

What Are the Limitations to Teaching Navajo Language  
in the Head Start Immersion Program?

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the limitations of Navajo language teaching in Navajo Head Start full immersion centers. The research questions asked what did Head Start teachers perceive as barriers to Navajo children successfully learning the Navajo language, what skills and knowledge did Head Start teachers have that were relevant to teach Head Start children the Navajo language, what Head Start teachers perceived as their strengths and weaknesses of the language immersion program, and what program and instructional qualities promoted and restricted the success of the language program? Two males and six females who resided in the northeastern part of the Navajo Nation were interviewed as to their teaching experiences. All of the interviewees were between the ages of late 40s to mid-60s and all spoke Navajo fluently. They had been employed with Head Start for more than 10 years. They came from families who had strong beliefs in the Navajo culture and language, and believed that all teachers should take Navajo language and culture courses to teach in Head Start. The interviews revealed the participants used their traditional language and culture skills to teach Navajo, but had they had limited knowledge as how to use the curriculum provided by the Division of Diné Education. The English curriculum was accessible and easy to follow, but did not adhere to President Hale's Executive Order to perpetuate the language. It was recommended that Head Start administrators and support staff review the Navajo language policies and regulations, train teachers how to write a lesson plan that was simple and teacher friendly, revamp the curriculums, and train teachers how to critique, analyze and develop lessons from the Navajo Curriculum. In addition, administrators should monitor and provide technical assistance to ensure teachers are implementing Navajo language instruction

according to Navajo Standards and monitoring each child's progress according to developmental domains and assessment.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Navajo language (*Diné Bizaad*) is the heritage and primary language of nearly all families, resulting in the preservation of Navajo language and culture. There are Navajo speakers of all age groups in the western part of the Navajo Nation; however, community members speak mostly English. The Navajo language is used only among adults and the elders because they understand and speak the language, but when it comes to speaking to children, the language is switched to English because the children understand this language. If the adults and elders do not speak Navajo to their children on a daily basis, the language will soon disappear.

In the mid-1990s the Navajo Nation Head Start established an immersion program for its staff to teach children their native language. However there were limitations to implement this important program. The Navajo Nation Head Start program is an extreme case to perpetuate the Navajo language as a nation in local communities and schools across the reservation. The questions for this research sought to find from teachers if the Navajo language was the medium of instruction in the Navajo Head Start program and what were the staff and instructional requirements to operate in an immersion program. What commitments do administrators and teachers have towards families and community members to perpetuate the language if they were to realistically abide by President Hale's Executive Order? The research inquired as to what motivates teachers to teach language to children and what strategies, resources and materials were available to perpetuate the Navajo language.

Navajo children are latent speakers of Diné (The People), but only when they are prompted. They speak mostly in English at local businesses, school grounds, and with their siblings, peers, or grandparents. Life is comfortable on the reservation for most parents, yet they do not realize its tremendous impact on their future generation. The worst part is they do not speak Diné to their own children. Their hope is to let someone do the talking for them. The common attitude is because you are a teacher, teach my child for me (*Shá*). They send them to grandma's sheep camp or enroll them in Navajo Head Start or exemplary programs where Navajo is taught. Grandma's sheep camp language experience is effective but only for a short time after they return to their home. If children are enrolled in Head Start immersion, there is another obstacle parents may encounter, which is how effective is the program for children to speak their native language. This research was necessary for discussion. Because Navajo Head Start provides native language teaching, what are the skills and tools teachers need to teach Navajo language effectively?

At school, the majority of children talk to their peers and teachers in English. If a child says a Navajo word, students will make fun of them. Sometimes teachers will interject and support the child by encouraging children to speak Navajo. During small and large group activities, teachers give instructions mostly in English. Teachers code switch words from Navajo to English when teaching. During home visitations or conferences, teachers talk to parents in English in front of their students. From this conversation, a child will begin to think, "My teacher speaks English, why can't I speak it too." The child does not realize that he or she can quickly learn a new language, his or her own native language!

In public places such as shopping centers, public health clinics, post offices, video stores, basketball games, preschool-aged children observe other children and adults talking to each other in English. They observe Navajo-speaking children being teased or laughed at by their peers. They think it is best to speak in English wherever they go. Grandma's sheep camp is the best place to speak Navajo. It is the only place where only one language is being used.

### **History of Navajo Language**

Long ago our forefathers expressed the importance of speaking and maintaining our sacred language. They say that our language is sanctified and it has a divine source. It came from *Haashch'éélti'i* (First Talking God) and *Haashch'é'éwaan* (Second Talking God). When life began in the Black World (*Nihodilhil*) a moisture of mist developed. This mist is a universal spiritual being in the form of a mind. The light (*Yá'álníí'neeyání*) from this mist has profound thinking and innate feeling capabilities. By a miracle, First Talking God used the first language. By a spiritual force, Second Talking God gave us the soul and mind in our body (*Nihi Diyin Nihii'isíín*). During the emergence into the fourth world (Glittering World), the Diné brought their culture and philosophies of learning with them (Aronilth, 1992). Navajo history is told orally from generation to generation. It was not until the 1620s when the Spaniards started recording Navajo history. Archeologists, socio-linguists, and anthropologists found Navajo artifacts and remains from Southeast Asia to Dulce, New Mexico. Socio-linguists believed that the Navajo language derived from the *NaDene Athabascan* speaking group. The four *Athabascan* groups migrated from Northern Canada to the southwestern part of North America. The Diné are one of the southwestern *Athabascan* speakers with Apaches in

New Mexico and Arizona. During World War II, the United States Marine Corp recruited Navajos to help them in the communication unit. The Japanese unsuccessfully tried to break the description of Navajo codes. After the U.S. won the war for using the Navajo language, the U.S. government ignored the punishment of many Navajos for speaking their native language. Today the Diné reside on the reservation within the four corners of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah. Some live outside of the boundary to seek better education and employment opportunities.

### **Demographics and Population**

The Navajo Nation is 16.2 million acres (25,351 square miles) in the four corner state region. It overlaps a total of 11 counties. Within the western Navajo Agency, the border towns are Flagstaff, Winslow, and Page, Arizona. Most Navajos go to border towns on weekends to do their shopping and business. San Francisco Peaks (*Dook'o'osliid*) in Flagstaff has the highest elevation in Arizona. It is the sacred mountain to the Navajos and Hopis. Points of interest within this region are Monument Valley Navajo National Park, Navajo National Monument near Kayenta, and Lake Powell in Page, Arizona. They attract thousands of tourists every year. The majority of roads are graded, and they are rarely maintained by Bureau of Indian Affairs. During harsh winter months, road conditions are wet and muddy, making it unsafe to travel. Sometimes schools in the remote areas are closed until the roads are fixed.

According to Navajo population profile 2010 U.S. Census, an estimated population of Navajos is 332,129 enrolled members of which an estimated 22,000 are registered voters who live within the Western Agency. Tuba City was the largest community and it had a population of 7,354 Navajos. There are 18 chapters within this

agency. The 18 chapters are locally controlled by an estimated 72 elected chapter officials through the Navajo Nation's Local Governance Act. The chapters provide economic, housing, and social services to the community. The chapter officials consist of a council delegate, chapter president, vice president, secretary, and a chapter coordinator.

### **History of Navajo Head Start**

Head Start is a federally funded program under Region 8 of the American Indian Program (AIP). In 1965, the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity (ONEO) program had only a few Head Start center-based programs across the Navajo Nation. Services were provided to only 100 children. A thin curriculum that consisted of colors, numbers, shapes, animals, foods, and a list of household items were used at this time. These topics were taught with Navajo culture, but literacy was used only towards cognitive learning. There were only 10 to 15 children enrolled in the classrooms that were situated at local chapter houses. The children spent half a day at school and then were transported by a bus driver in suburban vehicles. They ate breakfast at home before school started. Lunch was not provided at school.

In the Western Navajo Agency, Navajo Mountain Head Start was one of the first centers to start its operation. It began as a pilot project with less than 10 students. A parent involvement coordinator was managing this center. The teachers who taught during this time stated their students spoke mostly English. The language they brought to school was called their home language. Three weeks after school started, they conducted language surveys and family intake questionnaires to parents. One of the initial surveys they conducted was the primary language questionnaire. The questionnaire determined students' English- and Navajo-language speaking abilities. The results indicated children

who used both languages understood what was said to them, but they could not respond back in Navajo. Teachers stated that only 2 out of 20 children (10%) spoke Navajo fluently. One teacher stated that none of her students spoke Navajo (P. Long, personal interview, 2013, Summer). The children had young parents who were between the ages of 20 and 25 and stayed with their grandparents at home. Children who were bilingual spoke Navajo better than those who just understood it. This survey was also used to determine whether to assess children in English or Navajo. In 1995, 20 % of the children could barely understand and speak Navajo (Becenti, 1997). The statistics indicated that the numbers have declined since then.

### **Arviso and Holm Assessment**

In 1987 Marie Arviso and Wayne Holm conducted a language assessment at Fort Defiance Elementary School. They assessed incoming kindergarteners who came from Fort Defiance Agency Head Start centers. The curriculum that was used by the school district had to be simplified in Navajo. It was revised to fit the child's age and language. In talking time, the children talked about what was going on at school. They were questioned by the teachers to express themselves openly. The purpose of talking time was to observe how children used the language for natural communication in the home and in their own environment. The language used by the children had meaning, but to the listener, it may be novelist.

### **Platero Study**

In 1992, Dr. Paul Platero conducted a similar research to Head Start children across the Navajo Nation (Navajo Division of Education, 1992). He observed a one-to-one communication between children and Head Start staff. He reviewed lesson plans to

ensure if literacy was culturally relevant and age appropriate. In the classroom during the morning circle, he observed children singing songs, saying nursery rhymes, and identifying colors, shapes, and numbers in English and Navajo. Platero listened to children and observed language used by the children in the classroom. He interviewed a few Head Start parents who were at the center, and they determined that teaching Navajo in the classroom did not work. He concluded that interaction between the children and Head Start teachers was mostly English and hardly in Navajo. If there was code-switching going on, it created confusion. The statistics he gathered revealed that of the 682 children observed, 54.4% were English dominant speakers, 28% were bilingual, and 18% were Navajo speakers. He blamed the administrators for not supporting the teacher's efforts to teach Navajo using Navajo Culture Curriculum, and they also lacked teaching materials and supplies. He also learned that parents were not actively involved in curriculum planning and participating in literacy activities. He recommended all classrooms be enriched with literacy development through reading and speaking. All teachers need to obtain a state teacher's certificate plus ESL or Navajo language endorsement. Teacher aides could work on their associate of arts degrees and meet the same qualifications as teachers.

### **Language Survey and Assessment**

The Navajo Head Start immersion program, which is operated under the tribe's Division of Diné Education (DODE), developed the Head Start Language Ability Survey (see Appendix A) and the Head Start Dine Language Proficiency Assessment (see Appendix B) to measure the child's language ability. Five education specialists (one per agency) were assigned to conduct these surveys and assessments. In the Western Agency,

Center I-A results indicated 25% of the children spoke both languages. Center I-B has 10% speaking both languages; Navajo was not the primary language in the home. Ninety percent of the children were bilingual speakers from both centers. Results indicated teachers taught various techniques using Navajo verbs. They were encouraged to use oral Navajo as much as possible to teach language.

### **Executive Order**

On July 31, 1995, then Navajo Nation President Albert Hale issued an Executive Order (see Appendix C) to proclaim that Navajo be the medium of instruction at all Navajo Head Start facilities. The result of this proclamation was to respond to Dr. Paul Platero's Study (1992) on Navajo Language use in Head Start. His findings indicated that 54 percent of preschool-aged children are losing their language. The Proclamation didn't go into effect until January 1998 when Office of Standards, Curriculum and Assessment Development, formerly Office of Diné Language, Culture and Community Services administrators hired five education specialists to coordinate two head start immersion sites at each region on the Navajo Nation

### **Staff Development**

The majority of Head Start staff members are classified (non-degreed) employees. Only three or four staff per agency at the administrative level had a bachelor's degree. Head Start mandates all teachers obtain a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate before working in the classroom. This certificate is awarded to them from the national office when they complete their AAS requirement by doing early childhood module assignments. They perform observations, develop portfolios, and conduct parent questionnaires. They compile resource community needs assessments, health surveys,



and chapter profiles. They also attend evening college classes to pursue their A.A. degree. Before they receive their certificates, teachers are observed and evaluated by a national Head Start CDA representative.

In 1992, President Petersen Zah issued a proclamation for Navajo teachers to obtain a state teacher's certificate. His goal was, by the year 1996, there would be 1,000 Navajo teachers certified to teach in the classroom (G. Clark, personal communication, 2013, Summer). Head Start teachers who participated in the Ford Foundation's certification program were no longer employed; instead, they sought employment in state public and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools.

Head Start did not have a realistic career development plan for their staff. Some of them took the initiative to take summer school and evening classes to advance themselves. Certified teachers who left the program were not given incentives for salary increment. They were replaced by their aides or parents whose children that were enrolled in Head Start.

Teachers had limited language arts skills to write effective lesson plans and develop narrative reports. Teachers also lacked Navajo reading and writing skills. In the summer of 1997, 12 to 15 staff from each of the five agencies attended Diné College to take Navajo culture and language courses. This initiative benefited the teachers when they returned to their work. Ms. Gloria Clark, the former Qualitative Assurance Specialist from the central office stated that more plans were being developed to recruit more Head Start staff to take Navajo language and culture classes.

## Curriculum

A curriculum that was developed and used in the latter part of 1970 is not good anymore. The committee members who developed this curriculum were Head Start teachers, coordinators, and consultants. This curriculum had weekly topics with lessons to teach large and small group activities, children's songs, and stories. The curriculum also had Navajo culture lessons. In 1992 a Navajo curriculum was developed. Most teachers lacked Navajo reading and writing skills, and they did their lessons mostly in English which they were *comfortable* with (A. King, personal interview, 2015, Summer). They created their own methods to do their lessons in Navajo. According to the lessons, children say animals and their body parts in Navajo and English. It included cognitive tasks such as saying colors and shapes, counting numbers, and reviewing months of the year and days of the week. In July of 1997, Head Start teachers from each agency met at Window Rock Elementary School to discuss Navajo words that would be used in the curriculum. Ms. Irene Silentman, Education Specialist, stated this was a stepping stone to preserve and teach Navajo language. Its purpose was to teach Navajo first. She stated she wanted Navajo children to learn the complexities of the use of verbs in the Navajo language (Bencent, 1997).

According to Patero's observation, he discovered that most teachers did not know how to write lesson plans and implement them. Supervisors and educational coordinators stated they conducted training in lesson plan development, claimed they never received this training since they were hired. It was recommended that teachers be trained, and that there was a need for Head Start teachers to go back to school. Most teachers assumed their positions according to years of experience working in Head Start.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study investigated the limitations of Head Start teachers teaching Navajo language in Navajo Head Start immersion programs. Questions were raised to evaluate and compare the differences of how teachers utilized effective teaching methods to implement Navajo language immersion: Are teachers using their own oral Navajo speaking abilities and use these skills to teach Navajo? The alternate question asks if there are criteria established by Head Start to implement immersion services they need help with. Is this something that needs to be addressed to Head Start administrators so teachers will be trained and have the necessary tools and materials to provide effective Navajo language immersion services?

### **Purpose of the Study**

Many Navajo people still speak their native language. Some parents and grandparents speak Navajo to their children. Few preschool-aged children still speak their mother tongue in the home. If they do not use it as a conversation, it is used for commands from their parents, grandparents, and siblings. The common words they use are *aoo'* (yes), *dooda* (no), *hóla* (I don't know), and *yáadilá* (not again). They cannot communicate intellectually to carry on a conversation. At school, children talk mostly in English and this is the language they know.

This research topic was chosen because of concerns about how Navajo Head Start teachers are limited as to teaching Navajo language to preschool children. The children are not learning their native language. Head Start administrators, teachers, and parents are not serious about how language immersion services are being implemented and monitored in the classroom. In 1995, a language policy was executed to perpetuate Diné

language but there was no public awareness. The Diné are not educated on the purpose of this policy. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to research these concerns and provide explanations why this is going on.

The research questions that formed the basis for this study were as follows:

1. What do Head Start staff members perceive as barriers to Navajo children successfully learning the Navajo language?
2. What do Head Start staff members perceive as their strengths and weaknesses of the language immersion program?
3. What skills and knowledge do Head Start staff members have relevant to teaching Head Start children the Navajo language?
4. What program and instructional qualities promote and restrict the success of language program?

### **Definition of Terms**

*Latent speakers:* Language is present but not visible, apparent or actualized; existing as potential.

*Sanctified:* Navajo language is considered sacred. Words are considered sanctified during prayers, ceremonies, and rituals.

*Innate:* The state of keeping native language connected in the home and community.

*Perpetuate:* To keep the language stabilized at its present state.

*Code switch:* The act of speaking from Navajo to the English language during conversation or teaching.

*Bilagàana:* Anglo person or westernized methods of teaching.

*Asdzàà*: Adult Navajo female.

Ashkii: Navajo male boy.

*Endoglossic*: Denoting or relating to an Indigenous language that is used as the first or official language in a country or community.

*Wááshindoon*: Federal programs that fund, operate, and monitor programs on the Navajo Nation.

### **Limitations**

Each individual responded to the questions differently to the interviewer. It was assumed that both groups experienced the same situations at their sites but they were different according to their service areas. Some provided information in their Native and English language. They shared their Navajo language and cultural background experiences when they were growing up as children.

### **Delimitations**

This study was only for Head Start teachers who taught Navajo language immersion to preschool children in the western region of the reservation. The location of the study was in Shonto, Arizona and Oljato, Utah. The information obtained was from a small population sample but may not be generalized to other larger service areas.

### **Significance of Study**

The significance of this study was to conduct a research on how Navajo language should be taught effectively to preschool children in Head Start centers across the Navajo Nation where Navajo language is the medium of instruction. The study also advocated for language and cultural teaching when instruction in Navajo was not taken seriously by school districts. The study is for Navajo teachers or practitioners to analyze, plan, and

integrate language and cultural teaching using the curriculum. This study will be a resource for educators who specialize in Navajo language and culture, and essential for community members and stakeholders on the Navajo Nation.

### **Assumptions**

My assumption of this study was that staff members from both sites experienced the same conditions in terms of service and availability of resources and support. It was also assumed they openly responded to the interview questions with honesty.

### **Organization of Study**

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of study, definition of terms, limitations, significance of study, delimitations, and assumptions. Chapter 2 includes literatures reviewed on what is known and what is not known about Navajo or Native American language and culture, language research, and techniques for teaching. Chapter 3 reviews methods of research used in the study. Chapter 4 provides the findings of the study and Chapter 5 presents a summary and recommendations for further language study.

*A word of caution:* It should be noted that there has been a major reform in Navajo Head Start since the data for this study was collected. As a result, some of the study's conclusions need to be considered in this context. In the summer of 2015, officials of Head Start and the Navajo Nation established a memorandum of agreement with Diné College, Arizona State University, and Navajo Technical University to make higher education and a highly qualified work force a priority in Head Start (Dotsin, 2015, May 16, July 16).

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this study examined topics relating to Indigenous languages and the impacts of the pedagogy of Navajo language. Topics reviewed were immersion education, language policy, reversing language shifts, language revitalization and perpetuation, and curriculum.

#### **Immersion Education**

To understand the purpose of immersion education, it is important to explore how native speakers in various immersion programs receive language services in foreign countries, United States, and Native American communities. Immersion comes from the word *immerse*, which is to place in water like a wet sponge. The idea is that children will be immersed in another language, as being dipped in water. Children are like little sponges; they grasp what they learn (Asdzaa 2, participant). The use of immersion education has been effective in supporting and developing the endoglossic languages as L2 media of instruction, that is, languages whose norms are created within the local speech community. These programs have been set up in contexts where that same language may have won the hard-earned right to an L1 medium of instruction. A community in which the number of native speakers decline and in which its members determine to maintain its language, identity, and culture, immersion is likely to be an important means, perhaps the only one, for reversing the process of extinction.

Two instances of immersion have declined since the 1970s: Welsh schools in which Welsh medium education were provided for L1 speakers of Welsh, and immersion schools for students from an English-speaking background. Studies of immersion

programs in Catalonia and in the Basque country were banned from use in education. When they regained their place in language of instruction, bilingual programs (Catalan-Spanish; Basque-Spanish) for Catalan and Basque speakers were initiated. Alongside them, and in support of them, Catalan and Basque immersion programs for Spanish monolingual children were begun. Immersion is the only way of reviving an extinct language. Parents and community leaders who have strong ties with language did not speak the language themselves; however, they have promoted the use of a threatened language as an L2 medium so that their children can become fluent in the language. Examples include the Ukrainian immersion and Cree immersion programs in Canada, and the Maori immersion program in New Zealand. Immersion educational programs as L2 medium of instruction bring forth support and revival of a natural speaker (Johnson & Swain, 1997).

The revitalization of a native language works in immersion programs if people and their leaders in the community have the desire to maintain their language and identity. The results of a foreign language immersion have shown that students can develop content knowledge at the same time as they develop language skills. In immersion, the majority of the language students are educated in a new language. In total immersion programs, school activities from mundane tasks such as collecting lunch money to cognitively demanding tasks such as learning how to read are conducted in a foreign (second) language. Numerous studies of Canadian immersion programs have shown that English-speaking students schooled in French not only attain higher levels of proficiency in French than in any other school-based model of second language instruction, but also show that there is no detriment to their native language, academic, or



cognitive development (Genesee, 1985, p.159). This is one of the model maintenance programs where L2 students are not only learning their native language but they are also learning the English language as well.

In the United States, schools are challenged to provide a quality education to students who are not yet proficient in English, and there are many teachers charged with developing these students' linguistic and academic proficiencies. Some teachers are English as second language (ESL) teachers who see the children for part of the school day. Other teachers are grade-level teacher in whose rooms the students are "mainstreamed" for most of the day. And others are grade-level teachers whose students have been "exited" from ESL or bilingual programs but whose students continue to struggle with the linguistic demands of the academic curriculum. Yet other teachers of minority language students work in two-way immersion programs ( also known as dual immersion, developmental bilingual, or two-way bilingual or are bilingual education teachers whose students may have limited proficiency in English, and even perhaps their native language. These students must be provided with content instruction. The students of these teachers simply cannot wait to develop high levels of academic language proficiency before tackling the demands of the curriculum. It is clear from the results of foreign language immersion that achieving such a goal is possible (Genesee, p. 159, 160).

Those who work with second language students (just like immersion teachers) will want to plan for the integration of culture. This may mean teaching students about the culture of the speakers of the language they are learning as well as that of the students themselves. Where possible, culture should be infused into other areas of the curriculum. Teachers who integrate the teaching of culture with the objectives of the school

curriculum can more easily *find time* for one or more set of objectives and enrich instruction because student learning is integrated rather than fragmented. A French immersion teacher working on a social studies objective, such as the geographical features of a region, used this opportunity to compare and contrast the topography of the local area with that of a selected region in France. Another immersion teacher used a fifth-grade science lesson on climate as a springboard for understanding the implications of geography on climate in contrasting Spanish-speaking cities such as San Juan, Mexico City, Lima, and Buenos Aires. Similarly, those who work with learners of English can and should ensure that planning for instruction includes attention to the sociocultural needs of students, to cultural information and attitudes that will help students function in a new culture and reinforce positive attitudes of students in their home culture (Genesee, 1985, p. 166). Integrating language instruction with culture in immersion classroom is essential for students who live in North and South America, and Mexico. The attitudes of some Diné people believe their language and cultural teaching are integrated. Holm (1990) stated, "Language and culture are the same." No doubt there is substantial overlap. But they are not the same. Even while saying this, we do things in schools that include otherwise. We write books in English, which is something that is not part of Navajo culture if culture is defined as having occurred only in the past. We talk about Navajo culture in school. However, because the children do not speak much Navajo, and because Navajo culture is so important, we talk about it to the children in the language they do understand, English. We get into this problem by assuming that Navajo culture is only in the past. But culture, if it is alive, it continues to change, and so does language (McCarty & Zepeda, 2006, p. 11).

Immersion program is also a place for language power. In the postcolonial era, the language of the former colonizer has in many cases been retained as a second language medium of instruction. These situations correspond to our definition of immersion only insofar as additive bilingualism remains a goal. In many contexts, the target proficiency of the majority of L2 medium programs where the colonial language has been retained remains essentially replicative because the support for L1 educational development is often minimal or nonexistent. This situation may result from deliberate policy and a desire to promote national rather than regional identities. It also results from lack of financial and other resources, particularly where no well-developed tradition of literacy and formal education previously existed. Even in more favorable circumstances such as those of the Molteno Project, where early education has been a vernacular language, maintaining L1 instruction in the highest levels of education and allowing for the full development of additive bilingualism presents a formidable challenge. Just as the immersion programs can be used to enable students to communicate effectively within the particular language communities with minority group members, or with individuals from foreign nations, they may also be used to enable students to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In Singapore, where English has been established as both an intranational and an international *lingua franca*, immersion has provided an important means for accomplishing this aim. Over time, this *lingua franca* has become the L1 of an increasingly large portion of the population, particularly the urban elite. English is now claimed as the L1 of more than 205 of the population, typically the more highly educated, and no other Singaporean language can compete within the education system (Cummins & Hornberger, 2008, p. 239).

Another method of children learning their language is by imitating their parents. One traditional and popularly held view about how children learn their language is that they do it by imitating their parents and by receiving feedback from the parents, who correct their erroneous speech. Language is passed back and forth between the child and the parent, as a ball of clay is passed from one hand to the other, with each pass producing a smoother product. This view is consonant with empiricist philosophy (the philosophical basis of the work of Werner Leopold and Madorah Smith) and its psychological disciple of behaviorism, whose goal is to provide a description of the concrete and measurable conditions under which observable behaviors occur. The suggestive molding of the language can be thought of as the building of chains of behavior (called *habits*) that are externally observable (both to the parents and to the scientists) and thus subject to modification.

The empiricist approaches to both linguistics and psychology have come under fire from Noam Chomsky, who argues for the inadequacy of attempts to derive linguistic knowledge from externally observable (hence “experience-able”) data. The empiricist’s account of language acquisition, the molding of clay, could not be the right one in the Chomskyan world, because for him language is an abstract entity that simply cannot be molded by parent, teacher, or any other external source. It must be derived from knowledge that is already resident in the child (Hakuta, 1987, p. 109). Chomsky’s theory that language resides in the child is true because the Diné and other indigenous people strongly believe language comes from within by some spiritual realm. Children develop language skills by imitation especially at a very young age. Children listen to words and repeat after their parents, teachers, and peers. If there are any errors made by a child, it is

imperative to correct their mistakes instantly. This is where molding or immersing comes in. Children also develop language naturally and become fluent speakers. They observe, hear, and speak the native language under one roof. The language is one entity.

The term *Native American* glosses tremendous cultural, linguistic, and educational diversity. More than four million people, or 1.5% of the U.S. population, self-identity as American Indian or Alaska Native; an additional 874,000 people or 0.03% of the total population identify as Native Hawaiian or “other Pacific Islander” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Native peoples in the U.S. represent more than 560 federally recognized tribes and 175 languages. Further heightening this diversity are the different historical experiences among tribes in the “lower 48” states, Native Alaskans, and Native Hawaiians, and the fact that education for Native students is conducted in federal, state, parochial, private, and tribal or community-controlled schools. This diversity, notwithstanding, all Native Americans are recognized as First Peoples and members of internally sovereign Native nations. For more than 400 years, Native American children and the content and medium of their schooling have been at the heart of the struggle between tribal sovereignty and federal control (Cummins, 1996, p. 240).

McCarty (2002) stated,

Bilingual education for native peoples in the U.S.A. is no less fraught with controversy today than it was in the 1960’s when Indigenous educators such as Agnes Dodge Holm introduced the then radical notion of schooling in the native language. The issues today, however are much different, whereas the goal of early Native American bilingual programs was to develop children’s native language while they acquired English as a second language, the situation today is reversed, as more Native American children come to school speaking English as a primary language. The troubling paradox is that even as this shift to English has occurred, native students often are stigmatized as “Limited English Proficient” and tracked into remedial programs. Up to 40% of these children will leave school before graduating (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997).

Thus, contemporary Native American bilingual education programs have the combined goals of revitalizing native languages and promoting children's English language learning and school achievement" (Cummins & Hornberger, 2008, p. 239). The bilingual educational system was Americanized towards Native students. No matter how goals are set for revitalizing the native language, teachers and children are trapped in the system. They fail because English language is mixed with native language.

The core features must be present to some extent for a program to be usefully labeled as *immersion*. Johnson and Swain (1997, pp. 6-8) defined a prototypical immersion program. The program consists of important elements in social context, curriculum, pedagogy, and teachers' and students' characteristics. By matching programs against these features, bilingual educators can determine, trivially, the extent to which their programs are immersion programs in light of the opportunities, constraints, and problems a program that matches these criteria might face as a consequence. The nine elements are as follows:

1. *The L2 as a medium of instruction*: This feature differentiates immersion, along with many other forms of bilingual education, from contexts where the L2 is taught formally and only as a subject. The assumptions underlying the use of the L2 as a medium is in other respects essentially that of the communicative approach to language teaching. The use of the L2 as a medium is a means for maximizing the quantity of comprehensible input and purposeful use of the target language in a classroom.

2. *The immersion curriculum parallels the local L1 curriculum:* The immersion curriculum consists of content subjects such as mathematics, science, geography taught through L2.
3. The L2 medium curriculum follows the L1 medium curriculum and is defined in terms of L1 speakers' needs, aspirations, goals, and educational norms, not in terms of another speech community located elsewhere.
4. *Overt support exists for the L1:* Overt support for the L1 is an essential element within the curriculum, and attitudes toward it are assumed to be positive. At a minimum, the students' L1 is taught as a subject in the curriculum at some stage and to advanced levels. Often it is also used as a medium of instruction.
5. *The program aims for additive bilingualism:* By the end of the program, L1 proficiency should be comparable to the proficiency of those who have studied through the L1. In addition, a high, though not that of a native speaker, level of proficiency is achieved in the L2. This additive feature differentiates immersion from L2 medium programs that result in replacive bilingualism, that is, where L2 proficiency develops at the expense of L1.
6. *Exposure to the L2 is largely confined to the classroom:* The prototypical immersion context would be one in which students have little or no exposure to the L2 outside the classroom. In this respect, immersion programs are clearly at a disadvantage compared with some other bilingual programs.
7. *Students enter with similar and limited levels of L2 proficiency:* In this feature, students contrast with those entering a submersion program, where L2 speakers with limited L2 proficiency are placed in classes dominated by and organized for

L1 speakers. A prototypical immersion program has therefore considerable potential among L2 medium programs to develop a curriculum and pedagogy that match the L2 proficiency of the students, cater to those students' learning needs and maximize their opportunities for rapid L2 development. A major factor affecting the success of an immersion program is the availability of the expertise and resources necessary to exploit that potential to the full. In combination with the lack of L2 contact outside the classroom, this feature makes immersion classrooms particularly well suited to pedagogical research and curriculum evaluation.

8. *The teachers are bilingual:* Prototypical immersion teachers are bilingual in the students' L1 and L2 medium of instruction. Students can therefore communicate with the teacher in their L1 as and when necessary, while the teacher has the language proficiency necessary to maintain the L2 as a medium of instruction. Students can communicate with the teacher in their L1 as and when necessary, while the teacher has the language proficiency necessary to maintain the L2 a medium of instruction, and to support and motivate the use of the L2 by the students. Immersion classrooms contrast again on this feature with submersion programs, and with multilingual classrooms, where teachers are unlikely to know the students' L1.
9. *The classroom culture is that of the local L1 community:* The high level of L1/L2 bilingualism already referred to is necessary, but not sufficient for teachers to be able to function effectively in an immersion classroom. The classroom culture of the prototypical immersion program, like its curriculum, is that of the community



from which the students are drawn, not that of a community where the target language is L1. As an example, Japanese teachers recruited from Japan might need to adjust to the classroom culture in a North American or Australian immersion classroom before they could work effectively, no matter how proficient they might be in English. The same has been shown to apply to expatriate English-speaking teachers in Hong Kong.

There are excellent prototypical immersion programs to teach language. As a nation, the Navajo people need to identify the best program that will meet their children's needs.

### **Language Policy**

Leaders and policy groups of the Navajo Nation develop regulations and policies through resolutions. The resolutions are adopted and passed at the local chapter meetings, committee meetings, and council delegate meetings, and are developed through legislations under Navajo Nation's three branch government. The purpose of introducing policies pertaining to Navajo education and language is to inform parents, educators, community members, and stakeholders that regulations pertaining to language exist. The following are examples of resolutions or policies that were developed on the Navajo Nation:

#### **Resolution of the Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council**

The resolution CN-61-84 on November 14, 1984 and codified at 10 N.N.C. §111 (see Appendix D) was adopted and passed by the Education Committee of the Navajo Nation. The resolution has three components. Under Whereas, 13 items are addressed but only 10 key issues pertaining to Navajo children's education were revisited.

Item 2: Pursuant to Resolution No. GSCO -81-95, the Government Services Committee of the Navajo Nation Council approved the Plan of Operation for the Department of Head Start. The Department of Head Start is situated under the Executive Branch of the Navajo Nation government within the Division of Diné Education.

Item 3: The Department of Head Start strives to provide early childhood experiences for children to bring about a greater degree of social competence. The mission of the Department of Head Start is to accomplish this through efforts with collaborative efforts with parents, communities, and local resources.

Item 5: Pursuant to an Executive Order executed by President Albert Hale, relating to the usage of the Navajo language as the language of instruction at all Navajo Nation Head Start facilities was formally proclaimed on July 31, 1995.

Item 7: Pursuant to the Navajo Nation Education Policies adopted by the Navajo Nation Council by Resolution CN-61-84 on November 14, 1984, and codified at 10 N.N.C. §, specifically states,

The Navajo language is an essential element of the life, culture and identity of the Navajo people. . . . Instruction on the Navajo language shall be made available for all grade levels in all schools serving the Navajo Nation.

Item 8: The Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council and the Department of Head Start is committed to ensuring the Navajo language is surviving and prospering for the Navajo people. The Navajo language was used in times of war. Now, in times of peace, the Navajo language must be used to ensure

the survival of the Navajo people to maintain the Navajo way of life and to preserve and perpetuate the Navajo Nation as a sovereign nation.

Item 9: The Navajo Nation has less than half of its children entering the Navajo Head Start program able to talk Navajo; people able to speak Navajo is declining every year. The Department of Head Start has concerns about the effects of so many young children shifting from Navajo to English only. The Navajo Nation Department of Head Start's Immersion section has developed the Navajo Nation Head Start Act for the benefit of children and families participating in the Head Start program.

Item 10: The Department of Head Start strives to promote the children's social and educational competence through the Navajo language.

Item 11: The Department of Head Start is concerned that an Executive Order can be more easily ignored, superseded, or overturned. The Division of Diné Education has developed and proposed the Navajo Nation Head Start Act to be made part of the Navajo Nation Code and become Navajo law.

Item 12: The immersion Section of the Department of Head Start, which received input from a number of people concerned with teaching Navajo in the Navajo Head Start program, has developed the Head Start Act.

Item 13: The Department of Head Start and the Head Start Policy Council feels it is in the best interest of the Navajo Nation to adopt the Navajo Nation Head Start Act for the benefit of the preservation of the Navajo language.

## **Navajo Nation Head Start Act**

The Head Start Act, Chapter 2 referenced as Exhibit A, was codified by Navajo Nation Education Committee through a resolution that was approved on August 12, 2000. The Act is made up of six parts: Navajo as the language of Head Start, purpose, definitions, implementation at three levels, program procedures, and implementation through support and planning. The purpose of the Head Start Act was to provide awareness for Navajo Nation Head Start staff members to be involved in the instruction of children's Navajo language development at all Head Start facilities. The focus of the Head Start Act was to ensure Head Start staff implement language services through means of communication, interaction, and instruction to enable limited Navajo-speaking children to communicate freely and effectively with confidence in Navajo.

## **Executive Order**

The Executive Order of the Navajo Nation was executed by Navajo Nation President Albert Hale on July 31, 1995 (see Appendix D). The purpose for this proclamation was to bring awareness to all people of the Navajo Nation, not just Head Start staff, that language is the essential element of life, culture, and identity of Navajo people. The proclamation addresses Navajo language be the medium of instruction at Head Start facilities.

There were some concerns with this proclamation. The following question was asked by concerned citizens: "What will the policy be?" The following remark was made: "We don't really know what the President's statement will actually say." We would hope that the policy would include some or most of the following provisions. It is the intent of the Navajo Nation to implement Navajo education policies with respect to the Navajo

language in all Navajo Head Start centers. The intent is not to go back to Navajo-only. The intent is to go forward towards stable bilingualism. We want Navajo children to become proficient as adult in both Navajo and English. We expect them to become able to use Navajo or English well in appropriate situations. To this end:

1. Navajo will be the language of communication, instruction, and interaction in all Head Start centers.
2. Navajo Head Start programs will prepare children for oral literacy and numeracy in Navajo.
3. Navajo will be the language of interaction between Head Start staff members in the centers.
4. Bureau, community-controlled, mission, and public schools receiving these children are asked to begin developing appropriate programs to enable Navajo children to continue to develop their Navajo language abilities.
5. Explanations of the policy, should try to make clear the following:
  - a. The intention is the use of Navajo with all children in all centers.
  - b. The only exceptions will be the occasional use of English in instances of injury or distress. “We do not intend to teach children to read/write or do arithmetic in Head Start. But we do hope to do a number of pre-reading and pre-math activities that will prepare children to do so in Navajo in kindergarten and first grade. Explanations of the policy should make it clear that increased ability in these areas in Navajo should contribute to increased ability in these areas in English. (June 1995, June, p. 1, draft #1).

The parents did not want a bilingual program. They don't want teachers to teach Navajo to their children. They don't really listen to me. The chapter leaders and the tribal leaders should explain to parents and they'll listen to them. I know that students will comprehend more things in two languages, but I can't get parents to listen to me. (Navajo elementary teacher; Batchelder & Markel, pp. 239-247).

The concerns from citizens are some examples Navajos still ask and need explanation from leaders. Policies and regulations pertaining to language are adopted but they are not made public, so people are not aware of its intent. They need to be informed and educated.

### **Reversing Language Shifts**

Language shift is the weakening of a language through intergenerational generations of people in a sociocultural context. When the language weakens, the culture of the people also weakens. Reversing Language Shift (RLS) in the study was to obtain historical background on the political effects of RLS, analysis of threatened languages, and the impacts of language shift in Native Americans.

Renowned international Sociolinguist, Joshua Fishman (1997) stated that in order to reverse language shift in Indigenous nations, language maintenance must be consistent in communities where there is close intimacy in culture and home language. He believed that home language is best learned from the mother tongue. The domains of language must be genuine and transferred without hesitation through many generations. If this intergenerational language transfer is not maintained, then the language and culture barriers will cause social dislocation.

One of the major impacts of the weakening of these languages was through sociopolitical influences by either the dominant society or another minority group. The *Bilagáanas* (Anglos) in one case have successfully civilized and institutionalized Native

Americans. In 1800, due to a high population of Native Americans in the United States, Manifest Destiny was adopted by the U.S. government. Americans started to move in and settle on their lands. They bought Indian territories from the British and French government. In 1830 an Indian Removal Act, which was an anti-Indian legislation, was established by the American government again. This act allowed the Americans to legally remove the Natives from their territory by force. The frontiersmen settled all over the United States and reported the peaceful Natives as troublemakers because they were in the way of their expeditions (Locke, 1992), which led to Manifest Destiny. During the course of this expedition, the frontiersmen and Native Americans exchanged goods, services, and language. This was the time when most eastern tribes started losing their native languages because of interracial marriages and trading. One hundred and seventy five Native American languages are still spoken in the U.S. but most of them are still in danger, some are more endangered than others. Oklahoma, mid-eastern, northwestern, and the Dakotas have only 70 languages left. These languages are mostly spoken by the elderly. Particularly, the Eyak, Penobscot, Tuscarora, Mandan, Delaware, Iowa, Pawnee, Wichita, Chehalis, Clallan, Cowlitz, Snohomish, Omaha, and Washoe tribes are in great danger of losing their languages. The languages are spoken by fewer than 10 elderly tribal members. Only 55 languages are in existence (Krauss, 1998).

Native American languages also have a significant role in times of treaties with other minority groups. For example, in May of 1805, a peace, trade, and alliance treaty between the Navajo and Spanish took place in Mexico. In the treaty, there was a language barrier. The Cebolletas, Navajos from Alamo and Ramah, New Mexico area were friends of the Mexicans. They were captured and became family members of the Mexicans. They

became traditional enemies with the rest of the larger population of Navajos. Carlos, a Cebolleta Navajo Chief, negotiated and interpreted for all the Navajos. As the negotiations were going in favor of the Mexicans, Navajos retaliated to fight over the Cebolleta land area. In July, a war broke out between Mexicans and Navajos (Locke, 1992). Language barrier and cultural connectedness had a tremendous impact between Native Americans and different minority groups. Because of the past political activities, the Cebolletas did not want to take part in the Navajo Nation government. Navajos from Ramah, Alamo, Canoncito and Cuba, New Mexico spoke Spanish. Their Navajo-speaking abilities were not proficient.

Reversing language shift in a sociocultural context is one of the best concepts to revitalizing native languages in a community. Using RLS in a collaborative effort and having control over traditionalists, elders, educators, parents, and students strengthen the language. The mother tongue must constantly flow from the mouths. The three RLS issues that best describe the revitalization of Native American languages are as follows:

### **Curriculum**

Curriculum is a great tool and a guide to revitalize the language. Native Americans from eastern regions lost most of their languages because they could not find the resources to develop a curriculum (Krauss, 1998). To develop a unique curriculum for revitalizing your language, it must involve elders, traditionalists, and educators within the community. Lenora Red Elk, a Sioux Native who attended University of Arizona's American Indian Languages Development Institute (American Indian Language Institute, 1999) in Tucson, Arizona, developed a curriculum that contains methods, procedures, and strategies to teach situations that involve simple language usage for her tribe. She



used animal names, plants, families, cognitive skills, and verbs and nouns to reteach her native language. The curriculum she developed was used in the classrooms and chapter houses. She stated,

Like the Navajos, we had problems with our dialect regions and due to this, there was a conflict in the community. Several groups want certain words written in different tones. If the tones are not included, tensions start to build up among the members. (McCarty & Zepeda, 2006, p. xvi)

Red Elk stated educators and the community at her reservation look up to her to assist with curriculum development. She could speak only three-fourths of her language.

Curriculum development comes in many forms. Developers plan and develop the framework and scope of learning according to their Native philosophy of learning.

### **Total Physical Response (TPR)**

Total physical response (TPR) was popular in the 1960s and 70s by James Asher. It represented a revolutionary departure from the audio-lingual practice of having students repeat the teacher's utterances from the very beginning of the first lesson and whatever material was introduced later on. It is a method to get students involved to use language. There is a lot of active participation and cooperative learning between the teachers and students. Asher recommended that beginners be allowed a silent period in which they learn to recognize a large number of words without being expected to say them.

The story-telling strategies of Total Physical Response, Storytelling (TRP-S) are utilized in the vocabulary taught in the earlier stages by incorporating the vocabulary into stories that the learners hear, watch, act out, retell, revise, read, write, and rewrite. Subsequent stories introduce additional vocabulary in meaningful contents. Because children are already familiar with stories from other school and preschool experiences,

they then become exposed to this familiar genre as the teacher presents it in a new language with an abundance of gestures, pictures, and other props to facilitate comprehension. After hearing a story, students act it out together or assume different roles while their peers watch. The teacher may retell the story with slight variations, replacing one character with another, and engaging different students in the acting. Another technique introduces conversational skills, as the teacher asks short-answer and open-ended questions such as, “Is the cat hungry?” “Is the dog big or little?” Students are not required to memorize the stories; instead they are encouraged to construct their own variations as they retell them to a partner or a small group. The goal is to have students develop original stories and share them with others. This is an excellent strategy for teachers to teach language arts to Native American children in their own language.

Both TPR and TPR-S are excellent examples of language teaching as an interactive learner-centered process that guides students in understanding and applying information and in conveying messages to others. Several Native American teachers and teacher trainers have created TPR lessons to introduce their native language to children who have not learned it at home, and these efforts are usually very successful. They allow learners to indicate comprehension non-verbally, keeping the affective filter low. However these TPR strategies develop receptive language skills and ignore the productive ones (Reyhner, Cantoni, St. Clair, & Parsons-Yazzie, 1999, pp. 53-56). Navajos like many Indigenous nations are taught to sit still, be good observers, listen, and comprehend what is being said.

## **Language Used as a Discipline**

Dr. Paul Platero, a Navajo researcher, believed that to reverse the language, fluent Navajo speakers must talk 100% orally in Navajo to their children. This is how the children are disciplined consciously, which becomes a learned behavior. Native American children do not need literacy materials and a classroom filled with Native American crafts to relearn their language. Many fluent Navajo speakers will agree with him.

Articles related to TPR will address how some Native American families and schools dealt with language shift. Language barrier and connectedness can have a tremendous impact between adults and children. Following are five factors that have contributed to the language shift.

1. *Punished for speaking their traditional language in school:* During the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 1960s Native Americans attended Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools to get an education. They were taken to school, sometimes forced by BIA agents or tribal policemen. They came with their home language, customs, beliefs, and clothing. As they entered school, their ceremonial paraphernalia were put in trash. Their hair was cut short and they were given strange clothes to wear (Sekaquaptewa, 1994). English was the spoken language. It was a cultural shock. In the classroom and at the dormitory, if they were seen communicating in their own language, they were severely punished. Their mouths were washed with soap. Punishments like this were executed by BIA employees who were Native Americans.

2. *Ashamed of their own language:* Native Americans who are ashamed of their Native language are those who had traumatic language experiences during childhood, a result of the Christian faith, married to another nationality, or could not speak their native language. These people are reluctant to teach their native language to their children and do not want them enrolled in bilingual or immersion programs.
3. *Peer pressure in social events:* When a Navajo tries to speak his language to a large crowd, he is laughed at and become a public scrutiny to his people. To avoid being laughed at again, he speaks English. Navajos who experienced this are ones who may have lived in urban cities since they were small. Bilingual speakers who speak a strong English academically and weak Navajo conversational skills also experience embarrassment.
4. *Parents never passed on their native language:* Some Navajo children will never have the opportunity to experience their native language because they have young parents who are dominant English speakers and grandparents who are native speakers (Rodgers, 1995). Their grandparents are socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active but beyond child-bearing age. They live in neighborhoods that still speak their language with one another. The elders also experience family separations when they were growing up on the reservation. They moved away from their home land and became students and staff at Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) boarding schools (Sekaquaptewa, 1994).

5. *Lived in foster homes in urban cities:* Navajos who lived in urban cities lost their language because they lived in foster homes with non-Navajo families. The children were abandoned by their families and referred by social services. Their families do not want to take the responsibility to care for them. Once they lived in urban cities, they become attached to city life and do not want to return to the reservation (L. McCormick, personal interview, 2013, Summer).

### **Curriculum**

Curriculum used by Navajo Head Start was reviewed, and analyzed. It is imperative to note how curriculums are organized and developed according to the life style and child development learning theories. Theories of curriculum were also reviewed.

#### ***Ádééhoniszin Dooleel Curriculum***

*Ádééhoniszin Dooleel* (I will know myself) was written by The Navajo Nation, Division of Diné Education staff (n.d.). It was supported and approved by the Navajo Nation Head Start Parent Policy Council by a resolution, NNHSPC 83-03-08 (see Appendix D).

The curriculum was established pursuant to Resolution No. GSCAP-35-01, Head Start Performance Standards on Education, 34CFR 1304.21 (a) (3) (i) (e), Navajo Nation Executive Order of July 1995, and NTTC Title 10. The curriculum was developed according to the Positive Child Outcome Framework and the revision and alignment of Diné Curriculum. To create this unique curriculum, the team asked themselves the following five questions:

1. What is our vision for the children?

2. What is our philosophy and mission statement for our Head Start children?
3. What is it that we need to teach the children?
4. How can we involve more parents in the curriculum?
5. What will be our curriculum objectives that would align with the Child Outcomes Framework?

To meet the needs of the curriculum objectives, the Central Parent Council approved the Creative Curriculum as the core foundation of teaching and learning for children 0 to 5 year olds. *Ádée'honiszin Dooleet* Curriculum framework emerged from the Creative Curriculum and it included the Navajo cultural teachings and Western theories of teaching and learning. The cultural topics from Diné Curriculum were revisited and aligned with the Positive Child Outcomes Framework. Head Start parents were highly commended for their input. They strongly believed that Navajo preschool children should learn their language and culture so they will always remember their self-identity.

The topics in the curriculum were developed according to the four season's teaching of Diné philosophy of learning (see Appendix E). There are numerous suggested topics that teachers could teach from each season. They are written in English and Navajo. Altogether there are 50 topics that embrace the whole curriculum.

The topic begin with illustrations, informational background, cultural learning goals, vocabulary for practice, and curriculum resources. Each topic has learning objectives, activities, materials, and developmental domains. The numbers in the learning objectives provide reference for Creative Curriculum learning objectives. Head Start centers started implementing this curriculum beginning the school year 2003.

## ***Diné Curriculum***

Diné Curriculum was one of the first Navajo curriculums developed for Navajo Head Start in the mid 1990s by the Division of Diné Education's (DODE) Office of Diné Culture and Language staff and a selection of Head Start teachers. This curriculum was unique and it provided an attempt to integrate the wisdom of traditional teachings with day-to-day planning and activities in Head Start. In the early years, Head Start used teaching methods to provide many opportunities for children to learn through hearing stories and experiencing the environment and seasons. Young children learned stories and songs. They learned about plants and animals by the seasons; they used concrete objects and their five senses to explore the world around them. Language was woven into their daily experiences. Vocabulary was extended through stories, songs, games, and the manipulation of concrete objects.

Parents and elders understand the significance of early childhood, and all the knowledge and experience gained in this early age would stay with the child throughout their life. It is anticipated that this curriculum strives to incorporate the wisdom of traditional teaching and learning for young children with the modern Head Start program. *Ádééhoniszin Dooleet* superseded Diné Curriculum during revision.

The Diné Curriculum (Department of Head Start, n.d., p. vi) used the Navajo basket and seasons as a framework for learning activities. It incorporated the four cardinal directions and the blessings and teachings of the 12 Holy People as they relate to the four seasons. The basket also represents the original four worlds of the Navajo language, the four stages of life, and the human life cycle. One of the ways to view a

Navajo basket is a visual representation of the four stages of life and the life cycle within the natural environment. The four stages are explained below:

1. The first segment basket represents east to south, which is the earliest stage of life. This stage represents new birth, the spring season, beginning of life for plants and animals. It indicates life from birth to age 12.
2. The second segment represents south to west, the youth stage of life. The stage represents the summer season, physical development of challenging skills such as running, lifting, cooking, and physical and mental endurance. It indicates the age group of life from 13 to 18 years old.
3. The third segment represents west to north, the adult stage of life. The basket teaching in this life is about responsibilities of adulthood and the fall season. The significant changes in this stage of life are marriage and parenthood. It is represented by the age group from 19 to 65.
4. The last segment represents north to east, the last and most respected stage of life. This part is about the wisdom of the elderly, the winter season, and the final exit of the pattern of the basket. The phase of this basket indicates life after 65 years old.

The curriculum is divided into four units: the child, the home, the community, and the Navajo Nation. The units begin in September and end in May. In order for this curriculum to be effective, staff members need to plan and work as a team. The outline of scope and sequence is as follows:

- Step 1: Review the scope and sequence for the monthly topics. Identify the topics and sequence them throughout the month.



- Step 2. To meet the topic objectives, brainstorm using the web sheet in developing the lesson plan.
- Step 3: Write the lesson plan.
- Step 4: The activity form is used as a resource in identifying such things as suggested topic objectives, vocabulary, and skills.
- Step 5: The large group will be teacher directed. The learning areas will provide free choice, child initiated and hands-on activities that relate to the topic of the week.
- Step 6: Stories and illustrations are provided as resources to reinforce the topic objectives. The activities and materials all pertain to the topic objective.
- Step 7: Implement the lesson plan.
- Step 8: Fill out the evaluation section of the lesson plan.

An example of scope and sequence from Unit 1 was as follow:

Month: September Unit: *Awéé' T'áàbí Bina'anish* (The Child)

Theme 1: *Bíla'ashdla'ii Níli, Baahasti'* (child's uniqueness)

Objectives related to the topic:

1. At school: Introduction of staff and students
2. I am special: My name
3. Child's role: Personal safety
4. Help me stay healthy: Proper hand washing

Theme 2: *Hanaagóó Áhoot'éhígíí* (child's environment)

Navajo Nation fair

Theme 3: *Bee Íhoo 'aah Dóó Bee Na'anish* (concepts and skills)

Weeks 1 & 2: Colors, shape, number, spatial relations, sounds and recognition.

Theme 4: *T'àà Hooghandóó Na'nitin* (learning at home)

Introduction to School: Child introduces parents. Parents help set up classroom.

The Diné Curriculum was a self-concept model. It was developed according to Navajo philosophy of education. Its purpose was to integrate the wisdom of traditional teachings with day-by-day planning and activities in Head Start. The curriculum has many songs, finger plays, stories, suggestive activities, vocabulary words, home activities and ten teaching blocks. There are approximately 50 topics to choose from.

### ***Situational Navajo***

Situational Navajo Curriculum was developed in 1997 by Navajo Nation Language Project staff and Head Start teachers. The book has 17 specific units (recurring situations) to teach Navajo verbs to children. How this curriculum originated was that in June of 1996 an extensive workshop was held in Window Rock. Four teachers worked with Laura Wallace, Navajo Language Specialist. They brainstormed settings according to Head Start center operation. After the settings were identified, routines were established. The teachers worked in pairs and large groups. After many editing sessions and printing problems, the book finally came out in the summer. In October of 1997, the books were distributed to Head Start teachers.

The curriculum was organized as a teacher-child language. Instead of learning Navajo language through commands and directions, children learned more if the teacher gave them an opportunity to respond back orally. Teachers and children were to continuously talk to each other through shaping and expanding the children's responses.

Teaching Situational Navajo required a one-to-one communication between a child and a teacher. Children learn verbs through the mode and aspect of each setting. The verb forms were categorized in singular, dual, and plural domains of first, second, and third person.

During lesson planning, teachers select a verb form to work on during the week. On some occasions, the lessons are extended the whole month. The lessons comprise of setting, routine, intent, and reaction. Below is an example of how this lesson was used for instruction. It is followed by the teacher's introductory statement and expected responses from the child.

Setting: Personal hygiene

Routine: Drying hands

Intent: To get children to dry their hands

Reaction: Children will dry their hands

Introductory Statement:

Teacher: *Nihila' dadiitol* (pl)

Teacher: *Nihila' daot'ood/Nidaoltsàah* (Child: Children wipe/dry hands).

Teacher: *Nihila'ish daoht'óod / Nidaoltsei* (Did you dry your hands?)

Child: *Aoo', nihila' deiit'óod / nídeiiltseii* (Yes, we dried our hands.)

Child: *Nidaga', T'ahdoo deiit'ood da/Nídeiiltsàah da* (No, we haven't dried our hands.)

The example given may come with a variety of responses depending on how the verb context was used. Holm stated,

There may be room in some programs for what we are calling “Situational Navajo,” at least in the preschool and primary levels. There may also be room in higher grades and on up to the college level where we are introducing Navajo as a classroom language for the first time. But we are also concerned that Navajo be made the language of instruction in at least one and possibly several subjects. (cited by McCarty & Zepeda, 2006, p. 26)

If language transformation is going to happen, it is up to the society to promote the language through pedagogy for freedom. Mackey (1980) stated,

Education for liberation would challenge the givenness of the world to enable learners to reflect on their experience historically, giving their immediate reality a beginning, a present and most importantly, a future. One awoken seeks expression in collective transforming social action. (Heaney, 1995, p. 2)

Freire would identify Navajos as one of the oppressed people. In doing so, his philosophy was that the poor and oppressed people’s strength is in numbers. Social change is accomplished in unity. Under the surface of concern for World War II in 1943, there lingered a deep concern for what human beings are and what they might become. One may argue that such a self-conscious interest is what makes us human. In the curriculum literature from 1900 to 1980, three orientations to curriculum thought emerged with some persistence: the intellectual traditionalist, the social behaviorist, and the experientialist (Schubert & Lopez, 1980). In addition, Thomas added a fourth one, which is conciliator.

### **Intellectual Traditionalist**

The main emphasis of this approach was on great ideas derived from the classics of Western intellectual tradition and from the attendant disciplines of knowledge. The great works are great because they are geared towards the essential ideas that persons of all backgrounds and from all eras need to consider what is truth, beauty, goodness, liberty, equality, and justice. The intellectual traditionalist curriculum not only augments

knowledge and skill acquisition, but also brings the learner close to the deepest concerns of humanity throughout the ages.

### **Social Behaviorist**

This curriculum came from social behaviorists who are advocates of social efficiency and essentialists. The people call for attention to *time on task* and link behavioral aspects of teaching to standardized test scores. The curriculum begins with a systematic needs analysis, followed by detailed planning of objectives and content and activities to further the objectives, organizational matters such as scope and sequence, the learning environment, and evaluation that leads to revision in subsequent course or topic offerings. The object

ives and activities that are presented in this curriculum serve as a basis for inducting the young into the society.

### **Experientialists**

Experientialist curriculum thought has its origins in the work of John Dewey, who referred to his own pragmatic philosophy as *instrumentation*. Brameld's categories of progressivism and reconstruction both apply to the experientialist's orientation to curriculum. Experientialists advocate for the progressive organization of curriculum by moving from what Dewey called the *psychological* to what he referred to as the *logical* (Schubert & Lopez-Schubert, 1980). The main thought of this curriculum was to begin with the psychological is to start with the interests and concerns that emerge from learners' experiences. As these learners air their interests and concerns, they begin to see that at a deeper level, they are similar to the concerns and interest of others. Teachers and

learners build projects to understand more deeply of the problems that grow from their lived experiences.

### **Conciliator**

Another important conciliating act was the birth of synoptic curriculum texts. Books are designed to bring together, under a single cover, a holistic portrait of curriculum knowledge. Too many schools are conciliatory in the negative sense of trying to integrate a range of popular hot topics that conflict with one another. Proponents of the western tradition once claimed that because it has spawned great divergent insights as a basis for inquiry and that any cultural tradition embodies great ideas, we should stick with the one with which we are most familiar with, in this case, is the self-concept model of Diné Curriculum. Too often, critics add that insights do differ among these and other traditions, often criticizing the western tradition as being the ideas of affluent men. Proponents counter by asserting that western tradition is, in fact, multicultural.

### **Language Revitalization and Perpetuation**

I am Stephen Greymorning, but in the Arapaho way I am called Hawk-flies-by-in-the-winter-Greymorning, and I believe if Indians lose their language it will be bad for all people. I am really worried if we lose our language we wouldn't be able to think in the Arapaho way. If we lose our language use we will lose our ceremonies and ourselves because our life is our language, and it is our language that makes us strong. (Reyhner, Cantoni, St. Clair, Parsons-Yazzie, 1999, p. 6)

Native American experts, educators, traditional practitioners, and community activists come together each year for the annual Indigenous language revitalization conferences. They provide a forum for the exchange of scholarly research on teaching American Indian and other indigenous languages. They share ideas and experiences on how to effectively teach American Indian and other indigenous languages in and out of the classroom. The study examined Indigenous language issues shared by Native

Americans. Statistics and types of maintenance programs of Navajo language are also presented.

For centuries Native American languages have been a reflection of those cultural distinctions that have made them who they are as a people and their nations, and in a sense have been an element of many things that have made them strong. They have survived centuries of contact and conflict. Today they are faced with a crisis that is more significant than any they have ever encountered in their histories. It is a crisis of the loss of their languages, and this crisis has reached a point that if they are not able to effectively pass their languages on to their children within the next 15 years, they could witness the loss of as much as 85% of the Indian languages that are still currently spoken.

No one knows precisely how many languages once were spoken by the people Native to what is now the United States and Canada, although one prominent scholar estimates over 300 (Kraus, 1998). We do know that in the past and today, Indigenous peoples can be characterized as much by their linguistic and cultural diversity as to what they share in common. Most scholars agree that of the original 600-plus Indigenous North American languages, between 150 and 210 are still spoken in the United States today. Twenty six of these languages are spoken in Arizona and New Mexico alone. Within major language groups, people often speak distinct dialects, some so different they merit being treated as separate languages. All of this has led some observers to liken Native North America to an “American Babel.” But linguistic labels mask the immense differentiation that exists with regard to proficiency in indigenous languages. For languages with large numbers of speakers, Navajo in the Southwest, for example, there are speakers of all ages, and more than half the school-age population still speaks Navajo

as a primary language. But even among Navajos, who claim over 160,000 speakers, a marked shift toward English is under way, as past education policies coupled with exposure to English mass media, technology, and the larger society all take their toll. Among many other groups, only a handful of elderly speakers remain; in some cases, the heritage language has been lost entirely or is spoken by adults but no longer transmitted as a child language (McCarty & Watahomigie, 2003, pp. 75-76).

Navajos are still among the more maintenance-effective minority, mother-tongue groups in the United States today; however, their growing anglicization began to set a generation ago. Of the parents of the current school-aged children (4 to 17 years old), 11.5% use more English than Navajo in their daily lives. Among the school-aged children themselves, this is true of 34%. Indeed, among those children both of whose parents are English dominant bilinguals, 84% primarily speak English; and even among parents both of whom are primarily only Navajo speakers, 17% of their children are primarily English speakers (a percentage which rises precipitously if only one parent, particularly the mother, is primarily English-speaking). Navajos are finding it increasingly difficult to compartmentalize English effectively into certain functions only; and unless this situation is reversed, further attrition of their traditional language is a foregone conclusion. A growing number of tribal leaders have come to be concerned, albeit still only informally, while restoring both Navajo language use and the observance of authentic traditions with which that use has so long been associated. Thus, while there is now no tribal organization concerned explicitly with the current state or future of Navajo (the now defunct Bilingual Education Unit) in the tribe's Division of Education having formerly served this function, the slow shift to English is now noticeable even in Reservation-



interior communities. It is even more noticeable in urbanized Reservation areas. There are also some few signs of active RLS sentiments and efforts, so that the overall picture is more negative and more diversified or differentiated than it long used to be. Both maintenance and RLS efforts are underway that help maintain substantial indigenous regulation and direction of Navajo culture change. Unfortunately, generations of passive dependence on such quickly disappearing factors as isolation or distances from Anglo influences as the prime protectors of the Navajo way of life has left its definite mark. It is badly in need of replacement. It remains to be seen whether such replacement will be anything other than too little and too late (Fishman, 1997, pp. 189-190).

Hales' Executive order addresses Navajo language as an element of life, culture, and identity of the Navajo people (see Appendix C). The nation recognizes the importance of preserving and perpetuating that language for the survival of the Nation. Garcia stated,

Education for American Indian children should empower them to become full participants in their communities, the country, and the world. The contents of their education should provide them the full array of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for participation as politically active, culturally viable, and economically prosperous citizens. (cited by Reyhner, 1994, 85-86)

The following are four areas of Navajo language instruction in schools:

### **No Navajo**

English was the only language in schools approximately 127 years ago. Mission schools were the only schools that did their instructions in Navajo. It was not until the 1930s when Navajo educators advocated for Navajo language use in the classroom. Books were written, but were never used. The continued problems of Indian over the years resulted in the lack of success for large number of students in public and BIE

schools. Investigations made by Merriam and Kennedy (U.S. Congress, 1969) reported on why Indian students do not learn to read and write as well as non-students became ammunition for reformers who used them over the years as evidence to support the passage of a variety of special programs funded by the federal government. Today most schools serving Navajo schools are conducted in English.

### **Navajo as a Means**

In the 1940s and 50s Navajo came to be used in the Five-Year Program. In this program, Navajo assistants interpreted for teachers to first-year students. In the students' later years, instruction was given only in English. Navajo was used as a means of enabling students to comprehend instruction given in English. Under Title VII programs, Navajo was used as a second language of instruction while students received more or less intensive ESL instruction. After two or three years, the use of Navajo was abandoned. Navajo was used only as a means to English language ends.

### **Navajo as Add-on**

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Navajo Add-on was offered to middle and high school students as an elective or a foreign language course. Recently, Arizona foreign/native language mandated that elementary school students begin to take foreign language courses. The program provides students some modest conversational ability, and perhaps the ability to sound out written Navajo. In most schools, one may sense that these classes are very much add-on, one more subject in an already overloaded curriculum.

## **Navajo as Integral**

A great example for this program is Rough Rock Demonstration School who began using Navajo and English. A number of other community-controlled schools followed suit. Navajo was used in its own right, not just as a means to other ends. In this program, students were expected to continue to develop their Navajo language abilities throughout their school career. Students were taught to read and write in Navajo. They continued to develop their Navajo reading and writing abilities after they had learned to read and write in English. The curriculum was content-based covering all areas in Navajo. Some say this program may work in a community where large numbers of students are Navajo speakers.

The revitalization of indigenous languages will not come easy. There has been a lack of sharing information among communities about which indigenous language activities, strategies, and policies have proven effective and those that have not proven fruitful. Languages need special love, care, and protection by the communities that want to keep them alive. If indigenous languages are to survive, it is not enough for more children and adults to learn those languages. Environments must also be created in indigenous communities where the indigenous language is used exclusively. They all say “Use it or lose it,” which goes for Indigenous languages as well as a lot of other things. These exclusive environments could be community centers such as Maori Culture Centers. They can be individual homes and they can be Christian churches (Reyhner et al., 1999, p. xix).

CHAPTER 3  
METHODOLOGY

**Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze Head Start teachers' perceived barriers to implementing Navajo language immersion program and its effects on the success of utilizing Navajo teaching strategies to preschool-aged children. This research gave me an opportunity to gain an in-depth knowledge of factors that teachers experienced when trying to teach Diné (Navajo) to children who were starting their education at a very young age in the western region part of the Navajo Nation.

Qualitative methods were utilized in this study, based on open-ended questions asked to Head Start teachers whose first language was Navajo. The responses in Navajo were authentic. The indigenous language innate concept was present because the flow of communication from the teachers was open, showing their willingness to share their cultural experiences of how they learned Navajo when they were children growing up in the traditional hooghan. (hogan)

Freire's thought of critical consciousness would read the world that although Navajo language is still here, fluent speakers consciously think they are Navajo literate, but subconsciously, they are illiterate because of the intergenerational language transfer where language transformation should be taking place using their innate abilities through traditional prayers, rituals, ceremonies and the communication of language discourse levels and syntactical organization. Consciously the society is no longer a strong nation. (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 53)

**Population and Design**

The population and design for this data consisted of eight participants. Two males and six females were interviewed. All of them still resided in the western region of the Navajo Nation. Of the eight, three were still employed at the time interviews took place.

They were not teachers in the past. Currently two of the eight are Teacher's Aide, and one is a support staff from Center One area. One relocated and was working for the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) school. She was a Teacher when she left Center One. Two were unemployed and they were Teacher's Aide from Center Two. From these two, one resigned due to health complications. She enjoys making jewelry and stays home with her family. It was her income and hobby. Both of them live with their grandchildren. One retired as a Teacher from Center Two. He had been employed for more than 20 years. One left the program as a teacher from Center Two. She was a part time substitute teacher in her community. Of the eight participants, two teachers obtained their bachelor's degree. One was working for the B.I.E. grant school, and one was working for a public school. Of the two, one earned her master's degree and she was a part time substitute teacher. The one who retired obtained his Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate and that was how he stayed with the program. All of the interviewees were between the ages of late 40s to mid-60s and all spoke Navajo fluently. They had been employed with Head Start for more than 10 years. The interviews were conducted at their home, vendor place, or under a tree in the western part of the reservation. The interviews were conducted in 2013 before the major Head Start reform and that was the limitation to the study.

### **Instrumentation**

The instruments used to collect this data for this study was a set of four research questions, in which a digital recorder was used to record the responses. The purpose of the questions was to identify the effects to the success of Head Start's Navajo language immersion program. The questions focused on barriers to children's success of learning

Navajo language in a structured immersion program, staffs strength and weaknesses as to implementing Navajo language instruction, staffs' acquired skills and knowledge that are relevant to teaching Navajo language and instructional qualities that support the success of a Navajo language immersion program.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Arizona State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) required that doctoral candidates who were conducting human research on Navajos had to comply with Navajo and ASU IRB protocols. Due to subjects relating to Navajo recipients and their profession in Diné education, a supporting resolution from the Western Agency Council Committee (Appendix F) and a support letter from the Superintendent of Department of Diné Education (Appendix G) were needed. Both of these documents were part of the protocol to begin the Institutional Review Board approval process.

On June 5, 2012, a letter requesting to conduct a research was given to the secretary at the Superintendent's office at the Department of Diné Education in Window Rock, Arizona. On June 12, 2012, I received a support letter from Andrew Tah, Superintendent of Education from the Department of Diné Education in the mail.

Both of these support documents were forwarded to Arizona State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) with the stipulation that the research would not occur until approval was received. Arizona State University's Institutional Review Board committee granted my protocol as Exemption Granted, IRB Protocol # 1209008263 (see Appendix H) to pursue my research on October 26, 2012.

I went to Tuba City Chapter House to be put on the agenda for a meeting with the Western Navajo Agency Council members. The purpose of meeting with council

members was to obtain a supporting resolution so I could conduct my research on the Navajo Nation. I was placed on their agenda on May 24, 2012 by the chapter secretary. On Saturday, June 16, 2012 I attended the Western Agency Council meeting in Leupp, Arizona. My research abstract and proposal were accepted and approved.

On May 21, 2013, an IRB Research Protocol Application and 10 copies of my proposal were turned in to the Navajo Nation Human Research office. I went before the Navajo IRB committee on June 18, 2013 at Shiprock, New Mexico to present my proposal. I was the last person to present my proposal. There was a vote and no comments or questions from committee members. I would be meeting with them again on September 15, 2015 at Window Rock, Arizona.

Staff members were contacted at their homes, where I completed their interviews. Three of them were contacted via a cell phone call first before I visited them. I sat down with them individually to conduct my interviews during June of 2013. I had scheduled some of them earlier and because of their busy schedules, I had to reschedule them. One was interviewed at a vending place along the road side. Three of them started earlier but did not finish due to family situations. Their interviews were conducted in 2013 before the reforms and that is the limitation to the study. One interviewee had health problems but managed to complete it in August 2013. All eight participants were asked four questions (See Appendix I). The transcription of the audio recordings took at least 10 hours, which resulted in 80 pages.

### **Data Analysis**

All qualitative data (interviews) were recorded into a digital voice recorder. It was replayed, edited, modified, and analyzed. The data were read multiple times. Navajo

words and phrases that reflected themes or patterns were found in the data. The Navajo translation part was very tedious, critical, and exhaustive. Chapter 4 presents my findings of the study.



## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

This chapter reports the findings of interviews conducted with eight staff members who lived in the western region of the Navajo Nation. They were all employees of the Navajo Nation. Five of them were employed at Center Two. Of the five, one left the program and attended college to obtain her educational leadership degree and became a parent at Center Two. One is still employed as a Teacher's Aide. One retired and two of them are no longer with the program. Three staff members were employed at Center One. One was a Teacher's Aide at the center and one was a former Teacher. She became a Data Analyst for Center One and Center Two. One became a Teacher for a BIE school.

Of the eight members, two were males and six were females. Seven of the interviews were conducted at their residences and one at the place of a vendor who sold jewelry for her income. The interviews were conducted in English and Navajo. Translation was provided to some English questions in Navajo for clarity purposes and that was how participants responded in Navajo. Navajo responses were very lengthy because the language is culturally innate and critical, which allows for open expression of thoughts. All interviewees spoke fluent Navajo, which was their first language. They were with their grandchildren during the interviews. Five of them were still employed within this region, one retired, and two were unemployed. Of the eight members, three were still employed with Navajo Nation Head Start, which is funded under the federal Department of Health and Human Services. One of them taught for the grant school in her community, which is operated by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). One was a

part-time substitute teacher in her community. She worked for the public school in her community.

All participants' responses were given a pseudonym to protect their identities. The two gentlemen were named Ashkii 1 and Ashkii 2. The six ladies were named Asdzaa 1 to Asdzaa 6. Individual responses in Navajo were very lengthy, and they were read several times and translated; they were also analyzed, coded, edited, and transcribed into the English language. The length of the interviews was from 30 minutes to one hour. Interviewees were asked to respond to four open-ended questions (see Appendix I) that were relevant to their experiences and limitations of providing Navajo language services to preschool children. Some questions required multiple answers. The questions are as follows:

1. What do Head Start staff members perceive as barriers to Navajo children successfully learning the Navajo language?
2. What do Head Start staff members perceive as their strengths and weaknesses of the language immersion program?
3. What skills and knowledge do Head Start staff members have relevant to teach Head Start children the Navajo language?
4. What program and instructional qualities promote and restrict the success of the language program?

The following are summarized responses from the interviewees:

I asked Question 1, What do Head Start staff members perceive as barriers to Navajo children successfully learning the Navajo language? I had to translate and clarify what *barrier* means to children learning the Navajo language. Their responses were

related to their Navajo culture, language upbringing, and daily classroom teaching experiences at their respective centers. The seven barriers they expressed were lack of Navajo literacy skills, impediments to language transfer, lack of staff Navajo language training, lack of administrative support, lack of curriculum knowledge, more English spoken and taught in the classroom, and Christian beliefs.

The majority of staff admitted they could not read and write the Navajo language. They could not read children's story books and large books with big letters printed in Navajo. They could not read Navajo words from posters, picture cards, and charts. They could read Navajo words from Navajo curriculum. They did not know how to write in Navajo to develop their weekly lesson plans. One teacher stated she tried to read and write in Navajo according to letter sounds of Navajo-English equivalents. She read short story books and wrote simple Navajo words during large group activity with the children. She was in the process of reading Navajo before she left the program. The following are examples of how the lack of Navajo literacy skills impacted children learning the Navajo language:

I did not really learn how to read and write Navajo. In some areas, I can see where this lesson is leading me, that's how I used Navajo teaching. (Ashkii 2)

There was no support from administration staff to teach Navajo language. I am fluent in Navajo but I don't really know how to write in Navajo, and reading long stories in Navajo is difficult for me. (Asdzaa 3)

I have difficulty reading and writing the Navajo language but was in the process of learning to read. You have to read it with me. If I do it by myself, it is difficult to understand it. (Asdzaa 4)

I know my language and culture. Mostly I read and write English, but not too much in Navajo. It's difficult for me. My strength is read and write the English language. (Asdzaa 1)

I did not really learn to read and write the Navajo language. (Ashkii 2)

I tried to develop Navajo weekly lesson plans from *Ádée'honiszin Dooleet* Curriculum. It was difficult for me because I did not know how to read and write the Navajo language. (Asdzaa 3)

I'm a fluent Navajo speaker. My weakness is not really know how to write in Navajo and reading long stories in Navajo. (Asdzaa 3)

Head Start teacher may not have studied Navajo language in reading and writing. (Asdzaa 5)

In summary, one of staff's main barriers to teaching Navajo language to preschool children was their lack of ability to read and write the Navajo language in the immersion program. They stated Navajo was a difficult and a hard language to learn. Children's storybooks, posters, charts, and curriculum were printed in Navajo and they could not read them. They could not write lesson plans in Navajo on their own.

Reportedly, the impediment of the transfer of Navajo was another barrier to keep Navajo language alive in the classroom. Ashkii 1 bluntly stated, "*Íiyisíí éí ilhóyéé* [The real problem is laziness]. Even parents and grandparents are at fault too." He justified his reason by stating that Navajo should not only be spoken at school, but it should be spoken everywhere, including to children and family members. Ashkii 1 stated laziness affects parents and grandparents transfer of Navajo language. In essence, impediment is synonymous to laziness; it contributes to the barriers of language revitalization. It makes the oral communication difficult for parents to speak with their children in Navajo. Occasionally, fluent speakers try to speak all Navajo but they cannot say the right words to identify, or describe the objects or situations that they are talking about. This makes it difficult for them to complete the sentences. If they can't find the right words, they start to code-switch from Navajo to English. Moreover, the situation might be difficult for parents to use Navajo at home because they get resistance from their children who find it

difficult and don't see the value. Sometimes it is a matter of costs and benefits. Is their battle worth squabbling with their kids, especially if the parents are not fluent speakers? English was easy and not difficult to speak, but the children already spoke English to each other, and they did not know how to respond back in Navajo when you talked to them.

All teachers spoke Navajo fluently, but were hesitant or never took college courses in Navajo reading and writing. Another barrier in implementing immersion was they had not received training in Navajo literacy. The following are examples of summarized responses from four staff members:

Staff was encouraged to attend training and take college courses on Fridays to develop skills in early childhood education. Navajo Head Start has a staff development policy for all staff to attend trainings and take college courses. (Asdzaa 2)

Staff may not have studied Navajo language in reading and writing; that's one of our barriers. (Asdzaa 5)

One concerned staff member recalled that on Fridays children did not attend school. This was when Head Start administrators brought in consultants to train teaching staff. There are also local and nearby colleges available for staff to take Navajo language and cultural classes. Diné College (Kayenta and Tuba City Center) provide Navajo aspects of child development, and Navajo language and cultural courses. Navajo Technical University in Chinle, Arizona also provides Navajo language and cultural courses, but students must attend classes on campus.

In summary, Navajo language and cultural classes are available in Kayenta, Tuba City, and Chinle but teaching staff did not want to take courses because the Navajo language is a hard language to read and write. They might not take classes because it is

an extra burden on their daily schedule. There is already too much work that needs to be done at the center. Some cannot afford to pay for classes and class time takes up their planning time at the center. Some have limited basic skills and they risk failing the classes, or getting a bad grade will reflect poorly on them. This is also a cost / benefit analysis. What are the benefits of hard work and time commitment? Is it worth it? They expressed failure or fear if they did not pass a Navajo language class and it would affect their jobs.

The fourth barrier to children learning the Navajo language was lack of support to implement the Navajo immersion program. Three staff members were very concerned.

Their responses are as follow:

The barrier comes from my supervisor. He wasn't serious in the teaching of the Navajo language. We weren't being supervised or watched to see if we were actually teaching, and nobody cared. It doesn't matter, so I kind of code switched back to English again. (Asdzaa 3)

There was no support from staff members to teach Navajo language. There were no resources and materials to teach with. There was only English. (Asdzaa 3)

Today lots of parents are not young. They don't speak Navajo anymore, so they may understand it but a lot of them don't speak it. Our Navajo children are speaking more English, because parents are not supporting them, and even when we teach it in Head Start, they learn some Navajo but it's not carried on at home. Parents aren't using the same language children are taught at Head Start. For example, they learn the word *Dahdiniilghaazh'* [frybread]; they might learn that for one week, then they're introduced to other words again. Lot of them they forget, so if the program was to work, parents need to be part of the school and know what the kids are learning in Navajo. (Asdzaa 6)

The three participants who addressed these concerns were veteran teachers of Head Start. They were employed for more than 15 years. Asdzaa 2 obtained her bachelor's degree in education. Asdzaa 6 obtained her master's degree in educational

leadership. They are no longer employed with Head Start. Asdzaa 3 was still employed with Head Start but she did not mention her educational background.

The fifth barrier was the lack of curriculum knowledge. The pedagogy was in English and Navajo. Staff stated four curriculums were used in Head Start: Diné Curriculum, Situational Navajo, and the *Ádééhoniszin Dooleet* curriculum were in Navajo; Creative Curriculum was in English. Four staff members admitted they did not know how to develop lessons using the curriculum that was available at the centers. The following are examples of their responses:

I don't know how to use the curriculum to teach. It was hard for me to understand it. We use our own lessons to teach. We taught according to what we got from people that want us to talk Navajo. It was never explained to us on how to use it. They wanted us to read it them; do what it says. I added my own lesson to teach Navajo. (Ashkii 2)

Our lesson plan didn't include Navajo language even though it was required. We were told to talk Navajo, but nobody wasn't really serious about it. It falls back on the supervisor and director. (Asdzaa 2)

Diné Curriculum was revised but it broke up; then a new English curriculum was introduced to use and it's called Creative Curriculum. People were all for this curriculum because it is in English and *Wááshindoon* [Department of Health and Human Resources] wants us to use it. Somehow we need to put Navajo back into the curriculum. We use our own strength to do our teaching. We use Diné Curriculum to teach even though it became an idea book. Right now, there's none. Everything is in English in our immersion program. (Ashkii 1)

We still use Diné Curriculum but as a supplemental resource. We hardly used this because we have a new curriculum called Creative Curriculum. We use this a lot because we assess children, but I use Diné Curriculum all the time. Creative Curriculum activities are too advanced for our children and preschool lessons are at second grade level. With *Ádééhoniszin Dooleet* curriculum I tried to develop lesson plans every week so children can learn their language. Situational Navajo Curriculum and Diné Curriculum is not used anymore. It's used as a resource. (Asdzaa 3)

The four staff members' reaction to utilizing the Diné Curriculum, Situational Navajo, and *Ádééhoniszin Dooleet* were positive. They were trained to use these as guides and

tools to teach Navajo language and culture. One staff stated he liked the Diné philosophy framework for Diné and the *Ádééhoniszin Dooleet* curriculum because it was developed according to the teaching of the Navajo's four seasons in *Nitséhákees* (thinking), *Nahat'á* (planning), *Iiná* (life), and *Sihasin* (wisdom and hope). Ashkii 1 preferred using the combined theory of Navajo and westernized education but more towards the Navajo aspects of early childhood development.

Ashkii 1 observed and realized the Navajo learning and growth theory in his own grandchildren were true. They were also trained to use Creative Curriculum to teach children in English. The purpose for using this curriculum was to understand the western theory of child development. One staff mentioned they use this curriculum according to the assessment of our children.

More English spoken in the classroom was the sixth barrier for children learning the Navajo language. The following are responses as to the concerns of three of the staff members:

I really wasn't aware we were working as an immersion program because most of the time we were talking in English. We talk in Navajo but not all the time because the teacher taught in Navajo. As a staff, there would be teaching in English. It would be better if everyone was teaching in Navajo. We weren't collaborating. Parents are not motivated and they don't talk Navajo. They don't teach Navajo to their children at school. We tried all we could to teach Navajo. (Asdzaa 2)

It's hard to mix English with Navajo. Children talk more in English. In the past, Navajo was spoken more, now it changed to English. Some don't try to learn Navajo, even staff. They don't know the culture. The barrier starts from teaching. They speak English at home except for grandparents. In Navajo, there's less teaching tools. More English is spoken here. When I revisited the classroom, everything was in English and I was very disappointed. *Wááshindoon* [Federal] provides funding, and we need more money for teaching materials. We need posters written in Navajo and displayed in learning centers, even on the school bus. Now everything is the *Bilagáana* way. (Asdzaa 1)



Children tried to say picture words or objects in Navajo and they get frustrated. Sometimes they say, “I don’t know.” Saying picture words or objects in English was easy for them. (Asdzaa 4)

Lastly, Christian belief was also a barrier for children learning their native language. Only one staff member responded to this barrier. An example of her response is as follow:

There are staff introducing topics through Navajo teaching that relates to Navajo religion. Christian families don’t teach stuff like that to their children. They don’t want anything to do with Navajo songs. Yes, you want your children to learn Navajo words, but when it comes to teaching, there’s certain limitations. This is where it puts a lot of parents back from the program. Not only in Head Start, but elementary level too. Parents don’t support it because of their Christian beliefs. (Asdzaa 6)

The other seven members’ responses had nothing to do with mixing Navajo and language with religion in a Navajo immersion setting. Asdzaa 6 was a former Head Start teacher. She was also a parent at the same center she worked at. She enjoyed Navajo children learning the language. She expressed her thoughts on mixing religion with her Christian faith. She commented, “As long as children are learning crafts such as weaving, beading, rug dyeing, dyeing wool, and shearing, Christian parents will not be turned away.” She believed that Head Start staff should be sensitive and aware of what cultural teaching is in preschool.

Staff members responded and addressed seven barriers to implementing Navajo language. They were fluent Navajo speakers but lacked Navajo literacy skills. They needed to take Navajo language courses. English was spoken in the classroom. The barriers of language transfer inhibited the acquisition of Navajo language in children. They needed technical assistance writing lesson plans using the curriculums. Christian beliefs should not hinder children’s language use.

I asked Question 2, What do Head Start staff members perceive as their strengths and weaknesses of the language immersion program? They thought of the question for awhile and made statements in English and Navajo. They all responded with two answers. The following are examples of their responses:

My staff taught children to sing and say rhyming words in Navajo, and that's how children understood and learned Navajo. In some areas, I can see where this lesson is taking me, and that's how I used Navajo teaching. I added lessons to my teaching. My only problem is reading Navajo books to children. I did not really learn to read and write the Navajo language. (Ashkii 2)

We were told to teach in Navajo. We were forced to teach in Navajo, but the curriculum changed to English; therefore it is up to us to teach Navajo. We taught Navajo words if we wanted to. We mostly taught in Navajo. (Ashkii 1)

Parents are not motivated. Some don't talk Navajo. They don't teach Navajo to their kids. Lots of parents don't understand or talk Navajo. For our strength, it was fun. It's good to implement Navajo language to the little children. We showed pictures and named objects in Navajo. It's cute when they repeat it after you. They sing along with you in Navajo. Since they're children, they're like sponges. They'll pick it up faster. (Asdzaa 2)

Just speak Navajo to children. Talk more Navajo to them with using colors, counting numbers, and reading short story books. I tried to tell them so they could understand it. I'm a fluent Navajo speaker. My weakness is not really know how to write in Navajo and reading long story books in Navajo. (Asdzaa 3)

My strength is speaking my native language to them. Some learned and some didn't. You say it for them slowly and they repeat it after you. Our weakness was trying to let children say object names and short phrases in Navajo but they got frustrated. Sometimes they say, "I don't know," and refuse to say it anymore. I had a difficult time reading and writing the Navajo language, but was in the process of learning to read it. (Asdzaa 4)

I know my language and culture. Mostly I read and write English, it's very easy and it's not related to immersion. Not too much in Navajo. It's difficult for me. (Asdzaa 1).

Head Start staffs' strength would be they know their own language. They make materials, and let children say the consonant sounds of the alphabets in Navajo. One of their weaknesses would be teachers may not have studied the Navajo language in reading and writing. (Asdzaa 5)

The weakness would be—Head Start should be trained, but in most cases not all of them receive it. An example would be, bring out materials and share with other staff members, such as bus drivers, cooks, and teacher's aides so they're familiar with what the Navajo immersion program is all about. If it's not introduced all the time, new staff members may not get training in these areas. If a curriculum was introduced, they don't know how to use it correctly. They don't walk them through and make them become aware that this is essential in immersion. Some of the things they use are too advanced for our children. They need to work on this. As for strengths, children learn family tree and Navajo clans. These are taught through hands-on activities. The children do their own work, put stuff together after they're done with their lessons, so it helps out. When they do this, they understand more what is being taught. (Asdzaa 6)

In summary of Question 2, staff responses were relevant to their teaching experiences in an immersion classroom. They openly expressed concerns in making an effort to teach Navajo language. They utilized their Navajo-speaking ability to teach children according to lessons and units from the curriculum. Some utilized westernized child development teaching theories but applied it to Navajo. Navajo language was present in the classroom but the children were having a difficult time learning the language. Parents were not supporting the immersion program.

I asked Question 3, What skills and language do Head Start staff members have relevant to teaching Head Start children the Navajo language? Four staff members asked me to repeat the question again. I clarified the meaning of skills and knowledge in terms of how is it relevant to teaching children their native language. The following are examples of their responses.

For my skills, I talk Navajo to them. I taught nursery rhymes, used picture cards, charts, and alphabet posters and counting numbers. I showed them utensils, say their English names and translated them in Navajo. I also taught Navajo verbs and phrases using Situational Navajo Curriculum. They stated verb phrases such as *Abe' aa'ánilééh /yaaziíd* (open your milk). I give them directions in Navajo and they understood it. (Asdzaa 1)

I got ideas from the training but I also used my own ideas to teach. I followed directions to teach. My staff observed and listened to my teaching techniques. That's how they learned it. (Ashkii 2)

I used Situational Navajo Curriculum. We sang songs, counted numbers, and taught them how to say the eight basic color names and four common geometric shapes. I taught these lessons in Navajo during circle time. (Asdzaa 3)

We were trained to implement Navajo language teaching techniques. During large group activity time, I showed them pictures of animals and foods. I used picture cards. I did not understand some parts of Navajo teaching methods. (Asdzaa 4)

I help revise the Navajo curriculum but it just broke up; then a new one in English was introduced to us. People are all for it because the federal wants us to use it. Somehow we need to put Navajo back in the curriculum. (Ashkii 1)

Head Start staff attended training on Fridays. That's how they developed skills. We were encouraged to take college courses and that's how we picked up skills. As I observed and taught the little ones, I was experiencing how I was bringing up children in learning their native language. (Asdzaa 2)

Staff members are aware of President Hale's Executive Order that was put forth in the early 90s. They should be talking to children in their own native language. Staff conducts parent trainings. They encourage parents to talk to their own children in Navajo at home. (Asdzaa 5)

I have a lot of knowledge in Navajo culture co-teaching. I've been with the program for more than 15 years and more familiar with what's being taught. Some Head Start teachers are young and they don't speak Navajo. I interpret for them. I'm fluent in Navajo and I like to talk in Navajo and encourage it to my kids. I need more knowledge and get my reading endorsement. (Asdzaa 6)

In summary of Question 3, all teachers spoke Navajo fluently. They stated children should be speaking their native language. One staff member, who is now a supervisor with Head Start is confident that children can learn their Navajo language, if given the opportunity. She supported her statement using President Hale's Executive Order. All staff made efforts to revive the language by utilizing their own teaching ideas, trainings they attended, developed lessons from the curriculum, and encouraged parents

to talk Navajo to their children. Staff members use their native language to teach. They are trained to implement Navajo immersion. They need support from parents.

When I asked Question 4 regarding program and instructional qualities that promoted and restricted the success of the language program, half of the staff members wanted clarification of what instructional qualities and restriction meant. I explained this in Navajo. They thought about the question for a while and then responded. The following are examples of their responses:

If there was support, it won't be difficult. It is up to teachers to talk in Navajo when they teach. Administrators need our support. We need regulations in our service area. We need support from the chapter. The program will be effective and easy if we speak more Navajo to our children. It's up to administrators to implement Navajo. (Asdzaa 1)

There is no Dine Curriculum to teach from, just Creative Curriculum. (Ashkii 1)

Yes, they provided training and workshop. Reading and writing the Navajo language was difficult. I used my own knowledge to teach children. (Ashkii 2)

As a program, we followed the daily schedule. In the short time I was with Head Start, children did hands-on activities in Navajo. They really picked up skills in the learning centers according to thematic units from the curriculum. They enjoyed it. A lot of children have never been to school. Everything was new to them and it's great for their early development. (Asdzaa 2)

In the past, administrators monitored our center but we were not satisfied of their visit. I thought, "How do we teach Navajo effectively if we don't get recommendations from them?" They didn't show us Navajo concepts of teaching and our teaching strategy is missing, so we developed our own methods to teach Navajo to our students. That was our restriction at the center. Some mothers like our teaching and they praised us and encouraged us to continue. We taught their Navajo clans, gender, names and self-concept. They learn how to introduce themselves in Navajo. (Asdzaa 4)

We still use Diné Curriculum but as a resource. We hardly used Creative Curriculum. We use this a lot because we assess children, but I use Navajo language all the time. I develop weekly lesson plans from *Ádée'honiszin Dooleet* curriculum so children can learn to speak their native language. (Asdzaa 3)

We have a lot of reading books that have Navajo language. It is written in English and Navajo. We labeled objects and furniture in Navajo. These are some of our instructional qualities that promote Navajo language teaching. (Asdzaa 5)

There are certain good things taught the right way [*Nizhónígo Bee Na 'nitin*] in language and culture. But when it comes to mixing it with religion, that's where it becomes difficult for parents. As a teacher, you know what to teach and what not to teach. Certain themes are introduced according to Navajo's four seasons of teaching. For example, during winter time, we tell coyote stories and play winter games. One of the restrictions to teaching Navajo is you need to get permission from parents to get their children involved in drama plays. I was doing a Christmas program and we were singing 12 days of Christmas in Diné. When I got to five *yé 'iibicheiis* I got in trouble because these are sacred deities used only in ceremonies, and I used one of the child as a *yé 'iibicheii*. As a Christian I wasn't introduced to a lot of those teachings so I had to learn that through training. If teachers are taught what to teach and not mix it with religion, the program will be successful. The way I see instructional qualities, is children should be taught Navajo words. They should pronounce words clearly and taught according to their dialect. In Oljato and Kayenta area we say *yas* (snow) but in other regions on the reservation, some say *zas*. (Asdzaa 6)

In summary of Question 4, all staff expressed their desire for teaching Navajo correctly. They utilized their own teaching concepts to promote Navajo language teaching. They believed that the Navajo language was still alive and children were learning to speak. They needed administrative support to ensure best practices of teaching were in place. Staff expressed the need to teach Navajo language and used their own teaching concepts to teach Navajo.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary and Recommendations

I would like to acknowledge that since the data for this study were collected in 2013 there has been a major reform in Navajo Head Start to comply with federal monitoring deficiencies. As a result, some of the conclusions of this study need to be considered in that context.

This chapter provides a summary of the limitations of staff members who taught Navajo language in the Head Start immersion program. Chapter 4 provides an overview of how the teaching experiences impacted their desire to implement Navajo immersion goals and objectives. Based on the results that led to the implications, recommendations for better services to preschool children are addressed and discussed.

#### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to identify and analyze Head Start barriers of implementing a Navajo language immersion program and its effects of the success of utilizing Navajo teaching strategies to preschool-aged children. Qualitative research methods were used in this study, based on open-ended questions asked to eight staff members who taught in a Head Start program. The four questions that guided the research were as follows: (a) What do Head Start staff members perceive as barriers to Navajo children successfully learning the language? (b) What do Head Start staff members perceive as their strengths and weaknesses of the language immersion program? (c) What skills and knowledge do Head Start staff members have relevant to teaching Head Start children the Navajo language? and (d) What program and instructional qualities promote and restrict the success of the language program?

To respond to these questions, eight staff members were interviewed. There were two males and six females. All of them lived in the western region of the Navajo Nation. Five of them were employed. Of the five, three were still employed with Head Start, one as a teacher at a grant school, which was operated under Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and one as a substitute teacher for a public school in Utah. Two were unemployed and one was retired.

Before beginning the interviews, a resolution (see Appendix D) was approved by the Western Agency Council, and an approval letter (see Appendix G) was received from the Navajo Department of Diné Education (DODE) Superintendent's office. A Navajo Institutional Review Board (NIRB) application was filled out, presented at their meeting on June 18, 2013, and subsequently approved. The NIRB committee requested the researcher to continuously meet with them until the study was completed. On October 23, 2013, Arizona State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted Exemption Status (see Appendix H) to conduct research. Eight staff members were selected and contacted by phone call to schedule interviews. Seven interviews were conducted at their homes. One was interviewed at a selected place by the interviewee. Staff members were asked four questions. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to one hour in Navajo and English. The transcriptions of the interviews took at least 10 hours, resulting in 80 pages of transcripts.

### **Summary of Findings**

Results of the study indicated all staff members were fluent Navajo speakers. Navajo was their home language when they were children growing up in a hogan with their parents and grandparents. Although they were fluent speakers, they could not read



and write their native language, which resulted in one of the limitations to implement teaching the Navajo language to preschool children. Of the eight, one was in the process of learning to read the language before she left the program. Seven of them believed in their Navajo culture. They were exposed to cultural beliefs such as participating in traditional *tàdidiin* (corn pollen) and Native American Church (NAC) prayers, ceremonies, and chants. One was raised as a devout Christian but believed traditional practices should be passed on to young children.

When questioned about their barriers to children successfully learning their native language, there were seven issues they addressed. All staff members lacked Navajo literacy skills. They expressed Navajo language was a difficult language to learn. They could not read and write Navajo proficiently, could not read stories in Navajo to the children, or pronounce Navajo words printed on posters and charts. Furthermore, they could not write words, sentences, or phrases in Navajo. They could not write lesson plans in Navajo. The only way they could read in Navajo was to pronounce the Navajo-English equivalency letter sound to translate what was written.

A barrier as to language transfer was another factor in teaching Navajo. One staff member stated, “*Íiyisíí éí ilhóyéé*’ [The real problem is laziness].” His justification was English was easy and not difficult to speak. Navajo should not only be taught at school, but it should also be spoken everywhere, particularly to children and family members. Navajo language could not be perpetuated if parents and grandparents spoke English to their children and expected English responses. Everyone was at fault.

Staff did not receive training or took college courses in Navajo language. One staff recalled that on Fridays they attended trainings to develop skills in early childhood.

Navajo language courses were available through Diné College and Navajo Technical University but teachers were reluctant to take these courses. Administrators brought in consultants to provide training to their staff. The purpose of attending these training was for professional development. Staff could obtain continued earned units, and get a certificate. The certificates were filed in their personnel folders for federal monitoring, so as to reflect the goals of their individual development plan (IDP), which was a requirement from the start of employment. Staff members were encouraged to take college courses as part of their staff development and obtaining a college degree. They were hesitant to take Navajo language courses because it was too hard for them and they did not want to fail the courses.

Three staff members openly stated there was a lack of support from supervisors, co-workers, and parents. The supervisors from the agency level did not offer support when they were available onsite. They felt that they were not being supervised or observed by their superiors when they came to monitor. They felt their superiors did not care if they needed technical assistance such as requesting teaching materials, needed demonstrations in immersion teaching methods, and needed assistance in talking with parents. Asdzaa 2 claimed,

It didn't matter, so I kind of code-switched back to English again. There was no support from co-workers at the center, because we lacked resources and materials to teach. There were a lot of young Head Start parents. They understood Navajo but didn't speak it. Their children are speaking English and they are not supporting them.

Asdzaa 6 recalled,

Even when we teach it in head start, they learn some Navajo but it's not transferred at home. Parents aren't using the same language children are taught at school. If this immersion program was to work, parents need to be supportive and

part of the school. There was only English and no one is motivated to teach in Navajo.

Four teachers' reactions to using the curriculum were positive. They were trained to utilize Diné Curriculum, Situational Navajo, and *Ádée'honiszin Dooleet* curriculum but they had limited knowledge to teach Navajo language to the full extent. One staff member liked the framework because it had cultural significances of teaching. They were also trained to use Creative Curriculum that was taught in English. This curriculum was used to understand the western theory of child development and also used to assess the children. Ashkii 1 preferred using the combined theory of Navajo and westernized education but more towards the Navajo aspects of early childhood development.

More English was spoken in the classroom by children, staff, and parents. The barriers started from the teacher, thus defeating the goals of implementing the Navajo immersion program. Three staff members expressed their concerns because, as a staff, they would be teaching in English, which was the norm of everyday activity. They were not collaborating. Parents were not motivated to have the teachers speak or teach the Navajo language to their children at school. There were less teaching tools to teach Navajo, so more English was spoken. Asdzaa 2 stated, "I wasn't aware we were working in an immersion program because most of the time we were talking in English. We talk in Navajo all the time because the teacher taught in Navajo." Asdzaa 1 stated, "When I revisited the classroom, everything was in English, and I was very disappointed. Children tried to say picture words or objects in Navajo and they get frustrated. Sometimes they say, 'I don't know.'"

Christian beliefs from children's parents affected the way teachers taught. They mixed culture and language with religion. This was a reason why parents left the

program. They did not want their children singing Navajo songs, or participating in plays that had to do with religious activities, such as *yé'ii bicheii* dances, prayers, and chants. Asdzaa 6 who was a Christian and a former teacher stated, “As long as children are learning crafts such as weaving, beading, rug dyeing, and shearing, Christian parents will not be turned away.” Staff should be sensitive and aware of how teaching affects culture at their preschool.

When questioned about their perceptions of weaknesses and strengths in teaching children that was relevant to their teaching experiences, the majority of them used their Navajo-speaking abilities, but their greatest weakness was reading and writing the Navajo language. Some taught according to westernized child development teaching theories and applied it to Navajo.

They were told to talk in Navajo and forced to teach Navajo and it was up to them to teach Navajo, however they pleased. Children tried to say objects and short phrases in Navajo by themselves, but they got frustrated. Not all Head Start staff received the same training and did not receive training in certain areas. They were not guided in pedagogy; therefore, they did not know how to use the different curriculums correctly. Some teaching techniques they received were too advanced for the children.

As for their strengths, they had fun talking in Navajo to children. They thought it was cute for preschool-aged children to sing songs and repeat words after them. Asdzaa 3 stated, “Just speak Navajo to children. Talk more Navajo to teach numbers, shapes, calendar, colors, nursery rhymes, and read stories to them during circle time.” They prepared materials for their arts and crafts activities. They also made booklets about animals, community helpers, body parts, and plants to teach Navajo letter sounds.

When questioned about their skills and knowledge that were relevant to their teaching, they all spoke Navajo fluently. One staff member believed that since the inception of President Hale's Executive Order, all children should be speaking their native language. Teachers made efforts to meet this mandate by utilizing their own teaching ideas, and used training methods they received to teach language. They developed lesson plans from the curriculum they were trained on. They also encouraged parent involvement to speak Navajo to their children.

When questioned about instructional qualities and restrictions as to the success of the program, interviewees' answers varied. Head Start has curriculums in English and Navajo to teach from. Some staff members stated there was a curriculum, and some stated there was none. If there was a curriculum, they either would not know how to use it or tried to use it. And if there was such a Navajo curriculum, it was phased out and was replaced by the Creative Curriculum, at which time the Navajo curriculums were only used as resources or guides. Despite the situations with the availability of curriculums, Navajo was still spoken in the classroom by staff members.

There were plenty of children's books available in English and Navajo. The books were read to children during circle time, nap time, and on the bus. Books were available in the library area for children, staff, and parents to read. Literacy was encouraged in Head Start. During large and small group activities, children were taught phonics. They pronounced letter sounds and learned to read in English and Navajo by looking at pictures. They also learned letter sounds by writing their first and last names and labeling pictures they drew.

Some teachers had a desire for teaching in Navajo. Asdzaa 6 stated, “There are certain good things taught the right way [*Nizhónigo Bee na’niitin*] in language and culture. But when it comes to mixing it with religion, that’s where it becomes difficult for parents.” Parents were very over-protective of their children when they enrolled them in school, which became a challenge for teachers when it came to cultural teaching. Some lacked the skills to select topics that were associated with Navajo themes such as prayers, songs, stories, and chants. Teachers taught according to the daily schedule. Activities consisted of greeting, breakfast, circle time, large and small group activities, art activities, lunch, outdoor play, bus time, and prep time. During large group activities, children said words in English and Navajo. They said their colors, counted numbers from 1 to 10, and reviewed the calendar with the teacher. Children learned by a rote teaching system. Teachers used the say-repeat method to teach their students. They sought best practices in teaching strategies, but there were limited resources and lack of support.

There was no support to implement Navajo immersion goals and objectives. Some staff members were doing their own thing because they were not being supervised or monitored. Administrators offered no support for improvement. They did not visit the centers to conduct staff observations, assess materials being used, buy teaching materials, review language assessments, review lesson plans, and provide recommendations for better teaching techniques. However, above all the negatives, the children were speaking their Navajo language.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Limitations for Head Start teachers who had teaching experiences in Navajo immersion program should reflect and evaluate themselves on how effective immersion

should be implemented. The following sections offer effective immersion in terms of Navajo literacy, impediments as to language transfer, Navajo language courses, lack of support, curriculum, use of English, and beliefs.

### **Navajo Literacy**

It was great that all staff members spoke Navajo fluently; however, as educators they must also be proficient in reading and writing the Navajo language when teaching in an immersion program.

- During staff development days or planning time, staff should learn to read and write the Navajo language. After children's books are selected for reading, they should take the time to read it together as a team. They may invite a person who is proficient in Navajo reading. This is also important for reading Navajo words or sentences on posters, charts, and alphabets. This is critical in being prepared when it comes to reading during large group activities, small group activities, and individual seat work.
- Practice writing Navajo words or stories in their personal notebook. This is the best way to write a language. As they write it, read it at the same time.
- Listen to Navajo stories and letter sounds on audio tapes. Read and write the language. *Diné Bizaad: Speak and Write the Navajo Language (Goossen)* is a good resource.
- Go to church and listen to pastors reading the Navajo Bible. As they read scriptures, follow along. Listen to how they pronounce each letter or sentence.

*Shik'éei, shidine'é, atah áásjítgóó . . . háadida léi' nihizaad,  
nihisodizin, ádóone'é niidlinígíí dóó nihe'á'ál'í' nhit  
ch'aawóle', shá'átchíní, hosidoolí'jí', sidootdee'jí'*

My relatives, my people, each and everyone of you . . . wherever you go, and wherever you may live, never forget our language, our prayers, our clan relationships and our Way of Life, my children.

Chief Manuelito—*Hastiin Ch'ilhaajiin*  
Navajo, 1818-1893

## **Impediments**

Impediments to the transfer of native language to young children affect the Navajo Nation. How can Navajos transfer and perpetuate their language if teachers, administrators, parents, and grandparents do not speak it in the classroom?

Encourage everyone to speak Navajo in front of children so they will understand that Diné people have a language and it is part of their culture.

- Remind people at the center who are speaking in English to speak in Navajo.
- Encourage parents and grandparents to speak Navajo to their children. Remind them that you are making attempts to revitalize the Navajo language in children. Send lists of Navajo words they have learned at school and have them practice with their parents, grandparents, or siblings at home.

## **Navajo Language Courses**

Fridays were reserved for staff development. This was an opportunity for staff members to take college courses. Staff members were reluctant to take Navajo language classes. If they failed the course, it might have a poor reflection on them affect their job.

- Administrators should encourage all teachers to take Navajo language courses. If there are monies available, travel times, books and tuition should be paid for. Provide child care for family members. Courses should be used as an incentive for salary increase or promotion.



- Head Start should establish a partnership with Diné College, Navajo Technical University and NAU to teach Navajo language courses in their community.
- At the beginning of the school year, teachers should fill out the Individual Development Plan (IDP). In this plan, require staff members to enroll in a Navajo language class.
- Review and evaluate this plan with them before they go on furlough. If the goals are met, provide incentives for salary increment or promotion in their job.

### **Lack of Support**

There is no support for teachers who work at the immersion centers. It is everybody's role and responsibility that Navajo is the medium of instruction at all Head Start centers. It is great that Navajo teaching is going on, but people do their own thing.

- District supervisors who monitor immersion programs establish rules, guidelines, or checklists to ensure the goals of Navajo immersion are being met. When they are on site, they should observe and monitor the classroom. Before the end of the day, they should have a briefing with staff members to review what was monitored and share results of what transpired at the center. They should make recommendations for improvement. The supervisor is a professional who is certified and has a background in Navajo immersion.

Parent advisory groups should encourage children, staff, and parents to talk Navajo. They can stop by the centers to observe, greet children and staff and provide technical assistance. The advisory groups are essential and they are just as important as the Agency Head Start Parent Committee, Navajo Education Committee, and the Indian Education Committee. They are advocates for Navajo language.

- Teachers should encourage co-workers to work as a team. They should remind their co-workers that they have a mission to fulfill, which is to perpetuate the Navajo language. It is imperative they speak Navajo when they are at the center, assist with lesson planning and instruction, prepare children's materials for classroom activities, and take classes. When the teacher is not present, everybody knows what to do.

### **Curriculum**

Three types of Diné curriculum were used to teach Navajo. Staff members had different approaches to using the curriculums. Whether it was used as a tool for teaching, used as a resource, or never used, they still taught Navajo.

- An annual training in Diné Curriculum should be provided to all teachers. New staff members should be orientated and get to know the curriculum.
- It is imperative that all staff should be trained in the Navajo philosophy of learning and take classes in early childhood development.
- Staff should be encouraged to participate in curriculum mapping during the summer or during staff orientation.
- Administrators should encourage all staff to participate in curriculum revision. Encourage parents and community members to participate.

### **Use of English**

Teachers, co-workers, administrators, children, and parents speak English at the immersion center. It is hard to stay focused in speaking Navajo. People code-switch from Navajo to English and it causes confusion in front of children.

- Put up signs in the classroom and learning centers to remind everyone to speak Navajo. Encourage that no code-switching be allowed. If it is written in Navajo, it will be fantastic.
- Staff members are encouraged to write notices in Navajo.
- Let children listen to Navajo songs and stories.
- Read stories in Navajo to children and parents.
- Label furniture and objects in Navajo in the classroom.
- Do circle time in Navajo. No English.
- Ask for objects in Navajo.
- Use commands to teach Navajo.
- Provide rewards such as movie tickets, dinners, shopping sprees for parents, staff, and children who speak Navajo.

### **Beliefs**

All staff members have strong Navajo beliefs, including one who was converted to Christianity. Mixing beliefs with teaching should not hinder children's learning.

Language and culture are one entity.

- All staff should review and analyze the topic or unit in the curriculum. Before they develop a lesson plan, they should ask themselves, "Does this unit have any significance with Navajo prayers, songs, stories, and chants? They can modify the lesson at children's level and understanding.
- Involve parents to assist with the development of lesson plans from the curriculum.
- Ask Navajo practitioners if the lesson has anything to do with Navajo religion. And if it does, how can it be teacher-friendly for teachers to use it?

- Ask for technical assistance from the district level. Implement their recommendations?

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Although staff members spoke Navajo fluently, they need to learn to read and write the Navajo language proficiently. People who enter the immersion classroom should speak Navajo and no code-switching. Administrators should be visible at the center to provide technical assistance. Staff members need to be retrained on how to develop lesson plans using the curriculum. All furniture, objects, and learning centers in the classroom need to be labeled in Navajo. Religious beliefs should not hinder children's language acquisition.

Stakeholders and Navajo Politicians across the Navajo Nation need to support Head Start's attempt to perpetuate the Navajo language. The following are recommendations for further research:

1. Regulations, laws, or policies pertaining to Navajo language should be reviewed and analyzed.
2. The framework of the curriculum should be reanalyzed according to the current learning styles of children.
3. Language assessment and primary language survey forms should be reviewed and analyzed. Results of the assessments and surveys should be assessed to determine how many children speak Navajo.
4. The research should be presented to the Division of Diné Education (DODE) language and cultural staff and Head Start staff during orientation or training.

5. All research pertaining to Navajo language immersion should be presented at Indigenous language conferences and the Navajo Nation Research Conferences.

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APPENDIX A  
HEAD START LANGUAGE ABILITY SURVEY

1998 HEAD START NAVAJO LANGUAGE SURVEY  
Navajo Language Ability

SCALE  
(six-point scale 0-5)

- 0 = Adin, doo bit béé hózinda  
No Knowledge
- 1 = T'áá áits'isigo yaa ákonizin  
Some Passive Knowledge
- 2 = T'áá yédigo yaa ákonizin  
Some Active/Passive Knowledge
- 3 = Áits'isigo yee hanádzi  
Limited Speaking Ability
- 4 = Noosétigíí yíghadí yátti'  
Age Appropriate Speaking Ability
- 5 = T'áá hóyáanii nahalíngo yátti'  
Highly Exceptional Adult - Like Ability

This is where the role of Agency Culture/Language coordinators and FSC's would be most important: to be sure that these categories mean more or less the same thing to all raters.

English language ability: Use the same six point scale for English.

Navajo ability of mother: Most of the research suggests that the language abilities use of the mother is often the single biggest determinant of children's abilities in that language. Use the six-point scale 0-5.

Navajo ability of father: Here, too use the six-point scale 0-5.

The explanation for asking these questions are as follows:

AGE: This is intended to help us separate out 3-year old, 4-year old, and 5 year old, on the assumption that there may be differences which may be indicative of trends. Should we put in birth date, birth year, or age when school opened, or what?

SEX: This is intended to separate boys from girls on the assumption that there may be a difference in language abilities.

INITIALS: This is intended only to identify the children to the teachers so that they are talking about the same student. These could be erased or blacked out if there's a problem with this.

1999 HEAD START NAVAJO LANGUAGE ABILITY SURVEY Center \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Agency \_\_\_\_\_

no.	initial	age	Navajo lang. ability	English lang. ability	Mother's Navajo lang. ability	Father's Navajo lang. ability
01.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
02.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
03.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
04.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
05.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
06.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
07.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
08.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
09.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
10.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
11.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
12.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
13.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
14.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
15.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
16.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
17.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
18.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
19.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
20.	___	___	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B

HEAD START DINE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

Head Start Diné Language Proficiency Assessment  
Staff \_\_\_\_\_

Center \_\_\_\_\_

	Mastered = M	Knows Some = S	Mastered	Knows Some
	No Answer = N		Date	Date
OBSERVATION				
PERSONAL DATA:				
1. Haash yinilyé?				
2. Dikwish nináahai? (Holding up fingers to show age is acceptable.)				
3. Nimásh hawolyé? (First name is acceptable.)				
4. Niléecháá'ish hólo? Haash wolyé?				
COMMENTS:				
IDENTIFICATION:				
5. Díish ha'át'íí á'é? Nitsiish heit'é? Nitsiish tigai? (Touch or point to child's hair.)				
6. Nikee' shá' heit'é? Nikee'ish tichíí'?				
7. Díé shá' heit'éego naashch'áá' ? Hí' shá' éi heit'é? (Do not point to animals on picture.)				
8. Bilasáanash éi heit'éego naashch'áá' ? Hashk'aan shá' heit'é?				
COMMENTS:				
FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS:				
09. Yíizjìh.				
10. Abe' ía' nidíá. (Can be observed during lunch time.)				
11. Dego díní'íí'.				
12. Bikáá' adáni biyaadi joo' nini' aah. (Can substitute other objects)				
13. Ts'íilzéi biih he'níí' biyi' góne' joo' ani' aah.				
14. Shine'déé yíizjìh.				
15. Shíighangi dahnídeah dóo shiwosgi dahdílníih.				
16. Hágo kodi shaanilyeedgo shilák'edílníih. (Make sure child is not too close.)				
COMMENTS:				
MATH/SCIENCE SKILLS:				
17. Héidiish nitsaa? Héidiish áts'isi? (Show picture/objects)				
18. Díish dikwíí? (Hold up three fingers or blocks.)				
19. Díí yíníitá. (Give the child five items to count.)				
20. Héidiish lá'í? Héidiish á'ch'ídi? (Use items in Manipulative Area.)				
21. Héidiish nínee? Héidiish áts'isi? (Use sticks, pencils or heights of children.)				
22. Héidiish sik'az? Héidiish sído? (Show pics of woodstove & ice/show)				
23. Díí naaltsoos bikáá' naashch'áá'ígíí shá' t'óodi haahoot'é? (Show picture or go outdoor.)				
24. Díish háadi daholó? (Show one or two items; Corn/Apple/Pinon Nuts.)				
25. Héidiish nídaaz? Héidiish átzóli? (Present items from classroom.)				
26. Haash dooniit nínizín, táít' ááh daats'í doo'oi; tátkáá' daats'í dahnaa'eet doolee??				
COMMENTS:				

Center \_\_\_\_\_

<b>PICTURE DESCRIPTION:</b>			
27. Diish haa'igi choo'í? (Showing a comb/toothbrush.)			
28. At'ééd shá heit'í? Ashkii shá heit'í (Action picture of boy/girl.)			
29. Dii na ashch'aa'igii baahólne'. (Picture of two or more people engaged in an activity.)			
COMMENTS:			
<b>STORY TELLING:</b>			
30. Niwoo' bee yich'iishí héinitáá dóó bikéédée' shá haanéini'íh?			
31. Nikee' t'ahdoo biih ni'éésgóó shá, átsé ha'á'ii biih nánit'is?			
32. T'áábi áar'ídigii ía yaahalne' doo.			
33. T'áábi hazhó'ó hane' aikéé' sinilgo ía yaanáhodoolnih.			
34. T'áábi hane' naaltsóos bikáá' naashch'aa'igii aikéé' niidoonit' dóó yaahodoolnih. (Present story pictures.)			
COMMENTS:			
<b>LISTENING &amp; RESPONDING; REASONING ABOUT STORIES</b>			
35. Hane' bit' hóone'igii t'áá áts'isigo yaa hadoodzih; yaah na'ididóolkit. (Accept any logical statements or questions pertaining to the story.)			
36. Hane' ía yidiiz'ts'á'igii yaahalne' doo. (Accept any information given about what he has heard, local news, family news, etc.)			
37. Hane' bit' hóone'igii biyi' áyisii baahane'igii yaa hodoolnih. (Main Idea)			
38. Hane' biyi' ts'ida átsé áhóót'ídigii yaahodoolnih. (What happened first.)			
39. Hane' biyi' náasdi áhodooní'igii yaahodoolnih. (Prediction)			
40. Áyisii baadahane'igii yaahodoolnih. (Characters)			
COMMENTS:			
<b>EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE: STRUCTURE AND MEANING</b>			
41. Uses verb in 1st and 2nd person. Shíi hózhó/Bii hózhó; Sháháchi' / Baháchi' (Pictures or actual situations showing feelings & emotions.)			
42. Doo shíi íkanda; doo shíi yá'á'énda. (Negative phrases to express feelings, desires or observations.)			
COMMENTS:			
<b>POSITIONAL WORDS</b>			
43. Uses positional words: Bikáagi/Biyaagi			
44. Uses positional words: Aláaji' (First/Front) / Akéédée' (Last, in the back)			
COMMENTS:			
<b>QUESTIONS: WHO, WHEN, WHERE, WHAT, WHY, HOW</b>			



APPENDIX C  
EXECUTIVE ORDER



EXECUTIVE ORDER

RELATING TO THE USAGE OF THE NAVAJO LANGUAGE AS THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AT ALL NAVAJO NATION HEAD START FACILITIES

WHEREAS:

1. The President of the Navajo Nation, as the Chief Executive Officer of the Navajo Nation, has the authority to exercise fiduciary responsibility for the operation of the Executive Branch and to faithfully execute and enforce the laws of the Navajo Nation, 2 N.T.C. § 1005; and

2. The Navajo Nation Education Policies adopted by the Navajo Nation Council, Resolution CN-61-84 on November 14, 1984, and codified at 10 N.T.C. § 1111, specifically states:

The Navajo Language is an essential element of the life, culture and identity of the Navajo people. . . . Instruction on the Navajo language shall be made available for all grade levels in all schools serving the Navajo Nation. . . .

and

3. For the Navajo people to thrive as a distinct people, a system must be developed to implement and perpetuate the use of Navajo language and culture in the education system within the Navajo Nation; and

4. The Navajo Nation Department of Head Start has completed a survey of pre-schoolers served by the Head Start program and found a general decline in Navajo tradition, culture, language and values; and

5. The Navajo Nation is committed to ensure that the Navajo language will survive and prosper. The Navajo language was used in times of war. Now, in time of peace, the Navajo language must be used to ensure the survival of the Navajo people, to maintain the Navajo way of life and to preserve and perpetuate the Navajo Nation as a sovereign nation; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED THAT:

1. Navajo language shall be the medium of instruction of Navajo children, the Nation's future, at all Head Start facilities.

2. The Department of Head Start, Division of Education, shall herewith implement, beginning with the Fall Semester 1995, the purpose and intent of this order in the curriculum, teacher education, facilities, extra curricular activities and all other relevant facets of the Navajo Head Start program.

3. Every program, department, division and entity of the Navajo Nation government shall ensure through development and implementation of the Navajo language and culture programs that the Navajo language and culture continue into perpetuity.

In witness hereof, I hereby proclaim the Executive Order that the Navajo language be the language of instruction at all Navajo Nation Head Start facilities, this 31st day of July, 1995.

Albert Hale, President  
The Navajo Nation

APPENDIX D

RESOLUTION OF THE NAVAJO NATION HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL

**RESOLUTION OF THE  
NAVAJO NATION HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL**

**APPROVING AND RECOMMENDING TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE  
NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL AND THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL THE ADOPTION OF  
THE NAVAJO NATION HEAD START ACT**

**WHEREAS:**

1. Pursuant to 45 CFR 1304.50, Program governance and Appendix A, the Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council is duly elected and a constituted Head Start Policy Council and an authorized entity of the Navajo Nation government; and
2. Pursuant to Resolution No. GSCO-81-95, the Government Services Committee of the Navajo Nation Council approved the Plan of Operation for the Department of Head Start. The Department of Head Start is situated under the Executive Branch of the Navajo Nation government within the Division of Diné Education; and
3. The Department of Head Start strives to provide early childhood experiences for children to bring about a greater degree of social competence. The mission of the Department of Head Start is to accomplish this through collaborative efforts with parents, communities and local resources; and
4. The Department of Head Start also provides children with opportunities such as access to and utilization of necessary medical, dental and nutritional services, as well as the experiences which encourages and stimulate intellectual and social growth; and
5. Pursuant to an Executive Order executed by President Albert Hale: Relating to the usage of the Navajo language as the language of instruction at all Navajo Nation Head Start facilities was formally proclaimed on July 31, 1995; and
6. The President of the Navajo Nation, as Chief Executive Officer of the Navajo Nation has the authority to exercise fiduciary responsibility for the operation of the Executive Branch and to faithfully execute and enforce the laws of the Navajo Nation, 2 N.N.C. §1005; and
7. Pursuant to the Navajo Nation Education Policies adopted by the Navajo Nation Council by Resolution CN-61-84 on November 14, 1984, and codified at 10 N.N.C. §111, specifically states:

“The Navajo Language is an essential element of the life, culture and identity of the Navajo people. . . Instruction on the Navajo language shall be made available for all grade levels in all schools serving the Navajo Nation. . .”; and
8. The Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council and the Department of Head Start is committed to ensuring the Navajo language surviving and prospering for the Navajo people. The Navajo language was used in times of war. Now, in times of peace, the Navajo language must be used to ensure the survival of the Navajo people to maintain the Navajo way of life and to preserve and perpetuate the Navajo Nation as a sovereign nation; and
9. The Navajo Nation has less than half of children entering into the Navajo Head Start program able to talk Navajo and people able to speak Navajo is declining every year. The Department of Head Start has concerns about the effects of so many young children shifting from Navajo to English – only the Navajo Nation Department of Head Start’s Immersion section has developed the Navajo Nation Head Start Act for the benefit of children and families participating in the Head Start program; and

10. The Department of Head Start strives to promote the children's social and educational competence through the Navajo language; and
11. The Department of Head Start concerned that an Executive Order can be more easily ignored, superceded or overturned, the Division of Diné Education has development and proposes the Navajo Nation Head Start Act to be made part of the Navajo Nation Code and become Navajo law; and
12. The Department of Head Start – Immersion Section has developed the Head Start Act which receive input from a number of people concerned with teaching Navajo in the Navajo Head Start program; and
13. The Department of Head Start and the Head Start Policy Council feels it is in the best interest of the Navajo Nation to adopt the Navajo Nation Head Start Act for the benefit of the preservation of the Navajo language.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT, RESOLVED:**

1. The Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council hereby approves and recommends to the Education Committee of the Navajo Nation Council and the Navajo Nation Council to adopted the Navajo Nation Head Start Act.
2. The Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council hereby strongly supports intensive instruction through the Navajo language as a way of giving children access to a meaningful Navajo way of life.
3. The Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council hereby directs the Navajo Nation Department of Head Start to develop the policies and procedures for the implementation of the Navajo Nation Head Start Act for the Policy Council approval.
4. The Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council hereby supports and urges all Navajo Nation Head Start employees and parents to enable children to communicate freely and effectively in Navajo within the Head Start program.
5. The Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council hereby supports and urges communities utilize the Navajo Nation Head Start Act as an instrument to encourage the preservation of the Navajo language.

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council at a duly called meeting in Flagstaff, Arizona at which a quorum was present and that same was passed by vote of \_\_ in favor, \_\_ opposed, and \_\_ abstained, this 12<sup>th</sup> day of August 2000.

Ernest Harry Begay, President  
Navajo Nation Head Start Policy Council

**MOTION:**  
**SECOND:**

APPENDIX E  
DINÉ PHILOSOPHY OF LEARNING

## IINÁ DÓO ÓHOO'AAH BINDII'A' OVERALL DINÉ EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

Ni'hookáá' Diyin Dine'é niidlí. Nahasdzáán nihimá dóo Yádiłhił nihitaa' bita'gi nanihi'deelyá. Dził éi sodizin dóo sin, nitsáhákees, nahat'á, iiná, dóo siihasin bił hadít'éego nihighan ha'a'aahjigo ch'é'étiin nihá'ályaa áadóo Diyin Dine'é saad niheiniłá. Díí bee nihidziil dóo chánah niidlí.

Sodizin dóo sin, dóo nitsáhákees, dóo nahat'á, dóo iiná, dóo siihasin, kót'éego bił nanihi'deelyá éi bik'ehgo óhoo'aah dóo éé'deetiłh biniiyé nihá niilyá. Tí'óódeé' óhoo'aah dóo éé'deetiłh yá'adaat'éhigíí éi bił ałhii'siláago kodóo náásgóo niha' áłchíni bee naniitin dooleeł. Bits'íis dóo binitsekees hadadít'éego yee iiná' iidoolił.

Díí bee nihitsiji' hózhọ dooleeł, nihikéedeé' hózhọ dooleeł, nihinaa t'áa ałtso hózhọ dooleeł, iında bee nihizaa hadahóózhọ dooleeł. Díí bee Si'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhón niidlíigo náasji' kót'éego bee yiikah dooleeł.

We are the Holy People of the Earth. We are created and placed between our Mother Earth and Father Sky. Our home, the Four Sacred Mountains, with the entrance to the East embodies our Way of Life. It provides strength and peace within us.

Spirituality, intellect, planning, and life have been instilled within us; through these attributes we attain knowledge and wisdom. We shall combine the best learning and knowledge of other societies with that of our own for the benefit of our future.

With that, our children will walk with beauty before them, beauty behind them, beauty beneath them, beauty above them, beauty around them, and will always be respectful and live in harmony with natural law. Our children will go forth in life endowed with what is required to achieve their ultimate aspirations.

APPENDIX F  
SUPPORTING RESOLUTION FROM WESTERN  
AGENCY COUNCIL COMMITTEE



# WESTERN NAVAJO AGENCY COUNCIL

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## RESOLUTION OF THE WESTERN NAVAJO AGENCY

SUPPORTING JEFFERSON CLAUSCHEE, DOCTORAL CANDIDATE, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY, NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (NAEL) TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS AND COLLECT DATA FROM THE WESTERN NAVAJO AGENCY HEAD STARTS OFFICE AND PERSONNEL.

WNA Resolution No.: 168-198-#6

### WHEREAS:

1. The Western Navajo Agency Council is a consortium of duly elected Chapter Officials of eighteen (18) certified Navajo Nation Chapters that advocate, promote and support common goals and interests of the respective Chapters; and
2. The Western Navajo Agency Council is comprised of elected officials from eighteen (18) Navajo Nation Chapters in the Western Navajo Agency and has the responsibility and authority to address matters and projects that will benefit the 18 chapters of the Western Navajo Agency of the Navajo Nation; and
3. The Western Navajo Agency Council welcomes and supports the educational activities of Navajo graduate students doing research within the Navajo Nation; and
4. The Western Navajo Agency Council supports the educational project of Ph.D. candidate Jefferson Clauschee described in EXHIBIT A that involves community members of the Navajo Nation Western Agency.

### Now, THEREFOE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Western Navajo Agency Council, pending complete Navajo IRB approval, permits Jefferson Clauschee to conduct interviews and collect data of the Western Navajo Agency Head Start office and personnel.
2. The Western Navajo Agency Council requests that Jefferson Clauschee recognizes that in the doctoral dissertation it contributes to all Navajo Nation community members from the Western Navajo Agency who participated in this project.

It is the policy of the Western Navajo Agency Council to support and encourage the education of Navajo youth. The Council shall support and encourage the education of Navajo youth who are members of the Navajo Nation and who are attending school in any of the Navajo Nation chapters. The Council shall support and encourage the education of Navajo youth who are members of the Navajo Nation and who are attending school in any of the Navajo Nation chapters.



APPENDIX G  
SUPPORT LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF  
DEPARTMENT OF DINÉ EDUCATION



DEPARTMENT OF DINÉ EDUCATION  
THE NAVAJO NATION

P.O. Box 670 · Window Rock, Arizona 86515  
PHONE (928) 871 – 7475 · FAX (928) 871 – 7474



Ben Shelly  
President

Rex Lee Jim  
Vice-President

Date: June 13, 2012

To: Mr. Jefferson Clauschee, Doctoral Candidate  
Native American Education Leadership, Arizona State University

From:   
Andrew Tah, Superintendent  
Department of Diné Education

RE: Navajo IRB Support Letter for the Study: Head Start's Navajo Immersion

The Department of Diné Education (DoDE) supports doctoral candidate Mr. Jefferson Clauschee in his study of Navajo Nation's Head Start Programming geared towards Navajo Immersion. As Mr. Jefferson Clauschee progresses towards his study and fulfills his commitment to submitting all required documentation for the Navajo Nation Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, we encourage his efforts to be a responsible researcher and follow all necessary protocols to get his research completed. Therefore, we support his submission to the Navajo Nation IRB. This research will be useful in Navajo Nation's efforts to understanding the program impact of the Navajo immersion programming. DoDE supports Navajo researchers such as Mr. Jefferson Clauschee.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

*Jimmie C. Begay, President · Dolly C. Begay, Vice President · Katherine D. Arviso, Secretary*  
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*Andrew M. Tah, M.Ed., Superintendent of Schools*

APPENDIX H  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER



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Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

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**To:** Nicholas Appleton  
ED

**From:** Mark Roosa, Chair  
Soc Beh IRB

**Date:** 10/26/2012

**Committee Action:** Exemption Granted

**IRB Action Date:** 10/26/2012

**IRB Protocol #:** 1209008253

**Study Title:** What are the limitations to teaching Navajo Language in Head Start Immersion Program?

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX I  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do Head Start staff members perceive as barriers to Navajo children successfully learning the Navajo language?
2. What do Head Start members perceive as their strengths and weaknesses of the language immersion program?
3. What skills and knowledge do Head Start staff members have relevant to teach Head Start children the Navajo language?
4. What program and instructional qualities promote and restrict the success of the language program?