

Asset-based Community Service for Developing Digital Textbook within Second Language (L2) Teacher Education

Hilda Izzati Madjid, hildaizzati@uinsby.ac.id UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya
Afida Safriani, fida_safriyani@yahoo.com UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya
Rakhmawati, rakhmawati@uinsby.ac.id, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya

ABSTRACT

Service learning embedded in the course plays a vital role in transforming theoretical knowledge into practical one. It provides students with the concept and brings them in contextualizing their concept that they have already learned in the classroom. This study explores the process of enacting service learning using asset-based approach to university-community engagement. This study employed multiple data sets from observation, semi-structured interviews with teachers and principles, focused group discussion with students, and students' products of digital textbooks. The findings revealed that service learning using the asset-based approach empowered all the stakeholders and contributed to emergence of the equitable partnership between university and community. The students' product of a digital textbook represents collaboration between English teachers, the teacher educator, and the university students who successfully designed learning resources that meet the academic level and interests of students of the school partners.

Keywords: Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), Service Learning, Digital learning resources, Digital literacy

INTRODUCTION

Previously, the students' experience in learning was limited to the classroom. The students almost had no chance to experience their knowledge in the real context. They almost had no idea how the knowledge that they learned is useful for others within the community. In the context of assessment, the students were also required to accomplish the assignments which are theoretically driven ignoring the practical aspect. In this case, the students were asked to finish assignments from their teachers without considering its connection to the real life experiences. This text-based assignment is then meaningless. The students' assignments ended up with a collection of papers which have no significant effects except for the students' mark.

As what has been described previously, connecting the students' theoretical concept into the real life experience creates a wider opportunity for meaningful learning. This could be realized

through service learning which is integrated in the course. Many higher education institutions extensively conducted service learning due to its benefits regarding the students' experiential learning (Yusof et.al, 2018). It provides students with chances to transform their theoretical knowledge into practical knowledge (D'Rozario et.al, 2012; Felten, 2011).

In service learning, students are both “serving to learn” and “learning to serve” (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009). Service learning is embedded in the course, and therefore it has a purposive objective. In addition, service learning is an academic work which contains the activities providing the community service. These community service activities are utilized as a “text” that is comprehended, analyzed, in relation to the content of a course (Furco, 1996; Zlotkowski, 1996). In conducting the community service, the community voices should be taken into consideration. Asset-based approach is relevant to apply considering its positive effects on the community as it focuses on the assets or the strengths the community owns instead of their lacks.

Due to the importance of instructional materials in teaching, designing as well as developing the materials will provide a great impact on the teaching and learning in the class. Demanding the students to develop the instructional materials, therefore, could assist them to learn how to teach. However, to develop meaningful materials which the teachers in the school community could take the benefits of, the developed materials should then meet the real condition of the school. The students should also know the real condition of the school to create relevant and appropriate materials. Through this way, the students will not only learn theoretical knowledge from their teachers but also learn how to apply the knowledge in the real environment.

As the technology in education is widely utilized today, technology-based instructional materials are urgently needed. Digital textbook as one of digital instructional materials is the most relevant among other forms. Among numerous benefits of digital textbooks as reported by Robb in her article (2019) are interactive and collaborative resources, familiar navigation tools, as well as real-time updates. Creating digital textbooks is one of the processes associated with digital literacy (Spires & Bartlett, 2012). It importantly highlights that digital literacy is not necessarily related to locating and consuming as well as communicating digital content. This digital literacy, in turn, will enable the students to grab 21st century skills. At this point, the students' developing digital textbooks empowers their digital literacy.

Plenty of research focused on either service learning or digital literacy. A study by Bernadowski (2013) clearly indicates that the service learning is able to improve the students' self efficacy. Truong et.al (2020) also conducted a study investigating the perceptions from both students and teachers in Vietnam towards community service learning. This study revealed the participants' positive responses in the implementation of service learning. Another research conducted by D'Rozario (2012) examining pre-service teachers in Singapore highlighted that service learning can promote the students' character of socially responsible citizens. Seilstad (2014) has also conducted research on service learning in Morocco confirming the students' increased abilities in their academic aspect as well as their improvement in the personal, social, and civic areas. Research on service learning analyzing the community partners as research focus has also been conducted by Gerstenblatt (2020), Cress & Stokamer (2021). However, research on service learning on the basis of the community's assets is limited.

Referring to the above background, this study will be guided by the following research question: How is the implementation of asset-based community service for developing digital textbooks in second language (L2) teacher education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Instructional Materials

In order to support teachers in their efforts to deliver engaging and effective instruction, instructional materials are essential (Tarrayo & Anudin, 2021). Both the needs of the students and the course objectives are highly considered in selecting as well as developing teaching materials. A set of either living and non-living things or human and non-human resources that a teacher could use in assisting students to meet their learning goals are referred to as instructional materials.

Instructional materials are not static. They are always changing to adapt to the development of the world. Consequently, the materials should be dynamically developed. The term "materials development" encompasses all of the procedures including the evaluation, adaptation, design, production, exploitation, and study of those materials. used by professionals who create and/or use resources for language acquisition (Tomlinson, 2012). When developing language-learning resources, professionals who create and/or use resources for language acquisition should ideally take into account all of these procedures.

Digital literacy is associated with a range of processes, including locating and consuming digital content, creating digital content, as well as communicating digital content (Spires & Bartlett, 2012). As one of digital literacy skills, locating and utilizing digital content refers to the ability in searching relevant and valid as well as accurate information on the web. Another process related to digital literacy is producing digital content. This process is viewed as a strategic and effective method in assisting the students' 21st century skills that they should master (Bakkenes, Vermunt, & Wubbles, 2010). Moreover, being able to share digital content through any technological devices is also closely linked to digital literacy.

As a part of teaching materials, a textbook plays a significant role in the teaching and learning process. A digital textbook which integrates digital literacy in the creation of instructional materials could be used as a powerful tool to enhance the learning. A digital textbook is defined as a printed textbook that has been converted into an electronic format that can only be accessed and seen with an electronic device (such as a PC, laptop, or tablet) (Robb, 2019). Numerous advantages of digital textbooks have been revealed, along with their disadvantages.

A digital textbook does not always need to be online when accessing. It can be downloaded so that the content can be available offline. In addition, multiple devices can be used to view digital content in the textbook. Another important feature as one of many advantages of digital textbooks is its interactive resources which enable the viewers to listen to the audios, highlight the texts, make an annotation, as well as watch the video (Robb, 2019). The feature of digital textbooks which provides the students and teachers work collaboratively is also highlighted as a primary attribute of digital textbooks that another type of textbook does not have. In addition, digital textbooks provide navigation tools for viewers to easily link other useful and related information throughout the content. Updated and relevant information provided is another essential feature provided exclusively by digital textbooks. The fact that digital textbooks are always updated to the current issues and the latest version in particular duration of time also becomes another interesting point. At this point, the textbooks are always adapting to the new advancement of either issues or textbook versions as well as the changing needs from students and teachers.

Asset-based Approach to Community Engagement

Primary methods of community development are needs-based community development and asset-based community development. Different from needs-based community development which focuses on the problems or what is missing in the community, asset-based community development concentrates on building and empowering assets in the community (Haines, 2009). This approach emphasizes the strengths, the assets, as well as the capacity of the community rather than a community's deficit (Green, 2010). The basic idea of building a community is by a collective action for a collective goal. Prioritizing the assets as a community's strength is aimed at providing a positive perspective of the community. This positive perspective then is expected to bring positive influences in developing the community, in this case is the school community.

The first step in an asset-based approach is mapping out the resources a community has to offer. Resources are available from individuals, groups, and institutions (Green, 2010). This approach makes use of and values individuals, associations, local institutions, and organizations (Haines, 2009). Assets are not referred to stocks, materials, and other capital forms. Assets could be any forms that the community has. In fact, all individuals have the potential abilities to contribute significantly for the development of the community. Referring to Green and Haines (2007), there are seven forms of community assets covering physical, human, social, financial, environmental, cultural, and political. These assets are regarded as capital because investments in them result in the community receiving more resources or advantages. Asset mapping process is then continued to the following step focusing on building relationships across the community to get a broad support in reaching the goals. Although local resources are primarily important in the process, support from external resources could mobilize assets.

Like other approaches in community development, asset-based approach also has invited various challenges including disregarding power relations within communities and community interest on the problems focused (Green, 2010). Asset-based approach mainly considers common interests and values that could serve as an effective tool to mobilize assets in order to manage important issues collectively within a community. This fact might not carefully consider individual awareness on power relations in a community. Another challenge is related to the difficulty in mobilizing assets. At the beginning, it sounds that bringing the community around problems and needs is much easier than understanding their local resources. However, in the following stage it will be more difficult for the community to sustain the efforts to solve the problems and cover their

needs. They also tend to jump to the solutions of the problems rather than comprehending the nature of the issues (Green, 2010). Understanding local assets, therefore, is an essential part as well as an effective strategy in developing communities.

Research on asset-based approach in learning focusing on community partners has been conducted by Gerstenblatt (2022). By interviewing nine community partners, including agency employees and active citizens, it affirms the benefits that service learning brings to communities and highlights the value of fostering partnerships with local organizations. In addition, this study also suggests that service learning should not emphasize primarily on project outcomes or learning objectives, but rather on getting to know students and the motivation and inspiration they bring. Other typical studies have also been conducted by Cress et.al (2010), Littlepage, Gazley, & Bennett (2012), and Sandy & Holland (2009). Those studies concern the impact of service learning to the community partners considering that mutual benefits are brought equally for students and school community.

Service Learning

As partners in the teaching and learning process, the community is connected to student teachers through the service learning experience. Being able to recognize and respond appropriately in response to the significant influence that a teacher has on his or her students is undoubtedly one of the most difficult elements of becoming a teacher. Jacoby (in D’Rozario, 2012) describes service learning as a type of experiential education. Further he stated that service learning provides structured opportunities to promote student learning and growth in relation to the community needs. Through service learning, course concepts and objectives are placed in the context of real-world circumstances (Bernadowski, 2013).

Service learning has been described by experts either as a program, a pedagogy, or a philosophy. According to Daniels, Patterson, and Dunston (2010), as a part of pedagogy, service learning can be seen as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, promote civic responsibilities, and strengthen communities. In addition, service learning gives students enough time for reflection, meets the needs of the community, and benefits both those who provide and

those who receive the service. Service learning beneficially gives both students and teachers new ways to grab the course objectives while using content in the school community.

However, three primary characteristics of service learning comprising learning goals, reciprocal collaboration, and critical reflection and assessment should be carefully considered when conducting service learning (Felten, 2011). This is relevant to what Kendall (1990) described as basic components of service learning comprising academic content, community experience, and reflection. In academic content, students not only get the knowledge but also implement their knowledge in a real world experience. In addition, students are able to cooperate with the school as embodiment of community experience. These components are completed with the guided critical reflection assignments that relate theory with the practice (Yusof, et.al, 2019).

Bringle & Hatcher (2009) highlighted that service learning should be academically based. It should also consider the community voice in the process of developing, applying, and assessing the effect of a service-learning course. The reflection activities play a vital role in connecting the community service activity to reach targeted educational objectives. Felten (2011) in this case also emphasizes that service-learning is becoming a key component of initiatives to link discipline learning and general education with dedication to public goals.

Numerous research on service learning embedded in the course have been conducted in various contexts. Truong, Bui Phu, and Thi Tu (2020) reported the positive attitudes from both students and teachers in Vietnam towards service learning. However, the article also revealed the challenges in applying it in the classroom.

METHOD

This research employs qualitative study using the multiple data sets which include observation field notes, interviews, FGD, documents and related artifacts. Further, this research investigated the implementation of the service learning embedded course of *Instructional Materials and Media Development*.

Site and Participants

There were 5 students from the 6th semester who expressed their interests in participating in this research. In terms of gender, 4 female and 1 male students. Each of them designed a digital

textbook according to the assigned and particular basic competence of the 2013 English curriculum otherwise known as K-13. All students enrolled in *the Instructional Materials and Media Development course* were grouped into a group of four. Each group developed one chapter that consisted of activities and tasks for four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each group member then was assigned to design one subchapter for one language skill. The 5 student participants abovementioned did not belong to one group. In other words, their individual Flipbook only contains one language skill that refers to one basic competence of the English curriculum assigned to them. In addition, 2 principals, 3 teachers, and 3 staff of the school partners were recruited to participate in this research. Given that there were three IMMD classes instructed by three different teacher educators, one teacher educator who is also the second author of this article also participated in this study.

The research took place in a Public Islamic University and two private Islamic schools located in one of the big cities in Eastern Java. The two Islamic schools where students performed their service-learning program consisted of one private Islamic middle school, and one private Islamic high school. The two schools signed an agreement as the school partners of the service-learning program.

Data Collection

This study employed several data collection methods which include observation, interview, focused group discussion, and documents or other related artifacts. The researchers observed the IMMD class and 5 meetings or events that involved the school partner teachers, principals, and staff as well as students and teacher educators. The researchers also interviewed the principals and the English teachers of the school partner. The focused group discussion was conducted virtually with the 4 female students participants one time, whereas one male student wrote his responses to FGD questions separately. This study also collected documents and related artifacts in terms of the course syllabus, description of the course evaluation, students' created digital textbook, students' designed needs analysis and textbook framework, and other related assignments.

Data Analysis

The researchers collected a considerable amount of data and a variety of data sources for analysis. The data analysis was conducted in multiple phases and formats. Some portions of the data sets and open coding occurred concurrently with data collection for a better methodological

approach to data gathering. Another portion of the data sets was analyzed after the data collection was completed to generate a comprehensive picture of and a better understanding of the service-learning program using the asset-based approach to community engagement within the English language education study program at the Private Islamic University. All the data from the observation was written fieldnotes, as well as all the interviews and FGD were transcribed. This study draws on Miles Hubberman and Saldana's (2014) coding methods especially *descriptive coding* and *process coding* in order to capture processes during the implementation of the service-learning program and the establishment of partnership between the university and the school partner. In addition, the process coding was employed to capture the processes of student's designing the digital textbook according to the school students' needs.

FINDINGS

The implementation of the service learning embedded course of instructional Material and Media Development follow the steps below:

(a) Preparation to build partnership with schools

Based on preliminary research, there were two schools, SMP Muhammadiyah 14 and SMA Annajiyah. These schools become the school partners in the service learning due to some considerations, including location, facilities, and recommendation from previous service program organized by the university in collaboration with civil society organizations. The location of both schools is relatively close to the university. It enables the students to manage their time since they also have to attend offline courses which require them to join the class, but they also have to come to the school at a particular schedule to discuss with teachers or other school members. Both schools are located in suburban areas making them have very limited facilities in learning. In addition, these schools have been becoming school partners in previous service programs organized by the university in collaboration with civil society organizations. Historically, a similar service program has been conducted at the university level through SILE-LLD (*Supporting Islamic Leadership in Indonesia/Local Leadership Development*). These schools were among school partners in that program.

In relation to the different levels, junior high school and senior high school, is due to the consideration that students should be provided with sufficient information of the educational

system at both levels earlier before they have teaching practice at schools. This can also be regarded as a way to familiarize the students with the real environment, requiring them to communicate with the teachers and other school members.

- (b) Visiting partnership school to discuss how the implementation of english teaching learning materials used

Once the school community is decided, the students as well as the department members visit the schools to talk about the implementation of English teaching learning materials. An intensive discussion serving as a preliminary stage to decide the materials needed to develop. At this step, the material that is important to develop is for 8th grade students of SMP Muhammadiyah and 11th grade students of SMA Annajiyah.

- (c) Doing five focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were conducted five times involving the students, lecturers, and teachers as well as other school members. The first focus group discussion intensively talk Firstly, it implemented asset based community development in service learning

The second focus group discussion emphasizes on finding the road map of the human resources of the school as one of the essential assets of the community. At this stage, the school partners were invited to understand the nature of assets, which in turn helped them identify their major assets. In identifying the assets, the schools consisting of teachers, IT staff, librarians, and other school members were teamed up with the students and lecturers to carefully recognize the school assets, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Identifying community assets

The identification of assets shows that human resources containing individual skills and capacities are the major assets. However, other assets either physical or non-physical assets were also revealed such as the school building, the association, as well as cultural assets.

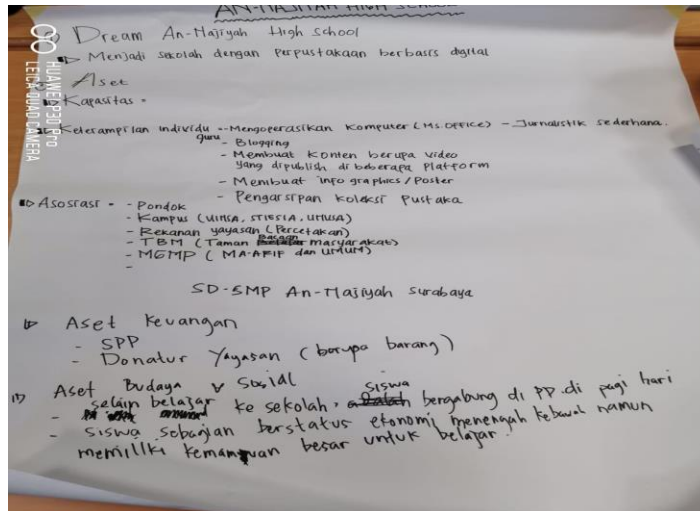


Figure 2: Asset Mapping

The final activity in mapping the assets is communicating these identified assets to other communities. This stage is important in the way that another insight, ideas, and recommendations were extensively brought by other members of group discussions in response to the presentation. Figure 3 demonstrates one of the community members communicating the result of discussion on identifying the community's assets.



Figure 3: Presenting community assets

The following focus group discussion was conducted to digitize learning resources and media. The participants were firstly exposed to the information both theoretically and

practically on the use of digital resources and media. They, then, practiced on creating digital resources and media. The teachers and other community members in collaboration with the students and lecturers create relevant digital resources.

The fourth focus group discussion concentrated on designing as well as developing digital textbooks between students, teachers and also the lectures. Before creating the textbooks, the students and lecturers created the instrument to decide which materials should be developed. The developed material in 4 English skills comprising listening, writing, speaking and reading materials. The developed digital textbooks not only contain the reading texts or passages but also practice to check the readers' understanding.

The last focus group discussion was administered to evaluate and to get feedback from the result of the flip book designed. Teachers and other school members experiencing the service learning were invited to join this discussion. Students and lecturers as well as other faculty members were also engaged in the discussion. The evaluation from the students shows the positive effect on their ability in creating digital textbooks. The students also got valuable information and experience in the community which is useful for their teaching practice. On the other hand, the evaluation coming from the community members revealed that the teachers were interested in joining the program. They were aware of their capacities and strengths, they also have been demonstrated with many updated knowledge including how to develop effective and relevant digital resources and media in teaching.

CONCLUSION

Asset-based approach community service was conducted in *Instructional Materials and Media Development* course for developing digital textbooks. The study revealed that students, lecturers, and community partners altogether contributed to the development of digital textbooks. Through three primary stages including preparation to build partnerships, visiting school partnerships, and conducting five focus group discussions asset-based approach community service in second language teacher education was successfully implemented.

REFERENCES

- Bakkenes, I., Vermunt, J. D., & Wubbles, T. (2010). Teacher learning in the context of educational innovation: Learning activities and learning outcomes of experience teachers. *Learning and Instruction*, 20 (6), 533–548. doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2009.09.001.
- Bernadowski, Perry, Del Greco. (2013). Improving Preservice Teachers’ Self-Efficacy through Service Learning: Lessons Learned, *International Journal of Instruction*, Vol.6, No.2, e-ISSN: 1308-1470.
- Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (2009). Innovative practices in service-learning and curricular engagement. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2009(147), 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.356>.
- Butin, D.W. (2010). *Service Learning in Theory and Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York.
- Cress & Stokamer. (2021). Communities, Change, and Social Justice: Equity-based Community Engagement and Service Learning. *The Palgrave Handbook of Educational Leadership and Management Discourse*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-39666-4_103-1
- D'Rozario, Ee Ling Low, Ava Patricia Avila & Stephane Cheung. (2012). Service learning using English language teaching in pre-service teacher education in Singapore, *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 32:4, 441-454, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2012.741764>
- Felten, P., & Clayton, P. H. (2011). Service-learning. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2011(128), 75–84. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.470>
- Gerstenblatt, Paula. (2022). Community as Agency: Community Partner Experiences with Service Learning, *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Page 60. <https://doi.org/10.54656/VTKX3458>
- Green, G. (2010). Community Assets: Building the Capacity for Development. *Mobilizing Communities: Asset Building as A Community Development Strategy*. Temple University Press: Philadelphia.
- Robb, M. (2019). Potential Advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Textbooks. *Nurse Author & Editor*, 29: 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-4910.2019.tb00054.x>
- Seilstad, B. (2014). Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating a Department-Wide Service-Learning Program for English Language Learners in Morocco. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 18, 229-263.
- Spires, H., & Bartlett, M. (2012). Digital literacies and learning: Designing a path forward. *Friday Institute White Paper Series*. NC State University. <http://www.fi.ncsu.edu/whitepapers>
- Tarrayo & Anudin. (2021). Materials Development in Flexible Learning amid the Pandemic: Perspectives from English Language Teachers in a Philippine State University. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2021.1939703>
- Tomlinson, B. (2013). *Developing materials for Language Teaching*. Bloomsbury Publishing: New York.
- Tomlinson, B. (2012). Materials development for language learning and teaching. *Language Teaching*, 45(2), 143-179. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000528>

- Truong, Bui Phu, and Thi Tu. (2020). Integrating Community Service Learning into University Curriculum: Perspectives from EFL Teachers and Students, *Language Related Research*, Vol. 11, No. 5 pp. 201-226, <https://doi.org/10.21859/LRR.11.5.201>
- Yusof, et.al. (2019). Developing Students Graduate Attributes in Service Learning Project through Online Platform. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333417489_Developing_Students_Graduate_Attributes_in_Service_Learning_Project_through_Online_Platform
- Yusof, et.al. (2018). Towards a Conceptual Framework for Service Learning in Online Learning Environment. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330422344_Towards_A_Conceptual_Framework_for_Service-Learning_in_Online_Learning_Environment