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Abstract: Service-learning is a transformational pedagogy with timely application to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. In our current climate of assessment outcomes, language study and the humanities more generally tend to be devalued and rendered invisible by utilitarian models of evaluation. Incorporating service-learning courses and experiences into the foreign language classroom provides real-world immersion for students in their local linguistic and cultural communities, satisfies teachers' desires to connect teaching and research to local community issues, and allows departments to meet institutional and educational goals. Indeed, service-learning points us to new definitions of old concepts—such as the role of the professor and the mission of the university—and embodies the paradoxes we must embrace in the new century.

Keywords: assessment/evaluación, humanities/humanidades, liberal arts/artes liberales, service-learning/ aprendizaje-servicio, transformational pedagogy/pedagogía transformacional

Declaring that the humanities are in crisis has become a hackneyed pastime in the academy, an unchallenged observation of the conditions we all recognize, conditions that privilege the business-minded and the economically practical while devaluing that which cannot be counted, bought, or assessed. Some despair nostalgically, lamenting the end of elite traditions and great books, while others embrace the opportunity to redefine them in light of postmodern, poststructuralist thinking, which questions epistemological and aesthetic truths and therefore demands that we revisit the role of education in new and potentially exciting ways.[1]

The 2011 president of the Modern Language Association (MLA), Russell Berman, has urged language teachers to take seriously the call to defend language study in particular and the humanities in general (see Berman 2011). Both MLA and American Historical Association (AHA) presidents have argued that we need to reimagine how humanities doctorates work in the world. The identity crisis in the humanities has created difficult working conditions and looming cultural consequences, and it is incumbent on us to find ways to make language learning relevant and valued to the general public. This turn to practical consideration of our public image, coupled with a push to become public intellectuals who speak to a variety of audiences, is evident in Sidonie Smith's September 2011 Presidential Address in *PMLA*, where she recounts her experience as a lobbyist in Washington, DC for National Endowment of the Humanities funding. Indeed, the MLA overtly encourages members to become activists in a complex world that denies a vision of education as an insular, apolitical, or monastic endeavor. This move to a practical engagement with—instead of a detached distancing from—our surrounding communities breathes new life into the key terms that shape our profession. The liberal arts, a university education, disciplinary boundaries, truth, beauty, the role of the professor—together these form one constellation of concepts that inform and guide the work we do as humanities professors and as language educators.

Public scholarship is receiving a lot of attention as the MLA and the AHA try to maintain relevance in the twenty-first century. They are looking to make changes that welcome a new

version of the professor, one who is engaged with larger cultural issues and topics, and not simply cranking out specialized monographs and avoiding spending too much time on teaching for fear their scholarship will suffer. The role of the professor, civic and moral development in the academy, and the question of discipline—all of the concepts and values that undergird higher education—are creaking and shifting as we move into the twenty-first century, with an eye to living out the truths and knowledges we created and adopted in the postmodern/poststructuralist turn.

What exactly the liberal arts are and what we expect from a liberal arts education are always up for debate, especially in today's climate of corporate style financial cutbacks to higher education. Can we measure the liberal arts? Can we state them as a checklist of accomplishments? Many institutions now boast liberal arts statements; indeed, I served on the committee charged with crafting our college statement, which starts off with the following premise: "The liberal arts' basic and historic purpose is at once to teach us to think for ourselves, to act wisely and well in the world, to undertake occupations useful to ourselves and others" ("Core Values" 2007). The juxtaposition of the lofty with the practical, evident in the lexicon of wisdom and usefulness, captures the paradoxical center of the liberal arts. And, it is in this precarious but fertile space where we must work, live, and explain ourselves to the larger, humanities-phobic culture. Service-learning can help us do this.

One of the central tenets of service-learning is to foster citizenship and moral development while achieving academic excellence in the content area.[2] Debate continues about whether it is the place of the university professor to connect traditional classroom material to moral and civic development. The debate intensifies when we consider the political aspects of engaging in service-learning pedagogy. Two representatives of conflicting schools of thought are Stanley Fish (*Save the World on Your Own Time*) and Ernest L. Boyer (*Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*). While Fish (2008) urges university professors to stick to their disciplinary expertise in the classroom, Boyer (1990) calls upon us to tear down the walls dividing the ivory tower from the surrounding communities that could benefit from the practical application of our collective academic knowledges. I tend to side with Boyer, as I do not see how these issues are separable from some artificial notion of "disciplinary content."[3]

Boyer (1990, 1996), champion of the scholarship of engagement, was a fervid supporter of both rigorous foreign language requirements and the incorporation of community service into higher education. Over his long career as an educational visionary, he lamented the university model of valuing research over teaching, and he challenged a rigid and crippling definition of scholarship. He identified four interlocking functions in the scholarship of engagement: discovery, integration, sharing knowledge, and application of knowledge. It is easy to link his vision with the central tenets of service-learning, and to see it as a defense of the humanities, since a discipline, as defined in his model, is clearly useful and beneficial to our surrounding communities.

If Boyer was primarily concerned with connecting the university to the community, Fish argues that universities need to defend their unique profile as academic institutions, resisting the call to justify ourselves to the non-academic spheres. In his two-part op-ed in the *New York Times* (2010a, 2010b), he urges humanities faculty and administrators to reject "the demand (always a loser) to economically justify the liberal arts." Fish asserts that the real problem is a lack of public funding, but the arguments should not be about money: "When it comes to justifying the humanities, the wrong questions are what benefits do you provide for society (I'm not denying there are some) and are you cost-effective." Fish concludes by urging us to defend the university for what it is and "not confusing it with a profit center." He contends that proponents of the humanities need to think in terms of the university as a whole, since the variety of disciplines and particular corners of a university feed and recharge one another. This vision, of course, would prevent a medical school from claiming superiority over a philosophy department in times of financial profiling.[4]

However, service-learning also speaks to Fish's side of the debate, as Butin (2008) points out in his review of Fish's book, which offers a very postmodern reconciling of opposite viewpoints and appropriation of dominant discourse. This "mastery of a craft" is, for Fish, what will save higher education because it will allow us as faculty to focus on our legitimate jobs of "academicizing" any and all issues, which leaves behind cultural transformation and partisan politics in favor of the search—in the classroom and in one's scholarship—for the always complex and contingent truth. Fish sees his perspective as antithetical to what is commonly thought of as the service-learning movement. I, however, see it as a perfect roadmap for "legitimizing" certain aspects of service-learning in higher education (Butin 2008: 66). Arguments about what a university education accomplishes or should accomplish and about what service-learning does and should do crack on the same fault lines: affective/cognitive and moral/academic. Fish (2008) says we should just stick to our expertise: we should be passionate about the way our particular discipline intellectualizes the world and contributes collaterally to the larger university spectrum, which he leaves as a mystified entity. In other words, our job as professors is to "academicize" the critical issues of diversity, justice, and civic virtues, not preach about them. But, can the academy remain removed from ethics and morality when all three of these issues pretend to deal in truths? Boyer (1990) says we need active and morally engaged democratic citizens. Either way, service-learning fits the bill, as it accomplishes skill mastery and the "academicizing" that Fish wants, yet satisfies the Boyer side of the equation by thrusting students into the messy work of democratic society. The various incarnations of the US university tell the story of balancing the desire to sustain a tradition of liberal education with the desire to equalize opportunity across categories of exclusion that include gender, race, and class. Service-learning helps us keep it in balance.

As a Spanish professor, I was initially attracted to the pedagogy of service-learning as a way to avoid creating artificial situations for the practice of grammar points or vocabulary words featured in each chapter of our textbook. No matter how clever the teacher might be at creating pretend situations for maximum language practice, I knew that such activities were no substitute for conversing with real people in real situations in the target language. Tacelosky (2008) argues as much when she asserts that in service-learning the content of the interaction is not "secondary to the grammatical structure being practiced" (877). For Tacelosky, when dialogue is understood in Buberian terms as a "turning towards the other," "it not only offers a real life interaction for language learners, but also has transformative potential" (877). For me, service-learning was a way to transform the way I taught, the way I thought about teaching, and the way I understood my role as professor and as intellectual, all unfolding along the lines drawn by Boyer.

Is it the professor's job to produce speakers of Spanish with proper accents and conjugational skills, or is it to show students the edges of the discipline, where it connects with the realities of everyday life, where the speakers of the language live and toil, and rise and fall on hierarchies of power and privilege?[5] Giroux (1995) writes: "University intellectuals can play an important pedagogical role by redefining for their students the myriad political linkages that mutually inform the relationship between the university and the larger society" (249). His view of education challenges Fish's notion of disciplinary work and embraces the opportunities of service-learning pedagogy. Service-learning enables me to play both sides of the debate.

At Butler University, our Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures department has incorporated a permanent service-learning course as part of our Spanish program, one that allows our students to interact in meaningful and mutually beneficial ways with the local Latino population, which has experienced tremendous growth in the last decade in Indianapolis and, more generally, in the Midwest (Aponte and Siles 1994). The course is called "Service-Learning in Spanish," and is a third-year skills course, designed for students who have completed two years of language study or the equivalent, and are likely to major or minor in Spanish. Through

our decade-long partnership with Indianapolis City Public Schools, students enrolled in the course spend two hours a week working with Spanish-speaking Latino students (elementary through high school level) as tutors and mentors. College students are paired with individual, limited-English, Latino students in the tutor rooms of the public schools, which is a safe Spanish-speaking space where the college students can work closely with the public school students on a variety of school subjects. The tutor room director supervises and coordinates student-to-student assignments, sometimes based on a college major or an academic strength (e.g., a Spanish/biology major might be assigned to a small group of Biology I students). Apart from structured assignments, there is always time and space for casual conversation, allowing students to get to know one another. It is in these small and unscripted conversations that these two groups of students (university and high school) truly negotiate a web of linguistic, academic, social, and political factors. This service work is complemented by our weekly classroom meeting (90 minutes) in which the Butler students are encouraged to frame their community experience in meaningful ways through discussions, selected readings, and reflection journals, all of which provide the opportunity to practice communicative abilities in Spanish while deepening engagement with the topic of Latinos and education.

The course (Spanish 320: "Service-Learning in Spanish") requires students to write 500 words a week in Spanish: either a journal entry reflecting on the experience tutoring in the community or a comment paper engaging with the weekly reading. All of these writing assignments are graded using a correction key that empowers students by allowing them to revise their papers in a way that maximizes learning.[6] By coding mistakes into general categories instead of providing the correction, students gain a heightened awareness of their own writing by identifying grammatical tics and common errors, which prepares them to achieve the next level of writing proficiency. We often share opportunities to review corrected papers on the screen in class and use the content of the papers to begin discussions.

While writing exercises and discussions are key elements in this course, the community component is also crucial. We have seen many changes in the Latino population and the public schools over the past decade and this has affected the way we interact with the community. For example, back in 2000, there were small "pockets" of Latino students turning up in the public schools, and often there were very limited resources for helping them navigate the linguistic barriers they faced. My primary contacts and supervisors in the community at that time were dedicated and over-worked tutor room directors and ESL (now ENL) teachers, and they were very grateful for our service and enthusiasm. My college students were able to assist during parent–teacher nights, serving as interpreters for Spanish-speaking parents, and also assisting in school activities, such as soccer, a sport that attracted many Latino families. These teachers became my partners in outlining the parameters of the service component of my university class and in educating our mutual students at both levels. Today in 2012, the public schools have consolidated their resources and established certain schools as hubs for Latino students, making them more streamlined and efficient. However, our contacts are no longer with those most directly involved in their education, but rather with a tutor room scheduling assistant. My students no longer walk in the school, sign-in, and report to the ENL teacher. Now, we all must undergo a criminal background check through the downtown police department, which often takes weeks to complete, before even entering the school as tutors. Another difference between the early years of the course and this past year is the attitude of the Latino students in the public schools. While early on they seemed very eager for tutors and became attached to my university students, this past year there were many Latino students who preferred to work on their own, either due to the abundance of community tutors and/or the stigma of "needing help." However, these new conditions have not changed the successful formula of the course, which renders positive benefits for all participants overall, if with new challenges.

In this hybrid course, we deal with issues that include politics, immigration policy, bilingual education, and official language legislation. These topics are politically charged and demand ethical and civic engagement. Casile (2011) argues that service-learning results in the mastery of academic content as well as the development of engaged citizens: "[Service-learning is] a viable mechanism for mastering course content through application and experience" (138). Indeed, for service-learning to work optimally, you must have a good grounding in traditional academic goals. The pairing of Spanish language courses and service-learning is a solid fit, as the connection between the community experience and the academic goals of the course is clear and direct. As Gibson, Hauf, Long, and Simpson (2011) demonstrate: "It is important for instructors to tightly link the service projects to the course material. Doing so provides students with the theoretical foundation necessary to make sense of their experiences and elevates the experience as central to their learning and not simply time spent outside the classroom" (294).

In Indianapolis, I found a convergence of key factors: 1) a need for tutors in the public ENL classes, 2) an institutional imperative for citizenship and community, and 3) a desire on my part to take teaching beyond the traditional classroom and into a changing landscape of new goals and opportunities. For me, it was the perfect situation in which to create the course. It also was a popular class that rendered overwhelmingly positive responses from my students, whose comments on the evaluations over the last decade echo the fundamental tenets of service-learning in particular and the hallmarks of transformational pedagogy in general.[7]

For many students, a salient benefit of the course was the clear improvement in their Spanish skills:

> All in all, I feel my *español* improved greatly and my confidence in my skills rose. I am more and more eager to speak up and utilize what I have.

> This course was a great experience for me. It allowed me to further develop my linguistic abilities in Spanish and to better educate myself on a major world issue.

In addition to sharpening Spanish skills, students report an increased awareness of social and political concerns, as well as a clearer idea of how their past has shaped their thinking. In these evaluations, we see students reflecting on their backgrounds in small, rural, and homogenous communities, something particularly important at a regional, Midwestern, private institution like Butler University:

> Before this class, I had no experience with IPS (Indianapolis public schools) and little experience with ESL students since my high school in southern Indiana was not what I'd call diverse. The students that I met were amazing, bright, and for the most part, diligent. This class opened my eyes to the inequities these students face. Classroom discussions got me to really think about the nation I call home and the beliefs of those around me. I really enjoyed this course.

> This class opened my eyes to the challenges of Latinos in the United States that I would have never thought about otherwise, particularly the topic of bilingual education.

> I really liked this class it achieves a lot of things. 1. Helps the Spanish-speaking students w/o having IPS (Indianapolis public schools) pay for help, 2. Provides a wonderful opportunity for many Butler University students that are sheltered and raised in rural towns to see what public and urban society is like, 3. Betters our Spanish skills in all aspects. I enjoyed this class a lot and encourage to have more sections available for students. There are zero disadvantages of taking this class.

In other student comments, we hear an appreciation for linking theory and practice, and an articulation of gains in critical thinking:

> I really enjoyed this class. More than any other class, it actually allowed me to think in a more creative and critical manner.

> Overall, this course was exceptional! I learned so much about Hispanic culture, American politics, Spanish language, and myself. There is really nothing that I would change. The combination of outside experience in IPS (Indianapolis public schools), readings, and writings perfectly complemented one another. I will miss this class.

> This is my favorite class ever! One of the most useful things I learned is to look critically at the world around me and not accept that which I know is morally wrong. Other classes tell us that we should look critically at the world, but this one actually makes us. In tutoring the ESL students—I learned so much that I know I could not have learned any other way. I think you should really promote this class to majors and non-majors alike. Tell them that for all of the times they feel frustrated with their Spanish, there are twice as many where they will feel victorious and proud!

> Never have I had a class at any point in my life that has affected me as much as this class has. I have learned what it means to be part of a community. I have also grown as a person.

Many students offer evidence that service-learning increases their civic engagement. They clearly express motivation to continue working in the community beyond the course requirement:

> I truly enjoyed this class. I loved that it got me involved in the community. I've finally found volunteer work that I actually like!

> I will continue to volunteer with the Latino students throughout the spring semester. This was the most valuable Spanish class I have ever taken! Between the contact with native speakers and a focus on serving others—what a great way to foster personal perspective!

> This class has really opened my eyes to the experience of the Latino community. I will continue working in the community because of this class.

Service-learning teaches students that learning involves surprise and risk, that by focusing on goals beyond a grammar checklist or maintaining a 4.0 average, paradoxically, you will achieve and succeed more. They change what they "want" as students and learn about themselves as people, moving from disciplinary skill acquisition to moral, civic, and critical reflection. Service-learning pedagogy enhances the teaching of Spanish communicative skills while achieving other, larger goals of a liberal arts education. Students reach for more complex grammar constructions in the writing intensive and discussion-based course, where they are motivated to communicate authentic experiences.

Universities embrace service-learning for the promises it makes: to instill democratic principles, to foster global citizenship, and to connect the ivory tower of the university with real-world concerns. In a culture obsessed with practical results and models of value, where universities are required to document and assess outcomes in quantifiable ways, Spanish language teachers should embrace the pedagogy of service-learning as an effective way to meet these new demands while still preserving the dignity and spirit of a liberal arts education and providing excellent disciplinary instruction in Spanish. It is also a way to provide local immersion experiences for language students.

Not only do students benefit from service-learning by complicating their view of the world and the role of language in shaping social realities, but so do the institutions involved. For example, the numbers generated by our Spanish service-learning course are as follows: we have had 370 student participants since 2001, which translates to 8,880 hours of tutoring that Butler University students have provided to Indianapolis Public Schools. The whole model speaks directly to the imperative that we demonstrate the relevance of the humanities and language learning, while still meeting the data-driven demands of a tightly managed budget. Service-learning pedagogy allows us to make language and literature learning practical in ways that administrators and boards of trustees can appreciate; yet, it remains one of the most radical and transformational

pedagogies available to professors. Service-learning connects theory and practice, academics and the real world, and cognitive and affective modes of learning and thinking, all in ways that are both intangible and quantifiable.[8]

Combining service-learning with second language acquisition makes overall learning more effective. When students are learning a language, while immersed in the overlapping and messy constellation of orbits (e.g., moral, political, cultural) that shape and define human life, they are leaving behind the sterile environment of the text-based foreign language classroom and jumping into "real life" where native speakers are. Teaching service-learning in Spanish in the United States has attendant complications: where you will find a population of Spanish-speakers, you will likely become entangled with other aspects of the speakers' identities. The students are not simply conversation partners but rather human agents navigating a specific set of circumstances that often include poverty, immigration issues, and educational barriers. Service-learning in Spanish prevents students from maintaining a merely utilitarian relationship to their language study. Whether as global tourists or sanitized Spanish-speakers who invite a business colleague for a beer, these students are learning about ways that language implicates speakers by inscribing them in political, racial, and class-based debates and divides (Carney 2004).

In his MLA "Agenda for the Future," Berman (2011) calls for a universal bilingualism—the United States is far behind Europe in this regard—and points out that learning a second language enhances one's skills in the first language. As language teachers, we know from experience that mastery of a second language improves one's grasp of the first. Learning a foreign language is also widely believed to enhance cognitive growth in all areas, something many Spanish–English immersion schools are counting on. Berman laments a "tragic monolingualism" in the United States and calls for MLA members to actively work in their communities to promote the teaching of foreign language at all levels of the educational ladder, from kindergarten through university instruction. Since 9/11, there has been increased awareness in the United States of the urgency of learning about other cultures, but most of the efforts have focused on areas of less-studied languages like Arabic. Again, the argument is utilitarian and not one of improved critical thinking regardless of language, which Berman urges us to correct in the public discourse.

As part of our "Service-Learning in Spanish" course, I had the opportunity to work closely with the principal and teachers of a local, public, Spanish–English dual immersion magnet school, where my students and I helped promote and support the program in a community that had not readily embraced the value of bilingualism. Many parents, who were predominantly from an economically depressed area of the city, saw Spanish as a threat, and worried that their children would fall behind in English. Using research-based information about the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, and the assurance by researchers that learning a second language does not diminish capacity in the native one, we were able to convince some parents to keep their children in the school instead of moving them out of the magnet. We were also able to attract Latino families to a school that would provide their children with a supportive and Spanish-friendly environment. My participation in this school's success enacts the goals of my disciplinary organization, satisfies my need to connect my scholarship with the local community, and reflects well on my institution. Academic and university leaders are increasingly committed to such partnerships, and the protean nature of service-learning allows it to be many things to many different people.

Service-learning is one way to reconcile the paradoxes that define our current situation, one that crystallizes in the changing profile of academic leaders: "[C]ollege presidents are no longer moral philosophers but rather 'mediators, managers and chief executives, rather than the moral philosophers of yore'" (Liu 2008: 35). At my institution, we had ten years with a president who held a PhD in Victorian literature and wrote his dissertation on Oscar Wilde. He was replaced this year with a new president with an MBA and an entrepreneurial spirit and vision. I am confident our new president will be impressed with the work my students are doing in the "Service-Learning in Spanish" course. It is my hope that colleagues in Spanish and other languages consider adopting a service-learning course to increase the rigor of their language

programs, enhance the profile of the humanities through meaningful community partnerships, and strengthen their sense of intellectual engagement both in and out of the classroom.

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NOTES

[1] Perloff (2004), in the chapter of her book titled "Crisis in the Humanities?: Reconfiguring Literary Study for the Twenty-first Century," wrestles with the varied definitions that undergird the humanistic enterprise, noting that ideals, such as 'truth' and 'beauty,' are in flux.

[2] In the literature on service-learning, the terms 'moral' and 'ethical' often are used interchangeably, sometimes appearing as 'moral/ethical.' In this field, these terms generally reference a student's development of citizenship in relation to laws and other social codes of conduct, including a personal code of what is right and wrong. I do not use the term to refer to any specific religious tradition.

[3] Contrary to Boyer's (1990) vision of scholarship, the choice of the professor or the student to engage in service-learning constitutes a risk. There is still no guarantee that institutions will properly reward service-learning endeavors, and anything labeled as pedagogical or public still suffers from second-class syndrome in the academy.

[4] Economic crisis turns departments and colleges into standardized units forced to compete with each other, and, therefore, makes us all vulnerable to a normalizing effect that erodes the unique contours of individual disciplines. This is not to be confused with interdisciplinarity, which relies on clearly defined individual disciplines.

[5] For further discussion on this question, see Villa (2002).

[6] Examples of common abbreviations I use when marking a first-round of papers include "Vt" (*tiempo verbal*) and "con" (*concordancia*).

[7] The comments are included in this essay as originally written by the students, including some punctuation and grammar irregularities, although some minor modifications were made for clarity.

[8] Boyer (1990, 1996), pioneer in connecting the ivory tower to the community, suggested that the scholarship of teaching and learning is uniquely positioned to translate the chaotic and complex beauty of the humanities to chart-reading, financial-minded administrators (see also Jaschik 2011).

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