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Engaging a Mentor-Apprentice Model for Learning the Diné Language

Inside UAZ-Funded Scholarship

February 8, 2024

12:00pm – 1:00pm



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Land Acknowledgement



**Engaging a Mentor-Apprentice Model for
Learning the Diné Language**



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Event Introduction



Guadalupe (Guada) Lozano

Director and Endowed Chair, CUES

Director, External Relations & Evaluation, School of Mathematical Sciences

Associate Research Professor of Mathematics

**Engaging a Mentor-Apprentice Model for
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Speaker & Panelists



Aresta Tsosie-Paddock

CUES Distinguished Fellow

Assistant Professor, American Indian Studies

Assistant Professor, Linguistics

Assistant Professor, American Indian Studies-GIDP

College of Social & Behavioral Sciences



Tanya Goh

Diné Language Mentor



Kimball Shorty

Diné Language Mentor

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Purpose

Initiate a pedagogy in which students of Diné Bizaad will study with a fluent Diné speaker mentor with the goal of students attaining a greater degree of proficiency in the Navajo language and increasing cultural knowledge by utilizing Zoom.

Contributing Factors

- Declining number of proficient speakers
 - Governmental policies
 - Boarding Schools / Education
 - Relocation

Data

- 53% of Navajo citizens lived away from the Navajo Nation in mostly urban areas (Navajo Nation Division of Health and Navajo Epidemiology Center, 2013).
- 1990 census data, 84% of Navajo Nation residents spoke the Navajo language, but by 2010, it had declined to 51% (Denetclaw, 2017).
- 2017 data shows there were 7,600 monolingual Navajo speakers on the Navajo Nation. (Denetclaw, 2017).
- Covid-19 pandemic on the Navajo Nation "where 565 of the reservation's 869 deaths are among people 60 and older...", of which many were fluent speakers and traditional knowledge holders (Healy, 2021).



Master-Apprentice Program (MAP)

The Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (Hinton 2001)

- Native California Network
- Based on 5 main principles
 - No English allowed
 - Active and communicative Apprentice
 - Primary mode of communication is verbal
 - "Real-life" on-site learning
 - Nonverbal communication
- 3 years
 - Annual 300 hours of immersion
 - 10-15 hours per week



UA Mentor-Apprentice Program (MAP)

At University of Arizona, MAP

- Combines community and academic
 - Bridge
- Community
 - Navajo citizens who are proficient speakers
 - Bridge
- Academic
 - Students of Diné Bizaad language courses
- Learning facilitation
 - Zoom



Framework

K'é

- Give, share, support to relatives/relations (Austin 2009)

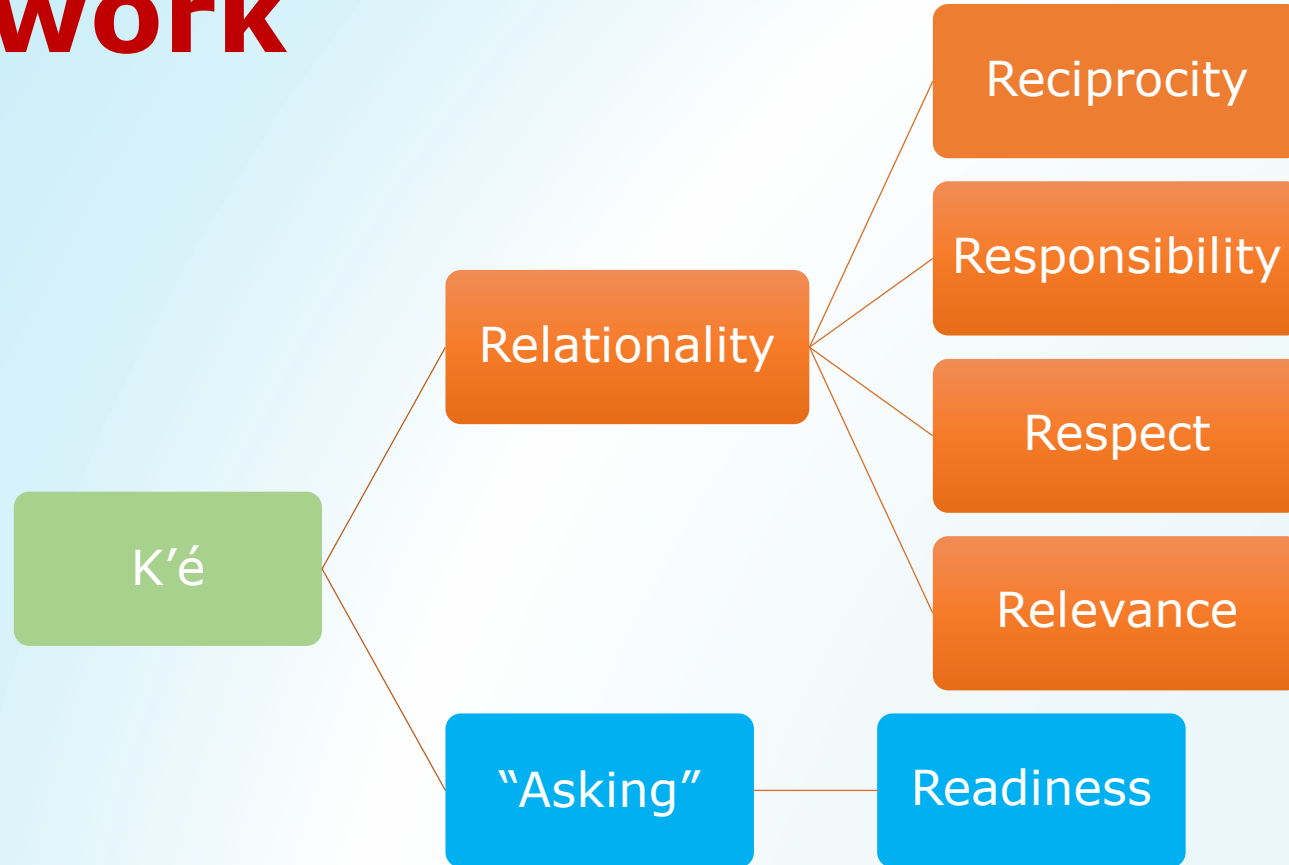
"Ask" Paradigm

- When a learner asks an elder or knowledgeable person to teach them, it is understood they are ready to listen.

Relationality (Kirkness & Barnhardt 2016; Markiewicz 2012)

- Respect
- Reciprocity
- Responsibility
- Relevant

Framework



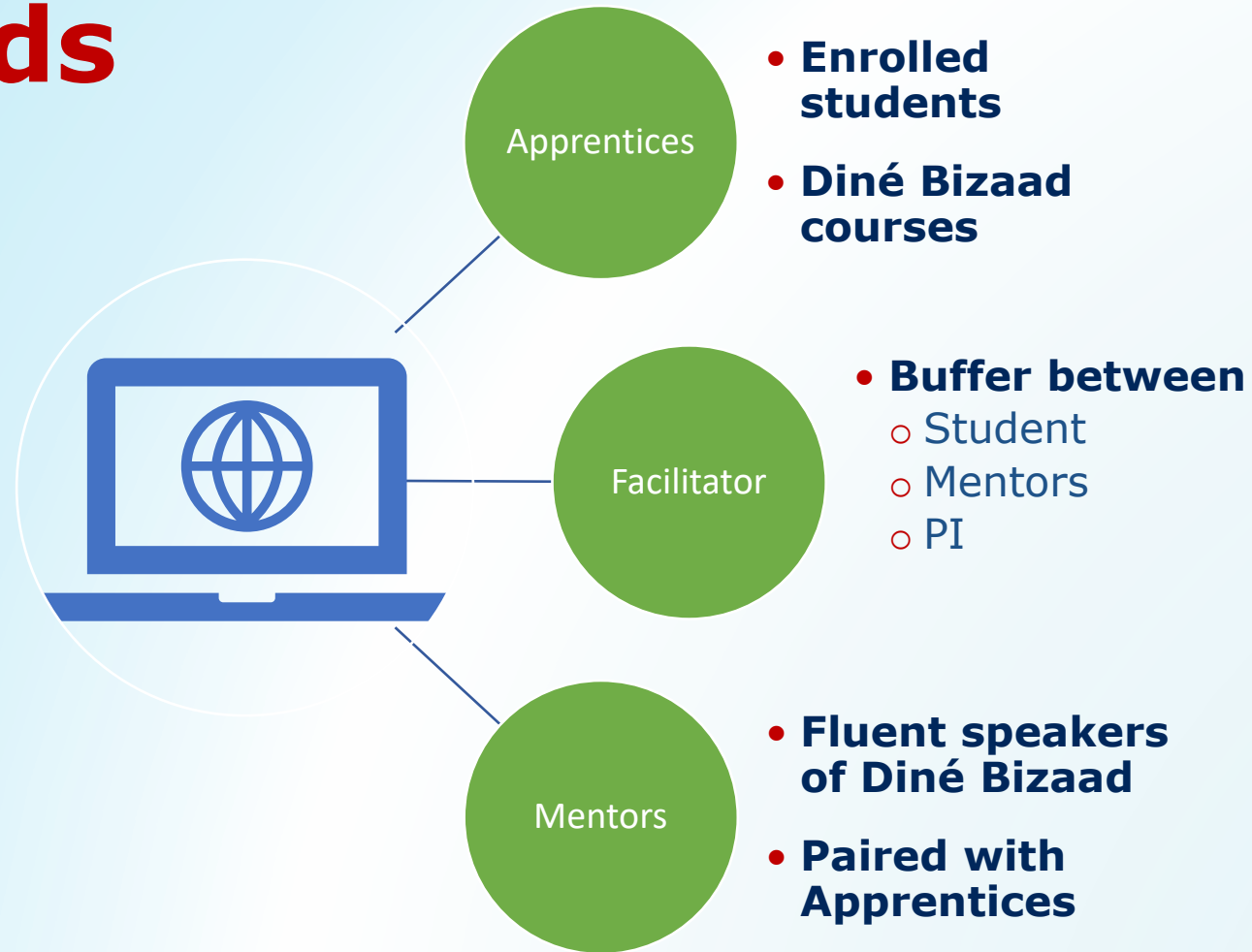
Research Questions

What are the impacts to student Apprentices learning the Navajo language and cultural knowledge while studying with a Mentor?

What are the oral/verbal outcome assessment differences between student apprentices and student non-apprentices?



Methods



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Methodology

Interviews

- Apprentices
- Mentors

Meeting Notes

- Apprentices
- Mentors

Video

- One session per semester

Verbal Exams

- **Comparison**
 - Apprentices
 - Non-apprentices



Apprentices and Mentors

Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023
Apprentices 7	Apprentices 6	Apprentices 6	Apprentices 7
Mentors 4	Mentors 3	Mentors 4	Mentors 4

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What are impacts to student Apprentices learning the Diné Bizaad and cultural knowledge while studying with a Mentor?

- **Identity/Cultural Knowledge:**

- Students indicate their language is part of their identity which includes being able to express their clans, know their teachings and stories, and where they fit into their Diné community in a holistic manner.
- Students indicate they are learning more cultural knowledge that they would not have learnt elsewhere.

- **Confidence:**

- Students indicate learning more about their language makes them feel accomplished, they learn how to make conversation, they are more comfortable speaking Diné, and they find that mentors encourage them to succeed.

- **Engagement:**

- Students indicate they take back what they learned to family and teach their younger nieces and nephews.
- Students indicate they reconnect with family through language by speaking and being involved more with family. They indicate learning the Diné language and cultural teachings gives them ideas about projects to work on in other classes.

- **Valuable:**

- Students indicate that they are away from their homeland and do not get to go home much, thus the program makes them feel a little closer to home.

What are the oral/verbal outcome assessment differences between student apprentices and student non-apprentices?

Spring 2022	Verbal Exam 1	Verbal Exam 2	Verbal Exam 3
Apprentices	100%	93%	88%
Non-Apprentices	100%	92%	88%
Fall 2022			
Apprentices	89%	94%	89%
Non-Apprentices	92%	80%	69%
Spring 2023			
Apprentices	100%	96%	93%
Non-Apprentices	90.15%	94%	95.69%
Fall 2023			
Apprentices	100%	89.33%	100%
Non-Apprentices	100%	84.17%	100%



Tanya Goh

Northern Arizona University
B.S. Mechanical Engineering

-
- **Background**
 - **Why be a Mentor?**
 - **Approach**
 - Examples
 - **Value**



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Kimball Shorty

ITT

B.S. Electrical Engineering and
Electronics Communications

-
- **Background**
 - **Why be a Mentor?**
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Conclusion of Preliminary Study

- **Assessments**
 - Verbal exams
- **Commitment**
 - Apprentices
 - Mentors
- **Delivery**
 - Zoom works



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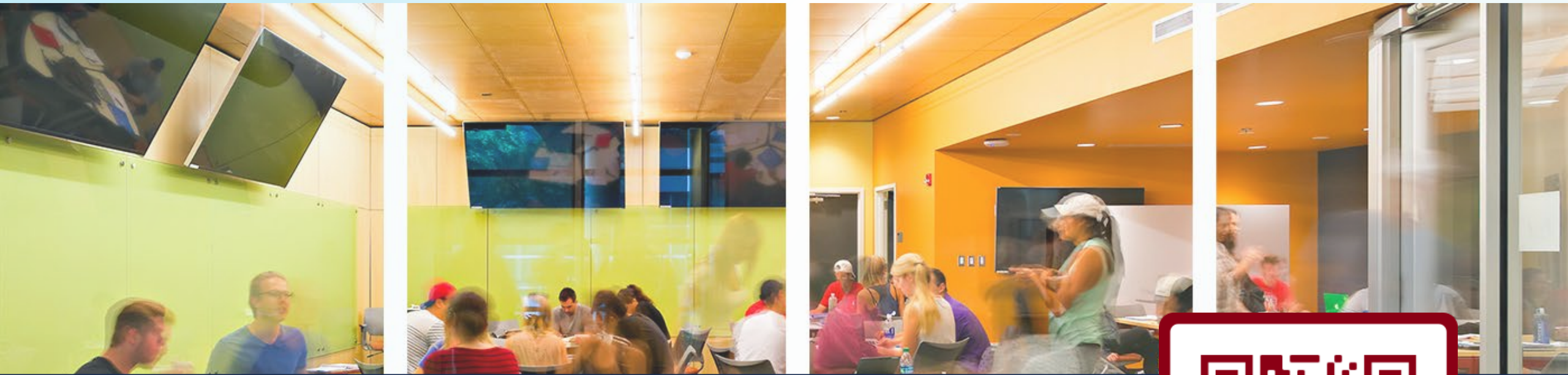
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CUES Spanning Boundaries Challenge



2023 CUES Spanning Boundaries Theme:
Teaching & Learning Assistants in the Classroom
Pre-proposals due February 14 | [Read more >>>](#)



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Nominations due April 1 | [Read More >>>](#)



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