

【초청 강연 논문】

Towards a Community-Centered Spanish Classroom^{*}

Chin-Sook Pak**
(Ball State University)

Introduction

When knowledge acquisition is viewed as the most important goal of education, the educational system fails to develop intellectual habits that foster the desire and capacity for life-long learning and the skills needed for active participation in democracy.¹

As a foreign language teacher, I have struggled trying to answer two

* Part of the work for this paper has been made possible by an Indiana Campus Compact Faculty Fellowship and a Creative Teaching Grant from the Office of Teaching and Learning Advancement at Ball State University.

** Dr. Chin-Sook Pak is a professor at the Ball State University in U.S.A. She lectured on the theme of this paper at the Institute of Iberian & Latin American Studies on 17 May 2001.

¹ John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* cited in Bringle and Hatcher (1999, p. 179).

questions at the end of each semester: 1) how have I assisted my students to become competent users of Spanish for real world purposes? 2) how have I contributed to instill in them a desire to explore and participate in communities that are different from theirs? After having laboriously shoveled what I believe to be necessary content materials into a short time frame, I am often left wondering what my students retain from their foreign language classroom experience.² The goals of foreign language instruction have been outlined as enabling students to not only acquire useful language skills, but also “look beyond their customary border, develop insight into their own language and culture, act with greater awareness of self, of other cultures, and their own relationship to those cultures, gain direct access to additional bodies of knowledge, and participate more fully in the global community and marketplace.”³ However, the traditional classroom setting does not assure the attainment of these broader benefits of foreign language learning.⁴ Many language

2 Foreign language teachers are painfully aware of the fact that even after one summer break, students' retention of course materials from the previous semester is less than impressive. In addition, it has been my experience working at Ball State University (a typical mid-sized state university in the Midwestern part of the United States) that many students do not have opportunities to use their Spanish outside the classroom nor do they have contact with Hispanic communities. Most of them do not end up living in large cities with a huge Hispanic population nor do they have the luxury of constant overseas travel or study. In fact, most of my students work 15-20 hours a week on top of taking a full load of classes and cannot find time even to participate in language club activities.

3 *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (1999, p 7).

4 For example, Howard(1998) observes that if the task [at hand in an academic course], in addition to learning content, is to excite and motivate students to learn during the course and after, to learn new ways of learning, and to develop a set of overall values in the field of study, then we know that the information-dissemination model is woefully lacking. (p. 29)

classroom settings do not provide students with opportunities for making direct connections between what they learn in the class and the broader communities in which they live.

In light of growing interest in and support for scholarship of community engagement in academic campuses throughout the United States,⁵ the aim of this paper is to share with my colleagues in Korea a valuable method of enhancing students' foreign language learning experience by incorporating community-centered programs into Spanish courses. By community-centered classroom, I mean a classroom that not only takes into account the teacher and students but also makes an explicit effort to incorporate an involvement with communities near or far, often with a service component. Community-based learning not only educates students about civic responsibility but also provides efficient avenues for better meeting the objectives of a Spanish language classroom. This paper will first present a rationale for community-centered programs in the contexts of teaching and learning Spanish in the U.S. Then, it will provide sample implementation of various community-centered tasks within the context of different levels of Spanish courses. Finally, it will discuss specific benefits as well as challenges for practitioners of this non-traditional pedagogy.

5 Most campuses in the U.S. have centers/programs that promote service-learning and greater community involvement, place students in various volunteer programs, and support faculty with the development of community-based courses. For example, the Joint Educational Project (JEP) at the University of Southern California works with 700-1000 students per semester to provide links between their courses and work in community settings. (Enos & Troppe, 1996) Campus Compact, which is a nation-wide organization with bases in many states for the purpose of promoting teaching, service, and research related to service-learning, estimates that 11,800 service-learning courses are available to students on its member campuses. (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999)

Community-Based Learning for Spanish Language Classrooms

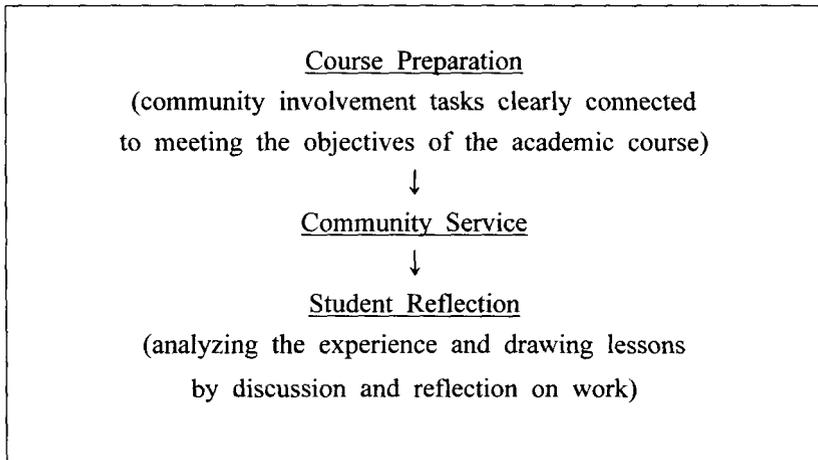
The “standards” for foreign language learning developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages along with numerous other language organizations in the U.S. highlight five goal areas: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities (see Appendix I for details of the standards that specifically pertain to learning Spanish). By meeting the standards in these five areas, students are expected to develop communicative competence, which can ultimately “facilitate genuine interaction with others, whether they are on another continent, across town, or within the neighborhood.” (1996, p. 11) However, the fifth standard, which focuses on students’ participation in multilingual communities (both within and beyond the school setting), has been often neglected (Overfield, 1997; Pak, 2000, 2001). Many language classroom settings do not provide students with opportunities for making direct connections between their learning and the communities around them. In this respect, community-centered tasks can create authentic contexts for language learning that not only addresses this deficiency but also help better meet the other four goals of foreign language learning.

The most common form of community-based learning is that of service-learning, which is “an engaged pedagogy, premised on experiential education as the foundation for intellectual, moral, and civic growth.” (Saltmarsh & Heffernan, 2000) To be considered a legitimate pedagogical tool, service-learning programs must meet two criteria: connection to course objectives and structured opportunities for students’ reflection on their community service experience. Bringle and Hatcher (1995) argue that this course-based, credit-bearing educational experience

in which students meet identified community needs is “in contrast to co-curricular and extracurricular service, from which learning may occur, but for which there is no formal evaluation and documentation of academic learning.” (p. 112)

In his *PRAXIS I: A Faculty Casebook on Service Learning*, Jeffery Howard delineates the general principles of good practice in community service-learning and pedagogy: 1) the maintenance of academic rigor with clear learning goals; 2) the establishment of criteria for the selection of community service placements; 3) support and accountability for students (discussions, presentations, and journal assignments); 4) emphasis on facilitation and guidance as the instructional role of faculty; and 5) allowance for variation in student learning outcomes. The structure of a typical service-learning program can be summarized as in the following table:

Table 1: Components to Effective Service-Learning



Perhaps the most important educational component of a service-learning program is student reflection, which allows students to “gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.” (Bringer & Hatcher, 1995, p. 112) Indeed, service-learning has been demonstrated to reinforce the skills of critical thinking, collective activity, and community building.⁶ However, unless students are taught to be reflective, Fisher (1996) argues that they do not necessarily make the connection between the community service and course. Williams and Driscoll (1997) provide suggestions for setting up reflective pedagogy in their article, “Connecting Curriculum Content with Community Service: Guidelines for Facilitating Student Reflection.” They stress the importance of an on-going reflection, multiple forms of reflections (e.g., some writing, some discussion, journal writing), instructor modeling, and an interactive, respectful atmosphere(pp. 33-34).

In the contexts of teaching and learning Spanish in the U.S., community-centered programs offer numerous benefits to students. First, it offers valuable hands-on opportunities to practice the language and explore cultural norms in real-life situations. Many students do not have

6 Eyer, Giles and Gray from Vanderbilt University have collected and summarized research (1993-1999) on the effects of service-learning on students, faculty, institutions and communities. Some of their findings include: a positive effect on interpersonal development and the ability to work well with others, leadership and communication skills, a positive effect on reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural and racial understanding, a positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills and on commitment to service after graduation, and an improvement of students' ability to apply what they have learned in the “real world. Service-learning also has an impact on such academic outcomes as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking and cognition development. It contributes to career development, as well as stronger faculty relationships.

the luxury of overseas travel; here, they experience direct contact with native speakers right in their own communities.⁷ Indeed, several studies have demonstrated advantages of community-based learning for providing avenues for improving students' communicative competence. (Beebe et al., 1993; Hale, 1999; Mullaney, 1999; Overfield, 1997; Pak, 2001). For example, Overfield (1997) argues that within the traditional foreign language classroom, linguistic competence receives the most attention while other components(e.g., sociocultural competence) receive less attention(p. 486).

Community-based tasks increase students' exposure to diversity. Students come into contact with different Hispanic communities. In the case of the U.S., service-learning courses allow students to explore issues facing Hispanic communities in the country, while the traditional classes often limit themselves to Spanish and Latin American communities.⁸ In addition, community-centered activities provide avenues for interaction with a diverse group of community members (e.g., people of high-profile and low profile, people who serve and people who are being served, the professionals and laborers... etc.). Furthermore, students take on diverse roles in the classroom. By working with community members and sharing their experience with the class, students change their roles from information receivers to information providers and often themselves become promoters of Hispanic cultures (e.g., working as liaisons between

7 In some cases, work with the community may not involve a direct contact with native speakers of Spanish (e.g., working with schools). Nevertheless, students will be using Spanish and their cultural knowledge outside of the classroom in a real-life situation, whether that may be teaching or doing written translation for Anglo community members.

8 The majority of students who choose Spanish over other languages recognize the growing Hispanic presence in the country and seek a more successful participation in their multilingual community.

English- and Spanish-speaking communities).

The experiential and reflective nature of service-learning courses leads students to take a more active role in the learning process. This active climate enhances students' critical thinking skills. In the traditional classroom, Fisher (1996) argues that students often take the role of passive tourists by receiving explanations from their tour guides (i.e., teachers) at face value and rarely questioning the assumptions. However, the reflective component that results from their community involvement allows students to become "explorers/ethnographers" who "would make an effort to inquire, to question assumptions, and to find out which observer-relative meanings someone else attaches to his or her social reality." (p. 75) In this respect, community-centered classrooms facilitate the attainment of the broader goals in foreign language instruction. In his article, "The Foreign Language Problem: The Governance of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning," Patrikis argues that "if a field represents itself primarily in terms of skills or performance, then it effectively diminishes its role and status in higher education... [T]he discourse of foreign language education must focus on education and not simply on foreign language."(p. 324)

Creating Community-Centered Spanish Classroom Programs

Tasks that require student involvement with community are more feasible for some courses than others. Service-learning may not be destined to be used in every course. However, in the case of learning Spanish in the U.S., the environment offers many opportunities for creating community-centered tasks at different levels of Spanish courses.

This paper will draw examples from five Spanish courses taught or currently being taught at Ball State University: Spanish 101 (an introductory language course), Spanish 202 (a second year language course), Spanish 303 (a third year advanced grammar course), Spanish 337 (Spanish phonetics and phonology for advanced students), and Spanish 338 (business Spanish for advanced students). Implementation of the community-based class activities in these courses consists of various interacting components: 1) course objectives; 2) outside support/grants for course development; 3) survey of the community and establishment of a working relationship; 4) identification of appropriate and realistic tasks; 5) students' preparation and accountability; and 6) evaluation of community-based tasks and student learning outcomes.

Course Objectives -- The general goal of the courses is to improve students' communicative skills in Spanish so that they can appreciate and function in the target culture or a multi-lingual community (i.e., meeting the standards of foreign language learning as outlined in Appendix I). Main objectives of each of the five courses are listed in the following table:

Table 2: Principal Course Objectives

Class	Course Objectives
SP 101	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To acquire basic language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) · To enhance students' participation in their diverse communities (e.g., knowledge of and appreciation for the cultures of Spanish-speaking peoples)

SP 202	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To enhance students' knowledge of the cultures of Spanish-speaking peoples · To develop language skills that would allow students to survive in the target culture or in a multi-lingual community
SP 303	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To enhance students' knowledge of Spanish grammar (i.e., to be able to identify and explain difficult areas of Spanish grammar for Anglo students) · To increase the accuracy of their use of Spanish · To expand their vocabulary
SP 337	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To learn the native pronunciations of Spanish through analysis, imitation and practice · To identify major differences between the sound systems of North American English and Spanish
SP 338	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To strengthen students' communicative skills in Spanish for professions with an emphasis on business · To increase their knowledge of the cultures of Spanish-speaking people and their awareness of the needs/opportunities in our diverse communities

Resource Support for Community-Based Course Development -- Any task that alters the structure of a traditional classroom requires an investment of extra resources, energy, and time. In the case of the U.S., the recent surge of interest in community engagement has led to availability of various resources to support the development of community-centered activities in academic campuses. A significant amount of literature on academic programs that support learning pertaining to community outreach is available as well as numerous regional and national conferences, workshops and grant opportunities to promote this agenda.

Examples of web sites that provide resources and grant opportunities for community-centered programs include the following:

- Campus Compact : www.compact.org
- American Association of Colleges and Universities: www.aacu-edu.org (look at the Diversity Initiative section)
- American Association of Higher Education Service-Learning Project: [www.aahe.org.service/srv-lrn.htm](http://www.aahe.org/service/srv-lrn.htm)
- Learn, Serve, Surf: www.edb.utexas.edu/servicelearning/index.html
- The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse: www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu
- Service-Learning Internet Community: www.sluc.calstate.edu

Sample programs, extra summer stipends, and research assistants to support faculty facilitate the development of community-based courses.

Survey of the Community -- Faculty will need to obtain preliminary information on the nature of the surrounding community. A number of potential “sites” for community projects will need to be contacted and visited. However, this task can be shared with students (see the next section for details). Furthermore, many colleagues have some connections with Hispanic families who in turn share further insights about the presence or absence of Hispanic communities. In the case of the city of Muncie, Indiana, the size of Hispanic population is relatively small, and many organizations’ need for volunteers who speak Spanish seems to be sporadic and unpredictable. However, several organizations have welcomed assistance related to preparing their Anglo communities to better meet the future needs of Hispanic communities.

Development of Community-Based Tasks -- After preliminary surveying of the community, a number of feasible tasks were identified

for the five courses. The tasks were divided into two types: 1) community exploration tasks and 2) student projects with a service component. The first type required students to go out into the community, seek and initiate contact with various members of the local Hispanic community, and share the findings with the class. The second type allowed students to provide a service that met specific community needs. A list of possible community projects pre-arranged with various community organizations/members were provided to students. Exceptions were allowed for special opportunities that arose or for students who desired and had feasible plans to initiate a different type of community outreach project on their own.⁹

Table 2: Sample Community Outreach Projects¹⁰

<u>Type of Community-Based Tasks</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Tasks</u>
Community Surveying Tasks	SP 101	Guest speaker projects -- Students worked in groups to bring in from the community guest speakers who were Hispanics themselves or who worked closely with the local Hispanic community. For each speaker, students prepared questions for their topic of interest in advance and learned to write notes of appreciation in Spanish afterwards and handed in a short written report for each speaker (half in Spanish about the description of the speaker and the second half in English about their thoughts on the session)

⁹ For example, a church sponsoring programs to help out recently-arrived Hispanic families with medical concerns needed volunteers to translate for and socialize with these families.

¹⁰ For detailed student instructions, please e-mail me at cpak@bsu.edu. Guidelines for these community projects and sample course syllabi will be provided.

	SP 338	Documentation of the profiles of Hispanic leaders in the community -- In this Spanish business course, students worked in groups/pairs throughout the semester documenting various types of high-profile and low-profile local Hispanic leaders in order to better assess the issues/challenges facing their multi-cultural/-lingual communities.
Community Service Tasks	SP 202	Cultural presentations at a local elementary school -- In this last semester course of language requirement (i.e., students come with a low motivation level), each group of students investigated a cultural event/issue of their interest (e.g. el Día de de los Muertos, el Día de los Reyes Magos, la quinceañera, la sobremesa...etc.). Half of the group (2 students) shared their research with the class via oral presentations in Spanish and the other half adjusted the materials to share with a class at a local elementary school. ¹¹⁾
	SP 303	Students worked with various community agencies to translate information brochures ¹²⁾ from English to Spanish to increase the accessibility of the services provided by these agencies to local Hispanic clients.
	SP 337	Pronunciation clinic -- In this Spanish phonetics course, students worked with individuals from the community (e.g., local high school students studying Spanish, Hispanic community members studying English ... etc.) ¹³⁾ For each client, students analyzed his/her speech patterns, identified "problem areas", prepared appropriate pronunciation exercises and gave several practice sessions, and made various speech recordings to make final recommendations to improve his/her pronunciation.

11 The state of Indiana does not require a foreign language program at primary schools; therefore, many teachers and parents welcome opportunities for children to receive exposure to some foreign language study/cultural events.

12 Students received pre-selected information brochures from various community agencies. These included shelters for abused women and children, a community education center offering ESL classes, a public library, and two

Student Preparation and Setting up Accountability -- In order to assure their status as a rigorous academic experience, the community projects constituted 10 to 25% of the course grade depending on the nature of the assignments (e.g., some projects required students to spend 15-20 hours to complete the necessary components). Furthermore, their connection to the course objectives was explained and demonstrated to the students. Depending on the type of the project and student strengths, students worked individually, with a partner, or in groups of 3-4 students (e.g., instead of being isolated, less experienced students worked with and learned from students with different strengths). At various intervals during the semester, students handed in a short progress report in which they summarized the week's activities and plans for the following week(s) and listed any challenges or new discoveries. Also some class time was devoted to class discussion to share progress, problems, and suggestions. At the end of the semester, most community projects required each group to give an oral presentation on the experience, and each student handed in a final written reflection paper with a portfolio containing all the notes, journals, resources consulted, and other documentation of their work. In their reflection papers, students were asked to comment on: 1) relevance of the project to the course; 2) discoveries about their community, cross-cultural practices, and structural differences between Spanish and English; 3) challenges and benefits of

agencies providing court-related and childcare programs. After examining the possibilities, each group selected a brochure and divided the workload among the group members.

- 13 More than half of the students who take this class pursue teaching careers. Some prefer to become Spanish teachers, while others are more interested in interacting with Hispanic community members struggling to learn English and adjust to the American culture.

the project; and 4) recommendations for the future.

Documenting Learning: A Look at Student Reflection

Community-based projects yield numerous benefits as they create authentic contexts for practicing language skills and strengthening cultural knowledge, which in turn increase students' motivation for learning, for participating in their diverse communities and for developing a sharper sense of civic responsibility. When asked to discuss the impact of the project for the class, students made useful observations on their language learning, cross-cultural issues, on their community, and on their motivation.

Improving Language Skills - At the language level, most students in advanced courses commented that the project gave them an opportunity to better assess their language skills in real-life situations. For example, several students who worked on translation projects in the advanced grammar course, realized that having “mastered” many areas of grammar and vocabulary in the classroom did not necessarily lead to proficiency. In spite of having received good grades throughout their Spanish language courses, some students felt humbled to see how many errors they made and, as a result, they understood that language learning is a life-time process. Many recognized the importance of maintaining constant contact with the target cultures and engaging themselves in continuous language study.

The community projects not only provided students with authentic contexts to acquire new vocabulary, but also enhanced students'

grammatical knowledge and language use. Even beginning with Spanish 101, students learned to write in Spanish from the fourth week of their introductory study. The guest speaker series provided students with the opportunity to write short compositions applying their recently acquired vocabulary and grammar (e.g., *Sr. Bustamente es el director del Centro Hispano en Indianapolis. Es alto y moreno. Es un hombre simpático y humoroso. Es de Texas pero sus padres son de México... etc*). Students also made useful grammatical observations. While working on the written translation projects in the advanced grammar course, students commented that Spanish employs more definite articles than English, that the subjunctive is unavoidable in Spanish (indicating that they will have to learn to use more subjunctive forms), and that Spanish renders longer sentences containing more prepositional phrases and subordination. Students also discovered that English uses a lot of passive constructions, while Spanish prefers to use more *se pasiva*. Furthermore, students who were used to conversing in the *tú* forms in classrooms appreciated the opportunity to practice formal language with the *usted* forms. In addition, beyond the sentence-level language study, students learned to focus on the importance of context, which in turn led to improved skills for using the dictionary. For example, one student translating a brochure for a public library discovered that *discutir* does not simply mean “to discuss” in Spanish but rather refers more to discussing a problem in a heated conversation. Instead of settling with a simple meaning/translation in pocket dictionaries, students became more willing to go through the comprehensive list of meanings provided by the sample sentences in a substantial dictionary.

The most significant impact of the community-based tasks on students' language learning was the enhancement of the quality of class

discussions in Spanish. Instead of the teacher having to force students to speak up in the class, the experiential nature of the projects encouraged students to share their ideas more openly. In addition, students' interaction with the native guest speakers invited to the class improved as they asked more questions and took a greater interest in social concerns of daily life. Finally, the final oral presentations along with class discussions improved students' fragmentary grasp of language and cultural issues/concepts.

Exploring Cultural Differences and Diversity -- Because many community projects led students to come into contact with Hispanic community members from various geographic areas, races, and ethnic origins, students were able to explore the cultural diversity of the Hispanic community in the region. Students also became aware of differences in the language use among native speakers as well as numerous cross-cultural issues and practices. For example, while working on a translation project for a local social service agency, one student commented, "Como encontraron casi todos los estudiantes de la clase, me di cuenta de que hay muchas palabras que hemos inventado aquí en Los Estados Unidos para describir algunas situaciones o condiciones de la vida. Es posible que esas palabras no existan en español porque la cultura hispana no demuestra la necesidad de usarlas como aquí." Another student translating for a public library shared with the class that the concept of public library is not so common in Mexico and other Hispanic countries as it is in the U.S. Furthermore, after interviewing the agencies that provide support to victims of domestic violence, students discussed that there were very few Hispanic women using their services because Hispanic culture expects women to tolerate more abuse. The

students then explored the role of *machismo* and religion in Latin America.

Improving Student Motivation -- In general, students accepted more responsibility for their own learning, not only because their projects were intended for a real audience, but also because they understood the benefits of the project for the community. The service-learning translation projects, in particular, increased students' motivation for improving their language skills and participating in their communities. To the teacher's surprise, some groups even voluntarily engaged themselves in serious peer-editing of their work. In the case of the phonetics course, many students commented that the pronunciation clinic project forced them to master the course content materials as well as pay more attention to improving their own pronunciation.

Connecting with the Community -- The community-based activities encouraged many students to participate in their diverse communities. First, by trying to identify local Hispanic communities, students learned about opportunities to work with various organizations. Second, the class observed social disadvantages which minority groups constantly faced. For example, students commented that information on various social services was not always accessible to minority groups. Third, some students witnessed attitudes of indifference towards minority groups by their community; they discussed some thinking patterns of those who do not speak another language besides English. In summary, the community-based projects increased students' awareness of civic responsibility as can be observed in the following student comments:¹⁴

14 These are quotes from students' reflection papers.

- *“Muchos hispanos no saben que este servicio está disponible..., Necesitan saber sus oportunidades.”*
- *“Como estudiantes de español en la universidad, tenemos los recursos que muchas personas no tienen. Por eso, necesitamos ayudar a otros con nuestro conocimiento. También estos proyectos van a ayudarnos en el futuro con trabajos.”*
- *“En la comunidad, es importante que los ciudadanos sean concientes de personas con diferencias culturales. También es importante dar a su comunidad.”*
- *“En nuestro caso, hemos aprendido de la necesidad de parte de los hispanos para aprender de sus derechos legales aquí en los Estados Unidos. Por ejemplo, las mujeres de los países hispánicos casi siempre tienen que tolerar el abuso que viene de sus maridos o novios.”*
- *... “si se puede ayudar a una persona con este proyecto entonces esto es una persona más que antes. Nosotros como seres humanos somos iguales y [todos] necesitan tener las mismas oportunidades en el mundo. Este proyecto provee esta oportunidad.”*
- *“La lección más importante que aprendí es que toda la comunidad es importante y tenemos que trabajar a incluir las minorías en cualquier cosa.”*

Meeting Course Objectives - By providing students with opportunities to explore and/or serve their diverse communities, the community-based projects served as tools to better meet the specific course objectives. The guest speaker project in SP101 provided students with opportunities to use their newly acquired basic Spanish (e.g., asking simple questions and writing short descriptions and notes of appreciation in Spanish) as well

as to learn about diverse groups of Hispanic communities and cultural issues/events. The cultural presentation project in SP202¹⁵ allowed students to investigate and share an event/tradition of their interest (leading to a better retention of content materials) with both their classmates and less privileged young community members in an elementary school. The service-learning translation project in SP303 demanded that students examine detailed aspects of language use and grammatical similarities and differences between English and Spanish both at the sentence-level and discourse-level. The pronunciation clinic project in SP337 forced students to better learn specific course content materials as well as to practice and make a serious effort to improve their own pronunciation. Finally, documenting and sharing the profile of various Hispanic community leaders in the business Spanish course helped students to better assess the Hispanic market in the U.S. as well as some cross-cultural perspectives shared by these community members. In sum, students paid more attention to their language production and improved their presentation skills and content acquisition as they recycled and applied the course materials. The community-based activities are beneficial in preparing students towards meeting all five goals of Standards for Foreign Language Learning: communication, cultures, connections, comparison, and communities.

Other Benefits -- A large percentage of Spanish majors pursue teaching careers. In the case of Ball State students, many remain in

15 For many students, this is the last Spanish course, which is equivalent to a fourth semester language course. Most will not remember the uses of the subjunctive or the preterite/imperfect and other grammatical points covered during their language study. However, many seem to better retain specific cultural traditions presented in their classroom.

Indiana upon their graduation. The information gathered and shared through the project can better prepare not only faculty but also students for seeking future community outreach projects and developing working relationships with Hispanic communities in the region. In addition, the increased collaboration between university and different community members can demonstrate the university's commitment to community engagement.¹⁶ As for the community, the projects provide various members of the Hispanic minority with opportunities to voice their opinions and concerns to the University public. Moreover, these Hispanic community members can advertise their organization/company and their country of origin. The projects will also enhance future partnership activities by demonstrating that their participation will have a positive impact on the quality of education for our young adults.

Issues and Challenges

Incorporating a non-traditional pedagogy into a language course has led to issues and challenges that must be considered along with its benefits.

Course Preparation and Resources -- Developing any program that requires a working relationship with community members demands extra preparation time and organization for the instructor as well as availability of additional resources. Saltmarsh & Heffernan (2000) note that the traditional obstacles to incorporating service-learning into coursework have been time and pressures of faculty teaching load, resistance from the department and discipline to curricular changes, the lack of support

¹⁶ Community engagement has become a part of their mission statements for many institutions of higher education in the U.S.

for faculty participation in service-learning at the institutional level. However, in the case of the U.S. there is a growing number of grant opportunities for promoting service-learning, interdisciplinary and diversity programs, as well as a greater support for it at the institutional level for community engagement.¹⁷ Furthermore, there is a growing body of literature and conference presentations that offer sample syllabi and detailed descriptions of various projects with the community for Spanish courses.¹⁸

Another issue related to development of community-based tasks has been dealing with unpredictable needs for community service. Unlike those cities in the West or East Coasts or large cities, campuses located in small rural cities may not assure opportunities to work directly with native Spanish-speakers. In such cases, course projects can concentrate on direct usage of students' Spanish language skills and cultural knowledge by helping Anglo communities to understand and prepare for interaction with Hispanic communities (e.g., tutoring at schools, translating information brochures for social service agencies, offering a crash course on Spanish language and culture for the employees of these agencies... etc).

17 The development of all five community-based courses mentioned above were supported with either internal or external grants.

18 For example, *Construyendo Puentes: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Spanish* (1999) Eds. Hellebrandt and Varona, offers a series of articles that discuss theoretical and practical issues related to service-learning in various Spanish language and content classrooms. Among numerous resources offered by means of conferences, Santa Clara University located near San Francisco hosted a two day conference (September 21-22, 2001) entitled, Building Community: Service-Learning Institute for Community-High School-College-University Partnerships in Spanish and Portuguese.

Academic Rigor -- Some faculty members may fear that community-based activities will dilute the academic rigor of a course. However, these tasks do not downplay the traditional emphasis on the course content. While it is true that some energy and class time must be set aside for these community tasks, the specific course content materials must be taught and learned in order for students to apply them in their communities. Instead, Enos and Troppe (1996) argue that “these programs can intensify the level of intellectual effort students invest. Doing service in the community, when combined with the critical dialogue that faculty should facilitate in any course, draws students closer to, not further away from, the center of the course content they are supposed to be studying in the first place.” (pp. 158-9)

Scheduling and Uncertainties - Since the community projects require a working relationship among several people (i.e., community agencies and group members), some students may encounter scheduling problems. This problem can be alleviated when 1) students are given a longer period (e.g., longer than a one-month period) to organize and complete their project and 2) both the students and community members have clear expectations for commitment.¹⁹ Furthermore, since community needs are not always predictable, flexibility is needed to make adjustments along the way. Finding solutions to dilemmas can often be facilitated in classroom discussions when the entire class contributes to making suggestions, rather than just relying on the instructor. For example, when a group could not find anyone for their guest speaker project in SP101,

¹⁹ For example, the clients for the pronunciation clinic were chosen based on not only their interest for receiving the service but also their availability to meet within my students' schedule.

other classmates shared resources to locate native speakers.

Working in Groups -- Some groups work better than others. Some students are just plain lazy and uninterested. A number of groups faced internal conflicts during their projects. However, for the most part, students did manage to recognize some merit in teamwork. More advanced students were willing to share their talents with their classmates, and each group divided the work among the individual members based on individual strengths and interests.²⁰ In addition, because the project grades consisted of both group and individual performance (e.g., all students handed in individual reflection papers), students were more willing to tolerate group members who did not seem to contribute adequately.

Teaching Translation -- Many community needs were related to providing oral/written translations. Given the current trend in communicative teaching to avoid translation tasks in language classrooms, students did not have any prior training in translation. Students working on translating information brochures had to be taught to understand the importance of the context, develop better skills for using the dictionary, and avoid literal translations.

Limited Language Proficiency Level - Due to limited language proficiency, many students working on written translations relied heavily on the assistance of the advanced students in the class, the instructor,

²⁰ Some students preferred to work on written translations, while others took on the responsibility of seeking resources. Still others worked on preparing hand-outs and helped to enhance their group presentation at the end of the semester (e.g., using Power Point).

and the native speaker consultants to accomplish their part of the project. Furthermore, even after various drafts and editing sessions, the final version of the students' translation still contained some errors. Nevertheless, these translated brochures were welcomed by the agencies that otherwise would not be able to share any information with Hispanic community members. Moreover, while working with several native speaker consultants, students learned that even native speakers made grammar mistakes. Students realized that in order to produce quality translations in professional settings, they could not depend on the suggestions made by just one native speaker/language teacher.

Student Reflection and Generalizations -- Given the limited amount of feasible work/contact time with the community members, a part of the students' reflection can be ill-conceived or stereotypical. However, the instructor cannot expect to reduce stereotyping and facilitate cultural and racial understanding in students without providing them with experiences to form, test, and re-evaluate assumptions. By allowing students to engage in their communities and to reflect upon and share their experiences with the class, community-based learning enhances, not hinders, students' grasp of various implications of the course content, appreciation of the discipline, and civic responsibility.

Teacher Role -- Incorporating community-based programs into an academic course forces faculty to "reconsider their construction of control and authority in the classroom and beyond" (Enos & Troppe, 1996, p. 159). The shift in emphasis from individual to social responsibility and from a high degree of structure in the classroom and faculty control to a lesser degree of structure in the community and students' greater role to

be in charge of their own learning can create discomfort for many teachers.²¹ Indeed, service-learning pedagogy “challenges faculty to reconceptualize not only their curricula, but also their disciplinary training and their roles as educators” (Saltmarsh & Heffernan, 2000). In my case, however, despite the discomfort of having to relegate some authority and control, my efforts to incorporate community-based programs into various Spanish courses have re-ignited my passion for teaching. In his book, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, Palmer argues that “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.” (p. 10) Instead of letting my teaching settle into and remain a routine, I am challenged to strive towards becoming what I want my students to become -- an engaged learner.

In spite of the many challenges facing the implementation of community-based programs, the benefits seem to out-weigh the costs. As Dupuy (2000) observes, students develop stronger interest in the target language and culture when they are “learning something valuable and challenging that justifies the effort.” (p. 208) Community-based learning contributes toward holistic/global personal development, in which both the instructor and the student develop a greater interest in and engage themselves for the well-being of the diverse communities that surround them.

21 Howard (1998) highlights some of the incongruencies between the pedagogies of traditional and academic service learning. These include a conflict of goals (competitive individualism vs. advancing students' commitment to the greater good), a conflict about values of learning (deductively oriented academic learning vs. inductively oriented experiential learning), a conflict about control (high degree of faculty control vs. low degree of direction vis--vis learning), a conflict about active learning (the learner in the classroom vs. the learner in the community), and a conflict about objectivity (objectivity vs. subjective engagement).

Conclusions

Over the years as a foreign language teacher, I have striven to move away from a teacher-centered classroom and to adopt a more student-centered classroom structure. However, even when I give weight to my students' needs, interests and learning styles and offer them more opportunities to create with language in the classroom, the outcomes have not been totally satisfactory. A student-centered classroom poses its own set of shortcomings:

The idea of a student-centered classroom arose from such abuses of the teacher-centered model, but it has encouraged abuses of its own. In a student-centered setting, there is sometimes a tendency toward mindless relativism: "One truth for you, another truth for me, and never mind the difference." When students are put at the center of the circle, teachers may yield too much of their leadership; it is difficult to confront ignorance and bias in individuals or the group when students themselves comprise the plumb line. (Palmer, p.119)

Perhaps the next step is a community-centered classroom -- a classroom that integrates both academic and experiential learning, brings together teacher and students for greater good within their broader communities, and fosters a scholarship of engagement.

I return to my two questions with which I have struggled at the end of each semester: 1) how have I assisted my students to become competent users of Spanish for real world purposes? 2) how have I contributed to instill in them a desire to explore and participate in communities that are different from theirs? After having laboriously challenged both my students and myself to initiate participation within our diverse communities, I can answer these two questions with a greater

ease. A community-centered classroom helps students to move one step closer to meeting the five goal areas of standards for foreign language learning: to communicate in Spanish, to gain knowledge and understanding of the cultures of the world, to connect with other disciplines and acquire information, to develop insight into the nature of language and culture, and to participate in communities at home and around the world. Community-based learning not only provides avenues for valuable language practice in meaningful contexts, but also exposes students to issues, ideas, and social realities with which they would not otherwise come into contact on their own.

Works Cited

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (1996). *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*. Yonkers: ACTFL.
- Beebe, R. M. & De Costa, E. (1993). The Santa Clara University Eastside Project Community Service and the Spanish Classroom. *Hispania*, 76, 884-891.
- Bringle, R. & Hatcher, J. (1995). A Service Learning Curriculum for Faculty. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 2, 112-122.
- Bringle, R. & Hatcher, J. (1999). Reflection in Service Learning: Making Meaning of Experience. *Educational Horizons*, 179-185.
- Dupuy, B. C. (2000). Content-Based Instruction: Can it Help Ease the Transition from Beginning to Advanced Foreign Language Classes? *Foreign Language Annals*, 33, 205-223.
- Enos, S. & Troppe, M. (1996). Service-Learning in the Curriculum. In B. Jacoby and Associates (Eds.), *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices* (pp. 156-181). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Fischer, G. (1996). Tourist or Explorer? Reflection in the Foreign Language Classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, 29, 73-81.
- Hale, A. (1999). Service-Learning and Spanish: A Missing Link. In J. Hellebrandt & L. Varona (Eds.), *Construyendo Puentes (Building Bridges): Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Spanish* (pp. 9-32). Washington DC: American Association for Higher Education.
- Howard, J. (1998). Academic Service Learning: A Counternormative

- Pedagogy. In R. Rhoads et al. (Eds.), *Academic Service-Learning: A Pedagogy of Action and Reflection*, (pp. 21-31) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Howard, J. (1993). *PRAXIS I: A Faculty Casebook on Service Learning*. Ann Arbor: OCSL Press.
- Mullaney, Jeanne. (1999). Service-Learning and Language Acquisition Theory and Practice. In J. Hellebrandt & L. Varona (Eds.), *Construyendo Puentes (Building Bridges): Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Spanish* (pp. 9-32). Washington DC: American Association for Higher Education.
- National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (1999). *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*.
- Overfield, D.M. (1997). From the Margins to the Mainstream: Foreign Language Education and Community-Based Learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30, 485-491.
- Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pak, C. (2001). Creating Contexts for Language Learning for Real-Life Situations: Service-Learning in Foreign Language Classes. *Cincinnati Romance Review*, 20, 134-145.
- Pak, C. (2000). Towards a Development of Global Communities within: Service-Learning Projects in a Business Spanish Course. *Global Business Languages*, 76-96.
- Patrikis, P.C. (1995). The Foreign Language Problem: The Governance of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning. In C. Kramsch (Ed.), *Redefining the Boundaries of Language Study AAUSC Issues in Language Program Direction*, (293-335). Boston:

Heinle & Heinle.

Saltmarsh, J. & Heffernan, K. (2000). Putting the Tools to Use. In Campus Compact, *Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit: Readings and Resources for Faculty*. Brown University.

Williams, D. & Driscoll, A. (1997). Connecting Curriculum Content with Community Service: Guidelines for Facilitating Student Reflections. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, 2, 33-42.

Appendix I

Standards for Learning Spanish

(From *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*,
1999, p. 434)

	Goals	Standards
1	Communication (Communicate in Spanish)	1.1 Students engage in conversation, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions. 1.2 Students understand and interpret spoken and written Spanish on a variety of topics. 1.3 Students present information, concepts, and ideas in Spanish to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.
2	Cultures (Gain knowledge and Understanding of the Cultures of the World)	2.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of Hispanic cultures. 2.2 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of Hispanic cultures.
3	Connections (Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information)	1.1 Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through Spanish. 1.2 Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the Spanish language and its cultures.

4	<p>Comparisons (Develop insight into the Nature of Language and Culture)</p>	<p>4.1 Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons between Spanish and English. 4.2 Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons between Hispanic cultures and their own.</p>
5	<p>Communities (Participate in Communities at Home and Around the World)</p>	<p>5.1 Students use Spanish both within and beyond the school setting. 5.2 Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using Spanish for personal enjoyment and enrichment.</p>