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I Dare to Communicate with Strangers: Examining International Students' Communication Goals and Strategy Use during Service-Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study examined undergraduate international students' communication-related experiences during service-learning, focusing specifically on their goals and strategies and the role of communication. Participants included 28 English as a Second Language (ESL) students in two sections of a service-learning course in a university pathways program in the United States. For 11 weeks, students attended a one-hour service-learning class and completed up to three hours of service work per week at a community-based organization. After each service-learning encounter, students completed metacognitive wrappers designed to focus their attention on their communication. Data collected included the metacognitive wrappers and a final reflection written at the end of the semester. Findings indicate that participants set a wide range of communication goals for themselves and used a variety of strategies to achieve them. We discuss the implications of using metacognitive wrappers to support international students' service-learning efforts and directions for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Service-learning is defined as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs, together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). Direct service-learning projects for international students that are thoughtfully planned and organized can be mutually beneficial for both English language learners and partner organizations. For instance, organizations who engage tutors and activity assistants in youth programs or visitors to keep older adults company can benefit from the interpersonal communication provided by students. In

turn, when students are actively using English at their service-sites, they are presented with authentic and meaningful opportunities to develop their language skills.

Service-learning remains a long-standing tradition with American students, and interest in service-learning in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) continues to grow as well (Wurr, 2013). In this article, we describe a research study that examined the role of communication in the direct-service service-learning experiences of ESL students, focusing on a metacognitive tool used to encourage reflection on service-learning. We examined the communication goals that undergraduate international students set for themselves and the strategies they used to achieve them.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature on service-learning with English language learners is generally positive, highlighting its many benefits for English language development and its impact on students' academic and personal growth. First, scholars have noted that service-learning may provide meaningful opportunities for students to use English outside of the classroom (e.g., Heuser, 1999; Marlow, 2007; Miller, Berkey, & Griffin, 2015; Minor, 2002). Another reason why service-learning is advantageous for English language learners is because it can benefit students affectively (Kassabgy & Salah El-Din, 2013; Perren, Grove & Thornton, 2013). These affective benefits include increased confidence in speaking English (Hummel, 2013; Whittig & Hale, 2007), a sense of agency (Miller, Berkey, & Griffin, 2015), investment (Perren, 2013), and engagement in school work and course content (Elwell & Bean, 2001; Grassi, Hanley, & Liston, 2004).

In addition to linguistic and affective benefits, service-learning can help students understand course content more deeply, building their intercultural awareness (Askildson, Cahill Kelly, & Mick, 2013) and knowledge of social justice issues (Perren, Grove, & Thornton, 2013). For example, Miller, Berkey, and Griffin (2015) describe how international students in a United States pathways program developed a greater understanding of social and cultural issues and transformed their attitudes towards civic engagement. Miller and Kostka (2015) describe an oral histories project conducted with undergraduate English language learners and older low-income adults in Boston. The authors found that one of the positive outcomes of this partnership was the value of the intergenerational exchange and breakdown of students' negative stereotypes towards older adults. As this project and others illustrate, service-learning can impact students' linguistic, academic, and personal growth.

While increased language development is a benefit of service-learning, reflecting on learning is at its core. As Jacoby (2015) noted, "Service-learning is based on the assumption that learning does not necessarily occur as a result of experience itself, but rather as a result of reflection designed to achieve specific learning outcomes" (p. 3). Reflection can take many different forms in service-learning, but effective reflection is continuous, challenging, connected,

and contextualized (Collier & Williams, 2013). Students may reflect in varying ways, such as using specified frameworks and prompts or various modes such as writing, telling, or multimedia platforms (Collier & Williams, 2013).

One particular type of reflection is metacognition, or thinking about thinking (Silver, 2013). Writing about higher education learning contexts, Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, and Norman (2010) explain that metacognitive skills that are used to direct, monitor, control, and reflect on one's learning are critical to effective self-directed learning. Though there are different models of self-directed learning, Ambrose et al. (2010) propose a cycle of self-directed learning that combines the basic metacognitive processes which are common across models. First, students assess the task to be completed. Then, they evaluate and identify their current skills, what they already know, and what strengths and weaknesses they bring to the task. Next, they formulate a plan for accomplishing the task. As they work on the task, they apply relevant strategies and track their learning progress. The final step is to reflect on their approach and progress and make necessary changes before repeating the cycle. Ambrose et al.'s (2010) model is helpful for conceptualizing a way for learners to think about what and how they are learning on an ongoing basis to make adjustments as needed.

A metacognitive wrapper is an example of a tool that "directs students to review their performance (and the instructor's feedback) with an eye toward adapting their future learning" (Carnegie Mellon University Eberly Center, para. 2). When used in combination with exams, these structured reflections prompt students to evaluate their preparation and errors and identify what they will change when studying for the following exam (Lovett, 2013). Thompson (2012) provides an example of the use of exam wrappers in a college intermediate-level Spanish course where wrappers guided students in monitoring their comprehension and study strategies. The author found that students who used the wrappers made gains in self-monitoring. These results echo language learning strategy research which indicates that meta-strategies contribute to self-regulated learning (Oxford, 2011).

In addition to service and reflection, reciprocity is another crucial element of service-learning. According to Jacoby (2015), "Reciprocity means that we, as service-learning educators, relate to the community in the spirit of partnership, viewing the institution and the community in terms of both assets and needs" (p. 4). This view is in contrast to one-way relationships, in the form of helping or giving, which may not be responsive to changes in circumstances, needs, and strengths, and risk disempowering the receivers (Auerbach, 2002). In terms of English language learning, a reciprocal relationship has the potential to flourish in students' use of English each week to contribute to the programs and needs determined by the community partner organizations. In order for relationships to grow, expectations of community partners, instructors, and students must align and take into account students' language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and professional skills in relation to their service roles (Lear & Abbott, 2009).

Service-learning, reflection on communication and learning, and reciprocal relationships between students and partner organizations hold tremendous potential for supporting students' language learning. Nevertheless, few studies have focused specifically on the communication

goals that students set for themselves during their engagement in service-learning, as well as the strategies they use to achieve these goals. Our study aims to contribute to literature on service-learning in TESOL by examining the use of metacognitive wrappers to facilitate English language learners' reflections on their communication goals and the strategies they used to achieve them.

METHODOLOGY

Setting and Participants

We conducted this study in a pathways program at a large urban university in the United States. This program aims to strengthen undergraduate and graduate international students' English language skills in preparation for matriculation to the university. While taking English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, students also take content courses which transfer to their degree programs upon successful matriculation. The program includes three levels, and students enter the program in either the first, second, or third level for three, two, or one semesters respectively. Placement is determined by students' scores on an English language proficiency exam.

Service-learning has been incorporated into the undergraduate curriculum since fall 2012 and aligns with the university's long-standing tradition of experiential learning. All students in the second level of the program are required to take a one-credit course, *Experiential Learning in the Community*. The objective of the course is for students to improve their English language and intercultural skills while contributing to a community organization. While students fulfill responsibilities of on-going service-work, they develop an understanding of American culture and current social issues while reflecting on their roles as a learner, multilingual speaker of English, teammate, community member, and leader.

Each week, students attended one class session dedicated to orienting them to their service-learning responsibilities, supporting them throughout their service-work, and providing a series of workshop-type classes on topics such as asset-based community development, professionalism, working in diverse teams, and power and privilege. Students also completed one and a half to three hours of service-work per week with a community organization. Assignments for the course included weekly service-work wrappers (explained below), numerous online discussion board assignments related to the weekly course topics, midterm and final group presentations, and midterm and final reflection papers.

Where possible, connections are made among *Experiential Learning in the Community* and students' ESL courses. For instance, the listening and speaking course familiarizes students with small talk, working effectively in groups, and delivering academic presentations. In this course, students are also introduced to Cohen's (2011) concept of language learning and

language use strategies as conscious actions to “enhance learning” (p. 29), “perform specified tasks” (p. 29), “solve specific problems” (p. 30), “make learning easier, faster, and more enjoyable” (p. 30), and “to compensate for a deficit in language proficiency” (p. 31). To develop their familiarity with speaking, listening and vocabulary strategies, students completed a strategy inventory (Cohen, Oxford, & Chi, 2006), which they discussed with their instructor either in class or during individual conferences.

Partnerships with community organizations are made based on the organizations’ program needs, as well as a willingness and capacity work with international students who are learning English. Many of the partner organizations include schools and after-school programs that provide activities and tutoring for youth. Other partner organizations serve older adults by offering companionship, social activities, and technology assistance at community centers and assisted living facilities. Students in *Experiential Learning in the Community* were matched with their partner organizations based on their interests and schedule.

Both instructors of the *Experiential Learning in the Community* sections had experience teaching the course in previous years, as well as other ESL courses in the program. One of the authors, who was also one of the course instructors, introduced the metacognitive wrappers into the syllabus in response to feedback in previous semesters from supervisors in the partner organizations about students’ lack of engagement and communication during service-work. Additionally, some students had reported that they did not recognize the relevance of service-learning to their educational goals. To address these concerns and to facilitate reflection on communication goals and use of language learning strategies, wrappers were used to help students engage in and reflect on meaningful communication at their service-sites. This communication, in turn, would ideally contribute to students’ English language development as pathways students and to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities with their partner organizations. Figure 1 illustrates factors that contribute to meaningful communication and its accompanying outcomes.

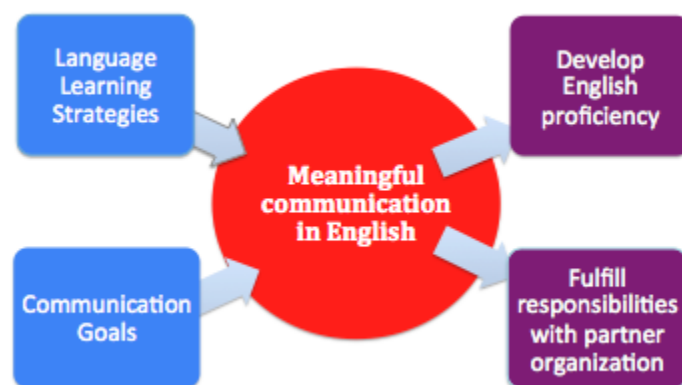


Figure 1. Influences and outcomes of meaningful communication at service-sites

A total of 28 undergraduate students participated in the study. Most of the students were from either Taiwan or China, and one student was from a country in West Africa. The majority of students had been in the United States for 3-6 months at the beginning of the study. One student had been in the country for less than a month, and three students had been in the country for 7-13 months. Only one student had spent more than 14 months in the United States. Participants engaged in a variety of service roles, such as tutoring children and youth, visiting and participating in social activities with older adults, working at a food pantry, and leading activities in a hostel. Table 1 lists the partner organizations, a brief description of the setting, students' roles, and the number of students who participated in those roles.

Table 1. Roles and Distribution of Students Among Partner Organizations

Organization	Description	Student Role	Number of Students
City Neighborhood Center	after school program in a neighborhood community center	tutor for elementary school children	2
Main Street Assisted Living	assisted living community for elderly residents	activity assistant engaging with residents in common areas	4
Ocean Yard Housing Cooperative	after school program in an affordable housing community	tutor and activity assistant for youth	3
Building Blocks of Community	multi-service organization for economically disadvantaged people	office intern working at reception and in the food pantry	2
Yankee High School	innovative public high school serving students from across the city	tutor high school students during and after school	3
Worldwide Hostel	hostel offering accommodations and activities for guests	engagement ambassador leading guests in meal preparation and activities	3
Pleasant Street Home	an affordable housing complex for elderly	friendly visitors paired with an older adult for	5

	residents	conversation or providing technology support	
Creative Collaborations	after school program building peace among elementary school children	materials and activities creator for afterschool program activity leader in afterschool program	5 1

Data

From weeks 4 through 12 of the semester, students completed a “service-work wrapper” after each service-work encounter (see Appendix A for the complete text). This wrapper is a metacognitive tool used to guide students in goal setting and reflecting on each service-work session. The wrappers drew students’ attention to communication, language learning strategies, and their goals to help them bridge the gap between where they are and where they want to be. Figure 2 displays the data collection process as it unfolded during the fourteen-week semester.

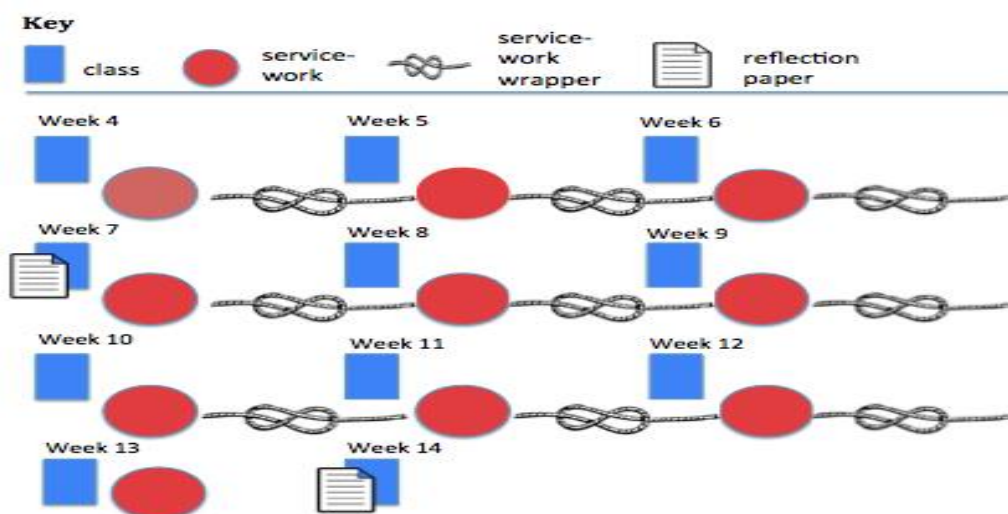


Figure 2. Data collection of weekly metacognitive wrappers and end-of-semester reflection papers

The service-work wrapper questions guided students through a cyclical process in which they prepared for each service encounter, completed their service-work, reflected on what they did and observed, and planned for the following service-work encounter. The first three questions asked students to report on their English use at the service site (i.e., how long they were there, the activities they engaged in, and how much time they were actively using English).

The next wrapper question asked students to describe one element related to English language or communication that they had noticed or learned that week. The following question asked students to describe a strategy they had used to increase the quantity and/or quality of interaction at the service-site that week. The final two questions were related to setting goals. One question focused on the goals students had set for that week and the extent to which they had met them. The next question asked students to set a goal for their upcoming service-learning encounter and describe how they planned to meet it. Instructors and teaching assistants (TAs) of *Experiential Learning in the Community* did not provide any feedback or commentary on students' wrappers other than assigning points for completing them.

In week 14, students also completed a final written reflection about their experience in the course (see Appendix B for the reflection guidelines). The reflection guided students in reviewing the "service-work wrappers" they had written throughout the semester to identify patterns in their activities at the service-site and how their activities intersected the organization's mission and their own interests, the most significant observation they made about communication, and the most important communication goal they met. In addition to the questions that referred to the service-work wrappers, the reflection assignment asked students to reflect on other aspects of their experience in the course, including their learning about American culture, how they would grade themselves for the course, and a future goal they have to continue learning.

To examine the communication wrappers and reflection papers, we drew from Wolcott's (1994) process of data transformation, which includes three major stages. Wolcott defines the first step as data *description*, which involves describing data in detail in order to present an account of what transpired. We began our description by making notes about students' service settings and activities they engaged in, organizing wrappers and reflection papers into numerous spreadsheets, describing data collection methods and instruments, and detailing students' weekly service tasks in chronological order. Wolcott's second stage of data transformation is *analysis*, which involves systematically identifying themes and patterns, sorting them into categories, and revisiting this step recursively throughout the process. The first author identified broad categories in the communication wrappers and reflection papers to group data together. The second author then corroborated the categorization of data.

In the final stage of data transformation, the researcher engages in *interpretation* with the aim of generating conclusions about the data (Wolcott, 1994). As Wolcott (1994b) noted, "Interpretation invites the reflection, the pondering, of data in terms of what people make of them" (p. 30). During this stage, we placed relevant observations in margin comments and discussed our own perceptions of the data. We also drew from literature to further guide our interpretations of the data and help us think holistically about the larger implications and meanings of this project. Wolcott notes that these three stages are not mutually exclusive, "nor are lines clearly drawn where description ends and analysis begins, or where analysis becomes interpretation" (p. 11). As we transformed our data and began writing this article, we

continuously moved among these three stages by revisiting our notes, descriptions, and categories.

Because one of the authors taught both the *Experiential Learning in the Community* and the listening and speaking course, some of the research participants were her own students. Therefore, reducing researcher bias was prioritized. The authors sought to increase the “accuracy of the findings” in two ways (Creswell, 2007, p. 206). First, data were collected from both weekly service-work wrappers and final reflection papers. These different sources of data helped confirm findings and illuminate perspectives and patterns that emerged (Creswell, 2007). The first author also met with an external consultant on a monthly basis over a one-year period when conceptualizing and designing the study, conducting a pilot study, and then collecting data. These meetings helped in making sound and ethical decisions about the research while prioritizing students’ learning in the course.

RESULTS

Communication Goals

This section highlights the types of communication goals that students set for themselves on a weekly basis in both their service-work wrappers and in the end of the semester reflection; they also noted which of their goals they considered to be most significant. The communication goals that students identified as most important to themselves fell into seven main categories: language; fulfilling service-work responsibilities; communicating with specific people; building relationships; culture, daily life, and community; affective factors; and other. Table 2 summarizes participants’ communication goals as indicated in their service-work wrappers and final reflection papers.

Table 2. Summary of Communication Goals from Wrappers and Final Reflections

Category	Percentage of service-work wrapper responses *(n= 205)	Percentage of final reflection responses (n=28)
Language	34%	36%
Fulfilling service-work responsibilities	22%	0%
Communicating with specific people	12%	18%
Building relationships	10%	18%

Culture, daily life, community	7%	7%
Affective factors	5%	14%
Other (More than one goal, *no response, generic or unclear goal)	10%	7%

*Some students did not fully complete all of their wrappers. Wrapper questions that students left blank are not included in these results. One reflection paper did not include a response about a goal.

Language.

Not surprisingly, most of the communication goals reported on the wrappers and final reflection papers were related to language. Specifically, most of these goals related to listening and understanding what others say, speaking, and conversation. Other language-related goals mentioned the importance of body language and pronunciation, learning American English slang, and reading and writing.

Understanding what others say was one notable category of language-related goals. A student who served as a materials creator with Creative Collaborations described language needs specific to living in the United States and reported meeting the goal of “understanding other’s meaning when we are talking. If I want to live in the United States, I have to know how to use English to talk to others.” Another student, an office intern at Building Blocks of Community, noted the difference between previous learning methods and communication opportunities available through service-learning and reported meeting the goal of “being able to understand what other Americans talk about most of the time.” This student explained that previous efforts at watching TV with subtitles had not been effective in improving listening skills and noted “unlike the conversations in TV series that can replay if I did not catch it, the communication in reality can only play once. Consequently, it challenges me to catch the contents in one time.” Both of these responses point to the prominence of using conversational English in their current situation as international students in the United States.

Goals about speaking made up the largest category of language-related goals. Students who reported speaking goals on their final reflections wrote about speaking either to more people or for longer periods of time. An office intern at Building Blocks of Community identified the most important goals that he met as improving his verbal English at his service-site through “lots of chances to speak in English with clients, staff and others.” Similarly, extending a conversation was another goal of many students. A tutor at Ocean Yard Housing Cooperative wrote:

The most important communication goal I met over the course of the semester is to communicate with one person for more than 30 minutes. Because it hard for me to talk

with someone in a long time, this goal can practice me a lot and improve my speaking ability.

Students also realized they needed to find suitable topics for conversation at their service sites. A friendly visitor at Pleasant Street Home wrote:

The most important communication goal is let the conversation go on naturally. Sometime two people are talking, after a few minutes, they may feel that they do not know what should they talk next. The atmosphere is embarrassing, I do not want that happen on me.

Another language-related goal was learning words and expressions. On the final reflection, an ambassador at Worldwide Hostel wrote:

The most important communication goal I met over the course of the semester is I learned a lot of English verbal expressions. It is important because it allows me to avoid a lot of mistakes that can really annoy people.

Learning words and expressions was a goal that received more attention in the wrappers than in the final reflections. In the wrappers, some students were very specific when describing the words they learned. A tutor at City Neighborhood Center wrote:

Last week, I set the goal to learn some new vocabularies in class. Here are the vocabularies: *Fluorescent lamp, calyx, stamens*. These are the words from the class during the discussion. We talked about the planting and flowers today and these words are new for me to learn.

This student's observation highlights a contextualized approach to learning vocabulary in one specific context, afforded by the service-learning placement.

Fulfilling service-work responsibilities.

Almost a quarter of all of students' goals in the service-work wrappers were about fulfilling specific responsibilities at their service sites. However, none of the participants selected one of these goals as their most significant in the final reflection. Some of the service-work specific goals in the wrappers made reference to communication. For instance, a tutor from Ocean Yard Housing Cooperative wrote, "This week I teach them to do the Chinese paper cutting. It not only can help them learn the traditional Chinese culture, but also can help me have a good talking with them." Some other students' goals implied that communication was involved but did not mention it directly. A materials creator from Creative Collaborations wrote:

I was planning to come up with some new ideas about the decoration of celebration at the end of the semester. I think I have accomplished that goal because we have decided the theme of the celebration and got some ideas about how to decorate it.

Participants' other reported goals did not appear to require communication. For instance, a Hostel Ambassador wrote, "The last week, my goal was to remember all the steps for the meal. This week, I finished my goal because I remembered all the procedures for cooking meals." While these goals do not focus specifically on communication, they seem to indicate that students were noticing other relevant goals and attempting to achieve them.

Communicating with specific people.

When students set goals about communicating with specific people, they made particular reference to staff members, Americans, people from all over the world, and strangers; they also provided specific reasons for wanting to communicate with them. These goals comprised 25% of the final reflection responses and 12% of the communication wrapper responses. In the final reflections, two students wrote about communicating with Americans. A tutor from Yankee High wrote, "I am in the USA, and people around me is Americans, so it is necessary to know how to communicate with them and their habits." Similarly, an activity assistant from Main Street Assisted Living wrote about communicating with strangers because "all people are strangers before they become friends; if I do not know how to talk to strangers, I may lose lots of opportunities of making friends." A tutor from City Neighborhood Center explained that his goal of communicating with specific people at his/her service-site was "to effectively talk to both children and teacher in proper ways," recognizing that there are differences in these two groups.

Many of the goals in the wrappers paralleled those on the final reflection. Some students were very specific about who they wanted to talk to, and they enjoyed their success. A tutor Ocean Yard Housing Cooperative wrote, "I wanted to use English to communicate with the staff and supervisor. I did meet the goal. I had fun time chatting with them. That was awesome!" Though students did not always indicate whether or not they successfully met their goals, this student was certainly satisfied with accomplishing the goal of using English with others.

Building relationships.

Students reported goals about building relationships in their final reflections and their wrappers, many of which were related to friendship. On the final reflection, two friendly visitors from Pleasant Street Home wrote about making friends with "native people" and "foreign friends" at the service-site to talk to them in English and practice their listening and speaking. One student, a tutor from City Neighborhood Center, wrote about using friendship as a means to supervise the children at his service site, stating "I think that the most important communication

goal is to be children's friend. My job is to supervise and take care of children. Based on the background, I should become children's friend that can help me to supervise them."

In addition to making friends, some of the wrapper goals were about meeting and getting to know people. A tutor at City Neighborhood Center addressed the challenge of getting to know many new people at once, stating:

My goal for last week was to remember the children's names, therefore, when the teacher called someone's name, I took a look at the face of that children. In addition, I also found a list of the kids' names in the classroom. It really helps me to remember more during the class. Now, I can remember all of their names; however, I still cannot mate few both names and faces right. I still have to work with it.

Another tutor from City Neighborhood Center wrote about the process of developing friendship:

I hope to play with card game with other children instead of the same one so that I can make more friends. I made some friends without playing card game, conversely, they are just very curious about my background and asked me some questions; therefore, we became friends.

While this student's goal focuses on building relationships, there is also specific reference to how communication contributes to meeting this goal.

Culture, daily life, community.

Two students identified significant goals related to learning about culture, daily life or community in their final reflections. A tutor at Yankee High School wrote:

The most important communication goal is to get closer to high school students in order to know more about American culture and how high school students think about their careers and lives, and try to give proper guidance to them based on their experiences.

This response indicates that this students' learning would benefit both himself and the tutees.

In the wrappers, some students identified specific aspects of culture they wanted to learn about, such as poetry, music, or cooking. Other students sought to answer specific questions about daily life, such as what students do in school, where to get a haircut, or how to book travel reservations. A friendly visitor at Pleasant Street Home wrote about meeting his goal and more:

I set a goal for myself last week is that I asked a question about the different policy between China and the United States to the older person. I met that goal and the older person talked with me somethings about the American poems and I learned some new words from the poem this week, such as *exulting*, *grim*, *keel*, *voyage*, and *shore*.

As these participants' reflections show, students can readily learn about culture in their local context while fulfilling their service-learning responsibilities. This is an important benefit for international students who are acculturating to life in the United States.

Affective factors.

Several students identified affective goals in their final reflections related to being or feeling introverted, shy, passive, courageous, and confident. A materials creator with Creative Collaborations who described herself as an introvert explained:

I think the most important communication goal that I met during the semester is that I dare to communicate with strangers. To be honest, I am an introvert person, so it is quite difficult for me to have the courage to communicate with strangers. However, through this semester life of the classroom and service, I no longer fear to talk with strangers.

A tutor at Yankee High School described feeling nervous finding students to tutor at the service site at the beginning of the semester but finding ways to communicate and not be passive.

At first of doing the mentor job, I felt nervous, and I do not know how to help students or find a student who has trouble and needs help. I was always assigned to a group or a student by our supervisors. Gradually, I thought should have changed, I have to ask students and communicate to them first instead of to be passive... I felt that I do have changed when I need to communicate to people.

Both of these students' reflections draw attention to the change that took place over the course of their service-work.

The affective goals in the service-work wrappers primarily focused on being active. The majority (90%) of these goals included the words "active" or "actively" and mentioned, making introductions, greeting people, and asking questions. An office intern at Building Blocks of Community noted, "I wanted to be more active. I achieved by saying hello first to everyone comes into the office." Similarly, an activity assistant in Main Street Assisted Living wrote:

I set a goal to be more active and polite to speak to everybody that I meet. I think I did a good job for that goal. Because I was always trying to listen and speak to everyone, and I was full of energy during this week's service.

This focus on active learning and personal growth indicate that these students are in fact taking responsibility for their experiences and learning at their service sites.

Other.

On the final reflection, most students identified one or two significant goals. One student, however, a tutor at City Neighborhood Center wrote about goals that touched on many of the categories above, such as communicating with specific people, building relationships, and affective goals:

After I entered this program, I had few opportunities to talk with local people because the most classmate are Chinese. But over this semester, I did more interaction with local people, and most are due to the service work. When I was doing my service work, I needed to continue to talk with children so as to build the friendship with them; otherwise, I also needed to talk to the supervisor and instructor if I met any problems. I used to be afraid of making mistakes while I was speaking in English, but I became more confident and brave enough to communicate with others in English after I did the service work this semester.

In contrast to this student's targeted reflection are more general goals that students reported in the service-work wrappers. For example, a friendly visitor at Pleasant Street House wrote "I want to better in communicating. I am weak in it," and a tutor from City Neighborhood Center wrote "Last week, I hope I can do more things I can. To meet this goal, I tried to do whatever I can do." These participants' responses show a range in topic and specificity of the goals they set.

Strategies Used to Achieve Communication Goals

This section describes the various strategies that students reported using in their weekly service-work wrappers and the ones that helped them to reach the communication goal they identified as most important. The strategies are coded by goal they were used to achieve or purpose that students indicated. For example, "ask questions" was a strategy that students used to meet different goals. If it was used to encourage communication or extend a conversation, it was categorized as a conversation and communication strategy. If a student used the strategy of "ask questions" in order to understand what someone said, it was categorized as a listening strategy. "Ask questions" was categorized as a service-work-specific strategy when it was used to encourage guests at the hostel to participate in the cooking activity. Most of the strategies that students wrote about using to meet their communication goals were language-related such as conversation, speaking, listening, and vocabulary. Other strategies were used for goals that were related to fulfilling service-learning responsibilities, affective, and interpersonal. Table 3 summarizes students' strategies as detailed in their service-work wrappers and reflection papers.

Table 3. Summary of Strategies on Service-work Wrappers and Reflection Papers

Goal	Percentage of strategies from service-work wrapper and reflection paper responses directed at the goal (n= 194)	Examples of strategies used to meet the goal
Conversation	23%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finding a topic of conversation ● Ask questions ● Take initiative/speak first
Speaking	16%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Try or practice ● Imitate others ● Speak slowly
Listening/ understanding	12%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen carefully or pay attention ● Ask questions
Learning or compensating for vocabulary	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use compensation strategies ● Recite words from lists ● Listen carefully or pay attention
Fulfilling service- work responsibilities	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talk first ● Do activities ● Find topics of discussion
Affect and motivation	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Try or be active ● Smile ● Try not to be shy or afraid
Communicating with specific people	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek opportunities to talk ● Chat, tell stories, ask questions
Building relationships	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generate interest ● Talk first and often
Other, generic, unclear, no strategy	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learn about specific topics ● Grammar ● Be patient and brave

Strategies for language-related goals.

The strategies directed at the language-related goals comprise over half of all of the strategies students reported. They are divided into four categories: *conversation*, *speaking*,

listening/understanding, and *learning vocabulary*. By far, the most commonly mentioned strategy to improve conversation was to determine suitable topics to discuss. An activity assistant at Main Street Assisted Living wrote, “The strategy I used was opening a conversation in general topic such as what happened recently, and we chose Super Bowl, which happened the day before, and then I asked the rules of football, which made the conversation continue.” Students also emphasized the importance of trying and practicing to improve speaking. Another activity assistant in Main Street Assisted Living wrote, “The strategy is simple, just talk, do not afraid of mistakes. It can help not only your oral English, but also increase your speed when you speaking.”

The strategies used to meet goals of listening and understanding had many similarities and some differences. Approximately half of the strategies for listening highlighted the intentionality involved in listening with phrases such as: “be careful”, “pay attention”, “try to listen”, or “focus.” Almost a quarter of the listening strategies were about asking questions for clarification, confirmation, or repetition. A tutor at the Ocean Yard Housing Cooperative explained, “When I cannot understand what others said, I will ask them to repeat it or explain to me. This strategy can make me completely understand what they said, and I can learn more words or grammar by their explanation.” Another listening strategy involved building vocabulary. A materials creator at Creative Collaborations explained in the final reflection paper how he studied vocabulary throughout the semester to better understand conversations:

I bought two vocabulary books and trying to recite two lists words per night. I mentioned it in wrapper 8,9,10,11,12. Now, I already recite almost every word in these two vocabulary books, and I definitely find that my English has improved a lot.

Though the specific vocabulary study took place outside of service-learning, the student indicated a positive effect on his interactions.

While some students, such as the materials creator above, turned to outside resources to build vocabulary, others took advantage of learning opportunities during their service-work. For instance, an office intern at Building Blocks of Community wrote, “Most of time in my service this time, I was doing the food pantry, so I have a great chance to touch on the common food that Americans like to eat. This time, I paid more attention on the name of each food.” Several other students noted the compensation strategies they used when they did not know a word in conversation. These included using body language, guessing, pointing, drawing or showing an object, and describing a whole sentence in another way. Students also recognized the value in using new words in order to remember them. A friendly visitor at Pleasant Street Home reported successfully using a variety of strategies:

Talking about on aspect deeply so that I can learn more relevant words. Repeat his words and if I don't understand I will ask him to explain by using examples. This time I learn lots of words about classic music.

The student indicated on another question on the service-work wrapper that he learned the word *symphony*.

Strategies for fulfilling service-work responsibilities.

Fulfilling service-work responsibilities was a goal linked to a wide range of strategies. In particular, initiating communication at their service sites was the strategy mentioned by several students. As a tutor at Yankee High School explained, “When I saw a student is confused or stay a long time on a question, I just directly asked her “do you need help?” I think this is an effective way because they will show me the question they do not understand.” A tutor at Ocean Yard Housing Cooperative was one of several students who prepared topics in advance to facilitate communication with students and wrote, “Before I go to my service site, I always think some topics which I can talk with kids. When I play games and do activities, I will talk these topics with kids. It is a good way to make friends and communicate with others.” While many of the service-work-specific strategies were focused on communicating, a friendly visitor at Pleasant Street Home also paid attention to when communication should be avoided and stated, “I noticed that I some older people are not willing to talk when they are relaxing. So, I learn when to shut up when others are not willing to talk.”

Students were able to apply strategies when working with others and individually. Some students saw themselves as working as part of a team at their service-site. An engagement ambassador at Worldwide Hostel wrote that her/his strategy was:

To plan different jobs for different persons. When people want to engage in our cooking, I will give them different works to do. Therefore, I can have more chances to talk with other guests. and they will ask many questions about cooking to me during the cooking time.

When working alone, an office intern at Building Blocks of Community recognized an aspect of language that she needed to focus on and made a connection between a strategy she was using at the service-site and daily life.

When doing the file editing, I paid attention on the Americans' names in it. It is common that people write names with first name and family name. However, when writing family name first, it is important to put a comma between family name and first name. This discovery helped me find some details in daily life.

These service-work-specific strategies demonstrate the range of activities that students engaged in at their service sites as well as their approaches to satisfying their responsibilities.

Strategies for affective goals.

Goals related to affect (i.e., feelings of shyness, nervousness, friendliness, and comfort), and motivation (being active) were addressed with several different strategies. Many students used the word *try* in their strategy description, some used the phrase *force myself*, and some used both expressions together. A tutor at the Ocean Yard Housing Cooperative explained, “I forced myself to chat with staff and the most important are trying not to be shy.” Other students recognized smiling as useful. A friendly visitor at Pleasantville Home wrote, “I just smile to her when I feel nervous...I always try my best to talk with her and smile to overcome the nervous.” Others identified uses of smiling to appear friendly and to make other people feel comfortable. A tutor at City Neighborhood Center wrote about a change he made from one week to the next:

Last time, I was not familiar with the teacher, so I was a little embarrassed in that moment; however, this time, when I met the teacher, I used an exciting emotion to stimulate myself to chat and talk more with the teacher. For that reason, I learned more about things such as cursive and taking care of children.

These examples indicate that students see affective factors as both potential obstacles and tools for communication.

Strategies for communicating with specific people.

When students identified specific people they wanted to communicate with, the strategies they reported using most often were seeking opportunities and finding a relevant type of talk to engage in. An office intern at Building Blocks of Community wrote:

I try to talk to my clients initially. When they come into the office, I will greet them with English. When they are waiting for our service, I try to talk to them about their day and mundane things. I think it is quite effective because I get more chances to talk with native speaker and I can learn their pronunciation and learn new phrases.

This student’s response reveals that there were specific skills that he wanted to learn from a native speaker. In contrast, a tutor at City Neighborhood Center indicated what he could offer when communicating with the children at his service-site and stated, “I will tell stories to children. When I tell stories, I will use many boy [body] languages that can improve the quality of my communication. Because I can tell stories, children will like me.” He also commented that being liked would lead to further opportunities for communication.

Building relationships was another goal of students. To achieve this goal, they tried to generate interest in a common topic and initiate communication. A tutor at Yankee High School

wrote, “When I talk to them firstly I need to show my friendly and just share my habits. Therefore they will treat you as a friend.” Another tutor at Yankee High School wrote:

I found out that the students that I worked with are a little bit shy, and I found out they like music. For this reason, I stated to talk about some music in order to break the ice. Finally, they became more familiar with each other.

Both of these examples indicate that students valued relationships at their service-site and took initiative to cultivate them.

Strategies for other goals.

Two of the strategies that are in the category of meeting other or generic goals are related to grammar, yet there are very few mentions of grammar in either the wrappers or reflections. A materials creator at Creative Collaborations simply wrote, “I will go to grammar workshop on campus a lot.” In contrast, a friendly visitor at Pleasant Street Home wrote:

I think when I communicate with the residents of Morville House, I need to have patient and think about how to speak the whole sentences to them. Perhaps sometimes I have some mistakes of the grammar, but I need to have brave to speak English because I believe everyone also has some mistakes. If I do not find my mistakes, I will have the mistakes forever.

These responses reflect a less and a more contextualized approach to learning grammar.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study shed light on the nature of communication at students’ service-learning sites and align with literature that has highlighted the benefits of service-learning on English language development. As the data illustrate, using English and fulfilling service-work responsibilities were the focus of students’ engagement with their partner organizations. Because students’ service sites provided ample meaningful opportunities for them to use English and because they were placed in service roles that necessitated the use of language, students were able to both set goals that emphasized communication and apply the strategies they learned in their listening and speaking class to achieve them. Such results support the suggestion by Grabois (2007), who pointed out the potential benefits of service-learning for language learning emphasizing that “it diminishes the classroom as the primary place of learning, and establishes an environment where authentic interaction is not a pedagogical goal, but rather a social reality” (p. 181). Many students in this study recognized the value of service-learning for extending language learning outside the classroom.

Furthermore, students in this study generally held positive views about their communication-related experiences during service-learning. We feel this is worth noting, as language-related challenges may inhibit students' engagement at their service-learning sites (Wurr, 2009), diminishing their potential to learn and fulfill the responsibilities assigned to them by their partner organization (Miller & Gardinier, 2017). In addition to meeting their unique communication goals, many students reported that they felt more confident using English and improved their language skills, which emphasizes the importance of taking initiative to speak and actively seeking opportunities to use English as their service sites.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC), "the probability of speaking when free to do so" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 564) is one way of understanding the complexity of the decisions that affect whether or not someone initiates communication in a given situation. The constructs that influence a second language learner's WTC are conceptualized in MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels' (1998) pyramid-shaped model. The six layers of the pyramid are grounded in the broad base of "social and individual context" and narrow upward to an individual's "communication behavior" at the top tip of the pyramid. In this study, students' goals and strategies illustrated several of the constructs that make up the pyramid, from bottom to top, including personality, social situation, interpersonal motivation, and a desire to communicate with a specific person, which were all discussed in one way or another in this paper. This finding is important because according to MacIntyre (2007), focusing on these micro-level processes can spur communication in a second language and thus facilitate second language acquisition.

Additionally, students expressed positive opinions of service-learning more broadly and seemed to appreciate the value of engaging in service-learning. As a friendly visitor at Pleasant Street Home noted in the final reflection, "It was a good way to help the introverted people open the heart," echoing prior work that international students recognize that they can make contributions to society via service-learning (Elwell & Bean, 2001; Miller, Griffin, & Berkey, 2015). This notion was also expressed by an activity assistant at Main Street Assisted Living who stated, "to be able to live well and communicate with others, you will need to have the awareness that we belong in this community." These comments indicate that students were eager to take advantage of the opportunity to not only improve their language skills, but also make contributions to their local community. They demonstrated through their wrappers and reflections what they found meaningful about their own learning.

The use of weekly metacognitive wrappers provided students with the opportunity to set a realistic and manageable goal for each service encounter, such as saying hello or asking a question. Because developing communicative competence in a second language is a long process, setting realistic individual goals can be motivating and help learners to make and recognize incremental progress (Oxford, 2011). With a few exceptions, such as one student who cited a use of vocabulary books over several weeks for rote-learning purposes, students reported using a range of goals and strategies over the course of the semester. Given this finding, more attention could be given in class to goal setting in addition to strategy instruction. As Oxford (2011) notes, second language learners who know how to set specific goals account for the long-

term and the short term, and are an appropriate level of difficulty, can be more strategic about their learning.

One element that we believe played a role in students' strategy use and goal setting was weekly reflection. Lovett's (2013) five practical considerations for effective wrapper use guided the development and administration of this wrapper and also provide a framework for adapting wrappers for other purposes in the future. The first and second considerations are, "impinge minimally on class time," and "be easily completed by students within the time they are willing to invest" (p. 25). In this study, students were asked to complete wrappers as soon as their service-work was over. However, not all students completed every wrapper. To ensure that students complete the wrapper, teachers could ask them to complete it in class. The third consideration is that the wrapper "be easily adaptable" (p. 25). Though Lovett focuses on using wrappers with exams, she notes that they can be used with other learning experiences, which was the case with our study. The fourth is wrappers are "repeatable yet flexible" (p. 25). Course management software Blackboard was used in this study, and wrappers were created in a quiz format. This decision was driven, in part, by the need to compile students' responses in an efficient way for the purposes of data collection. Other tools could be used to align wrappers with instructors' available resources and course objectives. Finally, Lovett notes that wrappers should "exercise the skills instructors want student to learn" (p. 25). While our focus was on communication goals and strategies, teachers or researchers can design them according to the questions they want to ask.

Finally, it is important to note that metacognitive wrappers can serve many purposes. In addition to helping students to set realistic goals for themselves and monitor their strategy use, they can also inform instruction in the course. When completed weekly as in this study, students are provided with an account of their learning and their thinking about their learning as it unfolds. If teachers read them, they can then intervene if any issues arise or if students need extra help. Wrappers may also be used for research purposes. Because teachers in this study did not ask for clarifications in students' wrappers, provide feedback, or leave any comments on them, some of students' wrapper answers were unclear. Researchers who would like to use metacognitive wrappers in the future may thus consider following up with participants using other data collection methods.

Limitations

This study was limited by multiple factors. First, minimal specific language learning strategy instruction took place in the *Experiential Learning in the Community*. Though several supporting activities were built into the listening and speaking class that students were taking simultaneously, the exact extent of the instruction is unknown because the students were in different sections of the course and taught by different instructors. Developing increased consistency in strategy instruction would ideally help students to plan and implement relevant strategies at their service learning sites.

In addition, this study provided one snapshot of students' perspectives during one semester of service-learning and relies on their self-reported experiences and selective memory. This is because the study focused solely on students' communication goals and strategies as reported on their wrappers and final reflection. We also did not include direct observation of students at their service sites or insights from students' supervisors at their partner organizations and instructors, which might have provided additional information about students' service-work. Future research may include insights from partner organization staff and supervisors who interact with students during their service-work.

A third limitation involves the teacher's attention to the wrappers each week and prompts on the wrapper itself. In this study, teachers did not want to influence the data and thus did not comment on wrappers. As a result, some wrappers lacked detail, and some students reported that they forgot to complete the wrapper. Additionally, as we sorted through the data, we realized that some students did not answer each part of the question in their wrappers. For instance, Question #8 included multiple combined questions. Separating these questions might have encouraged students to provide more detail in their responses and ensured that they answered all parts of the question.

Despite these limitations, we believe that metacognitive wrappers are a useful tool for students to reflect on their learning and set goals for themselves. Future studies might include interviews with students to clarify and elaborate on their goals and strategies. In addition, data might also include field observations of students' service-work to offer insights about how teachers can support communication that is specific to students' service-work. Data collected by an observer in real time may also offer a valuable counterpoint to students' retrospective reflection data (Cohen, 2011; Oxford, 2011). Finally, this study provided a holistic perspective of the data collected from all participants, rather than track individual students' reflections throughout the semester. Future research may focus on students' weekly metacognitive wrappers and final reflection papers in order to examine patterns, similarities, and differences of students' reflections throughout the semester.

CONCLUSION

Our study offers a glimpse into undergraduate ESL students' communication-related experiences during direct service-learning. While students reflected on their communication goals and strategy use throughout the semester, they were also able to accomplish a wide range of other tasks, such as making meals, visiting with elderly, and tutoring young children, among other tasks, which allowed them to learn from different populations and contribute to the missions of community-based partner organizations. Communication was one piece of the larger picture of community partnerships, but we believe it is a worthwhile area of focus for ESL students to engage meaningfully in their service-learning.

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APPENDIX A
Service-Work Wrapper Questions

(to be completed on Blackboard after each visit to the service-site)

1. How long were you at your service site this week? Please select the closest answer.
 - a. .5 hours
 - b. 1 hour
 - c. 1.5 hours
 - d. 2 hours
 - e. 2.5 hours
 - f. 3 hours
 - g. 3.5 hours
 - h. 4 hours

2. List the activities you did at your service site this week. Estimate how much time you spent doing each activity and how much time you spent actively using English (speaking, listening, reading, or writing) during each activity.

3. Add the total number of minutes you spent actively using English, based on your answer in Question 2. Enter the total number of minutes here.

4. What is one thing you noticed or learned about English or communication (from one of the categories below) at your service site this week. Write in complete sentences. Give specific examples.
 - a. A new word or expression
 - b. Grammar
 - c. Pronunciation
 - d. Nonverbal communication
 - e. Formality or informality
 - f. A difference in the way people speak
 - g. A strategy to get something done
 - h. Your own communication style
 - i. Other

5. Briefly describe one strategy you used to increase the quantity and/or quality of your communication in English at your service-site. (Remember that a strategy is something you do intentionally to help you meet a goal). How did you use the strategy? How effective do you think it was? Please write two or three complete sentences.

6. What goal did you set for yourself last week? To what extent did you meet that goal? Please explain.
7. What is one goal you have for your next service session to make it a worthwhile language learning experience for yourself? What will you do to meet this goal? Please write two complete sentences.

Appendix B

Final Written Reflection Guidelines

For your final reflection, you will draw on your experiences in this service-learning course to answer the seven questions below in one thoughtfully composed and well-edited document.

- Your response to each question should be at least one paragraph. Number your responses so that is clear which question you are responding to.
- Your document should be in Word format, double-spaced, and typed in 12-point font.
- Submit your assignment through Turnitin on Blackboard. Your assignment is **due on the last day of class**. Points will be deducted for late papers.

1) In order to answer the following questions, review the service-work wrappers that you completed throughout the semester. You are encouraged to use your answers on the wrappers to complete the questions below. However, if you would like to write about something that is not on the wrappers, that's okay too.

- A) When you look back at your service-work wrappers, what patterns do you notice about the activities you did at the service site? How do these activities reflect the purpose or mission of the organization? How do these activities relate to your interests and learning? (Refer to question 2 on the service-work wrappers).
- B) What is the most significant observation you made about communication at your service site? Why was this the most significant to you? (Refer to question 4 on the service-work wrappers. If you use an example from a specific wrapper, please include the date of the wrapper).
- C) What is the most important communication goal you met over the course of the semester? Why is this the most important? What strategies did you use to help you meet this goal? (Refer to questions 5, 6, and 7. If you use an example from a specific wrapper, please include the date of the wrapper).

2) What is the most significant thing you have learned about an aspect of American culture or a current social issue through your service-learning. Give thorough explanation and details.

3) What letter grade (A, A-, B+, etc.) would you give yourself for the service work component of this course? Provide specific reasons and examples for why you would give yourself this grade.

4) What is your overall reaction to the results on your Willingness to Communicate questionnaire? How well do you think the scores on these categories reflect your willingness to initiate interactions? How would you describe your confidence in the different types of interactions addressed in the survey? Based on this information and your reflection, are there any changes in your initiation of communication in English that you would like to make in the future?

5) Based on what you've learned about yourself, communication, community engagement, and American culture and society this semester, what is one goal you have for yourself for the upcoming semester? What are two strategies you will use to meet this goal?