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Making Linguistics Relevant: A Service-Learning Experience

Introduction

The pedagogical tool of service learning, with its roots in the early 20th-century educational theories of John Dewey (Morton & Saltmarsh, 1997), has emerged as a popular and much-studied pedagogy throughout the 1980s and into the present, generating an abundance of articles and books that help educators see how to meld in-class academic learning with out-of-class community service. This paper describes a way to use service learning as a tool to more effectively teach basic concepts of linguistics to preservice teachers.

Though there continues to be some disagreement about an exact meaning of service learning, a basic definition set forth by Jacoby (1996) in the now-seminal *Service Learning in Higher Education* is still useful: “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (p. 5). Within the pedagogy of service learning, however, there are varying views about its purposes; the motives behind service learning have been much discussed. Battistoni notes two “ethical foundations for service learning: philanthropic and civic” (1997, p. 150). The philanthropic foundation sees service learning as an “exercise in altruism” (p. 151), in which students build character and understanding by serving those in disadvantaged communities. Battistoni sees this approach as an unsatisfactory one as it breeds a further sense of disconnect between students and those they serve; students “do not conceive of those served as being part of their own communities” (p. 151).

On the other hand, a civic view of service learning, one that looks for ways to encourage understanding of and participation in democracy, “emphasizes mutual responsibility and the interdependence of rights and responsibilities, and it focuses not on altruism but on enlightened self interest” (Battistoni, 1997, p. 151). This civic view is often regarded as a “radical pedagogy” (Speck, 2001, p. 5), one that has at its heart a political aim: to promote consciousness about the injustices in society and to seek ways to remedy those injustices. This civic view has become a very prominent one among advocates of service learning (Battistoni, 1997; see also Herzberg, 2000; Cushman, 1999,

2002; among others) and is especially apparent in courses in which the subject matter itself is those injustices, such as courses on educational inequities in American society or on literacy.

Other practitioners, while not rejecting the civic purpose of service learning, seek not to lose sight of discipline-specific content in the quest for educating for democratic citizenship. They believe that the service and the types of learning activities related to the service must be clearly linked to the learning goals of the course, whether that course be one in mathematics, history, or natural science (Burns, 1998; Chapin, 1998; Tai-Seale, 2001). Howard (1998) describes this emphasis on course content as academic service learning.

It is this latter approach that best describes the Introduction to Linguistics course the first author of this article wanted to design. The course content is not explicitly ideological in nature; as this paper will show, the service component in the course serves as an integral component for learning about language structure. The civic component of service learning develops as a secondary benefit, with the primary benefit being mastery of the subject matter—the basic concepts of linguistics. An ancillary benefit is students' reflection about language and society and their own attitudes, but the main focus is on language form rather than function.

Much work has even been done in discipline-specific studies of how best to incorporate service learning into courses. For example, the American Association of Higher Education offers 19 volumes in its series on service learning in the disciplines, including the expected disciplines such as composition and sociology to slightly more surprising ones, such as accounting, engineering, and philosophy. However, none of the 19 volumes is devoted to linguistics. In fact, information about incorporating service learning into linguistics courses is hard to come by. A search in the MLA Bibliography turns up no articles or book chapters on the topic; education indexes are fruitless as well. The best resource is the service learning syllabus bank at the Campus Compact Web site. (Campus Compact is an organization of more than 800 colleges and universities committed to the civic purposes of higher education.) Here six linguistics-related course syllabi are available, three of them for communications classes and clearly unrelated to the description and goals of Introduction to Linguistics, the course that this paper wishes to address.

Two of the other courses are 400-level courses, both focusing on sociolinguistic topics. One is titled *Language in Context*, the other *Language, Literacy, and the Community*; both courses are taught at the University of Arizona (Wurr, 2003). The former course is directed primarily at language teachers and addresses such topics as multilingualism and world Englishes, languages in context and linguistic choice, and the ethnography of communication; its service-learning component is coaching in a program that helps adults learning English as a Second Language (ESL) prepare to gain U.S. citizenship. The latter course focuses on issues of languages and literacies and participates in the same program for ESL adults. Both courses primarily use weekly logs and other reflective writings to integrate course content and community service.

The final course syllabus is for an Introduction to Linguistics class taught at Kapiolani Community College, part of the University of Hawai'i; in the syllabus the stated purpose is:

to understand issues of world Englishes, dialect, gender, style, usage, and correctness by becoming language ethnographers of the written and spoken word, by observing and recording language uses in your readings and in your academic and personal lives, and by describing your experiences in written analyses. (Marcella, 2003)

In other words, this course also has a more sociolinguistic orientation. The students in the course have two options for the service components: they can serve as mentor/discussants in a teen reading circle in the local community or they can tutor in a local public school classroom. Assignments include journals that reflect on the service and tie it to language issues discussed in class and using the journals as a springboard for a variety of more formal writing assignments related to course content. Although there are similarities between these courses and the one we will describe, we believe the Berry College course differs primarily in the relationship between the service students perform and the course content, a difference related to the discussions about the purposes and motives of service learning as discussed above.

Additionally, while these syllabi do exemplify the kinds of service-learning projects being used in the linguistics classroom, still needed are detailed accounts of how to link course content and service learning and reports on how successful such projects are. Several teachers have written about using service learning as a tool to help ESL students learn about language and culture (Elwell & Bean, 2001; Heuser, 1999; see also Lally, 2001, on foreign language applications). But we have not found any reports of how service learning can be used in the training of preservice ESL teachers.

Most states require preservice or in-service teachers to take one or more linguistics courses to qualify for an ESL endorsement or certificate. In-service teachers who have struggled with how to communicate with English language learners in their classrooms are sometimes eager to study linguistics. Many preservice teachers, however, are resistant to learning the many technical terms and concepts of the field, principally because they do not see their relevance. An introductory linguistics course is a requirement for education majors at the liberal arts school where we teach. It was a challenge to reach many of these students, who were taking the class simply to fulfill a requirement and who did not immediately see how linguistics could help them with what they would be doing later as teachers. The sophomore-level Introduction to Linguistics course is supposed to focus on the core areas of linguistics—phonology, morphology, and syntax—rather than on applied linguistics. However, it was decided to restructure the course so that it was built around an applied linguistics service-learning project.¹ This choice was not mandated by theoretical or curricular needs, but by pedagogical considerations in an effort to better engage the students. It turned out, however, that

the project provided the perfect assessment tool to evaluate students' understanding of the core areas of linguistics, for example, articulatory phonetics and English inflectional morphology. Working on the project deepened and clarified students' understanding of those concepts. Students learn more when they can fit the new material into the context of their career goals and when they can put their knowledge into action.

This paper is a report on an applied linguistics project devised to help students do just that. It is an innovation in the field of service learning because first and most important, it teaches core course content, with cultural sensitivity and ethical development occurring as an important but secondary outcome. We have therefore described below the service-learning experience that linguistics students engage in, and we include detailed information so that other professors can plan similar projects for introductory linguistics courses that serve as preparation for ESL teachers. We will conclude with an assessment of the benefits of the project and some examples of student reflections.

Applying Linguistics to the Interlanguage of a Real Person

Students complete a semester-long project analyzing the speech of a nonnative speaker of English. The first part of the semester is devoted to studying phonetics and phonology, after which the students do a study of the nonnative speaker's pronunciation. The second part of the course is devoted to morphology and syntax, which gives students the information they need to analyze grammatical errors. In the last third of the semester, they study language acquisition. Students learn about the life experiences of a language learner and try to relate the person's fluency, or lack of fluency, to teaching methods, personality factors, and sociocultural contexts.

When work with this project began, students found their own research subjects. After a year and 100 students passing through the classes, they had interviewed all the international students on our not-very-diverse campus, some more than once. It was then decided to seek out immigrant adults in the community who were learning English to provide the data. In return for help with their projects, the students volunteer their time to work with these language learners as conversation partners. The enthusiasm for the project increased exponentially when students began taking a more active role in working with these nonnative speakers. Not only do they have the opportunity to be of service to the community, but they practice being teachers. Many of them returned to the research site to put in additional sessions beyond what was mandated for the class assignment.

Before students can analyze the speech of a language learner, they must collect a tape-recorded sample to serve as data. This requires a short discussion of social science interview methodology as a way to conduct empirical research. Students are provided a list of questions to ask at the interview (Appendix 1), instructions on the taping procedure, and informed-consent forms for the research subjects to sign. For a course in sociolinguistics, or for a graduate course covering second language research methods, students might

compose their own questionnaires. The informed-consent forms are written in simple language, translated into the appropriate language, and explained orally by the interviewer in case some subjects are illiterate. The college provides tape recorders. Each student is required to provide a blank cassette tape. Once all students have a copy of a language-learner interview on tape, they can begin their analyses.

Work on the project actually starts before the taping is complete. The interview includes a list of words for the subject to read on the tape. Since students are required to learn the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), this list of words is used in a homework assignment, in which they transcribe the words from English spelling into IPA. They use a broad transcription, and they are asked to transcribe the word the way a speaker of American English without a distinct regional accent would say it. International students may need to pair up with a classmate for this task. After they make the tape recording, they use it to add a third column to their word list, resulting in a chart with the headings *English Spelling*, *American English IPA*, and *Language Learner IPA*. That is, for the third column they are to transcribe as precisely as possible the words as the learner pronounces them on the tape. It is suggested that they first mark every word that they hear as being pronounced with a “foreign accent” and then that they focus on trying to describe how this person’s speech is different from a typical American English pronunciation. Students find it helpful to try to imitate the speaker on the tape and to notice the articulatory properties of the sounds in their own mouths. Often, they do not know enough IPA to show the fine phonetic distinctions that make a word sound “different,” for example, a trilled /r/ or vowel length. They are asked to just try to describe the difference the best way they can.

This part of the project is the most difficult to grade. If several students are describing the speech of the same person, the professor can play the tape and correct these several papers at once. The first time this project was assigned, not only did the students all interview different speakers, but they all made up their own word lists. A standard list of words not only helps make the grading easier, but it allows the professor to include words with sounds that are likely to vary, depending on the native language of the learners. This word list intentionally contains words featuring English sounds that are not found in many other languages, such as interdental, consonant clusters, and a variety of vowels. Choosing words with voiced consonants at the end was a useful way to illustrate final vowel devoicing for some speakers, and selecting words with /r/ and /l/ was a way to illustrate mergers for other speakers.

Word list

hat	robe	measure	better
this	street	boys	actor
bed	book	farmer	rather
fog	bitter	tub	move
houses	truth	leave	thing
meal	bays	school	haze

raid	other	desk	wish
all	these	judge	path

After transcribing the words, the students write a summary of the differences they found, using the linguistic terminology they learned for articulatory phonetics. Feedback but no grades are provided for this part and the next part of the assignment, which allows the students to make revisions before combining the component parts of the analysis to turn in as a final project at the end of the semester.

The second part of the project also involves transcription, but not in IPA. Students are asked to find a part of the tape where the language learner does more talking than the interviewer, which typically occurs toward the end as the interview becomes less awkward and more conversational. They transcribe a few minutes of the learner's speech in normal English orthography, noting pauses, overlaps, and other discourse features. Then they search their transcripts for morphological, syntactic, and semantic errors.

Students are required to list 10 errors, including at least one example of each type (morphological, syntactic, and semantic). They first write the subject's sentence, then offer a rewrite of what the sentence should be in Standard English, and then give an explanation for what is wrong with the sentence. For example:

1. Problems with plural endings: Some words that should be plural are singular and words that should be singular are plural.

"I bought a textbooks to learn English."

The word *textbooks* should be *textbook*.

The above example could also be indicative of problems with use of determiners. The step of writing what the sentence *should* be is important in helping students determine what the error is. Just as the pronunciation part of the project gives them practice using phonetic terminology, so this part of the project helps students better understand inflectional distinctions (tense, number, person) and gives them practice in identifying words by lexical category.

The third part of the project uses students' knowledge of language acquisition factors to offer an explanation for the learner's level of fluency. The students write a biographical sketch of the person, including what languages they speak and how, where, and when they learned them. They are encouraged to include quotations from the speakers about what their language learning experiences were like. Then they write an analysis, relating this person's experiences to what they have learned in class about factors that affect second language acquisition, including:

- identity, motivation, attitude (affective factors);
- classroom versus communicative learning (learning environment);
- the Language Acquisition Device and the critical period (age considerations).

They can then discuss whether the person's language abilities and experiences correlate with the research findings on second language acquisition.

Each student turns in the final project as a research paper, with transcriptions and marked-up copies of earlier drafts appended. It is suggested that they arrange their projects neatly in folders and save them to submit as part of their senior portfolios for the Teacher Education program. In their portfolios, they will be documenting the achievement of goals such as the following, all of which can be demonstrated by successful completion of the linguistics project. (Numbers/letters refer to various Charter School of Education training goals.)

1. Possess sound knowledge and understanding of subject matter content.
 - a. Uses tool of inquiry appropriate to the discipline
2. Create appropriate learning experiences by
 - c. Developing an understanding of second language acquisition and its impact on schooling practice
11. Demonstrate a wide repertoire of strategies and teaching styles appropriate for diverse student needs by
 - d. Planning for individual differences based on gender, culture, racial, language, and socioeconomic diversity
16. Demonstrate an awareness of the diversity of the school and the global community by
 - a. Seeking to understand families, cultures, and communities
 - c. Communicating in ways that demonstrate sensitivity to cultural, language, and gender differences (Charter School of Education, 2001-02)

Finally, students incorporate into their final papers their journal entries reflecting on the research process itself. In this way they use reflective writing as a learning tool, a component of the project we plan to develop further. This reflection includes an assessment of the interviewing, the transcription work, and what they learned overall by doing the project. We have included excerpts from some of these comments in the next section of this article.

Gaining Teaching Experience and Being of Service

Professors who wish to initiate a similar project could structure the interviewing and service commitment in various ways. Students could interview international students at the college and commit to helping them edit written assignments. They can participate in ESL classes at various sites in the county. In the future, it is possible that all students will work from the same tape recording and then find their own volunteer projects from a list of local sites, just to simplify matters. Whatever shape the project takes, it will be determined in large part by community input, in keeping with accepted principles of qualitative community-based research methods (Johnstone, 2000; Rossman & Rallis, 1998; among others).

Linguistics can be daunting. In Spring 2003, a Berry College professor who teaches ESL at a local church invited the students to do their interview-

ing there. The beginning-level ESL class was large, but the beginning-level language learners would not have been able to understand and respond to the interview questions. The linguistics students interviewed language learners in the intermediate class, which had about 15 members. Four or five volunteers from the church were already working with this class. Because 64 students were enrolled in introductory linguistics classes that semester, there was no way that they could have been of service in the ESL classes without getting in the way. They were allowed to attend the beginning class for extra credit, but the service requirement was dropped. A course such as this one always requires the ability to assess and make accommodations for the situation, which has always been part of the challenge of fieldwork.

Below, we offer as a case study the class experience from Fall 2002 to highlight both the benefits and the pitfalls of doing service work in the community with ESL learners.

The research site was at a Hispanic church. The minister said that an English class had been taught there previously, but that the teacher had moved away. She was very persuasive in convincing us to come, describing what hard lives her parishioners had and how eager they were to learn English. This project had not been intended to include the teaching of an English class, but had rather been envisioned as sending students to assist teachers who already had a class in place. The students are sophomores just beginning a teacher-education program, so they do not have any background in pedagogical methods, nor is this a topic covered in the linguistics class. Finally, it was agreed to have them serve as conversation partners, and it was made clear that the students would be learning as much from the immigrants as the immigrants would be learning from them. This plan would not have been possible except for the help of a Mexican-American student assistant who helped coordinate the program so that the professor did not have to attend each week. We made a commitment to come every week for 10 weeks, with different students serving each week as a mandatory assignment for the first five weeks. Those who wanted to could come back for additional sessions during the second 10 weeks (with extra credit offered for one but not repeated visits).

Reciprocity and mutual respect between students and community members is a pressing topic in the field of service learning (Flower, 1998, 2002; Welch 2002). Because we wanted to be sure our work met the needs of the community, we created a student-centered environment in which the adult learners told us what they wanted to learn. Some language learners wanted to learn how to communicate with their employers, reporting on incidents in the workplace or responding to questions such as, "Why weren't you at work yesterday?" Other learners wanted to be able to talk to their children's teachers or to assert themselves when a clerk in a store gave them incorrect change. The college students learned about the challenges faced by immigrant families just by asking the learners why they wanted to learn English.

Trouble in the first week immediately demonstrated some of the pitfalls of community-service work. When we arrived for the second lesson, the pastor asked to make it clear to everyone that we were there only to teach

English. First of all, a well-meaning student had invited some of the ESL students to attend her church. The pastor explained to the students in no uncertain terms that the language learners already had a church. Second, a student who was doing volunteer work with a community agency offered the agency's services when one of the language learners asked if she could help him get a driver's license. Driver's licenses are not issued to undocumented immigrants in Georgia. Although the students had been warned not to ask for personal information that could be a sensitive issue to those without papers, they had not been instructed not to offer help with legal or religious matters. This was one lesson the professor learned about how to prepare students for the assignment.

Another lesson learned was about the need for increased sensitivity training and reflection on cultural differences, as described by Reitzel (1999) in an article on service learning in an intercultural communications course. Our students are overwhelmingly white, upper middle class, and from the suburbs of Atlanta. Our campus is sometimes referred to as "The Berry Bubble" because it is removed from the diverse reality of the world outside of the campus. When students were asked to find a research subject themselves, a number of them confided that they did not know anyone whose native language was not English, even as a casual acquaintance. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the Berry student body in the 2000-01 academic year:

Table 1
Student Body Characteristics

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Place of Origin</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
White, non-Hispanic	94%	Georgia	83.5%
Black, non-Hispanic	02%	Other U.S. state	15.5%
Hispanic	01%	Non-U.S.	1%
International	01%		
Race/ethnicity unknown	01%		
Asian or Pacific Islander	01%		
Native American/ Alaskan native	<1%		

Note: From Colley, 2001.

The friendliness of the English learners was usually enough to dispel the students' awkwardness and anxiety about being in an unfamiliar situation. More training, however, will be needed to make students aware of patronizing attitudes they may bring to the class. For example, the students had a tendency to view the immigrants as somewhat naive and childlike, without realizing what they had experienced in their lives. For this particular context, a film about the struggles of Rigoberta Menchu against oppression in her country was used to introduce students to the realities of farm life in Guatemala, the

life several of our students had left behind (Canal 22, 1998). This helped students have greater respect for the language learners as adults with a wealth of knowledge in many domains of life.

One great benefit of this project is that students have the opportunity to meet people who are different from themselves. This is one small step toward preparing them for the diverse populations they will serve in their future classrooms. This service-learning experience allows the linguistics course to work hand-in-hand with another course these students take in their sophomore year, the experiential Maymester class, *Explorations in Diverse Cultures*, which requires a two-week stay either abroad or in an immigrant community. One student wrote about that course that he had “never truly acknowledged the fact that many (perhaps most) of the people I associate with have many preconceived ideas and prejudices against immigrants and other minorities” (Clement et al., 2002). Additionally, comments from students in the linguistics class show that they have acquired a greater empathy for people from other cultures. Here are a few of their comments:

[The project] helped me to understand and respect what immigrants go through in coming to this country and learning a new language.

This was my first opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of what it is like to come from another country and learn another language.

Overall I thought this fieldwork was very educational for me. I learned about people of diverse cultures and the hardships they experience when learning English and how oftentimes out of place they feel away from their homes, families and cultures that accept them.

One interesting finding is that when students describe the person they studied, they almost always do so with admiration, often with a comment that this person has been much more successful at learning English than the college student has been with learning a foreign language. In fact, students almost always assess the person's level of fluency as higher than it actually is. They are unwilling to criticize the speaker's fluency despite high numbers of errors, noting instead the success of the person's earnest attempt to communicate with them. It is obvious that even the small amount of cross-cultural contact required by the linguistics project had a positive effect on students' perceptions of people from minority cultures, fulfilling the civic purpose that is the goal of many service-learning programs.

A Tool for Learning

Recently, Berry's Charter School of Education participated in a workshop to learn about the new accreditation standards developed by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in conjunction with Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

(TESOL). The semester project in linguistics will form the basis for demonstrating that our program does a good job of preparing teacher candidates for their work with ESL learners in preschool through 12th grade, at least in the "Language" domain. The performance indicators that the accrediting agency will look at and that are covered by this project are listed in Appendix 2.

Students who learn to identify errors in interlanguage through this project will be able to identify the specific areas in which the children in their classrooms need help. As the standards indicate, students should be able to *apply* their understanding of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics to be able to assist ESOL students to acquire fluency in English. This project gives them their first practice at doing just that. They have discovered that their newfound skills are actually useful. One student wrote:

I feel that the task of transcribing has served to better acquaint me with the concepts and terminology we have studied and enhanced the learning process through synthesis and application, adding relevancy to what we have studied and a schema for the processes and activities we study and engage in during class. The opportunity to link our learning to experience I believe is invaluable for building a schema and promoting understanding as well as increasing retention. I also feel that these skills will aid me in my career as a teacher where I will surely have non-native speakers in my classroom. I will be better equipped to serve them because of these experiences in that I will hopefully be not only able to note that a problem exists, but to be more pro-active in assisting them as they overcome the problem by knowing wherein exactly the problem lies.
(Emily Marr)

Former students have been spotted explaining to international students how to position their tongues to make particularly difficult sounds in English. The professors who teach reading are impressed with their understanding of phonology. One former student has even set up an evening program for the parents of children at a local elementary school to learn English, and she has recruited almost 20 college students to serve as tutors there.

The following comments by students who participated in the classes at the church show how much they learned about language acquisition through empirical observation.

I have gained a great deal through this project but I have to admit: prior to this class and my experiences at the church, I had no understanding of why someone could not acquire English. However, now I can see why some people could have difficulty learning English because they are trying to follow a pattern that does not work very well (e.g. pronunciation). I had never thought about how irregular the English language is until transcribing and listening to the tape of Maria [pseudonym] speaking. This experience has allowed me to become more compassionate

about speakers of other languages trying to learn English because I realize how difficult English, and language in general, is to acquire. I feel so blessed to have had the opportunity to visit the church where the Spanish speakers met to learn English. My life has been enriched by the two visits and I wish I could have visited on more occasions. I would not do anything differently if I were to do this project again except visit the church on several more occasions. (Meredith Moore)

I really enjoyed doing this project as it allowed me to see the practical applications of the theories and methodologies we learned about in class. Perhaps my favorite part of the project was tutoring the second language learners. Their willingness to work hard and improve their language skills was inspiring, and volunteering with them taught me a great deal about some of the challenges faced by new immigrants as well as my own previous biases about second language learning. Prior to this project, I assumed that immigrants who failed to acquire the English language quickly were lazy and without excuse. However, I have come to realize the ignorance behind this view and now hold a deep admiration for those who are trying to assimilate into this complex culture. I believe that it is my responsibility as a citizen to assist them in this process in hopes to ease the pains of transition so they may truly make better lives for themselves. (Lindsay Dent)

The project was without a doubt a successful learning tool for the linguistics students. Whether the ESL students learned as much is another question. How helpful was the “service” the students provided? Requests for feedback from the language learners yielded a positive answer to this question. They thought that their English skills improved through the interaction and that the interviews and the classes were pleasant experiences. The error analysis can be used to provide feedback to the learners about areas where they have problems. We took a list of common pronunciation errors to one class for the language learners to use as a practice drill. In another semester, upon request, one student researcher provided her interviewee, a member of the staff at the college, with a list of grammatical errors that he could work on to improve his already considerable fluency. In the case of the class at the church, everyone seemed happy with the project at its conclusion, despite some initial problems. The pastor described the work the students did simply as “beautiful,” and the reactions of her congregation as “grateful, happy, enthusiastic.”

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse asserts that despite disagreements about the “objectives and contexts” of service learning, all practitioners agree on a core concept:

Service learning combines service objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities

that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content. (NSLC Web site)

Note that this definition specifies the desired results for student participants—self-reflection and discovery as well as a mastery of subject matter—and also emphasizes that service learning should have a clear effect on both parties involved.

We believe this project addresses the requirement of Wolfram's "Principle of Linguistic Gratuity" (Wolfram, 1993, 1998; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998). Wolfram believes that linguists should go beyond the ethical principles set forth by Labov (1982), who says that linguists should use their research to benefit the community whenever possible. Wolfram takes an even more proactive view, saying that linguists "who have obtained linguistic data from members of a speech community should actively pursue positive ways in which they can return linguistic favors to the community" (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998, p. 264). If language learners provide students with data for their projects, the students should seek ways to do something useful for the language learners.

The students provided a useful service while learning the basics of linguistics. As in most service learning, students gained an ethical education in prejudice reduction, appreciation for diversity, and empathy. However, they learned far more than that. The service project allowed them to learn much more about phonetics, morphology, syntax, and language acquisition than they would have ever learned from a textbook. We believe this project demonstrates that service learning can accomplish academic learning by contextualizing it in a meaningful way.

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Authors

Ellen Johnson teaches linguistics and a two-week cultural immersion course at Berry College in Rome, Georgia. She is the author of a book on vocabulary change in the South, Lexical Change and Variation in the Southeastern United States, 1930-1990, and she has published sociolinguistics articles in books and journals. She is interested in depictions of dialect by authors and the mass media. Dr. Johnson is also studying the formation of a multilingual community in a manufacturing town in northwest Georgia where the Latino population has recently grown to 50%. She welcomes feedback on this article at: ejohnson@berry.edu

Christina G. Bucher is assistant professor of English at Berry College in Rome, Georgia, where she teaches courses in 19th-century American literature, African American literature, women's literature, and film. Her article, "Perversely reading Kate Chopin's 'Fedora'" appears in the Summer 2003 issue of *Mississippi Quarterly*, and she has a forthcoming article on the poetry of African American civil rights activist and writer Pauli Murray in *The North Carolina Literary Review*. Dr. Bucher's interest in service learning arose from extensive reading in the area that she did for an intensive internal review of Berry College's first-year writing program.

Endnote

¹This paper is a collaborative effort by the authors to put into context and describe a teaching method and its results in classes taught by only one of the authors.

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Appendix 1

Language Learner Interview

[Prepare questions for the beginning of the interview to help you and the interviewee become more comfortable and start a conversation. You can ask them about their home country and culture, or what they like about being here. Especially try to ask them about things *they* are interested in and knowledgeable about. Smile and relax!]

Where were you born and where did you grow up?

What sort of language was spoken in your household? in your neighborhood?

What dialects/languages do your parents speak?

Do people in your family have any opinions about language, for example which languages are best, how important it is to learn language? What are they?

What languages have you studied?

For each language, get the following information:

How old were you when you learned it?

Did you learn it in school or just by being around people who use it?

If in school, what methods did the teachers use (conversation, repetition, etc.)?

In what settings have you used this language?

How many times have you traveled or moved (and where)?

Has moving or traveling affected your speech in your first language?

How has moving or traveling affected your ability to speak in other languages?

Was it hard for you to learn English?

Do you like the way you speak English?

Is there anything about your speech you have tried to change?

Has anyone ever made comments about the way you talk?

Do you ever have trouble communicating in English, either speaking or understanding?

Do you mostly spend time with people who speak in English, or who speak another language?

Do you read and write? What language do you usually read in? What about writing? Is writing in English difficult?

Appendix 2

Some NCATE/ TESOL Standards Supported by ENG 204

Performance Indicators:

- 1.a.1) Apply knowledge of phonology (the sound system) to help ESOL students develop oral, reading, and writing (including spelling) skills in English.
- 1.a.2) Apply knowledge of morphology (the structure of words) to assist ESOL students' development of oral and literacy skills in English.
- 1.a.3) Apply knowledge of syntax (phrase and sentence structure) to assist ESOL students in developing written and spoken English.
- 1.a.4) Apply understanding of semantics (word/sentence meaning) to assist ESOL students in acquiring and productively using a wide range of vocabulary in English.
- 1.a.5) Apply knowledge of pragmatics (the effect of context on language) to help ESOL students communicate effectively and use English appropriately for a variety of purposes in spoken and written language, and in formal and informal settings.
- 1.a.6) Demonstrate ability to help ESOL students' social and academic language skills in English.
- 1.a.7) Demonstrate ability to help ESOL students acquire a range of genres, rhetorical and discourse structures, and writing conventions in English.
- 2.b.2) Understand and apply knowledge about how an individual's cultural identity will vary widely among students.
- 2.b.4) Understand and apply knowledge about the impact of students' socioeconomic status, race, religion, class, national origin, disability, and gender on learning and teaching ESOL.
- 2.b.5) Understand and apply knowledge of U.S. immigration history and patterns in teaching ESL.

