
Cultivating An International Community of Occitan Awareness

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Résumé

Approaches in language revitalization often seek to balance the relationship of an outside researcher and the desires of indigenous, minority, or minorized communities (Hinton et al., 2018). Similar approaches in second language education have encouraged teachers and researchers to work with the speaker community towards a set of meaningful goals (Sato & Loewen, 2022). The students, in these second language classes, have the potential to become advocates for the minority language community. In this paper, I discuss and contextualize an ongoing project that aims to introduce Occitan issues into French courses in the US. In French programs in the US, Occitan is regularly taught as part of medieval literature courses, and many key troubadour works are readily available, and some with English instructional commentary (e.g. Paden, 1998). It is usually up to the specialist to introduce material from other time periods and disciplines. This material is less readily available for content lessons in the US classroom and must be assembled by the specialist on their own time.

There are thus two challenges in the creation of student-advocates for the greater Occitan community. (1) What resources are available directed at learners in English and French-medium about Occitan? (2) What should Occitan Studies consist of in today's world according to the Occitan community? In order to answer (2), I distributed an online survey asking Occitan community members (speaker and non-speakers) to rank and describe important areas of Occitan culture, society, and politics. Preliminary analysis of the ongoing survey has revealed several trends which resonate with questions in the larger field of language revitalization: A. Language as an object vs Language as a practice; B. Understanding the history of minoritization; C. Connections between other minority, minoritized, and indigenous groups. These areas that emerge in the survey will be used to respond to (1) through the creation of a publicly online guide aimed at learners in the American University.

The project I describe in this paper not only contributes to building international student allies and awareness raisers (Dorian, 2014) of Occitan according to the needs of Occitans, but it also suggests that revitalization efforts in the classroom might benefit from making comparisons with other minority groups.

References

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Mots-Clés: awareness, dissemination, community informed resources, international representation, Occitan