

The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, 2015–2, 54-73

Expanding the Community and Enhancing the Experience: The Dual University Model and Web 2.0 Technologies in a Spanish Community Service-Learning Course

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Abstract

While the pedagogy of community service-learning (CSL) in Spanish has been successfully implemented in the United States for several decades, it is still common for instructors and students to encounter significant obstacles that decrease its effectiveness, such as insufficient opportunities to produce the second language (L2) and a lack of affective support. In the present study, a collaborative CSL course was designed to examine the degree to which a cross-institutional endeavor could offset these commonly observed challenges. Under this model, 28 students from two identical CSL in Spanish classes at two different institutions formed a community of practice (CoP) and interacted via Web 2.0 technologies. Quantitative and qualitative analysis reveal that students reacted favorably toward the inter-institutional endeavor and its accompanying online tasks. Specifically, students benefitted from the guaranteed outlets to practice the L2 with their peers (i.e., blogging and Skype videoconferencing) and by receiving constant encouragement from their classmates.

Keywords: blogging, CALL, communities of practice, language use, service-learning, Skype, Spanish, social networking, Web 2.0 technologies

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1. Introduction

Community service-learning (CSL), if implemented correctly, can be a transformative pedagogical tool that enhances the learning of academic content and provides students with real world experiences in K-16 settings. Especially in the past two decades, CSL has been integrated in almost all academic disciplines in higher education in the United States, from the Arts and Humanities to Science and Technology. Specifically with respect to post-secondary second language (L2)³ Spanish classes, many instructors have included CSL to offer students ample opportunities to apply their linguistic knowledge in meaningful communicative situations. Other desirable outcomes, such as an increased sense of civic responsibility and the formation of leadership skills, are observed in Spanish CSL classes

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³ Even though in the field of Applied Linguistics “second language” (L2) and “foreign language” (FL) are used to refer to two different ideas (see Faerch, Haastrup, & Phillipson, 1984), here we do not consider it necessary to make such a distinction; we will use L2 as an abbreviation for both terms.

as well. Even though it is argued that CSL can be an extremely effective practice in L2 Spanish⁴, it is also imperative to recognize that there are substantial obstacles to overcome to make the experience worth its while on the course level. Therefore, the present research explores if CSL instructors can offset some of the potentially problematic aspects of a Spanish CSL course and enhance students' CSL experience through the creation of a community of practice (CoP).

To begin, the prevalence of CSL in higher education and the benefits and challenges of CSL in post-secondary Spanish courses will be discussed. The theoretical underpinnings of CoPs will be presented and, most importantly, they will be connected to the proposed course structure, labeled the "Dual University Model." The collaborative activities via Web 2.0 and other computer-assisted language learning (CALL) technologies that make up the Dual University Model will be explained in detail—so readers have the tools to replicate the course, should they wish—, and qualitative and quantitative evidence will be provided to show how the model was successful and where improvements need to be made.

2. Advantages of Community Service-Learning

Jacoby (1996) explained that CSL is "experiential education that engages students in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities" (as cited in Tilley-Lubbs, Raschio, Jorge, & López, 2005, p. 161). The defining characteristic that sets CSL apart from other types of volunteer or internship endeavors is that students' service experiences are tied to the academic content of an on-campus course or curriculum (Giles, Honnet, & Migliore, 1991). CSL has arisen from the tenets of experiential education and constructivist theories that advocate for learning through first-hand discovery (Furco, 2001). In the past few decades many post-secondary instructors in the United States have included CSL into their classes (Sánchez-López, 2013), since this type of hands-on pedagogy provides students the opportunity to reflect on their involvement in their service, facilitating a deeper understanding academic content and community awareness.

Regarding CSL in higher education, Bowley and Meeropool (2003) claimed that, although there was significant lag time between the introduction of Dewey's (1938) Model of Experiential Learning and the inclusion of CSL in the post-secondary arena, the presence of CSL is now undeniable and abundant in the United States. In fact, Learn and Serve America (2011) reported that, based on statistics from 2009-2010, more than half of community colleges and approximately one-quarter of all universities integrate CSL in different academic curricula.

The incorporation of CSL in Spanish curricula in the United States follows similar trends observed in other disciplines in higher education. The number of Spanish programs integrating CSL has been steadily increasing since the mid-1990s and, notably, the number of Spanish courses with a CSL component has skyrocketed in the past decade (see Pak, 2013). Supported by quantitative results of an American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese survey, Hellebrandt and Jorge (2013) adamantly affirmed that community engagement, which includes CSL, has been a "growing presence in Spanish classes" and there is presently "significant activity and interest within our ranks" (p. 206-207).

Regarding the effectiveness of CSL in Spanish classes, many CSL practitioners have reported numerous and diverse benefits of the incorporation of CSL in a Spanish program. Specifically, it has been shown that CSL can facilitate the *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (ACTFL, 2006)—especially the "Communities" and "Connections" goal areas (Abbott & Lear, 2010; Hellebrandt & Jorge, 2013; Lafford, 2012; Lear & Abbott, 2008; Weldon & Trautmann, 2003), as well as proficiency gains in L2 reading, writing, and speaking (Malkin, 2010). Likewise, it has been argued that the incorporation of

⁴ While many post-secondary instructors have increasingly adopted CSL pedagogy, there are scholars that discuss the limitations of CSL in higher education (see Butin, 2006).

CSL in Spanish language classes improves students' communicative competence⁵ (Barreneche, 2011; Grabois, 2007; Mullaney, 1999; Navarro, 2012; Olazagasti-Segovia, 2004; Overfield, 1997; Salgado-Robles, 2014), attitudes toward Hispanic cultures and the learning of Spanish as an academic subject (Beebe & De Costa, 1993; Long, 2003; Morris 2001a, 2001b; Mullaney, 1999; Overfield, 1997; Pak, 2013; Varas, 2005; Varona, 1999; Wehling, 1999; Weldon & Trautmann, 2003; Zapata, 2011), willingness to communicate in Spanish (Pellettieri, 2011), and cultural awareness (Malkin, 2010; Morris, 2001a, 2001b; Zapata, 2011). Furthermore, students' sense of civic responsibility (Beebe & De Costa, 1993; Long, 2003; Rabin, 2009; Weldon & Trautmann, 2003), as well as their sense of self (Carracelas-Juncal, 2013), can blossom throughout a CSL experience. While there are several positive outcomes, it is also necessary to consider the obstacles of CSL in Spanish.

3. Challenges of Community Service-Learning

The above literature review highlights the many advantages of integrating CSL in Spanish courses. Even if an instructor invests tremendous effort in setting up fruitful relationships, inevitably there will be problems to resolve along the way, especially during the first iteration of a Spanish CSL course (see Ebacher, 2013 regarding how to establish a CSL program). It is attested that any course with a CSL component carries its own host of challenges, such as establishing and retaining viable community partnerships with which the instructor can cultivate a "reciprocal relationship" (Long & Macián, 2008, p. 173), advocating and applying for the necessary financial and institutional support it takes to launch a CSL program (Barreneche & Ramos-Flores, 2013), and the extra time commitment for students and teachers alike (Montooth & Fritz, 2006). Anticipated obstacles such as these can deter some faculty members from integrating CSL in their courses, despite the overwhelming evidence of the effectiveness of the pedagogy (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002).

In the CSL literature, studies that focus on the challenges of a CSL program are scarce (Yusop & Correia, 2013); this could be due to the desire of practitioners to emphasize the effectiveness of the pedagogy and to recount their success stories. Yet, the research should highlight the problems faced in CSL so that potential adopters are provided with an accurate picture of what CSL entails and these obstacles can be taken into account during the planning stages and throughout the CSL experience to ensure success for all involved. Two challenges that were of focus in the present investigation were (1) an inappropriate use of the target language (TL) and (2) affective obstacles.

3.1. Inappropriate use of the target language

Since a common goal of CSL in any L2 is to expose students to native speaker (NS) input and meaningful conversation in the TL, instructors must establish partnerships with community organizations that can provide appropriate linguistic opportunities for students. In the case of Spanish CSL, instructors must not assume that students will routinely use the TL simply because an organization serves the local Hispanic community. Community partners often need students who can speak both English and Spanish and who are knowledgeable about Hispanic cultures; yet, students use English to carry out the majority of their on-site duties. If students expect to frequently speak or write in Spanish at their service and then do not, they could become frustrated that they are not utilizing these skills. Along the same vein, and as explained by Lear and Abbott (2009), if an instructor neglects to appropriately inform community partners of students' linguistic abilities or course objectives, community partners could either overestimate or underestimate students' language skills; this "misalignment" could potentially place students in a difficult position in which they are either linguistically unqualified to carry out on-site tasks, or their skills are drastically underutilized. This misunderstanding can cause disappointment or dissatisfaction from community partners if students'

⁵ Communicative competence is defined as the speaker's ability to use and understand an L2 appropriately. This includes grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

language proficiency is not what was expected or desired. Therefore, a candid discussion with community partners regarding their specific needs, students' linguistic proficiency, the amount of Spanish required of students, and course objectives is warranted to ensure that all parties understand the expectations from the outset of the CSL experience (Bloom, 2008). Even if this discussion takes place, it is still possible for community partners to overestimate the amount of Spanish that students will use during the semester. Consequently, along with regular communication with community partners regarding students' performance, it is wise to integrate supplementary activities into the curriculum in order to provide students with guaranteed outlets to produce the L2 and to prepare them for real-world communicative situations.

3.2. Affective challenges

A CSL course differs from other academic experiences in many ways, especially on the affective level for participants. CSL can be a life-changing, positive endeavor for students, but it also takes them out of their comfort zones and can cause a range of emotions. Given that students are in learning environments beyond the confines of the classroom, this unfamiliar academic context can make students feel anxious. CSL courses are also open-ended in nature, which can provoke feelings of resentment or frustration, since many students prefer concrete, traditional academic experiences (Jumpstart Service-Learning Resource Guide, n.d.). For example, in one CSL course, it was observed that CSL students expressed intense emotions during class meetings, intra-group conflicts arose when students worked collaboratively on service projects, and one student developed health problems due to the stress from the class (Yusop & Correia, 2013). While students' initial negative reactions were often the source of positive, life-altering lessons, the instructors also recognized the importance of preparing for and designing strategies to handle students' emotional struggles throughout the semester.

Moreover, since many students are working with community organizations for the first time, they have not had a chance to develop the professional skills required of them. They must face real-world problems that do not have readily available solutions, and they encounter unexpected tasks on-site (Morgridge Center for Public Service, 2012). Students' underdeveloped professional skills can likewise cause difficult relationships and tensions between them and their project supervisors, which can result in added stress (Jumpstart Service-Learning Resource Guide, n.d.). Due to the demands of CSL, students would benefit from an additional level of affective support during this new academic and professional experience. To address these specific challenges, the authors integrated CoP theory and CSL through CALL and Web 2.0 technologies, all of which will be described in the following sections.

4. Communities of Practice and Web 2.0 Technologies

To intercept the obstacles of CSL in Spanish, a CoP perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) was adopted in the present investigation. A CoP is a group of individuals that "share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2013, p. 1). In order for a group to be considered a true CoP, all members must (1) possess a common *domain*, or base, of knowledge, (2) create a *community* through discussions and reciprocal assistance, and (3) are engaged in a *practice*, or activity, that unities them (Wenger, 2013). An individual can be involved in multiple CoPs simultaneously and in varying degrees, ranging from peripheral to central participation (Wenger, 1998). While the concept of "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is not incorporated in the CoP perspective adopted in the present study, "*shared repertoire, mutual engagement, and joint enterprise* [emphasis in the original]" (Van Benthuyssen, 2007, p. 120) were the critical components of the authors' working definition of CoPs.

Lave and Wenger's initial discussion of CoP revolved around how non-academic, organically-occurring communities constructed knowledge through social activity and group membership (Haneda, 2006). Since the advent of CoPs, many scholars have applied the foundations of the authors' ideas to a broad range of *academic* disciplines and contexts, and L2 learning is no exception (see Haneda,

2006 and Van Benthuisen, 2007). A CoP perspective has been utilized in different areas of L2 learning and teaching scholarship, such as L2 scholarly writing (e.g., Flowerdew, 2000), the construction of L2 identity (e.g., Morita, 2004; Toohey, 1998), and language teacher preparation (e.g., Fraga-Cañadas, 2011).

Not all academic CoPs have to meet in person. In fact, with readily available CALL and Web 2.0 technologies, various online L2 CoPs are emerging. For the past few decades CALL and Web 2.0 applications have been utilized in language learning and instruction, so that learners are provided with input-rich environments and given the opportunity to interact in and produce the L2, which are all critical ingredients for L2 acquisition to occur (Lord & Harrington, 2013). These tools are now being employed to create additional spaces for L2 CoPs to develop. As Wang and Vásquez (2012) affirmed, “[the] results of existing [L2] studies have found that Web 2.0 technologies offer language learners the potential for a *collaboration-oriented* and *community-based* learning environment” (p. 413, emphasis added).

Consequently, L2 scholars have begun to investigate how CoP theory and Web 2.0 tools can complement one another in order to capitalize on the cognitive and social benefits of both. For instance, Bouyssi (2009) detailed how a CoP evolved among French and German students through videoconferencing. He claimed that this web-based tool facilitated the transfer of intercultural competence and gave the members of the CoP multiple opportunities for L2 practice. In addition, Lord and Harrington (2013) explored if an online CoP could help students acquire native-like phones in L2 Spanish. While the quantitative results revealed that the gains of the experimental group (students involved in a CoP) did not differ significantly from the control group (students not involved in a CoP), the authors concluded that the online CoP was greatly valued by student participants and merited further exploration. The present study seeks to contribute to the growing discussion of the role of online CoPs, CALL, and Web 2.0 tools in L2 learning and teaching and, in the following section, a description will be provided of how the authors modified a traditional CSL in Spanish course by fully integrating these perspectives and resources.

5. Traditional CSL in Spanish versus the Dual University Model

In a traditional CSL in Spanish course, the CSL component has been incorporated in language classes of varying levels (e.g., Barreneche, 2011; Bloom, 2008; Pellettieri, 2011; Petrov, 2013; Zapata, 2011) as well as upper-division topic classes on translation (e.g., Ebacher, 2013), Hispanic cultures (e.g., Varas, 1999), and Business Spanish (e.g., Lear & Abbott, 2008), to name a few. Typically, a sole instructor designs the CSL in Spanish class and teaches one group of students. Students attend regular class meetings and complete a predetermined amount of hours at their service placements. Since reflection is a vital aspect of CSL (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984), Spanish CSL participants normally interact with their cohort and instructor through conversations and journaling in order to process their experiences and to gain meaning from them. In addition to reviewing what community service entails, topics of discussion in a CSL in Spanish course might revolve around real-world use of the TL, Hispanic cultures, and issues relevant to the local Hispanic community. Even though the traditional format of CSL in Spanish is often quite successful, the effectiveness of the course largely depends on external factors beyond the instructor’s control, such as service placements and specific individuals involved in community organizations. In other words, other than the careful selection of service placements, typically there are no safety nets in place in a traditional CSL in Spanish class to offset the commonly observed challenges. For instance, what happens when students do not employ the TL in the way they had hoped at their service or if their placements fall short in providing them enough direct contact with NSs of Spanish? Aside from journaling and debriefing, what strategies are in place to help students process emotionally difficult service placements, as well as those experiencing additional levels of stress and frustration with CSL?

When the present authors were preparing to teach a Spanish CSL course for the first time at their respective institutions, it was a priority to avoid the pitfalls of CSL in Spanish and provide another level of educational and affective support for students. It was also important to offer students a broader

perspective of Hispanic cultures and an opportunity to learn more about service work by connecting them with CSL participants in different geographic locations. Consequently, two professors created a CoP⁶ and designed a collaborative CSL in Spanish course using what is now labeled the “Dual University Model.”⁷ Under this structure, two Spanish CSL classes were connected through communicative activities, mainly carried out through Web 2.0 technologies, in order to provide students with guaranteed opportunities for meaningful conversational exchanges in Spanish and an additional community to help them throughout their journey in CSL.

It was of great interest to examine the effectiveness of the Dual University Model, since other cross-institutional endeavors that involved CoPs, CALL, and/or Web 2.0 technologies had yielded positive cognitive and social results (e.g., Arnold & Ducate, 2006; Arnold, Ducate, Lomicka, & Lord, 2005; Lomicka & Lord, 2004). With this in mind, the following research questions (RQs) guided the present investigation:

RQ1: How does participating in a CoP impact students’ perceptions of their oral and written abilities in the TL?

RQ2: How does a CoP in CSL in Spanish support students with the emotional component of the experience?

RQ3: How do students rate the effectiveness of the Dual University Model and its accompanying activities?

6. Methodology

6.1. Participants and description of “Spanish Service Learning”

The participating universities—one in Greenville, South Carolina, which will be referred to as “U1,” and the other in Lexington, Kentucky, which will be referred to as “U2”—are located in metropolitan areas with extensive Hispanic communities. In fact, the population of Hispanics in both South Carolina and Kentucky grew tremendously from 2000–2010—147.9% and 121.6%, respectively—and these states were among those that experienced the largest increase of Hispanic residents during the past decade (Census, 2011). The institutions offered an identical Spanish CSL course in spring 2012 entitled “Spanish Service Learning.” A total of 28 students were enrolled: 13 at U1 in Greenville and 15 at U2 in Lexington. Both classes shared a similar L2 profile, as students’ Spanish proficiency ranged from intermediate to advanced levels. The vast majority of this group had learned Spanish in a formal context; only 2 of the 28 students had acquired the TL in an informal, familiar setting. All 15 students at U2 were Spanish majors or minors; at U1, 8 students were majoring in Spanish and 5 were pursuing other degrees.⁸

Both sections of “Spanish Service Learning” shared a common syllabus, used the same textbook—*Comunidades: Más allá del aula* by Abbott (2010)—, and completed the same readings and

⁶ It is believed that students participating in the Dual University Model evolved into a CoP: they all had knowledge of the Spanish language and Hispanic cultures (*domain*), they frequently interacted via Web 2.0 technologies for support (*community*), and all were involved in CSL projects in which they communicated in Spanish and worked with regional Hispanic communities (*practice*). To clarify, members of the CoP of the present project consisted of the students and professors from the two collaborating classes. Even though a sense of community developed between these participants, community partners, and members of the Hispanic community, the latter two groups did not participate in the virtual activities and, subsequently, were not considered a part of the CoP.

⁷ The present authors created the label “Dual University Model.” Nonetheless, we do not make the claim that this is the first time two groups from different institutions have worked collaboratively together through computer-mediated communication.

⁸ Although U1 offers majors in Spanish, French, German Studies, Japanese Studies, and Chinese Studies, U1 does not offer minors in any L2.

assignments. The communal learning objectives of the class were as follows: (1) to become familiar with the local Hispanic communities, (2) to reflect on what was learned while serving the community, (3) to improve spoken and written Spanish skills through real-world interactions, and (4) to collaborate with the partner institution in order to construct a deeper understanding of Hispanic cultures in the United States. During on-campus class meetings, readings related to the Hispanic community were discussed, which included articles on immigration, healthcare, political and social programs, English as a Second Language (ESL), and other educational programs. Students also examined the effects of CSL on the acquisition of L2 Spanish, the linguistic features and cultural norms of the local Spanish-speaking communities, and the different registers of spoken and written Spanish. Importantly, there was class time devoted to the sharing of students' experiences at their services; all of these debriefing sessions were conducted in the TL.

Table 1.

Community partners in Greenville, South Carolina and Lexington, Kentucky

Type of organization	Greenville	Lexington
ESL or Spanish-immersion programs	Greenville Literacy Association	Maxwell Spanish Immersion Elementary School Dunbar High School Village Branch: Lexington Public Library
Community organizations or Hispanic outreach programs	Girl Scouts/After School Program	Ashland Henry Clay Estate
	Hispanic Alliance	Center for Family and Community Services Mary Queen of the Holy Rosary Church
Hospitals	Language Services at Greenville Memorial Hospital	Samaritan's Touch Clinic University of Kentucky Hospital
Wellness programs	Girls on the Run	YMCA: Salsa, Sabor, y Salud
	Safe Kids Upstate	

The heart of "Spanish Service Learning" were the service experiences in which students participated off-campus. A week before the semester began, students were sent a list of the established communities partners via email; they selected the projects that most interested them and ranked them according to their top three preferences. Students had a choice of working with a variety of organizations, such as hospitals, ESL programs, Hispanic outreach non-profits, and wellness organizations. Similar community partners were established in both cities, so students could compare and contrast service experiences when collaborating cross-institutionally (Table 1). Each student was required to complete a minimum of 30 hours of community service work during the semester; many surpassed this total by the end of the term. Students kept track of their service hours; on-site supervisors verified the accuracy of students' activity and submitted an evaluation of each student's performance at the end of the semester. Throughout the term, the instructors stayed in touch with all community partners to ensure that students were performing according to the supervisors' expectations. All necessary adjustments were addressed immediately.

6.2. Data

The data evaluated in the investigation were extracted from three sources: (1) student work produced in the collaborative activities, as described in the section below, (2) instructors' observations of the course, and (3) the results of an end-of-course survey administered by the instructors. These data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, as explained in the "Results" section.

6.3. Collaborative activities with Web 2.0 technologies

The class components described above that were implemented in the Spanish CSL course could have been carried out without a partnering institution. However, the instructors wanted join their classes through various forms of Web 2.0 technologies, so students could find another source of linguistic, academic, and affective support, as explained above. These collaborative online activities became the essence of the Dual University Model and, to the authors' knowledge, cross-institutional collaboration had never been implemented before in a Spanish CSL course. The instructors carefully selected and tested each technological tool prior to the course and, given the importance of learner guidance for successful implementation of instructional technology (Hubbard, 2004), students were explicitly trained on how to use all of these resources at the beginning of the semester. In the following sections, more detail is provided regarding how the interactive tasks via Web 2.0 tools were integrated in "Spanish Service Learning."⁹

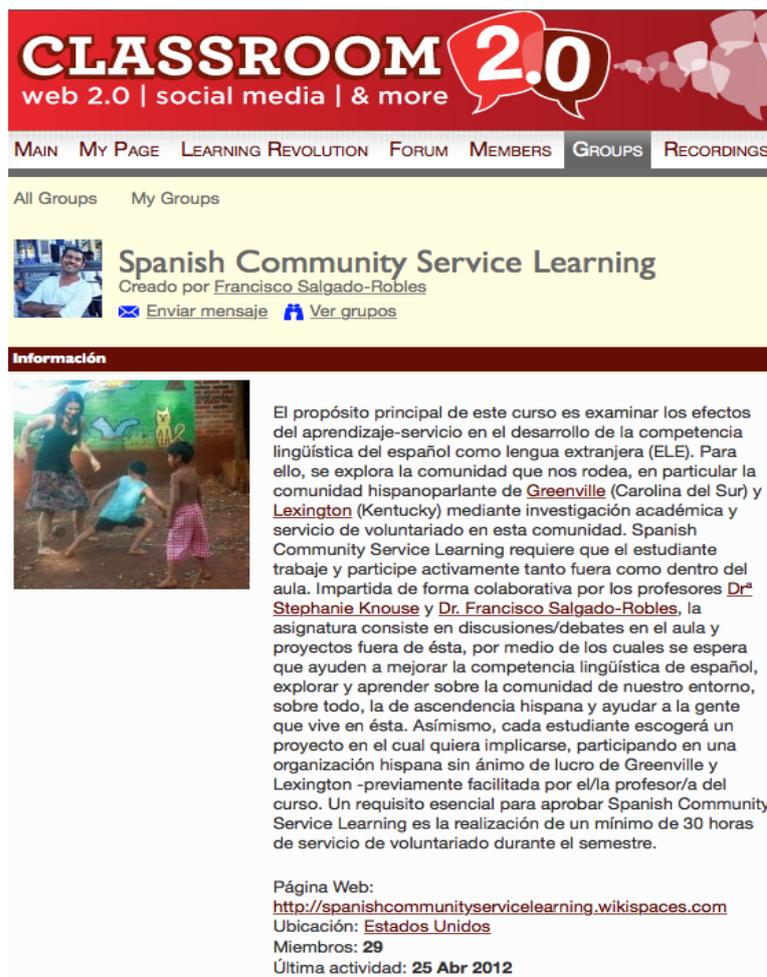
6.3.1. Classroom 2.0

Social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, Ning, or MySpace, have generally been used for non-educational, informal social purposes. Conversely, the education-based SNS Classroom 2.0 allows users to develop an online community of shared academic interests and provides students with the opportunity to interact with their peers and professors through the use of blogs, videos, or text-based chat. Students at both universities opened a Classroom 2.0 account, became "colleagues" with peers at their own institution, those from the partner university, and the professors. They were also required to join the class group "Spanish Community Service Learning" (see Figure 1).

All course information was housed on the Spanish CSL group page.¹⁰ The professors changed the settings from English to Spanish, so that the entire group page was in the TL; students were instructed to do the same on their individual pages. In addition to serving as the central meeting place for all members of this CoP, Classroom 2.0 facilitated synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) between the two universities. That is, students and professors could communicate through instant messaging, as well as through individual and group emails. These features of Classroom 2.0 illustrate the potential for this online multi-user virtual environment to help schools from different geographical areas to connect.

⁹ Readers are welcome to email the authors for copies of the materials (e.g., blog prompts, grading criteria, digital video guidelines) used in the course.

¹⁰ Another Web 2.0 tool used in this course was a wiki that students created to highlight important details of their community organizations. This activity is not included as part of the Dual University Model, as it did not feature collaboration between the two institutions.



CLASSROOM 2.0
web 2.0 | social media | & more

MAIN MY PAGE LEARNING REVOLUTION FORUM MEMBERS **GROUPS** RECORDINGS

All Groups My Groups

 **Spanish Community Service Learning**
Creado por Francisco Salgado-Robles
[Enviar mensaje](#) [Ver grupos](#)

Información



El propósito principal de este curso es examinar los efectos del aprendizaje-servicio en el desarrollo de la competencia lingüística del español como lengua extranjera (ELE). Para ello, se explora la comunidad que nos rodea, en particular la comunidad hispanoparlante de **Greenville** (Carolina del Sur) y **Lexington** (Kentucky) mediante investigación académica y servicio de voluntariado en esta comunidad. Spanish Community Service Learning requiere que el estudiante trabaje y participe activamente tanto fuera como dentro del aula. Impartida de forma colaborativa por los profesores **Dr.^a Stephanie Knouse** y **Dr. Francisco Salgado-Robles**, la asignatura consiste en discusiones/debates en el aula y proyectos fuera de ésta, por medio de los cuales se espera que ayuden a mejorar la competencia lingüística de español, explorar y aprender sobre la comunidad de nuestro entorno, sobre todo, la de ascendencia hispana y ayudar a la gente que vive en ésta. Asimismo, cada estudiante escogerá un proyecto en el cual quiera implicarse, participando en una organización hispana sin ánimo de lucro de Greenville y Lexington -previamente facilitada por el/la profesor/a del curso. Un requisito esencial para aprobar Spanish Community Service Learning es la realización de un mínimo de 30 horas de servicio de voluntariado durante el semestre.

Página Web:
<http://spanishcommunityservicelearning.wikispaces.com>
Ubicación: **Estados Unidos**
Miembros: **29**
Última actividad: **25 Abr 2012**

Figure 1. Screenshot for “Spanish Community Service Learning” on Classroom 2.0

6.3.2. Digital videos

Once all of the students had joined the Spanish CSL page on Classroom 2.0, the instructors wanted to formally introduce the groups to one another. Since conflicting schedules made it difficult for a live conversation to take place using synchronous CMC, each CSL class briefly introduced themselves in Spanish via a digital video that was uploaded to YouTube; the links were made available on the Classroom 2.0 page so all students could view the partner class’ recordings. In addition, students were instructed to create their own individual digital videos for homework, so their cross-institutional partners knew more about them before beginning the collaborative online activities. In the TL, students created a 3-5-minute digital video in which they introduced themselves, discussed their academic background, explained why they enrolled in Spanish CSL, and what their goals were for the semester. These videos were also uploaded to the class’ YouTube account and the links were posted on the Classroom 2.0 Spanish CSL page. To ensure that students created videos with appropriate content, the professors provided detailed instructions on how to complete the assignment using the communal YouTube account.

6.3.3. Reflection blogs

One collaborative activity in which a significant exchange of ideas was observed was the reflection blogs. Since superficial learning can result from a lack of “rigorous reflection” (Jumpstart Service-Learning Resource Guide, n.d.), the blogs were a crucial element of the course that helped

students reflect on what they encountered at their service placements. Students completed a total of six blog postings on their individual Classroom 2.0 pages. They also opened a Dropbox account in order to submit Word files of these reflections as a backup copy. Each blog entry had to be between 350-400 words and written in Spanish. Subsequently, students were instructed to leave two comments of 50-100 words each on their classmates' original postings: one for a classmate at the home institution and another for a classmate at the partner institution. The entries were evaluated on content, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy.

6.3.4. Skype videoconferences

In order to share service experiences and practice oral skills in the L2, students participated in monthly Skype videoconferences with their peers from the collaborating university. Students were paired based on their linguistic ability and community service placements. At the beginning of the semester, students were asked to download the free software from Skype.com if they did not have the program already installed on their computer. They then set up a Skype account, selected a username, and uploaded a profile picture.¹¹ Since the instructors wanted to review the conversations, students recorded an audio file of each videoconference using Audacity, another open-source program available via Internet.

During the Skype videoconferences, students spoke with one another in the TL for at least 30 minutes. They were encouraged to use newly acquired vocabulary terms and grammatical structures, as well as circumlocution techniques. Conversation topics and due dates were posted on the Classroom 2.0 Spanish CSL group page well in advance and students arranged when they would "meet" online to complete the oral task. The discussion topics were ones that facilitated reflection on the impact of CSL, their particular service experience, and Hispanic cultures. As with the reflection blogs, the Skype videoconferences were graded on quality of content, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. Students submitted digital copies of the conversations through their Dropbox accounts, so the professors could review the audio files.

7. Results

7.1. Student learning outcomes: Gains in perceived L2 ability

In this section, the first research question (RQ1)—How does participating in a CoP impact students' perceptions of their oral and written abilities in the TL?—is addressed. Recall that one of the rationales for creating the CoP was to provide students with guaranteed outlets to produce the L2, which also connects to Learning Objective #3, or improving spoken and written skills in Spanish. While the study of gains in communicative competence or other linguistic features is beyond the scope of this particular investigation, assessing students' *perceptions* of improvements in oral and written skills was of great interest. For years scholars have recognized the importance of learners' perceived L2 competence, as this internal factor has a direct impact on learner motivation, attitudes about the L2, and willingness to communicate in the L2 (see Gardner, 1985; MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998). Specifically, learners with greater perceived abilities in the L2 are more predisposed to engage in the TL and report using the TL more frequently in a variety of communicative contexts. Thus, if students in "Spanish Service Learning" observed an increase in their linguistic competence after participating in the CoP and CSL, this will help them become more successful and active language learners.

To examine RQ1, transcripts of the third Skype videoconference were analyzed. During these conversations, which were completed by the end of the third month of the course, all students discussed how their spoken and written Spanish had improved, stayed the same, or declined. Table 2 presents

¹¹ With the recent introduction of Google Hangouts, there is now another all-inclusive option for videoconferences and recording capabilities that is free-of-charge.

students' perceptions of L2 gains in oral and written production. Regarding spoken skills, the majority of students (74%) expressed that they were able make noteworthy improvements by that point in the semester.

Table 2.

Students' perceptions of L2 improvements after three months of CSL¹²

	Major improvements	Little improvements	No improvements	No response
N = 27	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Oral production	20 (74%)	3 (11%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)
Written production	6 (22%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	19 (70%)

They specified that their L2 speaking abilities had developed in a variety of ways, which included gains in confidence (43%), an expanded lexicon (29%), better pronunciation (10%), better use of grammatical structures (10%), and more fluency (10%). Below are select excerpts from the Skype conversations that highlight these areas of progress:

*Siento que ahora hablo con más fluidez. [...] La comunicación con los hablantes nativos me sirve para darme cuenta del tipo de registro que necesito usar en cada contexto.*¹³ (U2)

'I feel that now I speak more fluently. [...] Communicating with native speakers helps me realize the register that I need to use in each context.'

Creo que mi vocabulario ha expandido un poco especialmente porque con la comunidad que colaboro hay palabras específicas. También las personas con quienes interactúo hablan sólo en español. (U1)

'I think that my vocabulary has expanded a bit especially because with the community that I collaborate there are specific words. Also the people that I interact with only speak in Spanish.'

Me siento mucho más cómoda cuando hablo español. Me siento más cómoda cuando hablo con los pacientes en el hospital, con mis compañeros en clase, etc. La confianza es la cosa más importante para mí. A veces la gramática puede no estar muy perfecta, pero mi confianza ahora es mucho más alta. (U2)

'I feel much more comfortable when I speak Spanish. I feel most comfortable when I speak with patients in the hospital, with my classmates, etc. Confidence is the thing that is most important to me. Sometimes the grammar isn't very perfect, but my confidence now is much higher.'

While it is not a linguistic feature of L2 speech per se, gains in learners' self-confidence in L2 speaking skills emerged as a salient trend in the data. Given that it was the first time that many of these students utilized Spanish for real-world purposes during a sustained period of time, they were able to acquire more knowledge on how to communicate effectively in the L2, and working in the community

¹² One student did not participate in the third Skype videoconference.

¹³ All student excerpts in the TL are unaltered, despite the presence of non-targetlike forms.

was critical in facilitating these experiences. Students also recognized that class participation, blog reflections, and Skype videoconferences activities helped them practice speaking in Spanish; this preparation subsequently bolstered confidence levels.

He notado que mi español está mejorando. Las interacciones con mis compañeros, mis profesores son en español y son muy importantes. Esto me ha ayudado para reforzar mi español. (U2)

'I have noticed that my Spanish is improving. The interactions with my classmates, my professors are in Spanish and are very important. This has helped me reinforce my Spanish.'

En mi opinión, el escribir en español me ayuda a hablar en español, por ejemplo, los blogs. (U2)

'In my opinion, writing in Spanish helps me speak in Spanish, for example, the blogs.'

While students attributed gains in confidence in L2 oral production more to the CSL experience than to the collaborative activities, it appears that these two components worked in tandem to heighten students' linguistic awareness, perceived ability, and self-assurance.

In terms of written improvements, as indicated in Table 2, most students did not address the question during their Skype videoconferences and elected to focus on spoken production. Perhaps this was due to the open-ended nature of the conversations and that speaking in the L2 is particularly challenging for non-native speakers (NNSs). Yet, of those students who noticed an improvement in their written abilities in Spanish, some recognized that the course's collaborative activities played a central role in achieving these gains.

En mi español hablado uso palabras que conozco y busco otras palabras en la conversación si no recuerdo la palabra exacta. Mi español escrito también ha mejorado a través de los blogs, las tareas, etc. (U1)

'In my spoken Spanish I use words that I know and I look for other words in the conversation if I don't remember the exact word. My written Spanish also has improved through [completing] the blogs, homeworks, etc.'

After analyzing the conversations, it is clear that there were a variety of experiences that shaped students' perceptions of how their oral and written abilities did or did not advance. This is logical, since students served in diverse organizations (Table 1) that required different productive skills: some students exclusively translated official documents from English to Spanish, while others used the L2 to answer phone calls or to coach elementary-school-aged girls. These placements also varied regarding how much students interacted in the L2 with NSs or NNSs; some students even lamented during the semester that they wished they used the TL more at their services. While it was not feasible to control for exactly how students' linguistic skills would develop or be utilized in the various community organizations, it was possible to provide *all* students with regular opportunities to enhance their (perceptions of) oral and written production through the collaborative Web 2.0 activities. This was one of the principle motives for establishing a CoP through the Dual University Model.

7.2. Student learning outcomes: Affective support

To address the second research (RQ2)—How does a CoP in CSL in Spanish support students with the emotional component of the experience?—data from students' reflection blogs and Skype videoconferences were analyzed for trends. To remind the reader, another goal of the cross-institutional CoP was to support students with the extra emotional demands of the CSL in Spanish experience (see Learning Objective #4). The analysis revealed that throughout their interactions using Web 2.0 tools, students from both institutions were extremely supportive of one another, even though they had never met in person. They exchanged anecdotes, offered advice and positive reinforcement, and

commiserated when necessary. For example, Melanie (U1) expressed a lack of confidence in her spoken Spanish during one of the Skype conversations; yet, Jack (U2) reassured her.¹⁴

M: *No creo que mis habilidades han mejorado. Y, por eso, tengo un poquito de confianza. Pero, todavía, no mucho.* (U1)

'I don't think my abilities have improved. And, for that reason, I have a little bit of confidence. But, still, not a lot.'

J: *Pero, recuerdas que es la tercera charla conmigo, sigues charlando media hora en español, es algo importante, ¿no? [...] Has hablado conmigo dos o tres veces, tienes que pensar que tu nivel del español es mejor porque ahora mismo estás hablando y pensando en español.* (U2)

'But, remember that this is third chat with me, you continue to speak for a half an hour in Spanish, it's something important, right? [...] You have spoken with me two or three times, you have to think that your level of Spanish is better because now you are speaking and thinking in Spanish.'

Not all exchanges were to give encouragement during difficult times. Students often recounted moments when they felt proud during their service experiences. Below is an example of Kelly's positive encounter that she shared in a reflection blog, and Alice's subsequent response.

K: *En mi opinión, la práctica de hoy fue la mejor de todas que hemos tenido. Estaba lleno de la alegría, la risa, y el aprendizaje. Estaba caminando de mi coche a la escuela, cuando de repente oí mi nombre. Dos niñas [...] estaban corriendo y gritando. Por un momento, me preocupé que algo malo ocurrió. Realmente, ¡estaban muy emocionadas de que estuviera allí! Corrieron hacia mí y en mis brazos. Era la manera perfecta de empezar la práctica. Me sentí contenta. Entré el cuarto donde estaban las otras niñas y todas dijeron que estaban felices de verme. La semana pasada, cuestionaba si las chicas se gustaban las entrenadoras y mi. Debido a este evento, sé la respuesta. [...] Además de eso, pienso que ellas le gustaban la práctica. Hablamos de la cooperación y hicimos tres actividades para practicarla. Me encanté ver que ellas estaban aprendiendo de funcionar como un grupo. Fue un momento muy especial.* (U1)

'In my opinion, today's practice was the best that we've had. It was full of happiness, laughter, and learning. I was walking from my car to the school, where all of a sudden I heard my name. Two girls [...] were running and screaming. For a moment, I got worried that something bad happened. Really, they were excited that I was there! They ran toward me and in my arms. It was the perfect way to start practice. I was happy. I walked in the room where all of the other girls were and all said they were happy to see me. The week before, I questioned whether or not the girls liked the coaches and me. From this event, I know the answer. [...] Beside that, I think that they liked practice. We spoke about cooperation and we did three activities to practice it. I loved seeing that they were learning how to function as a group. It was a very special moment.'

A: *Tu última visita parecía ser muy divertido. [...] Creo que es maravilloso que se puede hacer bromas y disfrutar de su tiempo como voluntario. [...] Buena suerte con su experiencia.* (U2)

'Your last visit seemed to be very fun. [...] I think that it's marvelous that you can joke and enjoy your time at your volunteer site. [...] Good luck with your experience.'

The reflection blogs and Skype videoconferences became a meeting place for students to celebrate and express frustration together. In the following section, students' feedback on the Dual

¹⁴ All names were changed to protect students' anonymity.

University Model provides further evidence that they appreciated the support from their CoP throughout the semester in “Spanish Service Learning.”

7.3. Student feedback of the Dual University Model

To answer the third research question (RQ3)—How do students rate the effectiveness of the Dual University Model and its accompanying activities?—participants from both institutions were asked to complete an anonymous, 10-question survey about the Dual University Model and the collaborative assignments via Web 2.0 tools at the end of the course (Appendix). Students provided answers to 6 open-ended questions and 1 yes-or-no question; likewise, they rated 3 statements about the course activities using a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. The quantitative findings are corroborated by the students’ open-ended responses. To discover if there were differences in ratings for blogging, Skype videoconferences, or the effectiveness of the CoP between the students from U1 and U2, independent samples *t*-tests were performed. The results showed no statistically significant differences (ns.) between the two groups (Table 3). Furthermore, by examining the mean ratings of each activity, it appears that, overall, both groups benefitted from the cross-institutional collaboration; however, students offered specific suggestions on how to improve upon certain aspects of the methodology, which will be explained below.

Table 3.
Means and standard deviations of students’ ratings for the collaborative activities and the Dual University model by institution¹⁵

Activity	Group						<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	U1			U2				
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n		
Blogging	3.54	.481	12	3.67	.724	15	-.509	ns.
Skype	3.50	.798	12	3.40	.507	15	.397	ns.
CoP collaboration	3.75	.754	12	3.93	.799	15	-.607	ns.

The first item in Table 3 focused on students’ opinions of collaborative blogging. There appeared to be a sense of satisfaction among both groups of students (Table 3). In their open-ended comments, students mentioned the following benefits of blogging: “We could see each other’s perspectives of the services. I enjoyed seeing different writing styles,” “Sharing experiences [through blogging] helped us see the ‘big picture’ goals of the class,” “[The blogs helped me] practice writing in Spanish,” and “[Blogging] prepared students for class discussion.” Some drawbacks that students highlighted were that “[The blog] questions felt redundant,” and the activity was “[time] consuming and overwhelming.” While there is room for improvement, students valued the blogging activity in that it facilitated reflection on CSL (see Learning Objective #2), created opportunities for L2 use, and prepared students for in-class conversation.

Students’ evaluation of the Skype videoconferences also reveals positive attitudes toward the activity (Table 3); yet, these ratings were not as favorable as those for the blogging activity or CoP collaboration. Students’ open-ended responses provide more insight on their assessment of the task. Many participants affirmed that the Skype activity was beneficial mainly because they were producing the TL in a real-world context and it was an effective means to practice spoken Spanish in a non-threatening environment. Students also appreciated conversing with their Dual University partners about their service experiences. For instance, one student expressed that through these conversations

¹⁵ Even though there were 13 students enrolled in U1, only 12 students completed the end-of-course survey.

she was exposed to a completely new perspective about CSL: “It was nice to talk to other students who were experiencing the course in a different way. My partner had unique ideas, so it was interesting.” Nonetheless, many voiced frustration related to technological difficulties with the software and the extra time it took to complete the videoconferences; these challenges could explain why both groups rated the Skype task lower than the other course components.

Table 4.
Student self-assessment of achieving individual course goals (Question #9 on end-of-course-survey), by institution

Response	Group			
	U1		U2	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	9	75%	12	80%
Some of them	2	17%	3	20%
No	1	8%	0	0%

The last course element assessed in Table 3 — “CoP collaboration” — and students’ evaluation of meeting course goals (Table 4; Question #9, Appendix) targeted their overall impressions of the Dual University Model and the CSL course itself. Once again, the results show that students were quite satisfied with the cross-institutional collaboration and the CoP. For Questions #7 and #8 on the end-of-course survey (see Appendix), students expressed that they benefitted from the affective support from the CoP and that the cross-institutional coalition enhanced their CSL experience. One participant claimed that the experience was “amazing” and that she had made “new friends” from the partner institution. Students learned new information about other Hispanic communities in different geographic regions (see Learning Objectives #1 and #4); another student stated that this experience gave her more insights to the variety of Hispanic communities in the United States, which she could apply in her future career in an area with a large Hispanic presence. Furthermore, students overwhelmingly indicated that they had met their personal goals for the course (Table 4; Question #9, Appendix). Together, these results indicate that, while improvements are necessary, students generally responded well to the Dual University Model. The creation of a CoP was an effective approach to achieve the learning objectives of “Spanish Service Learning” and to assist with the challenging aspects of CSL.

8. Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Directions

The qualitative and quantitative evidence indicates that the Dual University Model is a valuable option for Spanish CSL. The many advantages to creating a CoP through CALL and Web 2.0 technologies outweighed the challenges, such as the additional time constraints that can burden students and teachers of CSL. The collaborative activities provided students with *guaranteed* opportunities for reflection, debriefing, and meaningful conversation in the L2, which are all critical components of a successful CSL course. Students made gains in their perceived L2 abilities, which will be an asset to them in the future as they communicate in Spanish in both academic and informal contexts. Participants of “Spanish Service Learning” also relied on an expanded community during the semester and formed a *bona fide* CoP; often those students who expressed frustration or despair through the blog or Skype activities were comforted by someone that gave them encouragement or another perspective because they, too, faced similar challenges. These students were grateful to have this additional outlet of academic and emotional support provided by the colleagues at the partner institution, which was also of benefit to the collaborating instructors.

It is important to note the limitations of the present investigation as well as weaknesses of the implemented methodology. Regarding the former, even though it was not the focus of the present study, it would be necessary to include a control group in the analysis (i.e., a traditional CSL in Spanish

course) in order to compare the effectiveness of the Dual University Model. Future investigations should also incorporate pre- and post-experience tasks to measure changes in students' attitudes toward CSL and NSs as well as progress in productive skills. A final area that warrants investigation that was not addressed in the present study is how a CoP shapes students' cultural understanding of Hispanic communities in the United States. Therefore, future investigations should focus on how students' attitudes toward and cultural knowledge of Hispanic communities are impacted when a CoP component is added to a CSL in Spanish course.

With respect to limitations of the Dual University Model itself, students commented that they wished for more contact with NSs, despite increased opportunities for oral and written communication with the established CoP, who were predominantly NNSs. If possible, the CoP could be expanded to include the participation of NS supervisors or other members of the Hispanic community. This way, the network could provide learners with more direct contact with NSs of Spanish and opportunities for authentic interaction.

This article contributes to the body of knowledge of L2 CSL instruction in two important ways. First, to the authors' knowledge, no research exists regarding cross-institutional L2 CSL or the inclusion of CALL and Web 2.0 technologies in L2 CSL to this degree. Even though this was a small-scale endeavor, the results gleaned from this project show great promise for the use of these components in L2 CSL instruction. Second, although Spanish is the L2 featured in this article, educators of different languages (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese) are encouraged to implement the Dual University Model, provided that there are substantial local L2 communities in the areas of the collaborating institutions. While it is acknowledged that the proposed model may not be suitable for all L2 programs and adjustments are warranted based on student feedback documented in the present investigation, the Dual University Model should be considered an advantageous strategy for CSL that provides students with additional linguistic encounters and community support as they journey through a CSL experience.

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Appendix A

End-of-Course Student Survey for “Spanish Service Learning”

1. What are your general feelings about blogging after maintaining a blog this semester?
2. Will you continue to blog (not on Classroom 2.0 necessarily)? Why or why not?
3. I enjoyed reading my peers’ blogs and responding to them; it helped me reflect on my experience in this course:
1 2 3 4 5
1=strongly disagree 3=neutral 5=strongly agree
4. What were the benefits of blogging in this class? What were some of the drawbacks?
5. What were the benefits of Skype? What were some of the drawbacks?
6. I enjoyed Skyping with my U1/U2 partner; it helped me reflect on my experience in this course:
1 2 3 4 5
1=strongly disagree 3=neutral 5=strongly agree
7. In general, collaborating with and having the support of the CoP helped enhance my experience in this course:
1 2 3 4 5
1=strongly disagree 3=neutral 5=strongly agree
8. Other comments about collaborating with the other institution?
9. Did you accomplish your goal(s) for the class (i.e., yes, some of them, no)? Why or why not?
10. Any other relevant comments?