

**Promotion of indigenous languages in an immigrant community:
the case of Mujeres Sin Fronteras
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A participatory approach to language promotion and revitalization projects has proved to be successful in different situations. The case of the *Mayangna Yulbarangyang Balna* in Nicaragua is a good example, which demonstrates that community involvement may play a crucial role in a linguistic project. A similar approach has been followed in the collaborative project with the group of *Mujeres sin Fronteras*, a self-established group of (im)migrant women based in Lenoir and Greene counties. The initial goal of the project was to promote the indigenous language(s) in the community; after a meeting with the group, such initial goal was made concrete with the objective of creating a multilingual visual dictionary.

After eight months of collaborative work, some important issues have been noted. First, the priorities of a an immigrant community (e.g. *Mujeres sin Fronteras*) are different from those of a community that stays in its place of origin (e.g. *Mayangna Yulbarangyang Balna*): although there is a recognition of a need for cultural and linguistic promotion, other aspects are more crucial to the survival of the immigrant community (i.e. the need for food and lodging and access to tools and services for the community's self-promotion). Second, as opposed to an *in-situ* community in which all members share a common linguistic background, there is greater linguistic diversity among the members of the immigrant community. This has consequences on the interest of each individual member to the promotion of indigenous languages (i.e. not all the members of the immigrant community are speakers of the same indigenous languages, or of a single indigenous language). Finally, the diversity of an immigrant population is also manifested in the different levels of literacy, a fact that impacts on the approaches to follow to conduct collaborative work.

These issues force a reshaping of the research approach. Instead of following a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which has proven to be successful when all members of the community share the same linguistic (and literacy) competencies, a community-based approach has been implemented. In both approaches, the final goal of the project is the same (i.e. the creation of a product that has value for and can be used by the community), but the difference lays on the role of the community members: in a PAR approach, the members of the community benefit from the research project by actively participating in the project; in an community-based approach, the members of the community benefit from the project by exchanging knowledges and needs with the external researcher(s). In the case of *Mujeres sin Fronteras*, the main way to give back to the community has been to have English lessons at each research meeting, to compensate for their time and effort and to fulfill one of the community's needs.

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The collaborative project with *Mujeres sin Fronteras* demonstrates that collaborative, participatory work and research is possible in different circumstances, provided that the needs of the community are placed as a top priority.