The Commodification of English as Development: An Examination of English Language Teaching Voluntourism Programs

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
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Abstract

With over 100 countries employing English as an official or second language (Selvi & Yazan, 2013), English is becoming increasingly popular around the globe. One way this spread of English has manifested is in the rise of the English language teaching voluntourism industry, where individuals from primarily Anglophone countries travel to teach English in the Global South. These trips promote volunteer English teaching as a way to contribute to local economic development. Additionally, qualifications to participate are minimal and often require only native English fluency (Jakubiak, 2016). This work explores the phenomenon of volunteer English teaching through examining discursive strategies used by organizations to construct the presence of English as linked to development outcomes. Additionally, it examines how volunteers are situated to contribute to development, and what sort of implications the framing of volunteers, English, and development have for relationships between volunteers and Global South community members.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Often described as the modern lingua franca, the English language has become increasingly present across the globe, and its rapid spread is propelled by and through a multitude of different outlets. Currently, over 100 countries have recognized English as either an official or second language, and approximately 85% of international organizations use English as their language of operation (Selvi & Yazan, 2013). Factors such as the internet, popularization of mass media, and general decrease in travel costs have contributed to an increase in both the virtual presence of English as well as the physical presence of English speakers around the world.

The widespread nature of English and its common existence in global corporations and institutions has propelled the categorization of English as the gatekeeper to modernization and economic development. In the current global market economy which is dominated by neoliberal ideology, both individuals and communities place high value on the symbolic capital of English as a means through which they can enter into the English dominated global sphere as competitive actors (Majhanovich, 2014; Vavrus, 2002). This formulation of English as a valuable tool for communities to increase economic potential has invigorated the spread of English language instruction and programming within the development sector.

It is with these assumptions that the development industry, spanning from larger international organizations like Cuso International to smaller grassroots organizations like Trek to Teach, has embraced English education as a key tool in the promotion of economic development (Cuso International, 2016; Trek to Teach, n.d.). The perception of English as a tool for economic growth has also perpetuated the spread of the English language teaching (ELT) voluntourism industry. Current statistics relating to the short-term volunteering industry, also called ‘voluntourism,’ pinpoint that approximately 37% of all volunteer projects fall within the category of education, and of these a significant number of education projects are geared towards English teaching (Jakubiak, 2012, p. 435). Both academic research along with promotional materials for ELT voluntourism programs dictate that qualifications to participate in these projects are minimal and most volunteer participants have no formal teacher training (Bunce, 2016; Jakubiak, 2016; Kenning, 2009). Most organizations simply request that volunteers are
over the age of 18, are native speakers of English, and have positive character traits like a good attitude, adaptability, and an open mind (Jakubiak, 2012, 2016; Volunteer World, n.d.; Volunteering Solutions, n.d.). Models for organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism projects are varied, and range from NGOs to social enterprises to for-profit companies. However, the 6 organizations examined in this thesis were selected due to the fact that they all require volunteers to pay significant amounts of money to participate in their projects. Additionally, the promotional materials of these organizations are all geared towards packaging and selling the product of doing ‘English language as development’ volunteering to interested consumers. Given this context, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do organizations present both English and Development in their English language teaching (ELT) voluntourism programs?
   a. What, if any, relationship(s) exists between two?

2. How do organizations imagine the role of volunteers in contributing to development through English teaching?

These questions were selected with the goal of more deeply understanding how these representations of English and Development as well as volunteer positioning that are produced and reproduced by ELT voluntourism literature might impact the relationships between volunteers and Global South community members. Additionally, this examination is both critically and socially relevant in that it is an exploration of one specific application of Language as Development (Appleby et al., 2002, p. 327). This concept will be further explored in the literature review section, however for our purposes it is used in reference to English specifically, and means: When the presence of English is construed as achieving development outcomes. As will be further illustrated, the phenomenon of ELT voluntourism programs rests on the assumption that the act of English teaching is intrinsically linked with economic development. The purpose of the majority of these programs is not geared towards achievable and visible outcomes, but rather a vague interpretation of the role of English within global economies, and the symbolic capital that English has for both individuals and societies to

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1 See pages 24-25.
achieve economic gain. Not only is this phenomenon a visible representation of *English as Development*, but it is also being packaged and sold to individuals across the globe as an achievable and appealing way to ‘make a difference.’ My hope is that this research will contribute to the growing body of work focusing on ELT voluntourism through an exploration of the ways that organizations facilitating such projects frame English and development and situate volunteers in their programs.

This thesis begins with a literature review in Chapter 2 that focuses on the context surrounding the voluntourism industry and some relevant terms and definitions. Following this, it outlines the historical roots of voluntourism, its rapid spread, and representations of the industry in mass media, education, and government policy. The section on voluntourism literature then details some central debates about the industry including the relationship between voluntourism and other industries, the motivations of individual volunteers, the perceived outcomes and deeper implications of volunteering programs, and how the industry and researchers should look to move forward. The literature review then presents the smaller yet highly relevant body of work focusing on English language teaching voluntourism, and then further contextualizes this specific phenomenon through exploring some of the literature on English language teaching in development contexts. Following this in Chapter 3, the thesis work details the neoliberal driven theoretical frameworks of interest in this project. This section argues that the phenomenon itself is rooted in the mutually reinforcing perceptions of neoliberal based economic development and skill transfer as well as neoliberal based commodification of the English language. Additionally, the work focuses in on the neoliberal based motivations for volunteer participants, specifically outlining how internalized neoliberal biases influence perceptions of the self in relation to both development work and language teaching. The work continues on to describe the methodology in Chapter 4 which was used in this thesis project, detailing overall research design, data collection and data analysis. Following this, the work presents the findings of this research project broken into sections specifically related to the research questions. The first findings in Chapter 5 explore the narratives that organizations construct of development and English. Next, Chapter 6 outlines how volunteers are positioned as actors in Global South classrooms. Finally, Chapter 7 discusses implications of the research for relationships between volunteers and Global South community
members, presents a call for future research based on the findings of this study, and summarizes the work with some concluding remarks.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1 The Voluntourism Industry

Voluntourism is a rapidly spreading phenomenon that is situated at the intersection of a number of different fields of study and academic disciplines. The overarching realm of voluntourism draws together theory and literature from volunteer research, tourism research, and development research. Additionally, most volunteering assignments involve specific themes or projects which can be categorized within a large variety of different research foci. When looking to examine ELT voluntourism, it is necessary to situate the topic within the overarching literature on voluntourism in the Global South, focusing in on the literature applicable to ELT voluntourism, and then zoom out again and situate English language education in the Global South more broadly.

Before delving into the relevant literature on voluntourism, it is first important to define exactly what this term entails. Although there are many overlapping features between the two, the voluntourism sector can be differentiated from international volunteering through the payment model that most voluntourist organizations operate with. As Mark Horoszowski (2014), co-founder of Moving Worlds, describes in a blog post, the biggest difference between voluntourism and international volunteering is “supply and demand” (Horoszowski, 2014, para. 4). International volunteering normally involves some sort of implicit demand or need for volunteers from host communities in the Global South, who in turn are supported by organizations through hosting and accommodating volunteers for the duration of their stay. Conversely, voluntourism programs are modeled on a “pay-to-play” scheme, where volunteers both “pay for the privilege of doing development” (Georgeou, 2012, p. 13) as well as to experience some form of travel or tourism within the host country. This difference is highly relevant for this work because it demonstrates the emergence of the idea of volunteering and ‘doing development’ as a commodity that is in turn packaged and sold to consumers who hold a wide array of individual motivations and ideas about their purchase.

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² An example of this is how voluntourism projects focusing on childcare would involve the fields of child development and psychology, in addition to the more generalizable fields relating to voluntourism as listed above.
The definition that is most commonly cited in voluntourism literature emerges from the introduction of Stephen Wearing (2001), who states that:

The generic term ‘volunteer tourism’ applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment. (p. 1)

In this definition we see the association between volunteer tourist, or voluntourists, and the intertwined practices of both holiday travelling and participating in development-oriented projects. In the work of Callanan and Thomas (2005), they describe how voluntourism has evolved into such a broad and far reaching category, that contextualized details are necessary in defining what specific type of voluntourism is being examined. They point towards deconstruction of the definition based on “the duration of the participant’s visit, the extent of involvement in a particular project (from passive to active), the skills/qualifications of the participant with reference to the project itself and the extent to which the project focuses on self-development or/and the altruistic contribution of the experience to the local community” (Callanan & Thomas, 2005, p. 196). Extrapolating from both of these definitional models, this research will treat the identity of voluntourism organizations as constructed from both the realms of tourism and development. The specific characteristics relevant to this exploration of English language voluntourism will be further explored in the methodologies section.

In a 2016 article discussing voluntourism, Gilbert cites a recent interview with expert on sustainable tourism Nancy McGehee. During this interview, McGehee categorized voluntourism as a 2-billion-dollar industry with over 10 million people engaging in voluntourism globally each year (Gilbert, 2016). These figures are supported by a report released in 2008 by the market research firm Mintel, which estimated that at the time, over 6 million people from Europe and the United States were participating in voluntourism projects every year (as cited in Koo, 2013). The global voluntourism industry is continuing to expand; however, the primary audience for these excursions remains members of the millennial generation who are also financially well-off. As Mostafanezhad (2013) recounts, “more than 80% [of volunteers] are between 15 and 35 years of age” (p. 488), and additionally, most of these volunteers are also “white, Western and from relatively privileged backgrounds” (p. 488). One final statistic of this industry that deserves
special attention due to the implications it has for program outcomes is that short-term volunteer assignments (those between 1 week to 6 months) appear to have become increasingly widespread. In a 10-year period from 1993 to 2003, the number of short-term volunteer placements jumped from a ratio of 3:1 in relation to long-term assignments, to a ratio of 7:1 (Tiessen & Heron, 2012, p. 46-47). While this statistic does not specifically delineate between voluntourism placements and international volunteering placements, it is indicative of the widespread growth and the popularity of international volunteering as a whole. Additionally, this statistic demonstrates how short-term volunteer trips have become increasingly common within a relatively short span of time.

The notion of taking some type of voluntourist service or learning holiday, often taking place during what is commonly referred to as a ‘gap year,’ has its historical roots situated in the privileged practice of the “Grand Tour” (Health, 2007, p. 100). During the Victorian era, the “Grand Tour” was a common practice for upper class young men who would take time between finishing school and beginning work to travel (Heath, 2007, p. 100). As is still the case today, these activities were representative of the participant’s privileged circumstances in that they were able to afford these excursions both in time and associated costs. As Heath (2007) illustrates, while the practice was once considered to be a niche activity, “taking ‘time out’ before engaging in more settled activities is now increasingly commonplace, yet nonetheless remains strongly associated with more privileged groups of students in pursuit of horizon-broadening experiences” (p. 100). Currently, this subset of young and relatively privileged individuals is one of the most commonly targeted populations by the commercial volunteer tourism industry, and voluntourism projects are categorized as an exciting “alternative to a classic gap-year adventure or backpacker trip” (Georgeou, 2012, p. 13).

The spread of voluntourism in the Global South, specifically short-term voluntourism, can also be partially attributed to its popularity in mass media. The international attention brought from events like “Live Aid” demonstrated the potential benefit to charities and NGOs that can come from partnering with famous celebrities to bring a voice to their cause (Callanan & Thomas, 2005, p. 185). Indeed, one need look no further than Canada’s own darling charity WE, a massive non-profit/lifestyle-brand/social enterprise which boasts a page on their website.
outlining celebrity ambassadors from Demi Lovato to Sir Richard Branson to The Cast of Degrassi (WE, n.d.a.). Popular celebrities like Oprah Winfrey and Angelina Jolie have promoted international volunteering in mass media, and construed it as an altruistic and exciting practice which everyone should engage in.

The positive attributes of international volunteering and development work are also emphasized in school environments. In middle and high school, organizations like WE involve schools in programming (WE, n.d.c.) and invite students to their massive and widely attended WE days in North America and Europe (WE, n.d.d.). At these events, guest speakers and WE employees inform youth of the benefits of volunteering abroad and encourage them to participate in voluntourism trips (Sarwar, 2014). In university, international volunteering is often promoted via practicum placements for certain programs, and is also often categorized as a service learning excursion which will result in the formulation of better global citizens (Butcher & Smith, 2010).

Government spending also often promotes and reinforces the practice of international volunteering. The US government supported Peace Corps is demonstrative of the institutionalization of international volunteering, with the organization enlisting close to 200,000 volunteers since its inception in 1961 (Tiessen & Heron, 2012, p. 46). While the Peace Corps’ programs can more accurately be categorized as international volunteering rather than voluntourism, as was previously mentioned the two entail a number of similar characteristics as well as similar criticisms. Additionally, the Peace Corps are worth mentioning because government support serves to legitimize the practice of international volunteering and increase public consciousness surrounding the topic. Canada has also contributed funding and a number of grants towards international volunteering, as demonstrated through its sponsoring of the International Youth Internship Program. This program was previously funded through CIDA and recently reinstated under the umbrella of Global Affairs Canada (Government of Canada, 2017; Tiessen & Heron, 2012). The widespread popularity of international volunteering coupled with the rapid growth of the voluntourism industry has spurred the development of a growing body of literature which seeks to explore the overall industry and its various subsectors. As a relatively recent field of study, the literature surrounding voluntourism is described as being “on the cusp
of opportunity,” and there are a number of emerging central debates that are particularly relevant to ELT voluntourism (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 127).

2.2 Emerging Debates in Voluntourism

2.2.1 Is it Development, Tourism, or Something Else Entirely?

While a commonly used working definition for voluntourism was presented in the previous section, there are still many discrepancies surrounding the nature of voluntourism and its relationship to the other overarching industries of which it is part of. Some theorize that perhaps the difficulty in defining voluntourism emerges from the fact that the industry itself is ambiguous in nature, and exists somewhere at the intersection of tourism, development, and international exchange (Wright, 2014). The boundaries are often blurred between voluntourism, international volunteering, other forms of tourism, and longer-term development projects that enlist members of the Global North (Wright, 2014). The discourse used by voluntourist organizations also contributes to the ambiguity when it comes to classifying voluntourism, given that this discourse often draws from a number of different realms. For example, voluntourist organizations frequently claim that their programs and interventions will ‘make a difference,’ alluding to the process of development work without actually using development rhetoric or discussing specific project outcomes (Ingram, 2011; Jakubiak, 2016; Simpson, 2004). While voluntourism organizations often make claims within their promotional literature to positively impact community, environmental, and socio-economic development in the Global South, these organizations are said to avoid employing more explicit development discourse.

Another factor which contributes to the ambiguity surrounding the voluntourism industry is the use of discourse concerning tourism and experiencing the world. Within voluntourism discourse, there is particular emphasis on the exciting travel opportunities that programs provide, where participants can immerse themselves in a different region and culture. As Buchmayer (2017) expresses it, “voluntourism has been defined and understood as an industry where one consumes through purchasing an experience” (p. 93). In terms of voluntourism, the nature of the industry is that the voluntourist consumer is paying for not just a volunteering experience, but a tourist experience as well. This bi-lateral tension between volunteering and tourism will be further
explored below; however, others like Executive Director Randy LeGrant of U.S.-based volunteer abroad company GeoVisions argue that voluntourism is something different entirely. In an email correspondence with the Vancouver Sun, LeGrant stated:

Voluntourism is not development... With development comes a sustainable project, money and time spent to solve a problem, and a long-term commitment to this project. In the end, that project is complete, problem solved, and locals are empowered to sustain it. In voluntourism, the chief resource is cultural exchange. (Steffenhagan, 2011, para. 35)

Here we see voluntourism being framed not just as tourism, nor as development, but as a reciprocal cultural education activity for everyone involved. While the voluntourism industry appears to have somewhat ambiguous goals, the same can also be said of those who participate in voluntourism projects.

2.2.2 Volunteer Motivations: Altruism or Egoism?

Within the literature focusing on voluntourism, participant motivation is a hotly debated topic, and diverse views exist concerning whether or not these motivations are more altruistic or egoistic. In other words, there are varying opinions on whether primary motivation for program participation involves the desire to volunteer time and money to serve others, or if it is to gain some sort of intrinsic benefit for oneself. This intrinsic benefit might be through CV building, or simply to have some sort of life-changing adventure (Callanan & Thomas, 2005). In their work on perceptions and misperceptions of voluntourism, Wright (2014) found that potential voluntourists often viewed the activity as altruistic and selfless in nature, and perceived that the primary benefit of the programs was geared towards the host. The research also indicated that voluntourists were often characterized by potential volunteers as possessing heroic attributes, with “qualities such as nobility, courage and strength regularly emerging from the interviews” (Wright, 2014, p. 247). In their exploration of the volunteering motivations of a group of volunteer tourists in Mexico, Tomazos and Butler (2010) also found that participants seemed to cite altruistic reasons for participating in the programs.

In contrast to this primarily altruistic depiction, many specify motivations as more egoistic by nature. In their multi-year study funded by the International Development Research Center, Tiessen and Heron (2012) interviewed voluntourists working abroad as well as members of the
Global South host communities to learn more about volunteer motivations, experiences, and sense of global identity. In their work, the two found that altruistic motivations ranked quite low on the spectrum of driving factors to participate in voluntourism, with egoistic factors such as CV-building and skills development as more commonly emergent (Chant, 2011; Heron, 2011). As Heron (2011) describes in one of the works that published findings from this research, “rather than being spurred by an innocent curiosity perhaps combined with a degree of altruism, young Canadians and other Northerners in short-term placements in Southern countries appear to display self-centered interests imbued with a consumerist orientation” (p. 116). This notion of participant motivation as more self-serving is reiterated in Sin’s (2009) exploration of Singaporean voluntourists which illustrated that the participants outlined “‘travel’ rather than ‘to contribute’” as primary motivating factors (p. 497). Interestingly enough, Sin (2009) also pointed out the means through which this travel was self-serving in a multi-faceted way, both fulfilling the participants’ thirst for travel, as well as providing a performative sort of validation through individuals presenting themselves as a worldly global citizen. This identity construction was then displayed to friends and family of the participant with their voluntourism experience as proof of their global citizenship (Sin, 2009). The understanding of voluntourists as motivated by egoism rather than altruism is also often held by members of Global South host communities. Wright (2014) explored perceptions of voluntourists by members of the host community, and found in their research that on the whole, hosts had a more negative perception of the industry. Additionally, members of the host community perceived voluntourists “as being predominantly vacation minded, and that the volunteering element is not the most dominant motive” (Wright, 2014, p. 246).

Although many might disagree on the primary motivations for voluntourists to participate in programs abroad, most do acknowledge that individual volunteer motivations generally exist on a spectrum ranging from pure altruism to pure egoism. Much of the literature indicates that there is a blend of volunteer motivations, and that “the line between altruism and egoism is blurred” (Mustonen, 2007, p. 97). Indeed, the notion of entangled motivations is also a topic of discussion in the broader realm of international volunteering, where Georgeou (2012) notes in their work that “volunteers’ motivations are a complex mix of wanting an authentic experience of the ‘other’, career advancement, doing something that ‘makes a difference’ and so on” (p. 13).
their work exploring the volunteer experience, Novoa and Johnson (2013) theorize that the link between altruistic and egoistic motivations of international volunteers might be reflective of the societies which volunteers emerge from, and posit a potential association between altruism-oriented volunteers and more collectivist societies versus egoism-oriented volunteers and more individualistic societies. An analytical framework is also proposed by Callanan and Thomas (2005), who place volunteers on a spectrum ranging from shallow to intermediate to deep volunteers, which correlates to their primary motivations. In this framework, shallow indicates higher emphasis on self-motivation, and deep indicates altruism as a primary motivating factor (Callanan & Thomas, 2005). While there is ample literature surrounding the range of volunteer motivations, there is a significant lack of research surrounding what the implications are for these volunteer motivations and whether or not there is any correlation to differing ways that volunteers interact with host community members. In other words, are the differing motivations correlated to other attitudes or behaviors that volunteers exhibit during their placements?

2.2.3 Perceived Outcomes and Deeper Implications of Voluntourism

The voluntourism industry has received both praise and criticism in relation to its outcomes, and to the deeper implications the programs have for all social actors involved. Many view well-structured voluntourism programs as possessing the ability to both provide community support as well as facilitate the individual development of the volunteers (Fee & Mdee, 2011; Ingram, 2011). However, academics and researchers seem to rarely connect the actual labour of volunteers to any sort of tangible benefit for Global South hosts. Much more common are the positive associations of voluntourism with the creation of innovative fundraising models, fostering of cross-cultural dialogue, and the development of individual volunteer participants through acquiring of global citizenship and beneficial soft skills (e.g. independence, confidence, team working, communication) (Fee & Mdee, 2011).

Perhaps one of the most fascinating cases put forward that argues for the benefits of voluntourism was an article by Blackledge (2013) in the Guardian, which implored readers to consider the fact that for NGOs and charities that rely on grants and donations, funding cuts
paired with operating costs have made it increasingly difficult to function. In these instances, voluntourism provides an innovative alternative where NGOs can both gain funding from participant volunteers, as well as utilize these participants to spread the word about their organization (Blackledge, 2013). While this is indeed an interesting argument, an increasingly common model within the voluntourism industry is that the experiences are facilitated by for-profit-companies as opposed to non-profits. In terms of for-profit voluntourism organizations, it is unclear how much money is actually being diverted back to host organizations and communities in the Global South and being used for charitable programming.

Another common theme that emerges in the literature supporting the benefits of voluntourism is the potential such experiences have to foster cross-cultural dialogue and intercultural competence between volunteers and members of the Global South host community. This notion was illustrated in the work of Khoja-Moolji and Karsan (2015) who outline that university service learning trips are often premised upon the notion that interaction between individuals from diverse backgrounds can work towards creating mutual understanding and community. However, it is significant to note that Khoja-Moolji and Karsan (2015) proceed to critique these cross-cultural relationships for possessing inherent power imbalances. In their article focusing on international volunteering and its contributions to sustainable development, Devereaux (2008) posits that volunteers have the ability to lay the groundwork for “solidarity and mutual learning” which is essential to development work (p. 368). It is important to note however that Devereaux (2008) did indicate with specific reference to long-term volunteer assignments, attributing greater effectivity to longer term projects that also incorporate “humanitarian motivation; reciprocal benefit; living and working under local conditions; local accountability and North-South partnership; and tackling causes rather than symptoms” (p. 359-360). Indeed, this emphasis on long-term projects and their relationship to building intercultural competency was also described by Lough (2011), who indicated that “service duration, cultural immersion, guided reflection, and contact reciprocity” all required significant attention when it came to planning international volunteer programs which seek to enhance volunteers’ intercultural competence (p. 461). Raymond and Hall (2008) affirm the idea that voluntourist organizations have the capacity to contribute to beneficial cross-cultural communication and understanding,
however they specified this should be a program goal and organizations should be intentionally structured to facilitate such understanding.

In addition to the potential for facilitating intercultural competence and cross-cultural understanding, volunteer tourism has also been described as a path for the development of ‘global citizens’ from the Global North, who actively engage in politics and have a deeper understanding of issues involving inequality and systemic poverty. As Chant (2011) illustrates, the assumption that voluntourism experiences will produce global citizens is one that is both “popular and pervasive” (para. 1). This supposition was reiterated by Heron (2011) who recounts:

> It is commonly assumed that exposure to conditions such as extreme poverty in ‘developing countries’ will make young Canadians and other Northerners into ‘global citizens’ – i.e., individuals whose consciousness has been transformed, and for whom this transformation produces ongoing changes in life choices (p. 111).

Prior to extrapolating on some of the more problematic notions surrounding voluntourism, Tiessen and Epprecht (2012) outline literature which suggests that there are a number of positive impacts on young Canadians who participate in voluntourism projects. The two describe literature suggesting voluntourism projects are a potential way for participants to develop confidence, knowledge and a deeper understanding of personal identity (Tiessen & Epprecht, 2012). The development of such soft-skills is an often-cited benefit of voluntourism to volunteer participants, with a number of researchers indicating that there is a presumed relationship between volunteer excursions and development of personal growth, greater sense of maturity and independence, and enhanced self-awareness (Fee & Mdee, 2011; Heath, 2007; Heron, 2011). It is important to note here that again, Heron (2011) draws an association between increased benefits to both volunteers and local communities with a longer duration of stay, normally over 6 months. While expectations around cross-cultural engagement for voluntourism are presumed to be quite high, research shows that this is not always the reality. For example, the work of Andereck, McGehee, Lee and Clemmons (2012) indicates that expectations of volunteer tourists in terms of engaging with local community members are widely varied, and sometimes do not match the realities of the program. Additionally, Lyons, Hanley, Wearing and Neil (2012) point out that although global citizenship is often expounded upon as one of the benefits of
voluntourism, there is no explicit or proven relationship between the two. Tiessen, who was quoted in an article published on University Affairs, further supports this theory through outlining how their research indicates that “global citizenship identities are tied up in short-sighted, superficial sets of actions … that don’t promote meaningful international relationships and do very little to address poverty and inequality” (Chant, 2011, para. 13).

While some positive outcomes and potential benefits are attributed to the voluntourism industry, there are also a number of criticisms that have been levelled against these organizations. The criticisms include claims that organizations are inherently exploitative, that they reproduce asymmetrical global power relations, and that they place undue burden on host communities and organizations.³ When considering international volunteering, the practice is often conflated with doing good and the notion that volunteer intervention leads to a positive transformation; however, as the literature will demonstrate, this assumption is not always based in reality. One critique of the voluntourism industry emerges from the nature of the industry itself. Buchmayer (2017) categorizes the industry as structured around fundamentally neoliberal ideals of the commodification of development, where companies profit off of packaging global need and selling it to privileged young consumers from the Global North who are told they have the ability to make a positive impact. This notion of the commodification of development for Global North consumption is also reiterated by Mostafanezhad (2013), who details how volunteer tourism is an extension of the neoliberal market in the way it commodifies development and social justice policy agendas. As Buchmayer (2017) illustrates in their work focusing on the charity WE, the organization positions its potential volunteer participants as “consumers,” and outlines the “components of the voluntourism package as selling-features for the product” (p. 94). This notion of the commodification of development as an extension of neoliberal market principles situates Global South communities as an experience to be sold to interested potential volunteers. Additionally, it orients these programs towards profit making imperatives as opposed to principles of sustainable development or social justice oriented reciprocal learning.

³ It is important to note that all of these issues are said to be exacerbated within shorter-term voluntourism projects. As Heron (2011) described, voluntourists from the Global North are more likely to arrive with “big agendas” and with little time to accomplish anything, possess implicit cultural biases without having time for them to be challenged, and often are not participating in the trip for any sort of serious goals or purpose (p. 113). This notion of length of stay directly correlating to benefit for host community was also something that was illustrated in Tiessen and Heron’s (2012) descriptions of the reflections of Global South partners, where “the longer the volunteers stay, the more positive impact they are perceived to have” (p. 47).
Another reoccurring criticism of the voluntourism industry that has emerged from the literature is the charge that voluntourism programs reinforce asymmetrical and hegemonic power imbalances between Global North and Global South social actors. It was often noted by a number of different researchers that both volunteers and voluntourist organizations frame Global South actors as helpless and in need of volunteers. This proves to reinforce power dichotomies characteristic of traditional Global North-South relationships dating back to colonialism, where members of the Global South are perceived as powerless and in need of guidance by the more ‘modern’ citizens of the Global North (Holmberg, 2014; McGloin & Georgeou, 2016; Sin, 2009). The construction of Global North volunteers as ‘saviours,’ is particularly prevalent within the discourse of voluntourism recruitment materials, which have been characterized as “reinforce[ing] a hegemonic discourse of need” (McGloin & Georgeou, 2016, p. 403). Indeed, even the photographic images used in voluntourism promotional materials have been categorized as contributing to the maintenance of “global systems of power” (Clost, 2011, p. 1). This production and reproduction of asymmetrical power relationships between Global North volunteers and Global South hosts is described as manifesting in a variety of different ways. The first of these emerges from the nature of the voluntourist project model itself, where volunteer participants pay to travel to countries in the Global South in order to make a difference and help others. In their deconstruction of volunteer power and privilege, Georgeou (2012) describes how voluntourists in essence sacrifice their own finances, and “disempower themselves in order to empower their host community” (p. 20). Despite the fact that volunteers are giving up some of their own money, along with often living in the host community and participating in community life, these gestures can often be seen as performative in that “they do not really give up their power, privilege or in the long-term, their affluence” (Georgeou, 2012, p. 20). Additionally, these gestures do little to mask the notion from host community members that volunteers exist in the world in a position of power and privilege (Georgeou, 2012). In this instance, we see the volunteers’ brief presence within host communities as a reinforcing of asymmetrical power relationships between volunteers and host members in the way that volunteers embody their power and privilege through simply participating in these programs.
Volunteer tourism also often receives negative critique for reinforcing cultural stereotypes within its international programs. In Crossley’s (2012) work, it is argued that the neutralization of poverty by voluntourists emerges through volunteers’ “lens of cultural stereotypes and fantasies, imprinting images of the ‘exotic’, ‘authentic’ and of ‘happy’ communities upon ‘voluntoured’ destinations” (p. 250). While one might assume that actual contact with the traditionally stereotyped ‘other’ might stimulate critical engagement and a deeper understanding surrounding issues of global poverty, Crossley (2012) argues that these stereotypes allow volunteers to keep a safe distance from confronting the brutal realities of systemic poverty. Simpson (2005) also critiques this view through stating that it is naïve to assume such short periods of contact would oust any stereotypes or preconceived notions. These stereotypical views of hosts in the Global South are often shaped by an oversimplification of both the context of host communities as well as the process of development. Volunteers are commonly described as knowing little about the community or context to which they are traveling, apart from the fact that said communities are impoverished and have some sort of perceived ‘need’ (Mohamud, 2013). Simpson (2004) also reiterates this notion of ‘need’ as a driving force behind voluntourism, and indicates that the concept “is treated in a highly uncritical way and forms part of the industry’s oversimplification of ‘development’” (p. 686). This oversimplification of development and community context is also exemplified by Zeddies and Millei (2015) who demonstrate in their work how one voluntourist organization’s overly-simplified promotion of a harmonious world filled with cross-cultural exchange in fact erases borders and historical power relations between countries and individuals. This in turn reinforces asymmetrical power relationships through the neutralizing of global inequalities.

Another significant criticism against voluntourism relating to asymmetrical power imbalances is that volunteer participants who are engaged in these programs often do so through a ‘humanitarian gaze,’ framing themselves as powerful and able to provide help to the helpless in the Global South. As Mostafanezhad (2013) illustrates, “the humanitarian gaze specifically highlights how the tourism–development encounter is mediated by discourses that create a binary and implicit hierarchy between givers and receivers, as well as circumscribing who is a legitimate benefactor of aid” (p. 489). The humanitarian gaze manifests in the “perpetuation of an ‘us’ vs ‘them’ power dynamic” (Mostafanezhad, 2013, p. 489), where volunteers categorize
themselves as more privileged with better lives who because of their circumstances, are in the position to help Global South recipients (Steffenhagen, 2011). This notion of superior aid givers and inferior aid receivers is reinforced through the positioning of volunteers as qualified to initiate beneficial development interventions through whatever sort of individual skills they possess. The intervention process implicitly grants volunteers authority as changemakers and gives them symbolic power, regardless of whether or not they have any relevant skills or qualifications in the areas their volunteer projects involve.

Voluntourism is also often critiqued as a negative practice due to the perceived burden that the industry has on the Global South host communities. This burden can be viewed as a tangible one in that it might be taking away jobs from members of the Global South host community, or potentially diverting resources away from community members towards volunteers and sending organizations (Sarwar, 2014). The burden to Global South communities can also take on more intangible forms, an example of which might be the exploitation of Global South community members to achieve personal development and growth of volunteers. As was previously mentioned, the individual growth and global citizenship of voluntourists has often been reiterated as a positive outcome of voluntourist projects. However, Heron (2011) posits a central ethical debate surrounding this understanding of voluntourism in their questioning of “whether it is warranted for Northerners to attain a claim to global citizenship via this mechanism, especially in light of the impact on Southern organizations that host young people from Canada and elsewhere.” (p. 109). Some have pointed out that the cross-cultural learning and individual growth, just like the travel flow of the programs, is one-directional. In this case, volunteers seem to reap the benefits of personal growth through interaction with host communities, while benefit from the reverse direction is ambiguous at best (Simpson, 2004; Tiessen, 2012). This notion of burden to host community members situates them as the mechanism through which volunteers can achieve personal growth, and in essence employs these real individuals as a vehicle for the development of Global North volunteers.
2.2.4 How Can Both the Industry and Researchers Move Forward?

There is a diverse array of opinions posited by researchers as to how the voluntourism development industry should look to adapt its programming and move forward. One recommendation posited by a number of researchers suggests that in order for programs to exist in the development sphere it is necessary for the industry to re-examine its goals and practices and adapt them to more closely align with development principles (Ingram, 2011). This focus on shifting to incorporate principles of sustainable development includes an increased focus on partnership and Global South community engagement, as opposed to an emphasis on service and centralizing the ability of the volunteer to enact the development process— in essence working with communities as opposed to for communities (Hauch, 2013; Khoja-Moolji & Karsan, 2015; McGehee & Andereck, 2009; McMillan & Stanton, 2014). Increased focus on principles of development would also include active engagement with issues of social justice and incorporation of education surrounding historical global hierarchies and issues of inequality and poverty (Khoja-Moolji & Karsan, 2015; Lewis, 2006; Rao & Niyozov, 2012; Tiessen, 2012).

Finally, given the correlation between length of volunteer placement and beneficial development outcomes, advocates for increased alignment with development principles pinpoint extending the volunteer length of stay as crucial to delivering more beneficial outcomes from voluntourist organizations (Heron, 2011).

Another recommendation that has emerged specifically through media criticism of the industry is a call for voluntourist organizations to enlist volunteers who have a background skill or knowledge base that is relevant to the specific context that the volunteer is travelling to. This emphasis on skill-sharing as opposed to volunteers lacking in technical experience or knowledge is said to be crucial to contributing to more sustainable and effective development work (Hauch, 2013; Horoszowski, 2014). Finally, there is an overwhelming call from researchers and journalists to further examine the effects of the voluntourism industry on communities in the Global South, and how such programs can incorporate better systems of monitoring and evaluation (Lyons et al., 2012; Taplin, Dredge, & Scherrer, 2014). The incorporation of voices of Global South community members is exceedingly crucial to such research, however it should be emphasized that these community members are in particular vulnerable positions due to the
fact that funding and monetary benefits for the communities might be tied to interaction with voluntourist organizations, a notion which researchers must be cognizant of.

2.3 English Language Teaching Voluntourism

While there has been a significant amount of work surrounding voluntourism in general, little work has been done focusing specifically on English language teaching (ELT) voluntourism. Perhaps the most notable work focusing on this topic emerges from Jakubiak (2012; 2016). The definition I have chosen which outlines ELT voluntourism is adapted from the works of Jakubiak (2012, 2016), and is as follows: *English language teaching (ELT) voluntourism is a practice where individuals predominantly from the Global North travel to the Global South on a short-term basis to teach English as an alternative form of travel and means of development assistance.* In their 2012 work, Jakubiak explores the construction of English language teaching as an altruistic practice through an examination of principles of hyperglobalism, along with the critical responses to the practice by former volunteer participants. In their 2016 work, Jakubiak explores the perceptions of volunteers and their interpretations of what development through English language instruction looks like. Jakubiak (2016) found that volunteers understood development through ELT as meaning “building a state’s English language capacity; offering English for cosmopolitanism; helping individuals become more American; and promoting critical thinking” (p. 255).

One commonly recurring theme that emerges through Jakubiak’s (2012) work, which is reiterated in the other works involving ELT voluntourism, is that ELT voluntourism is premised upon the idea that English is the gatekeeper to economic success in the global market economy. As Jakubiak (2012) outlines, “English for the global”\(^5\) suggests that unlimited opportunities exist on the so-called world stage and that English skills alone permit admittance” (p. 441). The

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\(^4\) In both their 2012 (p. 437) and 2016 (p. 245) works, Jakubiak presents two different definitions for English Language voluntourism both of which I draw upon to create a slightly adapted definition which is most relevant to the purposes of my research.

\(^5\) Jakubiak (2012) coins the phrase ‘English for the global’ to describe a type of discourse where “English is presented as the *lingua franca* of this imagined global terrain, and it is primarily through English language skills that people are allowed to access it” (p.441).
English language is often construed by voluntourism organizations and voluntourists as “a magical elixir that will open doors for anyone who consumes it” (Bunce, 2016, p. 114). There exists a common perception that proficiency in English is essential to both individuals and communities to access overarching global markets (Jakubiak, 2012, 2016; Kenning, 2009).

Within the promotional materials of ELT voluntourism organizations, a link is commonly portrayed between English language instruction and development outcomes. As Jakubiak (2016) describes, “to judge from English-language voluntourism’s promotional materials, the association between English and development is unassailable. Whether a project is situated in urban Ecuador or rural Tanzania, volunteer-led ELT is described as uniformly needed and valuable” (p. 248). While the linkages between English language voluntourism and development are tenuous at best, many organizations incorporate exactly this narrative within their promotional materials in the hopes of enlisting volunteers. As Bunce (2016) indicates in their work, members of the Global South community are positioned as in need of assistance, and “their progress in life is contingent upon volunteer assistance with English-language skills” (p. 107). This narrative of the volunteer’s ability to use their English language speaking skills to contribute to development initiatives is also represented in Bassett’s (2014) article which frames English as a valuable skill which volunteers can transfer to members of the Global South. The idea of the skilled English teaching volunteer is positioned as much more preferable than to allow unskilled voluntourists to work on other projects which seek to contribute to other development initiatives (Bassett, 2014).

Criticism surrounding ELT voluntourism is mainly focused on the unintentional effects that voluntourists might have on teachers and students. For example, Kenning (2009) points out that it is possible for ELT voluntourists to be reduced to merely a “token presence,” and that regular classroom teachers have to spend additional time and energy in order to accommodate them and give them an active and contributory role (p. 39). Additionally, volunteer English teachers automatically bring with them their own individual cultural and religious biases. This idea is explored in Varghese and Johnston’s (2007) work which illustrates the moral dilemma that Evangelical Christians experience while working abroad when it comes to either witnessing to their students or allowing students to hold their own cultural and religious views unchallenged.
Volunteers also often experience difficulties in navigating their role in the classroom. In one study volunteers found that their role implicitly gave them authority as an English teacher despite not actually having any teacher training, a position which caused confusion and awkwardness for them while they interacted with local teachers (Palacios, 2010). Indeed, this realization that English teaching is an acquired skill through training and professionalized education was something that also emerged through volunteer reflections in a thesis study focusing on volunteer English teachers situated in Chile (Romero, 2012).

2.4 English Teaching in Development Contexts

The small yet growing body of literature focusing on ELT voluntourism is situated not only within the broader volume of voluntourism literature, but also within the literature outlining English language instruction within development contexts. In the recent book *Language Policy and the Political Economy*, Ricento (2015) poses in the “Introduction” a central question within the text which I believe is at the core of questions concerning the use of English language in development contexts. That question is: “Does [English] advance the interests of sustainable economic and social development in the low-income/developing countries where it is commonly taught in schools?” (p. 2). It is first and foremost important to note that the notions of individual and community development are often conflated within the literature, and that as Pennycook (2004) notes, it is important to differentiate between “individually-oriented access arguments about escape from poverty, and class-oriented arguments about large-scale poverty reduction” (as cited in Ricento, 2015, p. 30). This conflation of individual and community development is also often present within ELT voluntourism programs, where promotional materials list ambiguous claims that English language intervention can ‘make a difference’ in the lives of others; however, it is not usually specified for whom or in what way.

There is widespread belief that English language instruction leads to economic development, a view that is held by many individuals situated in both the Global North and in the Global South. This belief has both produced and been perpetuated by development and education policy in the Global South driven by the emergence of neoliberalism within the global market economy. Indeed, there are numerous cases of countries and institutions from the Global North providing
aid to Global South countries in the form of English education initiatives. One particular example of this was the British government initiative funded by the Ministry of Overseas Development which provided support for education in Tanzania through the English Language Teaching Support Project (Brock-Utne, 2001, p. 124). The perceived linkage between English and economic development has influenced the widespread use of English as the medium of instruction and use of English curriculum in education systems where English is not the home language of the students. As the previous example illustrates, development aid geared towards educational outcomes is often conditional upon use of English or other European languages as the primary language within schools (Majhanovich, 2014).

The commonly held idea that English is an influential precursor to both individual and community economic development is subscribed to by many, but the basis of this understanding is ambiguous at best, and highly controversial (Markee, 2002; Ricento, 2015). In fact, English policies in the Global South have often been criticized for having negative effects on the students and communities who are framed as the primary beneficiaries of such policies. Research has shown that emphasis on English literacy as opposed to literacy of a child’s mother tongue can hinder literacy development, an issue which is particularly salient for early childhood education in low-income countries that utilize English curriculum and English as the primary method of instruction (Rassool, 2013; Romaine, 2015). It has been argued that achieving basic literacy skills which are essential for individuals to participate in local economies should be the primary goal, as opposed to a focus on English education which is said to open access to more far-reaching and obscured global economies (Bruthiaux, 2002). As Markee (2002) describes, “The younger or the more disadvantaged the participants are, the more likely it is that the L1 will provide the most viable means of access to development” (p. 272). This notion is exemplified through Rassool’s (2013) depiction of a World Bank funded study in Zambia, where it was found that children’s reading and arithmetic competencies were negatively impacted by use of English as a method of instruction, particularly in primary levels. Higher rates of literacy are often a more appropriate indicator of economic development, and use of English as a method of instruction in the Global South has been cited as negatively impacting these literacy rates, and

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6 L1 can also be defined as first language, or native tongue.
thus having a negative impact on economic development (Ricento, 2015). Additionally, research surrounding linguistic diversity has demonstrated that “societal multilingualism” is tied to an increase in trade, a linguistic structure which is negatively influenced by the diversion of resources to English-only models of instruction (Ricento, 2015, p. 3). Proponents of enhancing linguistic diversity in lower income countries cite increased literacy benefits, greater economic advancement through multilingualism, and a social justice orientation as benefits which emerge from reducing focus on English language education (Romaine, 2015).

The use of English within development contexts has also been negatively critiqued for primarily benefitting those who are already members of higher socioeconomic status, thus aiding the rich at the expense of the poor (Bruthiaux, 2002). As Niño-Murcia (2003) describes, “achieving proficiency in English in Peru continues to be a privilege of the upper classes, who attend bilingual schools or study and travel abroad. Otherwise, English is seen as the distant object of desire whose possession would drastically change one’s life” (p. 138). Additionally, the use of English in the context of development has received criticism for the underlying implications it has for local communities, specifically through the de-legitimizing of local linguistic resources and teachers. Appleby et al. (2002) illustrate this point through their description of “language-in-development,” and how the practice often creates situations in Global South communities where local teachers, curriculum designers and students are not able to claim status as authoritative speakers (p. 342-343). A common occurrence in the structuring of English curriculum and policy involves members of inner circle7 Global North communities traveling to the Global South to assist with the development of English language curriculum and teaching (Appleby et al., 2002). This practice, coupled with the implicit authority given to native speakers, has the tendency to undermine local teachers and resources (Appleby et al., 2002).

Ultimately, researchers describe how the use of English within development contexts should be strategic and thoughtful, should consider the community and country context, and should be oriented towards specific and achievable outcomes (Appleby et al., 2002). As Pennycook (1995)

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7 As Kachru (1985) describes, “In terms of the users, the inner circle refers to the traditional bases of English- the regions where it is the primary language- the USA (pop. 234,249,000), the UK (pop. 56,124,000), Canada (pop. 24,907,100), Australia (pop. 15,265,000), and New Zealand (pop. 3,202,300)” (p. 12).
describes, English is not a politically neutral entity, and framing the presence of English as modernization and development can have deeper implications for reinforcing global hegemonies and neocolonialism. The use of English in development contexts should not be with the aim to simply spread or teach English, but should be in service to some more specified development goal. Jakubiak (2012) effectively illustrates this notion through their description of Pennycook’s (1999) categorization of English as development vs English for development: “English as development (a process in which English language learning is the development goal) is often confused with English for development (a process in which increased language capacities ostensibly help people to participate in development projects)” (Jakubiak, 2012, p. 440). The sharp contrast between the two concepts of English as Development vs English for development is highly significant for this work because I will argue that ELT voluntourism is not only built upon this concept of English as Development, but has found a way to package and sell this concept so that it appeals to young potential voluntourists.
Chapter 3
Theoretical Frameworks

In order to understand the driving force behind these ELT voluntourism programs and their mass proliferation, it is important to examine the underlying assumptions that organizations which facilitate these projects are based on. By doing this, we can contextualize their overarching appeal to so many individuals, and question the implicit theoretical underpinnings that these models are constructed with. Exploring the diverse nature of voluntourist organizations and programs should necessarily involve a multi-disciplinary theoretical approach which considers the separate yet intertwined fields of research that are thematically relevant to the focus of those specific programs. With a concentrated examination of English language teaching within the voluntourism industry, this thesis takes up this challenge by grounding theoretical analysis in the disciplines of both Development Education and Critical Applied Linguistics.

In order to create the theoretical model for this specific phenomenon, I drew from the concept as described above of *English as Development* by Pennycook (1999) and further explored by Jakubiak (2012), and attempted to evaluate the mutually reinforcing global perceptions of the development sphere and the English language which contextualize this phenomenon. I also considered general understandings of the ‘volunteer self’ relating to development and English teaching which perpetuate the spread of this phenomenon. This theoretical model exemplifies the intersecting ideologies from both disciplines which serve to create and reinforce the global environment where *English as Development* is a justified and appealing process which is packaged and spread for consumption in the ELT voluntourism industry. Further detail will be provided below, however *Figure 1* is a simplified model of the neoliberal based perceptions of the world and self that mutually reinforce to create the conditions for the commodification of *English as development* in the ELT voluntourism industry.
As Georgeou (2012) describes, neoliberal policy has had “large scale societal influence” (p. 11-12). This influence is demonstrated from the privatization of education systems, to focus on skill development and individual utility within the global market economy, and for our purposes, also within respect to the commodification of ELT within the context of development.

3.1 Neoliberalism and Development

According to Tristan McCowan (2015) in their chapter outlining “Theories of Development,” there has been a resurgence in recent decades of liberal-capitalist approaches to development which can be attributed to the rapid spread of free-market ideologies within the global economic sphere. Implicit within this ideological formation is the notion that successful development intervention is linked to economic growth. This underlying assumption of development as linked to economic outcomes has manifested within the development sphere through the push towards mimicking more ‘modern’ Northern systems within the Global South. More specifically, through policies which seek to “replicate Northern capitalist market systems, with their accompanying social and political structures, throughout the world” (Georgeou, 2012, p. 38). This movement towards modernization of Global South systems and models is grounded on the assumption of the development process as linear, where Northern models are situated as the end-goal (McCowan, 2015). The continued reproduction of neoliberal ideology within development can also be seen as specifically related to voluntourism through the process which for-profit
companies capitalize on development narratives to turn a profit, demonstrating within these models how company goals for contributing to development and also making a profit are inextricably linked (Mostafanezhad, 2013, 2013b).

Along with the resurgence of neoliberal based ideology within the development sphere, we can also see the spread of neoliberal policies related to education. In neoliberal based education policies, the goal is to shape individuals as productive future workers in a workforce geared towards more ‘modern’ markets (McCowan, 2015). Additionally, the privatization of education also serves as a viable source of income (McCowan, 2015). As Khoja-Moolji (2017) describes:

Goals of economic growth and increased productivity guide schooling practices and policies; students, teachers, parents, and administrators are conceptualized as self-interested, rational actors who seek to maximize their gains through efficient processes and competition. These trends in education are part of the broader project of neoliberalization, which reduces individuals and social processes to economic logics and metrics (p. 1).

This neoliberal based characterization of education is also particularly prevalent in the Global South, where economic aid given by countries or institutions situated in the Global North often comes with stipulations that countries in the Global South employ neoliberal-based policies surrounding education. In the past, this conditional aid has taken the form of implementing user fees for public education through Structural Adjustment Programs, on using curriculum from the Global North, or using Global North languages as primary method of instruction in Global South classrooms (Klees, 2008; Majhanovich, 2014). These policies are often highly problematic, and are criticized for negatively influencing student comprehension as well as providing economic barriers to attend school which manifests in low attendance rates (Majhanovich, 2014; Klees, 2008).

Within the neoliberal conceptualization of education as based on the development of individual utility and end-goals of economic success, there is an increased focus within both the education system and the development sphere towards skill development in order to make individuals competitive within the job market. As Georgeou (2012) illustrates, “the skill transfer mode of development became the focus of international development agencies, and ‘capacitation’
overtook ‘liberation’ as the mode of development of solidarity models of development volunteering’ (p. 34). This neoliberal conceptualization of education extends beyond the classroom, and can also be observed in discourses surrounding life-long learning. In this instance as Andy Green (2002) describes, the emergence of the knowledge economy entails continuous development of individual skills so as to remain competitive in the job market. Despite this increased focus on skill development, a key characteristic of neoliberalism involves the diminishing of state intervention (McCowan, 2015), meaning that individuals must bear the cost of this continual education and re-training. This implicit link between skills education and its contribution to human productivity has overtaken much of the thinking within the education in development contexts, and as Allais (2015) outlines, can take on a number of different forms. Firstly, there are “basic skills” which help to improve individual livelihoods, including things like literacy and numeracy skills (Allais, 2015, p.238). Second, there are “core work skills” which are primarily focused on things employers might want like vocational and technical skills which might assist to raising levels of employment (Allais, 2015, p.238). Finally, there are “high skills” for individuals with higher level qualifications, more specifically involving skills to participate in the knowledge economy (Allais, 2015, p.238).

This orientation towards acquiring skills as a development initiative has implicit ramifications for education in the Global South as education is a process through which one learns new skills. As was briefly previously mentioned, voluntourism industry critics who discuss the ineffectiveness of non-technical volunteers have called for implementing more focused skill requirements and qualifications (Hauch, 2013; Horoszowski, 2014; Jakubiak, 2012). The neoliberal-based understanding of development as skill-transfer, coupled with the critique of voluntourism as exporting unskilled and ineffective labour to the Global South, has shifted the preference towards technically skilled voluntourists as more beneficial to Global South communities. Additionally, unskilled voluntourists lacking in relevant qualification are perceived in a more negative light (Hauch, 2013; Horoszowski, 2014). This frames ELT voluntourism programs as particularly appealing to potential volunteers due to the neoliberal based perceptions of English as a commodity/skill that native speaker voluntourists have the motivation and capacity to transfer to others, aligning them more with the technically skilled voluntourists as opposed to unskilled voluntourists.
3.2 Neoliberalism and the English Language

Widespread characterizations of language, and more specifically surrounding the English language, have also been heavily influenced by neoliberal ideology. The commodification of English, and the view of English as a sort of symbolic currency can partially be attributed to the shift towards the knowledge economy which places a higher value on linguistic and communicative skills for labour (Heller, 2010). Through this characterization, we see the value of English as intrinsically connected to increased productivity of individuals within the knowledge economy, where a person’s value is rooted in neoliberal ideologies involving their individual skill capacities. This narrative of English leading to increased productivity is reiterated by Vavrus (2002), who details how many in the Global South view English as a form of symbolic capital which has the capacity to elevate individuals from impoverished conditions and increase one’s capacity for economic success. This imagined route to economic success is thought to be through employment in the tourism industry, access to advanced education degrees, or ability travel abroad (Vavrus, 2002). The commodification of English as a valuable currency is further perpetuated by its widespread popularity, and as Ricento (2015) illustrates, the more English language continues to spread as a second or additional language across the globe, the more symbolic value it is has. The commodification of English re-frames English as a valuable skill ripe with cultural capital, and it is perceived as a means through which both individuals and communities can elevate their own socio-economic status. Niño-Murcia (2003) expresses this symbolic value of English through the recounting of one particularly salient quote by a taxi driver in Peru, who simply stated that “El inglés es como el dólar” (‘English is like the dollar’) (p. 121). In this way, as Niño-Murcia (2003) describes, “language and currency are equated in a very overt form” (p. 121).

The popular perception of English as a valuable commodity can also be attributed to the dominant position that English holds within the global market economy. English is consistently positioned as the language of globalization, mass media, technology, higher education, and international trade (Majhanovich, 2014). The perceived associations between English and modernity have induced what is described as a “scramble for English” (Aikman, 2015, p. 225). Policymakers are interested in English as a means to better position their countries in the global market economy, and individuals see it as a currency which will allow them access to better
socio-economic circumstances (Aikman, 2015). In their work outlining the commodification of language, Heller (2010) argues that the increased importance of language in the global market economy, along with the understanding of language as “a resource with exchange value” has increased with the spread of late-capitalism (p. 101). The commodification of English specifically and the positioning of English as the linguistic gatekeeper to accessing the global market economy provides justification for the use of English within the development sphere. This justification is in part due to the widespread belief that proficiency in English will lead to better socio-economic outcomes. English is seen as the language of modernization, a justification which is commonly cited with the introduction of English into education systems in the Global South. The narrative of English as modernity is also used to justify English as a primary method of instruction, as opposed to more common indigenous languages spoken in the homes of students. As Majhanovich (2014) describes, English has become a “prominent feature of the emergent global education system and knowledge economy” (p. 171). Through exploring this neoliberal based understanding of English as a valuable currency which has the potential to increase both individual and national economic capacities, we set the stage for the conceptualizing of English as intrinsically linked to development that is often highlighted within ELT voluntourism promotional materials.

3.3 Neoliberalism, Development, and the Self

We have explored the neoliberal based categorizations of both development and English which mutually reinforce each other and situate the milieu for how English language education is justified as a development practice. It is now necessary to explore the neoliberal-based volunteer perceptions of self which provide volunteers with both the motivation and justification necessary to participate in voluntourism programming. These perceptions of self also influence the growing popularity of this specific industry. As was previously explored, the desire for individuals to participate in voluntourism projects is driven by a complicated mix of both altruism and egoism, both of which are fundamentally grounded in neoliberal ideology. The rise of ‘ethical consumerism’ in the Global North has framed the purchasing power of individuals as a political declaration, and the buying habits of individuals are more frequently linked to development outcomes (Butcher & Smith, 2010; Mostafanezhad, 2013, 2013b). Examples of this can be seen through consumer goods such as Toms shoes, where consumers are told that with every pair of
shoes they buy, one is given to a child in need (Toms, n.d.). Another example is Warby Parker (n.d.) eyewear company, where a pair of glasses is given to someone in the Global South every time one is purchased.

This notion of consumption framed as altruism and linked to development outcomes is utilized not only in for-profit company models, but also in not-for-profit non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This concept is explored in Jefferess’ (2012) work which examines how the social enterprise Me to We, which works in partnerships with WE Charity to provide funding, frames ethical consumption through their organization as making a difference. As the current website describes, “ME to WE is an innovative social enterprise that provides products that make an impact, empowering people to change the world with their everyday consumer choices” (Me to We, n.d.). Jefferess (2012) outlines how such descriptions frame consumer identity as a way to produce positive outcomes in the lives of others. The ELT voluntourism industry is situated well within the emergence of this type of ethical consumerism, where individuals interested in seeking out travel and touristic experiences opt for what they perceive as more ethically minded tourism. In doing so, they satisfy their desires for travel while also feeling they have made a positive contribution. While this desire for ethical consumption and to ‘make a difference’ engenders the appearance of subverting neoliberal ideology through a focus on humanitarian motivations, this notion of giving to others through volunteering has in fact been co-opted by for-profit companies and NGOs alike looking to capitalize on the appeal of ethical consumerism (Mostafanezhad, 2013b). As Lyons, Hanley, Wearing and Neil (2012) illustrate, the shift of the volunteer tourism industry from NGOs to for-profit providers is demonstrative of how the “implied resistance to self-serving neoliberalism values can be coopted by neoliberalism” (p. 361). While it may be increasingly difficult to untangle the intricate mix of altruistic and egoistic motivations for voluntourism, it is far easier to discern the linkages of both motivations to the neoliberal ideological foundations they are grounded within.

While the motivations of many volunteers are influenced through an understanding of ethical consumption rooted in an extension of neoliberal ideology, so too are the qualifications that volunteers perceive themselves as having to perform development interventions. One of the specific ways that neoliberal ideology has impacted civil society is through “the emphasis on the
role of the individual in development’ (Georgeou, 2012, p. 52). This emphasis on the individual involves the recipient of the development intervention, who is framed as possessing the power to lift themselves out of poverty if provided with the correct tools (Georgeou, 2012). It is also applicable when considering the volunteer, who participates in voluntourism programs with the underlying belief that they as an individual have the capacity to ‘make a difference.’ As Jakubiak (2016) describes, volunteer tourism is “a feature of neoliberal logic” in that it purports to “mitigate neoliberalism’s negative effects through brief, individual acts of compassion rather than legal reform” (p. 247). This notion that all individuals possess the capacity to ‘make a difference’ is something that is repeatedly referenced by organizations like Me to We in both its online promotional materials as well as its massive We Day events, where the idea of “democratization of impact” is used to outline how each individual has the capacity to change lives (WE, n.d.b., para. 3). The widely held view that each individual has the capacity to effect a positive change and contribute to development outcomes is an evolution of neoliberal ideology related to individual capacity that is perpetuated by the ELT voluntourism industry, and is particularly appealing to voluntourists.

3.4 Neoliberalism, Language, and the Self

The neoliberal-based commodification of English as a skill or tool lays in sharp contrast to the notion of English as a natural cultural or communicative characteristic. The idea of the commodification of English is also influential in understanding how untrained English speakers view themselves as possessing the ability to transfer this skill to others. The belief of the native English language speaker as the ideal individual to pass on communicative abilities through teaching is one that is commonly referred to in the realm of Critical Applied Linguistics as “the native speaker myth” (Kubota, 2002, p. 21). Within this concept, we see an individual’s ability to speak with native level fluency attributed greater importance than more formalized teaching qualifications. This concept of the superiority of the native speaker rests at the core of ELT voluntourism, and as Jakubiak (2016) puts it, the industry relies on the “native-speaker fallacy—the idea that any inner circle, prestige-variety English speaker is a natural and effective teacher of the language” (p. 247). This notion of native speaking individuals as the ideal candidates to teach English, coupled with English teaching modeled after neoliberal-grounded understanding of English as skill and development as skill transfer, formulate the basis for which individuals
perceive that they are qualified and able to contribute to development outcomes through English teaching.

The citing of Jakubiak (2016) to ‘inner circle’ English brings to light one further point of consideration. Individuals from the Global North are often also associated with what is termed as inner circle variety English, or the traditional bases of English where it is a primary language, including the UK, the USA, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia (Kachru, 1985). Within this characterization, we see greater prestige granted to the English emanating from the geographic regions that are described as models of English given their association to native speakers, with all of those regions simultaneously existing in the Global North (Kachru, 1985, p. 16). I would argue that the perceived relationship between modernization and the English language further reinforces the privileging of inner circle varieties of English. Additionally, the geographical location of inner circle English as existing in economically advanced regions reinforces ideas of native speaker superiority specifically when those native speakers are teaching English in the Global South. Here, we see native speaker superiority as intrinsically linked with the economic superiority of the geographical home locations of the native speaker. Furthermore, the perception that English language voluntourists are able to have a positive impact is mutually reinforced by views of superiority of their variety of English due to its relationship to the more modernized Global North economies and education systems. The perceived ability of voluntourists to teach English despite lack of qualifications develops from the understandings of English as a tool which can be provided through models of skill exchange. Additionally, the perception that volunteers can teach English also comes from the notion that voluntourists possess the innate capacity to teach English through their membership to both the inner circle and the Global North.
Chapter 4
Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Data Collection

This research is designed as a qualitative case study which examines data collected from the organizational promotional materials of 6 different organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism programs. This study also incorporates interviews with Program Managers from 3 out of those 6 organizations. My intention for drawing from these two distinct data sets was to formulate a holistic depiction of the organizations, the way in which programs are structured, and their appeal to potential volunteer participants. I chose to focus on a case study because, as Mckay (2006) describes, the aim of a case study is to focus on a specific bounded phenomenon. The bounded phenomenon of this thesis is the characteristics of the ELT voluntourism programs. Each of the focal organizations facilitate programs with the same baseline characteristics which include: English language teaching components; programs are short-term in length; programs are ‘pay-to-play;’ programs all involve the same geographical flow of being based in the Global North but operating programs in the Global South. In this project, I have chosen to define volunteering on a ‘short-term’ basis as meaning between 1-24 weeks. I have limited the focus in this way because my interest is in programs with a high turnover rate, where volunteer teachers are entering and exiting classrooms abroad multiple times throughout the school year. My intention in focusing on programs operating on a ‘pay-to-play’ model is that I am interested in exploring the intersection between organization models which incorporate linkages to development work and educational outcomes, while also being simultaneously motivated to turn a profit. Whether this profit is re-invested in their organization as is the case for NGOs, or is directed towards other streams in the case of social enterprises and for-profit-companies, the goal of these organizations is still to generate capital from volunteer participants.

While the 6 organizations all incorporate the same baseline defining factors as mentioned above, they were also chosen due to their unique characteristics. Of these 6 organizations, 2 of them are registered non-profit organizations, and 2 of them are for-profit organizations. The final 2 categorize themselves as social enterprises in that they have a for-profit branch of their organizations and the money generated from this branch feeds into another branch which is
focused on charitable projects. It is also important to note that great consideration was put into what exactly to call these organizations. While they all facilitate ELT voluntourism programs- in terms of the definition previously provided in the literature review- they cannot be considered exclusively ELT voluntourism organizations. Some of the organizations also facilitate other types of voluntourism projects such as working in orphanages, building schools, and doing medical volunteer work. Other organizations were geared specifically towards language education and facilitate both short- and long-term teaching placements as well as paid ELT jobs. Additionally, some of the organizations explicitly stated that they were not voluntourism organizations despite aligning with standard definitions of voluntourism, a point which will be further considered in the findings chapters. Taking all of this into account, I have strategically chosen to frame the phenomenon being explored in this thesis as ELT voluntourism programs.

The organizations analyzed are organizations which facilitate ELT voluntourism programs.

The data collection involved two separate stages geared towards two distinct types of data. The first stage of this research incorporated broad-based promotional material collection. During this time, I collected the website promotional materials and pamphlets of the 6 different organizations facilitating ELT programs that were involved in the project. Data in this stage was collected from openly accessible websites including page information and summaries, published documents, guides, videos, and any other relevant materials attached to the website. This broad-based collection also involved printed materials retrieved from organization open houses. All the collected virtual and physical materials were analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis, with specific structure of analysis as further described below in the Data Analysis section.

The second stage of the data collection involved interviews with Program Managers. I am using the term ‘Program Managers’ as a catch-all title to describe individuals who work on the ground in Global South sites, focus on promotion, provide volunteer support, or who work in supervisory capacities at one of the focal organizations. From these 6 organizations, 3 were selected and a total of 5 interviews were conducted with Program Managers from those 3 organizations. The intention behind these interviews was to glean the perceived relationships between English language teaching and development that are held by individuals who do program promotion and help shape the organizational attitudes. The interviews also explored the
perceived impact that ELT voluntourists have on individuals and communities in the Global South. Understanding the perceptions of the Program Managers provided insight into the overall organizational cultures and attitudes in relation to the specific topics being investigated. The interviews with the Program Managers were done virtually through recorded Skype interview sessions. These interviews were also analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis. As a token of appreciation for participating in the study, each of the interviewees was given a $30 money order. I used semi-structured questions for the interviews, with my main purpose aimed at uncovering a deeper understanding of the perceived relationship between English and development, as well as the capacity of volunteers to perform beneficial interventions. I utilized a mixture of Grand Tour Questions and Experience Questions (Spradley, 1979) in the interview, as well as conducted a brief demographic survey at the beginning of the interview. The interviews lasted between 1 to 1½ hours and were all highly informative.

In organizing the data collected for this project, great care was put into protecting the identities of the interviewees from the 3 selected organizations. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants and ensure that it would not be possible to link the interviewees to any of the organizations examined, the identities of all 6 of the organizations were anonymized through labelling them as Organization A-F. The data in turn from each organization was grouped into a specific category, and numbers were attributed to the individual documents. For example, the 6th web page from Organization C is labelled as Organization C, Web 6. The intention behind this anonymizing and indexing of sources was to add an additional layer to protect the identities of the participants and any risks that might have been associated with their provision of an interview.

4.2 Data Analysis

The focus of the research questions entails an investigation of how organizations categorize both English language and development, how organizations situate volunteers facilitating development interventions, and how the organizations frame relationships between volunteers and Global South social actors. In order to explore these questions, the research analysis was grounded in a Critical Discourse Analysis orientation.
4.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

In order to conceptualize a basis of understanding for working within the frame of CDA, this research draws from the construction of CDA as outlined within the works of those generally considered to be the “core CDA” theorists- Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun van Dijk (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 454). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) put forth a clear and concise introduction to CDA and elucidate the theoretical underpinnings for the framework:

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of ‘social practice’. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. (p. 258)

In essence, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) present us with a theory of language and society as mutually reinforcing- discursive events both shape and are shaped by society. Or as Johnstone (2008) puts it, “(w)ays of talking produce and reproduce ways of thinking, and ways of thinking can be manipulated via choices about grammar, style, wording, and every other aspect of discourse” (p. 54). Through looking at discursive strategies and constructions, we can understand how a discursive event both shapes and is shaped by society.

Given that discourse has an impact on society and social relationships, CDA also highlights the significance of examining the underlying unequal power relationships between social actors that discourse can both produce and reproduce (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). As Teun van Dijk (2001) describes, “(c)ritical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context (p. 352). CDA provides a framework for analysis of these social relationships through acting as a bridge between micro and macro levels of analysis, drawing off broader theoretical concepts and applying them for analysis to specific discursive events and strategies (van Dijk, 2001).
4.2.2 Historical Discourse Analysis: Actors and Relationships

Within the umbrella categorization of CDA are situated a number of different approaches to analysis with varying theoretical positions and methodological objectives (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). For the purposes of this research, the methodological approach which drives the analysis is the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). A DHA oriented analytical frame is particularly relevant for an analysis of ELT voluntourism given its focus on the discursive strategies used to construct various phenomenon (for example English and development), as well as representations of the positive ‘self’ and the negative ‘other’ in discourse. As Wodak (2004) emphasizes, Discourse-Historical Analysists view “the discursive construction of ‘us’ and ‘them’ as the basic fundaments of discourses of identity and difference” (p. 7). The construction of positive ‘self’ and negative ‘other’ is created through discursive strategies such as membership categorization and labelling of groups with either positive or negative traits (Wodak, 2004, p. 7).

Within the DHA approach, linguistic choices are significant in the means through which they shape our perceptions of phenomenon, social actors, actions, and events.

A further consideration which situates DHA as the most appropriate method for analyzing the discourse of ELT voluntourism is the focus on how power relationships between social actors are constructed and reinforced through discourse. As Wodak (2004) outlines:

Power is about relations of difference, and particularly about the effects of differences in social structures. The constant unity of language and other social matters ensures that language is entwined in social power in a number of ways: language indexes power, expresses power (p. 3).

The implicit notion of unequal power relationships between social actors and the ability of the more powerful group to assert control “presupposes a power base of privileged access to scarce social resources, such as force, money, status, fame, knowledge, information, ‘culture,’ or indeed various forms of public discourse and communication” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 355). Within the context of my research, I examine what implications the construction of English and development, as well as the way volunteers are situated within the development process, elucidates asymmetrical social relationships between the various social actors involved in the process.
It is important to note that while the DHA approach typically involves heavy focus on linguistic analysis and discursive strategies, my specific approach is geared more towards phenomenon and social actor formation and interaction, incorporating a broader approach to linguistic analysis also involving context. I have actualized the analytical method through the creation of a process which draws inspiration from a table in Reisigl and Wodak’s (2016) work (p. 33). This table illustrates the process behind analyzing various discursive strategies, the objectives for the use of these strategies, and the specific devices utilized in the discourse. My work focuses in on the strategies of ‘nomination’ in examining the discursive constructions of English, development, and the various social actor groups, and ‘predication’ which examines the relationships between the various phenomenon and social actor groups (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 33). Figure 2 is an adapted chart which was employed during the data analysis stage which illustrates analytical strategies and devices that were examined and their relationship to the thematic objectives and overall central questions of the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Sub-Questions</th>
<th>Thematic Objective</th>
<th>Analytical Strategies/Devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How is English presented as a tool for economic development? | How is English framed as a commodity? | Discursive construction and qualification of English | • Membership categorization devices, metaphor, verbs and nouns to denote processes  
• Evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits  
• Comparisons, allusions, implications  
• Content and Context of topic discussion |
| | How is development framed as important/achievable? | Discursive construction and qualification of Development | • Membership categorization devices, metaphor, verbs and nouns to denote processes  
• Evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits  
• Comparisons, allusions, implications  
• Content and Context of topic discussion |
| | How are Global South members described as needing this commodity (English)? | Discursive construction and qualification of Global South social actors | • Membership categorization devices, metaphor, verbs and nouns to denote processes  
• Evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits  
• Comparisons, allusions, implications  
• Content and Context of topic discussion |
| How are volunteers situated to participate in development through English teaching? | How are volunteers framed to be qualified? | Discursive construction of volunteer social actors | • Membership categorization devices, metaphor, verbs and nouns to denote processes  
• Content and Context of topic discussion |
| | How are volunteers framed to be important/integral to the process? | Discursive qualification of volunteer social actors | • Evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits  
• Comparisons, allusions, implications  
• Content and Context of topic discussion |
| | How are Global South members described as needing this intervention (volunteers)? | Discursive construction and qualification of Global South social actors | • Membership categorization devices, metaphor, verbs and nouns to denote processes  
• Evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits  
• Comparisons, allusions, implications  
• Content and Context of topic discussion |

*Figure 2*
4.3 Limitations of the Research

The first limitation in terms of this thesis research that is important to disclose is that the study was restricted in terms of scope due to the requirements of the degree and its timeline. The proposal, data collection and writing stages for this research all took place in a period of 10 months, and the research was done without any external funding. While the project would have indeed benefitted from a larger number of Program Manager participants, limited time and funding necessitated both a smaller pool of interviewees as well as limited data collection from the 6 organizations. Additionally, it is important to note that throughout the interviewing process, my status as a researcher was that of an outsider. Given that I am not currently employed by, nor have ever been a participant in, any of the ELT voluntourism programs that were selected for analysis, my relationship with both the interviewee participants as well as with the selected organizations lacked the sort of insight that a researcher embedded in one of these organizations might have provided. Given the time and funding to conduct a more in-depth analysis of these organizations, being an active participant on the ground in the Global South would allow future research to incorporate valuable insight and a more holistic depiction of these ELT programs in general.

The second significant limitation that is important to address involves the structure of this study. As was previously described, the analytical method for this research is based on using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a method for examining the thematic issues that emerged throughout the data in relation to the research questions. Given that discourse is dynamic, and “meaning is never fixed and is always open to negotiation and interpretation,” the use of CDA in and of itself presents challenges in applying this research to future contexts (Mogashoa, 2014, p. 111). Additionally, there are also limitations in the way through which CDA was used to present common thematic issues from the 6 different organizations. These themes were generalized throughout the discourse presented from all the organizations, however it is important to note that the weight with which one organization might perpetuate such discourse in contrast to another one does indeed vary. The intention however for this research was not to focus the case study on one specific organization, but to identify common elements throughout the industry of organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism programs and position the industry itself as the bounded phenomenon being examined. The common thematic issues are significant in their own
right because they exist across this spectrum and as such are important to identify despite their limitations.

4.4 Researcher Positioning

In a final consideration for the structuring of this analysis, I would like to place myself, my biases, and my presuppositions within this research. As Johnstone (2008) outlines, “acknowledging that science is never value-free, Critical Discourse Analysts begin as advocates of social justice and social change” (p. 54). From a personal standpoint, my own lived experience has led to a critical understanding of the short-term ELT voluntourism industry. This critical lens has developed from my experience in high school participating in two ELT voluntourism trips to the Dominican Republic, along with two years working as an English teacher in Japan. Both of these experiences culminated in my perception of ELT voluntourism as an emergent form of poverty tourism, where the primary focus is not geared towards contributing to sustainable development, but on providing the voluntourist with a new and exciting travel experience. This experience in turn gives the volunteer something to feel good about and allows them to believe that they are ‘making a difference.’ This notion is also justified through the common misconstruing of English language as an innate skill that English speakers can pass on to others with little to no training, something I witnessed on countless occasions by untrained native speaker English teachers during my time in Japan. These are all preconceived notions and internalized biases that I have involving both voluntourism and untrained English teacher voluntourists, and the inherent political nature of these presuppositions is what guides my analysis.
Chapter 5
Findings: Shaping the Narratives of Development and English

The following chapter examines the way that organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism programs represent the concepts of development and English language learning. Throughout the data, organizations use engaging narratives to entice volunteers to participate in their projects and potential volunteers are told that they can ‘make a difference’ in the Global South by teaching English. The chapter analyzes how organizations appeal to potential volunteers’ humanitarian motivations by broadly alluding to development outcomes as well as directly positioning themselves as development organizations in their program literature. Further, this chapter explores how organizations characterize English as a tool to be leveraged for development outcomes. In their program literature and through Program Manager interviews, organizations depict English as contributing to development both directly through language education in Global South communities, as well as indirectly through positive impact that is a by-product of the existence of ELT programs on Global South communities. This chapter also explores some of the problematic narratives that arise through how organizations categorize English education as contributing to United Nations Sustainable Development (UNSDG) Goal 4: Quality Education. Finally, the analysis throughout this chapter illustrates how the majority of the organizations examined characterize the existence of English in communities as development in and of itself, rather than a tool which provides access towards a clear path to development for individuals and communities.
5.1 Vague Allusions and Direct References to Development

“As a former volunteer, I can say how inspiring it is to know that you are part of something bigger than yourself; to know that you are part of efforts to make a long-term, sustainable impact where help is needed most.” -Organization E, Web 5

This section first shapes a general understanding of development based on descriptions of goals and practices in literature from the United Nations, as well as literature which presents the mechanisms through which international volunteering has the capacity to contribute to development outcomes. Following this, the section demonstrates how the data collected from the 6 organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism projects aligns with current literature suggesting that organizations often make broad allusions to development through claims that their programs ‘make a difference’ and facilitate global change. This difference being made is specifically categorized as initiated by individuals and made greater through collective action of volunteers. While previous literature focusing on voluntourism predominantly states that organizations shy away from using development discourse to describe programs, the data in this chapter shows that in fact the organizations employ specific language which is regularly used in describing international development projects. This language includes references to sustainability, community partnerships, and monitoring impact and achievement. Some of the organizations even take this linking to development a step further through explicitly titling themselves as development organizations and linking their programs to the UNSDGs. While the data examined supports previous literature suggesting that organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism programs employ their own discourse involving broad allusions to development, this data also demonstrates that in addition to these broad allusions, many organizations explicitly position themselves as contributing to development practice.

In order to understand how the organizations examined link themselves to development discourse, it is important to first outline what is meant by ‘development’ as well as how volunteers have historically been linked to this process. The complex concept of international development is one which is frequently referred to throughout the data both implicitly and
explicitly. In this thesis, the definition of international development is provided by the United Nations Development Program. According to this literature, the process of international development includes tackling “the connected issues of multidimensional poverty, inequality and exclusion, and sustainability, while enhancing knowledge, skills and production technologies to enlarge peoples’ choices, reduce risks and sustain development gains” (United Nations, n.d.b., para 1). It is significant to note that international development is not simply the act of charitable giving. Rather, sustainable development is the process facilitated by individuals, communities and institutions which seeks to foster “prosperity and economic opportunity, greater social well-being, and the protection of the environment,” (United Nations, n.d.a., para 1). The above theoretical frameworks chapter presents the concept of development as grounded in modernization theory where development projects are evaluated based on their contribution to economic growth (McCowan, 2015). This formulation of development is important to consider as the 6 organizations from the data present development as improved economic advantages for both individuals and communities.

The practice of international volunteering has historically been linked to facilitating international development. Examples of this can be seen from organizations such as the Peace Corps and Cuso International which have both existed since the 1960s and have a long tradition of incorporating volunteerism as a fundamental aspect of their development practice (Cuso International, 2017; (Executive Order No. 10924, 1961). While Devereaux’s (2008) work primarily focuses on long-term international volunteers working in development contexts, they provide a frame of reference for the common use of international volunteers. Devereaux (2008) describes international volunteering within development contexts as the process through which “international volunteers share skills and contribute to capacity development in the local organisations in which they work, experiencing similar working and living conditions as their local colleagues” (p. 361).

In terms of voluntourism organizations, much of the literature criticizes them for employing broad-based claims that volunteers can ‘make a difference’ in the Global South through participating in their programs (Jakubiak, 2016; Simpson, 2004). The implicit assumption here which ties overarching narratives of ‘making a difference’ to development processes is that the
difference being made is a positive one, and the recipients of this difference are individuals and communities in the Global South. Indeed, this appeal to the humanitarian motivations of prospective voluntourists through employing the ‘making a difference’ narrative was observed throughout the data. The first illustration occurs in the Missions and Goals of each of the 6 organizations which facilitate ELT voluntourism programs. Organizations A and F integrate prospective volunteers’ desire to travel with aspirations of changing the world through using catchphrases such as ‘travel for change’ and ‘travel with a purpose’ in their mission statements and web advertising banners. The goals and mission statements of Organizations B, C and E provide slightly more direct linkages to development with characterizing their programs as working to ‘facilitate real change on the ground,’ ‘improve impact at every volunteer project site,’ and ‘volunteer for worthwhile work in developing countries.’ Finally, the mission statement of Organization D provides a slightly more detailed vision and link to development work in its mission of ‘enhanc(ing) the education of underserved children in Latin America.’

Through utilizing these direct references to development and indirect references to global change in their mission statements and goals, the organizations position themselves as mechanisms for positive impact in Global South countries through the employment of short-term volunteers.

Throughout their websites and blogs, the organizations indicate that through taking part in their programs as a volunteer, one is making a difference in the world. As one organization references, “‘our Volunteer Abroad and Service Learning programs provide unique opportunities to live, work, and study while giving back and helping the world be a better place!’” (Organization C,
The narrative of ‘making a difference’ is often alluded to and is broad enough to encapsulate a multitude of different results— it might be in reference to facilitating long-term educational development in the Dominican Republic in order to alleviate poverty (Organization D, Web 2), or “making a difference can be something as small as sharing your smile with a child who has lost everything” (Organization F, Brochure 3).

As previous literature suggests, the proposition of volunteers as being able to ‘make a difference’ and change lives is widely represented throughout organization promotional literature (Simpson, 2004, p. 683; Jakubiak, 2016, p. 248). However, in the data examined it is interesting to note that this discourse was often used as a tool to affirm an individuals’ capacity to contribute to the development process. This notion is clearly outlined in a blog post published by Organization B which pinpoints critical global issues and how a volunteer can contribute:

You have made a difference. These small changes are the only way to go about creating global change. Just as an individual who wants a more rewarding career path must start by applying to one job at a time so too must we work towards global change by making individual contributions, it is the only way. (Organization B, Blog 15, emphasis added)

With the focus on the individual and development as a process through which individuals have the capacity to enact, as Georgeou (2012) suggests we see a representation of development as a transitive process that one enacts on another, with emphasis on the individual as able to do development. In this instance, the individual is the volunteer, and the narrative that volunteer can ‘make a difference’ through simply choosing a project appeals to the humanitarian sentiment of volunteers as well as the sentiment that if individuals actively participate, they too can enact global change. Through selecting a program that volunteers are passionate and excited about, they are described by one organization as participating in a process which will result in “a more fulfilling experience for [them] and greater impact on the ground” (Organization B, Blog 4).

Another important characterization that was illustrated by organizations throughout their literature is the notion that short-term volunteers are contributing to a large scale difference that is being made in Global South communities. For Organization D, this cumulative difference is described in the following way:
You will not change the world in one week while volunteering abroad; however, you will make a world of difference in one or more students’ lives. Empowering [Organization D] students to live a life of choice through English education will lead to a transformed world. The combined efforts of [Organization D] volunteers and donors in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic ensure this reality. (Organization D, Blog 32)

Initially, it might seem to potential volunteers that it is unlikely they will actually ‘make a difference’ in any sort of substantial way through short-term voluntourist programs given that they might only be present for a couple of weeks. This issue however is addressed by organizations and Program Managers through framing the difference narrative as a cumulative one, where the focus is on not only a volunteers’ ability to ‘make a difference’ with individual students, but on the collective abilities of all volunteers to promote widespread systemic change and “achieve massive progress together” (Organization E, Web 12). As one Program Manager described in their interview:

[Volunteers] often worry that, you know ‘I’m only going for 2 weeks, 4 weeks, 6 weeks, whatever it is. What difference can I make?’ And then we always explain ‘yes but it’s a snowball effect from all the volunteers that have gone before you.’ (Victoria interview)

This notion of cumulative effect is employed to reaffirm that volunteers have the capacity to elicit some sort of broad-based global change, as well as ‘make a difference’ with those who volunteers individually interact with. The narratives of individual capacity to enact change as well as cumulative effects of volunteers leading to broad based systemic impact demonstrate how organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism programs allude to development outcomes throughout their program literature as well as in the interviews provided by Program Managers.

The literature concerning short-term voluntourism programs has often cited that organizations employ their own form of discourse to link programs to development agendas. This discourse involves making broad claims of positive impact while shying away from using specific development language such as literacy rates and health indexes (Jakubiak, 2016; Simpson, 2004), and current evidence suggests that organizations on the whole do not align with principles of development theory (Ingram, 2011). However, the data examined showed that some of the organizations did in fact employ more development specific discourse when discussing their
projects and global impact. It is important to note in this instance that the organizations which more closely aligned themselves with development practice were not organizations which focused primarily on language exchange programs and volunteer teaching abroad (Organizations A and C), but occurred most noticeably within the organizations that offered a wide array of short-term volunteering assignments from teaching to medical work to building projects (Organizations B, E & F). The exception to this rule is Organization D which is a non-profit specifically devoted to short-term volunteer English teaching, and closely aligns itself with development practice. One possible reason for this is that organizations whose primary focus is on short-term voluntourism projects as opposed to language programs are more aware of the criticism surrounding these projects and their broad claims to development. It is possible that in response to this, those organizations seek to position themselves as engaging in “responsible volunteering” and development practices through employing language more specific to development work (Organization B, Blog 6).

In fact, many of the organizations facilitating short-term volunteer projects actively differentiate themselves in their discourse from other short-term volunteering or ‘voluntourist’ organizations which are characterized as unethical or lacking in sustainability. One example of this is detailed in a promotional blog created by employees of Organization B which states:

Volunteering abroad often gets a bad rap, as some volunteering organizations simply don’t focus enough on responsible travel and sustainable impact. However, [Organization B] is committed to the communities we operate in and focus on empowering local partners. (Blog 27)

Through connecting their programs to ethical practices working towards development goals organizations attempt to position themselves outside of the typical ‘voluntourism’ industry. In Organization F’s words, their vision of volunteering abroad “is not about travelling to save the poor world, but rather about making a personal decision to do something different, something purposeful during your vacation” (Web 3). In fact, one Program Manager specifically referred to this issue in their description of the overall industry and the impact of organizations:

You know it can get oversaturated, and of course you get volunteer companies or other companies that are sort of jumping on the volunteer bandwagon just to make money and they’re not contributing properly, or as effectively as they could. And they give
volunteers a bad name. But the ones that do do it correctly they make a huge difference. (Victoria interview)

Through this categorization we see organizations critiquing competitors and positioning themselves away from the often-criticized practice of voluntourism towards a type of short-term volunteering which in their opinion promotes ethical and long-term development.

As depicted above, many of the organizations facilitating short-term ELT voluntourism projects have responded to the criticism levelled against the industry through actively attempting to differentiate themselves from the typical ‘voluntourism’ programs. However, it also appears that organizations are attempting to differentiate themselves by aligning more closely with development principles. According to Devereux (2008), effective long-term volunteering which actually contributes to development outcomes is characterized by 6 important criteria: “Humanitarian motivations; reciprocal benefit; living and working under local conditions; long-term commitment; local accountability and North-South partnership; and linkages to tackle causes rather than symptoms” (p. 359-360). While this list cannot be viewed as the formal rubric for volunteer organizations to effectively contribute to development outcomes, it provides a reference for some of the general characteristics which are commonly integrated into the discourse surrounding international development volunteering organizations. Many of these concepts are also referenced by the organizations examined in this paper and demonstrate how organizations use the rhetoric of international development in order to align themselves with development principles. Those key characteristics commonly referenced by organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism projects include, incorporating sustainability into programs, prioritizing community engagement, and measuring impact and achievement in their programs.

Many of the organizations aligned themselves with development practice through referring to their programs as sustainable and able to contribute to long-term development goals. This is done at times simply through referencing sustainability in discussing their programs. For example, a blog posted and approved by Organization B advising volunteers on how to search for programs details the following:

Now that you know which project in Africa you’d like to work on and where you’d like to go, it’s time to find a provider to help you make your dream a reality. Be sure to find
one that focuses on making a sustainable impact and that guarantees the safety of not only of the volunteers but the animals and any vulnerable persons they might come in contact with. (Blog 14, emphasis added)

While the notion of sustainability is at times unclear and often varies from program to program, Organization D is explicit in categorizing their programs as sustainable due to their focus on education. In two separate blogs written by Program Managers, Organization D presents the view that “education is the most sustainable way to make an impact in the world” (Blog 17), or “education is the best sustainable form of service” (Blog 1), because it combats poverty through providing students with opportunities to transform their own lives. This organization also categorizes its programs as sustainable due to their long-term goal of transitioning their education program in its entirety to local community members and graduates of their English school who will then take over managing the program locally (Organization D, Blog 1; Blog 31).

[Organization D] believes education is the best sustainable solution to combat poverty in Latin America and provide the children we serve with long-term opportunities to transform their own lives; however, we recognize that is more easily said than done. In order to ensure that our organization is sustainable in the communities we serve in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, we take measured steps towards educating groups of students who might one day take on our program, allowing us to pass on our teacher torches. (Blog 31, emphasis added)

The discourse of sustainable development is also employed by Organization E through their indication that both the organization as well as local community partners are committed to achieving “long-term sustainable impact through the combined efforts of [their] volunteers (Background 13).

The notion of community engagement and North-South partnership, as cited by Devereux (2008) to be a key element in effective development volunteering programs, is also often employed by these organizations in order to align themselves with development principles. Organizations describe how programs are created within Global South communities based on community needs vocalized by local community leaders and organizations. As Organization B details:

Before we set up any project, we first speak to the leaders of local organisations and communities to find out what they need. (Blog 26)
Local community members are described as possessing the understanding for “what placements are needed in relation to development and maximum benefit to the local community and economy” (Organization E, Background 13). This is a sentiment reiterated both on the web pages and promotional materials of organizations, as well as in the interviews of Program Managers. Programs are described as community driven often from inception, with one Program Manager even stating that frequently it was “the schools or the placements that will get in touch with [Organization E] because [Organization E] is well known in those communities” (Eva interview). In describing the beginnings of one of their teaching projects, Jessie described how community engagement was an integral part of their project origins:

And so we identified a neighborhood which is considered one of the poorer neighborhoods in (City Name) and we met with some community leaders in that neighborhood. And we literally walked with them up and down the little streets. Like these are dirt roads, uneven, up the hill on the side of the mountain, to find a house to rent that could be used as our Learning Centre at first, when we first got started. And it was the community members, like the community leaders who really facilitated that, and were present at the first meeting we had with prospective parents.

Through actively discussing the importance of local communities in developing volunteer projects, the organizations position themselves as aligning with development principles of community engagement. This narrative is also used by organizations as an attempt to distinguish themselves from the more heavily critiqued style of voluntourism, where organizations from the Global North facilitate programs in the Global South which take away from community ownership of projects and burdens local host communities (Gilbert, 2016; Heron, 2011).

In addition to sustainability and community engagement, one final reference that was observed throughout the data used by organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism programs to align more closely with development principles was continuous referencing to monitoring impact and achievement of their programs. Out of the organizations which were investigated, 2 of the organizations devoted linked ‘impact’ web pages which detailed statistics such as “10,000 students served” (Organization D, Web 16) and “11,676,971 hours were spent teaching primary school students” (Organization B, Web 20), while also indicating that impact reports were shared with stakeholders (Organization B, Web 4).
Additionally, 2 of the organizations published their impact reports on their websites, and included funding allocations, charitable grants, and tools for measuring progress of teaching programs (Organization A, Web 2; Organization E, Web 4, 5). Perhaps the most detailed impact reporting device that was published online emerged from Organization E, which introduces to prospective volunteers the Program Management Plans for most of the countries in which they facilitate English teaching projects (Organization E, Program Management Plans 1-25). These plans also indicate country specific goals along with a monitoring and evaluation chart (Organization E, Program Management Plans 1-25).
Organization E also employs the use of a “Global Impact Database” with the goal of tracking the impact of volunteers and achievement of students in Global South countries around the world (Organization E, Web 12; Organization E, Web 19). In describing their monitoring and evaluation processes, the organization also emphasizes the importance of their research on early childhood development where they “measure the rate at which children in [their] placements are developing fundamental physical, motor, cognitive, language, emotional and social abilities in early years” (Organization E, Web 4). The integration of impact measurement and achievement reporting into the discourse of organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism projects can be viewed as a means of more closely aligning programs with development principles as opposed to exciting international tourism packages.

In addition to employing typical development narratives and principles to position themselves as development organizations, some of the organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism programs also explicitly state that their goal is to align their programs with “international development best practices” (Organization B, Blog 9) or “good sustainable development practices” (Organization D, Blog 17). Finally, perhaps the most direct linkage to development practice employed by some of the organizations is through connecting the goals of their programs to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Of the 6 organizations examined, 2 of them actively link project objectives to specific UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). As Organization B describes in one of their published blogs:

All of [Organization B’s] projects are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and each location has a set of short, mid and long-term objectives, meaning that even if you only have a week or two to volunteer, you will be contributing to these goals in a tangible way. (Blog 13)

This linking is done through discussing how projects might contribute to these goals, as well as listing the “corresponding SDG” throughout impact reports in order to “highlight the bigger picture each action is contributing towards” (Organization E, Web 4).
Through aligning their programs with UNSDGs, organizations which facilitate short-term volunteer projects position themselves as linked to global development practice, and as such, posit that the cumulative efforts of their volunteers are working towards achieving widespread development outcomes. Despite previous literature positing that voluntourism organizations utilize “many allusions, but few direct references to ‘development’” (Simpson, 2004, p. 683) in their program marketing, the data suggests that these organizations use both allusions and direct references to development. Employing this strategy appeals to potential volunteers’ humanitarian motivations and is indicative of how organizations position themselves as engaging in ethical and sustainable development practice. This shift by the organizations towards employing more development specific rhetoric and attempting to align more closely to development principles can also be viewed as a further iteration of the increasing privatization of the development sphere (Mostafanezhad, 2013b), where for-profit companies also adopt practices which they specifically link to development outcomes.

5.2 English as a Mechanism for Development Outcomes

“By teaching and helping them with their English, you are unlocking countless possibilities for their success in the future.” -Organization D, Blog 35

This section examines the way that organizations which facilitate ELT voluntourism programs define English as intrinsically linked to development. Previous literature has suggested that similar organizations posit that the “association between English and development is
unassailable,” and this underlying connection between English and development was reiterated throughout the data collected (Jakubiak, 2016, p. 248). This section begins by presenting a common narrative technique employed by organizations which first describes specific countries in the Global South as in need of development, and then positions English as a solution to those countries’ problems. This is followed by reflections from volunteers which reaffirm this perceived need of English. The section then explores how organizations present the English language as a mechanism for development through affording Global South individuals with better opportunities in the tourism industry, the job market, and higher education. Following this, a critique of the implicit assumption made by many of the organizations that English education is necessarily connected with the UNSDGs and development goals for quality education is put forward. Finally, the section explores how organizations credit the existence of ELT voluntourism programs as producing beneficial by-products which contribute to development through- providing safe spaces for students; funding for infrastructure projects; contribution to jobs and local economy; and the creation of global citizens.

Throughout the websites and program brochures of the 6 organizations, English is framed as a language of global significance. The value of English emerges through the categorization of it as a “global business language” (Organization C, Blog 26) and as a tool which students can employ in order to “help their families to expand their businesses to reach new markets” (Organization C, Blog 26). English is also portrayed as being the language of academia, and as a tool which will assist individuals in “apply[ing] to competitive universities” (Organization C, Blog 26). On the whole, the English language is given a privileged position by organizations who frame English as exceedingly valuable in the global sphere. Organizations also present English learning as a process which will allow individuals located in the Global South to, as one long-term teacher recounts, “absolutely improve their academic and employment prospects, and introduce a whole new world of opportunities” (Organization C, Blog 25).

In attempting to position development through English learning as a logical solution to issues in Global South countries, many of the organizations employed a similar narrative technique in describing their various programs. In the program literature, organizations first position the country in question as in need of development, for example:
Peru is one of the world’s richest countries in terms of natural resources. However its social development has not kept pace with its commercial development, and Peruvians still wrestle with illiteracy and basic social justice. (Organization C, Web 15)

Shortly following this after some more description, the programs would offer English education as a mechanism to address these systemic issues:

In Peru, English language skills are absolutely critical for academic and professional advancement. Everyone understands the importance of English for global business, education, and research. Peruvians who do not speak English struggle to keep up with the economic success of their own country, which creates an even bigger gap between the wealthy and the poor. (Organization C, Web 15)

Here we see a structural example of how organizations posit widespread systemic issues, and then position English as a solution which will facilitate development.

Another example of this structural positioning of need with English posited as a solution can be seen below from a different organization:

The Southeast Asian nation has been working to eradicate poverty for the past decade but 12 per cent of Thai citizens - over eight million people - still live below the breadline. English proficiency is a key concern - Thailand ranks among the lowest countries globally for English language skills. In order to become a developed country, Thailand needs the help of international volunteers like you, who can
provide hands-on help in areas like teaching English, sports and ICT. (Organization F, Brochure 4)

Here again we see the occurrence of the structural positioning of systemic issues such as poverty in Thailand, and English as a means through which individuals can help Thailand become a ‘developed country.’

This perception of the need of Global South countries for English language education is one that is reiterated in the reflections of volunteer participants. In their testimonials, volunteers describe how “the students truly do need English-speaking teachers on a regular basis” (Organization F, Testimonial 11) and “the children very badly need English teachers” (Organization F, Testimonial 13). While the need for English is represented by organizations and reiterated by volunteers as a path through which individuals can escape from poverty, the actual route through which such an escape exists is represented through broad based claims that English will assist individuals through “[opening] both academic and professional opportunities” and provid[ing] a path out of poverty (Organization C, Brochure 8).

For countries like Costa Rica and Thailand, organizations stress that the booming tourism economy in these Global South countries presents an opportunity for community members to obtain jobs in local economies if they possess the ability to speak English (Organization F, Brochure 1; Brochure 4). The notion of English as a path for individuals to connect to the tourism industry is also something commonly reiterated in Program Manager interviews. As Eva describes: “Whether they have that interest in tourism. For example, Costa Rica, the whole concept of eco-tourism, that’s a booming industry. A lot of people want to learn English just so that they can get into that industry.” The tourism industry is described throughout program literature and Program Manager interviews as a growing industry in the Global South which is dominated by English and provides a route for individuals out of poverty through employment. English is positioned as an important skill for entering this industry through the implicitly suggested link between global travel (tourism) and the global language of English.

Tourism is presented as one industry in which English language proficiency can be viewed as a beneficial skillset, however organizational literature and Program Managers also reference that
English is a beneficial skill in the general job market because English is seen as being a desirable skill by employers (Organization F, Brochure 1). As one Program Manager describes, “even if it’s a job that they would not need to use English on a daily basis, it’s one of the first questions that prospective employers ask is ‘do you speak English?’” (Jessie interview). Not only do we see English framed as a highly desirable skill among employers, but English is also described as just implicitly useful in the job market because “job prospects generally rely on a solid grasp of the English language” (Organization B, Blog 7). Organizations and Program Managers present the narrative of English as generally useful for employment without making any sort of tangible link between English language learning and employment apart from simply ‘skill development.’ In this way, the narrative presented by organizations and Program Managers matches closely with Bunce’s (2016) reflection of how future job prospects for Global South individuals as well as their “progress in life” is described by organizations as “contingent upon volunteer assistance with English-language skills” (p. 107).

Another narrative that was presented specifically through Program Manager interviews was the notion that English education afforded individuals the opportunity to access higher education abroad. As Eva describes, English is “also helpful if [students] do want to study abroad, if they have that goal eventually in their future. So they feel like English creates more opportunities for them.” While describing English language education as a means through which students can receive higher education, Program Managers implicitly characterize English as the language of academia while simultaneously ignoring the wider systemic issues such as socioeconomic status and quality of education which might impact an individual’s ability from the Global South to access education systems in the Global North.

Perhaps one of the most confusing linkages made in organizational literature connecting English language learning to development outcomes emerged from the organizations that commonly referenced the UNSDGs on their website and in their impact reports. In outlining the impact of programs and the associated UNSDGs, contributing to Development Goal 4: Quality Education was commonly listed as the objective for English teaching projects (Organization B, Blog 4).
Additionally, it was often the case that the 2 organizations referencing UNSDGs combined program outcomes together to reference ‘English and literacy’ as a common category when referring to program impact on the ground (Organization E, Web 4). I find the narrative of English language learning as related to literacy development and contributing to UNSDG4 to be highly problematic. One reason for this is due to the fact that in UNESCO’s guide *Unpacking Sustainable Development Goal 4 Education 2030*, there is no mention of English as contributing to quality education (UNESCO, 2016). However, it is explicitly stated that one of the indices of parity includes “percentage of students in primary education whose first or home language is the language of instruction” (UNESCO, 2016, p. 34). The narrative presented by organizations of English language education as contributing to UNSDG4 and the conflation of English with literacy development draws focus away from the importance of mother tongue education, and frames English language learning as a contributing factor to improving quality education. Given that research has shown that too much focus on learning English from a young age might actually negatively impact mother tongue literacy development (Romaine, 2015), and mother tongue literacy provides economic opportunities through participation in local economies (Bruthiaux, 2002), the linking of English language education to SDG4 is indeed problematic and necessitates further exploration.
Throughout the promotional literature of organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism programs, the act of English teaching is on the whole broadly connected to development outcomes. The implicit link that organizations draw between English learning as an avenue to employment and higher education exemplifies Appleby, Copley, Sithirajvongsa, and Pennycook’s (2002) characterization of “language as development” (p. 327). In this case, English is framed in and of itself as a development outcome, rather than as a specific tool to be leveraged in order to participate in more tangible development projects.

For most of the organizations, English is the end goal because of its presumed link to economic benefit, and organizations do not offer a detailed route through which individuals might achieve economic success. There was however one exception to this practice. Out of the 6 organizations examined, Program Managers from Organization D outlined a clear path for the ways in which English education contributed to educational development for students overall, and provided a clear path for accessing higher education. As Organization D details, English teaching programs involve both volunteers visiting local schools in Global South countries as well as operating a supplementary language center in the community (Organization D, Web 1). At this language center, lessons are cited as incorporating math and science as well as literacy development in students’ mother tongue languages (interview).\(^8\) One Program Manager illustrates how Organization D facilitates this path to higher education through the following:

So our program is primarily focused on English, becoming proficient, passing the TOEFL exam. Our goal is that students, upon graduating high school, will pass the GED equivalent for math and science with, I don’t know what the passing rate is, it’s either 75% or 80%. And then, the goal would be that once a student has graduated high school, they have demonstrated English proficiency, math and science proficiency, we want to enroll them in an online degree program with a partner in the United States. A number of universities and colleges that are willing to accept students, or offer as a donation, an online degree.

Organization D facilitates this process through providing supplementary instruction in math, science, and first language literacy development, administering TOEFL and GED prep exams,

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\(^8\) Interviewee name redacted to protect anonymity.
and finally with a goal of providing access to partnerships they have formed with American universities (interview⁹; Organization D, Web 15). While the norm for organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism programs seems to be rationalizing English learning as linked to development through broad based claims of easier access to jobs and higher education, Organization D employs a more holistic method of educational development and facilitates a path to accessing higher education for their English learning students.

For most of the organizations studied, claims of the direct link between English language instruction to development outcomes are tenuous at best. However, it is worth examining the impact that is claimed to be a by-product of the ELT voluntourism programs themselves on both students and communities which might possibly be linked to development outcomes. For students, organizations often cited throughout their literature that English classes provided a safe space where “children can learn, socialise, discover and embrace their potential” (Organization B, Brochure 4). One volunteer reflected on how many of the children “came from dysfunctional home lives” however when in class they were able to “relax and forget about their worries” (Organization D, Blog 16). This notion of English class as providing a “safe and educational setting” for children to learn and grow was commonly referred to throughout program literature, and the implication is that facilitating English classes contributes to development outcomes through providing environments which centralize and promote the well-being and growth of children (Organization F, Project 3).

Another indirect link to development outcomes that is facilitated through the structure of the organizations comes from infrastructure development through things like grants and charitable donations to local Global South communities which are funded by income generated from ELT voluntourists. A number of the focal organizations incorporated charitable branches into their organizational structure which provided monetary grants to infrastructure initiatives like building community gardens or drinking fountains, or for scholarships to Global South students (Organization A, Web 6; Organization B, Brochure 4). As described in Blackledge’s (2013) article, volunteers can often play a vital role in providing funding for charitable organizations,

⁹ Interviewee name redacted to protect anonymity.
and in this instance ELT voluntourism programs generate income for organizations to re-direct towards other development initiatives.

Another means through which organizations position themselves as indirectly impacting community development is through providing jobs to community members as well as contributing to the local economy. As one organization describes, “we employ many people directly and provide plenty of work indirectly through the services we provide for volunteers” (Organization E, Web 1). The employment of local community members is also reiterated by Organization D through their description of hiring local “teaching staff, [kitchen] staff, and community members hired for facility maintenance” (Blog 17). Program Managers also describe how programs contribute to local economies through things like purchasing goods at “the local market” (Eva interview), as well as how there is “the financial influx of being able to purchase food for 40 people for the weekend in town. Or like the local transportation company. Those are a benefit” (Jessie interview). In this way, organizations position themselves as beneficial for community development through providing employment opportunities as well as contributing to local economies. Finally, one Program Manager indicated that English teaching programs contribute to community development through providing educational childcare, so parents could work:

But essentially we’re trying to give Tanzanians a place where their children can be educated and looked after, and they can then have the freedom to go and work. Because they don’t have to pay for their children to be sent to our school or the care centers. So we cover that for them. So we’re sorting their education out for their kids so they can go out and earn some money and provide for them in other ways. (Victoria interview)

The final impact that organizations link to development outcomes occurs through descriptions of the ELT voluntourist’s transformation into that of a ‘global citizen’ through engagement with their projects. As Heron (2011) describes, “it is commonly assumed that exposure to conditions such as extreme poverty in ‘developing countries’ will make young Canadians and other Northerners into ‘global citizens’ – i.e., individuals whose consciousness has been transformed, and for whom this transformation produces ongoing changes in life choices” (p. 111). This is a narrative that is often utilized by the organizations examined and is posed as a benefit for
volunteers working on their projects. Organizational literature informs potential volunteers that as they become “a part of this new community, [they] are slowly, but surely, transformed into a Global Citizen” (Organization B, Blog 2). These organizations characterize the transformation of volunteers into global citizens as an important process which is intrinsically linked to development because volunteers “will become more conscientious of the needs of the international community. Service will take on a new meaning and open doors for new beginnings” (Organization D, Blog 31). This narrative constructs the identity of the global citizens as people who are service-oriented and compassionate, who will in turn take lessons and observations about systemic global issues back into their regular lives, and will work to address these social justice issues within their own communities. While it remains unclear how exactly this process will be enacted, the link between the creation of global citizens as a path to a much more peaceful and understanding world is an additional way that organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism claim to link their programs to development processes.

For almost all of the organizations examined, the impact of English as a directly contributing factor to development outcomes is tenuous at best. However, the narrative that volunteers act as a funding mechanism and conduit through which other development outcomes tangential to English language learning are achieved is one which necessitates further exploration. What remains clear is that the categorization of English language learning as a route for individuals to achieve better economic and academic advantages, with the exception of Organization D, can be framed as a practice where English is in fact the end goal rather than provision of a clear path towards such development outcomes.
Chapter 6
Findings: Volunteers in Global South Schools

This chapter examines how organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism projects position volunteers as qualified to be English teachers in Global South communities, and by extension, to participate in development work. In Part 1, this chapter illustrates the way organizations frame Global South education systems as deficient in terms of structure, school logistics, teaching methodologies, and also within their English programs. In doing so, organizations reinforce simplistic views of systemic poverty and other issues impacting Global South education systems while simultaneously positioning volunteers as a mechanism through which many of these deficiencies can be addressed.

In Part 2, this chapter identifies the implicit qualifications of volunteers which position them to effectively contribute to development through English teaching. These qualifications include the ability to easily transition into the teaching profession, knowledge of Global North education systems, and English language fluency. While some disagreement exists within volunteer promotional literature as to the necessity of a TEFL certificate for English teaching, the need for TEFL certification is geared more towards longer-term teachers in Global South classrooms rather than short-term voluntourists.

In the final section, Part 3, the work explores how the very qualities which are expounded by organizations as a means through which volunteers can make an impact also exist as sites of struggle which present barriers for volunteers to adequately engage with students and local teachers. These qualities include volunteers using only English in their classes, volunteers deeply entrenched knowledge of school systems and culture in the Global North, and volunteers’ native speaker fluency as the ultimate teaching qualification.
6.1 Deficiencies of Global South Schools, Systems and Teachers

“Many school systems do not have the resources or staff quantity in order to provide all students with the support needed. Participants help to ease the workload, expose students to native spoken English, and bring enthusiasm and energy into the classroom. As an intern it is important to be open to teaching not only with local teachers but also with fellow volunteers and occasionally on your own.” -Organization B, Project 7

In order to understand how volunteers are positioned as qualified to elicit development through English education, it is first necessary to examine the sites where volunteers are placed and how organizations frame those locations as in need of volunteer intervention. In this case, the sites in reference are education systems in the Global South. Organizations first position these sites as desperately in need of intervention through bringing up broad and overarching issues and statistics regarding drop-out rates, gender disparity, and school fees. While the organizations present these issues to potential volunteers, little is done to contextualize them in terms of the broader geo-political landscape or historically rooted asymmetrical global power relations. This leads to an overly simplified understanding of systemic poverty by potential volunteers. The section then explores how organizations describe issues in Global South schools, classrooms, and with educators, and then immediately position volunteers as a mechanism through which such issues can be alleviated. Finally, this section explores the pervasive attitude throughout the data that Global South education systems are in such dire circumstances that anything volunteers can contribute is better than the alternative: nothing.

One of the criticisms often levelled against short-term volunteering projects is that many organizations do not facilitate experiences where volunteers might critically engage with the roots of systemic poverty and inequality (Palacios, 2010; Raymond & Hall, 2008). Additionally, Simpson (2004) posits that the concept of need is often referenced, yet lacks criticality, and thus presents an oversimplification of circumstances in the Global South which have been shaped by historical global power imbalances. In the organizational literature examined as well as the
reflections of volunteers and Program Managers, this lack of critical engagement or contextualization of such issues is also very present. Throughout the data collected, organizations cited statistics and briefly presented large and overarching issues which plague the education systems in Global South countries. For example, the following is a description of primary education in Bolivia presented by Organization E:

Though the first 6 years of primary school are free and theoretically compulsory, one in seven children in Bolivia does not complete primary school. Education issues are exponentially worse in rural areas where many children drop out of school (averaging only 4.2 years of school) as they are expected to work and help support the family income. (Program Management Plan 2)

Another example exists in the following quote where gender disparity is presented by Organization B:

Most of the world’s children are enrolled in schools, many of them, mostly girls seem to not be attending. Students also don’t seem to be mastering reading and writing or the valuable skill of working with numbers. This affects their ability to take advantage of future employment opportunities and stunts the economic growth of the country. (Blog 8)

The glossing over of deeply rooted systemic issues such as student drop-out rates and gender disparity in education demonstrates how organizations employ these facts and statistics to position sites as struggling and in need of intervention, and appeal to volunteer humanitarian motivations. While organizations might mention these issues within their program literature, they fail to provide further analysis of the causes of things like school drop-out and gender disparity such as systemic poverty, societal attitudes towards education and gender, and perceived and actual realities of the labour market (Akyeampong et. al, 2010; Swainson, 1995). Indeed, the oversimplification of such issues fails to acknowledge the deeply rooted colonial histories and modern asymmetrical relationships between Global North and Global South countries. Through failing to address the broader global context which has perpetuated these issues, the discourse of organizations is representative of the “humanitarian gaze” where “the tourism–development encounter is mediated by discourses that create a binary and implicit hierarchy between givers and receivers, as well as circumscribing who is a legitimate benefactor of aid” (Mostafanezhad, 2013, p. 489). This simplistic positioning of Global South education as fertile ground for development is also problematic in that it reinforces hegemonic discourses of need through its
assertion of the dominant paradigm that, as McGloin and Georgeou (2016) describe, “the poor of developing countries require the help of affluent westerners to induce development” (p. 403).

Another example of this lack of engagement with historical and ongoing asymmetrical power relations negatively impacting education systems in the Global South is through the simplistic description of ‘school fees’ as a barrier to accessing education. Throughout the data, the organizations presented school fees as a persistent obstacle to accessing quality education in the Global South, with one organization describing the following in the context of education in Ethiopia:

One major issue still faced is the high drop-out and absenteeism rate: more than a quarter of children who enrol in first grade drop out before completing their first school year. In 2010, the rate of primary school completion was 48%, and of these students, only 79% continued to secondary school. The reason behind this is no doubt the associated direct and indirect costs of schooling, whether it is fees or school supplies. Indeed, children from poorer families tend to enrol later, make slower progress, and are more likely to drop out without completing schooling as they must tend to housework or start working. (Organization E, Program Management Plan 7)

The citing of school fees and lack of financial resources as a barrier to accessing education (Organization B, Blog 8; Organization C, Brochure 8) while indeed an accurate one, positions Global South communities as in need intervention. However, the simplistic presentation fails to engage with the global context which perpetuated the existence of school fees such as user-fee policies instituted by the World Bank (Klees, 2008). Prior to the 1980s, most countries in the Global South provided free primary education, however neoliberal based policies instituted by the World Bank made school fees a requirement or a strongly encouraged condition for their education loans (Klees, 2008). While the World Bank publicly reversed its stance on user-fees in the early 2000s and now openly opposes them, the decades in which it either strongly encouraged or required them as a condition of educational aid have left a lasting impact (Klees, 2008). While organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism programs criticize Global South education systems for practices such as school fees, they gloss over the fact that Global North intervention was a major catalyst for this practice in the first place.
Another example of this lack of contextualization can be seen through one organization’s description of the “thriving private education sector” in Peru which was “developed to fill the public shortfall” (Organization C, Web 9). Here we are provided with an example of the neoliberal-based privatization of education which is presented in a positive light; however, this representation fails to engage with the global historical context of such issues, for example the privatization through school voucher schemes in Chile and Colombia (Klees, 2008). These programs were created with the intention of inducing educational development, however critics of these privatized systems cite issues such as increased inequality through marginalization of lower achieving students as well as those whose families are of a lower socioeconomic status (Klees, 2008). This positive characterization of the privatization of education in Peru also perpetuates misleading facts about the actual existence of private education in Peru. Current research on the subject suggests that low-cost private education in Peru is under scrutiny for its low quality of teaching and exclusion of poor and marginalized students (Balarin et. al, 2018).

While it may not be realistic for organizations to remain up to date on such current research, this example is demonstrative of how organizations employ this discourse of need and position non-state actors like private schools and NGOs as a beneficial mechanism for facilitating educational development. Overall, the persistent lack of critical engagement with global hegemonic power relations and how the Global North has perpetuated such policies in the Global South prevents a nuanced interpretation of Global South education systems and positions them simplistically as struggling and outdated sites where Global North intervention is necessary.

Along with their use of overly simplified depictions of need in Global South education systems to appeal to potential volunteers, organizations also directly position volunteers as mechanisms through which a number of different issues in Global South schools, classrooms, and with teachers might be alleviated. For example, volunteers are described by organizations as a means through which lack of school resources might be addressed. Organization F illustrates this through their depiction of the following:

Some of the projects you work at may not have all the resources you are perhaps used to and therefore you’ll need to use your creativity to improvise! You’ll be surprised at the fun or ingenious ways you come up with to help children learn to count or read (Blog 6).
Or as a long-term teacher from organization A describes:

The classrooms have very few resources so you really do need lots of creativity to make learning fun for the students. The classes usually have a blackboard (some may have a dry whiteboard) and usually the students have their own workbooks and pens (Organization A, Blog 31).

Not only are volunteers positioned as a means through which new school resources might be created, they are also described as potential sources for educational materials from outside local communities: “Volunteers are welcome to bring their own educational materials as locally-available resources are limited – be prepared to improvise” (Organization F, Brochure 2).

Another commonly occurring way in which volunteers are framed as providing necessary intervention in the Global South is through their provision of staff numbers which will in turn decrease the teacher to student ratio and alleviate large class sizes. As Organization D describes:

The [students] bring incredible energy and enthusiasm to the classroom every day but don’t often get the individual attention that they crave and need. That’s where our volunteers come in … whereas, in a typical Dominican classroom, the teacher to student ratio is about 1:35, our volunteer teams of fluent English speakers can bring that ratio down to 1:3 or lower! (Blog 37).

The use of volunteers to address staffing issues in Global South schools is also described as a way to provide more quality education for students because they will in turn have more one-on-one time with teachers. For example, one volunteer reflected in a Testimonial (18) posted by Organization F about this issue:

Alongside the teacher, I was able to assist classes but also lead some too. I was able to help out those who struggled the most. As the class is a large size (somewhere between thirty and forty) there is unfortunately a slight learning gap between some of the students. I tried to bridge the gap by keeping those who had finished first busy or helping those out who were taking slightly longer.

While the quality of this extra support provided by volunteers remains unexplored, organizations can be seen here as positioning Global South classrooms as needing volunteer intervention in order to provide both tangible resources like class materials as well as intangible resources like individual support in order to make up for large class sizes. Through these depictions of what
Mohamud (2013) describes of the volunteer as the “benevolent giver” and the community members as “the ever grateful receivers of charity” and intervention, we see a representation of how the volunteer is uncritically given power as the agent of development and positive change in Global South classrooms (p. 2).

Within the data, teachers in Global South classrooms are also positioned as deficient both in training and in skill and are categorized as a route through which volunteers can enact development intervention through their contact with them. In general terms, the deficiencies of teachers are posited throughout the data in a number of different ways. For example, one volunteer states in their reflection video that “the teacher is mostly a little bit late. And... some days she’s not there. And I teach the group alone, and I like it” (Organization E, Video 8). Ironically enough, another way in which teachers are framed as deficient is through their lack of, or often minimal formal training to become educators. Statements such as the following were witnessed periodically throughout the data, where organizations pointed out this lack of formal teacher training: “Insufficient teacher training has created obstacles to positive education outcomes in Costa Rica” (Organization E, Program Management Plan 5). Or another example in reference to Sri Lanka: “Inadequate training for teachers is an issue: 18.75% of the government teacher population are untrained and professionally unqualified with these deficiencies being particularly acute in English, Maths and Science” (Organization E, Program Management Plan 21). This general criticism throughout the data of teachers in Global South classrooms acts as an additional route through which organizations provide justification for volunteer intervention.

In their program literature and through posted reflections from former volunteers, organizations also criticize educators in Global South communities for using outdated practices such as rote memorization teaching techniques as well as for lacking innovative and engaging teaching methodologies. As Organization E describes:

The traditional teaching style of the Chinese educational system involves a lot of rote memorising and repeating contents of textbooks, which can often be tedious for the children. With the help of teaching volunteers, [Organization E]’s programs in China aim to introduce new methods of teaching and learning by incorporating creativity, fun and interaction (Organization E, Program Management Plan 4).
The practice of rote memorization as a method of teaching in Global South education systems was one which was reiterated numerous times throughout the data— with one Program Manager also describing how volunteers can counteract these teaching methodologies:

So a lot of our students learned by rote at their regular schools. And I think that our volunteers, the way they interact with our students, the way they challenge our students, actually makes the language come alive. If that makes sense. Like if they had just started being on the chalkboard, or the white board, and being copied into a student’s notebook. Like really engaging them to interact, and really find out what’s there with something as simple as ‘how are you’ shows that dedication of the volunteers aligning with our vision. (Jessie interview)

Apart from using rote memorization techniques, the teaching methodologies of Global South educators are also described as being outdated and in need of improvement by volunteers. For example, one of the teaching Program Management Plans (1) from Organization E describes volunteers as mechanisms to address these outdated teaching methodologies through the following: “Teachers who receive low salaries can become demotivated to teach and cannot afford courses to update their teaching techniques. Volunteers assist in giving new ideas to current methods of teaching” (Organization E, Program Management Plan 1). Through these depictions, organizations position volunteers as able to model a more modern and westernized image of what appropriate teaching methodologies should be— ones which more closely align to common methodologies in the Global North- and thus reinforce interpretations of development as improvement which mimics Global North models (Simpson, 2004). In doing so, organizations fail to consider departure from teaching methodologies which Rao and Niyozov (2012) call “dominant knowledge paradigms, epistemologies, and educational institutions” from the Global North, and in their place adopt practices which might be more closely aligned with “marginalized local and Indigenous knowledge systems” (p. 22).

The final way through which organizations use this “discourse of need” (McGloin & Georgeou, 2016, p. 403) to position Global South classrooms as sites where volunteer intervention is necessary is through their descriptions of English teaching programs. This notion of English
programs as rife with deficiencies and in need of volunteer intervention can best be represented through the following depiction by Organization C:

The public education systems in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Peru do not offer high quality ESL (English as a Second Language) classes. Speaking English is a life-changing skill for people in developing countries, because it opens both academic and professional opportunities, and provides a path out of poverty. Most middle and upper class students learn English at private language centers, which unfortunately are too expensive for a large part of the population. This creates an unfair gap between those who can afford English and those who can’t. Volunteers can help make real impact in people’s lives by teaching English! (Web 16)

English teachers in Global South classrooms are negatively described throughout the data as lacking appropriate knowledge in “phonetics, pronunciation and grammar” (Organization E, Program Management Plan 8), lacking “good English conversational skills” (Organization E, Program Management Plan 13), and lacking “proper training in the language” (Organization E, Program Management Plan 12). The methodologies of English teachers in the Global South are also characterized as outdated and wanting, with one organization describing how “children are taught ‘textbook’ English but there is a great need for the students to be taught more conversational English” (Organization E, Program Management Plan 8). Throughout these depictions, volunteers are positioned as a mechanism through which these deficiencies in English teaching programs and teachers can be alleviated. For example, one volunteer reflects on how:

They spoke [little] English and all the children and even the teachers were very eager to learn English. The children very badly need English teachers. The school I was at and I was told many other schools do not have enough teachers. Many of the students will have [lessons] taught from a television. So when I was able to come into their classroom and teach they were always very excited and they would clap and cheer. (Organization F, Testimonial 13)

This depiction of English classrooms as sites which require volunteer intervention for improvement provides a further representation of the simplistic depiction of volunteers as the charitable providers of development and Global South recipients as the happy receivers who would “clap and cheer” when the volunteer enters the classroom.
Across the 6 organizations examined, we see the positioning of sites of intervention as overcome with need that a volunteer can fulfill. This notion closely aligns with literature focusing on voluntorism where, as Simpson (2004) depicts, “a key concept, championed within the rationale of gap year projects, is that of ‘need’. This concept is treated in a highly uncritical way and forms part of the industry’s over simplification of ‘development’” (p. 686). As Simpson (2004) illustrates, this analysis “is not intended to trivialize the genuine needs of many of the communities where gap year projects operate,” or invalidate any of the statistics or issues which are indicated in organizational materials (p. 686). The intention is to critically examine how such needs are positioned to appeal to volunteers’ humanitarian interest and in turn how volunteers are positioned as mechanisms through which such needs might be addressed.

Throughout the data, there exists a pervasive notion that when it comes to volunteer intervention, anything a volunteer can do is better than nothing. This idea that organizations and volunteers “believe that something is better than nothing” reinforces the stereotype that education systems in the Global South are in such dire need of intervention, that any resource or contact a volunteer can provide will be beneficial (Organization E, Web 2). Ultimately, the characterization of Global South education systems as sites in desperate need of intervention is framed by organizations as a justification for ELT voluntourism programs. The following section explores the way that organizations construct the image of the ‘qualified volunteer,’ despite their lack of formal qualifications, as the route through which development can be enacted.

### 6.2 The Qualifications of Volunteers to Elicit Intervention

“Teaching English is one of the easiest ways for volunteers to get involved in service and make a lasting impact in the communities we serve. Although you may not know it, one of the greatest resources you bring with you as a volunteer is your ability to speak English at a native level”

-Organization D, Web 9

This section illustrates how organizations which facilitate ELT voluntourism programs position volunteers as qualified to participate in development through English teaching. A brief depiction
of the average Global North volunteer is first presented through excerpts from the data and then supported by literature from the field of voluntourism. Following this, the section details how volunteers are positioned as qualified to be teachers through descriptions of teaching as an easily learned process with help from organizational training, and how the lack of more formal certification allows for volunteers to try out teacher identities. Additionally, organizations describe volunteers as implicitly qualified to teach in the Global South due to their intrinsic knowledge from attending school in Global North education systems. Volunteers are also described as qualified to teach English due to their innate ability to speak English as a native speaker. The abilities of volunteers to speak English are framed as a valuable resource for Global South classrooms, and there is an emphasis on the specific values of inner circle English, as well as using teaching methodologies which exclude students’ first language (L1) from the classroom. This emphasis on L1 exclusion within the classroom justifies the volunteer’s qualifications as an English teacher despite common lack of knowledge of the local language. The combined knowledge of superior Global North education systems as well as their native knowledge of English is also presented as a qualification through which volunteers are able to teach Global South teachers. Finally, a fascinating counterpoint to the narrative of innate volunteer qualification presented by 2 of the organizations is discussed.

The literature on voluntourism commonly cites that organizations predominantly enlist young and financially privileged Global North individuals to travel to Global South project sites (Gilbert, 2016; Mostafanezhad, 2013). This characterization of volunteer demographics is one that was reinforced by the data, with one organization describing how “university students and recent graduates still make up the majority of [their] volunteers (Organization E, Web 1). In terms of geography, common countries from which volunteers are recruited are predominantly located in North America or Europe (Organization C, Web 6). The qualifications for volunteers are minimal, and for the most part are limited to fluency in English, enthusiasm, and flexibility. Some of the programs also require a bachelor’s degree. Despite lack of formal qualifications, volunteers are positioned to be implicitly qualified to act as English instructors through their ability to easily adapt to teacher roles, and their inherent ability to teach English as native English speakers.
One of the ways that organizations position volunteers as able to teach in Global South classrooms is through first categorizing teaching as an easily accessible skill which volunteers can experiment with and gain proficiency in. For example, one organization describes teaching English as “one of the easiest ways for volunteers to get involved in service and make a lasting impact” (Organization D, Web 1). The ease with which volunteers can transition into the teacher role is also supported through organization depictions of program orientation as being able to fully equip volunteers to become effective teachers. For example, Organization D outlines how:

In preparing to teach at an [Organization D] Learning Camp, it’s important to remember that you don’t need to be a professional teacher or have a degree in English to successfully teach these children! Our unique model focuses on bringing English to life via cultural interaction, and you’ll find the tools you need to successfully meet the needs of the students during our comprehensive orientation with [Organization D] leaders who map out your service experience and guide you through the lesson planning process. (Web 9)

A common depiction throughout program literature was that more formal teacher training is unnecessary in part due to the orientation and on-site training provided to volunteers upon arrival (Organization B, Web 12; Organization F, Brochure 1). Some volunteers did experience challenges when transitioning into their teacher roles, and those critical reflections will be further explored in Section 3. However, the data also presents reflections from volunteers which attribute their easy transition into their teacher roles to the training given by volunteer organizations. One such example is through a testimonial given by a volunteer from Organization B:

I got to Kenya thinking I would never be able to stand up in front of a class of 30 kids and teach them English but the [Organization B] staff gave me tools and the knowledge to be able to and by the end of it all I wanted to do was get into a classroom. (Testimonial 3)

The notion that volunteers might be able to forego the formalized qualifications that would normally be necessary to teach in their home countries while working in the Global South also casts education systems in the Global South as sites for experimentation where volunteers can develop teaching skills through trying on teacher identities. This notion of experimentation with professional identities is described by Simpson (2005) as a major selling point of gap-year and
voluntourism programs given that it allows volunteers who would normally not be allowed to take on such a role at home develop skills while volunteering abroad and try on their teacher hats, so to speak. As one volunteer described it, “While we’ve both worked in similar fields, neither of us has teaching experience, so we looked forward to the challenge” (Organization C, Blog 22). Despite their lack of formal qualifications, organizations position volunteers as able to become effective teachers through situating Global South classrooms as a location where it is acceptable for Global North volunteers to experiment with and grow into their teacher roles. As one organization describes: “Experience counts in the classroom, and for aspiring teachers, [Organization C]’s Education programs are a great way to get professional practice and gain confidence as an educator” (Organization C, Brochure 8). Through positioning teaching as an easily accessible skill for volunteers to experiment with in Global South classrooms, organizations frame volunteers as able to adopt the role of teachers while limiting this role to the geographic regions of the Global South. Additionally, organizations posit the lack of formal qualifications for teaching as a non-issue when volunteers teach in Global South communities.

Volunteers are also said to be qualified as English teachers because of their innate knowledge of superior and more modernized Global North education systems. This was a view which emerged primarily through Program Manager interviews, and it demonstrates how Global North education systems are construed as the idealized model which organizations are working to institute in the Global South through the use of volunteers. One such example arises in the following interview with Program Manager Eva:

And our teaching option projects don’t have any TOEFL requirements or any specific background in teaching, so anyone who’s over the age of 16 can participate in it and you would get the guidance and orientation session and training when you’re on the ground in order to do the teaching project. And I think a lot of times people think that they need certain qualifications for it, but we’re just looking for people to be helping with pronunciation skills or just providing individual attention. Or even offering creative lesson planning because often times the teaching projects, or the classrooms abroad, the teachers are not always the most qualified in teaching English. They are more experts in maybe other subjects but got asked to teach this subject. So they’re always looking for that extra help. And then second, it’s still common practice for teachers to just be writing
things on the board and having students write things down on their notebooks. So that’s where our volunteers come in because we have an education where, you know, we use flashcards or just diagrams, or other methods of teaching and you can remember that even from when you were in school as well. So that’s why there’s no professional background required in teaching. (Eva interview)

Here were see some examples of the previously discussed justification that organizational guidance and orientation sessions can take the place of more formal English teaching requirements when it comes to modeling pronunciation and working with students one on one. Eva also positions volunteers as equipped to assist in “creative lesson planning” through using more interactive and engaging methods of instruction which volunteers supposedly have an innate knowledge of because of previous contact with Global North schools. Indeed, this narrative that volunteers possess the knowledge to institute creative and interactive teaching methodologies is one which appears throughout the data collected (Organization B, Project 6; Organization E, Program Management Plan 5).

One reoccurring pattern to this positioning is that organizations will describe education systems as deficient in some way, while positioning volunteers as qualified to address this deficiency in their work. For example:

The education system in Costa Rica often focuses on learning by rote, with little to no attention given to developing skills in creative problem-solving or critical thinking, competencies valuable for higher education and employment. Our volunteers can promote learning through creativity by introducing creative activities and assignments, thus motivating students as well as encouraging them to think for themselves and become more innovative. (Organization E, Program Management Plan 5)

While the characterization of Global South communities as deficient by organizations was more thoroughly described in Part 1, here we observe the means through which volunteers are directly positioned as equipped to address these deficiencies because of their innate knowledge of more superior teaching methods from their experiences in Global North education systems.
Privileging Global North education systems as superior to those in the Global South, thereby granting volunteers innate knowledge of more advanced education systems, is a concept which is described even more explicitly by one Program Manager.

Well in the same ways, you know. We are helping the teachers because the teachers don’t get a very good education on how to teach. So if you’re bringing all that international knowledge in, which, you know it sounds arrogant to say, but it is more advanced and more evolved in developed countries. So instead of rote learning like ‘repeat after me- 1,2,3 or a,b,c’ that kind of thing, they’re introducing to these teachers a whole different way of teaching. Which we kind of take for granted in first world countries. But in developing countries, they just haven’t had that, haven’t caught up yet, you know? So we’re injecting that advanced knowledge and evolution of teaching that, you know, developing countries are taking quite a while to catch up on. (Victoria interview)

In this description, Victoria privileges Global North models of education as “more advanced and more evolved in developed countries” as opposed to Global South countries which “haven’t quite caught up yet.” In this depiction we see first the illustration of modernization notions of development practice, which matches literature depicting the voluntourism industry as one which encourages “the ‘third world’ to follow the west’s example, and offer[s] volunteers to set that example” (Simpson, 2004, p. 686). This notion of more advanced education systems also positions volunteers as the possessors of superior knowledge over Global South community members, and qualifies them to enact development through instruction in more modern education practices. As Ingram (2011) describe, the pervasive attitude of possessing superior knowledge is an issue in voluntourism which can reinforce “power imbalances between host and volunteer” and perpetuate the system of marginalization of Global South individuals and communities as being comparatively inferior (p. 219).

In addition to on-the-ground training and experience with superior education systems, organizations also position volunteers as innately qualified to teach English because of their own English-speaking abilities. The narratives which position volunteers as able to teach English because they can speak English often rely on the concept of ‘native speaker superiority’ to justify the abilities of English speakers as easily able to transition to an educator role. As Organization D outlines on their website, “you don’t have to be a professional English teacher to volunteer”
and “it may seem counter-intuitive, but it really is enough that you speak English and just want to work hard” (Blog 6). The notion that volunteers can take on teacher roles without any other qualifications than native level fluency is one that is also supported by volunteer reflections advertised on organization websites. For example, one volunteer reflected on how they “realized that just the students hearing English spoken by a native tongue was truly instrumental in their progress” (Organization F, Testimonial 6). Potential volunteer recruits are told that it is unnecessary to have a “TEFL certificate or be a professional teacher to get involved” (Organization E, Web 10) and that upon orientation they will be provided with the necessary skills to conduct classes and guided “through the lesson planning process” (Organization D, Web 1). Through the characterization of English speaking as an innate skill which volunteers are able to pass on to others, we see organizations situating volunteers as equipped to enact development through the process of English teaching.

![Figure 13: Organization E, Web 18](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Costa Rica, Guatemala, Peru</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Minimum 1 week; We recommend 2 weeks or longer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Schedule</td>
<td>3-4 hours/day; Working hours are either in the morning or afternoon, depending on project site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>At least 17 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements</td>
<td>Native English speaker or qualified via English Diagnostic test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible, creative, resourceful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard working, ready to do anything!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work independently to create lesson plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish language skills are not required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 14: Organization C, Web 16](image)
Despite lack of qualifications, volunteers are placed in positions where they are framed as knowledgeable and valuable contributors to the classroom due primarily to the fact that they possess native English speaker level abilities. The volunteer’s ability to speak English at a native speaker level is described as “one of the greatest resources you bring with you as a volunteer” (Organization D, Web 1), and the ability of volunteers to speak English fluently is portrayed as a highly valuable resource for classrooms in the Global South. As one organization describes, “even being a native English speaker makes you a great asset to the schools, as you are naturally qualified to help with pronunciation and conversation” (Organization E, Web 11). While the reoccurring narrative of the valuable native English speaker can be viewed throughout ELT voluntourism program literature, one project description of teaching programs in Ghana provides a glimpse of the notion that it is the idealized English speaker of inner circle Global North variety that is particularly valuable:

Although English is Ghana’s national language, there are dozens of other tongues spoken across the country. In rural, under- resourced areas like (City Name), where broken or ‘pidgin’ English is spoken along with various tribal languages, volunteers work with children at local schools and orphanages to improve students’ English abilities. (Organization F, Project 2)

Although the official language of Ghana is English, and language of instruction policies fluctuate between “English-only and promoting the use of mother tongue in the first three years of schooling” (Erling et al., 2016, p. 296), ‘pidgin’ English in Ghana is framed here as holding less value. As such English teaching volunteers who are fluent in Global North varieties of English are framed as important and necessary. In this instance, we see the myth of the ‘native speaker’ as represented in short-term volunteer program literature in not only the description of volunteers as possessing a “perfect, innate knowledge of the language” (Kubota, 2002, p. 21), but also the privileging of what Kachru (1985) terms inner circle varieties of English, particularly North American and British varieties. While organizations advertise the formal qualifications for volunteers to participate as simply fluency in English, the data supports the view that organizations are appealing to a variety of English which exists specifically in Global North countries. As one organization describes: “Native English speakers have an incredible advantage in the world. If you were born in the US, Canada, South Africa, the British Isles or down under, you learned the world’s most important language without even trying” (Organization A, Blog
This exclusion of outer circle (Kachru, 1985)\textsuperscript{10} varieties of English positions the volunteers as doubly qualified to be English language instructors as they possess both native speaker fluency and a variety of English that is highly valued in the world.

Another factor that was commonly mentioned which supported the notion that English speakers could easily adapt and be successful in the teacher role is the concept that most organizations conducted English education classes through using what they term as ‘immersion methods.’ This notion of immersion is not normally in reference to using English as the language of instruction to teach all courses, but more so to indicate the exclusion of student’s first language (L1) from the English classroom. As one Program Manager describes, it is unnecessary to be familiar with the local language in order to teach English because “the more exposure that the kids have to English, the more they’re going to be able to practice and improve their English-speaking abilities’ (Lucas interview). Schools are categorized as wanting “volunteers [to] teach English in English,” and while it may be beneficial to know a few phrases in the local language, the focus on excluding local languages from classes minimizes the use of the first language of students in order to teach English (Organization E, Web 10). Interestingly enough, one organization even categorizes the ‘immersion method’ of education as “the most effective way of teaching a foreign language,” and proceeds to describe how “studies show that children have brains like a sponge when it comes to acquiring language, so the quickest path to fluency for them is to hear the language all the time” (Organization D, Blog 6). Through this depiction, we see volunteers as qualified to be English teachers in Global South classrooms despite lack of local language knowledge because organizations frame exclusion of local languages and use of only English in the classroom as the most beneficial language learning methodology. While there are certainly benefits to primarily focusing on the target language in the classroom, this categorization of ‘immersion’ as the best method for language education ignores the benefits of using a child’s first language in order to teach a second language (Albay et al., 2016). Additionally, it fails to recognize the very practical necessity for using students’ first language in managing the

\textsuperscript{10} A definition of the outer circle is provided by Kachru (1985): “Numerically, the outer circle forms a large speech community with great diversity and distinct characteristics. The major features of this circle are that (a) English is only one of two or more codes in the linguistic repertoire of such bilinguals or multilinguals, and (b) English has acquired an important status in the language policies- of most of such multilingual nations” (p. 12-13). Examples of this include Nigeria, Zambia, Singapore and India (Kachru, 1985).
classroom and supporting students in other areas outside of language learning. The tension which arises from the narrative that organizations present of volunteers as qualified to conduct English classes without using students’ L1 versus the practical difficulties that such a strategy engenders in the classroom is a concept which is further explored below in Part 3.

As illustrated above, volunteers are positioned by organizations as qualified to be English teachers through the training they are provided, through their individual experiences in Global North education systems, and through their superior knowledge and privileged varieties of English. All of these factors are combined to also position volunteers as able and qualified to teach Global South teachers throughout the data. Volunteers are described as being particularly useful in educating teachers on correct grammar and pronunciation of English. For example:

Volunteers, in particular native speakers, can offer valuable help in improving the students’ and also the teachers’ phonetics, pronunciation and grammar. We also set up conversation classes to improve the student’s oral skills and capacity to participate in ‘real life’ conversation. (Organization E, Program Management Plan 8)

Volunteers are also framed by organizations as equipped to teach local teachers, who are often described as untrained and in need of professional development, about alternative teaching methodologies. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from Program Manager Lucas during their interview:

Now, and this would be another part of the impact our volunteers have had, because I do think when we have the local teachers sit in the classroom, they’re getting exposed to different teaching styles. A lot of the teachers, they’re not trained teachers. They haven’t gone to teachers school. Especially in the rural areas. So being able to expose them to (brief interruption) The teachers I think get to experience a different teaching style from our volunteers. And I’ve actually seen, I’ve been into a school and I’ve seen teachers doing some of those activities that our volunteers were doing. And so it’s about teaching the volunteers that, ‘hey you’re not just here to educate the students. But look at the, you’re role models here. Be a professional teacher because you don’t ever know who’s watching and who’s not watching.
Characterizing volunteers as qualified to instruct teachers through modeling accurate English language speaking and demonstrating alternative teaching methods positions them as possessing superior knowledge than that of the local Global South teachers. This imbalance of power which emerged through the data between Global South teachers and Global North volunteers aligns with criticism often levelled against voluntourism organizations that programs reproduce asymmetrical global power relations and reinforce negative stereotypes of Global South community members as comparatively inferior (McGloin & Georgeou, 2016; Sin, 2009).

Despite the fact that all of the ELT voluntourism projects required no formal teaching qualifications, there existed a slightly contradictory strand within the data as to whether or not TEFL qualifications were necessary in order to become an English teacher. As Organization C describes:

Simply knowing English is insufficient if you plan to teach English in South America, Asia, Europe, or anywhere else in the world. Language schools and professional institutes want teachers who are qualified, experienced, and who have practical training in the methodology of teaching English as a second language. (Organization C, Web 6)

Organization A also encourages potential volunteers and English teachers to obtain a TEFL certificate even if it’s not required as part of a program because it will go over not just English grammar, but also things like how to deal with “misbehaving students,” students with “low-to-no language abilities,” and how to complete “50 whole minutes full of classroom instruction and lesson planning” (Organization A, Blog 11). Interestingly enough, this narrative of formal qualifications as important for English teachers only occurred in the two organizations which also offered longer-term paid teaching positions. These longer-term teaching positions are made up of jobs which both do and do not require TEFL certification for new teachers. In this instance from these two organizations, we do see a differentiation between the role of volunteers and English teachers traveling from the Global North to teach English in the Global South. In this case, volunteers are positioned as capable to facilitate short-term teaching projects, however longer-term teaching placements are categorized as positions where TEFL training is highly beneficial.
6.3 Implicit Qualifications of Volunteers as Sites of Struggle

“My volunteer project was to teach English with a co-teacher, whom I expected would be fluent in English and in the classroom with me at all times. Too good to be true right? I’ve always imagined teaching to be a very easy profession and I know now it absolutely is not! When planning this trip I had it in my head ‘oh I can speak English and play with kids... No big deal... Piece of cake...’ well my job teaching was much more difficult than I had expected. For starters creating a lesson plan is a lot of work. Not to mention creating a lesson plan that is fun, entertaining, successful, and easy to translate without knowing any of the languages.”

-Organization F, Testimonial 2

Throughout their promotional literature as well as in the reflections of Program Managers, a narrative is constructed of Global South classrooms as sites which are in desperate need of development intervention, and of volunteers as the qualified individuals who will elicit such intervention. Interestingly however, throughout the data many of the major issues that volunteers are said to encounter through both their own reflections as well as those of Program Managers directly conflict with the qualifications that volunteers are posited to have. Despite being assured that their knowledge of English is the only necessary language to know for teaching English because of exclusion of L1 in the classroom, the data suggests that volunteers who lack local language knowledge struggle in communicating ideas to teachers and students and often place undue burden on teachers through their reliance on translation. Volunteers are lauded as possessing valuable knowledge of superior Global North education systems; however, their lack of knowledge of Global South classroom culture often presents difficulties for volunteers in dealing with issues such as scheduling and discipline. Finally, despite volunteers being assured that their superior knowledge of English is the ultimate qualification, the lack of more formal qualifications causes volunteers to struggle when teaching things like grammar, developing curriculum, and managing a classroom. Ultimately, volunteers and Program Managers frame these issues as a necessary learning curve through which the volunteer can achieve growth. However, one must wonder how the education of Global South students is being
impacted by a cycle of rotating short-term volunteers who all must continuously adapt to these learning curves.

While proficiency in the local language may not be required for volunteers to participate in programs, it is certainly an issue that comes up throughout both the reflections of volunteers as well as Program Managers. During a promotional video posted on an organization website created by one volunteer, they advise future volunteers to “learn Spanish. Or at least some phrases in the classroom, cause there’s always a time when you say something and they don’t understand what you’re saying” (Organization E, Video 6). Communication issues due to the fact that volunteers were unable to converse in local languages was a topic that arose in multiple Program Manager interviews. During their interview, Eva indicated that the language barrier is very challenging for volunteers at the beginning because teaching concepts or questions from students often needed to be translated into or from the local language, however “once they pick up on some local phrases, then it’s easier.” This sentiment was also reiterated by Victoria, who mentions that “the first thing I say to volunteers for Tanzania for example is ‘you need to learn some Swahili’” because without knowledge of the local language it will be difficult to teach students who have little to no knowledge of English.

Throughout the data from both volunteer reflections and Program Manager interviews, lack of knowledge of students first language is mentioned as a significant barrier in communicating ideas during class, organizing activities, and also implementing classroom management. Despite organizations’ emphasis on the importance of excluding students’ first language in the classroom, research shows that the strategic use of students’ first language in situations such as “for teachers to convey meaning, explain grammar, and organize the class, and for students to use as part of their collaborative learning and individual strategy use” can actually be very beneficial for students’ academic growth (Cook, 2001, p. 402). While exclusion of students’ L1 in the classroom acts as an enticing selling point for potential volunteers, the practical applications on the ground suggest that in practice, it exists as a technique which is exceedingly difficult for both volunteers and students, and may not be in the students’ best interest.
Another way that the volunteers’ lack of local language knowledge impacts the English Program is through the relationship which in turn develops with co-teachers from the local Global South communities. Volunteers often have difficulties in having in-depth communication with local teachers due to reliance solely on English based methods for communication. For example, one volunteer reflects on how “the first week was very stressful and very fun because my teacher spoke some English so we could get a point across, but never have a good conversation” (Organization F, Testimonial 25).

Volunteers’ lack of language knowledge also impacts the volunteer-teacher relationship through necessitating heavy reliance upon local teachers to continuously translate what the volunteers are saying into the students L1. For example, one volunteer reflects on this lack of local language knowledge through the following description:

The teaching went by smoothly, I had 2 teachers helping me out with the language barrier and they usually told the kids what to do and I made sure the students knew how and helped them out if they didn’t. One of the teachers spoke fluent English which was very helpful. (Organization F, Testimonial 29)

Another example is illustrated through a different volunteer who recounts:

My only concern was my little progress in learning Spanish before arrival. The mentor teachers I was helping were always there to help translate to students when needed. And more than helpful in assisting me learn this new language. I could not speak highly enough of the mentors that gave me opportunity to try anything with the class or help show me what works. (Organization F, Testimonial 14)

In these instances, both volunteers reflect positively on the experience of having local teachers translate for them, describing the process as “smooth” and the teachers as “helpful.” However, it is important to consider whether or not the heavy reliance upon teachers to continuously translate for volunteers is placing undue burden on teachers. One of the criticisms that has in the past been levelled against the voluntourism industry is that organizations burden host communities through things like diverting resources away from community members and towards volunteers (Palacios, 2010; Sarwar, 2014). In this case, we see an instance of how teachers must adapt classroom teaching methods and teaching time in order to accommodate the visiting volunteers...
so that they can communicate with students, thus placing burden on the teachers and diverting time and attention away from the students.

Another point of difficulty that often arises for volunteers involves adapting to local classroom culture. While volunteers are positioned as qualified to enact development intervention partially due to their innate knowledge of Global North education systems, this knowledge of Global North systems often conflicts with their on the ground experiences in Global South classroom culture and causes difficulties for the volunteers. For example, one organization acknowledges these difficulties through the following post in their organizational blog:

You are there primarily to build relationships with the people, to immerse in the culture and get to know their lifestyles and culture. You may also have to exercise patience with your project work because of these dynamics. For example, perhaps materials are late in arriving on your construction project, or maybe your teaching program isn’t progressing as quickly as you’d like. Try to understand that you are in a country with different bureaucratic structures, time management norms, and governments. These things affect the possibility of progress. You may not achieve all you want to, or that you are ready to achieve. That is ok, and is the nature of this field. There is always something left to do!

(Organization B, Blog 6)

One reflection from a longer-term teacher working in Thailand also illustrates this notion of differences in management and scheduling in their school: “It’s not so much that there’s miscommunication in Thai schools, it’s just that no one really ever knows what’s going on. Aren’t going to find your rigid and planned months in advance Western events in Thailand school’s anytime soon!” (Organization A, Blog 2). Volunteers reflected that management issues such as classes being cancelled, last-minute requests for presentations, and a general lucidity to scheduling were educational culture differences that were often difficult to manage in Global South schools.

Another issue relating to classroom culture in the Global South that was often shocking for volunteers includes the use of corporal punishment in classrooms. As Victoria describes in their interview:
One thing that volunteers do struggle with is that, you know, in Tanzania for example they still have corporal punishment. They still discipline the children by smacking them, and volunteers get quite upset about that. But it’s something that they have to just take a little bit of a back seat, or just a little bit of a, have a bit more patience about it. Because it’s just the way it is and always has been for Tanzania. They haven’t evolved the same way.

While organizations position most volunteers’ exclusive knowledge of Global North education systems as a benefit in the classroom, it is important to consider what negative repercussions their lack of Global South cultural knowledge might bring about. It is possible that this lack of knowledge might cause discomfort and even tension between volunteers, students and teachers when it comes to scheduling, time management, and issues of discipline in Global South classrooms. It is clear in the data that the topic of school culture exists as a point of contention.

The final node of contention which primarily exists due to organizations’ firm reliance on native speaker fluency as the only qualification necessary for teaching in Global South classrooms, is that volunteers often struggle with typical English teacher and general teacher responsibilities because of their lack of training. One of the issues that often came up as a side effect of lack of teacher training is that many volunteers struggled to pass on the intricacies of English grammar to their students:

English is my native language. I’ve been speaking it for 25 years, and never once did I question why it’s correct English to say ‘many clothes’ and not ‘much clothes,’ which to that I’d answer ‘Because it sounds right?’ By the second week, I learned English is a science. (Organization C, Blog 25)

My Spanish did rapidly improve, however it does help with the students when they need to ask you questions if you struggle to understand what they’re saying it really does help to have some basic Spanish and I would definitely say understand your grammar. Read over a grammar book because you will be asked grammar questions and while it’s natural and something we don’t think about, they will ask. (Organization E, Video 1)
While the first reflection was from a longer-term teacher, both of these descriptions illustrate the point that despite having an innate knowledge of English as fluent speakers, there is a significant difference between speaking English and teaching English which requires additional knowledge about the structure of the language. Along with difficulties involving teaching grammar to students, many volunteers described difficulties in things like following curriculum and creating lessons. For example, the volunteer quoted in the introduction of this section described this frustration through the following reflection:

When planning this trip I had it in my head ‘oh I can speak English and play with kids... No big deal.. Piece of cake...’ well my job teaching was much more difficult than I had expected. For starters creating a lesson plan is a lot of work. Not to mention creating a lesson plan that is fun, entertaining, successful, and easy to translate without knowing any of the languages. (Organization F, Testimonial 2)

This volunteer indicates that despite their expectation that their ability to speak English would make English teaching easy, they point out numerous other standard considerations that are common for educators working in the classroom.

When considering the challenges that arise from lack of qualifications or local language knowledge of ELT voluntourists, it is important to consider why these issues aren’t addressed by merely altering program requirements. The answer to this is actually quite simple. Despite emphasis on the humanitarian motivations of the program, ELT voluntourism is structured to
have two primary beneficiaries— the English language learner in the Global South and the volunteer English teacher from the Global North. As Program Manager Lucas describes in their interview:

We can do a much more effective job with the kids in the community by just hiring teachers down there and saying, ‘look if English education is the number one way to expand their opportunities, we can hire professional teachers that are trained.’ And we really wouldn’t need a volunteer program, but we’d be missing out on another half of what we’re up to as an organization.

In this description, Lucas indicates that the other half of their program, which is facilitating an experience for Global North volunteers, is equally as important as providing English language education to Global South students.

One final point of consideration is that volunteers often reflected on how they experienced a learning curve when entering into the classroom. An illustration of this occurs in Testimonial 2 from Organization F, where the volunteer describes how “as the weeks went on I finally got into my own groove of teaching.” Rather than discussing the impact that these learning curves might have on students in the English classes, there was a tendency to couch these moments of struggle and difficulty that volunteers experienced as an opportunity for individual growth. For example, one former volunteer describes the following:

During your placement, things may not go as first planned. You may get homesick or your lesson plan may go down like a lead balloon, but it doesn’t matter. Be positive, think on your feet and laugh about it. These are the things that will help you grow as a person and will give you strength and confidence in the long run. (Organization F, Blog 4)

In the data collected, there is no reflection on the negative impact that a continuous cycle of short-term volunteers struggling to adjust to a learning curve while teaching in the classroom might have on students located in the Global South. As Mohamud’s (2013) web article describes, these circumstances lead to a troubling dynamic where “one begins to wonder if these trips are designed more for the spiritual fulfillment of the volunteer rather than the alleviation of poverty” (para. 2).
This chapter considers in Part 1, how Global South classrooms are positioned as sites of need; in Part 2, how volunteers are positioned as qualified to fulfill these needs; and in Part 3, the contradictory nature of these qualifications and how they actually prevent volunteers from fulfilling Global South needs. As Simpson (2004) illustrates in their work involving the importance for examining short-term volunteering organizations and their construction of ‘need’ in Global South countries- this work “questions how thoroughly such needs are identified, and how well they are met by the short term, non-specific skilled volunteers that form the bulk of the workforce on gap year projects” (p. 686).
Chapter 7  
Discussion and Conclusion

The following chapter ties this thesis together by exploring some of the major discussion points that have emerged from this research involving the existence of volunteer English teaching programs in Global South communities. Part 1 discusses how organizations present narratives which reinforce the idea of the inferior untrained Global South English teacher compared to the untrained yet superior Global North volunteer. This section also discusses how organizations present Global North education systems and individuals as the idealized version for what classrooms and teachers in the Global South should strive to be. In Part 2, the presentation of English as a necessity for receiving quality education is analyzed, as well as the implications of reinforcing native English varieties. Additionally, the concept of commodification of development practice and the implications this has for on the ground interactions with Global South community members is also explored. Part 3 discusses some of the questions that emerged as a result of the findings of this research, as well as proposes future routes for data collection and research to be conducted. Finally, Part 4 provides a brief conclusion to the research.

7.1 Implications of Global North Superiority in Education

While a number of fascinating issues emerged from the data, it is important to highlight some of the major implications that this study has for the relationships between Global South community members and Global North volunteers. As the literature review demonstrates, one of the most significant criticisms levelled against voluntourism is that the programs reinforce hegemonic knowledge and power structures through their work in the Global South (Holmberg, 2014; Mostafanezhad, 2013). This work highlights a few specific ways in which Global North individuals and systems are given higher value and framed as the idealized versions which Global South individuals and systems should work to mimic. Throughout the data, the organizational materials and Program Manager interviews portray Global South teachers as deficient and Global North volunteers as knowledgeable and a route through which teachers can receive professional development. Organizations criticize Global South teachers for being generally untrained, using outdated teaching methods, and lacking knowledge in the use of
proper English. While organizations emphasize the importance for Global South teachers to be trained and have proper experience, they fail to extend this emphasis to Global North volunteers.

Insufficient teacher training has created obstacles to positive education outcomes in Costa Rica. Many teachers continue to teach using the same methods in which they themselves were taught as students, focusing on simple memorisation. By working with the teachers to introduce new teaching techniques to the classroom and offering one-to-one support to children, our volunteers can help improve the standards of teaching in schools in Costa Rica (Organization E, Program Management Plan 5).

The volunteers, most of which possess no formal teaching qualifications, are positioned as a route through which Global South teachers can improve their teaching practice. This criticism of Global South teachers and elevating of Global North volunteers occurs regularly, and there is no acknowledgement of the tension between these two narratives.

Organizations present an inherent contradiction with this idea of the untrained and unqualified Global South teacher in comparison to the untrained yet implicitly qualified Global North volunteer. This narrative reinforces the idea of individuals from the Global North as inherently superior due to their contact with Global North education systems and knowledge of English. This framing reproduces asymmetrical power relationships between individuals in the Global North and Global South by placing higher value on the knowledge from Global North individuals. Additionally, it minimizes Global South teacher authority in the classroom when it comes to teaching English. This narrative also presents volunteers as skilled actors in their ability to contribute to development work, a concept which is highly appealing to potential volunteers. As Holmberg (2014) describes:

> In order for the volunteer experience to be an attractive product that the volunteers are ready to pay for, the beneficiaries need to be described as really needy and the contribution of the volunteer needs to be described as something that actually does make a difference. (p. 34)

This narrative of the unqualified Global South teacher versus the implicitly qualified volunteer reinforces asymmetrical power relationships, as well as legitimizes potential volunteer perception that their intervention is greatly needed in Global South classrooms.
The continuous criticisms that organizations put forward of Global South education systems, coupled with the emphasis on how volunteers possess an innate knowledge of superior Global North education systems, diminishes the value of education in the Global South. Additionally, it places education systems in the Global North as idealized models which should be the goal for educational development. These two narratives also demonstrate another way in which organizations perpetuate ideas of Global North superiority in educational systems and reinforce hegemonic and asymmetrical power relationships. Similarly to criticism levelled against such organizations by Ingram (2011), this narrative demonstrates a “failure to acknowledge the value of host community agency” (p. 220). Instead of supporting local communities in developing education systems and curriculum which are more context specific and aligned more closely with community languages and schooling practice, ELT voluntourism programs insert a vision of what more modernized education systems should be, and provide little room for negotiation of such ideas. This idea of educational development as modernization of Global South education systems reinforces Global North superiority in terms of education. As Jakubiak (2012) explains: “Despite its pretensions to altruism, then, English-language voluntourism may in fact be aiding and abetting the very formations and ideologies that lead to structural inequities in the first place” (p. 440).

7.2 Implications of English and Development Narratives

The findings of Chapter 5 demonstrate that organizational literature and Program Managers present English language instruction as a component of quality education. Additionally, this chapter also presents how organizations equate the existence of English language programs to achieving educational development. The existence of English as demonstrative of development is emphasized in the data through volunteer reflections on how “English is the most important language to learn. It is the most common language spoken worldwide, and therefore the most useful” (Organization A, Blog 114). Both the narratives that English is a component of quality education and that English is indicative of development are highly problematic. First and foremost, these narratives perpetuate the idea that English education in the Global South is an unassailable and necessary good, and will benefit individuals in the Global South. However, as Appleby et. al (2002) illustrate, there are major issues with such a framing “because it overlooks the many possible negative effects of the wholesale presence of English in the curriculum (e.g.,
pushing other languages aside, contributing to a diminished education through the L1) and because it fails to draw any real connections between language and social, cultural, and economic change” (p. 338). Additionally, this narrative makes it unnecessary for organizations to put forth specific routes towards educational or social development, and relies on the existence of English as an indicator for development in general.

Organizations throughout the data also perpetuate the idea of native speaker superiority throughout their program literature as well as in volunteer reflections. Conceptually, the idea of native speaker superiority is not a new one, and has long existed in Critical Applied Linguistics as a common perception for international English educators. However, the existence of this narrative in these organizations which lie at a crossroads between tourism, English teaching, and development, demonstrates the transition of this narrative into different realms with a lack of critical reflection on the problematic underlying assumption of native speaker superiority. In the context of ELT voluntourism, the notion of English speaker superiority provides a justification as to how volunteers can be perceived as skilled actors, through reliance on their innate ability to teach English. This idea, coupled with the emphasis demonstrated by organizations on the value of the inner circle English varieties which volunteers most commonly possess, reinforces the idea of English as something which is owned by Global North individuals in Global North countries. The reinforcement of native speaker superiority as well as inner circle English superiority in turn diminishes the value of both outer circle English as well as local languages.

This research also has major implications in terms of development practice. Chapter 5 demonstrates how organizations allude to development in their promotional materials. Additionally, organizations explicitly link themselves to development practice through employing development specific language as well as linking their programs to UN Sustainable Development goals. Through this analysis, we can observe how the organizations utilize the rhetoric surrounding Education for All in order to appeal to the humanitarian motivations of consumers while simultaneously turning a profit. As Mostafanezhad (2013b) describes, the existence of this phenomenon provides “a vivid example of the continued privatization and neoliberalization of development more generally” (p. 320). The organizations examined, specifically those which possess for-profit-status, co-opt the discourse of development in order to
generate income from volunteer participants and utilize Global South communities as profit making sites for Global North businesses.

7.3 Emergent Questions and Further Research

While this research elucidates the many problematic narratives that are reinforced through the literature and descriptions given by Program Managers of ELT voluntourism programs, their growing presence in the international volunteering sphere indicates that such programs will not be disappearing anytime soon. Additionally, the profitable nature of these programs for both charities and for-profit companies alike reinforces their continued existence in the international volunteering industry as well as the NGO sector. As such, this work would like to call for an increased focus on academic research based around the following emergent questions that this data presents.

7.3.1 What is the Impact of These Volunteers on the Ground and in Classrooms?

This research demonstrates the ways in which the promotional materials of organizations facilitating ELT voluntourism perpetuate specific narratives surrounding development and English. As Chapter 5 details, organizational promotional materials frame development in terms of acquiring skills and socioeconomic status, and represent English as a tool through which higher socioeconomic status can be achieved. A following significant question then entails: In what way are these discourses carried forward by ELT voluntourists to their worksites in the Global South, and how do ELT voluntourists represent these discourses in Global South classrooms? This is a significant question in that it would provide further context for how these understandings of English and development shape interaction between ELT voluntourists and Global South teachers and students. Research involving field work at sites where ELT voluntourism is conducted remains scarce, with one such study being the work of Jakubiak (2012) which involved observation of volunteers on an ELT voluntourism project in Costa Rica. However, in order to create a holistic depiction of this phenomenon, more research is needed. In particular, research involving the voices of Global South teachers working alongside ELT voluntourists that focuses on the way they understand the processes of development and its links to English language learning, as well as the ELT voluntourists role in the process, would enable a greater understanding of this phenomenon.
An in-depth study of the impact of ELT voluntourism programs and their purported links to greater socioeconomic outcomes for the recipients of their programs would also provide much needed context for this phenomenon. This fieldwork might take the shape of undertaking extensive interviews of Global South former students who have received English lessons from ELT voluntourists, and investigating in what ways they might utilize the English skills they obtained from those classes in their everyday lives. Additionally, a comparative study which contrasts communities with ELT voluntourism programs against communities without such programs, and the way that those programs have impacted Global South communities, would be highly beneficial. The final question relating to impact on the ground that this research presents is how student learning is affected by the continuous fluctuation of short-term volunteer English teachers. Further research is necessary concerning what effect the continuous cycle of volunteers has on curriculum planning, instruction, and student comprehension.

7.3.2 How Can These Asymmetrical Power Relationships Be Addressed?

This thesis work presents an analysis of organization promotional literature which consistently frames Global South teachers, education systems and communities as deficient and in need of Global North intervention. Additionally, throughout the literature, ELT voluntourism programs and volunteers are positioned as powerful actors who are able to elicit such intervention and bring about beneficial change. As discussed, these narratives diminish the authority of Global South individuals and institutions. The question then follows: In what ways can the problematic asymmetrical relationships that are presented by ELT voluntourism promotional literature and Program Managers be addressed?

In order to hold these organizations accountable for their programs, there is a great need for research-based review of best practices for ELT voluntourism programs. As Taplin, Dredge & Scherrer (2014) indicate, “monitoring and evaluation are key aspects of sustainable tourism planning and management” (p. 874). It is imperative to understand whether or not these power imbalances in both discourse and structure exist across the industry, and in what ways they might be mitigated. The data presented in Chapter 6 demonstrates the deeply engrained views within Program Managers which position Global South teachers as deficient, and give power and
authority to untrained volunteers based off of their supposed innate qualifications to act as educators. As previous literature has suggested, if ELT voluntourism programs continue to exist, it is essential that they work to facilitate critical reflection within their discourse and training programs which challenges the inherent power imbalances of such programs and works towards developing a more contextualized and holistic understanding of the communities which they seek to support (Palacios, 2010; Raymond & Hall, 2008). Further research examining what form this critical reflection might take in both discourse and structure of ELT voluntourism programs is necessary so that, if possible, a model of best practices might be constructed. The phenomenon of ELT voluntourism currently lies at a crossroads between tourism, English education, and development work in the Global South. Due to this fact, it is critical that academics and researchers from a variety of different disciplines closely examine these programs, the power relationships which they reinforce, and their potential impact on Global South communities.

7.4 Conclusion

This thesis work explores the narratives that organizations which facilitate ELT voluntourism programs present of development, English in development contexts, and the positioning of volunteers in their programs in relation to Global South communities and individuals. In Chapter 5, this work demonstrates how organizations link their programs to development through generally alluding to development practice as well as directly employing development specific language and titling themselves as development organizations. Organizations also reinforce the idea that English language education acts as a mechanism for individual and community development through stating that English is the language of global media and economies, and therefore an understanding of English will help individuals achieve greater economic outcomes. Additionally, organizations describe English as a necessity for individuals in the Global South to receive a quality education. In terms of volunteers, Chapter 6 explores how organizations position Global South communities and classrooms as highly deficient and posit volunteers as a route through which beneficial intervention can be provided. Despite not requiring any type of formal qualifications to participate in ELT voluntourism programs, organizations frame volunteers as implicitly qualified to teach due to the fact that teaching is an easily learned process. Additionally, organizations frame volunteers’ prior contact with Global North education
systems as providing them with the ability to impart superior knowledge of education to local teachers. Chapter 6 also explores how organizations position volunteers as qualified through their innate knowledge of privileged varieties of English. Despite the fact that volunteers are led to believe these qualifications will more than suffice for their participation in ELT voluntourism programs, these implicit qualifications actually exist as sites of tension on the ground. The analysis throughout this thesis which is highlighted in the final chapter explores the way that ELT voluntourism programs reinforce asymmetrical power relationships between Global North volunteers and Global South teachers, as well as reinforce perceptions of superiority in terms of both education and language abilities. Ultimately, this work demonstrates that there is a great need for further academic research concerning ELT voluntourism programs. While programs recruit volunteers through utilizing the appealing narrative that they have the capacity to ‘make a difference’ in Global South classrooms, this research demonstrates that the core of those narratives is problematic, and further analysis is needed to examine the effect that these programs have on Global South communities.
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Appendix A: Program Manager Interview Protocol

Background Info:
- I want to know a bit more about you. How long have you been working for the organization?
- Can you tell me a bit about what your job entails?
- What motivated you to take on your current role?
- If you could give me a 30 second elevator pitch to entice me to participate in the program, what would you say?
- Have you ever gone on a volunteer trip with the organization? Or maybe with a different organization?
  - If yes, can you tell me a bit about your experience?

Understanding of English:
- Can you tell me a bit about the English teaching volunteer program?
- So what are some of the goals of the program?
- Are there any experiences that you’ve heard about the program, either from volunteers or community members that come to mind that you’d like to share?
- How do you think having English teaching volunteering is beneficial for the community? What about for the volunteers?
  - Can you think of any drawbacks?

Understanding of Volunteers:
- How does your organization normally go about recruiting volunteers?
- What characteristics make an excellent volunteer English teacher?
  - Are there any specific qualifications for the role?
- Is there any advice you would give to volunteers interested in English teaching?
- What sort of preparation do the volunteer English teachers go through before they leave?
- What types of things do volunteer English teachers normally do during their placements?

Volunteer Outcomes (in the community):
- How did the relationship between your organization and the volunteer host community begin?
- What sort of feedback have you gotten from the host community about the volunteer English teachers?
- Have there been any challenges that have come up in working with the host communities?
  - What about challenges volunteers have working in the communities?
- What sort of impact do volunteers have on the community?
- Do you have any other stories or reflections you would like to share? Perhaps personal narratives, or stories from volunteers?
Dear (XXXProgramManagerXXX),

I hope you are well and it was wonderful meeting you at the open house. Just to re-introduce myself, my name is Melissa Beauregard and I am currently a graduate student researcher at the University of Toronto’s Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. Right now, I am conducting a research project which focuses on English language teaching volunteer projects. One of the goals for this project is to hear from different Program Managers about their organizations, their perspectives on English language teaching, and stories they are interested in sharing about their work with volunteers. In our previous conversations at the (XXXOrganizationXXX) open house, you had mentioned your potential interest in being interviewed, and I wanted to follow up because I’m very interested in getting your perspective.

The interview would take around 45 minutes to 1 hour, and you would receive a small monetary compensation for your time as a thank you for participating. If this is something you are interested and would like to learn more about, I am happy to send you a more detailed information letter and consent form for you to look at. Your participation is appreciated and would add greatly to the study. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Melissa Beauregard
Appendix C: Initial Outreach Email to Program Managers

Dear (XXXProgramManagerXXX),

I hope you are well and it’s wonderful to meet you. My name is Melissa Beauregard and I am currently a graduate student researcher at the University of Toronto’s Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. Right now, I am conducting a research project which focuses on English language teaching volunteer projects. One of the goals for this project is to hear from different Program Managers about their organizations, their perspectives on English language teaching, and stories they are interested in sharing about their work with volunteers. I noticed your email on the (XXXOrganizationXXX) website, and I am very interested in getting your perspective through an interview.

The interview would take around 45 minutes to 1 hour, and you would receive a small monetary compensation for your time as a thank you for participating. If this is something you are interested and would like to learn more about, I am happy to send you a more detailed information letter and consent form for you to look at. Your participation is appreciated and would add greatly to the study. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Melissa Beauregard
Appendix D: Informational Letter & Consent Form for Program Managers

XXXXX, 2018

Dear XXXX,

My name is Melissa Beauregard and I am a graduate student at the University of Toronto in the OISE Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. I am currently working on a research project which is collecting reflections and experiences from Program Managers of organizations which facilitate English language volunteer teaching programmes. The goal of this project is to explore the goals of these English teaching programmes, the way that organizations connect English teaching to development, and also the role of volunteers within the teaching process.

This research will involve the collection of organization website materials, and other promotional materials from six different volunteer organizations with English language teaching programs. Approximately 6 Program Managers will also be interviewed for this project. All of the identifiable information of participant Program Managers will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms, and through the altering of other identifiable features in transcribing, analyzing, and presenting data. This includes the disclosure of the specific organizations that the participants work for.

This research study is being supervised by Dr. Jeff Bale at OISE’s Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning, and has already been reviewed and approved by the University of Toronto’s Ethics Review Board. Only the Principal Investigator (Melissa Beauregard) will have access to the data collected, and it will be stored in a secure password protected cloud platform. Please also note that the University of Toronto’s research ethics program may also have access to the confidential data if they choose to conduct a research audit to ensure that all appropriate procedures are being followed.

Involvement in this study is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time for any reason without negative consequences. Any data that had been collected from participants will be destroyed if participants choose to withdraw, and the Principal Investigator will ensure that there is no conflict of interest within this research. As a small form of compensation, each participant who provides an interview will be given a $30 money order. The participant will also be emailed a copy of the interview transcript to look over and approve after the interview has been completed. If the participant decides at any time during or after the interview that they choose to withdraw their participation, the compensation would still be provided. All interested parties would be provided notice of any reports or publications that result from their contributed data.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me at XXXXPhoneXXX if you would like to learn more about the project, or if you have any questions or concerns. Further, you may contact the Ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or by phone at (416) 946-3273. A consent form is attached for your review. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the rights of participants, please do not hesitate to contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office.

Sincerely,

Melissa Beauregard
Program Manager Consent Form

Name of the Principal Investigator: Melissa Beauregard

Name and Contact for Supervisor: Dr. Jeff Bale
Associate Professor of Language and Literacies Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

I, ____________________________________________ , have read and understood the details of this research in the information letter written by Melissa Beauregard on XXXXXX, 2018. I agree to the following activities:

☐ Provide an interview to Melissa Beauregard focusing on my work with a volunteer English Teaching Organization.

☐ I do not agree to provide an interview.

Signature ____________________________________________

Date ____________________________________________
Appendix E: Transcription Template

Save transcript using this naming convention:
Pseudonym for participant – Interview- Month Day.doc
E.g. Lisa – Interview – March 13.docx

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant pseudonym:</th>
<th>Interviewer’s name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of interview:</td>
<td>Transcriber’s name:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timestamp</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Transcribed talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Transcript conventions

Goal
- Aim for verbatim transcription of what the participant said.
- Don’t record pauses, filler words, false starts, etc. in the participant’s speech. Likewise, if the participant makes a grammatical error in their speech, transcribe the correct usage. Given the goal is not a close linguistic read, but rather a content analysis of participant talk, it’s only necessary to capture their ideas in a way that is as close to what they said without filling the transcript with extraneous detail.

Notations
Bolding the notations listed below in the transcript is unnecessary. It is done here so as here to make this document easier to read.
[inaudible] — a word or two that can’t be made out

[inaudible: duration in seconds or minutes] — a longer segment of the recording that can’t be made out

[cross talk] — when two or more people talk at once

[long pause] — Ellipses shouldn’t be used for short pauses because the goal is not that kind of close analysis. But if the participant takes a long pause (i.e., more than 2-3 seconds) to gather their thoughts, rethink something, etc. that is important to note

[irrelevant: duration in second or minutes] — for longer segments of the recording that are off topic or not helpful to the analysis

?(questionable text)? — if unsure of the word(s) the participant is using, note like this. This notation is for words that can be heard but not understand clearly, whereas [inaudible] is for words that can’t be heard

Bold + colour — for any information or name that identifies individuals or other sensitive information that will need to be redacted or changed to pseudonyms