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Gaining Proficiency in French Through Service Learning: An Action Research Project with Secondary French Students in California and Secondary Students in a French School in France

Stephanie R. Richards
Dominican University of California

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Stephanie Richards

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Signature Sheet

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Stephanie Richards   December 1, 2016
Candidate   Date

Madalienne F. Peters, Ed.D.   December 1, 2016
Program Chair/Thesis Advisor   Date

Robin Gayle, Ph.D., MDIV, MFT   December 1, 2016
Acting Dean   Date
School of Education & Counseling Psychology

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

Engaging in service learning at the high school level in a world language classroom is integral to gaining oral proficiency in the target language. Service learning helps students to see the practical application of the language and it increases student motivation. In many high schools, students have limited opportunities to engage in authentic experiences, use the target language outside of the classroom or with native speakers and they cannot envision practical application for the language. Through the implementation and evaluation of this service-learning project this study aims to increase the opportunity to use French in authentic situations and therefore increase the students' oral proficiency.

A review of the literature revealed that the more students interact in authentic situations the higher oral proficiency rates, augmenting motivation and helping students to see the connections between learning language and its usefulness in the real world. This is a qualitative study that examines students' perceptions of their increased French language proficiency after experiences with native speakers in a variety of contexts including speaking one-on-one with native speakers, a lesson in sports from a native speaker and communicating virtually and a-synchronistically with students in France. The secondary students are from a fourth year French class at an urban high school who are corresponding with French literature students at a public French high school. Results indicated that students have an increased awareness of the magnitude of the French speaking community; they are able to make connections between language learning and the global community, and they have increased motivation and engagement when learning through this model of teaching.

Keywords: French, secondary, service learning, experiential learning, oral proficiency, high school, authentic learning, communicative competence

Chapter 1 Proficiency in French

Language instruction has evolved considerably in the past few decades. Many language instructors describe the changing methodologies of language instruction by describing the imaginary pendulum swinging from one method of instruction to another. One means of language learning that is comprehensible to anyone is that of having first hand experiences with speakers of the language and trying to interact with the language community. This idea of experiential learning is in part what fuels this research: gaining oral proficiency in French through service learning. Learning through community service is experiential, it is also altruistic and civic; it is based in communication, the community and in this way the experience becomes multicultural. Imagine the gamut of scenarios that may inspire a student's learning through community interaction: a young woman learning Spanish and going to her local State university. She has her first experience ever helping and working with her community through a course in which students support recent immigrants with the English language and helps them to prepare for a citizenship exam. She uses her knowledge of Spanish language, however novice and together her and her students make headway; they build rapport; she learns how to navigate the city, she learns about her local government and she learns something about the 21 different countries her students come from. This ignites her passion to learn more, to help as much as possible, to understand her privilege in this world and what good she can do with that. This is the opportunity that working in the community can afford a young person. This is meaningful and engaging work.

Statement of Problem

Students in the world language classroom are not exposed to enough experience with the target

language and often don't have experience with native speakers to inspire their learning. Students

at the secondary level have little opportunity to engage with the greater French community and

lack opportunities to interact with community members. Service-learning seeks to offer the

French language students an opportunity to engage with native speakers in the global community

through authentic interactions with the language. These opportunities are more readily available

to secondary Spanish students but they are possible for French students if one is willing to look

for those that we can serve in the global community.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to look closely at the benefits of service learning in the French

language classroom. It distinguished if this type of learning experience supports the world lan-

guage standards of communities and communications and if it supports oral proficiency in the

target language. Furthermore this teacher action research project was to offer students an oppor-

tunity to work with the global community interacting in French.

Research Question

How does the service-learning experience support the World-Readiness standards of Communi-

cations and Communities? How does the service-learning experience support proficiency in the

target language? How does this type of participation add to students' interest and engagement in

the class? Although it seems obvious to some that this type of experiential learning supports the

language standards, it is important to formally and scientifically look at the outcomes of partici-

pating in the service-learning experience.

Theoretical Rationale

Attributing value to work helps students to engage, and increases motivation to learn (Marcum 2014). Engagement Theory as it relates to education is based in student choice, direct participation, collaborative problem-solving, and communication. Engagement through service learning to help students learn a foreign language has been researched and documented, as in the work of Falce-Robinson and Strother (2012). Their research shows that in academics in general and in language learning, engagement is a motivating factor. Service learning is an inherently engaging curriculum to employ in the foreign language classroom as students are motivated to achieve cultural understanding and linguistic proficiency. Student work is meaningful and they gain experience in the community, which may help them to make connections beyond language learning.

Connections made in service-learning projects are intended to shape participants' lives and motivate them to learn and use the target language. In an effort to engage students in meaningful and authentic work, to better understand the target culture, and to better speak the target language, the researcher of this study integrated a service-learning experience in the foreign language classroom.

Assumptions

In the current research, it is assumed that service learning leads to increased student motivation and engagement. Students who are motivated may tend to increase communicative competence in French, as a result of this experience. School to school engagement may foster one's commitment to building community and help students to better understand the target culture. It is

also assumed that the concept of service learning can expand to fit a broad context— that of

promoting cohesion between communities.

Background and Need

Most published research on service learning and foreign language focuses on post-secondary education. Furthermore, most studies in the United States target Spanish speaking service-learning experiences.

French Service-Learning Programs in Higher Education

Authentic learning opportunities in the language classroom can be achieved through the service learning experience (Grim, 2010). This is a qualitative study with 25 students in a Colorado university. Qualitative data were gathered from reflective journals and quantitative data were gathered from responses to a questionnaire administered to these students designed to identify the following: learning motivation, professional aspiration and their role of civic commitment. Further data were obtained from weekly journals, and one-on-one interactions between the students and the teacher. Results of this study included expanded language proficiency, particularly vocabulary, and increased student motivation. This study nurtured a real-world purpose in language use, impacted students' thoughts about their professional and career choices, promoted their self-esteem, and increased their civic engagement.   These findings are important to the present study because Grim describes some of the challenges of designing a service-learning program of this scope, collecting data about second language proficiency and offers insight to designing service-learning experiences for the French language specifically.

Summary

There is a need for increased student engagement in the secondary French classroom and increased opportunity for engagement with native speakers. Service learning as a concept is limit-

ed in the research to programs in higher education. Service learning has a place in secondary education as a pathway to communicative competence and civic engagement. Chapter 2 explores the research literature about the place of service learning within language education and building communicative competence through service learning and experiential learning.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Introduction

This section is an examination of the research literature on learning French through service learning projects. Information was gathered from academic library searches using online resources. Research information is organized in the following categories: Historical Context, Review of the Academic Research, Interview with an Expert; French service-learning programs in higher education, Spanish service-learning programs in higher education, service-learning programs in secondary education, service-learning programs in higher education (non-language focus) and frameworks for designing service-learning experiences.

Historical Context

Service learning is a means to achieve specific learning goals in a creative and engaging way. Connections between service and learning can be seen in the philosophies, studies and practices of Ghandi and Friere (Ebacher, 2013), Addams, Martin Luther King Jr., and Dewey (Busch, 2016). Offering service to the community enhances learning because it is based in actual life experiences (Ebacher, 2013) thus increasing student interest and motivation to learn.   As Falce-Robinson and Strother (2012) discuss, when motivation increases, students' proficiency in the target language increases as well. From this foundation of service learning one can reach and achieve specific student learning outcomes by way of authentic and interpersonal interactions. For the language learner, when these interactions are based in the target language one is not only fulfilling the vision of the aforementioned scholars and philosophers but also achieving core national language standards based in communities and communication, as reported by the Ameri-

can Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2015).

Review of Academic Research

Spanish Service-Learning Programs in Higher Education

Authentic Dialogue in the target language can be achieved through the service learning experience (Tacelosky, 2008). This study reviews a service-learning program in an intermediate-level Spanish course at a small Midwestern liberal arts college. The students had an opportunity to choose between a variety of settings and activities to fulfill their service-learning experience. Data were obtained from the liberal arts college and the students' reflection journals to link authentic dialogue with the national standards. Results showed that service learning supports the Communities, Communication, and Cultures standards [hereafter referred to as 'Standards'] (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2015) for language learning. Because the focus of the present study is primarily seeded in oral competency in French and the students achieving their student learning outcomes based in the Standards, (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2015) this study positively supports these possible outcomes.

The service-learning experience can be effective in supporting the intended learning outcomes for Spanish students (Bettencourt, 2015). This action research project is a qualitative study with 12 students that are Spanish majors and minors in a small, public liberal arts university in the southeastern United States.   "Data were obtained from students' oral journals, mid - and end-of-semester student surveys, and one semi-structured focus group conversation

and semi-structured individual interviews with community partners" (Bettencourt, 2015, p. 477).

Among a variety of results, specific results indicated that the student learning outcomes

supporting the Standards were achieved consistently through the service-learning experience.

Furthermore, the author noted that beyond the student learning outcomes the experience

supported professional skills. This finding is important to the present study because Bettencourt

identifies the Standards that are most consistently achieved through the experience, those that

were not met, and the specific tasks that helped the students to learn.   Furthermore, Bettencourt

employs a model of reflection during the service-learning experience that may be useful to the

current study.

Integrating service-learning in the Spanish language classroom can serve as a model for

other service learning projects (Caldwell, 2007). This case study is a qualitative study in a third-

year Spanish conversation course with five students that are Spanish majors or minors at "a small

public liberal arts university" (p. 446). Data were obtained via a preservice questionnaire,

reflection journals, a post-service questionnaire in the target language and direct observation.

Results indicated that the experience promoted critical thinking, civic engagement, motivation,

self-confidence, cultural sensitivity and augmented proficiency in the target language. This is

important to the present study because Caldwell outlines a methodology to follow when

preparing a service-learning experience on a large scale, and shows that the Standards as student

learning outcomes can be met through this type of experience. Furthermore, Caldwell gives his

post-service questionnaire in the target language, which is a consideration for the current study.

Caldwell further quotes the scholar Friere grounding the case study in a history of service to the

community, as does the current study.

In a language course an important factor of gaining language proficiency is the motivation of the students to learn; service learning makes learning meaningful and motivating. (Falce-Robinson & Strother, 2012) This is a review of two service-learning programs that integrate study abroad. These programs take place at two major universities in Southern California. These programs involve students with Spanish majors. Data were obtained in for this study via questionnaires, surveys and reflection journals. The results emphasize the importance and magnitude of planning that is involved in organizing service-learning programs of this stature along with identifying objectives, assessment and processes of evaluation that have a successful program. Results also clearly link motivation as an important variable in second language learning and how these programs have increased student motivation. Other results show how students achieved their pre-stated student learning outcomes and greater communicative competence. The article is important to the present study because it builds a clear connection between service-learning programs and student motivation, which ultimately result in achieving student learning outcomes.

Service-Learning Programs in Secondary Education

A promising practice in secondary education to both promote student achievement and help reach the Standards is service learning; in this way, it is important to identify the elements of high school service learning programs (Dymond, Renzaglia & Chun, 2008). This study is a review of 62 secondary service-learning programs to identify the elements of service-learning programs and the frequency of each element. Data were obtained through a search of various databases using specific criteria: finite search terms, a specific range of publication dates, peer-reviewed journals, and language that the program was published in. Results showed that from

these 62 articles 12 elements for service-learning programs emerged and three elements occurred

most frequently: student participation, action and reflection. The article study further revealed

that although reflection was mentioned frequently this element did not lead to improved

outcomes in the programs. The study also identified the limited attention to assessment and

thought this was of particular concern. The relevance to the current study is primarily based in

the identification of the elements most commonly found in service-learning programs. The

elements identified in this article will serve to guide the program design for the present study.

Service-Learning Programs in Higher Education (non-language focus)

Service Learning between universities and high schools has the potential to build connections

within the community and create academic value in learning (MacLellan, 2009). This is a

practice-based case study between Reversion University students in an upper-level course and

grade 12 urban high schools in Toronto. Data were obtained through three reflective assignments

that looked at the university students' perception of the high school, a reflection of a group-led

activity at the high school and an analysis of the experience. Results show that service-learning

connects real-world problems and offers students an opportunity to have practical experience in

the community. A further benefit for these urban high school students was the demystification of

university system and a connection and experience with the university.   This study is relevant to

the present study for identifying the value of service learning at the secondary level.

Frameworks for Designing Service-Learning Experiences

In researching frameworks for service-learning experiences the University of Michigan offers a

workbook for course design (Howard 2001). This workbook is a framework for   program

design whose aim is to identify the criteria for service learning, establish principles of the

practice, offer specific strategies for achieving learning objectives, exercise learning strategies and implement assessment methods. This workbook identifies three main criteria, which establish the basis for service-learning: relevant and meaningful service with the community, enhanced academic learning and purposeful civic learning. It is important to the present study by offering a jumping off place and for establishing a clear framework for the program.

Service learning and language learning share many of the same characteristics and this is why service learning is a logical extension of the foreign language classroom (Krogstad, 2008). This article outlines one way to incorporate service-learning into the classroom by giving a step-by-step approach from pre-departure activities through the reflection process. The outline is important to the present study because it gives a clear guideline to follow for the execution of this style of action research and program implementation.

In all service-learning programs' design, reflection is a key component. In Ash, Clayton and Moses' book (2009) they explain the DEAL model for critical reflection, which helps students to describe, examine, and articulate their learning through guided questions (Ash et al, 2009). This model draws from Pam Kiser's "Integrative Processing Model" (1998) and includes aspects of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) to help students critically think and reflect of the learning objectives of SL. This model offers the present study a model for reflection and a series of simple questions and action words that may be used in the target language to help students reflect on their service learning experience.

Spanish Service-Learning Program in Secondary Education: Interview with an Expert

An important way to add meaning to learning is to find ways for students to use their language skills in real life experiences. James Baptista, a Spanish teacher at a high school in northern Cal-

ifornia leads a service-learning program that sends students out into their community to teach,

learn and help in a variety of ways.   This interview was conducted on April 10, 2016. In this

particular service-learning class there were four ways in which his program facilitated experien-

tial learning; one, teaching Spanish in elementary schools; two, offering art projects in Spanish at

the local library; three, helping with interpretation at a local law school that works with the Span-

ish-speaking population and; four, offering translation and interpretation assistance at the local

community college dentistry program. This interview is relevant to the current study because it

offers insight into the variety of ways that experience might add meaning to language learning.

It also highlights the different possibilities projects that may fit into the scope of service-learning

and language programs. (Personal communication Jim Baptista April 10, 2016)

Summary

Conclusions following a review of the literature include the following. Service-learning

experiences increase student motivation, increase community engagement and expand student

thinking to include college and career opportunities, cultural awareness and insight into career

opportunities. Students build an improved connection with the community through interaction

with others. Challenges include the level of organization to set up a program of this magnitude

that includes interactions between high school students in a public school setting and high school

students in a public high school in France. Other challenges include the difficulty to quantify

changes in language proficiency prior to and following a service-learning experience.

The gaps in the literature show that few service-learning experiences are documented at the

secondary level, few service-learning experiences are documented pertaining to French in higher

education and that no service-learning experiences are documented in the literature about French at the secondary level in the United States. Therefore, the present study addresses several of these gaps and serves as a program model for creating an experience that fosters language ability and civic engagement.

The current study adds to the knowledge in this area by implementing and reviewing a service-learning experience at the secondary level in French. Further things to consider are that the current project may not fit under the definition of academic Service Learning as proposed by Michigan journal of community service learning which require three criteria be met (Howard, 2001).   Thus, one may argue this is not an official service-learning endeavor but instead just an opportunity for serving a global community and an opportunity for experiential learning.

Chapter 3 Method

Research Approach

This teacher action research project is a qualitative study. I am the teacher of record, hereafter referred to as researcher, for a 4th year French class at a senior high school in an affluent school in an area north of San Francisco. The research method involves a collection of data through, observation, discussion and post project student self-evaluation of his/her competence in this exchange experience.

An action research project is an appropriate approach for this study as the researcher seeks to allow the students to experience learning and speaking with native French speakers in a variety of contexts. It allows also for a qualitative approach to data gathering and freedom to use a variety of potential language learning experiences. The researcher recognizes the rarity of documented experiential learning endeavors with secondary French students and seeks simply to explore this realm and possible benefits for secondary students. This approach takes into account the importance of collecting data in the natural settings of the classroom. Building experiences for high school students in advanced French classes is likely not new in its practice but is new in its documentation. Most previous educational research data are collected about college students using Spanish as the target language. This study is an adaptation of a service learning experience described as follows: a single video with 6 chapters whose goal is to help students in France to understand the American political system specifically the presidential elections, who can become president, the electoral college, the branches of government, the political parties, some important

past presidents and how the media covers the presidential elections. This study also includes two other experiential learning activities leading up to the creation of the videos in order to expose the students to communicating with native speakers 1) a lesson in Pétanque with a French native and 2) two 10 minute conversational sessions with native speakers 1 with a French native and the other with a French-speaking Suisse native. All activities took place within the typical high school context during the school day for the importance of increasing student language proficiency and interconnections with other students and adults in French speaking communities.

Ethical Standards

This paper adheres to the ethical standards for protection of human subjects of the American Psychological Association (2010). Additionally the proposal was reviewed by the researcher's thesis advisor and approved.

Sample and Site

The researcher worked with 18 French language students in a public high school north of San Francisco in California in an urban setting. The school had 1,635 enrolled in grades 9-12 and students at the school were 90% college bound. The school was 55% white, 24% Latino, 12.2% Asian, 8.4% Black/African American, 2.2% Pacific Islander and .6% American Indian; according to the school's website and school profile. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges accredit the school since 1999. The students in this class were between fifteen and eighteen years of age. Fifteen students spoke English as a first language. Two students spoke French as a first language and one student spoke German as a first language. Many students spoke second languages including Spanish and Vietnamese. The students were in a mixed fourth year

academic and Advanced Placement course. They corresponded with a group of 11th grade high school students from a public high school in a semi-rural setting in the southeast of France. These French students were in an academic pathway "ES" class that specializes in economics and social science. In their class there were 29 students comprised of 16 girls and 13 boys all 16 years old. All students spoke French as their first language although some students came from a Maghreb background and also spoke Arabic.

Access and Permissions

The researcher worked with her students during class time. Through the researcher's connections at the University she was able to connect with a high school teacher of French literature in France. The teacher of literature in France equally worked with a colleague who teaches government and economics. All of the students were working with the teacher of record at their respective schools during school hours. The researcher initiated connection with this teacher via email and was able to access her students through virtual correspondence. The teacher in France facilitated the video correspondence during her class time, as did the researcher. The students used the video recording program of their choice to virtually correspond about a topic that was appropriate to help the students in France advance in their educational goals. The researcher and the teacher in France corresponded for approximately 8 weeks before deciding on a topic and a manner by which to produce videos that would be most appropriate for her class. Data Gathering Procedures included observation of the students during the class period, discussion and a post-project student reflection survey.

Measurement

Data were collected through three forms of measurement including researcher observation of the students, class discussion and a post project survey of the students. The researcher focused on two of the world-readiness standards for learning languages— Communication et Communities (ACTFL, 2015).   Moreover, the research looked for evidence of the speakers communicating effectively in the target language "…in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes" (ACTFL 2015. p.43). The Communities standard focused on the ability to interact with cultural competence in order to participate in multilingual communities. More specifically the researcher measured if the interactions with the native community helped the students to better understand the target language culture and if it influenced student engagement and motivation.

The data collected were qualitative in nature. The researcher observed the Pétanque lesson given by a French native, the face-to-face conversational practice with the native speakers and the asynchronous communications between the researcher's students and the students in France. The post survey included a series of questions focusing on the ACTFL standards of Communications and Communities. The results of the observations, and survey were collected and considered to determine if authentic interaction with native speakers improves oral proficiency in the target language while satisfying the ACTFL standards of Communications and Communities.

Data Analysis Approach

By looking at the deficits in the language classroom such as minimal interaction with native speakers and little opportunity to work in the larger community the researcher considers the

implementation of these factors in the language classroom to help motivate the students to learn and improve their communicative competence. Data gathering was primarily subjective and qualitative, however, the self-evaluation questions were created from the National Standards in Foreign Language Education (2015) and validated that the action research project was standards-based. The research questions prepared by the researcher focused on the Communications and Communities standards with a minor focus on motivation. The full format of the questionnaire is included here.

Self-Evaluation Questions

Student Evaluation of Experiences

When answering the following questions please consider the previous exercises:

Pétanque lesson with a French native

20 minutes speaking with native speakers (10 minute blocks)

Creating videos on the American political system for French students

Receiving videos on the French political system.

Other activities in French class (please specify)

Please be specific in saying how the activities have or have not helped you by explaining in what way they have helped (i.e. to communicate conversationally, to understand French, to help with written expression, with pronunciation they haven't helped because…etc.)

Questions for native speakers:

(You may answer in French or English)

What is your perspective on how French class has helped your non-native French-speaking peers communicate in French?

What insights have you gained about cultures other than your own?

Other comments about French class in general?

Your reflections on activities in class?

What connections has French allowed you to make outside of simply practicing French?

Self-Evaluation Questions for Non-native Speakers

Student Evaluation of Experiences

When answering the following questions please consider the previous exercises:

Pétanque lesson with a French native

20 minutes speaking with native speakers (10 minute blocks)

Creating videos on the American political system for French students

Receiving videos on the French political system.

Other activities in French class (please specify)

Please be specific in saying how the activities have or have not helped you by explaining in what way they have helped (i.e. to communicate conversationally, to understand French, to help with written expression, with pronunciation they haven't helped because…etc.)

Questions

(Communications Goal) How has the class helped you to better speak French?

(Motivational Goal) How has the class helped you to increase your motivation to communicate or comprehend French?

(Communities Goal) How has the class helped you to communicate and interact with a better understanding of the culture?

What connections has French allowed you to make outside of simply learning French?

Other comments about what has or hasn't helped you to communicate in French?

Other comments about French class in general?

Chapter 4 Findings

Description of Site, Individuals, Data, Interactions

Before this project began the researcher noticed that there was a cultural divide in the class and that this was in fact eliminated during the first session when all students got together for the Pétanque lesson. Prior to that, the two French speaking students were separate from the rest of the class. When splitting up to play teams for Pétanque there was a moment where the students split naturally into teams of boys and girls. The girls welcomed the French speaking girl into their group and the boys welcomed the French speaking boy. This, in turn, created a new bond between the male group and the female group in the class beyond simply the language divides.

Also significant, was that during the process of going through the two conversation speaking sessions, the native French speakers in the class and the non-native students seemed to become more at ease speaking with one another and the non-native speakers became more at ease about having native speakers around. They began to understand better their culture and their cultural practices simply having them in the class.

Age - All participants

	Boys	Girls	Ages
French school	13	16	16
American school	9	9	15-18

All participants in the study from the French school and the American school are of comparable age. The researcher's class of record was a senior high school class with students from grades 10-12 that vary in age from 15 to 18. The researcher chose to work with students of a comparable age also in a public high school setting. The students at the school in France with whom the researcher corresponded were 16 years old and in 11th grade specializing in ES (économie et social) or economics and social science.

Ethnicity - American High School
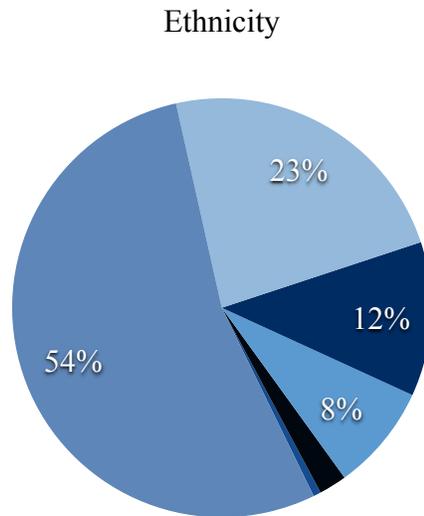
Ethnicity

The chart above shows the ethnicity at the American school. The majority of the students in this setting is white and speaks English. Only 4.8 % of the school population is English learners, an urban public school in Northern California.

Ethnicity - American High School - class specific

	Boys	Girls
White	5	7
Other, Pacific Islander	1	0
Asian Indian	1	0
Vietnamese	1	1
No Race documented	1	0
Black or African American	0	1

In the class of record in particular the student ethnicity population identified in the following way - 6 % of the class is White, .05% of the class identifies as Other or Pacific Islander, .05% of the class identifies as Asian Indian, .11% of the class identifies as Vietnamese, .05% of the class has no race documented and .05% of the class identifies as Black or African American.

Languages - American High School

	Boys	Girls
English only	5	6
Primary Language other than English or French	2	2
Primary Language French	1	1

As shown in the above chart the class has two speakers whose primary languages are French. These two students played a vital role in the preparation of the non-French speaking students as they each spent 10 minute sessions with every student in the class speaking to them about conversational topics in order to expose the students to more French.

Results

Observations

The day of the Pétanque lesson the researcher observed that the students were engaged in the activity, laughing, and enjoying playing the game. They seemed to understand the convivial nature and social aspect of the game. The students learned and used specific vocabulary that day that was essential to the game although they were not engaged in prolonged interpersonal communication with the facilitator. The researcher also observed a barrier between students break down the day of the Pétanque lesson where the native French-speaking boy was invited to join the boys group and the native French-speaking girl was invited to join the girls group. This camaraderie epitomized the social aspect of the game and underlined the community building and cultural understanding that the researcher hoped to engender with this type of activity.

When the researcher introduced the correspondence with the school in France: students were nervous and excited while they were intently working whereas they are sometimes reluctant to work if the work does not having substantial meaning. Although the students would say during class "I don't care if they don't like the video", it was obvious in their nervousness and excitement about the video production that they very much did care if that they were presenting their best efforts. The day that the finalized video was brought into class the students all excitedly gathered around the teacher's desk to try and catch a glimpse of the video.

During the 10 minute segments speaking with the native speakers in the class one student exclaimed after coming back into the room "I love speaking French!" This exclamation seemed

to solidify the excitement and motivation that the students have when engaging with native speakers.

Survey Results

The researcher created two sets of self evaluation questions; one for the two native French speakers in the class and the other, for the non-native French speakers in the class. The questions were based in the world-readiness standards and directly target the Communications and Communities goals mentioned in Chapter 3, subheading Data Analysis and approach.

The survey was conducted through Google survey so that the students were not required to log in or give their name. All of the data collected were anonymous and responses were filtered into a spreadsheet by response topic. For the benefit of the research the researcher rationalized that all responses to the survey should be in English so that the students could best express their feelings, ideas and thoughts in their native language.

Motivation Goal

	Percentage of Students
Motivated by In-Class Experiential Learning 50%	50
Motivated by other factors	50
Not Motivated	0

Half of the students in the class said that they were motivated specifically by the in-class experiential learning activities including the Pétanque lesson, conversations with native speakers and the service-learning experience with students in France. Half of the class continued to be motivated by other factors. Some of these factors included the possibility of traveling to that country, study abroad, becoming fluent in the language, to pursue future personal goals such as

politics and humanitarian work. One student's responded to the question on motivation in the following way —

> *...I realize how important it is to know another language and culture. It opens up so many more opportunities in life and really changes your perspective on the world. Communication is what bind people from all corners of the world together. It's how problems get solved and how people can work to alleviate the suffering of other people. From this class I have learned to look for the beauty in other people's lives as well as my own; be that through art, literature, cuisine, etc.*

We can see from responses like this that the statements are too vague and broad to pinpoint if the specific experiential learning and service-learning experience are what motivated the student, nevertheless, the student was motivated to learn and speak the language.

Communities Goal

	Percentage of Students
Cultural Understanding Specifically by In-Class Experiential Learning	58
Gained Cultural Understanding Through Other Factors	42
No Better Understanding of the Culture	0

The above results show that specifically through the activities with native speakers and the service-learning project the majority of students in the class were able to communicate and interact with a better understanding of the culture. Similar to the motivational goal, the researcher found that students answers to the questions were broad as opposed to specific and

that there were a variety of answers that couldn't determine precisely what had helped the

learners to better understand the target cultures. In example one response read "It has helped me

by doing fun little activities with one another and having one-on-one time with my teacher helps

me understand". Another response stated "I have learned a decent amount about French culture

and I think that has helped."

Communications Goal

	Percentage of Students
Proficiency improved through In-Class Experiential Learning	50
Proficiency improved through other factors	50
Proficiency unimproved	0

As seen above the results of the survey show that half of the learners reported specifically

improving their proficiency in French through the aforementioned activities. As with the results

from the questions regarding communities and motivation the responses to these questions were

broad and it was difficult to determine what specifically helped the students to improve their

communicative competence.

Summery of Results for the Native Speakers Survey

	Native Speaker 1	Native Speaker 2
Communication	The American students' level of French is better than the level of English of the students in France.	Communication depends on the individual effort of each student
Cultures	The cultures are very different yet an equal exchange of cultural perspectives occurs in the class	Through class discussion there we learned about American culture

	Native Speaker 1	Native Speaker 2
Connections	There were opportunities to help the American students speak, read and write and understand	Learned about the people in the class; learned about American culture

The native speakers responses revealed interesting perspectives about language learning in their countries and the United States. They found that the level of proficiency of the American students is better than that of the English students in their respective countries. Furthermore, they expressed disbelief that more students didn't take language classes. One student wrote the following *"I think that more people should take it though because I cannot believe that people just know one language and can graduate! Especially because it is fun and not annoying there is no excuse for the people that do not want to take it."*

In general their answers showed that there was ample opportunity in class to learn about each other's cultures especially through class discussion and the variety of activities in which they participate in class. The native speaking students also felt that they had helped their classmates to read, speak, and write in French.

Student Reflections

Student Self Perception

At the end of the first semester in French in a fourth year course, commonly students are reaching the point where they have an awareness of their limitations in French. They perceive themselves either as drastically far from being able to communicate in the target language after four years of study or quite advanced. This is a turning point for many students where they will

choose to continue their French studies beyond high school committing to fully learning a foreign language, or stop with high school level 4 French. The following is an example of on student's self awareness at the mid-point of the year in French 4.

> *…Out of every class at [this] school, the French course has developed me as a student-and as a person- the most. …I have not only become aware of a new language, but also strengthened my ability to look beyond Santa Rosa, beyond the life that I live, and open myself up to a new cultures…French is one of the only classes where I feel like all of the students share a sense of community and affinity for one another… allowed me to not only explore my interests…given me a free space where I can experiment with how creativity and education can work together in harmony (and even become one). Although it may sound exaggerated, I feel as though French class gave me a voice in high school that I wouldn't have had otherwise…My curiosity to go beyond the French language and connect what I have learned in class to social and humanitarian issues are also apparent. Another quality that I think that the class atmosphere has leant to me, is the chance to make mistakes and learn from them. I have always felt comfortable seeking help from my peers and my teacher in your class. It's all a part of the learning process.*

This student narrative brings to mind that that each student has a unique experience of which the teacher has a limited understanding. It suggests that it is critically important to offer these types of opportunities to provide context in which these students can have time to reflect, as this narrative indicates.

Themes

The results of the observations and survey responses were collected and considered to determine if authentic interaction with native speakers improves oral proficiency in the target language while satisfying the ACTFL standards of Communications and Communities. The researcher recognized that the questions for the student survey may have been too open-ended resulting in an inability to determine what specifically motivated the students, helped the students speak the target language and what helped them to have a better understanding of the culture.

Considering the open-ended nature of the questions, the observations, the results of the survey, the classroom climate and the rapport with students it is however, clear to the researcher that the students were thoroughly excited and welcoming of this type of experiential learning and service-learning module in the class.

Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis

Summary of Major Findings

Perspective of the French Teacher

To quantify second language proficiency gains after a service-learning project is difficult at best. Many other factors convolute this information, the primary factor being that working with human beings, as in the case of the current study, their actions, ideas and results are unpredictable. High school students often have complex lives independent of their time in school. Some students have up to five Advanced Placement classes, or may be taking classes at the community college level, each one with separate demands whereas other students may work or care for family members. Considering the social, emotional, and cognitive development of the students, to ask them to articulate and be self-aware of their language gains proves quite trying.

However, this project is not only about the students' improvement in using the French language, it also is about the experiences they have in the world. What is truly important in teaching and learning the language is having the opportunity to engage in activities beyond the classroom, to broaden students' perspectives about their world. Being a French teacher, it is easy for someone to become consumed about whether or not students are learning French; but, perhaps the question that the teacher should come back to is if the work we ask students to engage in is meaningful.

To answer the question "How does the service-learning experience support the World-Readiness standards of Communications and Communities?" the qualitative conclusion that the researcher came to is that service-learning creates a meaningful experience through which

students can experience the target language. However, the quantitative data collected showed that the proficiency gains were not necessarily influenced by this activity.   To answer the secondary research question "How does this type of participation add to students interest and engagement in the class?" it is clear that the students were more motivated and more engaged. Again, looking only at the quantitative data collected one would not have been able to come to this conclusion, but through the observations and the discussions with the class, coupled with the survey results; this was abundantly clear.

Comparison of Findings to the Literature

Study findings support the literature in that students show increased motivation, cultural awareness and show improved connection with the target community. The more students interact in authentic situation the better proficiency they will have in the target language.

Limitations/Gaps in the Research

When working in a public, secondary school setting there are many potential limitations that may arise. Those that affected the outcome of the project were the limited recording resources available and the students' inconsistency in turning in their work in a timely manner. Other limitations experienced by the researcher were the inability to quantify language proficiency before and after the project in a qualitative manner and also the lack of opportunity available for students of the French language in the immediate community. Finally, a great challenge to the researcher was the level of organization to set up and implement a program of this magnitude which includes interactions between high school students in a public school setting a high school students in a public high school in France.

Limited Resources

Because recording resources available are limited in a secondary public school setting the students were required to use their own smart phones to record their videos.   The result in doing so was little consistency between digital recordings. Whereas some videos were low-definition and granular other were high-definition, clear crisp and easy to see. One video in particular was impossible to see and so, the results were less than ideal on the final recording that the students sent to France. Ideally, the students would have resources available to check out from the school that allowed them to record visual and audio in high-definition not requiring them to use the memory on their own phones.

Student Error

High school students do not always turn in their work in a timely manner. Although a timeline was set to complete the preparation, recording, editing and sending of videos these due dates were not respected by all participants. The video recordings were actually not mastered until two weeks after the initial deadline and the videos were not sent out until almost four weeks after the intended date. That delay further delayed the students ability to fill out the evaluation form and so the final data for the project was not collected until much later than anticipated.

Assessing Language Proficiency

Further limitations in the study include the ability to quantify language proficiency before and after an experience like this. How is one to quantify language proficiency in any quantitative way? Mostly the data must be qualitative in nature. The future possibility of quantifying language proficiency before and after such a project proposes a fascinating challenge for future researchers. Although, this scale by which language teachers assess students proficiency, even

when using standards from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, is still

quite subjective.

Available Opportunities

Although there seem to be many opportunities available in for Spanish language learners, the

opportunities for French language learners are quite limited in the local community. Because

there aren't many native French speakers in the community it is difficult to find opportunities for

students to experience the target language outside of the four walls of the classroom if it is not

virtually. The time it requires for a local public high school teacher to find community

participants for a service learning experience is great and all-consuming. This commitment

could easily deter teachers from making the effort to find people in the community to work with.

Implications for Future Research

Many avenues of future research could come of a study of this measure and nature. Those whose

interests lie in language proficiency may look for a more methodical and empirical means to

quantify language proficiency before and after a like project. Others may be interested in

studying sociological or psychological impacts in a longitudinal study with those who participate

in service-learning in a foreign language.

The most important implication for future research is the necessity for teachers of world

languages in the public, secondary school system to document the work that they are doing in the

classroom that may fit under the service-learning and experiential learning umbrella.   Through

conversation with teachers in the community and the research, the researcher found many

teachers facilitate or have facilitated service-learning projects with a target language but almost

none of these are documented and published for the global community to learn from.

Overall Significance of the Study

The study contributes to the body of published works regarding service-learning and French at the secondary level about which the researcher found no published works. This model for teaching and learning offers students a context in which they can have experiences with the global community using a foreign language. It challenges youth and engages them intellectually to help them to make connections with the world at large. These connections can in turn lead to greater global citizenry, a more culturally aware community and can bridge gaps between people and cultures. This work is often reserved for post-secondary education and need not be.

About the Author

Stephanie Richards is a secondary French teacher at public high school in northern California. She is a lifetime learner who enjoys sports, travel, language, food, the outdoors and her family. She is a dedicated teacher, a sister, an aunt, a daughter and a loving partner.

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