

E-SERVICE-LEARNING AND TEACHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF EXPERIMENTAL EDUCATION

E-SERVICE-LEARNING Y LA EDUCACIÓN DEL PROFESORADO: UN ESTUDIO DE CASOS EN LA EDUCACION EXPERIMENTAL

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Resumen

Durante las últimas décadas, el uso del aprendizaje experimental en la educación superior en todo el mundo ha evolucionado considerablemente hasta convertirse en lo que ahora se considera un componente crítico del éxito estudiantil. Inevitablemente, estas experiencias de aprendizaje a través del servicio a menudo se conectan con la tecnología, otro pilar de la sociedad actual, para plantear preguntas valiosas en cuanto a las mejores prácticas en la experiencia de E-service-learning. Este artículo describe el estudio de un caso relacionado con la implementación de un proyecto de E-service-learning en la formación docente de inglés y luego discute la repercusión que se produjo en términos de conocimiento, habilidades e identidad profesional. A través del análisis de contenido de las narrativas obtenidas de los participantes, surgieron tres temas: la autoeficacia del docente preservicio, el desarrollo profesional, y los factores que conllevan el aprendizaje de una lengua. Los resultados de este estudio sugieren que el E-service-learning puede servir como un medio eficaz para el aprendizaje y la enseñanza, puesto que proporciona tanto al estudiante como al docente oportunidades para desarrollar competencias profesionales que entran en relación con el mundo global. Además, a través de las interacciones en el aula relacionadas con E-service-learning, los docentes aprenden sobre las tendencias culturales y sociales de los aprendices de lengua inglesa y mejoran su conciencia cívica general y su compromiso. De esta manera, el E-service-learning no sólo desarrolla habilidades técnicas y docentes, sino que también mejora las habilidades humanísticas para relacionarse con diferentes estudiantes en diferentes contextos.

Abstract

During the last decades, the use of experiential learning in higher education worldwide has evolved considerably into what is now considered a critical component of student success. Inevitably, these service-learning experiences often cross paths with technology, another mainstay of society today, to pose valuable questions as to best practices in the E-service-learning experience. This paper first describes a case study of the implementation of an E-service-learning project in English language teacher education and then discusses the impacts that it produced in terms of knowledge, abilities, and the professional identity of pre-service teachers. Through the content analysis of participant narratives, three themes emerged: pre-service teacher self-efficacy, professional development, and language learning factors. The results of this study suggest that E-service-learning can serve as an effective means to learning and teaching because it provides the student-teacher with opportunities to develop professional competences working in connection with the global world. In addition, via the classroom interactions of E-service-learning, student-teachers learn about the cultural and social tendencies of English language learners and improve their overall civic awareness and engagement. In this way, E-service-learning not only develops technical strategies and teaching skills, but it also improves soft skills for relating with different students in different contexts.



Introduction

Education founded on only the transmission of knowledge is not sufficient in our current time because individuals in all cities today are expected to learn and improve their skills and professional competences faster than in the past. The innovative model described through this case study, a practical template for cities large and small around the globe, joins existing resources and technology for the dual purpose of enhancing English language learning and language teacher education.

Particularly in the global society of today do individuals need authentic opportunities to develop their professional competences by actually working within their craft and by also having to reflect upon the practical experiences so as to improve their knowledge and skills, increase a sense of civic engagement, and foster understanding of cultural and social diversity. Moreover, the labor market expects higher education to oversee a highly technical and specialized preparation of students. For this reason, multiple and varied forms of experiential learning have been implemented over the past years. One example of experiential learning in higher education is service-learning, “a method that extends classroom learning into real-life situations through participation in service experiences organized by collaborating schools and communities” (National and Community Service Act of 1990).

Several studies have well documented the importance of service-learning for enhancing professionalism and civic engagement (Root, 1997; Miller, Dunlap, & Gonzalez, 2007) and assert that service-learning experiences reinforce the mastery of course content and provide avenues for pre-service teachers to construct meaning from their teaching (Erickson & Anderson, 1997; Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Wilson, 2008; Meaney, Bohler, Kopf, Hernandez, & Scott, 2008). Indeed, service-learning can be an effective methodology in teacher education because it gives pre-service teachers a more accurate perspective of the teacher-student relationship by crossing boundaries and exposes them to a reflective-in-action process model that allows for the eventual connection of theory to practice (Schön, 1983; Eyler, Giles, & Schmeide, 1996). In particular, service-learning can help pre-service English language educators improve their ability to teach and effectively address issues relevant to English learner education in both sheltered English language instruction (Uzum, Petrón, & Berg, 2014) and bilingual settings (Rodríguez, 2013). All in all, the theory-to-practice connection gleaned through service-learning can spark a better understand of own’s local settings by learning about the settings of others, awareness of one’s own skills and limits, and greater gains in knowledge and professionalism through reflection on the experience.

Equally relevant to education today are findings in higher education research which suggest that the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) can provide a powerful learning experience for students (Volman, 2005) and that “this form of online course emulating traditional classroom instruction is the fastest growing form of distance education in U.S. universities, and so it is important to know how it affects learners who are involved in it,” (Bernard et al., 2004, p. 386). In fact, research of E-learning has gone beyond the



asynchronous approach of teaching and learning to specifically examining synchronous collaborations and communication within language education, instances where individuals exchange in real time albeit remotely. Results from such empiricism indicate that the combination of synchronous text, audio, and visual communication not only facilitates language learners in the language acquisition process but also improves the professional skills of pre-service teachers (Wang & Chen, 2012; Sisco, Woodcock, & Eady, 2015). From this emerges the need to creatively adapt conventional service-learning practices to online settings as well as the notion that E-learning can realistically enhance pre-service teacher preparedness by offering them an authentic setting in which to hone their English language teaching skills.

Coupled with this theoretical framework, the present case study looks to the notions that cities are ever-changing spaces and that they must creatively evolve to meet the objectives of those living within them, teasing out along the way fluid solutions to the challenges of daily existence. By blending populations from different locations by means of the synchronous online modality, all participants have opportunities to explore unique aspects of human culture, which in turn fuels local discovery and a sense of unity and camaraderie. The current article exposes problems-solving strategies where E-service-learning in ELT education met multi-city needs, and it also reveals the effects that a synchronous experiential learning modality can produce, both individually and collectively, in terms of the development of abilities and professional identity as well as a real-time view of “living” from varied cultural perspectives.

Objectives

The primary objective of the study was to analyze the experiences of pre-service ELTs who participated in a synchronous online, service-learning project so as to understand the effect E-service-learning can have on the development of teaching ability and professional identity for the purpose of informing English language teacher preparation methods and strategies. The inquiry was guided by the following research questions:

- Is E-service-learning a viable strategy for teaching and learning in pre-service teacher education?
- What are the benefits?
- What are the limits?

Methodology

This case study was based on an ontological philosophical assumption with a post positivism paradigm and viewed through a phenomenological lens as it reports on the multiple realities as experienced by individuals participating in project. The phenomenological approach is a type of research that describes the meaning of lived experiences of a phenomenon. Because phenomenology research is founded on the philosophical perspective of the intentionality of consciousness of the phenomenon, the reality of one’s experience is their perception of it. Therefore, the inquiry presented here seeks to qualitatively examine the effects of synchronous online service-learning from the perspective of pre-service English language educators. The qualitative data



obtained was analyzed through open-coding and in vivo coding and then sorted into dominant themes with associated formulated meanings.

Literature Review

1. Language Teacher Education and Service-learning

At the foundation of service-learning is Dewey's (1938) experimental learning theory, which argues the importance of undergoing meaningful experiences through which students can acquire knowledge and develop skills to solve various real-world problems (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Based on Dewey's work, Kolb outlined an experiential learning theory (1984), a conceptual framework for service-learning projects consisting of four, cyclical elements: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Lastly, service-learning connects learning and service in the community with the development of a greater sense of responsibility and attention to others.

Service-learning courses need clearly articulated learning objectives, identify and address real community needs, and provide student opportunities for ongoing, guided reflection of their experiences (Eyler & Giles, 1999). These guided reflections are intended to correlate to coursework associated to the learning circumstance. Reflective practice during the service-learning experience can sustain pre-service teachers to learn from their own application and develop content and practical knowledge (Correia & Bleicher, 2008). Service-learning courses can serve to link universities and their communities through academic subjects, skills, and values.

Service-learning can also be an effective tool in terms of teacher education in that it provides pre-service teachers an opportunity to construct meaning from their teaching while also learning from the service engagement experience. Much research has documented the importance of service-learning as a strong contributor to enhancing pre-service teacher self-efficacy and teaching attitudes and abilities (Erickson & Anderson, 1997; Astin & Sax, 1998; Sax, Astin, & Avalos, 1999; Jacoby, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999). According to work done by Meaney et al. (2008), the cultural competency of pre-service teachers was significantly impacted as a result of participating in service-learning programs.

In terms of language education, pre-service language teachers need specialized knowledge sets in order to adequately face the challenges specific to the areas of linguistics, language acquisition, instructional strategies, and the role of culture in language learning. Findings in language teacher education research show the positive impact of service-learning projects on increasing pre-service teacher awareness of their own assumptions about teaching and learning (Fitzgerald, 2009; Hagan, 2004). Specifically, service-learning can help pre-service language teachers improve their ability to teach and to effectively address issues related to education and society faced by English language learners (Rodríguez, 2013; Uzum et al., 2014). "This type of learning experience could assist teachers' growth in their understanding of teaching, their awareness of students' backgrounds, and their reflective actions in teaching" (He, 2015, p. 9). It is essential for language



teachers to have the requisite pedagogical knowledge specific to English language teaching in order to improve their professional competences with regard to the linguistic and cultural diversity typical of English learners (He, 2015).

2. E-service-learning in Online Education

The prevalence of distance education today has brought about the need to creatively adapt conventional service-learning practices to online settings. Coupled with that need is the variety of technological tools currently available to educators and institutions to support online service-learning endeavors (McGorry, 2012). Malvey et al. (2006) define E-service-learning as "...an electronic form of experiential education and incorporates electronically supported service learning. It is delivered online and uses the internet and state-of-the-art technologies that permit students, faculty, and community partners to collaborate at a distance in an organized, focused, experiential service learning activity, which simultaneously promotes civic responsibility and meets community needs" (p. 187). Results from a study by McGorry reported, "No difference in students' service-learning experiences whether they were delivered completely online or in a traditional classroom setting" (2012, p. 52). Although synchronous online exchange can be logistically more challenging to implement than asynchronous mostly due to time constraints, the former has shown to foster more spontaneity and a heightened sense of presence among users (Hines & Pearl, 2004).

With regards to teacher preparation, Gomez, Sherin, Griesdorn, and Finn (2008) argue for the importance of infusing technology into teacher education curricula so that future education professionals are more digitally literate, better connect theory to practice, are afforded more practicum experiences, and have the opportunity for deep reflection on the scholarship and practice of teaching. By bringing technology into experientially-based instruction, the notion of service extends past the institution's classroom and immediate locality to not only a greater geographical area but perhaps more importantly an increased expanse of diversity, culturally, socially, and economically, which consequently promotes an enriched sense of civic and social engagement within pre-service teachers (Guthrie & McCracken, 2010).

3. Reflection and Service-learning

Reflection is a vital component in the process of transforming experiences into learning, integrating the service experience with the course materials. Through guided reflection, students critically examine the quality of both their learning and their service. For students, reflection increases the understanding of course topics and ability to objectively self-assess goals and progress. Indeed, by reflecting on their experiences, students critically interpret what they have learned, increasing the likelihood of their applying the gained knowledge in future learning situations (Selmo, 2015).

"Effective reflection in service-learning as a process involves the interplay of emotion and cognition in which people (students, teachers, and community partners) intentionally connect service experiences with academic learning objectives," (Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006, p. 42). Reflections that are structured and



supported by clear guidelines and directions result in more meaningful reflection documentation (Eyler, Giles & Schmiede, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Selmo, 2015). Succinctly put, reflection is a critical component to the service-learning experience because, by reflecting on their service-learning experience, pre-service teachers can analyze their own learning not only to further develop their knowledge and teaching abilities but also to facilitate their professional and social competences.

Research Design

This E-service-learning project consisted of 24 hours of synchronous online instruction executed in fifteen sessions over a 10-week period. The instruction itself focused on testing strategies and was delivered to thirty-one, adult, non-native English speakers (NNEs) from various locations worldwide and were preparing to sit for the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). Some of these individuals were derived from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings at a post-secondary institution in France (N = 19) and within the professional sector in Italy (N = 2); others were from the host institution (N = 1) and a local state college (N = 9), hence English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Each pre-service teacher was assigned to one or two English learners.

The instruction provided through the service-learning project, a 5-lesson TOEIC preparation curriculum, was designed by the researchers. The first two lessons addressed the four parts of the TOEIC Listening section, and the remaining lessons covered the three parts of the TOEIC Reading Comprehension section. Each lesson followed the same basic sequence of instruction and included application activities. Four course sections of intervention were established (TOEIC1, TOEIC2, TOEIC3, TOEIC4).

The primary duty of the pre-service teacher in this synchronous online service-learning project was to deliver TOEIC preparation instruction on the lesson topic and guide application activities with English learners. At each lesson, the pre-service teachers were provided with a class roster, the designated lesson plan, and the electronic files accompanying the lesson. The pre-service teachers did not supplement in any way the TOEIC preparation course curriculum, nor were they responsible for formal assessment tasks. All lessons were based on publisher-approved excerpts from a TOEIC self-study textbook, and these excerpts were provided to English learners during each lesson via the screen sharing feature available within the learning platform. Lastly, no formal proficiency, diagnostic, or progression measures of TOEIC performance were included in this pilot project.

The E-service-learning sessions were broadcast in real time from a multimedia facility on the host institution's main campus. Pre-service teachers were spaced approximately 10-15 feet apart to minimize sound interference as they transmitted the lessons simultaneously through the conferencing feature of the learning platform. The hardware that supported this project consisted of mid-tiered enterprise level towers with Core 2 Duo processors, professional 17-inch monitors, Logitech H360 headsets with boom-type microphones, Logitech c260 webcams, and 10 GB backbone internet connection tied into the lambda rail. In preparation of the synchronous online modality, all pre-service teachers attended an orientation session which reviewed



guidelines for executing the language lessons and well as the various functions of the learning platform. Prior to each lesson, all NNEs received an electronic link that allowed them to access the video-conferencing feature at the time of the lesson.

1. Population

The participants in this study consisted of six graduate students actively pursuing TESOL masters degrees at a large public university in the southeast United States. These graduate students were enrolled in a required course targeting current theory and best practices of standardized testing of English learner populations across the globe. There was no randomized sampling or assignment in this study because the pre-service teacher group self-selected the synchronous online service-learning setting over the face-to-face option for their service-learning project within the course for which they were enrolled.

2. Procedure

The pre-service teacher arrived at the multimedia facility fifteen minutes before the actual start of the session to allow time to initiate the conference, upload screen sharing items, and review the lesson plan. The pre-service teacher participants were encouraged to open the online session a few minutes prior to the start of each lesson in order to greet NNEs as they arrived to the online classroom. At the start of the 45-minute lesson, the pre-service teachers activated the video-recording feature, which was later available for review by the researchers and the participants themselves and to support subsequent reflection tasks.

At the end of each lesson, fifteen minutes was also allotted for immediate audio journaling. Pre-service teachers were instructed to audio record their immediate thoughts and impressions using Sound Recorder found on the operating system of the same computer station. Often these reflection tasks were topically guided via a prompt posed by the researcher. The audio commentaries were intended to allow the pre-service teacher an opportunity to document immediate reflections of the lesson for future consideration and in ultimately compiling the service-learning project deliverable.

After each audio commentary session following the E-service-learning session, the mentoring instructor led an open discussion with the pre-service teachers to discuss aspects of the lesson, answer questions, address concerns, and summarize directions for the subsequent week's lesson. At the end of the entire E-service-learning project, the pre-service teacher participants each compiled a comprehensive account in narrative form of the experience.

3. Analysis

The analysis focused on six narrative reflections of the pre-service teachers who attended the E-service-learning in fulfillment of a requirement for the graduate course in which they were enrolled. Each document contained summaries of all the lessons taught and the reflection of both the E-service-learning experience and the synchronous online modality specifically.



The data analysis phase of the study began with both researchers independently applying open coding and in vivo coding to the six reflective narrations obtained in the data collection phase and also determining the patterns and themes that emerged. After this independent analysis, the two analyses were merged and then analyzed for commonalities, ultimately rendering a single list of themes and sub themes. The analyses of the six reflective reports rendered 63 statements extracted through the common analysis, and three themes and related sub themes emerged which reflect a variety of meaningful content from the data gathered.

Findings & Discussion

The three themes that emerged directly address the effects of the synchronous online service-learning modality on pre-service teacher development; each theme emerged with relevant sub-themes as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Thematic Categories Derived from Narrative Reflections

Themes	Sub-themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-service teacher self-efficacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of teacher role Emotions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of teaching skills Understanding technology as a teaching medium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language proficiency and learner success Understanding the sociocultural implications of language learning

1.Theme 1 – Pre-service Teacher Self-efficacy

The first theme that emerged reflected pre-service teacher self-efficacy. The discourse patterns within this theme centralized on two main notions: the awareness of the role and motivation of the pre-service English teacher participants, and emotions expressed by them in consequence to the service-learning experience.

1.1. Awareness of teacher role

Results seemed to reveal a strong indication that participants found service-learning in the synchronous online format similar to that in a traditional setting. They reported being able to adapt teaching techniques, such as language modeling and lesson transitions, in a manner which emulated traditional classroom behaviors. In addition to instructional strategy variations within the synchronous online modality, the pre-service teacher participants reported empathy toward the cultural and social learning tendencies of learners and a heightened awareness of their own teaching abilities and preparedness for the content area of the intervention, test preparation in this case. Therefore, this experience produced in the participants self-awareness on many levels and growth in terms of teacher preparedness as obstacles were encountered and autonomously overcome. All the participants but one, reported an overall sense that the E-service-learning experience enriched them as teachers and was an experience they would gladly repeat.



1.2. Emotions

The content analysis of pre-service teacher reflections also revealed an interesting array of emotive comments, ranging from appreciation of “...the live guidance of the mentoring teacher during lessons...” to frustration “...when the technology did not work properly...” to regret “...wishing I had practiced more with the technology...” to desire for “...more hands-on practice...”. The researchers view this wide variety of emotions within the narrative data as attributable to both the limited number of participants and the uniqueness of the service-learning experience employed, a non-traditional modality as compared to that commonly encountered by pre-service teachers.

2. Theme 2 – Professional Development

The second theme to emerge from the data analysis, Professional Development, was comprised of two sub-themes. One targeted teaching ability, honing specific teaching strategies and considerations, while the other sub-theme focused on the use of the many technological features available through the learning management platform employed for the case study.

2.1. Development of teaching skills

Several responses within the narrative data collected overtly reported an increased sense of knowledge and preparedness in teaching. Some participants discussed their own changes in teaching strategies, such as “...providing more examples...” and “...better transitioning from one task to the next...” as well as comments on “...teacher centeredness...” of their teaching and a heightened awareness of the impact of learner proficiency level on instruction. In addition, an important trend emerged from the reflections that suggested a greater sensitivity toward “teacher talk”, a vital component of effective language teaching that can often be challenging to convey to pre-service teachers (Sarigoz, 2013, p. 4) and quite difficult to develop. The researchers believe this last point is attributable mostly due to the nature of the mentoring teacher/student-teacher exchange, where both were present while the intervention was being carried out and where the mentoring teacher was able to offer spontaneous guidance if needed.

Another aspect that presented in the data analyzed pointed specifically to the synchronous online modality employed for the service-learning experience. Not only were the platform tools discussed throughout all participant narratives, in particular the role of the webcam which has been treated independently due to its pervasiveness in the discourse data, but there also seemed to be a natural inclination on the part of participants to associate the synchronous online experience to that of a traditional, face-to-face setting. Ultimately, all but one respondent reported easily adapting to the synchronous online modality and its relevant tools, and that participant explained, “I had to remember to do several tasks before starting the lesson...eventually, these set-up procedures became routine,” aligning with the best practices of language teaching and learning.

Lastly, the narrative data collected included references to partner work, a common component of language education. Participants stated that learners “...worked together to figure out meanings...” similarly



to the way they would in a face-to-face setting. Another participant expressed a desire to implement partner activities in the synchronous online modality and a need for more direction in executing collaborative activities in the synchronous online modality.

2.2. Understanding technology as a teaching medium

The second, and very prevalent, sub-theme relating to the notion of professional development focused on technology as a teaching tool. When comparing the synchronous online modality to that of a traditional instructional setting, varying impressions emerged from the narratives as stated by one pre-service teacher, “There are several similarities between online and face-to-face classes.” Conversely, another pre-service teacher reported, “I also felt at a disadvantage of not being in the same room with my students. I rely greatly on non-verbal communication to gauge understanding and engagement, and I need to learn how to read other clues to be successful in tele-tutoring.”

Another area juxtaposed between the two service-learning modalities was student attention. While one participant reported that the same distractions appeared in the E-service-learning modality as she had experienced in traditional settings, another participant stated that she observed comparatively better learner attention with E-service-learning, “Perhaps if I were in a physical classroom, students would not feel so much pressure to listen attentively because I could be heard so clearly, and their minds would wander.”

Further associated to technology, participant data indicated that the features provided through the learning platform seemed to readily support the execution of the instruction. Whether utilizing the many whiteboard features or manipulating supplemental visuals through screen sharing, most participants reported minimal difficulty in effectively incorporating modality features as they taught. In spite the need to adapt to the tools provided by the learning platform, pre-service teacher participants seemed to also quickly get a natural sense for which features would effectively support specific aspect of their teaching. For example, the chat box was seen by one as an effective means “...to clarify issues...”, while another claimed it reduced engagement, “...if a student is reading, he or she does not have to listen...” The narrative data also contained several references to the use of color and onscreen strokes in real time and how they were generally seen to “...increase student engagement...” The researchers also believe that these references to the use of specific teaching features within the learning platform resemble the observations pre-service teachers make regarding traditional teaching tools in face-to-face instructional settings. This further suggests that teacher development in the two modalities is likely to follow a similar trajectory.

Although most participants reported ease in using the learning platform tools, the discourse analysis of the narratives revealed a consistent reference to the impact of audio/video feature. In fact, audio/video transitioning proved to be the most frustrating element of the synchronous online modality experience. The combination of visual and auditory cues of the webcam led to what one participant described as feeling “... more connected...” Succinctly put by another pre-service teacher, “Not only did the webcam lead to a better personal connection between the instructor and student, but the webcam allowed for better comprehension



checks and teacher judgment". In general, although the synchronous online modality did at time pose some obstacles, it did seem to adequately support lesson instruction, application, and interaction when all the features were functioning.

3. Theme 3 – Learning Factors

The last theme to emerge as a result of the study data relates to learning factors. By far the most pervasive element addressed in the narratives related to time management. Participants expressed challenges associated with not having enough time to cover lesson content due to the English proficiency level of the NNEs. It is important to note that for this intervention English learners self-disclosed as being at an intermediate language level and that no placement testing was employed to verify this claim. Another prevalent sub-theme throughout the narratives pointed to the issue of learner success and the pre-service teachers' understanding of sociocultural components as they related to language learning.

3.1. Language proficiency and learner success

Results demonstrated that pre-service teachers were able to extract observations of learner ability and proficiency gains throughout the intervention. With regards to the language learning aspect of this case study, in several instances it was reported that English learners "...were able to apply the concepts with success..." Findings suggest that various factors directly influenced student success and that in particular greater consideration should be given to assessment, feedback, and elements directly related to the teaching objectives and content of each lesson. In this way, pre-service teachers can better address the specific learning goals of students, optimize the teaching pace, and improve upon the teaching strategies and delivery utilized; all these key issues contribute to greater effectiveness during instruction. Indeed, the data analyzed pointed to similar expectations from the synchronous online modality as compared to more traditional forms of service-learning in terms of the pre-service teacher's ability to monitor learner progress. In consequence, the researchers believe that a method for cross-analyzing English learner performance of select learning objectives supported by online analytics warrants development and further investigation.

3.2. Understanding the sociocultural implications of language learning

Less frequent but nonetheless worth noting are aspects of culture present within the narrative data. For instance, participant reflections indicated that the synchronicity of the online modality was paramount the overall learning process because it provided authentic inter-cultural exchange, which the pre-service teacher participants explicitly claimed they would not have encountered in an asynchronous modality. In addition, participant impressions mentioned an increased understanding of the social responsibility inherent to the teaching profession and direct exposure to how cultural and social aspects influence learning and teaching. In general, pre-service teachers found that the synchronous service-learning experience facilitated their better understand the social and cultural factors at the core of foreign language education. Furthermore, participants were satisfied that they had opted for the synchronous modality for their service-learning course requirement,



claiming that the “live” modality closely replicated that of a traditional service-learning with the added feature of exposing them to English learner populations worldwide which they would have, otherwise, not been able to access easily.

4. Limitations of This Study

Although it is evident from the findings that synchronous online service-learning is a valid approach for both pre-service teacher education and English language teaching, the limitations of the present case study relate mostly to study design. One such limitation was the number of pre-service teacher reflections included in the sample. This factor was restricted simply by the number of graduate students opting for the synchronous service-learning modality. With more narrative data, other themes may emerge, and present themes could be clarified.

Another limitation in study design was the lack of triangulation. For example, data related to research reflexivity would have increased the objectivity of results and balanced the perceptions of participants. The researchers believe that the audio commentary method used by participants during this intervention would likewise serve as a viable mode for gathering immediate researcher impressions during intervention. The other missing data component in this present study stems from English learner data. Although feedback was obtained from the English learners via a questionnaire, it was not adequate to draw grounded conclusions regarding instructional effectiveness or language learning gains. The questionnaire that evolved, however, was consequently enriched through this study administration, and the researchers believe it could easily be transitioned into a future methodology. By gathering varied data sets, the conclusions brought forth here could be ascertained and new research directions identified.

5. Recommendations for Future Research and Implementations

Of the spontaneous feedback obtained from the reflections with regards to the structure of this synchronous online service-learning project, several valuable notions gleaned from participant narratives have led the researchers to foresee an improved study methodology. The first of these was to assure the orientation conducted prior to delivering instruction since participants deemed this essential to effectively and efficiently working within the synchronous online modality. Furthermore, participants commented highly on the presence of a mentoring instructor before, during, and after each E-service-learning session. The main claim was that this mentoring provided immediate and valuable feedback and guidance, which was in turn directly applied by the pre-service teacher and further verified by the mentor. The summative notion by the pre-service teacher participants was that the orientation and ongoing corrective feedback in real time were particularly instructive and should, therefore, be retained as normal protocol for synchronous online service-learning projects as the modality evolves over time, and that mentoring teacher reflection will also be included in the data gathering protocol of subsequent study administrations.

Another consideration was that, although the reflective exercises used in this case study served as an



effective instrument for gauging pre-service teacher learning, identifying personal experiences, and developing professional identity, there seemed to be a gap in the data collected in terms of the role of service and the meaning of community and social responsibility as it relates to teaching and learning. The researchers believe that a more guided reflection on the value of service is warranted and would glean richer, more comprehensive data.

Lastly, it is believed that the inclusion of content analyses of the other data gathered during this case study, such as pre-service teacher audio commentaries and the video-recorded instructional sessions, should be considered for future qualitative inquiry of the E-service-learning experience and its effectiveness in ELT education. Of equal value would be a content analysis of English language learning during the intervention and of pre-service teacher/English learner discourse. These added perspectives would satisfy the present need for triangulation in the research design.

There is, of course, still much to understand about the effects of E-service-learning on both populations of where experiential learning joins the language education: pre-service language teachers and English language learners. Moreover, adaptations are needed to render the synchronous online modality as valid a component of the second/foreign language education as are traditional methods. Nonetheless, the overall contribution of this case study is that the synchronous online experiential learning modality has the potential for providing a rich experience for budding pre-service teachers equitable to what they would experience in face-to-face circumstances.

Conclusions

The E-service-learning model for pre-service language teacher preparation affords future teachers in all city settings not only the valuable opportunities characterized by experiential learning but also exposure to online education, a mainstay of learning today. It further serves to connect them in an authentic manner to the very learners they will encounter in their professional lives, people with diverse languages and different cultural backgrounds on the continuum of acquiring English as a second or foreign language. The synchronous service-learning modality also facilitates the development of critical aspects of teacher identity: the development of knowledge and professional skills, the increased relationship between different cultures and learners, and lastly the ongoing development of best practices for a trending setting in pre-service teacher education. With a greater understanding of how to effectively implement E-service-learning projects, such as the case study presented here, institutions in cities worldwide will have a practical tool with which to better interpret and meet the needs both pre-service language educators and their learner populations regardless of the geographic divide between individuals.

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