AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY TO DEVELOP CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE AND CONTEXTUALLY RELEVANT PIIPAASH TEACHING MATERIALS FOR PRESCHOOLERS

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FINDINGS

- Need for culturally appropriate materials to develop cultural competence and language skills at the same time

- Materials that can assist learning beyond the classroom

- Audio/Video language resources are also identified as helpful additional materials

- The Class focuses on developing students' listening and speaking skills primarily

BACKGROUND

Piipaash, part of the Yuman, is reported as one of the seriously endangered languages in the two reservations in Arizona. The present study was approved to receive a Seize the Moment mini-grant to create bilingual teaching materials for Piipaash preschoolers (ages 4-6) of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.

OBJECTIVES

To explore the environment, classrooms, and curriculum design of Early Enrichment Piipaash Program

Identify the pedagogical needs of the Piipaash teachers in Early Enrichment Program to assist preschoolers in building target language skills

After identifying students' learning needs beyond the classroom, the researchers are now working on creating digitized take-home worksheets. Learners are expected to be assisted by their parents in completing the designed activities. The following are the themes on which the language activities will be based:

1. Greetings
2. Local Plants
3. Local Animals and Birds
4. Local/Traditional Foods; Tortilla Making
5. Traditional Crafts, Basketry (Burden Basket, Kia-Ha)
6. Traditional Objects/Tools
7. Family and Kinship

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the structure and curriculum design of the Early Enrichment Program for Piipaash Language?

What are the pedagogical needs of Early Enrichment Program instructors?

METHODOLOGY

Language Curriculum Design Model:

Need-based analysis & Environmental Analysis
Environmental Analysis seeks to evaluate the Early Enrichment Program situation and Need Analysis to investigate the specific and situated requirements of the teachers to assist students in building target language skills and cultural competence.

Qualitative Methods:
The study employs a qualitative methods approach for the collection of the data. The research tools include semi-structured interviews with the program administrators and teachers, classroom observations, and teacher shadowing. The researchers utilize triangulation of the data to maintain validity in the process of data interpretation.

Data collecting tools:
Classroom observation and semi-structured interviews (focus group) with teachers; teacher shadowing

Data analysis methods:
Generic thematic analysis (Creswell, 2014)

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