

Authenticity, motivation, and joy

The role of community engagement in Content
and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

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Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

- Language learning in tandem with content learning (e.g. Coyle et al. 2010)
 - “The non-language subject is not taught *in* a foreign language but ***with and through a foreign language***” (Eurydice 2006)
 - Deeper criticality, competence, authenticity, and motivation
 - Typically described for English, other commonly-taught “world” languages

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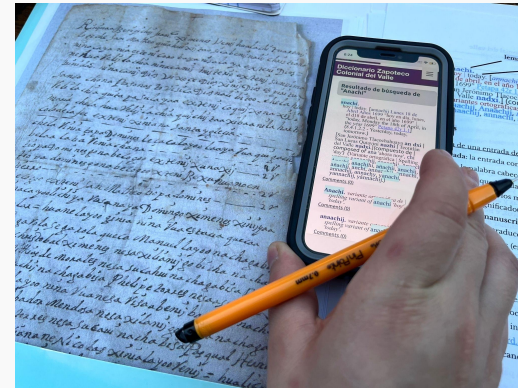
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 - Typically described for English, other commonly-taught “world” languages
- Similar to CLAC: Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum (Plough 2016)
 - Students “apply their knowledge of languages in a variety of curricular contexts, not just within the traditional language classroom” (CLAC website)
 - Response to monolingualism in U.S. higher education
 - Facilitates intercultural competence and internationalization

Today

- Community engagement via project-based learning in CLIL
- Adds key layers of **authenticity**, connection, and embodiment
 - Students experience greater **motivation** through relationships
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- **Case study:** Zapotec historical texts, (modern) language learning, and collaborative community resource development
- Grows from and supports the Ticha project (Broadwell et al. 2020)



TICHA PROJECT

CLIL for minoritized languages

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- Benefits extend beyond language learning and reclamation
 - Centers epistemologies and expertise usually absent from higher ed
 - Students participate in collaborative and community-oriented educational spaces that are not traditionally valued in (U.S.) academic systems

Together with Humanities

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- Supports courses that engage with language, community, and power
 - Language study integrated across the liberal arts
 - Co-taught courses and course clusters
 - Community-centered course outcomes & projects



Together with Humanities courses



Full-year American Sign Language paired with a writing seminar on disability and difference



Course on multilingual community organizing efforts across Philadelphia taught in Spanish & English



Class on language justice and Black study in education with lessons in Dagbani, a language of Ghana

Zapotec course cluster

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 - 2024: Prototype of Colonial Valley Zapotec dictionary with modern Zapotec cognates
 - 2025: Translation of Colonial Valley Zapotec last will and testament from 1786

Diccionario Zapoteco Colonial del Valle

Browse Ticha Zaa

a b c e g h i m n p q r

t

ta.

cuatro (número alternativo) | four (alternate number), (§.1.1 - Number.)

-chijitla "catorce (10 y 4)" | "fourteen (10 and 4)" Arte 3.2.1 2.1.1

(Véase también | See also: **tapa** 'cuatro; four,') Variantes ortográficas adicionales | Also

taa.

ochenta | eighty, (§.1.1 - Number.)

-chincouiahtichil "tres cientos y noventa (300 y 80 y 10)" | "three hundred and ninety (300 and 80 and 10)" Arte 3.2.1 2.1.1

Variantes ortográficas adicionales | Also spelled as: **táa**, § San Jerónimo Tlacoachahuay.

taca.

1. ser; estar | be, exist.

-Xij nacaxa ticha queia rieetij lachi xtemi Christiano? "¿Que es la fe en el cristianismo?"

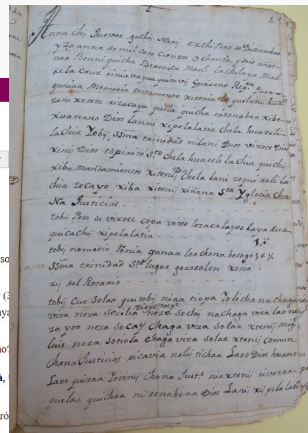
2. poder | be able to, can.

(Sub **taca**.) Variantes ortográficas adicionales | Also spelled as: **tasca**, **tasca**, **tacá**, **tacá**.

tacá.

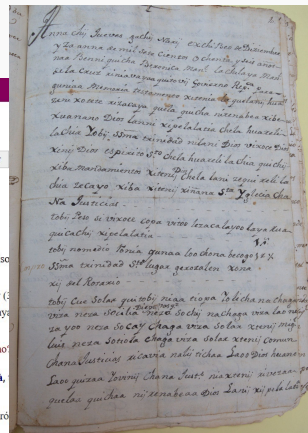
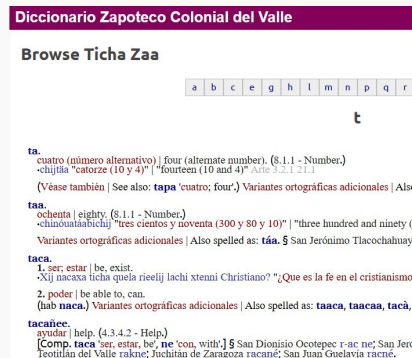
ayudar | help. (4.3.4.2 - Help.)

[Comp. **taca** 'ser, estar, be', **ne** 'con, with'.] § San Dionisio Ocotpec r-ac ne; San Jerónimo del Valle rakne; Juchitán de Zaragoza racine; San Juan Guelavina racne.



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- One week trip to Tlacolula, Oaxaca, Mexico to learn from and share draft materials with Zapotec community members



Zapotec course cluster

- Students applied knowledge across both courses to strengthen language and content learning in **mutually-reinforcing** ways

“While it is not required to understand the class materials, I think having a basic grasp of San Lucas Quiavini Zapotec did **illuminate the process** .”

“I **would not have gotten as much academic knowledge out of the course** if we weren't engaging with the language on a level beyond the analytical.”

Prof. Lopez: “The **light goes on for them** when they see similarities or when I make a reference to something they've already seen in Brook's class.”

Community engagement in CLIL



Authenticity

- “Real-world” (vs. simulated, constructed, idealized) tasks
 - Supports motivation, performance, & (re-)contextualization (Radović et al. 2020)
- Appropriately-sized tasks allow students to see **impact**
 - Students can see a (near-)final draft presented to its audience
- Interactions with community & place **embody** concepts explored in class



A mojonera (border marker), often referenced in wills



This altar was standing when the 1786 testament was written



Authenticity

- Students described learning as “real” – specifically with “**real people**”

“[Working with Zapotec speakers] made language learning feel connected to **real life** as opposed to just abstract memorization of vocabulary lists.”

“I would say it's made my learning more **"real"**, knowing that there's a genuine application and the materials we're working with aren't just self contained.”

“It's a nice reminder that work in academic spaces isn't strictly theoretical and devoid of impact - that everything we've been doing is connected to **real people** and **real challenges** .”



Felipe Lopez, Ana and Geraldina López Curiel, and student Micah discussing the 1786 Zapotec testament

Authenticity

- Relational and interdependent
 - “connected” vs. “abstract”
 - “genuine” vs. “self-contained”
 - “rooted” vs. “theoretical”



Ana and Geraldina López Curiel share their background and experience creating a Zapotec children's book with students

Authenticity

- Relational and interdependent
 - “connected” vs. “abstract”
 - “genuine” vs. “self-contained”
 - “rooted” vs. “theoretical”
- More than just a class project
 - Students get feedback and insight from the **intended audience**
 - Apply their knowledge and see the **impact** that it has on stakeholders



Ana and Geraldina López Curiel share their background and experience creating a Zapotec children's book with students

Motivation

- Interactions with community members reinforce the idea that the work is **interesting, relevant** and **important**
 - Students are empowered and motivated as valued contributors
 - Community engagement reinforces **modernity** and **application**, which is especially important for Indigenous languages

“In other classes I may have done the reading and had a sort of “**so what?**” attitude, but linking the readings to the present day languages and thinking about how to make the resource useful to as many communities as possible has helped me **bridge the gap between historical pasts and the present** .”

Motivation

- Students **pursued opportunities to continue** work outside of the course
 - 3 students created an independent study following the class
 - 3 students applied for summer fellowships in Summer 2025
- Summer fellows had the opportunity to host a workshop introducing the prototype dictionary to community members in Oaxaca



Students Ben and Esénia record Zapotec words with Janet Chávez Santiago



Students Roma, Esénia, and Michaela present the prototype dictionary to Zapotec users

Joy

- Language-learning was fun, joyful, and bonding
- Students fed off of the enthusiasm community members had for the work, and vice versa

“I truly felt that **I had fun in the process of language learning** , yet in doing so **was able to retain more** than I even expected.”

“Seeing the **joy and enthusiasm** everyone here has for the work that's being done is so **encouraging and heartwarming** .”

Prof. Lopez: “They’re **totally having fun** .
Whenever I see them they’re just **so happy to be there** .”



Students Roma and Michaela created Zapotec-inspired dice for Prof. Lopez to hang on his car mirror

Joy

- Joy in community, deprioritizing individualism (Camfield 2025)
 - Finding **acceptance** and **belonging** among collaborators
 - Able to bring their **full selves** into the class and the work

“The language class made us feel like a **team of language learners** .”

“Being around people who spoke Spanish and are Hispanic like me made me feel **accepted** . Meeting Janet and the two teachers and being able to learn more about where Janet came from **filled my heart** .”

Prof. Lillehaugen: “One thing they said that they learned is that they can **be more themselves** in their academic work. They’ve seen that you don’t have to say, this is my work and this is my life.”

Conclusions

- Community engagement (when done well!) can build **authentic** relationships & create space for **motivated** and **joyful** learning

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Conclusions

- Community engagement (when done well!) can build **authentic** relationships & create space for **motivated** and **joyful** learning
- Expanding CLIL for Indigenous/minoritized languages
 - Not only possible & effective, but **leverages the resources and structures of higher ed for language justice**
- Requires support, flexibility, and trust on all fronts
 - Takes significant administrative labor, time for relationship-building
 - Involves incremental progress that cannot be entirely pre-determined
 - Requires rethinking traditional assessment and instruction
 - Consider how this work is communicated & valued for tenure cases

Xtyozën liu! Thank you!

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