

# Evaluation of a Distance Learning and Teaching Model for Endangered Languages



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## Ojibwemowin

According to Anton Treuer, an avid Ojibwe speaker and linguist, there are currently fewer than 1,000 fluent Ojibwe speakers.

Ojibwe is one of the hardest languages in the world to acquire not because it is hard to pronounce, but because it is so descriptive. The Ojibwe language is approximately 80% verbs. The inflections on the verbs allow sentences to be only one word long.

### Ojibwe sentence example:

Gigii-Anishinaabemotawigonaan.  
*S/he spoke Ojibwe to us.*

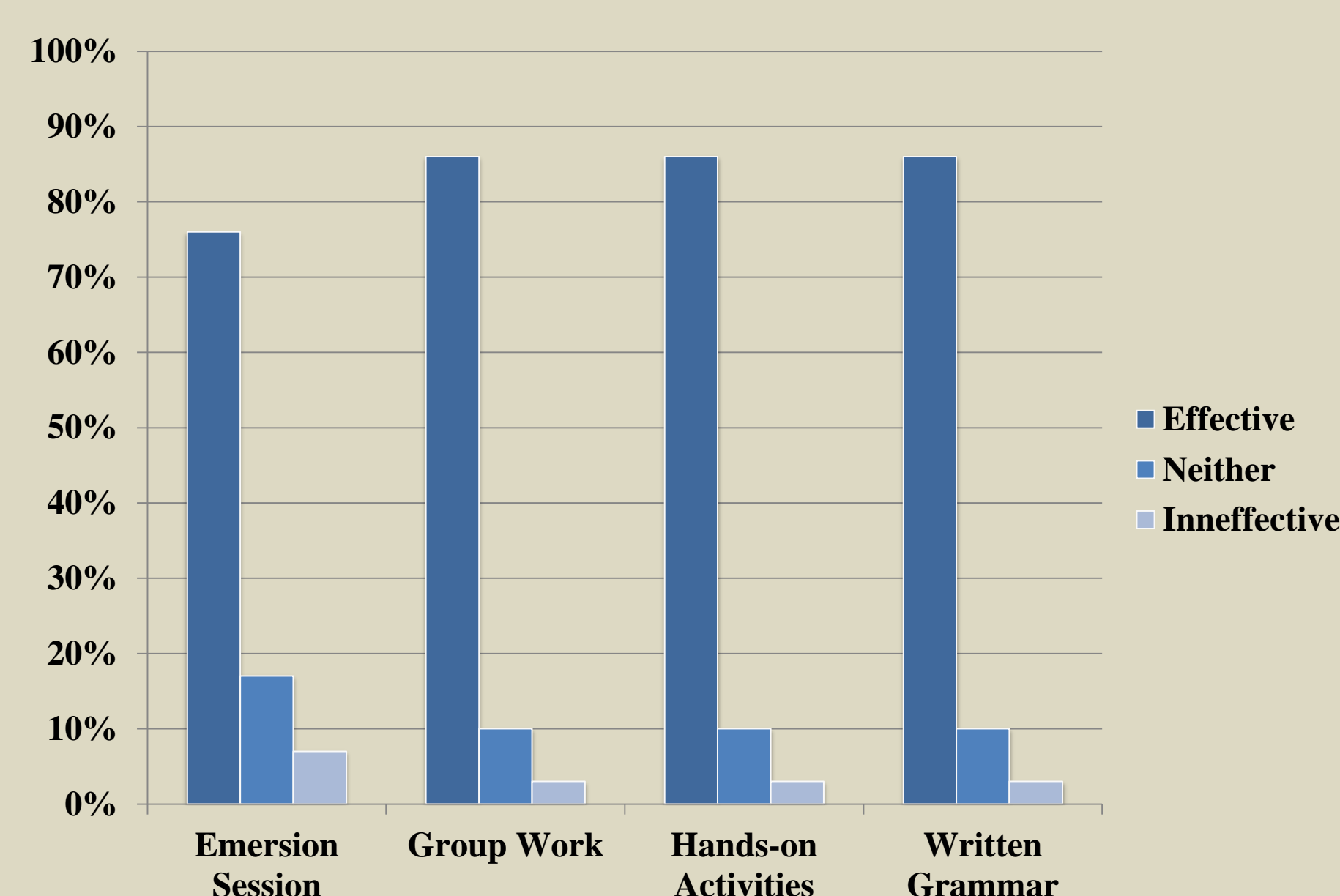
## Surveying UWEC's Teaching Model

An online survey reviewed each learning method: in class students, distance learning students, and Internet viewers. The purpose of the survey was to collect data on whether the in class materials and curriculum were effective teaching tools across the different learning methods. The survey also allowed suggestions for possible improvements to the current curriculum.

### Student Comments:

"The fact that the classes are online help tremendously because I can always view a lesson and understand what I missed in class this is by far the best language course I have ever take!" –anonymous

"The interactive oral exercises were very helpful and the assignments were creative and interesting." –anonymous



## How UWEC Teaches the Ojibwe Language

### Model:

Students who take the Ojibwe language class at UWEC gather in the distance learning classroom in order to learn Ojibwe for language and cultural diversity credits. Students at other universities may enroll and participate as distant learning students. Archived and streamed Ojibwe classes are accessible to those interested in learning for free online through UWEC's American Indian Studies website <http://www.uwec.edu/AIS/ojibwe/index.htm>. UWEC is the only place in the world to learn Ojibwe in full classes for free.

### Curriculum:

UWEC's program splits class time into two focused sessions:  
-The first half is an immersion session where Ojibwe is exclusively used to discuss diverse topics.  
-The second half focuses on grammar and use of the double vowel system for clarification, as well as answering questions from the immersion session.

Each unit exposes students to the Ojibwe culture through interactive activities, Ojibwe elder visits, and video's provided by fluent speakers.

### Benefit:

Because classes are archived and can be re-watched at any time, distance learning students, as well as in-class students, can use these videos for extra practice, studying, or to review what students have missed.

It provides an opportunity for learning to those online who do not have access to Ojibwe classes or books.

Week	Tuesday	Thursday	Topic
1	January 25	January 27	Review Audio Tapes at New Branch (No class on 1/26)
2	February 1	No Class	Class starts with both days
3	February 8	February 10	Clubs and Animals
4	February 15	February 17	Enduring and Intro to VTBs
5	February 22	February 24	Enduring: Midwinter from Montreal
6	March 1	March 3	Enduring: Midwinter from Montreal
7	March 8	March 10	Historic and Anton Treuer's 1988
8	March 15	March 17	In-Class Presentation: Teaching Ojib
9	Not Scheduled	Not Scheduled	Spring Break
10	March 28	March 31	Midwinterfest and Dr. Anton Treuer's 1988

## Comparisons of Ojibwe Teaching Methods:

A YouTube search for "Ojibwe class" and a \$10 online Ojibwe learning circle are the only Media Models similar to UWEC's.

### Other Ojibwe Resources Available:

- Schools offering Ojibwe class for credits.
- Dictionaries available to purchase on the Internet.
- Websites with clickable fluent speaker pronunciation.
- Websites with free printable vocabulary.
- Small community language circles.

## The Importance of Fluent Speakers



Co-Instructor Waasebines, an Elder from the Siene River First Nation, Ontario Canada, frequently teleconferenced with UWEC

students in Ojibwe class. He provided new Ojibwe words, commonly used phrases, and cultural information that was not previously available. Due to his unexpected passing, this evaluation involved gathering Waasebines's teachings and incorporating them into future materials.

Leech Lake Elder, Mezghinaashikwe, has created several videos and has visited UWEC campus for a baby swing demonstration. She also provided students and online viewers with new words, phrases, and cultural insight.



Both elders continuously encouraged students to teach each other about Ojibwe people and how important their dying language is to the survival of their culture.

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Special remembrance to Waasebines for all his contributions to the language, he will be missed. Miigwetch.