

### Book Review

**Jann Purdy, Editor (2018) *Language Beyond the Classroom: A Guide to Community-Based Learning for World Language Programs*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.**

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*Language Beyond the Classroom: A Guide to Community-Based Learning for World Language Programs* “aims to offer itself as a how-to guide for implementing and evaluating community-engagement programs for a variety of languages,” according to the editor, Jann Purdy (p. 3). Chapters are organized into three sections focusing on how to implement, promote, and broaden service-learning curricula in university language courses and the communities they serve. Each chapter describes how service-learning was integrated into the course (either as an innate part of the course or add-on afterwards), the projects undertaken, and the benefits to stakeholders that resulted from the work. Course syllabi, reading lists, and assessment instruments are included at the end of most chapters. The goal is to provide teachers new to service-learning and community engagement with the information and resources necessary to make informed choices about how to design engaged teaching and learning opportunities for students in their courses.

Although language educators new to service-learning are the book’s primary audience, the contributing authors are seasoned scholars describing curricula they have developed over many years. The professional literature is filled with service-learning success stories by recent converts and true believers anxious to share their stories and secure their place in academia. But this collection wasn’t produced at first blush; it’s a thoughtful reflection on praxis by senior scholars in engaged language pedagogy. Collectively, the book presents over 50 years of engaged language pedagogy, with some programs such as the one described by Anna Alsufieva and William Comer at Portland State University in existence for almost a decade. Seven years is about average, but even the newcomers in the collection draw on four years or more of time-tested wisdom in fine tuning their courses. There are few disciplines that can match this level of expertise in service-learning, and it is particularly fortunate for my colleagues in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and SLAT (Second Language Acquisition and Teaching) that much of the curricula described is not language-specific, and so it can easily be adapted to teaching English, Spanish, Arabic, or Chinese in foreign language settings.

For example, in “Transcending Classrooms, Communities, and Cultures: Service-Learning in Foreign Language Teaching Methods Courses,” Amy George, Alexandra Reuber, and Kyle Patrick Williams describe a model for implementing service-learning into “all foreign language methods courses,” not just the Spanish and French courses at Tulane that ground their discussion (p. 77). To further illustrate the need to adapt curricula to specific teaching and learning environments, a central theme in the edited collection, the courses described in this chapter have graduate and undergraduate offerings, so course requirements, assignments, and community expectations must all be adjusted to meet the students’ varying levels of linguistic, social, and civic competencies. The list of recommendations the authors provide at the end of their chapter for readers interested in implementing similar programs at their school is the type of advice I wish was available when I first started integrating service-learning into my teaching.

Similarly, I found Theresa Schenker and Angela Kraemer’s chapter on “Key Aspects in Program Design, Delivery, and Mentoring in World Language Service-Learning Programs” useful in my current position teaching English as a foreign language in Kuwait. Drawing on over a decade of experience each in service-learning program administration, the authors describe the common challenges of working with children, novice teachers, and college student peer mentors in sustainable, incremental, and effective ways. Although my university in Kuwait isn’t as well established as Yale or Michigan State University, where the authors respectively work, we have English, world language, translation, applied linguistics, and community outreach programs that aspire to inspire preK to college collaborations among faculty, staff, and students. The authors’ good advice to start with “one project to avoid overwhelming any participants” was perfectly pitched to many language programs around the world, including my own, wondering whether or how to implement service-learning on their campuses (p. 38).

Several chapters in the book focus on programs providing immigrant and refugee services, topics that should resonate with many practitioners in the US and abroad where

geopolitical, economic, and/or natural disasters have brought linguistically and culturally diverse populations to the community and students with disrupted educational backgrounds to campus. In Section II—How to Promote Service-Learning Programs—the contributing authors discuss outreach to immigrant communities in the US. Christine Coleman Núñez discusses how to raise students' cross-cultural awareness and understanding by having them write about their service and reflect on how their personal interactions with "Others" challenges popular cultural or ethnic stereotypes. Delphine Gras continues with this idea in her chapter, "How to Promote Cultural Awareness through Service-Learning in a Non-Required Course," arguing, as others have (Perren, Grove, & Thornton, 2013; Whittig & Hale, 2007), that having students serve as cultural ambassadors of the target language, particularly when working with children, can enhance their self-esteem and linguistic confidence. In the final section and chapter of the book, Irène Lucia Delany and Agnès Peysson-Zeiss describe a distance service-learning program that connected advanced French students at two American universities with Congolese bloggers at Maman Shujaa Media Center. The students translated 1-2 blogs a week for a non-profit organization, World Pulse, which helped distribute the blogs to a larger audience and raise awareness of women's issues and local community concerns in the Congo. The authors describe how the distance-service project developed from earlier, direct-service projects to immigrant communities that struggled to bridge academic and community schedules. Connecting to target-language communities via the Internet solved this problem, yet retained the sense of being part of something larger (Wurr & Hamilton, 2012) that is often lost when serving remotely.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the wealth of practical information contained within the collection, the reader may wonder at some editorial decisions such as the inclusion of syllabi and supplementary materials at the end of each chapter. While potentially useful to some as a reference, these supplemental materials comprise nearly a third of the entire book. Personally, I would rather have three more chapters to add to the scant nine in the collection than syllabi and assessment materials so contextually specific that they are of limited use to others, even when adapted. This is particularly true when considering the rather hefty list price of the book.

Having edited a few collections myself, I know one of the hardest tasks for the editor(s) is arranging manuscripts in a logical fashion so ideas develop across chapters and sections. The organizational plan developed in the three

sections of this collection is to implement, promote, and broaden service-learning curricula in university language courses. This sounds good in the abstract, but the chapters in each section do not develop the theme much and could probably be moved about without much of a loss to the overall coherence of the book, particularly in the last two sections. But these minor quibbles aside, *Language Beyond the Classroom* makes a meaningful contribution to the robust professional literature on service-learning in language classes and curricula.

#### References

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