

BRIDGING THE COMMUNITY AND INSTITUTION GAP: A SAMPLE COURSE WITH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND SPANISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES COMBINED AND IDEAS FOR ASSESSMENT

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Abstract: *A crisis looms on the horizon for graduate programs in foreign languages. It is evident in ever tightening budgets, institutional demands for cross departmental collaboration, interdisciplinary courses, community service-learning, online courses and majors, greater enrollment and retention, and student needs for applied language courses beyond those offered at the undergraduate level. Symptomatic of greater changes in the job market and society impacting the restructuring of higher education across the board, this crisis threatens to render graduate language programs as traditionally conceived obsolete. Meeting the current challenge, however, will require a critical reflection on not only existing course content and delivery, but also on the very purpose, potential value, and goals and objectives of graduate foreign language programs. To this end, this article presents a graduate level Spanish course combining civic engagement and Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), titled "Teaching Spanish for Specific Purposes and Civic Engagement." (SSP) as well as model for assessment. This course serves as a model to graduate foreign language programs, aims to inspire interdisciplinary collaboration, and exemplifies the innovation needed in meeting current needs and challenges. In the process, this paper assesses the current state of graduate foreign language programs and considers the potential value of integrating LSP courses as a core component of graduate curricula. I argue that the development of such courses and the broadening of our thinking with regards to aims and objectives of graduate programs in foreign languages are imperative if we are to remain relevant for students, institutions of higher learning, and society at large in the ever-changing world of the 21st century.*

Keywords: Service-learning; professional communication in foreign languages; Foreign language deficit; cross-cultural communication; languages for specific purposes; curricula development.

1. Introduction

Though interest in and the creation of LSP courses at the undergraduate level has grown significantly in the last few years alone, there yet remains a reluctance to incorporate them as a central aspect of graduate study as evident by an informal examination of existing graduate programs. This much is due in part to the current narrow structuring and focus of graduate foreign language programs. Yet there is great potential for LSP courses to fulfill not only current departmental, institutional, and student demands and needs but to strongly support the stated Modern Language Association (MLA) goal of developing translingual and transcultural

competency among graduate as well as undergraduate students. In 2007, the MLA ad hoc committee on foreign languages identified key interrelated deficiencies in the organization and governance structure of foreign language programs in higher education that while focused on undergraduate majors, are nonetheless relevant for understanding the current state of graduate programs in foreign languages. These include an overarching emphasis on the development of language competency, a rigid curriculum model leading from basic language instruction to advanced courses in literature, and a hierarchical division between tenure-track professors with backgrounds in literature and language specialists (2007: 2). The issue with the current configuration of foreign language programs, as the report explains, is that it limits potential development. The current system narrows programs to (however important and necessary) language study (grammar) and literature, and is defined entirely by PhDs in literature. As it rightly observes, the goals and means of language study must be reassessed and the hierarchical division must change if language programs are to remain salient for students and institutions of higher education today. As discussed in the following, these problematic issues can affect all levels of language study and impact graduate curriculum in a profound way.

An informal examination of graduate foreign language programs across the U.S. alone corroborates many of the findings addressed in the MLA report and reveals a similarly narrow conception of the goals and means of graduate language study that effectively stifle the development of graduate programs. Most significant among the problems identified below is the assumption that graduate programs serve solely as vehicles for training future language instructors and researchers destined for academia. That this assumption is implied and goes unquestioned in the MLA's ad hoc committee's suggestions for revamping language programs is indicative of the problems identified in the committee's report as well as of how connected graduate study and academia actually are. This is especially troubling when considering the labor currently derived from graduate students in terms of basic language instruction.

In sum, graduate students are either prepared to continue to a Ph.D. level or go to teach Spanish in a high school or college with a Master's Degree. Training graduate students how to teach Spanish for specific purposes would give them more tools to succeed as teachers. There is a need for training language instructors in today's ever-connected global world. Yet, and precisely for this reason, it is necessary to think even more broadly and creatively about the goals and objectives of our graduate programs. Our mandate must go beyond the training of future academics.

2. Current State of Graduate Curricula in Foreign Languages

As a means of assessing the current state of graduate curricula in foreign languages, this section presents an informal examination of 59 institutions across the U.S. Universities examined were identified using a custom listing search option accessed via the classification section of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching website (<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/>). The search parameters were limited using three of the six main classification categories as listed by the Carnegie Foundation: Graduate Instructional Program, Basic, and Community Engagement. Graduate Instructional Program refers to the type of

graduate programs offered at a given school while Basic refers to the basic classification system previously developed by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. As the title suggests, the Community Engagement Designation is an elective category used to identify universities engaged in the community. Within the category of Graduate Instructional Program, the selection was limited to institutions granting research doctorate degrees in the humanities, social sciences, and STEM fields (whether with or without medical programs) as well as to those institutions offering research doctorate degrees in a variety of fields, including professional education (i.e., business, education, law, public policy, social work, health professions, etc.). The basic classification category was limited to those institutions classified as RU/H (Research Universities, High Research) and DR/U (Doctoral/Research Universities). Excluded within this category were institutions designated as RU/VH (Research Universities, very high research activity). The exact search query is as follows:

- Graduate Instructional Program = "CompDoc/MedVet" or "CompDoc/NMedVet" or "Doc/HSS" or "Doc/STEM" or "Doc/Prof" and Basic = "RU/H or DRU" and Community Engagement = "Curricular Engagement or Outreach and Partnerships or Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships"

The search criteria used is based upon the hypothesis that, given the profile outlined by the Carnegie Foundation, such institutions afford foreign language programs greater flexibility with regards to program design and course offerings. As a result, one might expect to see a greater number of LSP courses as well as LSP courses cross-listed at the graduate level if not graduate level only LSP courses.

The above search parameters yielded a total of 59 institutions. The university and department web pages of the 59 selected institutions were subsequently analyzed for information on their respective academic degrees and programs (majors, minors, graduate degrees, certificates, etc.) as well as course offerings (at the undergraduate and graduate level). A list of courses if not course descriptions were readily available via all 59 institution web pages.

The survey itself consisted of 7 yes/no questions as well as a few observational comments regarding the focus of LSP courses and relevant comments regarding any aspect of the institution or program (i.e., unique interdisciplinary programs, or LSP courses outside of the language department). The questions included the following:

- Graduate degrees in foreign/second languages?
- Graduate degree in Spanish (including Master's of Arts in Teaching)?
- Program/certificate in international business or related interdisciplinary/international program?
- LSP courses (any language)?
- SSP courses?
- Undergraduate LSP courses?
- Graduate LSP courses?

As this survey is interested primarily in the presence of LSP courses at the graduate level, it did not concern itself with the exact number of LSP courses (at either level). Nor did it ask about the nature of the undergraduate or graduate programs (i.e., focus, structure, etc.). That said, the focus of LSP courses were noted in all instances regardless of level and regardless of whether or not a

graduate degree in foreign/second languages or Spanish was present.

The results of the survey confirm the lack of graduate level courses in LSP, and are telling with regard to the current emphasis of graduate foreign language programs. While 45 of the 59 institutions examined offer LSP courses at the undergraduate level, only three institutions offer LSP coursework at the graduate level, all of which are cross-listed (undergraduate/graduate). Of those three, two are offered within the foreign or modern language departments while the third is offered through a professional school (medical). All three institutions provide undergraduate courses in LSP as well as offer certificates or have programs in international business and/or global studies. Course topics include business, healthcare, and law.

Though the results of this informal survey are far from conclusive, it is nonetheless clear from the above that current foreign language programs are focused primarily on the training and production of future academics in foreign languages (instructors and researchers) destined for jobs in academia. This is in large part due to the narrow focus and organizational structure of existing undergraduate foreign language majors, as critiqued in the MLA report. As with undergraduate majors, this emphasis drives curriculum content and delivery, marginalizes content and perspectives outside of the canon, and makes the current hierarchy and dominance of literature professors within language departments stronger. While this focus and structure may have sufficed for the purposes of graduate programs in the latter half of the twentieth century, at present it is problematic given current trends in the academic job market as well as in higher education.

With the current economic crisis and subsequent institutional budget constraints, it is no longer tenable for graduate programs in any university department, let alone languages, to be focused solely on the production of future academics. While certainly an important and necessary part of graduate programs, it should not and cannot remain *the* focus. We need to think more broadly and creatively about what it is that graduate programs in foreign languages can provide our graduating master's and PhD students for success in *any* related career path whether in or outside of academia.

3. Service-Learning and LSP

Academic scholarship on service-learning and LSP is extensive and varied; however much of the current literature is concerned with the growth and development of undergraduate courses. This literature is telling with regards to current trends and challenges in LSP, yet its' emphasis solely on undergraduate curriculum development highlights the need for similarly critical reflection on the part of foreign language scholars on the potential value of further integrating LSP at the graduate level (master's and PhD).

The most prevalent articles in LSP to date discuss the growth of CSL programs and the benefits of that growth (Barreneche 2011; Ebacher 2013; Faszler-McMahon 2013; Hartfield-Mendez 2013; Lear and Abbott 2009; Leeman 2011; Sanchez-Lopez 2013). This increased growth has allowed for a plethora of research on the benefits of the incorporation of community service-learning into the higher education curriculum that aims to foster and stimulate the service-learning approach to foreign language instruction. Scholarship has also highlighted the place and role of students in this growth, noting favorable student responses to service-learning components of foreign language courses (Abott and Lear 2010;

Falce-Robinson 2012; Lear and Abbott 2009; Pellettieri 2011). Although attention is given to the challenges involved in implementing CSL in foreign language courses (see, for example, Lear and Abbott 2009), these discussions fail to consider how CSL in conjunction with LSP at the graduate level might better prepare future foreign language instructors in facing and overcoming these obstacles.

Similarly, the benefits of integrating service-learning with foreign language teaching, though well documented at the undergraduate level, are yet to be considered at the graduate level. Among the benefits noted by scholars include foregrounding the community (Plann 2002; Weldon 2003), which allows for the incorporation of all five C's identified by the ACTFL as crucial to successful teaching and learning (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities; see Abbott and Lear 2010). As shown in the literature, these benefits have a positive impact on student learning as well as on the communities involved. There have been class studies such as the one by Lear and Abbott (2010), for instance, that question how many of the students continue the work in the community after the course and how the connections are forged between the students and the community. Yet others offer their own classes as case studies testifying to how well the CSL model is performing within the communities (i.e., Bugel 2013; Carney 2013; Carracelas-Juncal 2013; Falce-Robinson and Strother 2012; Faszler-McMahon 2013; Hartfield-Mendez 2013; Lear 2013; Medina and Gordon 2014; Nelson and Scott 2008; Petrov 2013; Tilley-Lubbs 2004; Weldon and Trautmann 2003). This literature points to an increase in student motivation in learning the target language along with personal growth (Barreneche 2013; Falce-Robinson 2012; Grassi 2004; Medina and Gordon 2014; Petrov 2013). In addition, strong alliances can be formed with local school systems (Carney 2013; Guillen 2010; Hellebrandt 2013; Nelson and Scott 2008; Tilley-Lubbs 2004), local government services (Ebacher 2013; Weldon and Trautmann 2003), and many other local businesses (Nelson and Scott 2008; Petrov 2013; Plann 2002; Sanchez-Lopez 2013; Zapata 2011). Of interest for this article, however, is the notion that such courses have the potential to foster in students a sense of social action (see Abbott and Lear 2010). The above studies do not address, however, the implications of these benefits for graduate programs and graduate study in foreign languages.

While the literature on community service-learning in conjunction with Spanish for specific purposes has been positive, it has also identified challenges and limitations in conducting such courses, such as the presence and relative accessibility of a nearby Latino community, student preparedness (language and skill wise), resources, and logistical concerns on the part of the teacher and community partner (Barreneche 2011; Carracelas-Juncal 2013; Lear and Abbot 2009). Yet the challenges of training graduate students in the teaching of combined LSP and CSL courses, however, is not addressed.

As a whole, the literature on LSP and CSL shows that combining service learning with foreign language teaching is not only beneficial but ideal for preparing students to be engaged citizens and scholars in fostering the development of translingual and transcultural competency. Given the remarkable benefits highlighted by the literature and the related growth of LSP and CSL courses at the undergraduate level, it stands to reason that graduate programs would likewise benefit from integrating such a model as well as related graduate classes in LSP and CSL course design and instruction.

4. Transforming Graduate Programs in Foreign Languages Through LSP

Extending the MLA ad hoc committee on foreign languages' recommendations for broadening existing foreign language curricula and governance structures, I call for a reassessment of the goals and objectives of graduate programs in foreign languages beyond its current focus on producing future academics. This means de-centering and repositioning literature and language instruction courses alongside more diverse, interdisciplinary, collaborative, and applied courses that situate language within broader social, historical, geographic, and cross-cultural perspectives furthering the development of translingual and transcultural language competency (MLA 2007: 3). These goals shift the current emphasis away from language as an object of study in and of itself to language as an integral aspect of culture that pervades all facets of society, from literature to the professions. Among the more promising developments in the evolution of language curricula that may prove fruitful for the transformation of existing graduate programs in foreign languages along these lines is the emergence of and demand for Languages for Specific Purposes. Indeed, this paper corroborates and extends what previous scholars in the area of LSP have long noted and decried with regards to undergraduate foreign language education and the place of LSP therein (see, for example, Allen and Negueruela-Azarola 2010; Fryer 2012; Gómez 1990; Grosse and Voght 1990, 2012a, 2012b; Lafford 2012; Lear 2012; Long and Uscinski 2012). Yet while these studies do indeed reveal the growth of LSP at the undergraduate level and while there are indeed a growing number of academic positions in the area of LSP the same challenges that previously impeded the growth of LSP at the undergraduate level today hinder its development within graduate Foreign Language programs.

5. Toward a Remodeling of Graduate FL Programs and the Incorporation of LSP Courses at the Graduate Level

In this section, I describe a graduate course on how to teach Spanish for specific purposes with a service-learning component. I begin by describing the course and its stated objectives and goals. The objectives state the desired and measurable outcomes of the course while the goals reflect more general and abstract agendas encompassing the stated objectives. I then present the course assignments and projects.

This course is not just a theoretical approach but also an empirical one where students interact with local Latino immigrants in the community and develop cross-cultural skills. Such a course design allows students to be active participants in their own education and learning process, and is in keeping with current thinking on blending service-learning with traditional language teaching (see, for example, Abbott 2011; Lear 2012; Pérez-Illantada and Watson 2011).

5.1. Course description

This course presents a multicultural approach to the teaching of Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP) and civic engagement. In the course we discuss the effects of multiculturalism on the communication practices of the professional setting as well as theoretical and experimental research in Languages for Specific

Purposes (LSP). In addition, we analyze new insights into the adoption of culturally oriented perspectives in LSP, communication and comprehensive approaches to the discourse of professional, domain-specific communities, and communication practices and procedures operating in those communities. Finally, students will become familiar with how to design a teaching portfolio focusing on Spanish for specific purposes and civic engagement. This course has been designed for traditional as well as non-traditional students. Additionally, students spend 28 hours a semester in the local Latino community doing service-learning.

5.2. Course objectives

While the field of LSP is mainly focused on English and is currently offered in English departments, this course is oriented toward Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP). That said, this course may be adapted to suit the needs of any language. For the purposes of this paper, however, the content (i.e., cultural experiences and role playing activities) will focus on Spanish, given my own area of expertise. I encourage others to use this course as a model and to create similar courses based on the language of expertise of the individual instructor.

The course objectives are discussed with the students on the first day of class so as to make certain students understand their level of responsibility within the course (given the service-learning component). Likewise discussed is the final project, which constitutes a teaching portfolio that includes all major assignments from the class, evidence of community engagement, social media interaction and promotion, and a final reflection paper (see Final Portfolio).

The course objectives are as follows:

- Introduce participants to the field of Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP) within a theoretical framework for Language for Specific Purposes studies.
- Present the skills and competencies related to SSP.
- Present different methodologies and strategies for a SSP course.
- Present primary materials that may be used in SSP.
- Present classroom activities (Methods) for the SSP course.
- Present supplementary materials for development of the SSP course and curriculum.

The first objective is achieved by exploring existing publication in the field of LSP and Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP). The remainder of the objectives are realized through classroom presentation, discussion, and critical reflection. For instance, class-time is devoted to presenting and discussing skills, materials, and methods needed to teach SSP as well as consider the contribution of teacher backgrounds (i.e., experience or training in a related professional field or in community engagement). In the process, students explore how to teach languages with a focus, learn how to assess and create new SSP course materials and activities, and think critically about the notion of expertise.

For students who do not plan to teach this kind of course, the class offers a reflective experience on how to explore and challenge the way to perceive the learning of another language and how to develop interpersonal skills.

5.3. Course goals

Among the primary goals of the course is the introduction of the applied aspects of SSP within local Latino communities. Indeed, students taking this course often double majors (i.e., business and Spanish) and are drawn to this course as a result

of its service-learning component. During the first week of class, each student picks an area of interest according to their future professional goals and chooses a community partner to collaborate with during the semester. For example, a student interested in theater and acting is linked to Cazateatro, a local bilingual non-profit organization whose main objective is to bring Latino culture to the community. The student in this scenario might work on a play, created by them in conjunction with the organization (developing linguistic abilities as well as creative writing skills), and present the play at the University (Bridging the gap).

The goals of the course, as stated in the syllabus, are as follows:

- Understand and assess the status of SSP in the context of globalization.
- Understand and critique questions and issues concerning SSP currently debated among academics.
- Analyze and critique theoretical and practical aspects of SSP (i.e., specialized communication practice, second language acquisition, linguistic and cultural awareness, etc.).
- Assess impact of globalization on intercultural communication within specific domains of social interaction and professional practice (i.e., education, healthcare, law enforcement, etc.).
- Understand Interdisciplinary connections, plurality, and diversity of SSP.
- Assess SSP in the classroom context.
- Create a teaching portfolio with a sample syllabus and objectives on a chosen topic in Languages for Specific Purposes.
- Reach out and engage local professionals.

5.4. Final teaching portfolio, presentation, and final project

The final project for the course is a teaching portfolio. In this project, the student demonstrates his/her ability to develop a teaching portfolio that follows the methods in the SSP field. The portfolio includes a sample syllabus, sample materials, performance assessment, and grading rubrics. Specific instructions about the final teaching portfolio are given in class. The project is turned in the day of the final exam. Students also present their teaching portfolio. Presentations take place the last day of class. Each student turns in a PowerPoint or Prezi handout.

5.5. Progress reports

Students monitor their progress in the class with progress reports every 2 weeks. These reports include an overview of all the hours and activities for that week (i.e., total hours spent watching videos, conversing with native speakers, volunteering, etc.), an indication of progress (toward language skills improvement or the final project and presentation), and a running total for the course. In addition, students write a short narrative of their progress toward the final project, noting their activities and explaining the self-improving activities. Students are encouraged to include their thoughts, ideas, and discoveries no matter how “simple” or “complex” they might be.

Depending on the institution, the hours for community engagement may be more or less than the 28 hours presented here. To alleviate student time constraints, this course allows 8 of the 28 hours to be fulfilled by language “practice” (i.e., listening comprehension and verbal communication). The remaining 20 hours are specifically civic engagement hours designated toward the completion of the final project. Ideally, the service-learning hours should likewise advance student

language skills.

The report allows the instructor to assess student progress in the class and check for any major concerns. Knowing the students' experience in the community also helps in better supporting the students and the local partnering organization toward the successful completion of the service-learning projects. It also allows teachers to intervene in the event that there is a concern with a specific project or partnership before any major problems arise. This ensures a successful and positive community engagement journey for all involved.

The third portion of the progress report involves a phone call or social media inquiry to the local organization with the student present to discuss the project progress and partnership. In this way, students and partners have a better sense of the project's status as well as how best to proceed. This reflects a concern with ensuring the satisfaction and well-being of the community partner in addition to that of the student.

6. Mixed Method Survey

During the autumn semester of 2014 I conducted a survey on a 15-student course with service-learning. The results are presented in the following table. I used triangulation for accuracy, following the qualitative research methodology (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Ethnicity		Age	
White	6	18-20	2
African-American	5	21-25	12
Latino	3	25-30	0
Asian	0	30-35	0
Other	1	35+	1

Amount of Service Hours Completed at End of Course	
Less than 10 hours	1
20 hours	1
21-30 hours	5
31 or more hours	8

Out of School Responsibilities	
Raising Children	1
Caring for family	1
Work 32+ hours a week	5
Work 20-31 hours a week	3
Work 1-20 hours a week	4
Other	1

Key Skills Developed in the Service-Learning Course				
	Gained a lot	Gained a little	No Gain	N/A
Dispelled internalized stereotypes about others	7	4	1	3
Knowledge and assets to community	11	2	1	1
Increased sense of empathy, open-mindedness	11	9	1	1
Leadership skills in classroom or community	12	1	1	1
Skills in reading, writing, speaking or communicating	9	2	3	1

Coding Scheme: Service-Learning Course	
Pros	Cons
Applying knowledge to real life situations Adaptability skills Better experience, richer resume I challenged what I believed in Appreciation of diversity I learned a lot about immigration laws I am a better citizen because of this class	More work than a regular course Comfort zone My Spanish is not good enough We want more time in the community and less in the classroom

As we can see from the results, students gained leadership skills in the classroom and community the most, followed by increased sense of empathy, open-mindedness and knowledge and assets to community, then skills in reading, writing, speaking or communicating and finally dispelled internalized stereotypes about others. While the course is intended to develop language skills, the main focus is on service-learning and community engagement; However, developing Spanish skills in reading, writing, speaking or communicating happened naturally for students learning Spanish as a second language. Heritage speakers were also part of the course. The benefits of the course as identified by the respondents include: applying knowledge to real life situations, adaptability skills, better experiences, richer resumes, challenging preconceived assumptions and stereotypes, appreciation of diversity, learning about immigration laws, and being a better citizen because of this class.

I would like to mention that the approach presented here, engaging with the community, is really only possible in regions where there exists a sizeable immigrant community whose native language coincides with the one taught at the university in question. This is a drawback of the course; however, teaching about how to teach Spanish for specific purposes can be done in a region with no

immigrants or Latino community since it encompasses the learning of the methodology (at the graduate level). The course could even be taught in a hybrid way (online and contact hours); undergraduate courses with service-learning components, however, do need an accessible community, as previously noted.

7. Significance of the Course

Through the progress reports, the final portfolios, and the hours in the community, it is clear that the students, community, and university all benefit from such a course. In situating Spanish language learning within a service-learning context, students grow not only intellectually, but emotionally as well. Specifically, they are able to empathize with the local Latino community and their particular service needs. In the process, they also begin to see how their language skills directly transfer in practical, service-oriented contexts. Lastly, they benefit from an educational experience uniquely tailored to their specific career goals and interests. Community partners likewise benefit from student engagement in the Latino community. The course has met with much enthusiasm on the part of local business, community organizations, and Latino service providers. Local non-profit organizations dedicated to the Latino community receive an influx of volunteers to support their causes as a result of the course. In addition to being grateful for the support, partners are genuinely excited at the prospect of working with new graduates interested in applying their language skills and professional expertise in service of the Latino community. That the local community partners benefit from this engagement is evident by the new and emerging partnerships that emerge with each new iteration of the course. As a result, the department and University itself benefit from the positive exposure and relationship with the community.

To emphasize the impact of this course on student learning, Latino partners, and on the goals and mission of civic engagement oriented institutions, the following is a quote from a student commenting on the course via a University administered course survey:

The concept of this course is GREAT. I think it is an excellent approach to teach a language because it reflects reality, the use of Spanish in the real world and in everyday life. It was a hands-on community service class and I gained more experience in this class than I have in any other at the University. She [the professor] was very fun, upbeat and seemed to really enjoy this class! I used my Spanish skills during community service and it was a joy to be in this class. [The teacher] is the best professor to teach this type of courses because she is enthusiastic, nice to people, and very patient. I have definitely become more interested in the Hispanic community thanks to this course.

As the above quote illustrates, the impact of this course on students is significant and potentially even life changing as students take ownership of their knowledge by using it in a purposeful way.

With regards to the potential impact of such courses on graduate foreign language curricula, perhaps the most important short and long term benefit will be in the creation of language teachers with interest and knowledge in LSP able to replicate, build on, and expand such courses. In this way, this future generation will help to broaden the current, narrow focus of graduate language programs while producing well-rounded students confident in their ability to transfer and apply their language

studies and service-learning experience beyond the classroom in meaningful and productive ways. Creating space for such courses within existing foreign language programs are the gateway to bridging the gap between institutions and community engagement.

8. Conclusion

Graduate foreign language programs face the daunting task of reinventing themselves in order to remain relevant at the turn of the twenty-first century. As the survey above underscores, a narrow focus on producing language teachers and future academics is stifling the potential growth and value of language programs within institutions of higher learning. At the same time, a growing Latino immigrant population and an increasing need for service providers with Specific language skills is pointing the way toward new areas of teaching, service, and research. While undergraduate courses in LSP and SSP are indeed on the rise, there is still a need for graduate level SSP coursework. The course presented in this article is one possible solution; a different approach to higher education.

If institutions of higher learning value community engagement as central to their mission, as many do, than it behooves foreign language departments within those institutions to adopt course templates such as the one presented here. Such a course has the potential to close the gap between the university and the community, provide students with practical language skills geared toward their particular career goals and interests, engender empathy among students for the Latino and other immigrant communities, positively impact local Latino communities and partnering organizations/service providers, and expand the scope and focus of existing graduate foreign language programs. These are important and necessary steps toward updating and making foreign language study in the twenty-first century.

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