

Service-Learning in an Increasingly Global Context

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ABSTRACT

Service-learning (S-L), or community-engaged learning, refers to a project-based pedagogical approach that addresses community needs through coursework tied to academic, social/civic and personally impactful learning objectives. Originally emerging from research and practice in U.S. higher education, its inclusion in K-12 education in the US and international contexts has gained traction in recent years. Nevertheless, reports of implementation and effectiveness in international education are lacking. This article presents the impact of a two-week US Department of State-funded service-learning exchange program for 25 EFL teachers from 24 countries spanning the globe. Through academic sessions, site visits, and cultural activities led by an interdisciplinary team at a major Midwestern research university, participants were equipped to use S-L in contextually appropriate ways for the teaching of both English and vital 21st-century life skills. The authors begin with an overview of S-L and a research-based account of its benefits for holistic learning, and especially for its application in English education. Following a description of the exchange program, the piece demonstrates program impact by highlighting post-evaluation participant reflections on selected aspects of S-L in English language education. The authors suggest implications for the future of S-L in a global context.

Keywords: *service-learning, community-engaged learning, intercultural, international, global education, pedagogical approaches, sustainability, exchange programs*

Author Note

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The authors are grateful to the following exchange program participants for sharing post-program reflections for inclusion with this article: Ayna Atakishiyeva, Kateryna Filatova, Jalel Marmouri, Mwanaidy Mwacha, Michael Sihombing, Augusto Wah-Lung, and Karen Zamora. The reflections offered by these gifted and impassioned teachers present readers with specific examples of how service-learning is contributing to educational change in multiple world contexts.

We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action. (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke these words at a time of great civil unrest in the ongoing quest for true equality in American society (King, Jr., 1967). As we read these words, we may find ourselves drawn to our present time, and to the present struggle humanity faces against, for example, a changing climate and a resistance by so many to spring to action. We use climate

change here to point to just one of the many challenges humanity faces if we wish to sustain our world. In 2015, the United Nations established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are considered to be a “universal call-to-action to end poverty, protect the planet, and improve the lives and prospects of humankind, and it is only by working cooperatively that we can make any headway” (“Sustainable Development Goals”).

It is in this spirit that the SDGs were incorporated into a United States Department of State-funded exchange program on the topic of service-learning (S-L) for international teachers of English held this spring on the campus of Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Through two weeks of academic sessions, site visits, and cultural activities led by an interdisciplinary team at IUPUI, and administered by the International Center for Intercultural Communication (ICIC) in the IU School of Liberal Arts, 25 teachers from 24 countries spanning the globe learned the basics of teaching 21st-century skills of critical thinking, collaboration, and global awareness, through S-L. This article is co-authored by the Lead Instructor on the exchange program and a participant from Kolkata, India, with an appendix of participant reflections from seven other participants who have already begun to implement S-L in their own contexts, including K-12 and higher education. This collaborative piece demonstrates the potential that a S-L approach, one founded in U.S. university settings, has for making a strong impact in teaching and serving our local and global communities.

As teachers, we understand that sitting still is never a solution. Throughout history, educators have been at the forefront of societal change, and today, even while certain political factions attempt to strip teachers of their valuable influence in young lives, the call remains for ENL/TESOL/EFL educators in Indiana, across the United States, and around the world, to remain strong in our commitment to building a knowledgeable and skilled next generation with

the motivation to work towards the change we need in the world. How, though, can teachers who must use a standardized or mandated English curriculum, or with test requirements staring them in the face, infuse classroom learning with projects that hold real-world implications and encourage motivation and passion in students? Introducing students to the power they hold to effect lasting change through a service-learning approach may hold an answer.

Literature Review

What Is Service-Learning and What Are Its Benefits?

Service-learning (S-L), also referred to as community-engaged learning in literature and curricula, refers to a project-based pedagogical approach that addresses community needs through coursework tied to socially and personally impactful learning objectives. Bringle and Clayton (2012) define S-L as:

a course or competency-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in mutually identified service activities that benefit the community, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility. (p. 105)

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) describes S-L as “combining community service with academic instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking and personal and civic responsibility” (Prentice & Robinson, 2010, p. 1). Serving community needs and student reflection upon the action, leading to desired outcomes, is at the heart of these and other definitions. The beauty of S-L for the authors of this article and many instructors, though, is that it provides students with an opportunity to learn while they make a real difference in their world. McLeod (2017) emphasizes the reciprocal structure of S-L, describing it as students

applying “classroom-acquired skills in a real community, taking real responsibility for a real product with real consequences” (p. 20).

S-L has most often been encountered in university education, appearing alongside other common high-impact practices (HIPs), such as collaborative assignments, internships, and various forms of community-based learning. Still, it has made inroads in K-12 education, with the potential to effect strong learning outcomes and positive attitudes towards community engagement. Specifically, S-L is well suited for helping students at any age, in any discipline, and in a variety of educational contexts, to develop strong 21st century skills, for example, the 4Cs of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity; cultural and global awareness; social and emotional learning; and other so-called “soft skills” that students need now and in their future employment.

In short, a considerable body of literature surrounding S-L points to its threefold benefits (Bringle & Clayton, 2021):

1. **Academic learning.** Course learning objectives that lead to a deepening knowledge of the subject are met.
2. **Personal growth.** Students develop their identity and sense of self, along with 21st century skills and social/emotional skills, as they reflect on coursework and S-L activities.
3. **Civic learning:** Students develop knowledge and skills for being informed, active members of their society.

Prentice & Robinson (2010) present evidence of S-L’s effect on achieving specific learning outcomes, across categories of academic learning, personal growth, and civic learning, in higher education. Their team studied student (n=2,317) and faculty (n=68) experiences with

and attitudes towards S-L in surveys and focus groups across multiple higher education institutions in various contexts across the United States. The study compared six categories of learning outcomes (critical thinking; communication; career and teamwork; civic responsibility; global understanding and citizenship; and academic development and educational success) in a group of students who participated in S-L versus a group who took comparable classes with no S-L component. Across all outcomes, those who participated in S-L scored statistically higher than those who did not receive instruction via S-L. Results of focus groups with students and faculty were equally in favor of a S-L approach. Students and faculty alike reported that SL aids students in learning the required curriculum and that it teaches students how to react critically and logically in real-life situations. In other words, Prentice & Robinson's work shows the power of S-L to increase both academic and 21st century skills.

Striking results have also been found in K-12 settings. In a research study funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, and described in Newman, Dantzler, and Coleman (2015), more than 6,000 at-risk middle school students in 20 schools in Alabama and Georgia engaged in S-L projects that were integrated into their STEM coursework. One middle school, for example, served the community and met 7th grade science standards by working with community partners to prepare, construct, and contribute plants to a community greenhouse. In a participating junior high school, 420 students developed partnerships with the local Water Board and County Health Department to test wells, city water systems, creeks, rivers, and ponds to bring awareness to water quality and provide information to residents in a county plagued by high cancer rates attributed in part to contaminated water. In terms of student outcomes, data from surveys and a variety of qualitative sources showed notable gains in academic achievement and engagement, civic responsibility, and resiliency. Newman, Dantzler, and Coleman report of

two schools in the study who showed 20% increases in one year's time on standardized tests of science and reading.

Service-Learning in English Education

While the multifold benefits of S-L in general may seem clear now, the question may remain as to why S-L should be so well-suited to the English language classroom. In teaching English as a second or foreign language, perennial issues arise surrounding authentic language for communication, student motivation for learning, and skills integration. When students are faced with real-world problems, as is the case with S-L, the language that students need to communicate with each other in the classroom and with community partners becomes central to the purpose of problem solving. Language no longer comes out of textbooks or appears as “noticing exercises” on the board or shared virtually. Instead, language has tangible meaning, and students are motivated to learn because they become invested in the project through preparation, action, discussion, and iterative reflection. The integration of English communication skills with the “nonacademic” skills required for successful administration and completion of a service project, and the use of English for real-world applications, makes S-L attractive to many English educators and to students alike. In learning to communicate and collaborate, and even to get creative and become critical thinkers in English, language learning takes on a deeper meaning for those involved (McLeod, 2017).

In a university context, Ene and Orlando (2022) conducted a study of international students of English in an IUPUI course, “Academic English Reading: Perspectives on Culture/Society.” As the course name implies, goals included developing students’ English for Academic Purposes (EAP) reading skills, increasing cultural understanding, and developing greater civic-mindedness, goals that fold in well to the integration of a S-L approach. In the

course, students engaged in readings, participated in discussions, conducted research, presented, and reflected upon the course's service-oriented themes. At the midpoint of the semester, they conducted short-term S-L, providing a real-world connection to their course readings.

Community service was conducted at urban gardens, a local food pantry, refugee relief organizations, and an autism training and resource center. As a capstone project to the course, students were required to perform a critical reading of a 2000-word article on the course topic, perform reading-related tasks, prepare presentations, and blend S-L experience and reflections into discussions and presentations.

In the study, Ene and Orlando compare learning outcomes of 143 international students over 8 semesters. Specifically, the researchers sought to understand the differences in outcomes between students whose projects were instructor-directed and those students who were fully autonomous in choosing their project and conducting service. The study found between-group differences in terms of learning about the theme; attitude towards service; understanding connections between social issues, service, and the community; developing an ability to work with others; and making gains in language skills. The most notable finding of this study, in terms of the current paper, is that regardless of whether S-L was "other-directed" or "self-directed," students made gains across all categories. As McLeod (2017) contends:

no service-learning project is ever truly a failure, especially if it is an English-focused project, because already the effort by the students to understand a community need and formulate a project plan to address it consolidates their language skills in practical ways... (p. 21)

In Ene and Orlando, regardless of the approach, S-L benefitted these learners of EAP.

Over the past two decades, interest in the S-L approach has been growing in international settings. Clayton, Bringle, and Hatcher (2013) point to S-L organizational networks in Australia, Canada, and Latin America, as well as an increasing literature of regional case studies (Annette, 2005; Badat, 2004; McIlrath, Farrel, Hughes, Lillis, & Lyons, 2007) and cross-cultural comparisons (Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008; Iverson & Espenschied-Relly, 2010; Thomson, Smith-Tolken, Naidoo, & Bringle, 2011). International educators of English have also recognized S-L as an opportunity to teach English language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) while drawing students' attention and action to the particular needs of specific communities and contexts.

A Service-Learning Exchange at IUPUI

Context and Setting

In March 2023, the International Center for Intercultural Communication (ICIC) at IUPUI was chosen as one of five U.S. universities to host a two-week international teacher exchange, "Using Service-Learning to Teach 21st Century Skills to English Language Learners." The program's primary objective was to strengthen the capacity of international EFL teachers to use S-L as an approach to teaching language and developing a variety of interpersonal, social-emotional, and civic awareness skills in their students. The program was funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Office of English Language Programs (ECA/A/L) and administered by FHI 360 (a Washington, D.C.-based NGO) through a cooperative agreement for the English Access Microscholarship Program (EAMP). The EAMP, or Access, is a Department of State program that creates opportunities for promising, economically disadvantaged students, aged 13 to 20, to receive English language skills in their home countries. In this S-L exchange, program participants were alumni of one or more

ECA/A/L educational exchanges, and many were teachers in Access programs. They were selected for the exchange by the Department of State Regional English Language Officer in their world region.

Program Participants

Participants were a group of 25 EFL teachers (17 female, 8 male) from 24 countries. Regions represented include Central and South America; Northern and Central Europe; Africa; the Middle East; Central, South, and Southeast Asia; and Oceania. Participant years of teaching EFL ranged from 0-5 years (n=2), 6-10 years (n=11), 11-15 years (n=6), 16-20 years (n=2), and >20 years (n=4). The majority (n=13) of participants taught in K-12 settings; others taught in private language schools (n=6), in university settings (n=4), and in the national ministry of education (n=1). One was self-employed. Most had basic familiarity with the topic of service-learning, and 5 had recently participated in a Department of State S-L themed virtual exchange.

Program Description

Program Design and Objectives

The academic program consisted of 36 hours of classroom-based training, over three thematic modules designed around aspects of S-L, development and assessment of such programs, and incorporation of the 4Cs of 21st century skills within service projects. Led by an Academic Director and Lead Instructor from ICIC, participants gained insights from an interdisciplinary group of IUPUI faculty, including from the School of Liberal Arts, Institute for Engaged Learning, Office of International Affairs, and the School of Education's Urban Education Department.

Adhering to the funder's requirements, the program was designed primarily to strengthen international EFL teachers' knowledge of using S-L to teach 21st century skills in the English

classroom. Beyond this, the program leaders sought to have participants examine the humanistic potential of service-based learning, particularly as related to UN SDGs, including gender equality and climate sustainability, and examining its application in both K-12 and higher education, and in-person and virtual environments. The importance of developing 21st century skills, including global awareness and citizenship, the 4Cs, and technology, were emphasized throughout the program. By presenting these topics through the academic program and creating opportunities for observation of S-L and community-engaged learning in practice at schools and community organizations in the metropolitan area, the program was designed for participants to develop strategies to introduce S-L in their classrooms to effect local and global change.

With the aim of preparing participants to implement S-L projects in their contexts, the IUPUI team used a four-stage approach to S-L project development, one rooted in backward course design, from the National Youth Leadership Council (National Youth Leadership Council, 2021). The stages include: 1) identifying desired youth learning outcomes (academic standards, civic growth, and 21st century skills); 2) determining evidence of learning (artifacts and assessments); 3) facilitating the learner project experience (through the “IPARD” sub-framework: Investigation, Planning and Preparation, Action, Reflection, and Demonstration); and 4) self-assessing the project (e.g., what outcomes were achieved, what worked and what needs to be improved, and what opportunities came out of the experience).

The program additionally emphasized the importance of critical reflective practice in S-L. According to Hatcher & Bringle (1997), “critical reflection” provides students with a way to examine a service experience through guided questions and to make meaning of that experience, drawing connections between the service and the desired course outcomes. The team incorporated the DEAL model into program curriculum (Ash & Clayton, 2009). In short, DEAL

provides guidance for teachers in developing reflective prompts for students to *describe* the experience, to *examine* the experience in terms of learning objectives, and to *articulate learning* for each objective (Center for Service and Learning, 2020).

Program Implementation

Exchange participants arrived on March 3 with varying familiarity with S-L, as determined by a pre-arrival needs analysis. Over the course of the first two academic modules, they developed a common understanding of 21st century skills and global competency and an understanding of what S-L is and how it can benefit both the acquisition of English and development of students' critical thinking and interpersonal skills. The third module turned to the design and implementation of S-L opportunities. To facilitate exchange participant transition from S-L "in theory" to S-L "in practice," the Lead Instructor relied on a combination of readings and discussions, guest presentations from IUPUI faculty, and site visits to a variety of educational sites that use S-L in their coursework. Examples of program elements are described in the following section.

Sample Workshops and Activities. A highly beneficial session for exchange participants, in terms of starting S-L from scratch, developing partnerships, developing a syllabus, and assessing student learning, was a presentation from Dr. Keiko Kuriyama, Professor of Japanese in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at IUPUI. In her presentation, she shared the development of an undergraduate course, "Japanese Service Learning." The course was designed to provide students with the opportunity to work with the Indianapolis Japanese community by tutoring local Japanese children, assisting them with English and homework, and volunteering in English-conversation programs for Japanese people in the city. By sharing the course syllabus, logistics for running the course, and examples of reflective

assignments, the presenter equipped exchange participants with a clear example of how one teacher can implement service-learning from the ground up.

In another workshop, presented by faculty in Urban Teacher Education at IUPUI's School of Education, the value of community partners in developing S-L initiatives was emphasized and valued by exchange participants. In her presentation, "Critical Service Learning: A Social Justice Approach for Change," Associate Professor Cristina Santamaría Graff expanded the scope of the Bringle & Clayton (2012) definition by introducing participants to a critical service-learning approach put forth by Mitchell (2008). Mitchell defines critical S-L as an approach to S-L that aims to redistribute power, develop authentic relationships in the classroom and community, and adopt a social change perspective. Santamaría Graff went on to describe how such an approach was developed as a response to traditional S-L, which is viewed succinctly as "learning to serve" and "serving to learn," and how critical S-L positions social justice at the heart of interactions between students and community members when service is conducted. It goes on to question S-L projects where the positionality, power, and privilege of the "serving" party is not examined.

An example that resonated deeply with exchange participants questioned the critical position of a didactic example of S-L from National Youth Leadership Council's (2021, p. 8) "Getting Started in Service-Learning":

Planting flowers at a local park is service.

Studying erosion is learning.

Researching native grasses and working with master gardeners to control erosion at a local park is service-learning.

Santamaría Graff led participants to think on this example from a critical S-L perspective by asking such questions as:

- Whose land is considered “native,” and if this land belongs to a historically marginalized community, are they in full agreement with the actions being taken?
- How has the partnership been established? Is it mutually beneficial? Have agreements that are transparent been made before the “service” begins?
- What plans are in place to maintain and sustain what is needed for the native grasses to continue to thrive?
- Do all parties involved leave with a sense of fulfillment, or do some feel exploited or taken advantage of?

In one program activity, exchange participants saw an example of S-L in the community through a site visit to ProAct Indy, an Indianapolis nonprofit serving diverse and at-risk youth. Founder and CEO Derrin Slack led an interactive session that introduced participants to the ways ProAct Indy crosses social, racial, and economic boundaries through meaningful service projects and social equity training. During the second week of the exchange, exchange participants visited the Indiana Statehouse for ProAct’s “Power Up! Youth Symposium,” where they heard presentations from ProAct youth, who shared their service projects around a social issue impacting their communities with a wider audience. Through this experience, participants saw with their own eyes the impact that S-L has on communities and young learners. Further, following the IPARD framework, they saw a clear example of how S-L projects and learning can be “demonstrated” and celebrated.

Final Project. A motto that emerged over the course of the program was to “start small and keep dreaming big dreams,” and for their final projects, participants were asked to flesh out

their emerging dreams for using S-L in their contexts. They were asked to provide a description of the course in which they would implement S-L; learning objectives for the course, e.g., academic skills, personal growth, civic learning, 21st century skills, global awareness, technological skills; a plan for student assessment; a description of the S-L component, following the IPARD model; a sample lesson plan embedded within the IPARD model; and a plan for dissemination of knowledge learned in the exchange program. In the final days of the program, each participant presented their project, involving the instructors and other participants as evaluators.

Program Evaluation

Did the participants grow in knowledge and depart IUPUI confident in their ability to implement S-L in their contexts? One participant described her experience in the post-program evaluation:

It is amazing how the program led me from a very vague and confused understanding of service-learning into preparing a well-structured project plan in just two weeks thanks to the rich academic program and the daily workshops, presentations and panels facilitated by great scholars and highly qualified experts. I learned from different departments of IUPUI, ranging from language and culture to computer science. This has allowed me personally to look at service learning from different perspectives and helped me get a better grasp of the concept.

In the weeks and months that followed, the WhatsApp group that had connected participants, instructors, and program facilitators throughout the two-week exchange continued to bubble with excitement as one by one, participants began putting their dreams for S-L into action. In October 2023, five participants presented at the 9th Intercultural Rhetoric and

Discourse Conference, held at IUPUI, to report on the progress they had made in implementing S-L in their own classrooms as a result of the exchange. Three participants will join the Lead Instructor on the exchange to share their experiences and successes in implementation at the 2024 TESOL International Convention and Expo in Tampa, FL.

Participant Reflections on the Global Potential of Service-Learning

As part of the post-program evaluation process, participants were asked to reflect on various aspects of S-L that had emerged during the exchange program. Eight exchange participants, including the participating co-author, submitted reflective pieces. (These are included in their entirety in the Appendix.) In this section, brief commentary will be presented on the reflection themes, and selected excerpts from the contributors will be included.

Convincing Students and Administration of Service-Learning's Value

Ayna Atakishiyeva teaches English to high school students from several schools in her region near Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. She does this as leader of the Green Club at the Baku American Centre, where she uses S-L as an approach to addressing ecological issues and empowering 13- to 16-year-old students from different parts of the city of Baku to become environmentally conscious and engaged citizens. In reflecting upon the challenge of convincing students and administrators of the value of S-L, Ayna says that she “‘sold’ the S-L approach to [her] students by explaining its tangible benefits to their community and themselves.” She explained to them that S-L can translate textbook theories into real-world impact, and she did all she could to connect S-L to their passions, showing them “how it offers a meaningful way to be aware of their community’s problems and how to help them.” Ayna’s administration was already onboard with the idea of S-L, she says, offering strong support for her project, “Earth Is Our Home,” which spread awareness and action related to water conservation throughout the capital

city. Ayna comments on the “profound effect” that S-L has in “empowering students to become active, empathic contributors to their community while acquiring invaluable skills for their future endeavors.”

The Value of Community Partnerships

Michael Sihombing is a Lecturer in the English Language Education Study Program at the University of Pelita Harapan in Jakarta, Indonesia. In his reflection, he describes a S-L partnership between his department and the local police authorities to provide English education to children at a regional orphanage. He focuses on the mutual benefit that this service provides, both to the student teachers who gain “valuable teaching experience, honing their skills in a real-world setting,” and to the Sector Police, who benefit in terms of public image by being a “caring and active community partner.” The partnership’s greatest benefit to community, however, is the “positive impact on the orphanage and the children it serves” through the English language education they receive. Michael suggests that these classes “broaden their future opportunities and also allow them to engage more meaningfully in the global community.”

The Power of Reflection in Service-Learning

Karen Zamora, an English teacher in Costa Rica, teaches students in vulnerable conditions through a program called +Empleo. Through her teaching, these students gain access to better education and work conditions through the English they learn, in addition to the soft and technical skills acquired. In her post-program submission, she discusses the impact of reflection on S-L educational outcomes. She quotes Rodgers (2002), who defines reflection as “a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas” (p. 3). In terms of language skills, Karen highlights the impact that reflection has on developing

vocabulary, grammar, and overall language proficiency through descriptions and analysis of students' service experiences. As they discuss their reflections in class, students learn to “articulate ideas clearly, engage in meaningful conversations, and build their confidence in speaking the language.”

Olivia Mondal teaches at a private girls' school in Kolkata, India, and she also wrote about the power of reflection in S-L, especially in terms of increased cultural understanding. Her students include high schoolers, mature learners, first-generation scholars, and marginalized communities, and she says that they all “benefit from her use of S-L and storytelling to enhance language acquisition.” The S-L project she discusses in her reflection is an “Eco-Yoddha,” or “Eco Warriors” initiative, a three-month program with the “primary objective of fostering awareness regarding littering and effective waste management within their respective communities.” Through the program and through reflection upon the service work, Olivia points to student growth in vocabulary enrichment, critical thought and composition, oratory competence, and global awareness. She comments that the “inclusion of student leaders from marginalized backgrounds in such projects promoted cultural diversity and cross-cultural understanding,” and that “reflecting upon their experiences and interactions enabled the students to...appreciate the cultural nuances inherent within their community.”

Service-Learning and Community Transformation

Kateryna (Kate) Filatova, a freelance instructor of English from Ukraine, and Augusto Wah-Lung, who has taught many years through the Access program in Honduras, both spoke to the power of S-L in terms of its potential for transformation. Augusto believes S-L to be an educational means to transforming lives, noting that “skill-centered projects have opened [student] minds to experience real situations outside their classrooms.” In one of these projects,

Augusto's students volunteered as bilingual translators for U.S. medical brigades providing assistance in small mountain towns near their city. He says that his students see more successful outcomes because "they have experienced the humanistic part of education," and with this understanding they have the potential to "transform their institution, their homes, their communities, and even their country."

Kate teaches Ukrainian high schoolers through the Access program and another Department of State-funded program, "Learning English, Overcoming Stress." In this program, she teaches, virtually, by current necessity, a group of internally and externally displaced teenagers from occupied Ukrainian territories. She aims to transform her students by equipping them with social and emotional learning, with resilience in stressful times, and with confidence through language learning. As part of the course, she asks students to "tell stories about their life during the war" and to interview friends and parents "to better understand their mental state, exhibit empathy, and plan post-war recovery." Kate knows that this approach to S-L improves communication and interpersonal skills as her students listen to other narratives, and both she and her students believe that the project will have a positive impact on their communities and perhaps even the world. Kate says that the stories her students are telling "might change the perception of the war by foreigners, helping them to see that the people in them are real witnesses of war and not mere strangers in the news."

Suitability of Service-Learning for Environments with Limited Resources

Mwanaidy Mwacha teaches in the Department of Language Studies in Kichangachui Secondary School in Kigoma, Tanzania. She reflects on S-L as both pedagogically and cost-effective. For example, she has observed that teachers who have implemented S-L at her school have found the approach to be "user-friendly and very inexpensive." She believes that it is a

“great tool for under-resourced environments” and that her school can “use [the] community as a resource for learning.” Mwanaidy encourages other educators in Tanzania, and throughout Africa, to integrate S-L into public school curriculum.

Service-Learning and Sustainability

Jalel Marmouri is an EFL instructor at Taif University in Tunisia. One theme running through the IUPUI exchange was the potential for S-L to confront one or more United Nations Sustainable Development Goals at a local level to support global sustainability concerns. Jalel believes S-L to be an ideal approach for integrating SDGs in education and that teachers can use it to encourage students to be “active global citizens, who care about finding sustainable solutions to the issues in their society.” He goes further to say that through S-L, students have the power to “raise awareness of community members vis-à-vis the SDGs and promote a positive attitude toward achieving these goals.” In his own culture, he encourages schools to work with community members and local organizations to battle such issues as “gender discrimination and stereotypes, or women’s participation in political life.”

Conclusion

As participant reflections suggest, and as research increasingly notes, S-L is a powerful force that transcends borders, cultures, and languages. S-L has the potential in any region to ignite a transformative flame that can change the world while simultaneously nurturing the flames of English language learning.

In its essence, S-L intertwines the values of compassion and education, creating a symbiotic relationship between learners and communities in need. As students engage in meaningful service projects, they not only offer their time and skills but also gain a profound understanding of the world's multifaceted issues. This immersion in real-world challenges fosters

empathy, humility, and a genuine desire to drive positive change, while at the same time building such highly needed skills as critical thinking and collaboration.

In the realm of English language learning, S-L acts as a bridge connecting the classroom to the wider global stage. It serves as a living laboratory where learners are compelled to communicate, understand, and empathize with diverse communities. Language is no longer a mere tool for self-expression; it becomes the conduit for building bridges and dismantling barriers. Learners are pushed to go beyond textbooks, as they navigate the complexities of real-life situations, further honing their language skills in the process. They see an authentic need for English language use, and they understand the power it has to effect change.

Imagine a world where S-L is seamlessly integrated into the curriculum of schools and universities worldwide. Every student, regardless of their background, will engage in meaningful service experiences that transcend borders. This global network of empowered learners will collaborate on projects that address our most pressing challenges: climate change, poverty, healthcare disparities, and beyond.

In this future, S-L will be amplified by technology, connecting learners with peers from different corners of the world, transcending language barriers and fostering a deeper sense of global citizenship. English language learning, in this context, will become a vehicle for creating a common language of understanding, empathy, and collaboration among a diverse tapestry of individuals.

Service-learning is not merely a concept; it's a catalyst for positive change in our world, a beacon of hope for a brighter future. It reminds us that our interconnectedness is a source of strength and that learning is most powerful when it is purposeful. As we embark on this journey

towards a future where S-L is the standard, we envision a world where every act of service is a step towards a more harmonious, inclusive, and linguistically diverse planet.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Appendix

Convincing Students and Administration of Service-Learning's Value (Ayna Atakishiyeva, Azerbaijan)

After completing a 2-week intensive professional development program at IUPUI, applying service-learning (S-L), poorly known in our education system, to my teaching has been a fulfilling and enlightening journey. Relying on my experience and knowledge that I gained at IUPUI, I guided my Green Club members, 13–16-year-old students from diverse schools in my city, through a S-L project, and I witnessed remarkable growth in their 21st century skills as they collaborated on real community issues. Through hands-on engagement with a local environmental concern, they improved their critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills—essential 21st century competencies. I realized that traditional classroom settings sometimes fall short of imparting practical skills and real-world awareness. Thus, integrating S-L has become a natural progression. This experience is a testament to the profound effect of S-L in empowering students to become active, empathic contributors to their community while acquiring invaluable skills for their future endeavors.

I “sold” the S-L approach to my students by explaining its tangible benefits to their community and themselves. Also, I highlighted how it translates textbook theories into real-world impact, enhancing their 5Cs (communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and culture). Moreover, I connected S-L to their passions, demonstrating how it offers a meaningful way to be aware of their community's problems and how to help them. Showing S-L as a way to understand others, get involved, and, most importantly, positively impact their community.

Convincing my institution's administration to embrace S-L in my teaching was not overly challenging. The administrative team of the Baku American Centre, where I lead the Green Club, offered strong support for the S-L project and my other club activities. They even collaborated with the US Embassy to arrange a workshop. During this workshop, I had the opportunity to cascade my experience and knowledge with educators from different parts of the country, contributing to the broader advancement of S-L practices in our education system.

The Value of Community Partnerships (Michael Sihombing, Indonesia)

In the bustling metropolis of Jakarta, Indonesia, a unique partnership has formed between one of the Sector Police units and a local orphanage, bringing forth a multitude of benefits for all parties involved. This collaborative effort has not only bridged the gap between the police force and the community but has also improved the education and English language skills of the orphans and children nearby.

For university students studying education, this partnership is a golden opportunity to put theory into practice. Through volunteering at the orphanage, they gain valuable teaching experience, honing their skills in a real-world setting. This hands-on approach enhances their understanding of pedagogical concepts, making them more effective educators in the future. It's a win-win, as the students contribute to the community while refining their own capabilities.

The Sector Police also reap rewards from this initiative. By supporting these educational endeavors, they invest in the development of human resources within their jurisdiction. Their involvement fosters a positive image of the police force as a caring and active community partner, strengthening the bond between law enforcement and the people they serve. Furthermore, the skills acquired by these students may one day benefit the police force itself, as some of these individuals may choose to pursue careers in law enforcement.

Perhaps the most heartening outcome of this partnership is the positive impact on the orphanage and the children it serves. English proficiency is a highly sought-after skill in the modern world, and the collaboration enables orphans and children in the area to improve their language skills. This not only broadens their future opportunities but also allows them to engage more meaningfully in the global community. It's a life-changing opportunity for these young learners, opening doors they may never have dreamed of.

In conclusion, the partnership between the Sector Police and the local orphanage in Jakarta illustrates the power of community collaboration. It transforms the lives of university students, enhances the capabilities of the police force, and empowers underprivileged children with valuable skills. This story stands as a testament to the transformative potential of partnerships in even the most unexpected places, showcasing the far-reaching benefits of community engagement and cooperation.

The Power of Reflection in Service-Learning (Karen Zamora, Costa Rica)

The whole process of service-learning brings a variety of experiences to the participants, and both the students and the members of the community become aware of the cooperation that can bring benefits and learning through the project or projects involved. These experiences can only be recognized by reflecting on all the steps carried out, the skills developed, and the learning obtained. Rodgers (2002) defines reflection as “a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible, and ensures the progress of the individual and, ultimately, society. It is a means to essentially moral ends” (p.3). Reflective activities encourage students to articulate their thoughts, experiences, and insights in English.

As for English language and critical skills, reflection enhances students' vocabulary, grammar, and overall language proficiency as they describe, analyze, and interpret their service experiences. They learn to articulate ideas clearly, engage in meaningful conversations, and build their confidence in speaking the language. Reflective processes encourage students to analyze their service experiences, connect them to theoretical concepts studied before, and synthesize their understanding of the topic and context. This cultivates critical thinking as students evaluate the impact of their actions and relate them to broader social and cultural contexts.

Rodgers (2002) also highlights that "reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others, and requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others" (p.4). This statement brings out the importance of community in the reflection process. There is no reflection if there is no community to share with or to learn from. Considering this, service-learning itself is a reflective process in which the members involved become one in the sense of constructing new reflective experiences. English language programs worldwide are opening a world of self-awareness through service-learning projects.

The Power of Reflection in Service-Learning (Olivia Mondal, India)

The student leaders engaged in the "Eco-Yoddha" (Eco Warriors) initiative for a duration of three months, with the primary objective of fostering awareness regarding littering and effective waste management within their respective communities. This project afforded them the opportunity to forge collaborative partnerships with other local entities and orchestrate a series of impactful activities. These activities encompassed the revitalization of a weathered community wall through the medium of graffiti art, the cultivation of trees within the community, spearheading a comprehensive cleanliness campaign, and culminating in the organization of an Eco Art Fair. At the Eco Art Fair, these student leaders assumed the role of entrepreneurs,

establishing stalls wherein they showcased and vended an array of art products meticulously crafted from reclaimed waste materials through the practices of upcycling and recycling.

The reflective process embedded within Eco-Yoddha served as a pivotal means to support English language education in a formal context. This multifaceted project offered an array of opportunities to reinforce English language skills.

- *Vocabulary Enrichment*: By immersing themselves in research endeavors and eco-conscious activities, students encountered an extensive lexicon specific to environmental concerns. Through the process of reflection, they consolidated and expanded their grasp of these specialized terms, thereby augmenting their English language proficiency.
- *Critical Thought and Composition Skills*: The reflective process stimulated the student leaders to engage in critical contemplation of their involvement in the project. It encouraged them to articulate their thoughts, analyze the consequences of their actions, and establish connections between their service-oriented endeavors and the broader community issues. This practice nurtured their analytical faculties and fostered adeptness in English composition.
- *Effective Communication Proficiency*: Service-learning initiatives frequently necessitate collaboration and discourse with diverse segments of the community. Reflection upon these interactions provides students with opportunities to enhance their English language communication skills, including listening, oral expression, and comprehension of varying perspectives within their community.
- *Oratory Competence*: Participation in activities such as the Eco Art Fair required the student leaders to present their work or convey their ideas to a wider audience.

- Reflection on those presentation experiences fostered the honing of English language presentation skills, encompassing public speaking, eloquence, and compelling narrative delivery.
- *Cultural Insight*: The inclusion of student leaders from marginalized backgrounds in such projects promoted cultural diversity and cross-cultural understanding. Reflecting upon their experiences and interactions enabled the students to delve into and appreciate the cultural nuances inherent within their community, thereby enriching their linguistic skills through exposure to diverse cultural expressions.
 - *Global Awareness*: Engagement in environmentally conscious endeavors and the acquisition of knowledge regarding the ecological repercussions of waste materials align with global concerns. Reflecting on their role in addressing these issues inculcated a heightened sense of global awareness among students, motivating them to explore English-language resources and materials pertaining to international environmental initiatives.
 - *Personal Development and Expressiveness*: The reflective process empowered the student leaders to introspect and chart their personal growth during the project. This self-awareness was effectively articulated in English, enabling students to convey their evolving perspectives, values, and aspirations, thereby strengthening their capacity for effective self-expression in the language.

In sum, the reflective dimension inherent in a service-learning project centered on waste materials and littering not only contributed to environmental consciousness and community betterment but also offered a myriad of avenues for advancing English language education. This holistic educational experience facilitated vocabulary enhancement, critical thinking,

communication proficiency, presentation skills, cultural awareness, global consciousness, and personal expression in English, rendering it an invaluable facet of formal language education.

Figure 1

Eco Warriors in Action on a S-L Project



Service-Learning and Community Transformation (Kateryna Filatova, Ukraine)

The e-Service-Learning project “Remember.Live.Dream” was the summative stage of the course to accumulate all the knowledge and skills students acquired. The project followed the IPARD process, during which students were able to tell stories about their life during the war as well as interview their parents and friends on the same topic to better understand their mental state, exhibit empathy, and plan post-war recovery. After acquiring skills in interviewing, recording, collecting, and selecting information, students were able to organize everything into various digital artifacts (PPT presentations, videos, comics, etc.).

Students’ reflections after the project, following the DEAL format (describe, examine, articulate learning), showed that they improved their communication and interpersonal skills while listening to other people’s stories. Students applied critical thinking in the analysis of the

interview material and further used their creativity in the final presentation of the project. They were fully involved in the process of learning and peer teaching new tools and programs so that the difficulties they encountered, for example, fear to conjure up sad and painful memories, low English level, or problems with digital tools seemed unimportant compared to the civic engagement experience they had.

The majority of students believe that this eS-L project will have a great impact both for their communities and the world as the stories they presented might change the perception of the war by foreigners, helping them to see that the people in them are real witnesses of war and not mere strangers in the news. In posting their interviews, students also aim to break myths and misconceptions about Ukraine and get support and a better understanding of the experience of being in the middle of the war. The project might be expanded to the local and national levels by starting a promotional campaign on social media or publishing stories in books and magazines.

Figure 2

Results of Students' DEAL Reflection on Menti (www.menti.com)





Service-Learning and Community Transformation (Augusto Wah-Lung, Honduras)

Service-learning has helped our students find themselves and understand the world from a different point of view through critical-thinking activities and the acquisition of 21st century skills. They have been exposed to situations where they must take advantage of their competencies and solve real life problems. Our students have taken part in holistic activities such as our new program that includes Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math, and Humanities (STEAMH). Through their projects, they can transform first their institution, then compete in local, regional and even national or international Math and Science Olympics and set an example for their community.

We believe S-L is a way to transform lives through education. Through S-L, our students have benefited from a new way to learn English as a second language, which includes the acquisition of 21st century skills. Such skill-centered projects have opened their minds to experience real situations outside their classrooms through cultural activities and presentations; through volunteering programs in which they help translate for U.S. medical brigades in small mountain towns near the city; and through museum visits for artistic appreciation.

Our students are successful because through S-L lessons they have experienced the humanistic part of education and by understanding this they are able to transform their institution, their homes, their communities and in the near future, their country.

Suitability for Limited Resources (Mwanaidy Mwacha, Tanzania)

In some of the schools such as Kichangachui, Kigoma Ujiji, Access Microscholarship class, and St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) in Mwanza, teachers implemented S-L to help students integrate what they learned in the classroom and the community they belong to. These teachers' experience with S-L changed their perspectives, as they had assumed it would be difficult to implement, when in fact the approach turned out to be user-friendly and very inexpensive.

This study adopted a survey and questionnaires to gather relevant data from students, teachers, and other educational stakeholders who have already been implementing S-L in their teaching and learning activities/curriculum. All agreed that S-L is a great tool for under-resourced environments and that we can use our community as a resource for learning. My students have access to a number of non-profit organizations such as Roots and Shoots, KIVIDEA, Family Mission for Women and Children Welfare, NextGen Solawazi and others from government-owned sectors. Through these organizations, they participated in projects such as "Under the same sky cleaning campaign," "Greening Kigoma," "Lake Tanganyika free garbage area campaign," "Each school, one incinerator fundraising," and "Climate change awareness—Global-warming-free generation: Change begins with you." The local university has run many successful projects, which in turn help the community, such as BATIKI making (clothing line) made in collaboration with the community.

It is evident that these students and graduates will benefit greatly, not only while in school, but in the near future also. S-L enables students to integrate 21st century skills in their daily life to solve problems, explore opportunities, and to become global citizens who can compete in the world. Through S-L, they learned about the 4 Cs – how to communicate, collaborate, think critically and be creative in everything they do. These skills empower them to serve their community.

Here in Kigoma, thanks to S-L, we were able to network 5 schools in the TAG – Taking Action Global program run by a non-profit in the US, where they provide 6 weeks of online sessions to raise awareness about climate change and solutions. This is truly the best thing that can happen to students aged 15-17, at an early age where they learn and explore their career paths and how to become advocates.

In a nutshell, S-L has many benefits. I would love to take this chance to plead with other educational stakeholders in Tanzania and Africa in general to integrate S-L in our public school's curriculum. Through it, we will be building a better community in the near future.

Service-Learning and Sustainability (Jalel Marmouri, Tunisia)

One of the conditions for a service-learning (S-L) project to be successful is that it should leave a sustainable impact both on the participating students and on the community being served. This resonates with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015.

Even though Tunisia, a developing North African country with twelve-million inhabitants, is committed to implementing the SDGs, the UN Resident Coordinator in Tunisia has recently reported that the country's 2022 SDG points "have not recorded the development

needed to meet the aspirations of Tunisians.” <https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Economy/16583044-sdgs-index-tunisia>

Schools have an important role to play in the nation’s efforts to reach the targeted goals. In this respect, S-L is the most appropriate approach to integrate SDGs in education. By merging SDGs into S-L projects, the engaged students will have a better knowledge and more awareness of these goals and their importance through the community needs analysis part, and their reflection before, while and at the end of the project. This will push our students to become active global citizens, who care about finding sustainable solutions to the issues in their society as well as the whole world.

Since S-L projects engage the community in the different stages of the project, they will raise the awareness of the community members vis-à-vis the SDGs and promote a positive attitude towards achieving these goals. This impact will be clearer in developing countries like Tunisia, marked by illiteracy and lack of information.

Depending on the community needs, the students’ levels, and the available resources, S-L can be applied to achieve any of the 17 SDGs. For instance, in communities suffering from gender inequality, the students will work on an S-L project focusing on SDG 5. Working with the community members and local organizations they can aim at one aspect of the issue, like gender discrimination and stereotypes or women’s participation in political life. The project actions will take different shapes from workshops to advocacy campaigns, depending on the objectives.

Hence, as a hands-on education approach that combines learning with community service, S-L projects seem to be the best choice to integrate SDGs in our curriculum.