents are too busy to look into the website with their child, I will have those students to practice the learning from the website during their free time in school.

Implications of the project

My research question is why it is important to provide an at-home learning tool for parents to help their child improve their Chinese language learning by connecting in-school learning with at-home reviewing materials. Currently there are no formal tools available for parents to assist their children in learning and reviewing the target language at home. This is a major gap in all immersion programs. My project is to develop a tool to close this gap. When students fall behind in an immersion program, the only way to help them catch up with the whole class is to provide additional support. The tool I developed will provide an option for parents to assist their child to catch up at home. Additionally, children who are ahead of the class, can use this tool that provides many fun activities to be engaged and challenged.

Author's reflection

The main area of growth I have experienced through this project was having the opportunity to reflect on my own teaching, personal growth, and in search of ways to close the gap of learning a target language in connection with home and school in an immersion school environment. I feel that I have identified a need and provided a solution. I am at the beginning of my teaching career and this project has empowered me to not only to reflect on my teaching to identify areas of improvement, but it has also given me the tools to construct a tool that is suitable to the students' needs. Before taking this graduate program I recognized the need of improving my teaching. I was lacking resources and knowledge to actually make changes. There are many great teachers with many years of experience in my school, nonetheless, they seemed to be very set in their ways of teaching and doing things. Now that I have completed this program I feel extremely confident that I acquired the skills to continue to grow and improve on as a teacher. The website based tool I created is simply a starting point that I will continue to improve and develop along with the school curriculum and the state standards. I will also continue to think of the next big idea that will make have the most impact on my students' learning. I believe this project has further my learning on how to be a better teacher to overcome a challenge and with this the new skill on creating website learning tool enables me to assist other teachers in developing their own tools in the future.

Conclusion

My capstone project fits very well with the Hamline University School of Education conceptual framework. The first tenant is to Promote Equity in Schools and Society. The website learning tool fits very well with this mission. It provides an at-home

tool that involves parents in the immersion program, and it also promotes language and cultural understanding. The second tenant is to Build Communities for Teachers and Learners. My project creates an online learning community that can be shared with all teachers and students in the program. It will also create a framework for all of my fellow teachers to build a similar tool to be used by their students and parents. This project is an agent of change to help all students to have an equal chance of being successful in our program. My project is putting learning into practice. It is the combination of taking the theoretical ideas and concepts that I have learned to produce a tangible product that will be used by many parents and students for years to come. This aspect of the capstone fits with the Construct Knowledge framework. The final framework is to Practice Thoughtful Inquiry and Reflection, which is exactly the process I used to create my research question. It was through this reflection that I identified a gap in my real life teaching and consequently a solution was developed. Of the four framework concepts, I value this one the most. I really feel it is important to continuously to reflect and improve on my teaching.

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