

## Efforts to Revitalize Piipaash Language: An Explorative Study to Develop Culturally Appropriate and Contextually Relevant Teaching Materials for Preschoolers

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**Abstract :** Piipaash, representing one large family of North American languages, Yuman, is reported as one of the seriously endangered languages in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community of Arizona. In a collaborative venture between Arizona State University (ASU) and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC), efforts have been made to revitalize and preserve the Piipaash language and its cultural heritage. The present study is one example of several other language documentation and revitalization initiatives that Humanities Lab ASU has taken. This study was approved to receive a "Beyond the lab" grant after the researchers successfully created a Teaching Guide for Early Childhood Piipaash storybook during their time working in the Humanities Lab. The current research is an extension of the previous project and focuses on creating customized teaching materials and tools for the teachers and parents of the students of the Early Enrichment Program at SRPMIC. However, to determine and maximize the usefulness of the teaching materials with regards to their reliability, validity, and practicality in the given context, this research aims to conduct Environmental Analysis and Need 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. The study employs a qualitative methods approach for the collection of the data. Multiple data collection strategies are used concurrently to gather information from the participants. 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. The preliminary results of the study show a need for culturally appropriate materials that can further the learning of students of the target language as well as the culture, i.e., clay pots and basket-making materials. It was found that the course and teachers focus on developing the Listening and Speaking skills of the students. Moreover, to assist the young learners beyond the classroom, the teachers could make use of send-home teaching materials to reinforce the learning (i.e., coloring books, including illustrations of culturally relevant animals, food, and places). Audio language resources are also identified as helpful additional materials for the parents to assist the learning of the kids.

**Keywords :** indigenous education, materials development, need analysis, piipaash language revitalization

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