The Discovering the World: MSU Language Collaboration Community Outreach Project – PHASE II took place over the 2015/2016 academic year. It provided 7 hours of on-site multi-cultural/multi-lingual enrichment instruction to K-5th graders at Marble Elementary School on two separate occasions under two different organizational plans. Both events involved international students from MSU planning interactive activities and presentations designed to teach elementary school children about various aspects of their languages and cultures.

One of the Discovering events took place on March 17th, an afternoon when school was not in session and students were registered specifically for this enrichment course, as the original Discovering the World project of the previous year had done. 42 elementary school students participated in this four-hour course. The project also provided 4 hours of service learning/community outreach experience to the international students participants who led the enrichment instruction under the supervision of their instructor and the program coordinator. These 21 international students came from two advanced ESL classes at the English Language Center (ELC) and seven different countries. The students planned, practiced, and refined presentations and interactive activities designed to familiarize children with various aspects of their cultures and expose them to their languages, while simultaneously honing their own English communication skills and fulfilling a requirement of their ELC course. In addition, the program coordinator worked with their instructor, an experienced, senior ELC faculty member, who had never participated in this type of service-learning activity before. The coordinator advised the instructor on best practices for conducting the service-learning project, evaluating and guiding student presentations and activities to ensure strong pedagogical content and suitability to the elementary-aged audience, and establishing grading criteria and rubrics to evaluate student performance.

The other Discovering event was similar, but incorporated the PHASE II model that sought to involve a greater participant pool of MSU students, including domestic students studying a foreign language. This event occurred outside of the language classroom and was completely voluntary on the part of the MSU students involved. For this event, the coordinator focused on the culture and language of China, timed to coincide with Chinese New Year. She organized the date and time of the event with two interested elementary school teachers and sought MSU student volunteers from throughout the university. The service learning opportunity was open to native speakers of Chinese and second language learners of Chinese. Announcements of the program were disseminated through the university data request system, OISS, and through multiple instructors and advisors of Chinese language classes. The response was overwhelming. Within two days of sending out the announcement, the coordinator had received interested replies from more than 50 international students whose native language was Chinese and 13 second language learners of Chinese. Unfortunately, for the purposes of the program and space concerns, the number of participants had to be capped, but the coordinator continued to receive emails from interested parties that had to be turned down.

The MSU student volunteers then attended an organizational planning meeting where they were divided into groups consisting of 3-4 native speakers of Chinese and at least one second language learner of Chinese. The program goals, requirements, and restrictions (having to do with working with elementary school children) were presented and discussed. The coordinator
shared photos and sample activity plans from previous similar events to help students to select and plan their lessons for the event. Students then met with their groups to continue their planning and submitted a final planning document to the coordinator outlining the interactive activities they had chosen and articulating the linguistic and cultural objectives of their lessons. These plans were then approved (or in some cases, approved pending recommended revisions) by the coordinator.

Unfortunately, the evening before the event, which was scheduled for Friday, February 26th, the East Lansing School District announced that school would be closed due to the weather, so the Discovering event too was cancelled. It was rescheduled for the following Friday, but unfortunately, due to the proximity to MSU spring break, many of the MSU student volunteers were unable to attend the rescheduled event. Despite the drop in volunteers (especially affecting the domestic students), representatives from each of the original groups did attend and carry out the planned activities. 51 kindergarten children in two different classes participated, along with their teachers and the school principal.

Both programs were very well-received by the elementary school student participants, their parents, their teachers, the Marble Committee for Academic Enrichment and the school principal, as evidenced by unsolicited comments, emails, and thank you cards. The coordinator also disseminated information about CeLTA language classes and camps, and encouraged parents to continue their children’s multi-cultural and multilingual education. In addition, around the same time, the coordinator made a donation to a fundraiser at the school in the name of CeLTA, which was acknowledged on printed brochures with the center logo along with all other donors. While the long-term impact on the children who participated may be difficult to measure, it is expected that those who participated took away from the event a stronger appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity and a piqued interest in foreign language learning.

The impact on the MSU student participants is also significant. For most of the students, it was their first service-learning experience, and for almost all of the international students, it was their first time interacting with American school children. Most reported enjoying the activity and finding it both challenging and rewarding. The PHASE II model piloted proved to be very feasible and popular among both native speakers of Chinese and second language learners of Chinese, with many more students volunteering than could be accommodated. This suggests that there is student interest and willingness and that there just needs to be a faculty organizer and facilitator to increase the offerings. The model could easily be applied to other foreign languages taught at the university with a large population of native speaking students as well (Arabic, Spanish, Japanese, Korean, etc.). PHASE II was conceived of as a way to involve foreign language learners at the university in light of the concerns of foreign language instructors who felt that there was not enough time or flexibility in the prescribed curriculum to require such a service learning project as part of the class, which is the model of the original Discovering project. PHASE II does seem to address this issue with the added benefit of contributing to campus inclusiveness by creating opportunities for international and domestic students to pool their expertise and resources and work together to accomplish a task. In fact, I have already been approached by an instructor of Korean who is interested in possibly collaborating on a similar project with her students in the future, and would welcome the chance to do this and further refine the PHASE II model of promoting language learning through service-learning and outreach.
2015/2016 CeLTA Fellow

Discovering the World PHASE II:
An MSU Collaboration Community Outreach Project

Alissa Cohen
English Language Center
Michigan State University
The Goals

• Provide on-site language and culture exposure to children in an East Lansing public elementary school through MSU student-led interactive presentations and activities

• Provide an engaging and positive learning environment for both children and MSU students to learn about and interact with people from outside of their usual communities

• Provide opportunities for native and non-native speakers of a given language to collaborate and share their knowledge of the target language/culture

• Provide MSU language students and international students with a service learning opportunity.
A Phase I – Phase II Hybrid

Phase I (½)
- Provided 4 hours of language/culture instruction to 39 E.L. elementary school children in grades 1st - 5th
- 21 International students in the ELC presented interactive, pedagogically sound activities
- Required service learning component of selected ESL speaking/listening course
- Preparation done in and out of class
- Process and product graded

Phase II
- Provided 2.5 hours of language/culture instruction to 50 kindergarteners at E.L elementary school
- Incorporated 40 native speakers of Chinese and 10 second language learners of Chinese working together to present interactive, pedagogically sound activities
- Incorporated 100% volunteerism
- Preparation done via meetings and email
- no grade
“Discovering the World”
Service Learning Project

What is the project?

We will be putting on an enrichment course called for elementary school students called “Discovering the World.” As part of this project, you will

- Create a **poster** that shows important information about your culture and be prepared to explain the information and answer questions
- Prepare a 15-20 -minute **interactive activity** that teaches children something from your culture
- Choose a **book or story** from your culture that you will read or tell the children
- Create a **display** table with items from your country or culture that children can pick up, look at, and ask about

What is the purpose of this project?

- To share your culture with local elementary school children
- To give you a chance to practice using your listening and speaking skills with native speakers
- To provide you a service learning opportunity in the community
- To meet the requirements of your 094 Speaking/Listening classes

Who will participate?

- All students in 094-3 and 094-4 Speaking/Listening classes
- Marble Elementary School students from grades 1-5 whose parents register them for the program

Where will the activity be?

- Marble Elementary School, 729 Hagadorn Road, East Lansing 517-333-7860

When will the activity take place?

- Thursday, Oct. 25th from 12:00-3:30
Cultural Ambassadors Club
“Discovering China”

What is the project?

We will be putting on an enrichment activity for 50 kindergarten children (ages 5-6) at Marble Elementary School. The children are learning about China in conjunction with the Chinese New Year, and are looking forward to learning more about the Chinese language and culture.

MSU students who are native speakers of Chinese or language learners of Chinese are invited to participate in the volunteer opportunity. Students will form small groups (ideally consisting of native speakers of Chinese and Chinese language learners) and work together to create a 15-minute interactive activity that teaches the children about aspects of Chinese culture and/or language and a poster that presents key information visually.

What is the purpose of this project?

- To share Chinese culture and language with local elementary school children
- To give native and non-native speakers of English and Chinese an opportunity to work together and practice their language skills outside of the traditional classroom.
- To provide students with a service learning opportunity in the community

Where and when will the activity be?

- Friday, Feb. 26th 9:30-11:00 at Marble Elementary School, 729 Hagadorn Road, East Lansing, 517-333-7860.
  Marble Elementary School is accessible by CATA bus #22. Students can get the bus at Shaw Lane near Farm Lane (across from the Planetarium) and get off at bus stop #2601/NBD Hagadorn, which is just past Burcham Street.
- Students should enter through the main entrance only (the entrance closest to Burcham but facing Hagadorn), report in at the main office, and wait QUIETLY in the lobby until it is time to go down to the classroom. All other entrances to the school are locked and it is not permitted to knock on the door and ask those inside the building to let you in at any other entrance.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Alissa Cohen cohenal@msu.edu
If you have an emergency on the day of the event, you may call the school at 517-333-7860.
Planning
• Announcement sent out
• Informational meeting
• Planning meeting
• Planning documents submitted / feedback provided

Cultural Ambassadors Club

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Description of the Activity:

Language Learning Objective:

Other Cultural Objective:

Who is Responsible?

Where will the items be gotten?
The Big Event

CANCELLED

Snow Day!
The Big Event - Take 2
Conclusions

Phase II Model is Feasible!

• Very strong interest among international students and adequate interest among domestic language learners
• Student collaboration does occur, but not to the extent expected
• Unpredictable and somewhat stressful on the part of organizer; communication is more challenging
• Elementary school student experience can be equal(ish) with either model