

Service-Learning and English as a Foreign Language Education at Otemae University

大手前大学の英語教育・内容言語統合型学習におけるサービス・ラーニング

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Abstract: In this brief article, we aim to introduce the concept of service learning in EFL education at Otemae University. The series of articles that follows then introduces some of the service learning courses we offer at Otemae and student response to them.

Keywords: Service Learning, C-PLATS

要約

本論は省略的に大手前大学の英語の教育および Content and Language Integrated Learning と言われる「内容言語統合型学習」(CLIL 型学習)におけるサービス・ラーニングの思想を紹介する。続いて、今回のジャーナルでは大手前大学のサービス・ラーニングの学習と学生の反応をいくつか紹介する。

キーワード: サービス・ラーニング、C-PLATS

A Brief History of Service-Learning

While service-learning has received growing attention in recent years for its perceived ability to create civically, critically, and globally engaged students, its roots can be traced back to the early twentieth century, in particular to the American educator John Dewey (1859-1952). Although Dewey was perhaps the earliest advocate of what we know today as service-learning, the process was not articulated and named until 1967 (Giles and Eyler, 1994: 78). Since that time, service-learning has come to be broadly defined as a teaching method where guided or classroom learning is deepened through service to others in a process that provides structured time for reflection of service experience and the demonstration of the skill and knowledge acquired (Giles and Eyler, 1994; Crabtree, 2008).

Service-learning draws upon two educational philosophies: progressivism and pragmatism. John Dewey, in his progressive pedagogical texts, observed that students tend to learn and retain information more effectively when they learn through a cycle of action and reflection (Dewey 1933, 107-115). He understood that learning and doing are intimately connected; when students experience what they are learning, this improves the quality of their learning experiences.

Indeed, Dewey's philosophies offer a broad foundation for students to reflect on a given experience, an important and crucial factor in the learning process. Personal experiences gained through service-learning and community action allow theory to become practical and meaningful, especially when this reflection reinforces a

critical examination through analysis. According to Dewey, reflection is “an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supported form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it.”

William James (1842-1910) had a pragmatic approach to education. Pragmatism values understanding theory and traditional classroom concepts, but maintains that the theory must hold value and that there is no point in simply learning a set of rules. Thus, James believed that teaching must be combined with action. He argued that book knowledge is not enough, and that students should have opportunity to apply knowledge to real-world situations. Indeed, he famously imagined non-military national service in his 1906 address “The Moral Equivalent of War,” two decades before Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933.

William James and John Dewey, together with Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), promoted pragmatic and progressive education as a way to concretely make meaning not only from learned knowledge but also from experience. Their educational ideologies called for active engagement not only in the classroom but also in the community, as Giles and Eyler note: “For Dewey, pedagogy and epistemology were related—his theory of knowledge was related to and derived from his notions of citizenship and democracy” (78).

The twenty years between the 1960s and the 1980s saw a wave of pedagogical reform, with the beginning of education movements for “multiculturalism, collaborative learning communities, and service-learning” (Kezar and Rhoads, 151). These movements reached a peak in the 1990s as educators began to foreground the importance of civic engagement and global awareness in an increasingly international society. Service-learning, whether at a community, national, or international level, creates active and engaged global citizens (Jacoby).

Service-Learning at Otemae

Otemae University, a small university in the Kansai area of Japan, has created an educational reform system based on the principles of progressivism and pragmatism described above. Otemae’s educational philosophy is articulated into a series of six competencies, Creativity, Presentation, Logical thinking, Artistic sense, Teamwork, and Self-control. These basic social competencies are referred to by the acronym C-PLATS, as is discussed in a short English introduction to the system (Ashihara, 2011). This education reform was introduced with the aim of fostering socially engaged and aware students who are well equipped to actively contribute to positive social change. The underpinning philosophy make service-learning a natural fit for Otemae University, and the university encourages broad forms of civic engagement. The university hosts community outreach lectures and events, asks students to participate in volunteer work, and emphasizes the importance of internships and practical education as part of the university experience, to name just several examples.

Like service-learning, C-PLATS encourages a dialogic education, one that can be outlined broadly in four steps. Indeed, these four steps are identical to those of a successful service-learning program:

- 1. Preparation:** identifying a need, investigating and analyzing it and making a plan of action
- 2. Actions:** direct results of preparation
- 3. Reflection:** the pause that gives students time to explore the impact of their learning and its effects on

their thoughts and future actions

4. Demonstration: evidence of what students have gained and accomplished

In addition to encouraging students to take the initiative and participate actively in their own education, Otemae's system also encouraged students to become problem solvers who are invested in learning from many sources, not just educators. Learning from peers is encouraged, for example, through Otemae's annual presentation contest, in which all students participate. This peer learning extends into the classroom and the service-learning projects as well. Further, the development of an integrated, web-based portfolio system that allows students to track and reflect upon their educational and emotional growth over the course of their university education (Ashihara, Hata, Kozo, 2015).

Otemae's educational philosophy thus creates students who are socially engaged and equipped with the skills they need to work with others to make a difference in the world. In that sense, service-learning is a natural and important extension of Otemae's transformational courses and its mission to tie university education to larger social meaning.

The Institute of International Education in particular is active and engaged in creating, developing, and maintaining a variety of service-learning programs. We believe in the Japanese importance of socially beneficial community partnerships that works to meet community-identified goals. Our service learning programs are developed out of the research and pedagogy of our instructors, bringing our classroom into close educational dialogue with the service-learning projects. Indeed, a key difference between volunteer or charity work and service-learning is the latter's emphasis on education as a primary goal (Turner, 2012), and the deep engagement of faculty in the projects is absolutely integral to their success.

In the articles that follow, we introduce two service-learning projects. Both were developed with the aim of demonstrating the relevance of an English-language education outside of the Japanese university classroom and the social activism such linguistic ability made possible. The first is Service-Learning in the Philippines, a project developed and led by Shirley M. Ando. As the project has grown over the course of several years, Noriko Mori and Robert Sheridan have joined and added their expertise.

The Philippines Service-Learning project broadly aims to combine educational objectives such as cultural exchange during school visits and tours of museums, hospitals, and other institutions, with community volunteerism such as beach clean-up. The project was designed to include educational, service and recreational components. Otemae students learned about Filipino history, culture, language and cuisine while in turn they were challenged to teach grade 8 Filipino students about Japanese (their own) history, culture, language and cuisine. This service project, therefore, was primarily a cultural exchange and developed to be what Richard Kiely has described as a transformative project that challenged and changed students' world views (Kiely, 2004).

The second project, the Nagashima UNESCO Translation Project, was developed and led by Kathryn M. Tanaka. In this service project, Tanaka and the students were joined by John Jackson, Ozaki Kōji, Shikata Yoshiaki, and Robert Sheridan. They stayed at Nagashima Aisei-en, Japan's first national hospital for Hansen's Disease. There, students learned the history of Hansen's Disease in Japan and saw that history with their own eyes.

The main goal of the project, however, was to translate introductory materials into English in order to make the site more accessible to foreign tourists as part of Nagashima Aisei-en's bid to become recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In developing the project, Tanaka aimed to demonstrate to students the importance of English for social activism within Japan itself.

In introducing these projects here, we hope to demonstrate two ways in which service-learning can be a powerful tool in second language teaching. Through these projects, students not only use language they have studied in the classroom, but they also learn to be socially active and aware. Furthermore, the experiences they gain on these projects become part of the dialogue in the classroom and community when they return to Otemae, as we hope the following articles will demonstrate.

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