A TESOL Service Learning Program in Rural Michigan: An Innovative Approach to Preparing Pre-Service Teachers

April M. Burke
Central Michigan University, april.burke@cmich.edu

Sarah Case
Utica Community Schools, sarah.case@uticak12.org

Caitlin Hamstra
Bishop O'Gorman Catholic Schools, caitlin.a.hamstra@gmail.com

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Name: April M. Burke, Ph.D.

Address: Anspach 240 B, 1429 S. Washington St., Mount Pleasant, MI 48859

Telephone: (989) 774-2660

Fax: (989) 774-1271

Email: april.burke@cmich.edu

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Author names with institutional affiliations:

April M. Burke, Central Michigan University
Sarah Case, Utica Community Schools
Caitlin Hamstra, Bishop O'Gorman Catholic Schools

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Abstract:

Central Michigan University offers a TESOL service learning course that provides pre-service teachers the opportunity to apply their understanding of course content while addressing the needs of school-aged and adult emergent multilinguals. An innovative aspect of the course is that it provides clinical experiences, prior to student teaching, at the university's English Language Institute and at multiple sites within a rural K-12 school district. To contribute to an understanding of how to prepare pre-service teachers while supporting emergent multilinguals in rural communities, the authors describe the development and research basis of the course, discuss the benefits of the course and how they overcame various challenges, and offer advice for developing similar programs. The authors contend that service learning models can provide unique educational experiences by providing meaningful interactions between diverse student populations and call for additional research on TESOL service learning models in rural contexts.

Abstract

Central Michigan University offers a TESOL service learning course that provides pre-service teachers the opportunity to apply their understanding of course content while addressing the needs of school-aged and adult emergent multilinguals. An innovative aspect of the course is that it provides clinical experiences, prior to student teaching, at the university's English Language Institute and at multiple sites within a rural K-12 school district. To contribute to an understanding of how to prepare pre-service teachers while supporting emergent multilinguals in rural communities, the authors describe the development and research basis of the course, discuss the benefits of the course and how they overcame various challenges, and offer advice for developing similar programs. The authors contend that service learning models can provide unique educational experiences by providing meaningful interactions between diverse student populations and call for additional research on TESOL service learning models in rural contexts.

A TESOL Service Learning Program in Rural Michigan: An Innovative Approach to

Preparing Pre-service Teachers

Service learning is a method of teaching content and skills to university students through service to a community. The distinguishing characteristic of a service learning partnership is the mutually beneficial relationship between the participating university and the community organization (e.g., Schneider, 2018). A growing body of research indicates that service learning models can be an innovative means of simultaneously preparing TESOL teachers and serving emergent multilinguals[1] in numerous contexts (e.g., DelliCarpini & Wurr, 2013; Eyring, 2006; Lindahl, Tomaš, Farrelly, & Krulatz, 2018; Perren & Wurr, 2015), yet examinations of service learning models to prepare pre-service TESOL teachers in rural contexts are underrepresented in the literature. Studies indicate that rural schools can face numerous difficulties when attempting to meet the needs of emergent multilinguals (Burke, 2013, 2015; Burke, DePalma, Morita-Mullaney, & Young, 2014; Coady, 2020; Hopkins, Lowenhaupt, & Sweet, 2015; Lee & Hawkins, 2015; Yettick, Baker, Wickersham, & Hupfeld, 2014). Furthermore, certain rural

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[1] In this article, the term *emergent multilinguals* is used to refer to students who are acquiring English as an additional language. This term is preferred as it reflects the additive value of acquiring English while acknowledging that these students are already proficient in their home languages. The commonly used terms *English learner* (*EL*), *English language learner* (*ELL*), or *English as a second language* (*ESL*) focus on students' acquisition of English and ignore the students' home language and bilingual or multilingual development. We agree with García's (2009) argument for the adoption of the term *emergent bilingual*; however, because many students speak more than one language prior to acquiring English, the term *emergent multilingual* is more appropriate. However, in this article, the term *ESL* is used to refer to programs and teacher certification as these are the terms used by the Michigan Department of Education and the participating institutions described in this article.

emergent multilinguals are particularly at-risk and vulnerable; for example, those who are undocumented migrant farmworkers (Coady & Silver, 2007). Thus, rural TESOL service learning models warrant greater attention because they have the potential to provide support for rural communities that have limited resources and substantial emergent multilingual populations.

Largely rural states, like Michigan, provide unique locations for developing TESOL service learning models. Like other states, Michigan experiences a persistent "critical shortage" of teachers qualified to meet the needs of emergent multilinguals (Michigan Department of Education [MDE], 2017, p. 3) while the population of rural emergent multilinguals has been steadily increasing. For example, during 2013-14, emergent multilinguals comprised only 1.3% of Michigan's total rural K-12 student population, yet some rural communities reported a high percentage of emergent multilinguals; for instance, 57.6% of the students in the rural Nottawa Community School District were emergent multilinguals (Showalter, Klein, Johnson, & Hartman, 2017, p. 10). Additionally, while Michigan's total student population has declined between the school years 2013-14 and 2017-18 (-44,049 students or -2.8%), the state's emergent multilingual population has increased (+20,833 students or +27%) with a notable increase specifically in rural areas (+1,701 students or +52%) (Wan, Pardo, & Asson, 2019).

Further studies will be required to substantiate the claims presented in this article pertaining to the unique aspects of TESOL service learning programs in rural locales. However, findings from the extant research on TESOL service learning courses do indicate that, in an array of contexts, these courses can provide benefits and pose challenges. Fortunately, as Bryant, Schönemann, and Karpa (2011) noted, "These challenges can be more easily overcome when there are models to follow" (p. 5). Thus, the intention of this article is to answer the call for inventive means of incorporating service learning into TESOL courses (Cho & Gulley, 2017;

Perren, 2013) by sharing a TESOL service learning course at Central Michigan University (CMU). An innovative aspect of the course is that it provides pre-service teachers with clinical experiences—prior to student teaching practicums—at multiple placement sites with school-aged and adult emergent multilinguals. Furthermore, this course has been successful despite lacking key supports such as a university center for service learning, release time for faculty who teach or contribute to the course, and a team of ESL teachers in the participating K-12 schools.

This article begins with a description of the authors' roles, followed by a literature review that provides a theoretical and research-supported basis for the design of the reported course. Next, a description of the CMU TESOL service learning course is provided, followed by a discussion of the challenges encountered while managing this course and the solutions that mitigated these issues. The article concludes with advice for others interested in developing service learning programs, particularly in rural locations, and a call for future studies on rural TESOL service learning.

Roles of the Authors

Each author represents an important component of the described service learning model. Dr. April Burke is Associate Professor and the Director of the Interdisciplinary ESL Program Council at CMU. Dr. Burke contributes to the management of multiple university programs that prepare PK-12 educators and is the primary instructor for the course discussed in this article. While this article was being written, Sarah Case was the ESL teacher for grades six through twelve and the ESL tutor coordinator in the Mount Pleasant Public Schools (MPPS), and she was also completing an MA TESOL at CMU. Caitlin Hamstra was a CMU faculty member and Associate Director of the university's English Language Institute (ELI), and she was completing

a PhD in Educational Leadership at CMU. The MPPS and the ELI are the service learning

placement sites discussed in this article.

Theoretical and Research Background

As noted by Schneider (2018), TESOL service learning scholarship generally has

examined either models in which emergent multilinguals enrolled in university TESOL courses

perform the service (e.g. Askildson, Cahill Kelly, & Snyder Mick, 2013; Perren, 2013) or models

in which pre-service teachers perform the service. The focus of this literature review is on the

latter and narrowed to studies published after 2005 that involved service learning placements

within the US as these are most relevant to the design of the reported course. This section

concludes with a discussion of the need for research on rural TESOL service learning programs.

TESOL Service Learning to Prepare Pre-Service Teachers

Research indicates that service learning that involves meaningful contact with emergent

multilinguals can be a valuable method of preparing pre-service teachers. For example, Carr,

Eyring, and Gallego (2006) surveyed 68 current and former MA TESOL students who

participated in either service learning or experiential learning; they found that participants

perceived these experiences to be generally beneficial, particularly in developing an

understanding of pedagogical theory and second language acquisition. In another survey study,

Purmensky (2006) examined 129 undergraduate ESOL pre-service teachers' perceptions of their

experiences in a service learning linguistics course. A majority reported that the course increased

their confidence to be teachers, transformed their thinking, and provided a valuable means of

applying what they were learning in class. In a mixed methods study, Moore (2013) analyzed the

perceptions of 22 general education students who took a required Introduction to TESOL course

that included service learning in a variety of K-12 and adult ESL learning sites. The results

indicated that although the students generally perceived the service learning to be positive and beneficial, they also expressed a decreased interest in learning about other cultures as a result of taking the course. Lastly, in a qualitative case study in a Midwestern city, Atkinson Smolen, Zhang, and Detwiler (2013) found that through service learning, seven teacher candidates developed civic responsibility and respect for the Karen refugees they taught English to.

Scholars also offered valuable advice to help others develop TESOL service learning experiences. For example, Yough, Gilmetdinova, and Perera (2015) claimed that service learning programs have the potential to benefit university students by allowing them to develop self-efficacy and social perspective-taking (SPT) by providing opportunities to analyze and question their own beliefs and assumptions about emergent multilinguals. Yough et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of providing pre-service teachers structured service learning experiences and explicit feedback to help them develop their pedagogical skills and overcome personal biases.

Advice from other scholars includes grounding programs in social justice theory and encouraging pre-service teachers to become advocates for emergent multilinguals. In a qualitative study, Cho and Gulley (2017) found that among 13 TESOL graduate students, some began self-identifying as "advocates for social justice" during the semester they participated in service learning (p. 620). However, Cho and Gulley (2017) warned that without proper planning and use of appropriate theory—such as critical theory, social justice, or contact theory—service learning experiences can reinforce stereotypes and the notion that the role of teachers is to save marginalized populations. Building on this work, Schneider (2018) conducted an action research study, involving 20 pre-service teachers in an introduction to TESOL course, and found that the pre-service teachers reflected on how the new understandings they developed about immigrants during the course related to the teaching and learning of emergent multilinguals. Schneider

echoed Cho and Gulley's (2017) argument that instructors should assume a social justice position, asserting that one way of doing so is for teacher educators to "engage with community organizations as equal partners" (p. 11). Furthermore, Schneider (2018) advocated for teacher educators to listen to and follow the advice of community partners and base service learning experiences upon their needs. Similarly, in a comparison of four service learning case studies, Lindahl et al. (2018) encouraged critical approaches to preparing TESOL educators that counter views of emergent multilinguals as deficient, and they also emphasized the importance of faculty members building relationships and trust with community partners.

Rural TESOL Service Learning

The aforementioned scholarship on TESOL service learning is incredibly valuable for those seeking to develop similar programs or improve their existing programs; however, an extensive search yielded only one study on a rural TESOL service learning model and the aspects of the model deemed unique to its rural context. In the rural South, Fogle and Heiselt (2015) conducted a qualitative study in which they analyzed various forms of data—including reflective journal entries, final projects, and group reports—of four undergraduate and seven graduate students in a TESOL methods course. Corroborating the findings of others, including Purmensky (2006), the results of Fogle and Heiselt's (2015) study indicated that the service learning experience helped the pre-service teachers improve their pedagogy and develop an understanding of the experiences of emergent multilinguals. Their findings also indicated that the experience was mutually beneficial for both the pre-service teachers and emergent multilinguals. Additionally, Fogle and Heiselt (2015) explained the primary ways in which the "rural" nature of the service learning emerged. First, some of the pre-service teachers indicated that they were unaware of the cultural and linguistic diversity within the rural community where the service

learning occurred. Additionally, they expressed little awareness of the difficulties that newcomer emergent multilinguals experience when adjusting to life in a rural community. During the course, the participants developed awareness both of the diversity in the rural community and of the experiences of rural emergent multilinguals. Lastly, Fogle and Heiselt (2015) claimed that rural service learning poses unique challenges; for example, it may be difficult to find community partners in rural locales. They explained that faculty members must develop creative solutions to overcome these challenges.

Despite not being TESOL-specific, another study relevant for those interested in developing a rural TESOL service learning experience is Coady and Silver's (2007) examination of an *indirect service learning* model that served but did not involve direct contact with a migrant farmworker population in Florida, which included many undocumented workers. In this model, the pre-service teachers engaged in various activities to raise funds for the Harvest of Hope Foundation which provides emergency aid and scholarships to migrant farmworkers. Coady and Silver's (2007) findings indicated that the model increased the pre-service teachers' understanding of the experiences of migrant farmworker children and helped the pre-service teachers become advocates for migrant farmworkers while protecting undocumented community members.

In conclusion, research indicates that TESOL service learning models are perceived by pre-service teachers as generally beneficial and often transformative. Additionally, several scholars provided recommendations to help others develop service learning experiences that foster pre-service teachers' critical thinking skills and their understanding of emergent multilinguals' experiences. Lastly, this review revealed the need for research on TESOL service learning models in rural contexts. Drawing on the theories and findings provided in this review,

the next section provides a description of CMU's TESOL service learning model which was

developed in response to the needs of a rural Michigan community.

Program Description

This section begins with a discussion of CMU's community engagement initiatives,

which encouraged the development of the reported program. This is followed by descriptions of

CMU's TESOL programs and a service learning course within these programs. The authors'

perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with this course are also provided. It is

important to note that the information relayed in these sections is based on reflective

conversations held by the authors and, therefore, cannot be generalized to other locations.

CMU Campus Compact Participation and Community Engagement Initiatives

CMU is a member of the Michigan Campus Compact (http://micampuscompact.org/),

and the university intends to apply for Carnegie classification for community engagement (K.

Caszatt, personal communication, August 8, 2018). To attain this classification, CMU has

prioritized developing partnerships with various organizations and increasing the amount of

student community engagement; this has been an ongoing priority, most recently articulated in

the university's Strategic Plan, 2017-2022. One way faculty members can contribute to this goal

is by creating service learning courses. Currently, CMU offers 42 service learning courses in

diverse disciplines (CMU, 2020).

CMU is not alone in its efforts to increase student and faculty involvement with local

communities by encouraging the development of service learning courses. While the origins of

service learning can be traced to the late 19th century (Stoecker, 2016), increased interest in and

implementation of service learning programs in colleges and universities has grown dramatically

in the US since the 1980s (Schneider, 2018). In his critical analysis, Stoeker (2016) refers to

modern service learning models—like the one described in this article and in contemporary

scholarship—as *institutionalized service learning* because they focus more on education and

service in exchange for credit, rather than on change and action in the community for the sake of

the community alone.

Program Goals

CMU has three TESOL programs: a Master of Arts in TESOL, an ESL Minor, and an

Undergraduate TESOL Certificate. In 2014, Dr. April Burke redesigned a course that is a

requirement for all three of these programs, so it could be offered as a service learning course.

The course title is "TESOL Materials, Assessment, and Curriculum," henceforth referred to as

"TESOL Curriculum." This course was redesigned to meet three goals: (1) contribute to the

university's objective to increase community engagement, (2) address the need for English

language support in the local schools and the university's ELI, and (3) provide pre-service

TESOL teachers with experience working with emergent multilinguals.

TESOL Curriculum Course

TESOL Curriculum is a 500-level course, and its primary objective is that students will

be able to design appropriate curricula, materials, and assessments for K-12 and adult emergent

multilinguals. This course was redesigned to be offered as a service learning course because it is

a teaching methods course and, thus, well-suited to incorporate clinical experiences.

Additionally, ELI and MPPS faculty had expressed support for the development of a program

that would provide additional English language support to their students.

The service learning requirements for the TESOL Curriculum course include providing

weekly tutoring support to either K-12 or adult emergent multilinguals and completing many

assignments based on the tutoring experience. For example, grounded in scholarship by Brown

(1995) and Graves (1996), pre-service teachers in the course conduct informal needs analyses based on observations of their tutees. For the final project, they use their needs analyses to develop a syllabus, lesson plans, and an assessment. For this project, they also write a detailed reflection in which they describe their process for creating these items in relation to assigned course readings. The primary course textbook is the fourth edition of *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, edited by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Snow (2014). Additional readings include selections from the second edition of *Materials Development in Language Teaching*, edited by Tomlinson (2011), and chapters from *The ESL / ELL Teacher's Survival Guide: Ready-to-Use Strategies, Tools, and Activities for Teaching English Language Learners of All Levels* by Ferlazzo and Hull Sypnieski (2012).

There are several aspects of the TESOL Curriculum course that, when viewed collectively, illustrate how the course is an innovative model. First, the course provides pre-service teachers with clinical experiences prior to student teaching. Second, it includes multiple service learning placement sites in a university ELI and several rural schools. Third, similar to Fogle and Heiselt's (2015) model, the service learning component of the course facilitates interactions between rural K-12 students and university students—many of whom are from urban and suburban backgrounds—providing the university students with an awareness of the linguistic and cultural diversity in a rural community.

Service Learning Placement Sites

White and Corbett (2014) explained, "…distinctions between the rural and the urban are increasingly difficult to make…" (p. 2). Geverdt (2015) illustrated this point when noting that within the broad definition of a "rural locale," there is great variation in terms of access to educational resources:

> Some rural areas where school-age children live are extremely remote and difficult to access, while rural areas just outside large urban cores may have relatively easy access to a broad range of specialized goods and services typically associated with suburban and city schools. (p. 6)

In educational research, rural contexts are often described with information about the population size and the area's proximity to urban and suburban centers, yet Coladarci (2007) noted, "There is no single definition of rural…" (p. 2). He explained that these indicators of rurality can be useful starting points; however, he advised rural education scholars to include "…sufficient information about the context in which the research was conducted so that readers can make informed judgements regarding generalizability" (Coladarci, 2007, p. 2).

CMU and the described service learning placement sites illustrate the complexity related to classifying locations as either "rural" or "urban." CMU is one of the largest public state universities in Michigan with a total student enrollment of 19,431 fall 2019 (CMU, n.d.). Attending graduate and undergraduate students are primarily from Michigan; however, students also come from other states and countries. Like most large universities, when classes are in session, CMU's main campus feels like a small city with bustling, tree-lined streets and large, multilevel buildings. The campus is located on the southwestern side of Mount Pleasant, a small town with an approximate population of 26,000 full-time residents (City of Mount Pleasant, Michigan, n.d), within Isabella County. The county is classified as a micropolitan statistical area, having "at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties" (Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2009, p. 2). Additionally, the area surrounding both CMU and Mount Pleasant visually meets broadly

accepted expectations of a rural environment, consisting of wide expanses of sparsely populated active and former farmland, interspersed with densely wooded areas, and a network of both paved and dirt roads leading to a constellation of smaller towns, the closest being Shepherd (population 1,491) and Clare (population 3,069) (US Census Bureau, 2018).

English Language Institute (ELI)

CMU's ELI prepares international students who do not have sufficiently high English proficiency scores to fully matriculate into the university. The ELI provides an English language and college readiness support program that includes one-on-one tutoring services. Students attending the ELI come from numerous countries and are primarily from urban and suburban backgrounds. Attending a university in the US in a micropolitan and rural context is appealing to many ELI students who welcome the peaceful and relatively safe surroundings. However, living on CMU's campus or in Mount Pleasant also requires significant lifestyle adjustments for these students who are often surprised and disappointed by the limited public transportation and other amenities afforded by cities and urban campuses.

Mount Pleasant Public Schools (MPPS)

Although the schools comprising MPPS are within walking distance of a large state university, the district is classified as a rural school district by the MDE and relatively small compared to those found in urban districts. The district served 3,469 students during the 2019-2020 school year (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], n.d.). A majority of the students are classified as White (72.3%), followed by "Two or More Races" (8.4%), American Indian (8%), and Hispanic/Latino (6.5%) (State of Michigan, 2019). Most of the district's American Indian students are members of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. Additionally, depending on enrollment, MPPS serves approximately 50 to 70 emergent multilinguals with

various home languages, including Chinese, Arabic, and Korean. For example, during the 2019-2020 school year, the district served 60 emergent multilinguals (NCES, n.d.).

Many of the emergent multilinguals attending MPPS are children of international CMU faculty members and graduate students, but MPPS also serves emergent multilinguals whose parents and guardians came here to work in the service industry or because they had family ties to the area or qualified for refugee status. These guardians may have limited English language proficiency, not have access technology in their homes, and not own vehicles.

Key Elements of CMU's TESOL Service Learning Program

Eyring (2006) noted that an important aspect of quality service learning is the perception that both the providers and the recipients of the service benefit from the experience; in other words, quality service learning is mutually beneficial and illustrates reciprocity. A second characteristic Eyring (2006) deemed essential to good service learning is required reflection by the university students. Similarly, Lindahl et al. (2018) cited Purmensky (2009) when describing four tenets of service learning (SL) identified in the literature: "identification of community need; reciprocity between the SL participants and the community stakeholders; some type of engagement, initiative or demonstration of skills and knowledge on behalf of SL participants; and structured time allotted for reflective practices" (p. 105). Eyring (2006) also explained that a common goal of service learning initiatives is "the development of civic-mindedness or social justice" (p. 22). Correspondingly, Cho and Gulley (2016) claimed that instructors of service learning must take a social justice position in order for the experience to be transformative. Citing Cho and Gulley (2016), Schneider (2018) explained that an important first step for faculty to take in the direction of assuming a social justice stance is to interact with community partners in an equal relationship, elaborating as follows:

As a starting point, we must enter their institutional spaces and listen to their

perspectives. What are their needs? How do they want to structure the volunteer

experiences? Are there ways that course content could be altered to address their

concerns? The specific outcomes of this work could vary widely based on local factors,

and they do not eliminate the overarching power differential; however, […] there is a

great deal to learn by listening to community partners' perceptions of student

contributions. Our job as faculty includes being responsive to those points of view. (p.

11)

The reported model is based on the features of quality service learning programs described by

these scholars and consists of the following key elements: (1) development based on a social

justice stance and community need, (2) reciprocity, and (3) reflection.

Development Based on a Social Justice Stance and Community Need

Referring to programs described by Birch (2014) and Pennycook (2001), Lindahl et al.

(2018) explained, "While theirs and other SL programs have the potential to shift power

dynamics among marginalized communities by empowering them through collaboration, they

are rarely begun solely for that purpose" (p. 118). Similarly, the reported program was not

developed only to promote social justice. However, following Schneider's (2018) claim that

faculty members can take a step towards a social justice position by respecting community

partners, listening to their needs, and treating them as equals, the reported model does operate

within a social justice framework as university and school district faculty collaborate as equal

partners to manage the program. Additionally, the program was based on identified needs in both

the MPPS and the university's ELI. A need of the MPPS, which is common to many rural

districts, is to have additional multilingual educators, interpreters, and translators (K. Funnell,

personal communication September 22, 2020), and a need of the ELI is to have additional personnel to provide English language support.

Reciprocity

The reported program is reciprocal because the pre-service teachers benefit by gaining real world experience working with emergent multilinguals, which deepens their understanding of course content in the process. The participating emergent multilinguals benefit from the tutoring support they received from the pre-service teachers. The benefits to participants are discussed in detail in the following section titled, "Numerous Benefits."

Reflection

The instructors who manage the reported program, including the authors of this article, routinely make adjustments to it based on their ongoing discussions and personal reflections. Reflection is also important for university students because, as Cho and Gulley (2016) explained, "Reflection serves as a vehicle for evaluating students' own experience and transforming it into knowledge" (p. 615).

Similar to those described by Moore (2013, pp. 556-557), TESOL Curriculum course assignments require students to reflect on their service learning tutoring experiences. These assignments prepare them for the final project that requires them to develop a syllabus, lesson plans, and an assessment based on the following scenario.

> Imagine that you just applied for an instructor position in the school or institute where you are fulfilling the Service Learning tutoring requirement for this course. The hiring committee invited you to participate in an in-person interview and asked you to prepare three sample lessons and accompanying materials and an assessment for their student population based on your informal needs analysis. (Burke, 2020, p. 1)

For the final project, students also write a detailed, 2-4 page single-spaced reflection in which they cite the course readings and other sources they used and describe their process while creating these artifacts of practice, including how and why they made certain decisions. A series of prompts and questions is provided to guide their reflection, including the following:

- Include a reflection on your informal needs analysis, e.g. How did you conduct it? How did it inform your process while creating your Curriculum Project?

- Include a reflection on the syllabus you created. What type of syllabus is it? Why did you choose this type of syllabus? Cite, for example, Graves (1996, pp. 50-51).

- Describe the student needs you identified and explain how these needs correspond to the student learning objectives (SLOs) you wrote. (Burke, 2020, p. 3)

Grounded in the service learning experiences, the described assignments align with Schneider's (2018) claims that service learning can help TESOL pre-service teachers understand "that choices around course design, lesson planning, and classroom methods must be responsive to the multifaceted forces of any given teaching situation" (p. 3). Furthermore, citing Matthews (2011), Cho and Gulley (2016) noted that online tools can be especially effective for fostering student reflection. Accordingly, the pre-service teachers in the reported service learning course submit their assignments and participate in reflective discussions on the online platform Blackboard (https://www.blackboard.com/).

Numerous Benefits

The reported service learning partnership has strengthened the local TESOL community by fostering increased cooperation, trust, and respect between faculty in CMU's TESOL programs, CMU's ELI, and the MPPS. Additionally, the model benefits multiple student populations: pre-service teachers and emergent multilinguals in the ELI and MPPS.

Benefits to Pre-Service Teachers

By providing the opportunity to work closely with emergent multilinguals and highly-qualified teaching professionals, the service learning tutoring experience has given pre-service teachers the opportunity to provide valuable support to others while developing their skills as teaching professionals. Corroborating the assertions of Cho and Gulley (2016), we found the academic benefits for pre-student teachers include helping them make connections between theory and practice; not only does the service learning make it easier for students to understand the content in their classes, but they also gain a better understanding of what to expect in their future classrooms. During the service learning experience, pre-service teachers witness firsthand the stages of second language acquisition. Furthermore, corroborating Yough et al.'s (2015) argument, the authors observed that the experience helped the pre-service teachers develop self-efficacy. The authors believe this is a result of observing and learning from experienced K-12 teachers, being exposed to a variety of teaching strategies and resources, and gaining one-on-one intervention experience. Having the service learning courses appear earlier in their program of study is a unique aspect of the program that helps prepare pre-service teachers for student teaching. Lastly, the service learning experience benefits pre-service teachers by giving them the opportunity to become part of ELI and K-12 school communities. Corroborating Schneider's (2018) observations, some of the pre-service teachers in the TESOL Curriculum course returned to volunteer in their service learning placement site because they valued the experiences they gained and the relationships they made during their service.

Benefits to Emergent Multilinguals

According to Shen (2013), one of the main benefits of service learning is that it allows participants to use their specialized knowledge and expertise to serve the community in solving

real-life problems. As noted, like many rural districts, MPPS has difficulty funding ESL teacher, interpreter, and translator positions and finding qualified individuals to fill these types of positions. Fortunately, many of the pre-service teachers in the TESOL Curriculum course are multilingual and able to code-switch between a tutee's home language and English. The ability to code-switch is useful for instructional purposes and as a means of developing relationships with emergent multilinguals. Pre-service teachers' multilingualism as an asset to be leveraged in TESOL service learning partnerships, especially with rural partners, is a subject worthy of additional study.

The most significant benefit of the service learning model reported by MPPS and ELI personnel, including the authors, is the extra support the K-12 and adult emergent multilingual students receive from the pre-service teachers. At both tutoring locations, the participating instructors observed emergent multilinguals gaining confidence, practicing social skills, and acquiring English language proficiency by working with pre-service teachers. MPPS emergent multilinguals study, read books, and complete activities with pre-service teachers. Often, this happens in the classroom during regular instruction, which gives the students the extra support they need in a busy classroom full of other students. At CMU's ELI, the pre-service teachers provide individual attention to emergent multilinguals during private tutoring sessions or ELI classes. Both forms of service help the ELI faculty plan and implement more individualized lessons and support for their students, particularly for those with learning differences and lower English language proficiency levels.

Challenges and Solutions

The primary challenges encountered by those who manage the reported model were due to logistical issues and the design of CMU's TESOL programs. These challenges were overcome

by the hard work, collaborative efforts, and creativity of the authors and others who manage or contribute to the service learning program.

Logistics

Short-term service learning, defined as requiring one hour of service per week for one semester or less, can pose a number of challenges, including lack of participant commitment and management difficulties due to discrepancies between university and community schedules (Martin, Seblonka, & Tryon, 2009). The challenges related to the reported program may exist, in part, because it is a short-term program: the university students are only required to serve as tutors for one hour per week for one semester, which amounts to approximately 14 hours total. For example, the main challenges the authors have experienced are related to logistics, including challenges related to coordinating the pre-service teachers' placements. Another logistical challenge has been ensuring that the pre-service teachers are able to serve tutees at the ELI when tutees do not attend their scheduled tutoring sessions. Since participation in the tutoring sessions is voluntary for the ELI students, some of them—without notice—would not attend. Consequently, the pre-service teachers who needed to work with the ELI students in order to complete assignments for the TESOL Curriculum course were at a loss. In response, the ELI tutor coordinator arranged to have the pre-service teacher placed with different tutees.

Other challenges have been related to resource scarcity. For example, CMU does not provide release time for faculty members who teach or are involved with facilitating service learning courses. Additionally, as a rural school with limited resources, MPPS does not have a team of ESL teachers to help coordinate the pre-service teachers' service learning placements. Thus, the described challenges were primarily met by the diligent work of the tutor coordinators in the MPPS and ELI. The ELI tutor coordinator placed and monitored pre-service teachers in

classrooms and private tutoring sessions. At MPPS, Sarah Case coordinated the placements of pre-service teachers, hosted pre-service teachers in her own classroom, and facilitated communication between the pre-service teachers and other K-12 host teachers and support staff. Other participating MPPS and ELI teachers, staff, and administrators were also instrumental to the program's success: they welcomed the pre-service teachers into their institutions and classrooms and supported their unique learning needs.

In addition to mitigating logistical challenges, it also has been essential to ensure that the pre-service teachers were adequately prepared for their placements. At the start of each TESOL Curriculum course, the instructor, Dr. April Burke, arranges for the pre-service teachers to be trained as tutors by both the ELI and MPPS tutor coordinators. Fortunately, pre-service teachers are generally quite focused on the real-world applicability of their college education and gaining employment after graduation. Knowing this, Dr. Burke stresses professionalism and explains that the university students may be eligible for future employment in the service learning sites if they build good rapport with the faculty, staff, and administrators at these institutions. Additionally, the K-12 pre-service teachers are required to arrange their own transportation to their placement sites, make schedule adjustments with their host teachers directly, and be responsible for monitoring school cancellation and delay announcements. Furthermore, to encourage professionalism and attendance, a strict policy imposes significant point penalties for absenteeism. These actions encourage the professional growth of the pre-service teachers by teaching them about the expectations for educators and the norms of professional conduct while supporting them as they learn to take responsibility for their decisions.

TESOL Program Design

Other challenges stem from the design of the TESOL programs. As mentioned, the TESOL Curriculum course serves multiple audiences: undergraduate ESL Minor students, undergraduate TESOL Certificate students, and M.A. TESOL graduate students. Consequently, the students enrolled in the course have varied professional interests and disparate amounts of pedagogical knowledge. To serve these diverse audiences, multiple service learning placement sites in the ELI and MPPS were incorporated. Also, class discussions are facilitated about the similarities and differences between the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessments, as well as the needs of the emergent multilinguals, in the ELI and MPPS. Addressing the larger issue of how to adequately and simultaneously prepare multiple TESOL pre-service teacher audiences is a work in progress, and CMU faculty members are currently revising the curriculum to better serve these distinct populations.

Advice for Developing a Rural TESOL Service Learning Program

The following advice is intended to assist those interested in developing a TESOL service learning program and includes suggestions for doing so in rural areas.

- **Review the literature on TESOL service learning and rural education service learning.** For example, the work of Lindahl et al. (2018), Moore (2013), and Purmensky (2006, 2015), among others, contains excellent ideas and advice for developing TESOL service learning experiences. Additionally, Fogle and Heiselt (2015) described a rural TESOL service learning program, and Coady and Silver (2007) examined an indirect service learning model to support rural migrant farmworkers.

- **Ground the model in social justice theory or other critical theoretical frameworks.** We concur with Cho and Gulley (2017) and Schneider (2018) who argued that TESOL service learning should be based in theories that promote equity for emergent multilinguals and

foster pre-service teachers' critical thinking and awareness of the broader socio-political environment that affects the schooling of emergent multilinguals. To this aim, the reported TESOL curriculum course involves assignments and guest speakers to raise pre-service teachers' awareness of socio-political issues impacting emergent multilinguals who either came from or currently reside in rural locations, including migrant farmworkers and refugees.

- **Make the experience enjoyable for pre-service teachers and stay attuned to their feelings and attitudes.** Yough et al. (2015) explained that a pleasant experience is necessary for pre-service teachers to develop self-efficacy during service learning. They recommended that teacher educators remind pre-service teachers of the purpose of the experience, as well as the goals of the partnering organization. Furthermore, they stated, "Making appeals to their sense of social justice can also help to frame service learning in a way that augments its value to prospective teachers" (Yough et al., 2015, p. 49). Create a comfortable classroom environment and provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to share their concerns and potential anxieties. Through service learning experiences, pre-service teachers are developing new understandings and may not always be emotionally and psychologically prepared for the challenges they encounter in the classroom. Additionally, urban pre-service teachers may be initially surprised by or uncomfortable with the cultural norms and environments they encounter in rural schools. To mitigate these possibilities, we recommend that teacher educators include assignments with reflection components prior to and during the service learning experience to stay attuned to pre-service teachers' feelings and attitudes towards it. Additionally, we recommend following Yough et al.'s (2015) advice: "Provide feedback that acknowledges that anxiety and setbacks are a normal part of leaving one's comfort zone.

Unanticipated difficulties should be framed as welcomed challenges to be met and opportunities to develop skills, rather than threats to avoid" (p. 49).

- **Conduct ongoing needs assessments.** Solicit feedback from community partners and university students and use this information to guide changes to the service learning model. Additionally, as Lindahl et al. (2018) explained, "Ensuring that both community members and pre-service teachers are included in the needs assessment process is critical to their investment in SL" (p. 119). In rural areas, there may be a limited number of community partners available, which makes the investment of existing partners essential to nurture.

- **Model reciprocity and find additional means of strengthening the partnership.** For example, Dr. Burke provides a variety of services to the participating K-12 schools, including creating and securing funding for a graduate assistant position to provide interpreter and translator services in the MPPS. Additionally, Dr. Burke has served as a consultant for MPPS and helped the district develop their Title III plan, which is a federally-funded plan to support emergent multilinguals, and provided a professional development workshop with Sarah Case for MPPS elementary teachers on working with emergent multilinguals. These forms of service build trust between partners and are invaluable to sustaining a service learning model. Furthermore, the notion that service be at the heart of service learning is reinforced for pre-service teachers when modeled by university faculty; as Moore (2013) explained, "TESOL students need to see their faculty modeling reciprocity and a commitment to ensuring that the experience is mutually beneficial" (p. 565).

- **Take steps to sustain the program and partnership and advocate for support.** For example, the master course syllabus for the reported TESOL Curriculum course was revised to include a service learning designator and requirements. These revisions support other

faculty who will teach it as a service learning course. Additionally, advocate for institutional support based on local needs. Support may include establishing a university center for service learning, providing release time for faculty who teach service learning courses, and hiring additional teachers and staff to support emergent multilinguals.

- **Forge equal partnerships.** As Schneider (2018) advised, faculty members should treat community organizations as equal partners; listen to them, implement their advice, and base the service learning on their needs. We advise faculty members to learn about the unique, location-specific needs and attributes of their partnering organizations and communities. Doing so demonstrates respect, helps strengthen the relationship, and contributes to the success of the program. Anticipate challenges, yet have confidence that these can be overcome through collaborating, building trust, and maintaining clear communication with all participants.

- **Be flexible, creative, and open to new possibilities.** Federal, state, and local education policies change frequently, and student populations differ each year. Therefore, to maintain successful programs, faculty must be reflective practitioners and responsive to changing circumstances. Additionally, explore creative and location-specific means of developing service learning programs. For example, digital service learning, like the model described by Purmensky (2015), may be particularly useful for developing partnerships with rural communities that are not located near a university.

Implications for Future Study

There is a significant and growing number of emergent multilinguals in many rural K-12 schools in Michigan and across the US. However, teachers are often inadequately prepared to serve this unique population (Coady, Preston Lopez, Marichal, & Heffington, 2019). The extant

scholarship and the authors' observations conveyed in this article indicate that service learning

models may be a particularly useful means of preparing future teachers to work with emergent

multilinguals in rural contexts. Rural K-12 schools often have location-specific needs, including

the need for additional English language support for emergent multilinguals. Also, scholarship,

including work by Fogle and Heiselt (2015), indicates that rural TESOL service learning models

can provide unique educational experiences by providing meaningful interactions between

diverse student populations from a variety of regional backgrounds, e.g. rural, urban,

international, and domestic. Yet additional research is needed to determine the location-specific

benefits and challenges associated with TESOL service learning programs in rural contexts.

Thus, a need and opportunity exists for interdisciplinary research that examines these programs.

Scholars who answer this call should conduct place-conscious research that examines and reports

the distinctive characteristics of the rural context (e.g., Coady, 2020; Coladarci, 2007; Stapel &

DeYoung, 2011; White & Corbett, 2014). The combined efforts of researchers and practitioners

will result in the development of innovative, mutually beneficial service learning programs and

an increased understanding of how to better prepare pre-service TESOL teachers while also

providing support for emergent multilinguals in rural communities.

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