

## **Title: Beyond the Four Walls: Community Based Learning and Languages**

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Abstract: At a time when languages in universities are under pressure, Community Based Learning language courses can have many positive benefits: they can increase interest in language learning and they can foster greater engagement with learning, encouraging active learning, creativity, and teamwork. These courses which link the classroom and the community help address needs in the community; make languages more visible, and share resources. By giving students the opportunity to engage in practical work, their transferrable skills are enhanced. The gap between the university and community is closed and positive attitudes towards language learning are fostered. This paper examines research into Community Based Learning and languages courses and the effect that the approach has on students. Using an example of such a course in NUI Galway, the author gives voice to the student experience of a CBL course and its impact on their motivation, their style of learning and their attitudes towards language learning. Finally, a template for the introduction of such a course is proposed which guides instructors through the central elements in the design, implementation and evaluation of a CBL course.

### **Introduction**

In recent years it has been difficult to shake the feeling that languages are in a beleaguered state, constantly having to justify their continued existence and utility. Many language departments have been restructured, posts have been cut and support structures undermined. And yet, as Michael Worton has recently written, 'The case for modern languages in universities has never been more compelling' He then adds that this case 'must be adapted and articulated differently for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century context. Our universities have the scholarly capital, the intellectual capacity and the moral responsibility to ensure that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is indeed a century of global citizenship where differences are not only celebrated but understood.' (2010) In this paper I wish to present a pedagogical approach that embraces the concept of using a university's scholarly capital and intellectual capacity for the benefit of the community and teaches students core notions of civic engagement and citizenship. I believe that this approach can be used in universities to the benefit of language departments, students and communities, and can make a compelling case for the promotion of languages in both a local and global context. Community Based Learning is a radically different pedagogical approach which can be incorporated into the curriculum of language departments who wish to change and adapt to the demands of the twenty first century.

### **Community based learning: history and definitions**

Since the 1990s the Community Based Learning (CBL) or Service Learning approach has been growing in popularity as a radically innovative and successful didactic methodology. Throughout the United States third level institutions have adopted this form of civic engagement as a central element of their curriculum. CBL involves

students partaking in activities in their communities which meet identified needs of local groups. In contrast to volunteering, however, students engage in these activities as part of their credit-bearing university courses; the community involvement helps them to better understand their course content and enhances their studies and learning. The community practice is structured, reflective and, if successful, benefits the student and the community alike. A balance is struck between academic learning and community service, and student learning extends beyond the four walls of the classroom into the community (Zlotkowski 1999; McIlrath and Mac Labhrainn 2007; Sigmon 1996; Eyler and Giles 1999). Although there is no definitive figure on the amount of these community based/service learning courses currently offered, the umbrella group for the approach, Campus Compact, represents more than 1,100 colleges and universities which between them have some 6 million students. ([www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org))

### **Note on terminology**

In this paper, to describe these alliances between academic departments and local communities, I will use the term Community Based Learning (CBL). The terms Service Learning, Education-Based Community Service, Community Based Service, Community Service Learning are also used with the first being widely diffused, especially in the literature. I believe that the CBL term is the most appropriate and least controversial of the definitions to describe a community activity which is an educative experience tied to the curriculum, and thus have favoured it over others.

### **Benefits of CBL**

There has been widespread research into the benefits of CBL and in general researchers have reported that following a CBL course, students have better understanding of course concepts, increased understanding of and ability to relate to differences in others, increased self-awareness and self-confidence, and increased appreciation for and commitment to service (McKenna and Rizzo 1999). A longitudinal study of the effects of CBL on students, conducted at UCLA, revealed significant positive outcomes relating to academic performance (GPA, writing skills, critical thinking skills), values (commitment to activism and to promoting racial understanding), self-efficacy, leadership (leadership activities, self-rated leadership ability, interpersonal skills), choice of a service career, and plans to participate in service after college (Astin et al., 2000). Similar studies have seen equally positive outcomes from the CBL experience and have recommended the uptake of the approach (Gray et al. 1999; Eyler et al. 2001).

### **Community based learning and languages**

Language learning initially lagged behind other subjects in developing Community Based Learning courses. In 1999 the first book on CBL and Languages, *Costruyendo Puentes* reported only limited acceptance of the approach in the field of teaching Spanish language and literature (Hellebrandt et al, 3). The publication of this edited volume was, however, in itself a notable development as it brought together academics who had piloted CBL courses in the Spanish curriculum and made the pedagogical and social case for introducing such courses. It urged fellow academics teaching languages to follow suit and in the eleven years that have passed since this

publication, it can be observed that the call to action has certainly been successful in the United States where there is now widespread use and acceptance of this approach, particularly in Spanish language tuition.

### **Course examples**

There are currently many CBL courses in the United States which have been designed to integrate learning and the community and to respond to specific needs locally. Looking at the extent of this activity, examples of these courses include students serving as a conversation partners, volunteering as interpreters at local hospitals, clinics, schools, or social service agencies; tutoring or mentoring Spanish-speaking children and adolescents; facilitating Spanish story hours and other cultural activities for children in libraries and community centres; assisting local churches and community organizations with educational and social programs for Spanish speakers. Other experiences have included assisting in citizenship classes, human-rights workshops, after-school programmes for children of all ages, elaborating publicity materials to raise funds for associations, helping lawyers to assist immigrant workers, serving as legal interpreters and translators, and working in HIV-prevention programmes, day centres, lay firms and employment agencies. Students prepare for the CBL placements in class, take part in activities in the community and reflect on the experience and how it might have enhanced their language, cultural and social skills. The syllabi for a selection of these courses have been gathered together and can be consulted at [www.compact.org/syllabi](http://www.compact.org/syllabi) and [www.ashland.edu/sevices/commserc/ServiceLearningSyllabi](http://www.ashland.edu/sevices/commserc/ServiceLearningSyllabi).

Many of these activities are possible because of the presence of a large Spanish-speaking community in most parts of America. Other languages have focused more on bringing languages into schools (Polansky 2004) and working with local businesses. One of the more unusual approaches involved German language students becoming involved in a website devoted to global sustainable development and expanding its German-language content (Ter Horst and Pearce 2010). The Year Abroad provides an area rich with possibilities for interaction with and learning from the community and one example has shown how a CBL course in this context can help students build linguistic, cultural, and civic competence (Vahlbusch 2003). Where there is a foreign-language speaking community in the vicinity of the third level institution there are certainly many possibilities for a very beneficial service learning programme. This, however, is not the only means of implementing CBL as there are many other opportunities for integrating languages within in the communities.

### **Community Based Learning and languages – effects on students**

As the uptake of CBL has widened, so too has the research into the field grown. Over the last decade, many publications have discussed successful CBL courses and how these have been integrated into the language learning curriculum. Research into the effects on students taking these courses has shown overwhelmingly positive benefits to the approach.

Firstly, instructors and researchers report an improvement in language skills through CBL. Students speak the languages with less apprehension (Morris 2001) and have improved communicative competence (Overfield 1997). The target language is

used in a real-life context and the collaborative learning approach promotes proficiency and self-confidence (Caldwell 2007). One study notes that the students emerge from the experience energized, thinking critically and with improved language skills both in Spanish and English and comments that Service Learning almost always lowers the affective filter of the students (Dahms and Daniels 2008). Carney (2004) says that the students who take CBL courses improve their Spanish skills more rapidly, experience increased motivation in their study of the language and cultures, and report an increased appreciation for the complexities surrounding the Latino population in the United States. They progress their Spanish skills at a more accelerated rate than those students who do not take the course.

Apart from language acquisition, there are other benefits to those who partake in a CBL course. There is much evidence of how the approach improves not just students' language skills, but also their cultural acquisition (Hellebrandt et al 2003). In the cultural field, CBL can effectively tackle issues of diversity and multiculturalism (Fitzgerald 2009) and can increase students' cultural competence (Munoz-Christian 2010; Jouët-Pastré and Braga 2005; Weldon and Trautmann 2003). Recently Abbott and Lear have observed that Service Learning helps meet the 'Five C's' set down by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages in its *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*: cultures, communication, connections, comparisons and communities. In their article they claim that 'While the requirements are demanding for all parties, the rewards, both short-term and long-term, make it worthwhile because CSL [Community Service Learning] allows for maximizing the methodological principles of language teaching: communicative language use in authentic situations, understanding of cultures different than one's own, connections to other disciplines and access to new knowledge, comparisons among languages and cultures, and engagement with communities.' (Abbott and Lear 2009, 323)

Much of this research is descriptive in its approach but when a more empirical, quantitative analysis is used, the results are similarly positive. For example, Morris (2001) has shown that a CBL class in Spanish can be used as a pedagogical tool in enhancing motivation and promoting positive attitudes towards Spanish foreign-language learning and culture. Alonso Marks (2008) claims that a CBL project taught students how to apply knowledge of an academic subject in an authentic, meaningful context. Indeed, it is evident from the research that not only can this approach enhance students' linguistic and cultural skills but it also has extremely positive effects on a wider range of skills such as communication, preparation, self-confidence, organisation. Polansky (2004) has argued that: 'Through participation in the community beyond their campus, [the students] have interacted with age groups other than their own. They have found that language is useful beyond their own language classroom experiences and that their linguistic competence has enabled them to contribute beneficially to the lives of others' (372). Results of another study indicate that subjects enrolled in a CBL course formed positive and accepting attitudes toward Spanish speakers and their cultures, regarded their cultural experiences as worthwhile, and found a sense of fulfilment through contacts with native speakers of Spanish in the community. There was also evidence of a strong link between participation in CBL activities and academic achievement in Spanish (Long 2003). Finally, Abbott and Lear observed that during a CBL course students progress from anxiety to greater confidence in their work in the community (2010, 243).

Overall, it can be concluded from the studies that CBL has strong educational transformation possibilities (Long 2003, Morris 2001, Varona and Bauluz 2003). It can enhance and enrich language study, and can also increase cultural awareness and

sensitivity. The CBL experience allows participants to utilize skills, reflect on their abilities and develop their personal confidence and motivation as students (Carmen 2008).

### **Problems and pitfalls**

Adopting a CBL approach is not, however, a failsafe way of achieving successful learning outcomes. Susan Jones in 'The Underside of Service Learning' points out many of the pitfalls that may arise (Jones 2002). Gascoigne Lally also addresses worries that a service-learning component might be an artificial element inserted into a course of study; that it might whiff of a political agenda; and that it might be expensive and cumbersome (Gascoigne Lally 2001). Most instructors of CBL courses note that this pedagogical approach can be logistically more time-consuming than a simple 'chalk and talk' class. Abbott and Lear (2010) also point to potential hazards: 'We assert that teaching CSL [Community Service Learning] in a foreign-language curriculum does have enormous benefits, but is also adds on an additional layer of potentially problematic issues that must be explicitly managed by the instructor or course coordinator in order to enhance the experience for all parties' (313). Difficulties with the approach can however be avoided and Abbott and Lear claim that for a successful outcome, CBL needs to be well planned and monitored and pedagogically tied to specific academic goals, objectives and methods and assessment (2010). The CBL structure provides the possibility for positive community based learning and without this apparatus, ventures into links between university students and the community can be unsuccessful (Daniels and Dahms 2008). Weldon and Sigmon recommend strong coordination among the community and workplace setting and the university, special attention to the teaching roles in the community settings and early clarification of impact expectations for all parties involved (2003). It is very important that the course be mutually beneficial to all parties involved and that it is carefully planned at all stages to avoid potential difficulties inherent in such a different pedagogical approach.

### **Why adopt CBL? Languages fight back**

A 2008 report shows that the study of languages in America at third level has been steadily increasing since 1998 and states that 'between 2002 and 2006, enrolments in language classes expanded by 12.9%, and our data show an upward trend in the study of languages: more languages are being taught, and more students are enrolled in language classes.' (Furman et al. 2008) The picture for the study of languages in the British Isles is less rosy. On the one hand Michael Kelly (2002) reports that language studies are taught in 126 UK higher education institutions, that some 54 languages can be studied and that there are probably around 120,000 students studying languages as some part of their degree. On the other hand, Canning (2007) shows mixed fortunes for languages at third level and decreases in numbers in many languages. He reports that 'The continuing decline in numbers of students studying languages in schools means that the 2008 language landscape is as much a cause for concern as it was in 2003.' (13). In the Worton Report (2009) it was stated that following the British government's 2002 decision to make languages optional for pupils after the age of 14, there has been a sharp decline in the numbers of pupils studying a language to GCSE and highlighted the negative impact this has had on subsequent stages of language

learning. Further developments since then such the closure of language departments at some universities have resulted in difficult times for language learning at third level.

In times of pressure on resources and cutbacks, language departments are often seen as vulnerable and these departments need to defend their existence and promote the study of languages as a worthwhile and necessary venture. Although there are many great national initiatives such as the Routes to Languages in the UK and the MLPSI in Ireland, (some currently under threat, however) this cannot take from the necessity for language departments to become involved in placing their future on a more secure future by promoting languages locally and by making strong links between the university department and the community that surrounds it. The Worton Report said that 'it is vital that universities themselves take action. Much is rightly made of the autonomy of universities in the UK; now is the moment for the languages sector to embrace that autonomy as a creative and enabling force' (2009). The need for innovative and visible practices in language learning is vital now more than ever and the CBL approach is a very effective tool in achieving many of these goals. It brings university students into the community and raises the profile of the language being taught; it energises and motivates the students involved; it provides an innovative teaching and learning practice and, if properly implemented, benefits all parties involved from the university department to the community partner.

### **Transferable skills**

In an era of transferable skills, language departments are expected to train students in more than just language skills and through the CBL approach, gains are considerably broader than finite linguistic acquisition. As Abbott and Lear have commented: 'CSL in second-language programmes challenges students simultaneously to improve language skills, increase cultural competence and develop professional skills that are context-specific' (2009, 322). One study has identified twenty seven possible skills that can be linked to the CBL experience (Welch 2007). Depending on the CBL project, the degree of benefit to language skills can vary: for example a student working with a Spanish speaking community in a health centre will probably have better linguistic outcomes than, say, a student teaching elementary Spanish in a school. The benefits, however, to student confidence, motivation and engagement with their subject appear to be constant across the CBL experiences. Michael Kelly observes that 'Students have become more conscious of the career implications of their studies, and teachers have increasingly recognised the need to build explicit career benefits into academic programmes. [...] Teachers have responded by emphasising the value of key skills embedded in these programmes, particularly language and communication skills, intercultural competence, and personal resilience in mobility' (2002, 4.2). As seen previously in the research into CBL, the approach is very beneficial for the development of a wide range of skills in students and developing these skills in a very real experience in the community. By participating in a CBL course, students gain invaluable transferrable skills at a time when such abilities are in high demand.

### **An example of a CBL course in a language department in Ireland**

A Community Based Learning and Italian Course has been running in NUI Galway, Ireland since 2006. It is a module which teaches students the fundamentals of language learning and language teaching and then allows them to put this learning

into practice by arranging for the students to teach Italian in local primary schools. At the end of the course, the primary school pupils come to the university where they receive certificates at a celebratory 'Italian Day'. The course is taken by final year Arts students and runs over two semesters and is weighted at 5 ECTS. During the first semester, students study the history of language teaching; the variety of teaching methods in current use and the specific demands of teaching language to children. In addition to this they study the various skills needed in the teaching and delivery of a language class. Students analyse a variety of language learning approaches and reflect on their own experiences as language learners. In this first semester, they 'teach' a fifteen-minute class to their peers and write an essay on language learning. In the second semester, students prepare a course outline for their teaching, they research the school and the class profile where they are going to teach and they undertake exercises which guide them in the reflective process. They teach six classes in primary schools, generally, though not always, working in pairs. After the teaching, they submit a teaching portfolio, which is the main assessment for semester two and includes a course outline, teaching aims and objectives, lesson plans, and weekly and general reflections. This portfolio is assessed on its preparation, integration of prior learning, creativity and organisation and its reflection on the teaching experience.

The course aims to bridge gap between the university and the community and to foster positive attitudes towards language learning. In 2007 it won the European Language Label for innovation and creativity in language learning. I wish now to give voice to the student experience on this course and to reflect on its impact. Data for this section has been collected through questionnaires which are distributed annually to students to examine their reaction to the course and the impact it has on their learning. Information has also been gathered from the students' written reflective journals, initial assessments of participation goals and motivation, reports from community partners and surveys of school children during Italian Day. Of particular interest are the reflective journals which provide introspective first person accounts of the personal journeys of the students who have taken this course.

### **The student experience**

It has been noted that 'Students often approach [CBL] with equal parts of excitement and trepidation' (Abbott and Lear 2009, 314). Students taking the Italian course certainly experience this and the newness and difference of the course makes it a challenge for students. They cannot rely on their experience in other courses; they do not have a vast resource of former exam papers and predictable forms of assessment. Students have said, 'We have never had a class like this so it is a new way to think about learning; why we learn things the way we do'; 'I think it is more difficult because this is more about personal learning and not something you can just learn from a book.' The course forces students to be reflective and they comment that this is challenging as it is akin to grading yourself. They also say that the course is harder because they have to take part in the work more actively than in other courses commenting that it involves every aspect of students as people.

Despite these difficulties, it is clear that the students like to be challenged; the newness and difference of the course might be considered a problematic factor, but it is also one of the reasons why students choose to take the option. Students cite professional and civic reasons for taking the course and they are also motivated by personal development, hoping that the course will help with their confidence and their ability to convey a message. They also hope it will add to their personal skills set and

will help in their knowledge of languages. Students are very motivated to take these courses and indeed, the first year the course was offered, it was run on a pilot basis with no academic credit ensuing to the students; despite this, sixteen students chose to give up their time, even in the busy context of final year studies, in order to participate on the pilot project. Each year 75-80% of the final year class choose to take this course.

## **Skills**

An almost universal outcome of participation in the course is the development of personal skills. Students say that after the course they feel much more confident, they enjoy the fact that they have been able to put skills learnt over the previous three years into practice. Indicative of these sentiments is the observation of the student who said, 'I have personally matured. I had a wonderful experience and would do it again next week if I had the opportunity.' Students also report favourably on the benefits of interaction with fellow students, the opportunity to become involved in the local community and they also report a higher appreciation for teachers. One student said that 'although there were weeks that I found it very challenging and perhaps a bit difficult, the experience was very enjoyable; these teaching lessons have all served as a learning experience.' Another commented that 'It was interesting to discover both my own development as a teacher and that of my partner.'

Students' attitude towards language and language learning can change following the CBL experience. Not only are they more aware of different approaches to foreign language teaching, but they also critically analyse the methods and realise which method suits them best both as learners and as teachers. One student commented 'On a more personal level, teaching Italian [...] has been an eye-opening experience. Not only were the children learning something new and valuable but we the "teachers" were being taught something just as significant.' Students relate the learning to their own language acquisition and make comparisons between the methods they are using and the prevailing methodologies in Ireland over the last ten years.

In their reflections, students show that they are very engaged with their learning and observe the progress they can make in even a short amount of time:

- I didn't expect the six weeks teaching to change me as much as it did. I really grew in confidence, not only in general but also specifically, in terms of confidence in my ability in Italian.
- Over the six weeks I noticed a significant development in my own confidence in the class-room. I started to relish the whole experience by coming up with innovative and new ideas to make learning but also teaching fun.
- Teaching Italian not only increased my awareness about social issues but also enhanced my own educational experience and personal development. I got the opportunity to see Italian is in most practical and real sense.
- It was different from all the other modules. It challenged different aspects of my educational experience. But I thought it was very good as it gave us great freedom but also great responsibility.

## **Reflective Learners**



Most university courses are structured around a teaching and learning phase and then an assessment phase. In the CBL course, however, there is a preparatory phase, an experiential phase and then a reflective phase. Knowledge, activity, reflection and assessment are integrated in the course to enhance the learning outcomes. As outlined in Eyler (2002) reflection is a key element in all stages of CBL from pre-service, to in-class and to post-service. Students are encouraged to make serious, thoughtful, analytic commentaries on what was learned from the in-class and out-of-class experiences, connecting these with readings and class discussions. During the reflective process the students reflect on the value of their contribution and the effect of their participation in the course on their personal development. An example of this is a student who said:

It was a learning experience, and every week our confidence and abilities as teachers grew. We picked up hints and ideas from the children in every lesson. In my opinion, learning from experience is perhaps the best way to sum up the learning cycle. The students learn the language from experience during the communicative approach whereas [my teaching partner] and I learnt from the experience of teaching the class. Watching how children reacted and writing it in our weekly reflections our knowledge grew.

Students get immediate feedback on what they have done in class due to the reaction of the school pupils and the added reflective element brings them into a deeper sphere of learning. In a Service Learning course, students have to invest time and effort; they have to interact with staff and with peers about substantive matters; they experience diversity; receive frequent feedback and discover the relevance of their learning through real-world applications, thus positively promoting deep learning and personal development (Silcox 1995, Eyler and Giles 1999).

### **Promotion of Italian**

An interesting aspect of the Service Learning in Italian course is that by having to teach Italian, students are placed at the other side of the learning process, they are the ones who have to be enthusiastic about their subject in order to successfully teach the classes. By sending the students out into the community, they become ambassadors for the subject they are studying and they find that their enthusiasm for Italy and all things Italian increases accordingly. There is a widely held assumption that learning languages is too difficult and unnecessary in a world where increasingly everyone speaks English. This course shows students the relevance and application of language and the immediate benefits of learning a language. One student said, 'Teaching Italian for the past six weeks has been an incredible experience for me both personally and academically. Language is fundamental in breaking down barriers to opening the mind to new possibilities, new diversities, and a new way of living.' University students can see the enthusiasm of the primary school children and they witness another world opening up for them through the discovery of a new language and culture.

Bringing the primary school students to the university campus for the 'Italian Day' celebration is difficult logistically but ultimately very rewarding. The idea of going to the university at the end of the course works as a motivational factor for the pupils and also gives them access to the university and a sense of achievement. Furthermore, the 'Italian Day' generates publicity for the initiative. The benefits to the

school children are both tangible and intangible; they learn some Italian but more importantly, in their brief experience they realise that they can do languages and that language learning can be enjoyable. A recent Eurostat report noted that foreign language learning at primary level in Ireland is the lowest in Europe (24/09/2010). This initiative goes a little of the way at local level at introducing pupils to languages, hopefully whetting the pupils' appetite for more when the opportunity arises. At the end of the course the school pupils are asked why they like learning languages and the majority of them reply, 'Because it is fun'.

### **Template for the introduction of a community based course in languages**

Taking the indications and advice from various studies into CBL and combining this with the personal experience of setting up such as course, I have designed a template to help other academics interested in implementing such an approach. Much planning and careful design are central to ensuring that a successful and meaningful project is established for all parties: students, languages departments, and community partners.

#### **Template for setting up a CBL Languages Course**

1. Examine some of the many examples of existing courses and syllabi of CBL and languages at <http://www.compact.org/category/syllabi/> or <http://www.ashland.edu/services/commserv/ServiceLearningSyllabi.html>
2. Consult [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org) for details on the approach.
3. Conduct a needs assessment to identify an area of community need.
4. Decide which university class would most benefit from an experience of this kind.
5. Establish learning outcomes from a potential course which tie in both with student and community needs. The learning objectives must be explicit and assessable.
6. Approach community partners with proposals. Ensure reciprocity between the academic and community partners with regard to the resources, needs, objectives and priorities that define the partnership.
7. Make sure that the Critical Elements of Effective Service-learning Practice are in place. These principles of good practice can be summarised as follows:
  - Purpose: all parties involved must understand the purpose of the project, their role and the learning goals
  - Orientation and training: both the students and the teacher should be provided with information on the community, the community agency/agencies, and their responsibilities
  - Implementation: Ensure authentic action: the service activity should be meaningful both to the students and to the community
  - Reflection: the process through which the experience truly becomes an educational experience. Students should reflect on their service experiences discussing preconceived notions, surprising events, or other themes that directly relate to the learning objectives of the course/service-project. The reflection must be structured and multi-layered.
  - Evaluation: both students' learning outcomes and the effectiveness of students' projects should be assessed by all parties involved (i.e. the teacher, the students and the community agency/agencies)
8. Ensure proper alignment of student expectations and community expectations.

8. Establish constructive alignment of preparation, delivery, experience and assessment in the course.
9. Establish contingency plans for situations that may arise e.g.: what happens if a student pulls out of the course? What happens if the lecturer is on leave?
10. Integrate reflection and evaluation at all stages of the course and be willing to change if necessary. Feedback from students, evaluation of learning outcomes achieved and follow-up with community partners necessary to determine success or otherwise of the collaboration.

Sources: (Bloom 2008; Tilley-Lubbs et al. 2005; Zlotkowski 2007; Metz and Hesser 1996; Hollander et al. 2001; Moon 1999; Abbott and Lear 2009)
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## **Conclusion**

Community Based Learning language courses can have many positive benefits: they can increase interest in language learning and they can foster greater engagement with learning, encouraging active learning, creativity, and teamwork. The structure of the courses means that students go into the community as ambassadors for languages thus making languages more visible and sharing resources. By giving students the opportunity to engage in practical work, their transferrable skills are enhanced. The gap between the university and community is closed and positive attitudes towards language learning are fostered. And yet apart from a few universities, CBL has made little impact so far in the third level sector in the British Isles. This is something that language departments in particular might want to address.

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