

# COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS AT QUY NHON UNIVERSITY

**Tran Yen Nhi; Nguyen Hong An; Su Nguyen Khanh Trang; Vo Duy Duc**✉

**Quy Nhon University**

✉voduyduc@qnu.edu.vn

*(Received: 04/04/2024; Revised: 11/07/2024; Accepted: 07/08/2024)*

**Abstract:** The study was conducted to explore the awareness, level of participation, and experiences of pre-service teachers of English in 03 Community Service Learning (CSL) activities at Quy Nhon University, namely Green Summer Activity, Peer-Teaching Activity, and Teaching Assistant Activity. The research primarily focuses on exploring the benefits and challenges that the 3 CSL activities bring to the 23 English Teaching students. Data was collected through two main methods, direct interviews and surveys conducted via Google Forms. The results revealed strong support from the participants for all of the three CSL activities. However, the study also identified certain challenges facing pre-service English teachers. Furthermore, the research demonstrated the importance and feasibility of these three activities in enhancing professional skills for students of English Language Teacher Education. Based on these findings, recommendations for integrating CSL activities into the training program have been proposed.

**Keywords:** Community Service Learning (CSL), pre-service English teacher, English Language Teacher Education, professional skills

## 1. Introduction

Community Service Learning (CSL) integrates community service with instruction and reflection, enriching learning and fostering citizenship (Battistoni, 2000; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Celio et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2009; Deeley, 2010). In Vietnam, CSL is new and not widely applied. This study explores the awareness, level of participation, and experiences of students majoring in English Language Teacher Education in 03 Community Service Learning (CSL) activities at Quy Nhon University, namely Green Summer Activity, Peer-Teaching Activity, and Teaching Assistant Activity. The study aims at presenting the benefits of CSL to pre-service English teachers at Quy Nhon University based on the empirical evidence and suggesting specific CSL activities for the curriculum+. These activities, conducted by students, were found to be effective in enhancing pedagogical skills and can be implemented at any stage of their teacher education.

## 2. Literature review

Community Service Learning (CSL) can be described as "actual situations of hands-on and reflective problem-based instruction in which students enrolled in an educational program provide an urgent need to a community partner" (Goldberg et al., 2006, p. 131). Additionally, CSL programs are positioned at the center of this spectrum, as they strive to maintain an equilibrium between the objectives of service and learning. They aim to provide mutual benefits to both the service provider and the recipient (Furco, 1996). Ferrari and Chapman (2014) pointed out that while CSL might appear similar to volunteerism and internships, it is distinct in its focus.

CSL primarily aims to deepen students' comprehension of theoretical knowledge by providing them with practical experience in community service and encouraging them to reflect on this experience. In contrast, internships are more focused on acquiring specific skills relevant to a career, with the main beneficiaries being the service providers (Furco 1996). Volunteerism, on the other hand, is more service-oriented, with the main beneficiaries being the recipients of the volunteer project (Furco 1996).

In recent years, there have been research studies on CSL around the world. The research conducted by Pavian (1997) at a secondary school in North Carolina Press demonstrated the academic value of CSL as an instructional methodology in the content disciplines of secondary schools, with the participation of those who seemed to do particularly well or poorly with CSL methodology. Zapata's study (2011) contributed to demonstrating the effectiveness of applying CSL to the teaching process, specifically in cultural understanding for L2 learners to increase their self-confidence as L2 speakers. An (2021) investigated the experiences of preservice physical education teachers (PEPSTs) participating in a CSL program. The study aimed to examine how this program affected their comprehension of disability and their ability to educate students with disabilities (SWDs).

In Vietnam, CSL seems to be a new kind of educational approach. The practices and effects of CSL have not been extensively investigated in higher education in Vietnam. Vien Truong et al. (2019) conducted a study on CSL by sending pre-service teachers to English charity classes at local pagodas, providing them with hands-on teaching experience. The study found that CSL facilitated the development of essential skills for personal growth and future careers. Also at tertiary level, Nhat's study (2023) demonstrated that CSL was effective in improving the English communication skills of technical students. This included providing students with the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills and a sense of responsibility, which improved their listening, speaking, and writing skills. The research indicated that participation in CSL activities significantly impacted the development of teaching skills and contributed positively to community-beneficial activities. A study conducted by Truong et al. (2020) at the English Department of the University of Foreign Languages, Hue University, clarified the perceptions and attitudes of both students and lecturers towards CSL. It also pointed out the benefits for lecturers and students when integrating CSL into the teaching program. These studies underscore the tangible benefits and transformative potential of CSL in educational contexts. Tran Thi Quynh Nga et al. (2022) in their article "From the experience of the project "Reading with children", evaluated the role of the Community Learning model in training pedagogical skills for students. They applied this model to Elementary Education students at the University of Education, Hue University. This small project, part of a research topic applying the Community Learning model to train pedagogical skills for students, started from the idea of connecting the reading community. The project officially launched a series of experiential activities at some primary schools in Thua Thien Hue province from March 2021.

The review of the literature indicates that research on CSL is still at its infancy in Vietnam and that no research has been conducted on CSL activities at Quy Nhon University for pre-service English teachers (PSETs). This research aims at shedding light on CSL activities for PSETS at Quy Nhon University, exploring if they can be used to enhance both professional skills and practical experiences for PSETs.

### 3. Research methodology

*Research settings:* The three CSL activities in the study took place and were organized sequentially in July 2023 and from October 2023 to January 2024.

For the first CSL activity, the research group directly participated in the Green Summer Campaign in July 2023. The Green Summer Campaign is a yearly event organized by the Youth Union of the Department of Teacher Education. Several activities are included in this event, such as teaching literacy to rural children, building houses for poor people in rural areas, keeping the environment clean in highly polluted areas, etc. That is, the green summer camp activities are both CSL-oriented activities and merely voluntary activities.

Regarding the second CSL activity, Peer-Teaching, during the period from October 2023 to January 2024, which was the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, the Peer-teaching activity was organized by the research group and had been approved by the relevant parties. The PSETs for tutoring were recruited through a post on the Facebook page of the Young Teachers Club. Learners registered to participate through a post in the Quy Nhon University K46 Student Group. Tutoring pairs were randomly arranged and began working in October 2023. Every three weeks, the research team conducted visits and answered questions as well as addressed challenges that tutors and learners encountered through messaging or direct meetings.

The last CSL activity, which took place concurrently with the Peer-teaching activity, was the Teaching Assistant Activity. The research was conducted during the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year in English 1 classes for first-year non-English majors. The PSETs received advance notifications about class schedules, session details, and teaching times for English 1 classes, taught by lecturers from the Department of Foreign Languages. The participants could choose their preferred sessions based on their individual preferences. In total, four classes of non-English majors were involved in the study. Their primary responsibilities during the sessions included assisting students with queries as requested by the instructors and preparing for review activities as needed.

*Study Design:* This descriptive research study employed a quantitative research methodology to generalize the findings and to discern the variance in satisfaction levels and the nature of the research variables. Additionally, qualitative research methods were utilized to gain a more profound understanding of the participants' perspectives and perceptions.

*Participants:* The research involved mainly 23 pre-service English teachers at Quy Nhon University.

In the Green Summer Activity, 7 PSETs joining in the Green Summer Camp took part in the CSL activity. In addition, the activity involved 6 border guards working in Nhon Chau island, and their ages were between 23 and 45. They had virtually no environment where they could use and practice English in their daily lives because of the nature of their jobs.

Regarding the Peer-teaching Activity, the participants taking part in this CSL activity include 8 PSETs and 8 first-year students who major in Chinese, Construction engineering, Finance, and Banking, English Language, and Information Technology. Each tutor only worked with one student during the semester. The students registered for the tutoring program by completing the Google form. The program lasted approximately one semester. The program was

delivered either directly or via Google Meet, depending on the flexibility and availability of the tutor and learner. There was no interference between the tutor and the learner during the learning process. Every week, tutors and students were asked to see if they were experiencing any difficulties. After Semester 1, tutors and learners filled out a Google Form to evaluate this CSL activity, the challenges they faced, and their aspirations for similar CSL activities in the future.

The Teaching Assistant Activity was the activity with the largest number of participants. Specifically, it involved 8 PSETs from the Department of Teacher Education, Quy Nhon University and over 80 first year non-English majors enrolled in English 1 course. All of the PSETs have an average grade (the previous academic year) of above 7.0 on a 10-point scale. The majority of these PSETs had already studied pedagogical subjects in the curriculum of English Teacher Education of Quy Nhon University. These subjects include English Teaching Methodology 1, 2 and Professional Practices 1, 2.

*Data Collection:* The data for the study were collected through two main methods: face-to-face interviews and surveys conducted via Google Form. For each activity, CSL participants were required to complete two survey forms - one before and the other one after participating in the CSL activities. The direct interviews with CSL participants took place at Quy Nhon University. Prior to distributing the survey forms to the PSETs, their reliability was ensured through careful examination of the questionnaire.

For the first activity, the Green Summer Activity, the data for the study was collected from English Language tutoring to border guards working in Nhon Chau Island as part of Green Summer Campaign in 2023. As per the preliminary plan, the PSETs arranged a one-week tutoring program for this CSL activity. However, the duration of the green summer camp activities was reduced due to numerous objective circumstances. They therefore had to set up a program that would include simple game-based learning activities like "Guess the word," "Do what I say," and "Who is the fastest?" to fit the reduced schedule.

For the second activity, Peer-teaching activity, the data for this CSL activity was collected through direct, open-ended interviews and via social media platforms (Zalo, Facebook). The participants were asked to rate their agreement on a Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, strongly agree). The questionnaire is divided according to major themes: the influence on personal development, the benefits that CSL brings to PSETs, and the impacts on community responsibility. To obtain more specific and clear information about the opinions of each individual, four pairs of tutors were interviewed via Zalo.

For the last activity, Teaching Assistant Activity, the data collection was conducted through Google Forms, with Likert-scale items. Additionally, the research team directly interviewed five CSL participants to gain deeper insights into various aspects of the activity. The question sets were divided into different categories, including the CSL participants' readiness, the benefits of participation, and the challenges encountered during the activity.

*Data Analysis:* The quantitative data from the questionnaires was processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software version 20. The mean scores (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), and Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) values were computed using this SPSS application.

*Ethical Considerations:* The involvement of the CSL participants in the three activities was entirely voluntary. Similarly, their contributions to the survey models were made willingly and with integrity.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Green Summer Activity

The current research study attempted to seek quantitative and qualitative data by surveying the 7 PSETs, interviewing them as the tutors, and interviewing the border guards as the learners. For the data analysis, the reflections were coded in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Coding framework for the analysis of the pre-service English teachers' reflection in the interview responses

Themes	Subthemes	Frequency (N=7)
<b>Benefits</b>	Practicing pedagogical skills	6
	Learning how to plan activities for a group of individuals whose English proficiency varies	6
	Linking pre-service teachers with social activities	5
	Inspiring participants with interest in English	6
<b>Challenges</b>	Working with time constraints	7
	Planning a program for a group of individuals whose English proficiency varies	6
	A finite number of PSETs	6
	Overwhelming pre-service teachers who have limited real-world experience	4

#### *Benefits*

##### **Practicing pedagogical skills**

6 out of the 7 PSETs find that planning and organizing the English-language tutoring program in the Green Summer Camp gives them practical opportunities to improve their pedagogical skills and be conscious of the significance of the combination of theory and practice, as well as the role that education and society play. The following reflections are indicative of this awareness:

*"While theoretical knowledge is important, practicing it is much more important. Planning activities with other pre-service English teachers has allowed us to practice and enhance pedagogical skills, including creating lesson plans, organizing activities, and ensuring everything went as planned."*

##### **Learning how to plan activities for a group of individuals whose English proficiency varies**

As mentioned above, the border guards had different English language proficiencies. Therefore, the PSETs had to design lesson plans in such a way that all of the border guards could keep up with the pace of the activities. 6 out of the 7 PSETs as the informants said that they had learnt a lot from designing game-based activities in a flexible fashion to teach the group of individuals whose English proficiency varied greatly in a fun and engaging way. This demonstrates how useful CSL is to pre-service teachers who need to be flexible and adaptable for their future teaching jobs.

### **Linking PSETs with social activities**

Linking PSETs with social activities is another significant benefit, with 5 out of 7 PSETs acknowledging this advantage. Opportunities to work in and learn from actual situations and social contexts while attending university are always rare and greatly valued by PSETs. Since they were able to work with learners of several levels of English proficiency in the same activity, interact with actual learners, and gain a deeper understanding of the community, the majority of PSETs expressed gratitude for having been able to create and organize this activity. The following reflections are indicative of this benefit: *"I hope to get the chance to take part in more activities like this in the future since being engaged in actual situations and social contexts teaches me a lot of valuable lessons that I can apply to my future teaching career."*

### **Inspiring people living in the community to learn English**

The PSETs have created an activity that goes beyond teaching and learning English by creating an environment where English is used to link participants with other participants and with program activities. Accordingly, the majority of participants said that the use of English in the activities relieved them of pressure or concern; rather, they believed that the use of English in this way made the activities interesting and engaging rather than boring. One border guard revealed: *"Due to the nature of my job, I haven't used English for a long time. When I participated in the activity, I felt excited and interested, and I saw that English is not as scary or difficult at all."*

Along with the benefits CSL brought to both PSETs and local people, it was found to be challenging for the PSETs. The challenges are presented below.

#### *Challenges*

##### **Time constraints**

As per the preliminary plan, the PSETs planned four 2.5-hour English language tutoring sessions in the Green Summer Camp. However, because of schedule adjustments brought about by the impact of multiple objective circumstances, the activity was only extended to one 2 hours session. Organizing similar activities on a definite and regular basis is nearly impossible due to the nature of the participants' jobs as border guards.

##### **Planning a program for a group of individuals whose English proficiency varies**

The PSETs faced many challenges in planning and organizing the program to ensure balance and suitability for all participants. Finding appropriate content for participants with a wide range of English proficiency levels is a big challenge, even for those with a lot of experience. The following reflections are indicative of this awareness: *"Even though the activity was a great success, we found it quite difficult to organize the activity. To ensure that the material and techniques would be effective in a program with participants of varying ages and English proficiency levels, we invested a great deal of time and effort in developing and testing them"*

##### **A finite number of PSETs selected**

The possibility for many PSETs to join in and experience this CSL activity is quite confined because the Green Summer Camp is a university volunteer program, where the number

of participating members is limited and carefully selected through interviews. Accordingly, not many PSETs are given opportunities to take part in CSL activities.

**Overwhelming PSETs who have limited real-world experience**

The issue of overwhelming PSETs whose real-world experience is limited is particularly prominent among PSETs, with 4 out of 7 PSETs agreeing that they face difficulties in this area. PSETs have encountered several challenges in conducting this activity due to a classroom environment that emphasizes purely theoretical learning with little chance for practical engagement. However, theory is unable to provide the flexibility that is needed for real action. One of the PSETs argued, *“Having helped to plan the event, I thought that the theories I have studied in class were insufficient. Reality calls for far more than theory can offer, and I believe that those without as much real-world expertise as I do will find this task quite challenging.”*

**4.2 Peer-Teaching Activity**

This second CSL activity was also found to be beneficial to both PSETs and learners.

***Benefits to Pre-service English Teachers***

The benefits of participating in Peer teaching Activity be categorized into three main aspects, as outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Benefits of Peer - teaching Activity to PSETs

Aspects	Benefits	M (N=8)	SD
Teaching and learning	Applying theoretical knowledge and teaching methods	4.00	0.67
	Experiencing real teaching scenarios	3.50	0.75
	Developing teaching skills (communication, language delivery, and problem-solving skills.)	4.25	0.60
	Adapting teaching methods to different learners	3.75	0.71
Personal growth and reflection	Finding joy in helping others	4.25	0.58
	The capacity to assist individuals in PSETs’ vicinity	4.25	0.71
	Self-reflection and personal growth	4.62	0.74
	Increased confidence in teaching	4.37	0.57
Social interaction and community engagement	Connecting with others within the school community	4.75	0.75

The quantitative results for the benefits for English teacher education students show that the majority of students support the idea of peer teaching as a way to gain more practical experience and improve their professional expertise (M = 4.00).

In the context of teaching and learning, all PSETs highly rated the development of specialized skills, such as language communication and problem-solving abilities (M = 4.25). However, when discussing the experiential aspects of real-world teaching situations, there was a relatively high standard deviation (SD = 0.75) with the lowest mean value among the factors (M = 3.5). In practice, during in-depth interviews conducted by the research team, two students concurred that teaching and learning primarily occur based on individual learner requirements and goals. Additionally, since most teaching takes place via platforms like Google Meet and Zoom, students tended to feel somewhat withdrawn and find it challenging to concentrate. Consequently, communication between educators and students is limited, resulting in fewer unexpected teaching scenarios. However, during a direct interview with the PSETs as participants,

they pointed out that teaching in a face-to-face setting at school often leads to unforeseen situations, allowing for valuable experiential learning and improved problem-solving approaches

Furthermore, the PSETs unanimously expressed their satisfaction and usefulness in applying their expertise to assist others ( $M = 4.25$ ). This statement also receives a relatively low standard deviation compared to the dataset ( $SD = 0.58$ ). One of the PSETs said, *'Using our professional knowledge to help fellow students within the school context is truly meaningful, and it brings us great joy and fulfillment.'*

Regarding personal development and reflection, the self-reflection and personal growth factor garnered agreement from most CSL participants ( $M = 4.62$ ). A PSET pointed out, *'Participating in this activity has deepened my self-awareness. During preparation and teaching, I recognize my own shortcomings, both in terms of knowledge and other aspects. Consequently, I am aware of areas where I need improvement and areas to limit.'* Enhancing self-confidence was another benefit reported by the PSETs during their participation ( $M = 4.37$ ) as one of the PSETs said, *'Thanks to this activity, I not only have an additional student but also make a new friend.'*

Among these, PSETs expressed the strongest level of support for the notion that Community Service Learning (CSL) provides an avenue for them to engage with the real-world community and acquire unprecedented experiences ( $M = 4.75$ ).

In summary, the PSETs' experiences underscored the importance of practical exposure, self-reflection, and collaborative learning in the context of teaching and learning. These insights contributed to a more holistic understanding of the educational process and the multifaceted roles of CSL participants.

### ***Benefits to learners***

Not only does this CSL activity benefit the teacher, but its essence also aims to yield specific advantages for both parties involved. Regarding the benefits for learners, the research team observed that most students shared the opinion that their English grammar improved significantly ( $M = 4.42$ ). Furthermore, when interviewed about their learning motivation, most students agreed that having a companion and guidance during their English studies in the English 1 course made them more enthusiastic and motivated to learn English compared to studying alone.

Additionally, other skills exhibited progress among individual learners due to variations in their foundational English knowledge and specific learning goals. In addition, other language skills were assessed with relatively modest average scores: speaking ( $M = 3.00$ ), writing ( $M = 2.71$ ), listening ( $M = 3.57$ ), and reading ( $M = 3.28$ ). This variation could be attributed to the diverse needs, goals, and teaching approaches of individual learners and different PSETs.

The multifaceted nature of skill development during the activities contributed to this diversity. Having a peer companion during the English learning journey also played a pivotal role. Participants reported increased motivation and enthusiasm ( $M = 3.7$ ) due to shared experiences and regular assessments with fellow learners. As one participant aptly said, *"Having a study buddy and frequent evaluations have made me more diligent, and I now find English less monotonous than I used to."* The benefits the peer-teaching activities brought to the learners are presented in Table 3.



**Table 3.** Learners’ Progress and Collaborative impact in Peer-teaching Activity

Skills	Learners’ Progress (Mean) (N=8)	Description
Grammar	4.42	Significant improvement in grammar skills.
Speaking	3.00	Enhanced ability to express thoughts orally.
Writing	2.71	Progress in composing written texts.
Listening	3.57	Improved comprehension of spoken English.
Reading	3.28	Development in understanding written materials.
Motivation	3.71	Enthusiasm amplified by companionship and guidance during English studies.
Collaborative Study	4.01	English 1 course transformed into a collaborative journey, fostering camaraderie and mutual support.

Along with the benefits the CSL activity brings to the PSETs and learners, it was found challenging. The following presentation is on the problems facing the PSETs as tutors.

### *Challenges*

In the realm of tutoring, the challenges faced were multifaceted, as revealed by data collected from Likert scale questionnaires and open-ended questions. These challenges could be broadly categorized into three main groups: the difficulty in securing a suitable teaching location, the pressure of managing time effectively, and the struggle to maintain consistent motivation.

About 6 out of 8 PSETs found it challenging to find an appropriate location for teaching. This issue is further complicated by the need to resort to unconventional spaces like cafes or virtual platforms like Google Meet, which lack the stability of a dedicated teaching environment. This lack of a fixed location can lead to suboptimal teaching conditions due to external factors such as ambient noise or unreliable internet connections.

In addition to location issues, enhancing the learning consciousness of students was another significant challenge, 7 out of 8 CSL participants acknowledging this difficulty. The struggle to maintain students’ focus and dedication to their homework and lessons was a common issue, leading to problems such as students dropping out halfway or being continuously absent.

The issue of maintaining students’ learning motivation was particularly prominent among PSTEs, about 5 PSETs agreed that they face difficulties in this area. One first-time tutor highlighted the struggle of maintaining enthusiasm in the face of these challenges, stating, *“Both usually have to choose cafes or study through Google Meet without a specific and fixed location, making the lesson less effective due to external factors such as noise or poor internet quality affecting the learning process.”*

From the perspective of the students, the research team’s in-depth interviews revealed that most learners agree on the importance of maintaining learning motivation, which is often influenced by subjective factors such as personal drive and interest. However, objective factors such as the learning environment and the level of support from teachers also played a crucial role in shaping the learners’ experience. As a student in the peer teaching program pointed out, *“I think if I can study directly, I will absorb more new knowledge. Online learning is easily affected by factors such as internet connection and noise from both sides, this makes me unable to devote 100% concentration to the lecture.”*

However, despite the enthusiasm and support from the tutors, some students still found it challenging to stay motivated, especially when the subject, like English 1, was an elective course. As one student who dropped out halfway through the course explained, *“This is a meaningful program for non-English major students like us, but because English 1 is an elective course, my passion and learning motivation are very limited.”*

In conclusion, both tutors and students faced a myriad of challenges in the teaching and learning process. These challenges, both subjective and objective, need to be addressed to ensure a conducive and effective learning environment. It is clear that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work in education, and individual needs and circumstances must be taken into account to provide a truly enriching learning experience.

### 4.3 Teaching Assistant Activity

Like the other two CSL activities, Teaching Assistant Activity was found beneficial and challenging.

#### *Benefits*

The benefits that this activity brings to PSETs are divided into three major groups, which are presented in Table 4.

According to the survey results, in the context of community learning activities, the majority of the PSETs agreed that they had benefited in terms of social interaction. They concurred that they had learned various methods of knowledge transmission, teaching styles, and ways to explore grammar topics and skills from the instructors (M = 4.28). Furthermore, they also expressed a high level of agreement with statements related to learning from fellow CSL participants and even from non-English majors (M = 4.32).

Furthermore, the PSETs also believed that their social relationships (lecturers-PSETs, PSETs-non-English majors, and PSETs-PSETs) had significantly improved as a result of their participation in the activities (M = 4.29). Moreover, their involvement in these activities had also enhanced their language knowledge and professional experience and allowed them to identify gaps in their knowledge by addressing grammar-related inquiries from students and improving English language skills (M=4.28). Table 4 below shows the benefits of the teaching assistant activities to the PSETs.

**Table 4.** Benefits the Teaching-Assistant activity to the PSETs

Themes	Benefits	M	SD
Skills enhancement and learning	Improving communication and crowd management	4.00	0.67
	Enhancing pedagogical knowledge and experience	4.28	0.75
Social interaction and engagement	Expanding social opportunities	4.29	0.77
	Learning from fellow participants	4.32	0.77
Understanding student psychology and teaching	Deeper understanding of students' psychology and behavior	4.16	0.79
	Recognizing the significance of the teaching profession	4.00	0.62

#### *Challenges*

The research team conducted a survey and listed the difficulties that CSL participants encountered during their participation in the teaching assistant activities in Table 5.

The issue that most PSETs agree upon is that their ability to answer questions is still limited due to various subjective and objective factors ( $M = 3.57$ ). Specifically, during an interview, one PSET said *“Sometimes non-English major students ask us about grammar issues that even we are not sure about, making it quite difficult for us to explain thoroughly and specifically to the students.”* In addition, another factor raised by two PSETs is from the learners themselves, *“Most non-English major students have very little interest in English and also have a limited understanding of it, so when I teach them, there are very few students who can understand the knowledge I am conveying.”*

The observed standard deviation exhibits significant variability in terms of connecting with non-English majors ( $SD = 1.38$ ). This dependence on objective factors, such as the rapport between teaching assistants and students, the foundational English proficiency of learners, and the frequency of face-to-face interactions, makes it challenging for teaching assistants to find common ground with non-English majors. One of the PSETs said, *“Since most classes only met once, I found it quite difficult to communicate and address questions for the students.”*

Additionally, from a time perspective, the PSETs as tutors faced considerable difficulty in consistently participating in a class led by a specific instructor. Typically, their schedules and timetables aligned with those of non-English majors, making it challenging for them to establish a lasting connection with the class and its students. One of the tutors in the program said, *“I want to participate long-term in a class with a particular instructor so that I can have more time to get acquainted with the students and build close connections. Table 5 provided below is the detailed presentation of the findings regarding the difficulties facing the PSETs.*

**Table 5.** The difficulties PSETs encounter when participating in the teaching assistant activity

Description	M (N=8)	SD
I struggled to balance my time between participating in activities, attending school schedules, and managing my timetable.	3.00	0.81
I found it difficult to connect with non-specialized language students	2.7	1.38
I felt that my initial enthusiasm for participating in this activity was gradually fading.	2.7	1.10
I found it challenging to foster a love for the English language among non-specialized language students.	3.28	0.95
I felt that my ability to impart knowledge to students is limited by several subjective factors (lack of confidence in my abilities, poor relationships with non-specialized language students, etc.).	3.57	0.78

### 5. Implications of the study

During the research process, the research group identified the difficulties and shortcomings that the participants encountered while participating. Therefore, the research group has the following specific proposals:

#### *Green Summer Activity*

In addition to the major benefits of this CSL activity, a variety of objective factors make it challenging in many ways, so the effective execution of this activity requires the involvement and cooperation of pertinent parties, including the university, the local community, and the school, where the university must establish connections with more localities to organize programs to create opportunities and attract more PSETs to participate. The locality where the activity is held

must also create conditions to ensure time and the number of people participating in the activity so that the activity can achieve the highest results and bring benefits to all parties involved.

### ***Peer-Teaching Activity***

The most significant challenge faced by English teacher education students and learners is the difficulty associated with a fixed teaching location. Timely coordination and support from the school and department are essential. As a result, the research team proposes the following recommendations:

*Flexible Classroom Hours:* The school administration may consider expanding classroom availability beyond regular daytime hours. For example, lecture halls should be left open in the evenings, which would provide additional learning spaces. This flexibility benefits not only students of English teacher education, but also students from other disciplines who may require access to classrooms for group discussions, workshops, or collaborative projects. By offering evening classes, the school ensures that students have an environment conducive to peer teaching and collaborative learning.

*Student Commitment and Accountability:* To address issues concerning student commitment, a proactive approach is required. Before participating in any teaching or service activities, students must sign a commitment form. This document outlines their responsibilities, such as attendance, active participation, and sticking to schedules. Students should be requested to sign it to demonstrate their commitment to the program. Regular check-ins, progress assessments, and reflection sessions can help to reinforce this commitment. Faculty members can offer advice and mentorship, emphasizing the importance of meeting their responsibilities.

*Peer Teaching and Community Engagement:* CSL offers students a unique opportunity to connect theory and practice. It allows them to leave the classroom and interact directly with the community.

To maximize CSL's impact, the school can form partnerships with local organizations, schools, or community centers. Students may participate in language teaching programs, literacy initiatives, or cultural exchange activities. Having a fixed location (such as designated classrooms) for these community-based activities promotes consistency and stability. It also instills a sense of responsibility in students, who recognize their role in positively contributing to society.

### ***Teaching Assistant Activity***

#### ***Registration for Participation***

*Optimizing the Registration Process:* A pre-enrollment registration system should be implemented to enhance participation in activities. This would allow students to register before officially enrolling in courses. By doing so, we streamline scheduling logistics and ensure that CSL participants can closely align their availability with specific classes.

*Flexible Information Infrastructure:* Developing a flexible registration information system is essential. Such a system should empower the PSETs to select classes that best fit their schedules and commitments.

### *Connecting with non-English majors*

*Continuous Support from Instructors:* Given that this activity contributes to the professional growth of PSETs, ongoing guidance from instructors is paramount. Instructors can play a pivotal role by providing: (1) Guidance: Clear instructions on effective communication strategies with non-English majors; (2) Study materials: Access to relevant study materials, including grammar resources and language-specific content; and (3) Timely assistance: Prompt responses to queries from non-specialized language students, especially when addressing intricate language nuances.

*Understanding student challenges:* Acknowledging that non-English majors may pose questions related to grammar topics they find challenging is crucial. Teaching assistants should be equipped to navigate these complexities with patience and precision.

The investigation into 3 CSL activities for pre-service English teacher at Quy Nhon University suggest some implications for stakeholders. First, the integration of CSL into the university curriculum should be considered to be a pedagogical strategy in the educational policy of higher education institutions at Quy Nhon University. Using conferences and seminars, efforts should be made to familiarize the institution with CSL activities. This strategy has shown to be an effective way in both theory and practice to link universities with society and to bring PESTs closer to the community. Secondly, the locality where CSL is held must also create conditions to ensure time and the number of people participating in the activity so that the activity can achieve the highest results and bring benefits to all parties involved. Thirdly, before engaging in any educational or community service activities, participants are required to sign a commitment document outlining their obligations, including regular attendance, active involvement, and schedule adherence. Finally, the university can collaborate with local organizations, schools, or community centers to enhance CSL's influence. Students might take part in literacy campaigns, language education programs, or cross-cultural activities. These community-based events are more consistent and stable when they are held in a set venue.

## **6. Limitations**

The study has two main limitations. First, it was only done by three distinct, quick-turnaround, small-scale activities. Secondly, the findings only focused on the limited number of participants' reflections after the engagement in these activities. Therefore, the scope of research is still small in terms of research site, participants, and methodology. Hopefully, similar empirical research studies will be carried out in the future in other units and at a larger scale with more CSL activities in Vietnamese universities, and these studies will employ different research instruments with the involvement of other groups of participants. By so doing, more findings will be found to make the implementation of CSL for PESTs dynamic, realistic, and more convincing.

## **7. Conclusion**

To sum up, almost all the findings reveal that CSL activities, including the Green Summer Activity, the Peer-Teaching Activity, and the Teaching Assistant Activity are shown to benefit both the PSETs and participants in several ways. First, after getting involved in the CSL activities, the PSETs practice their pedagogical skills and are conscious of the significance of the combination of theory and practice, as well as the role that education and society play. Another

meaningful result involves the PSET's enthusiastic engagement in the community and growing awareness of citizenship. Secondly, the PSETs perceive a significant enhancement in their social relationships as a result of participating in these activities. Additionally, PSETs have created an activity that goes beyond only teaching and learning English by creating an environment where English is used to link participants with other participants and with program activities.

## References

- An, J. (2021). Learning to teach students with disabilities through community service-learning: Physical education preservice teachers' experiences. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 68(3), 442-455.
- Battistoni, R.M. (2000). *Service learning and civic education*.
- Bringle, R.G., & Hatcher, J.A. (2000). Institutionalization of service learning in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 71(3), 273-291.
- Celio, C.I., Durlak, J., & Dymnicki, A. (2011). A meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning on students. *Journal of experiential education*, 34(2), 164-181.
- Conway, J.M., Amel, E.L., & Gerwien, D.P. (2009). Teaching and learning in the social context: A meta-analysis of service learning's effects on academic, personal, social, and citizenship outcomes. *Teaching of psychology*, 36(4), 233-245.
- Deeley, S.J. (2010). Service-learning: Thinking outside the box. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 11(1), 43-53.
- Ferrari, J.R., & Chapman, J.G. (2014). *Educating students to make a difference: Community-based service learning* (Vol. 18, No. 1-2). Routledge.
- Furco, A. (1996). Service-learning: A balanced approach to experiential education.
- Goldberg, L.R., McCormick Richburg, C., & Wood, L.A. (2006). Active learning through service-learning. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, 27(3), 131-145.
- Nhat, T.T.M. (2023). Applying Community Service Learning to Improve Technical Students' English Communication Skill: Case Study at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, VietNam. *Eastern Journal of Languages, Linguistics and Literatures*, 4(1), 154-171.
- Pavian, R.L., & Moon, R.A. (1997). Community Service Learning Methodology and Academic Growth in Secondary School Content Disciplines: An Action-Research Study. University of North Carolina Press, 80, 202-209.
- Trần, T.Q.N., Trần, P.B.N., Trần, T.N.T., & Hồ, T.T.N. (2022). Từ trải nghiệm dự án “Cùng em đọc sách”, đánh giá về vai trò của mô hình Học cùng cộng đồng đối với việc rèn luyện nghiệp vụ sư phạm cho sinh viên. *Tạp chí khoa học giáo dục Việt Nam*, 18(2), 13-17
- Truong, V., Bui Phu, H., & Truong Thi Tu, L. (2020). Integrating community service learning into university curriculum: Perspectives from EFL teachers and students. *Language Related Research*, 11(5), 201-226.
- Tran, T.T.A., & Truong, V. (2019). Implementing community service learning for pre-service teachers: The case at University of Foreign Languages, Hue University. *Journal of Inquiry into Languages and Cultures*, 3(3), 299-308.
- Viên, T. (2021). Tích hợp học tập phục vụ cộng đồng vào chương trình giảng dạy đại học: Một nghiên cứu thực nghiệm. *Hue University Journal of Science: Social Sciences and Humanities*, 130(6A), 65-81.
- Zapata, G. (2011). The effects of community service learning projects on L2 learners' cultural understanding. *Hispania*, 86-102.

## **MỘT SỐ HOẠT ĐỘNG THEO MÔ HÌNH “HỌC TẬP PHỤC VỤ CỘNG ĐỒNG” CHO SINH VIÊN NGÀNH SƯ PHẠM TIẾNG ANH, TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC QUY NHƠN**

**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu được tiến hành nhằm khám phá nhận thức, mức độ tham gia, cũng như những trải nghiệm của sinh viên ngành Sư phạm trong các hoạt động Học cùng cộng đồng (HCCĐ) tại Đại học Quy Nhơn. Nghiên cứu chủ yếu tập trung vào tìm hiểu những lợi ích và khó khăn mà 3 hoạt động HCCĐ đem đến cho 23 sinh viên Sư phạm Tiếng Anh. Dữ liệu trong bài nghiên cứu được thu thập thông qua hai phương pháp chính: phỏng vấn trực tiếp và khảo sát được tiến hành thông qua Google Form. Kết quả cho thấy sự ủng hộ mạnh mẽ từ sinh viên đối với cả 3 hoạt động HCCĐ. Tuy nhiên, nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra những bất cập nhất định xuất phát từ sinh viên sư phạm và các bên tham gia. Ngoài ra, kết quả nghiên cứu cũng chứng minh được tầm quan trọng và tính khả thi của 3 hoạt động đối với việc rèn luyện nghề nghiệp chuyên môn cho sinh viên sư phạm. Dựa trên các kết quả nghiên cứu này, những thách thức và các giải pháp đề nghị liên quan đến vấn đề tích hợp 3 hoạt động HCCĐ vào chương trình đào tạo đã được đề xuất.

*Từ khóa:* Hoạt động Học cùng cộng đồng (HCCĐ), Sinh viên sư phạm Tiếng Anh, Sư phạm Tiếng Anh, kỹ năng sư phạm