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Abstract

Developing authentic relationships as a part of service-learning projects is often considered one of the most meaningful outcomes for both student and community participants. In this project, students met with community members who were not native English speakers. The goal was for students to gain experience with linguistic diversity as they trained to become teachers, while also providing a program for community partners to practice English. I found that the competing goals of the program and its single semester timeframe limited the ability for students to invest in developing authentic relationships, despite any guidance I may have offered. Drawing from my critical examination of student reflective writing, I argue that teacher guidance and modeling do not necessarily lead to the successful development of authentic relationships. I conclude with thoughts on collaboration and suggest that students should have a choice about their participation.

Introduction

I spent my formative years as an educator abroad, so when I returned to the United States as a course instructor in a teacher education program, I brought an inclination toward cultural and linguistic flexibility and a passion for experience-based learning. I desired for students in my course (i.e., prospective teachers) to have opportunities to encounter cultural and linguistic diversity through what I sometimes call *authentic* learning experiences—namely, encounters that remain connected to lived experience in ways that are difficult to reproduce in the classroom. In this article, I describe a service-learning project I designed that asked students to engage with the cultural and linguistic diversity of our local community through working with a community volunteer language tutoring project.

I had intended for the service-learning experience to allow prospective teachers to interface—in an authentic way—with the diversity of the world, literature, and their future classrooms. Authenticity is a paradoxical term—striving for authenticity often precludes the possibility of achieving it; the organic emergence of authenticity is excluded by an intention to create it. I borrow Mitchell's (2008) relational definition of authenticity in service-learning: Authentic relationships are built upon connection, both in the classroom (between teacher and student) and in the community (among students and community participants). Authentic relationships are central to critical service-learning, or projects that include

a social justice orientation (see Rice & Pollack, 2000; Rosenberger, 2000). Therefore, my goal was for students to learn about self and world, books, and what it means to be a teacher by developing meaningful relationships.

My initial pedagogical hypothesis was that students involved in service-learning experiences might develop a repertoire of interpersonal skills that would facilitate future engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse learners. My purpose emerged from my alignment with social justice teacher education, which emphasizes "the development of sociocultural consciousness and intercultural teaching competence among prospective teachers so that they will be prepared to teach...increasingly diverse students" (Zeichner, 2006, p. 328). However, an assumption that I held was that without teacher guidance and a shared sense of community partnership, students involved in service-learning would hold a perspective (i.e., "this is for a class") that would counteract the authenticity of the experience. The question at the heart of this research is, can the teacher, in fact, contribute to the erasure of authenticity?

Theoretical Framing

Because the partner program was intended for students to provide English language instruction or support, I first elaborate a sociocultural notion of language and literacy to illuminate the relationship of language to power and of power to authenticity. A sociocultural perspective frames language as communication, which aligns with

notions of relationship-building—the core of how I understand authenticity in this context. I begin by describing a social understanding of language to help identify a foundational problem with how language is understood and operationalized in education, and then offer a perspective for how teacher education can address this issue.

Language as Social, as Power

According to Bakhtin (1986), language acquisition occurs "through a 'process of assimilation' – more or less creative – of others' words (and not the words of a language)" (p. 89). Language is essentially social: it is used for communication. Through interaction with other speakers, or relationship-building, learners develop a capacity to communicate with(in) a community. Socialization through interaction with more experienced users of the target language provides more than the knowledge of words; it also grants a learner access to the ways of thinking, valuing, and behaving that make language ideological (Gee, 2012).

I consider this notion of language-in-use to be authentic because is emerges from relationships. These relationships are meaningful and equitable. As Mitchell (2008) explains, "Relationships based on connection… [challenge] the self-other binary and [emphasize] reciprocity and interdependence. Common goals and shared understanding create mutuality, respect, and trust leading to authenticity" (p. 58). To clarify my position: authentic communication results from parity, and power differentials can cause communication to be inauthentic—as is often the case in institutional language use.

For example, in contrast to language-in-use, language is often defined within education as abstracted from social context, only tangibly tied to evaluations. Canagarajah (2007) illuminates the incongruence between language practices and language assessment in education: "language learning involves an alignment of one's language resources to the needs of a situation, rather than reaching a target level of competence" (p. 928). A social understanding of language (stressing language-in-use) contends that education, with its emphasis on testing, too often frames language as disconnected from lived experience. Further, disparity results from institutional authority and powerlessness—the former granted to privileged dialects and roles and the latter often imposed upon learners and speakers of othered language varieties.

The context and purposes of language use affect the users of the language (for example, Gee, 2014; Fairclough, 2015). As a result, language is powerful. Those with knowledge of valued forms of language have social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and can wield power. The power that underlies language can create opportunity as well as disparity; language is not neutral. When the students in my course become teachers, they will—like me—take on roles in which language and context support the authority they wield over students. However, if authority leads to power disparity in service-learning, then authentic relationships are unlikely.

Teachers and Language

Cultural and linguistic disparity between teachers and students—resulting from broader demographic shifts in the United States—must be addressed in teacher education to prevent teachers from perpetuating systemic racism and oppression. Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) note that most prospective teachers have little or no professional development or coursework to support their English language learners (ELLs; their term), and few prospective teachers—like Anglophonic Americans generally—have shared the experience of becoming proficient in an additional language: approximately 20% of the United States' population is proficient in a language other than English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Interactions with ELLs should help prospective teachers gain experience because:

> Without such contact, ELLs will remain an abstraction, defined by their lack of proficiency in English and likely to be perceived through prevalent media stereotypes of immigrants. Direct contact allows future teachers to see ELLs as individuals, and it gives the teachers-to-be a sense of the diversity among ELLs (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008, p. 370).

While not all students learning English are immigrants (and vice versa), the concern regarding stereotypical narratives is vital to address. Bhabha (2012) describes stereotyping as situations in which an image replaces identity, functionally erasing the individual and the diversity among individuals. Accessing multiple narratives through interactions could presumably work against stereotyping by challenging the image through an increasing knowledge of identities. Perhaps the most likely

means to challenge the inclination to stereotype is through the formation of authentic relationships, whereas limited superficial connections may very well reinforce or instill stereotypes. Community interactions can contribute to preparing teachers for their future encounters with students by providing opportunities to build authentic relationships.

Community and Teacher Education

There are many visions for the future of teacher education, one of which is broadly called social justice teacher education. A social justice approach to teacher education centers society's diversity and the inequitable distribution of material and intangible goods across demographic groups. In her elaboration of a theory of teacher education for social justice, Cochran-Smith (2010) explains, "From the perspective of social justice, teacher preparation also includes parents, families, and community groups as collaborators" (p. 460). Zeichner (2006) believes the future of teacher education relies, in part, on increasing the influence of communities in the education of teachers, noting "there is growing empirical evidence that novice teachers are helped to acquire in some forms of community field experiences the kind of knowledge, skills, and dispositions teachers need to be successful" (p. 334). Collaborations with community partners (i.e., holders of equal power) offer pedagogical opportunities to enact social justice and forge authentic relationships.

Zeichner (2006) believes more teacher education needs to be situated "outside of the college and university campus in schools and communities, but we need to do much more than just send [prospective teachers] out there to pick up what they need to learn by a process of osmosis" (p. 334). The assumption is that teacher guidance is vital. Telling students to aim at establishing authentic relationships may work, but—as my research suggests—it may undermine it too.

Another form of guidance is modeling authentic relationships: "In the critical service-learning classroom, developing authentic faculty and student relationships provides a model for engagement in the community. This is achieved by a commitment to dialogue, developing self-awareness, critical reflection, and building solidarity" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 61). Authentic service-learning might begin from an educator's desire to build relationships based on connection with the community, which can then serve as a model for student-participants.

I believe I fostered dialogue and solidarity in the classroom as a means to develop authentic faculty-student relationships, but I have come to question how authentic modeling can actually be: either the teacher models something explicitly and creates an authenticity paradox or the teacher retains authenticity through implicit modeling and perhaps fails to prepare the students. In the next section, I elaborate my own self-awareness.

Researcher Position

To implement critical service-learning and "avoid paternalism demands a social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships as central to the classroom and community experience" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 52). To better situate my motivation for undertaking a critical pedagogy, I describe my own position as a researcher and course instructor.

As someone who has taught English language and US culture courses abroad for seven years before returning to the United States, I both struggled with and benefited from English hegemony. For better or worse, English as a lingua franca (ELF) is an undeniable fact of the modern world and global capitalism. As a teacher of English language abroad, I had access to the political, social, and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that English grants. However, I view ELF and neoliberal globalization as descendants of colonialism. As an Anglophonic, White, middle class, cis-hetero male from the United States, I am granted a privileged position in the hierarchy of this global system. Recognizing the system's inherent injustice creates my ethical struggle: I acknowledge my complicity and strive to minimize my negative impact while considering others.

Returning to the United States in 2013, I volunteered to lead English discussion classes as part of a community tutoring program. I was motivated to participate in some form of service and to maintain a connection to people from outside the United States. Volunteering helped me feel like I was not exploiting the participants. The program was designed to provide "free English conversation practice for [the university's] international students, scholars, and [adult] family members" (VETP, 2017). My class consisted of an informal weekly discussion with some regular participants and various sporadic attendees. I tended to take more turns speaking, but participants frequently steered the conversation toward their interests. I aimed to provide a context in which participants felt relatively equal and comfortable.

The director of the program, Mary, was a retired librarian who devoted a few days a week to organizing the various classes and projects of the program. She and I had conversations about language learning, literature, and the community over the ensuing two years, and she told me about a one-on-one version of the program called Conversation Partners (CP) that was hoping to recruit more volunteers.

Meanwhile, my doctoral work in teacher education led me toward community-engaged scholarship. The university I was at encourages researchers to engage in outreach scholarship: "outreach and engagement activities should reflect a scholarly or knowledge-based approach to teaching, research, and service for the direct benefit of external audiences" (Provost, 2009). Such work is meant to "*cut across the mission* of teaching, research, and service" (Provost, 2009, original emphasis). This intersectionality appealed to me because my growing understanding of education and social issues.

I approached Mary about involving students in my class in the CP program. I wanted to raise questions regarding the normalization of mainstream cultural experience that occurs in schools despite attempts at multicultural education (see Haddix, 2008). I hoped prospective teachers could critically examine the erasure of identity through normalization and how it affects culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. I imagined CP would provide prospective teachers with opportunities to experience unfamiliar nuances of English as valid as those spoken in the Midwest—what Canagarajah (1999) refers to as World Englishes—and to reflect on their own language and culture. The design of the project was driven by these pedagogical purposes, though not to the exclusion of community needs.

Methodology

This article is the result of an exploration into my pedagogical practice. Research into teaching can take many forms, including participatory action research (e.g., Whyte, 1991) and self-study (e.g., Loughran, 2005). Pedagogical scholarship is reflexive and recursive: I am both a teacher and a researcher, and the implications of this research inform both my teaching and hopefully resonate with other educators. I do not intend to make claims about instructional decisions that will fit all contexts. This research is guided by critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2015), and I draw upon case study design (Stake, 1995) to present some of the results. This project was determined exempt by the Institutional Review Board.

Project Context and Participants

In fall 2016, the US presidential election was nearing its apex. It brought heightened xenophobia and its normalization in public discourse. Within this broader social context, I incorporated a service-learning component in a children's literature course for undergraduate prospective teachers (I also refer to them as students). I tried to position the students as learners: this project was an opportunity to learn how they adapted to unfamiliar language varieties. I wanted them to have new experiences with people who might challenge stereotypical narratives, especially given the need for them to engage cultural and linguistic diversity as teachers.

The course section I taught was designed to serve a cohort of global-educators-in-training. The service-learning assignment asked students to interact with international members of our local community, most of whom were affiliated with the university. The project was intended to be mutually beneficial for all stakeholders (i.e., community members, students, and me).

The two groups of participants were students and partners, though I focus on students as I explore the pedagogical application of community partnerships. While students in my class were required to participate as part of a course project, the partners had an intrinsic motivation: a desire to have meaningful interactions with English speakers. Students and partners arranged their own meetings, which often occurred in public spaces on campus such as the library or student union.

Students were undergraduate education majors in their first or second year of a five-year teacher preparation program. There were 19 females (18 White, 1 White/Latina) and three males (2 White, 1 Asian-American). They were all 18–20 years old. The intentional public purpose (Stanton, 2008) shared in the assignment description (see Appendix) was "to provide… students with exposure to and interaction with non-native English speakers that will help them gain experience working with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds." Partners were from many different countries, including China, Japan, and Colombia. They were often spouses of either visiting scholars or graduate students who wanted to practice English. The partners tended to be older, ranging from their mid-twenties to forties.

The only access I had to the partners was mediated through either the students or Mary. This remains a major limitation of this study and one I would like to address by communicating with all stakeholders in the future.

Power in Research

I asked students to participate in service-learning, and as such their participation was a demand made by an instructor. To lessen the power differential, I implored students to address me by my given name, I sat with them in group discussions, and I often had casual conversations during class breaks. Additionally, students had the opportunity to shape the research process through feedback that contributed to my inquiry into my own teaching practice.

To better give voice to other stakeholders, Mary had the opportunity to read and review this manuscript. I encouraged her—as her time permitted—to read and comment as much as she liked. I revised this product to incorporate her feedback throughout.

Data Sources and Analysis

I used community engagement along with reflective writing, which Thomson, Dumlao, and Howard (2016) find "led students to develop and engage in flexible thinking and communication with members of their community" (p. 46). As Bowen (2010) found in his review of pedagogical scholarship involving service-learning, empirical materials were generated "typically through student reflections" (p. 4). I examined reflective writing completed by students in my course during the Fall 2016 semester.

I assigned reflective writing through written prompts as part of the students' course requirements. Bowen (2010) found reflection "was most effective when it was structured and guided in such a way that it helped students link their service experiences to course goals and concepts" (p. 7). For the purposes of this article, I focus on writing that followed their first meeting. The prompts I used can be found in the assignment description (Appendix).

I supplemented these formal reflections with other reflective writing that students completed each week in ungraded journals. A final journal entry at the end of the semester that asked, "There were a number of different ways we engaged in thinking in this course. What was an important moment in class for you? Describe what it was and why it mattered to you?" This additional set of informal writing served to (dis)confirm some of the themes I found in my analysis.

I analyzed the data for positions taken up in the students' reflections that indicated how they formed and viewed relationships—authentic or otherwise. Analysis was interpretative; in the final stages of analysis, "the analyst is in the position of offering (in a broad sense) interpretations of complex and invisible relationships" (Fairclough, 2015, p. 59). The nuances of student responses indicated the importance of power relations in partnerships, and this theme was particularly salient given my intention of sharing power in my pedagogical scholarship.

Norman Fairclough (2015) provides guidance for reading, interpreting, and analyzing discourse, especially with a critical perspective attuned to power dynamics and social relations. He describes three stages of critical discourse analysis: description (of a text), interpretation (of text and of interaction, text as product of a process of production), and explanation (interaction and social context). I present my interpretation in the next section, but I avoid explanations because I do not intend for this interpretation of a small sample to lead to predictions of future behavior. Taleb (2010) claims "we are explanation-seeking animals who tend to think that everything has an identifiable cause and grab the most apparent one as the explanation" (pp. 119-120). Instead, I provide introspection into my own teaching and consider how I might alter future iterations of this project based on Fairclough's (2015) initial two stages: description and interpretation.

Findings and Discussion

A challenge that arises in service-learning (perhaps in all education) is the teacher's desire to provide students with the conditions for intrinsic motivation. Like replicating authenticity, this may be an impossible task. I begin with the caveat that I erred on the side of less participation, hoping that motivation and authenticity would emerge organically. For example, I never explicitly instructed students to build authentic relationships. I never told them I was modeling authenticity when I interacted with them, nor did I define authentic relationships. However, there were hints that one should not exert power over others in their relationships. For example, the project description concluded with:

We want [partners] to understand you are committed to making sure they get what they desire out of the exchange (a conversation partner,

a social and cultural translator, a friend)…please be gracious and flexible, and respect your partner's goals (Appendix).

In short, even though I may have developed authentic relationships with students, my approach may have failed as a model because it was tacit. But really, can a teacher who has a meaningful connection with a student, then tell them it was an exercise in pedagogical modeling and not expect an erasure of authenticity?

Regardless, an outcome was that students entered their partnerships being unclear about their relationship to their partner and were therefore perhaps less likely to establish meaningful connections. I will first provide an interpretation of excerpts from student reflections—intrinsic cases (Stake, 1995)—that led me to believe they had not developed authentic relationships and then present some highlights from a successful (i.e., instrumental, Stake, 1995) case. I provide examples of data that illustrate the themes that emerged in my analysis. Although the limited number of examples affect the completeness of my interpretations, I hope my descriptions will sufficiently support my claims. These findings incline me to believe that teacher guidance—enacted as explicit modeling, which I reject on the grounds of the authenticity paradox—may not be the only solution to the paradox of cultivating authenticity. Instead, I argue that student choice is another means of achieving the ends I desired.

Teacher and Learner as Power Positions

In their reflections, students often positioned themselves as teacher and/or learner. While the CP program staged their interactions to position them as teachers, I also stressed the importance of being a learner as well (see Appendix). Taking up a teacher position does not require erasing or hiding one's position as a learner—I wanted students to embrace both, in what Clayton and colleagues (2010) describe as transformational, not just transactional relationships. These roles set the tone for how students interacted, and the authority associated with teacher often prevented authentic relationships by precluding mutual transformation.

The teacher position, in some cases, emerged from a view of language competence development. Students wrote about correcting pronunciation or adjusting speech patterns (five of 21 students mentioned this). This is unsurprising since the project inclined students toward taking the teacher position: they were working with partners who expected to improve their language skills.

While navigating imperfect communication is necessary, correcting can lead to disparity, for example, "The only problems that arose were in minor grammatical errors (pluralization, syntax, etc.) in conversation, which were solved by my correction and patience." Here, the partner's subjectivity is erased in the passive voice. The focus is on the knowledge the teacher has and can provide to the partner with "patience," implying the sacrifice the teacher is making to support the partner's learning. The partner is not thought of as providing reciprocation. Similarly, another student wrote, "In order to correct and give advice on her pronunciation, we resorted to writing down undetectable phrases on paper, and from there continued to alter the text to a better alternative to say the given phrase." While this comment indicates working together to solve communication issues, "undetectable phrases" gives the teacher position—as linguistic gatekeeper—subjectivity: the detecting is done by the student. The discursive constructions of subject and object can reveal how partners' humanity can be minimized from the authoritative teacher position. Again, I offer this interpretation not as the explanation, but to illustrate my thinking as the teacher of the course who found a pattern in the writing of a few of the students.

Alternatively, students might develop a teacher position through inquiry and critical reflection that leaves them open to learning. For example, another student considered the results of simplifying language: "As I tried to simplify things I was explaining…I was troubled by the fact that I was creating generalizations. I tried to avoid creating stereotypes, but this is difficult when I had to put things in simpler terms…" Her knowledge is a work in progress, open to transformation. While this student takes on the challenges of the teacher position (i.e., explaining), she also struggles to justify that which she explains. Not many students took this stance, but this example illustrates the possibility of it. Teaching choices are complex, and the teacher position is not one that must be authoritative and all-knowing.

The pedagogical purpose of the service-learning project was for students to interact with people who may not speak the common Midwestern English with which the students were most familiar. In contrast, the purpose of the volunteer program was to provide language instruction. Ultimately, these two purposes competed with one another by respectively positioning students as learning-teachers and as

authoritative teachers. According to Mitchell's (2008) review of service-learning literature, "The service-learning relationship is inherently complex because of the myriad roles the pedagogy requires of students and community members" (p. 59). The confusion that emerged from this complexity made this project less likely to succeed as an enactment of critical service-learning: Redistributing power was unlikely when students were offered a power position as an option.

I am aware that the format of the reflective writing may better reveal what students wrote for the teacher (me) than what they experienced or felt about their relationships, even if the prompt (see Appendix) did not position them to prove themselves as teachers. However, these reflections were evidence of their entry into the relationship, and informal discussions I had with students failed to disconfirm the interpretation I offer here: Taking the role of authoritative teacher made it difficult for relationships to become authentic. A future direction I might take would be to formalize these discussions as interviews, but again, this enters into a parallel paradox: the informality of the discussions perhaps revealed truths that an interview might not.

Desiring Equal Power

Retrospectively, most of the prospective teachers found it beneficial to be involved in the CP program. Some desired to have built a better relationship, as one student commented: "If there is anything I could do differently it would maybe be to meet with her more often." While I have used the term partner throughout, I believe what some students were expressing follows how Clayton and colleagues (2010) distinguish between relationship and partnership: the latter is characterized by "closeness, equity, and integrity" in contrast to the former (p. 5). Consequently, if relationships fail to achieve authenticity, then they are never capable of developing into partnerships in this sense.

A common issue noted across many student responses was that such a project is inorganic: the relationships feel forced and therefore inauthentic. As one student wrote: "I would have changed the fact that we were put together with a partner instead of being able to pick one. I felt as though the friendship was sort of forced upon us and was a little bit awkward." While this inauthenticity is perhaps inherent to educational projects in general, students came to view these relationships as personal—one student invited her partner to have Thanksgiving with her family. Once they became friends with partners, the origin of their relationship seemed inauthentic, though this was only explicitly mentioned by a few students.

However, many students had never had a relationship with someone from another country and perhaps they never would have if not for my assigning it. While they may not have experienced this relationship without the assignment, the assignment made it less authentic than was desirable—a paradox. My intention is not to say that authenticity is impossible in an intentional relationship. Indeed, the crux of the paradox lies in my position as teacher: I can encourage students to engage in something I think is good through the external motivation of a graded assignment, but the transaction for a grade will loom over the experience.

Considering the students' perception of inauthenticity, I argue that student volition is vital, perhaps more so than modeling. I reiterate my position that explicit modeling would not make authenticity possible, and I add that it is possible to give students an opportunity to opt in to a service-learning project. Next, I describe a successful case that adds texture to the argument that motivated students can develop authentic relationships in service-learning projects, even when receiving the same minimalist, tacit modeling I provided.

A Successful Case

A measure of success I employed was defined by the project's framing around language and community reciprocity: whether students' reflections indicate critical consideration of language dominance in society (Fairclough, 2015). This case shows that acknowledging power disparity was part of the process of rectifying it, as well as increasing the potential for authentic relationships. To elaborate, I highlight some of the reflections written by Paige (a pseudonym). Her story was exceptional in that very few students, in this class section or the others in which I had partnered with the CP program, had any experience as meaningful as Paige's was in reframing the power positions. While there are quite a few students who had successful experiences, Paige's was the only one that entered the space in which language and reciprocity were redefined by the major stakeholders: Paige and her partner. These qualities made her case instrumental (Stake, 1995), providing a view of what might be possible.

An indicator that Paige was prepared to redistribute power and develop a reciprocal relationship appeared in her writing on the first day. She expressed her understanding of the importance of language learning among the English-speaking population of the United States:

> I am working towards a Spanish minor along with my teaching major in hopes of helping children that do not speak English. I also believe that having English speaking students learn another language, such as Spanish, is beneficial in the United States today since there are so many people that do not speak English as a first language.

For her, language variety is the contemporary state of the nation, and it requires efforts from the dominant linguistic group to facilitate education and general citizenship—a community-focused stance. Because becoming a teacher often foregrounds an authoritative position, prospective teachers need to critically examine beliefs about English and how language dominance operates in schools. Again, Paige specifically considered language in school: "In the United States, school subjects are mostly taught in English and if a child does not speak the language, the chances of them understanding the material is going to be a lot lower." Her position is a confluence of learner, future teacher, and citizen. As a result, authority is minimized, and parity is possible.

Mary did an excellent job pairing Paige with a Spanish-speaking partner from Colombia. Following Paige's initial meeting with Sofia (a pseudonym), she was "very excited to be meeting with her once a week" and referred to Sofia as "a very sweet, genuine person who I know I will enjoy spending time with." Paige was clearly ready to have a relationship that exceeded my course requirements.

Like most students in the course, Paige learned about where Sofia was from and how she came to the United States. Paige wrote in her initial meeting reflection:

> Sofia is originally from Colombia and just moved to the United States…Her native language is Spanish but her English is much better than I was expecting it to be, which helped our communication. I am currently working on a minor in Spanish, which is also going to make our time spent together easier and more beneficial.

Paige's investment in Spanish had tangible benefit, and Sofia had a valued/able fund of knowledge. While Paige was involved initially as a teacher—positioned as such through the CP program—her first meeting with Sofia established fluid power dynamics and reciprocity. As Paige recalled in her reflection:

> Sofia seemed very excited to be a part of this program and I can tell that she likes being involved and is trying very hard to perfect her English…Sofia asked me questions and took the time to explain things to me in Spanish as well. Since she knew that I could speak Spanish (somewhat) she talked in Spanish and English throughout our meeting. At the end, we made a plan to both talk in English one week at our meeting and then both talk in Spanish the following week… it keeps her in her comfort zone when she speaks Spanish and gives me a chance to get out of mine, like she is doing by speaking English.

Their relationship became one of reciprocity and interdependence and allowed them both to have experiences that challenged the self/other binary and was therefore quite authentic (Mitchell, 2008)—nearing partnership (Clayton, et al., 2010).

On the last day of class, Paige wrote that of all the course assignments and projects, the "most meaningful for me was meeting with my conversation partner." I argue that it was meaningful because she developed an authentic relationship. Despite my role in providing the opportunity for that to happen, I cannot attribute her success to any guidance (i.e., explicit modeling) I provided. Otherwise, more students would have had similar experiences, and unfortunately, only a handful of the approximately 20 students came anywhere near to establishing authentic relationships.

Critical Reflections on/with Collaboration

I learned that Mary wanted to take a break from our project after fall 2016—she had run out of partners to pair with students. I had a feeling that other factors contributed to this decision: that students ended their participation after the semester and were unable to meet their partners consistently. That is, students were not invested enough for authentic relationships to form.

I brought these ideas to Mary to discuss in the context of researching and writing up the project

in this paper. She said our collaboration worked well to reduce her waiting list of international community members desiring a partner; but she confirmed that prospective teachers' commitments did not continue beyond the semester. Mitchell (2008) acknowledges this problem: "Authenticity is not achieved in a semester, so an ongoing partnership and prolonged engagement in service are integral to achieving this desired outcome" (p. 60). Despite what students may have written in their reflections about developing a friendship, many of them did not continue their relationships outside the minimum course requirements.

However, the CP program was intended for weekly meetings, and that was what most partners desired (Paige was one of only a few that met partners weekly). Mills (2012) identifies this as one of four major tensions that arise in service-learning: "student emphasis on hours vs. agency emphasis on commitment" (p. 33). As a result, Mary preferred to pair partners with other CP volunteers—volunteers who were not assigned the task. Further, Mary's challenges working with students (i.e., short-term volunteers) likely included "time investment, capacity to supervise, direct-service difficulties, timing and project management, and calendar issues" (Tyron, et al., 2008). I felt that I had failed to effectively explain to students the commitment involved to develop a meaningful connection and to align what was required with what was desired in consideration of all stakeholders. Mills (2012) offers as a solution that educators and community collaborators find alternative measures (other than hours or meetings) to gauge student participation. I will shape future service-learning projects with this tension in mind.

This is not to say all the students would not commit to the partnership. Some of the prospective teachers stayed on for more than the semester. One participated beyond the Fall 2016 semester with the same partner. Then, when her partner left, she continued to meet with a new partner (a friend of the original partner). This was a non-traditional teacher education student and an exception. Her experience was successful for all stakeholders. Paige also had success and engaged in "translanguaging" (for example, Wei, 2018) practices that attended to deeper issues of language and power in teaching and schooling in the United States. Hers was also not a common student experience.

My next experiment as a reflective practitioner is to give students a choice of community-based opportunities to fulfill my service-learning requirements. My hope is that students will have a greater sense of ownership and therefore commit to developing authentic relationships.

Conclusion

I believe service-learning projects should be critical. They should expose participants to new perspectives from the margins of our notions of self and community. In teacher education, the community might collaborate with teacher educators and prospective teachers to justify and practice instructional and curricular choices. The community has agency in the preparation of teachers and deserves partnership.

Central to the work of community-engaged scholarship is the notion of partnership (see Clayton, et al., 2010). In this type of scholarship, the researcher is meant to avoid marginalizing the community through foregrounding power relations. Teacher-researchers introducing students to community members as part of service-learning would do well to similarly highlight partnership as an enactment of authentic relationships. Nevertheless, the position of prospective teachers remains in flux: still students, transitioning into teachers. Service-learning projects are thus often liminal spaces in which prospective teachers are encouraged to act as teachers. Yet in adopting the teacher position, prospective teachers can actually work against of the goals of partnership and learning.

In learning to become a teacher, interactions centered on language diversity should more frequently include members of the community who represent its variety. Experience solely with children—especially given the ways that these interactions will carry some evaluative stance toward language—maintains prospective teachers' position of authority. Interactions with older adults or peers, on the other hand, can contribute to working against notions of people as abstract images or stereotypes. To achieve the goal of community involvement across teacher preparation, prospective teachers will need to have experience with communities outside of their university-based teacher education program. These experiences could offer a variety of positions from which prospective teachers can interact with community members and develop authentic relationships.

However, because teacher educators often seek to meet curricular goals through community partnerships, such instructional projects are

not always beneficial to all involved. Perhaps positioning student-participants in ways that motivate them to foreground partnership and reciprocity can increase the likelihood that these experiences will be meaningful for everyone. Hopefully, these relationships can be sustained for longer periods. As Mitchell (2008) claims, "Social justice will never be achieved in a single semester nor systems dismantled" (p. 54). One recommendation I will take into my future work is that students should have the opportunity to select the programs in which they participate. I believe respecting student voices and granting them partnership in their education will increase the likelihood that they will feel invested in developing meaningful connections with people and therefore feel reciprocity as these connections become authentic relationships.

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Appendix: Conversation Partners Task

As part of this GECP section of TE348, we will be participating in a project that pairs the TE348 students with non-native speakers of English through the Volunteer English Tutor Program (VETP). The major goal of this project is to provide 348 students with exposure to and interaction with non-native English speakers that will help them gain experience working with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Additionally, this experience will allow 348 students to discuss literature from multiple positions, and to authentically engage with children's literature and another's experiences of literature.

An important, yet often overlooked, skill for future teachers is to be able to work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners. Many teacher education programs aim to develop these skills and the theoretical knowledge that underlies them because classrooms are growing in diversity while teacher education programs remain fairly homogeneous. Although in this course we will not have much time to work intensively with second language acquisition theories, gaining experience through exposure and introspection will help lay a foundation for interacting with CLD individuals in and outside of schools.

Additionally, a goal of this course is to have students understand their positioning - in regard to literature and in the world - and to build awareness of the privileges and constraints that come along with one's position. Experiencing texts as an insider is a common experience for members of the dominant culture, but understanding a text as an outsider is less commonly achieved (or attempted). This intercultural exchange will begin to bring that experience to the surface.

For this assignment, each student will need to complete the following:

- Apply online for the Conversation Partner Program.
  - » Include "TE348 course requirement" in the space asking why you would like to volunteer for VETP
  - » List me as your first reference. Your second reference is not important.
  - » Sign up for a time to meet with Mary, director of the program, who will arrange a partner.

- *The meeting requirements are subject to adjustment based on logistics.* You are required to meet with your partner a minimum of 3 times for at least one hour per meeting. Meetings of more than one hour do not count as more than one meeting. The 3 obligatory meetings should meet the following requirements:

1. Introductory meeting (completed by February 25)- Following your initial meeting, write 300 thoughtful, introspective words (about 1 page) in which you consider some of the following questions (or your own):

   - What did you talk about? Who initiated the conversation topics?
   - What surprised you?
   - What problems or confusion arose? How did you respond?
   - What worked well?
   - What did you notice about body language, eye contact, etc.?
   - What do you think you'll do differently next time?
   - What questions have arisen for you regarding working with CLD individuals?

   Following your response submission, read the following articles:

Lucas, T., Villegas, A. M., & Freedson-Gonzalez, M. (2008). Linguistically responsive teacher education: Preparing classroom teachers to teach English language learners. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *59*(4), 361-373.

3. Learning about literature - As part of your discussion, you should introduce the idea of the course and that you are interested to know more about what children's literature looks like in his/her/hir culture. This may potentially cause confusion if you discuss it in the first meeting, so please refrain from doing so until a later meeting. You should solicit from your partner titles of books from his/her/hir culture's body of children's literature, or stories considered an important part of childhood. Following this meeting, you need to find a book associated with your partner's culture - ideally, one of his/her/hir recommended titles (this counts as one of your independent reading titles).

3. Literature Discussion - After you have found and read a book from your partner's culture, come up with two sets of questions: 3 discussion questions like we have for all of our books, and any questions you have regarding elements of the book you do not fully understand. As a cultural outsider, you should not feel obligated to know everything, but you can make an effort to learn. If your partner has not read the book (in the case that you use a book that was not recommended by your partner), take some time to read it together or arrange for your partner to read it, too. Following the book discussion, you will need to write a 300-word response considering the following: What may have been obscured by my positionality? In what ways did my partner help me understand the story? What difficulties remained for me? (How) did my perspective cast new light on the story for my partner?

Keep in mind that our literature discussions are not necessarily a priority for your partners. We want them to understand you are committed to making sure they get what they desire out of the exchange (a conversation partner, a social and cultural translator, a friend), while also trying to include literature. Therefore, please be gracious and flexible, and respect your partner's goals.