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Pathways to Paradigm Change: Critical Examinations of Prevailing Discourses and Ideologies in Second Language Education

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Chapter 10

Second Language Education and Service-Learning: Disrupting Discourses of Disempowerment

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Introduction

In its congressionally commissioned report on language learning in the United States, the American Academy of Arts & Sciences (AAAS, 2017) called for a renewed national investment in language education with the specific aim of building capacity for communication and intercultural understanding. At our institution, this report prompted university-wide discussions about curricular actions to respond to this call. One of these proposed actions would be for language departments to develop credit-bearing Language Engagement Activities (LEA), including community-based service-learning (CBSL) modules that would involve practice of a language other than English or the practice of English in the case of English learners.

Over the past 20 years, language education in the United States has embraced CBSL as an avenue for language and culture learning beyond the classroom (Palpacuer Lee, Curtis, & Curran, 2018b). For instance, as part of its agenda for equity in education, the university's Graduate School of Education has partnered with school districts, community organizations, and libraries to expand public access to language education. In our linguistically diverse community, English is more often a second or third language than a first one: Family languages include English, Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Hungarian, and Russian (Mann, 2011), among others, each tracing the city's rich history as an immigration hub.

We have been involved with this program for 10 years, and our perspective is represented in this program's multilingual orientation. As language educators and researchers, we believe we have a responsibility to equally honor both community languages and community investment in English. The potential for university-wide action to develop community-based learning affords a unique opportunity to enter into conversations about the tasks and challenges ahead. We view achieving clarity about the aims and agendas for CBSL as being among these challenges. We believe,

as do others (e.g., Lear & Abbott, 2008; Leeman, 2011; Rabin, 2009, 2011), that an examination of the discourse of language-focused service-learning is a potential platform for necessary action in the direction of equity and paradigm change in language education (Palpacuer Lee, Curtis, & Curran, 2018b).

With these aims in mind, in this chapter, we explore communications about our CBSL program at the institutional and programmatic levels and illustrate tensions in these communications that we, as educators, confront in our classrooms. Our study asks: Whose language, whose community, and whose service are valued at our institution? Acknowledging the ways that language reproduces social practice, this chapter represents our contribution to the inspiring and challenging project of pursuing social change through language. Through a case study, we illustrate a path forward that begins with reflection and inquiry and continues with action in the classroom.

The Study

CBSL and Reciprocity in Higher Education

In higher education, CBSL describes an academically supported, for-credit, community-based service experience. CBSL programs aim for *reciprocity*, understood as mutually beneficial relationships among academic institutions and community partner organizations such as public schools, libraries, faith-based charities, and nonprofit advocacy groups. Service-learning scholars have examined the notion of reciprocity and its articulation within traditional and critical service-learning (e.g., Meens, 2014; Mitchell, 2008), outlining a continuum of meanings and practices. These include *exchange*, *influence*, and *generativity* (described by Dostilio et al., 2012). Relationships of *exchange* can be primarily transactional, in which academic institutions provide a resource to community partners, such as after-school tutors receiving college credit for a field experience in a public school. Interpretations of reciprocity as relationships of *influence* and *generativity* both speak to processes of reshaping the partners' perspectives. In a relationship of *influence*, "reciprocity is expressed as a relational connection that is informed by personal, social, and environmental contexts" (Dostilio et al., 2012, p. 20). On this continuum, *generative* partnerships are transformative and radical; the system through which the partnership has evolved is itself changed, and/or participants' ways of knowing are transformed by forming new collaborations. In this critical view, reciprocity involves the production "of something new together that would not otherwise exist" (Dostilio et al., 2012, p. 20). These perspectives on reciprocity are not mutually exclusive and may overlap; however, reciprocity should not be assumed without being defined. The unquestioned invocation of reciprocity may in fact limit conversations among students, faculty, and community participants about the assumptions of the partnership. In this chapter, we present a case

study that pursues such a conversation that aims at clarifying who we are in the partnership, who benefits, and how. We believe that conversations about "why are we here" and "who [are we] in this relationship" (Flower, 2002, p. 182) are key to transformative, critical, and *generative* collaborations involving the redistribution of power and the co-construction of new knowledge. Taking such a stance raises additional questions of how we understand community and service and how we achieve ethical partnerships.

Research Questions

In the context of heightened linguistic diversity and an increased emphasis on CBSL as a resource for language education in the United States, we include the question of "whose language" is negotiated, emphasizing the urgency of clarifying positions, agendas, and meanings of service associated with CBSL. To this end, we designed a case study to examine the institutional discourses associated with the community-based language partnerships that we have been engaged in. We examined layers of words, sounds, and images with the aim of understanding how these layers combined to discursively construct the roles and actions of participants in the program. The following questions guided both our study and the classroom intervention that we designed:

1. Whose community, whose service, and whose language are present (or not) in the discourse?
2. How has reciprocity in language-focused service-learning been articulated (or not)?

To answer these questions, we draw from scholarship that has outlined the discursive and ideological contours of language-focused CBSL in linguistically diverse communities (e.g., Rabin, 2009, 2011). To refine our understanding of our program's positioning in relation to this discursive landscape, we examined communications about language-focused service-learning at our institution. To do so, we took a holistic approach, employing critical and multimodal discourse analytical tools (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Machin, 2013; Michelson & Álvarez Valencia, 2016; van Leeuwen, 2008). Before turning to our study and intervention, we briefly introduce the program that forms the topic and context for the university communications we examined.

Methods

The Program

The study examines three communications that describe a language-focused CBSL program called *Conversation Café*. This program brings together bilingual speakers at various levels of proficiency for a weekly hour of unscripted and informal

conversation. *Conversation Café* was launched in 2012 with a pilot program that afforded desired community access to English conversation. At that time, we learned from many city residents that they sought access to English in order to become more involved in community life, such as participating in parent–teacher conferences at their children's schools or in city council meetings. Aiming for a language program that honored participants' family languages, Cafés for Mandarin and Spanish were subsequently developed, reflecting the city's languages and in turn engaging the expertise of bilingual residents. Our research in the pilot program involved partnerships with community-based organizations that sought support for their community-based English classes and led to the development of academic, community-based courses that prepared undergraduate students and preservice teachers for their roles as conversation partners, *sympathetic interlocutors* who understand the interactional demands of spontaneous conversation in a second or third language and take responsibility for building understanding (Dooley, 2009; Garretón & Medley, 1986). With an understanding of the sociopolitical dimensions of learning and speaking English in the United States, these participants from the university practice strategies for language-aware interactions in their conversations across linguistic and cultural differences, such as speaking at a reasonable pace, inviting participants to introduce or elaborate on a topic, and engaging in exchanges about language and culture (Palpacuer Lee & Curtis, 2017). The English-focused *Conversation Café* program, which we highlight here as the anchor program for the community organizations and the academic course, integrates a weekly series of conversations, held off-campus between university participants, many of whom are bilingual in English and another world language, and bilingual community members who wish to practice English. The structure of the CBSL course is outlined in Table 10.1.

The first four weeks of class are dedicated to preparing university students and/or preservice teachers for their roles as sympathetic interlocutors, as described. To build this necessary capacity, our courses introduce *funds of knowledge* (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992), language as social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Ochs, 1993), and the dynamic notion of linguistic repertoires (Blommaert & Backus, 2013). These conceptual tools contribute to organizing students' thinking

Table 10.1 Academic Course Structure

Component	Duration	Course Content Example
On-campus preparation	Four weeks	Introduction to sociocultural learning, community of practice, funds of knowledge
Off-campus conversation programs at community organizations	Eight to nine weeks	*Conversation Café* (between 60 and 90 minutes) with community members embedded within class time
On campus reflection and debrief	Two weeks	Internalizing what was learned through questions and discussion

about language as meaning-making and for identifying and clarifying students' beliefs about languages and cultures that may (or may not) be different from their own. In pre- and postservice classes, students engage in systematic, guided reflection to connect theory to practice and (re)consider their own multilingual and varietal identities and practices as they enter power relations associated with the social spheres of family, work, communities, and the *Conversation Café* (Palpacuer Lee & Curtis, 2017). Our program research has included deep examinations of students' and preservice teachers' intercultural learning in this program (Curtis & Curran, 2015; Curtis & Palpacuer Lee, 2019; Palpacuer Lee & Curtis, 2017; Palpacuer Lee, Curtis, & Curran, 2018a) and the intercultural learning of participants in the *Conversation Cafés* for Mandarin and Spanish (Curtis, Palpacuer Lee, & Curran, 2017). In this instance, we were interested in examining how the institution understood the community-based language learning program and its associated relationships.

Case Study Data

Our approach for this case study involved taking inventory of institutional communications that describe the *Conversation Café*. The data included communications disseminated via websites, recruitment flyers, promotional videos, partnership documents and meeting agendas, and newspaper articles. We selected texts for our case study that (1) were public communications; (2) included texts and images; and (3) reflected viewpoints of students, program coordinators, and university publicists. Based on these criteria, we selected public-facing institutional communications to shed light on the discourse of the institution as a whole. The three selected texts included (1) a newspaper article that described a *Conversation Café*, written for the readership of the student-run campus newspaper, (2) the *Conversation Café* program website that had been developed sequentially by several program coordinators since the program launch and was designed to recruit university students as participants in the academic course and community-based language program, and (3) a one-minute segment of a 2017 promotional video created by the university public relations staff to broadcast the university's civic mission.

Each multimodal text selected for the case study represented the work of different institutional members: students (for the newspaper article), program coordinators (for the program website), and publicists (for the promotional video). Our analysis focused on the ways in which the program website, the promotional video segment, and the student newspaper article contributed to a discursive representation of the program.

Analysis

To answer questions of how reciprocity in language-focused service-learning has been articulated (or not) and disseminated, and to examine whose community,

whose service, and whose language are represented (or not), we employed critical and multimodal discourse analytical tools (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Machin, 2013; Michelson & Álvarez Valencia, 2016; van Leeuwen, 2008) to construct a holistic view of representations of the community-based practice across all three texts. To do so, we built on van Leeuwen's (2008) concept of discourse as recontextualized social practice (2008, p. 3). As van Leeuwen explains, "texts should be studied as representations as well as interactions" (p. 4). Representations are assumed to be based on social practice, yet they may discursively eliminate, foreground, or transform certain aspects of practice, such as participants and setting. We focused the analysis on the identification of participants, actions, and aspects of design to capture how the representations functioned together and discursively positioned the language-focused program on the continuum of reciprocity.

First, we identified the participants and their roles (e.g., actors, recipients, and beneficiaries) in each text, as represented in images and written language (illustrated in Table 10.2). In the newspaper article and the promotional video, the *Conversation Café* is envisioned as an ESL classroom, requiring actors, such as "teachers" and "students," and an object of study, which here is English. In the model that is projected in these communications, the program is identified as a traditional language class, even if the practices associated with the *Conversation Café*, as illustrated by participants' quotes and images, disrupt this model (e.g., people sitting at round tables, informal conversations instead of "teacher" and "student" arrangements). In addition, participants are not always human agents, and we noted how language was constructed not only as resource but also as *actor*. Second, we examined how the actions performed by participants were described (e.g., sequences, time, location, material resources, the presentation styles of participants in these performances). For instance, on the program website, the main action students and English Conversation Facilitators are engaged in is that of service,

Table 10.2 Participants and Actions

Source	Actors	Actions
Program website	Students	Serve (5)
	English conversation	Engage (2)
	Facilitators	
	Adult learners	
Promotional video	Students/university	Impact (5)
Newspaper article	Student facilitators	Help (4)/teach (2)/facilitate (1)
	City resident/volunteer	Learn (5)
	Student/volunteer	
	Immigrants/newcomers/"foreign-born"	

while in the promotional video segment, the main action of students and the university is that of impact. The newspaper article, however, includes additional distinctions among actors and actions: "Student facilitators," "volunteers," and "city residents" are engaged in "helping," "facilitating," and "teaching" "immigrants," "newcomers," and "foreign-born" participants, whose sole aim is to "learn" (see Table 10.2). Third, after interrogating each text as a separate unit, we aggregated and compared the discursive constructions of language, service, and community across the texts (see Table 10.3).

Given the multimodal nature of the texts in our case study, we adapted Kress's (2010) framework for social semiotics as context-specific practice. To do so, the second main part of our analysis took a rhetorical approach to these communications, considering how meanings are designed, how representations are formed, and how they are both disseminated. To this end, we identified the *rhetors* (who generated the messages) and the *interpreters* (who engage with the messages) in these communications. We initially identified the rhetors as university members: the university communications office (who generated the promotional video), program coordinators (who generated the informational and recruitment website), and students (who generated the newspaper article). We identified the interpreters as prospective or current students, their families, and faculty. We also examined how the rhetors characterized themselves and others as participants and how rhetors described the actions taken by them and others in the program, thus framing a narrative about the program and its social practices that interpreters would (or not) engage with. We focused the analysis on the identification of actions and knowledge-making through design and dissemination of these texts to capture how the representations of service, community, and participants functioned together and positioned the language-focused program on a continuum of reciprocity. In the next section, we describe how these meanings interact, are co-constructed across our data, and how they contribute to an overall narrative about the *Conversation Café* program.

Table 10.3 Constructions of Language, Service, and Community

Source	Language(s) (number of mentions)	Service (descriptors)	Community (descriptors)
Program website	English (9)/ESL (3) Spanish (3)/ Mandarin (2)	Impact/opportunity/ serve/collaborate/status (conversation facilitator)	Community partners/ participants/adult learners
Promotional video	English (1)	Impact/relationship/status (teaching career credential)	Entire communities/ parents of elementary school students
Newspaper article	English (9)/ESL (4)	Help/teach/status (ESL career credential)	Immigrants/newcomers/ participants

Findings

We interrogated the data and asked: (1) Whose community, whose service, and whose language are present (or not) in the discourse? (2) How has reciprocity in language-focused service-learning been articulated (or not)? This section presents an overview of our findings.

Across our data, public communications about the program emphasized power dynamics centered around English and academic knowledge. We identified silence about languages other than English as one of the discursive moves that served to sustain the organizational identity of the institution as the legitimate and powerful center in the community. In turn, this narrative legitimated the role of the institution and its student members as professionals and engaged actors, disqualifying community members practicing English as legitimate members capable of contributing to the service-learning program.

Language, Community, and Service

In this section, we detail how the interpretations of community, language, and service across texts interact to construct a narrative of community disempowerment. We found consistency in institutional messaging regarding the dynamic and interrelated constructions of language, community, and service across modalities: The contributions of university students and faculty were positioned in the foreground, while participants in community-engaged conversation were in the background, in the periphery. Language, and specifically "English learning," constituted a field of activity that foregrounds the university against a community backdrop. In turn, service was discursively constructed as "impact."

The roles associated with the categories of *participants* did overlap. For instance, in the promotional video, the university students are identified as *actors*, and yet are also the *beneficiaries* of the social practices associated with the *Conversation Café*. The promotional video was created in 2017 to broadcast the civic mission of the university. A one-minute segment (2:07–3:13) of the promotional video is dedicated to the *Conversation Café*. The short segment includes interview clips featuring a preservice teacher, a school principal, and a faculty member. Footage captures images of participants, preservice teachers, and parents at an elementary school, in conversation in the background, and positions one preservice teacher, who is wearing a suit, in the foreground. The preservice teacher interviewed is in the foreground while the audience hears "[S]tudents are impacting entire communities through the Graduate School of Education's school community partnership network and a program called *Conversation Café*, an adult English learning program." The visual data from the promotional video comprise panoramic views that construct the university as a center, located in public spaces and reaching out beyond its campuses. These center-periphery and foreground-background distinctions are particularly salient in the video close-ups

and interviews with university stakeholders, reinforced by the audio that features a single narrative representing the voice of the powerful institution, embodied by the interviewed preservice teacher, while the voices of the community members who attended the English conversation practice are muted.

In the newspaper article, however, additional distinctions are made, reinforcing mutually exclusive categories of participants. The newspaper article was written by a university student journalist for the large campus readership. Published online, the article is headlined "[university name] students, [city name] residents, help community learn English with library program." Beneath the headline, there is a photograph of program participants that was taken at the public library, a community partner since the program launch. The attached caption explains that the library "hosts an 'English as a Second Language' program where [university name] students and other members of the city community teach immigrants the English language several times a week." Quoted in the article are various actors in the narrative crafted by the journalist, including two bilingual community members, two university students, a city resident/volunteer, and the library's ESL program coordinator. In the newspaper article, community members were further divided into two categories: "volunteers/facilitators" and "participants" (see Tables 10.2 and 10.3). The "volunteers/facilitators" were the ones impacting their communities by "teaching" and "helping" non-English speaker "participants," also described as "immigrants," "newcomers," "foreign-born," "who can't communicate well in English." The conflation of language proficiency and nationality in the newspaper article was further confirmed by a link to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Language figured as an actor in these texts as presence and absence. English and ESL were present across all three multimodal texts: through voice-over and background conversations in the promotional video and in-text references in the newspaper article and the program website. In contrast, community languages were absent or silent, except in the program website, which uniquely mentioned Mandarin and Spanish. Across our data, "English" and "ESL" constituted a fulcrum on which discursive understandings of the roles of students (as helpers/teachers) and community members (as beneficiaries/learners) were weighed and measured (see Table 10.3). The narrative of the promotional video depicts the students as actors in a discursive field in which English is also understood as an actor that shapes social relations, and in which language discursively recreates the perceptions and practices associated with the condition of ESL in traditional classrooms. The condition of "ESL" requires that "teachers" and "students" be involved in a discursive frame that envisions a language-focused, community-based, service-learning program as a language classroom where the actors are traditionally "students" and "teachers." Community members, actors whose agency brought them to the English conversation program, were positioned as learners, the "recipients" of English, and of university actions and impact (see Table 10.2). "English" was thus an actor that shaped participants' understandings of their

community-based activity, filling a silence about bilingualism in the community. These representations of language contributed to produce university students and community members as mutually exclusive categories.

Discursively constructed categories of membership were illustrated across the data. The newspaper article constructs a message that confirms the position of the university and its students as central in supporting the immigrant and "foreign" community, described as lacking in English. The promotional video and the newspaper article confirmed the university students' status as "teachers" and "helpers" while they were still learning. The roles of university students were also professionalized and converted into status, as illustrated by the capitalization of the university students' roles as "Conversation Facilitators" on the program website. Overall, the representation of these overlapping roles and memberships emphasized the university as a prominent actor in this discursive space. This distribution of roles and actions, crystalized around the power associated with English as a privileged world language, served to discursively produce mutually exclusive categories of participants, an "us–them" dichotomy. This distinction remains problematic, ignoring the funds of knowledge available among participants and ignoring the complex memberships and identities being negotiated.

Examining the discursive constructions of service across the data, as illustrated in Table 10.3, we noted that the verb "to serve" occurred five times across the program website pages. On the *Students* page on the program website, there is a drop-down menu that includes *Service-Learning*. This page informs interested students that "[s]ervice-learning is an integral part" of the program. However, there is no further information about service-learning, nor a definition, found here. Other actors identified on the website are "adult learners," and their main action is that of engagement (the verb "engage" is found twice). In contrast, the promotional video emphasized the "impact" (repeated five times) of the action of "students" and "the university," engaged in "helping" and "teaching." In this promotional video, we noted the presentational style of these actors: A preservice teacher is interviewed in the video, wearing a suit and tie, similar to the school superintendent also interviewed. These presentational styles index status and professionalism and contrasted with the presentational styles of other participants who were not interviewed and were dressed casually. In the program website and the promotional video, service was discursively constructed as "impact."

By contrast, the visual data in the newspaper article and the multimodal data in the program website suggested an alternative construction of the social practices and power dynamics related to service in the *Conversation Café*. The *Photo Gallery* on the program website page included visual illustrations of service in the program; 12 pictures of program participants taken between 2013 and 2016 were included on this page. A sentence that includes the place and time the photos were taken is attached to each. In these visual representations, program and community spaces were depicted as interior spaces, intimate sites of learning where people

of various ages were seated together around tables, speaking or listening to each other, deeply engaged. The pages *Join a Conversation Café* (forms for students to join), *Professional Development* (a departmental contact for more information), and *News* (links to articles and awards) complete the website. The *Community Partners* page displays the logos of three community partner organizations, which serve as links to the community organization websites. This page contains one sentence that describes service and the program as a collaboration: "[The program] is a collaborative effort make possible through our partnerships with various community-based organizations." This suggests a departure from the representation of the program as a language classroom and from a view of service as "teaching," instead constructing "service" as a partnership.

The analysis highlights a narrative in which the coexistence of converging and sometimes conflicting public messages from program coordinators, students, and publicists ultimately serves to produce a nexus of empowerment (of the university) and disempowerment (of community participants) and associated categories of membership.

Reciprocity

Interpretations of reciprocity in CBSL hinge on a continuum of meanings, interpretations, and practices that include relationships of *exchange*, *influence*, and *generativity* (Dostilio et al., 2012). Reciprocity can be interpreted as a relationship of exchange that is primarily transactional. A relationship of influence would construct reciprocity as the evolution of a mutually beneficial relationship as informed by context. Finally, relationships of generativity aim at a radical transformation of the program and its participants as they create new knowledge, collaborations, and practices. Despite this continuum of possible interpretations, we did not find mentions of reciprocity across the three texts. The program website uniquely mentioned partnership, community partners, and collaboration. The engagement of adult learners in one-on-one conversation was mentioned twice (see Table 10.2).

The program website was developed by several program coordinators over the four years since the program launch to recruit students to the community-based language program. Visually, the website background, which consists of repeating tree-like images, frames seven main pages, suggesting organic connections rather than imposed hierarchies. The program website's *Home* page acknowledges the collaboration between two university departments to establish the conversation program and partnerships with community organizations. On this page, reciprocity is described in terms of relationship building and opportunities. In the program, community members, cast as "adult language learners," have "opportunities to practice conversation in an informal setting"; meanwhile, students, in the linked *Students* page, have "exciting opportunities to serve."

The program website's *Home* page also describes the program's impact in terms of (a) hours of service, (b) number of student and community facilitators, (c) number of community members involved, and (d) number of community partner sites. The *Students* page proposes an "exciting opportunity to serve as English Conversation Facilitators within community-based organizations offering ESL (English as a Second Language) services while receiving academic credit." The website thus describes reciprocity in terms of opportunities and appears to orient toward a relationship of *influence* (Dostilio et al., 2012). However, by quantifying the "impact" (of university students), the exchange value of the relationship is skewed: The value placed on university action is confirmed. This communication about an *exchange* of opportunity for both students and community members obscures two actions: (a) the conversion of student "service" to "status" (i.e., Conversation Facilitator, capitalized, suggesting a title) and (b) the production of academic capital for students. The overall message conforms to the expectations of an institutional discourse that values *measurable* impact, as evident on the *Home* page, which displays the quantification of the impact and actions of the university program to confirm its success and value.

The newspaper article and the promotional video reinforced the discursive construction of reciprocity as a transactional *exchange*. The newspaper text represented the actions of university students' "helping" as "teaching." Reciprocity in the *Conversation Café* appears to be constructed as an *exchange* whereby the university provides a resource—English conversation—to community partners while university students receive college credit for their participation. The exchange, however, benefits the institutional members when the contributions of the multilingual community are mentioned neither in the newspaper article nor in the video. In the promotional video, participation in the *Conversation Café* was described by students and faculty as a way to gain cultural capital that would benefit both their careers and, eventually, the youth and families that they interact with. While we do not discount the evidence of care on the part of students and faculty, this exchange ultimately serves to disempower community participants positioned as beneficiaries of the institution's actions.

Each of these texts and images contributes to a narrative that devalues the time and resources of the community involved by overlooking, for instance, their engagement, contributions, expertise, intercultural competence, and patience with university students as the students learn to negotiate across difference. A dynamic of overt messaging about opportunity and credentials (for university students) and covert messaging about deficit (for bilingual community members) was communicated through frequent mentions of "English" and "ESL" across all three texts, in contrast with a relative absence of bilingualism and a dearth of mentions of community languages. The program website constituted an exception, with mentions of opportunities for practice in Mandarin and Spanish and program schedules available in English and Spanish.

Discussion

Our second research question focused on the ways that reciprocity in the language-focused service-learning program was constructed and articulated. The analysis across the three texts found overt messages that suggested a reciprocal relationship of exchanges of opportunity. However, these exchanges were skewed, with value placed on the time and effort of university students, faculty, and departments. These messages served to undermine the assumed (and desired) reciprocity of the program. Reviews of the literature and critical scholarship have illustrated how reciprocity has been interpreted from traditional and critical perspectives (Meens, 2014; Mitchell, 2008). For instance, traditional approaches tend to interpret reciprocity from a deficit perspective, fully actualized in *charity*, *missionary/savior*, or *drive-by* approaches that emphasize individual action (Butin, 2007; Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Such perspectives, of which we found traces in our data, can activate a cultural model of community disempowerment and may create a perception of distance (e.g., geographical, ideological, socioeconomic, linguistic) between the institution and the community it aims to serve. The analysis revealed tensions that centered on (a) the underlying perceptions of *actors* and *actions* in CBSL, discursively privileging "English" while silencing community languages, and constructing the university and the students as the legitimate actors impacting the multilingual community; and (b) the way the unscripted conversational activity was recontextualized as classroom-based, structured "ESL" and "English learning."

Our first research question invited a critical examination and reflection on whose language, community, and service were heard or not in the discourse at our institution. The analysis demonstrated how an institutional perspective centered the narrative on English and ESL across all three texts, overlooking community bi/multilingualism. Consequently, this discourse tended to overlook community members' agency as participants in and contributors to a program in which university students and preservice teachers were professionally socialized. Thus, actors and actions were constructed as contrasts that not only serve to undermine the program's desired reciprocity (aligning with generative collaboration) but also reinforce the "us–them" dichotomy that the program seeks to disrupt.

In addition, deficit-oriented discourses, as much as they obscure community agency and agendas, also serve to overlook the ways in which service-learning may be experienced differently by students of different socioeconomic, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds, suggesting normative assumptions (Green, 2003; Leeman, Rabin, & Román-Mendoza, 2011; Meens, 2014; Mitchell, 2016; Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012, among others). Research in our programs has found that participating university students may not be engaging in "border crossing" from the perspective of social distance and may themselves be navigating—or resisting—an ideological landscape that centers on language and membership in "America"

(Curtis, 2018, p. 29). Leeman (2011) notes, "despite the diversity of students' language backgrounds, as a profession, we [language educators] continue to design curricula for an imagined monolingual English-speaking student" (p. 302). Students at the public university and/or their families may be members of the language communities they serve, and community members may engage in multiple linguistic and cultural communities and workplaces. For instance, a bilingual university student in our program demonstrated her insider positionality within the city's Spanish-speaking community through her choice of pronoun ("*my* community") and her desire to serve it through teaching: "I want to be a teacher, but I would also like to keep helping *my* community. I expect to learn new skills on how to help other people that are learning a new language, factors that affect their learning" (Curtis, 2018, p. 88). This research confirms a misalignment between participants' perspectives on helping—the need and desire to support community language education in community relationships of trust that recognize human interdependence (see Moll et al., 1992)—and the discursive exclusion of university students from minoritized and diasporic language communities. Finally, the potential for accumulation of academic capital associated with service-learning may also reinforce "us–them" boundaries, even as students' idealism is engaged and desirable opportunities are opened up for professional experiences.

These findings had an impact on our practices and classroom-based research in the program. Aware of the ways the institutional discourses associated with the *Conversation Café* overlook community bi/multilingualism and can convey community disempowerment, we attempted to disrupt these frames by foregrounding multilingual community members' voices and funds of knowledge in our classrooms. To this end, we found ways to incorporate our research into the course content, for instance, incorporating a *Booklet of Advice* for families new to the area that was produced by parents in the *Conversation Café* as a pedagogical tool (described in Palpacuer Lee, Curtis, & Curran, 2018a).

In light of the findings, we also recognized the need to position our program in relation to this discursive landscape, and to develop, articulate, and disseminate a discursive model that would align with our views of partnerships as generative, and contribute to transforming discourses and practices toward paradigm change. To take our students in that direction, we included a reflection on the discourse and meanings of service in our classes, with the goal of collectively negotiating "who we are" and "why we are here." This was the focus of an intervention that we describe next.

Intervention: (De)/(Re)Constructing Discourses of Empowerment

As critical language educators and researchers, we firmly believe that paradigm change, ushered in by community-led activism for language rights and equity in education, should be affirmed and co-constructed in the classroom through

talk and interaction. To do so and to learn about service together with university participants, we selected the newspaper article from our data, and through interactional inquiry, we built our intervention around the discursive and collective de/reconstruction of the ideologies and discourses emerging from the close reading of this text. In what follows, we present our de/reconstruction of the campus newspaper article, addressing as a group, in class, discursive constructions of community and service in our program.

Activity 1: Collective Textual Analysis

We began by leading students in a collective textual analysis of the campus newspaper article. Our aim was to engage in meaning-making in the classroom to complicate the discourse about the community-based program at our institution and defer action in the community to inquiry into the meaning of our involvement in the program. We brought the newspaper article to our classrooms with questions for our students: What is meant by "community"? What actions are taken, and by whom? Whose languages are valued? Our collective textual reading involved several steps. First, we demonstrated a sentential-level reading based on the semantic order of English, followed by an examination of the underlying relationship of each participant to the action (i.e., initiator, or agent, vis-à-vis the patient or recipient of the action). Second, we identified collocations and parallel structures throughout the text to reveal how "service" and "community" were interpreted. Third, we identified oppositions (e.g., "teach" and "learn") that contributed to creating mutually exclusive social categories and dichotomous relationships (i.e., "students" and "immigrants"). Fourth, we identified references to language, determining which languages were mentioned (or not) in the text. For instance, English was mentioned nine times in the text, while we noted the absence of community bilingualism and community languages. In what follows, we share samples from our critical reading, intended to deconstruct how "community" was represented. We began with the article title:

> [S]tudents, [city] residents | **help** | *community* learn English

The students agreed that the *agents* represented in the sentence subject (underlined) are the university students and city residents who "help" (a transitive verb). In the next step, students and instructors agreed that the *patient*, the recipient of the action, is "community" (italicized). We did not know yet who comprised the recipient of the action, except that the community had been characterized as learning English, a language that is presumably in the possession of the agents, the university students, and the city residents. The sentence structure created a dichotomy: "community" was constructed as a category that excludes

students and residents. This was confirmed by examining the photo and its caption, illustrated as follows:

> The [City] Free Public Library hosts an "English as a Second Language" program where [university] students and other members of the city community teach immigrants the English language several times a week.

We highlighted for our students the words "teach" and "English" as illustrated here. From this caption we learned that the word "community" in the headline included "immigrants." We can see how, sentence by sentence, in the novice reporter's process of wrestling with a definition of "community," "immigrants" became excluded from the category of "members" of the city and the university in the photo caption.

> Sentence 1 (Headline):
> [S]tudents, [city] residents | **help** | *community* learn English
> Sentence 2 (Caption):
> [S]tudents and other members of the city | **teach** | *immigrants* the English language.

Next, we delved into the action taken, "to help." From the photo caption, we learned that "help" had been defined as "teach" and that "community" had been redefined as immigrants who are described as non-English-speaking and positioned as nonmembers of the university and urban setting. We highlighted "teach" and "English" (in yellow) and established "teaching" and "learning" English as the primary activity in the program. Within that activity, the one-dimensional axis of engagement positioned "students" as members of the community who were teaching English and "immigrants" as nonmembers who were learning it. This served to emphasize the positioning of "immigrants" as nonmembers, communicated not only sentence by sentence but also by invoking a monolingual ideological model of English and U.S. membership, reinforced throughout the text and cemented with a statistic: "about 38.6%" of the city population "is foreign-born." The statistic emphasizes "foreignness" and erases the rich linguistic texture of the community as a whole, which comprises bi/multilingual university students, long-time city residents, and newcomers to the United States. One university student responded in class that day, "When I arrived in the U.S., I already spoke English fluently. I grew up with Bangla, Hindi, and English. The article makes it seem like immigrants don't know English" (Curtis, field notes, April 6, 2016). These characterizations communicated in the newspaper article unconsciously reinforce ideologies and cultural models that link English to competence, education, U.S. citizenship, motivation, and leadership (see Pavlenko, 2005; Rosa, 2015). Yet, the

actors and actions represented in the text appear in dissonance with the photo. The photo represented student participants and community members seated together in small groups at randomly arranged tables, in fact disrupting the teacher–learner dichotomy that was presented in the newspaper text. The contrast between these messages was an opportunity to unpack and discuss customary ways of talking about community-based activity. This initial activity invited our group to resist a deficit perspective regarding the multilingual community and deconstruct the "us–them" dichotomy that emerged from our analysis.

Toward the end of the newspaper article, a university student was quoted as she described her conversations as "forums for mutual learning" and her learning from the experiences of community members as "maturing and humbling," articulating the reciprocity the program intended. She recalled the struggles of her parents to access conversational English. The challenge for us, then, was to illuminate for the students in our program customary ways of talking about CBSL—who is involved, what actions are taken—that reassert a dominant discourse about language ideology and membership in the U.S. polity. This discourse can create ideological boundaries between "immigrant" and "resident/member" as well as "student." We brought this challenge to our students as we delved into making sense of our activity in the program.

Activity 2: Making Meanings

In the newspaper article, the verb "to help" was central and associated with "service." To clarify these two notions and recognize their intersections, we collectively engaged in a meaning-making activity that invited students to develop a vocabulary about CBSL. Using an online platform, we created a visual representation of our understanding of these two verbs by including texts, images, documents, and hyperlinks to generate multiple and multimodal definitions. We discussed our visual representation as it evolved and changed according to students' posts. To take this meaning-making activity further, we read a short essay by Remen (2012) that examines what it means to "help," "fix," and "serve," and what distinguishes these three actions.[1] After answering a few questions about the text, to ascertain our understanding of the three terms, we added these new categories to our online visual representation. Appendix 10.A illustrates the second stage of the collaborative process that students engaged in as they considered meanings of "help" in their preparation to revise the text of the article.

Finally, we brought this meaning-making activity back to the newspaper article. In the process, we confirmed an intent to learn to serve and intentionally resist and disrupt disempowering discourses that would view local multilingual

[1] We are grateful to Dr. Netta Avineri for introducing us to this text and to its pedagogical potential in CBSL classrooms.

communities as "broken" or promote charity-oriented perspectives on service that position such communities in need of "help" and, by contrast, ourselves and the university as good Samaritans. This led us to discuss notions of reciprocity and responsibility as well as our study's findings. In this meaning-focused activity, we also analyzed and deconstructed messages that associate service with status. For instance, we had noticed over the years that some students would translate their participation in the service-learning program into a job title (adding it as such to their e-mail signature or résumé). We opened this practice to a class discussion about the ethics of service, encouraging students to remain critical. The goal of this meaning-making activity was to support students' conceptualization and communication about their participation in the program and, together, to develop a vocabulary that recognizes multiple and overlapping intersections of "knowledge communities" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in our program. In the process, we also reaffirmed the reciprocal and ethical orientations of our community-based programs and a view of multilingual communities as sites of mutually beneficial learning.

Activity 3: Rewriting the Article

We returned to the newspaper article equipped with (1) an expanded vocabulary to talk about service-learning in our program, (2) an inquiry stance to orient our reflection and actions, and (3) additional questions to problematize the discourse about language-focused service-learning. We invited students to rewrite the article in small groups and share with the class by unpacking notions of *helping*, *fixing*, and *serving* as well as the associated sense of social distance or closeness in each. As illustrated here, the original text was modified in two ways: the deleted text is crossed out while additional text is included in bold.

1. In addition to housing a large repertoire of books, the … Free Public Library has committed to ~~assisting the area's immigrant community~~ **engaging with community members of linguistically diverse backgrounds.**
2. One of the library's initiatives, the ESL *Conversation Cafés*, welcomes adult residents of the city and of surrounding towns who wish to improve their conversational English, **broaden their knowledge of other cultures and make new connections with people in the community.** Each week, three sessions are held where ~~volunteer~~ … students and community members facilitate small group activities and conversations.
3. By nurturing language skills, the cafés ~~help~~ support the linguistically diverse community members in the area ~~adjust to a new environment and obtain more life opportunities,~~ … **and share new life opportunities.**

In the sample rewritten text just mentioned, the students replaced "to help" with phrases such as *to converse*, *to learn from each other*, *to support the*

linguistically diverse members in the area, and the more neutral *to practice English*. Preference was thus given to a message about multilingualism as a resource and strength in the community. Thus, community participants initially labeled as "immigrants" became *community members of linguistically diverse backgrounds* and *linguistically diverse members* in the new version of the article.

Our textual analysis of the newspaper article, which became a classroom activity, also constituted a pedagogical response. In deconstructing the narratives about our program, we aimed at developing a common vocabulary about service, language, and the actions and actors of language-focused service-learning. While we were more interested in expanding on the possibilities of revising thinking through writing and dialogue than measuring the discursive and pedagogical outcomes of this intervention, future research could focus on the lasting impact of these activities and further inform our practice. Finally, this literacy event also represented an interesting discursive challenge and an opportunity for us, as language educators, researchers, and program developers, to refine and broadcast our ethical stance to members of the university (such as students, communications coordinators, faculty) and community and school district partners (such as superintendents, administrators, and program directors).

Toward the Enactment of a New Discourse

One of the outcomes of our collaboration in writing this chapter has been to clarify, through discussion and reflection, our core program mission, our aims for reciprocity, and, our vision of what language education for a broad, multilingual public might look like. How do we clarify and achieve reciprocity, collaboration, and ethicality in discourse and in practice? While critical CBSL programs, including ours, aim for generative reciprocity in mutually beneficial partnerships, program intentions, actions, and discourses are not always aligned. Radical moves in the classroom, however small, can untangle the threads of marginalizing discourses about language, community, and service that coexist with drives for academic capital and social mobility. We implemented a pedagogical response in the form of an intervention that converted our findings about actors and actions into an avenue for collective inquiry. In turn, this intervention highlights how we envision action toward paradigm change and provides a basis for further conversations among language educators engaged in language-focused service-learning.

We call for further conversations to sharpen and clearly articulate our mission to engage a linguistically diverse public in language education and orient in the direction of paradigm change for language-focused service-learning. Our contribution to this democratic project is to suggest examination, reflection, and inquiry as steps toward the elaboration of a discourse that more accurately reflects our aims for equity and reciprocity. As we engage in university-wide conversations about the implementation of language-based service-learning modules to respond

to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' (AAAS, 2017) call for a national investment in language education, we offer the following recommendations based on work from the ground and the findings of this study. These steps involve our partnerships and curricula.

- Conversations among those involved in developing and implementing language modules, courses, and curricula that include community-based service should include questions that we ask here: whose language, whose community, whose service, and whose benefit? This would lead to taking steps toward a ground-up implementation of service-learning that insists on sustaining the university roles of inquirer and listener in relationships with community partner organizations.
- Students and participants should be engaged in the construction of the discourses about participants, service, and the programs they are contributing to. This direct engagement with the discursive representations of the program would, in turn, reflect the values of the participating members and challenge us–them dichotomies.
- Further conversations among stakeholders should also translate our historical knowledge about multilingualism and bilingual education in our communities through the lens of language ideology. Applied to the proposed curricular models that include language-focused service modules and programs, this translation involves decentering our curricular content to include community-led initiatives that have advanced bilingual education and that have advanced service-learning in higher education (see Bocci, 2015; Stevens, 2003 for historiographies).
- Finally, to systematically reinforce collaboration as a desired goal, we recommend that language-focused service-learning courses develop socioculturally based frameworks to examine collaborative outcomes, following in the steps of Cooks and Scharer (2006) and DuBord and Kimball (2016). This would mean combining language assessments that focus on students' individual language and/or culture skills with an emphasis on qualitative assessment of participation.

We join these voices, and many others before us, to call for ongoing conversations in the university and with community partners to advance opportunities to access language education and clarify who we are and why we are here.

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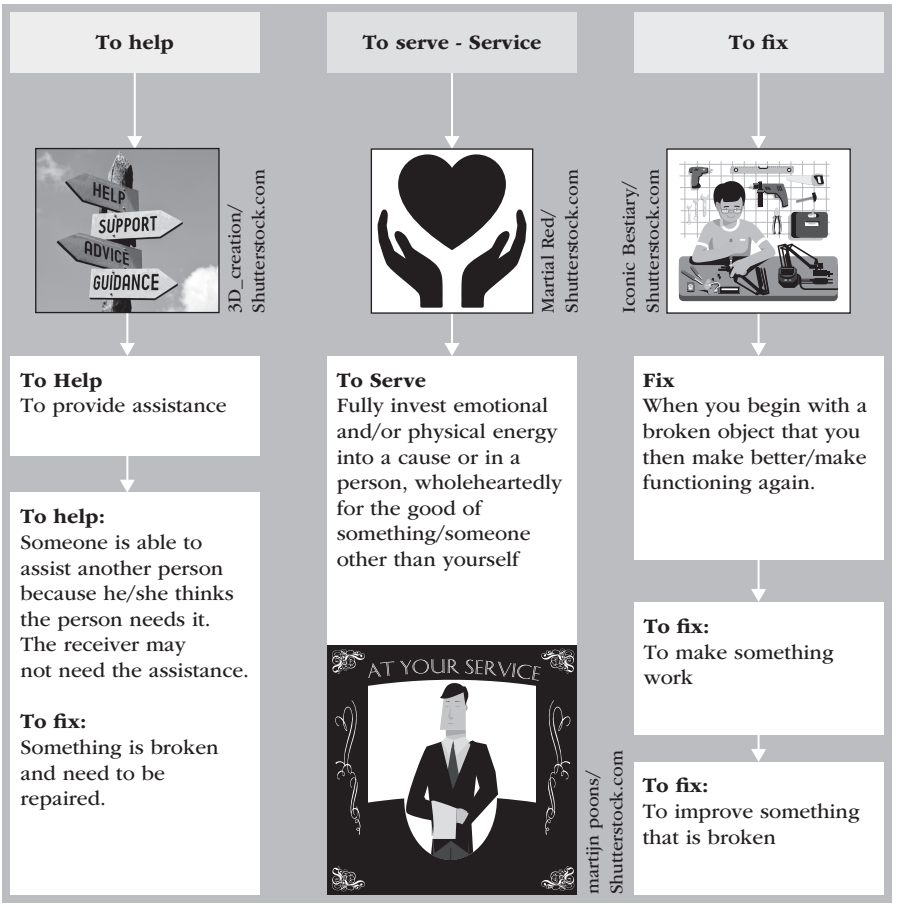
Appendix 10.A

To help, to fix, to serve: Meaning-making activity (based on Remen, 2012)