

TRAVELERS, TEACHERS, OR ALTRUISTS? A MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY  
OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE VOLUNTOURISM

by

CORA ANN JAKUBIAK

(Under the Direction of Linda Harklau)

ABSTRACT

This multi-sited ethnographic study investigates the ways in which stakeholders and participants in short-term, volunteer English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching, or *English language voluntourism* programs, use a variety of discourses to render short-term, EFL teaching a form of volunteer tourism, a practice that involves “aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society” (Wearing, 2001, p. 1). Focusing specifically on the language in English language voluntourism promotional literature and on in-service and former program participants’ talk, I examine the discourses that circulate within English language voluntourism around language teaching and learning as well as development—broad categories that form the philosophical foundations on which volunteer tourism and other, similar intervention-type programs, rely.

Organized into a manuscript format, this dissertation is comprised of an introduction, a methods chapter and three separate articles. The first manuscript focuses on discourses of English language use within English language voluntourism, examining how sponsoring organizations and program participants conceptualize short-term English language teaching as a means of humanitarian aid in the Global South. The second manuscript attends to how in-service

and former program participants operationalize the concept, development, and what forms they think development takes in and through English language voluntourism. The third manuscript explores the ways in which in-service and former program participants contest the dominant notions of development that circulate within English language voluntourism.

The overarching analysis finds that within English language voluntourism discourse, English language use in the Global South is associated with conditions of hyperglobalism (Dicken, 2003), the perspective that world-wide consumer tastes are homogenized by Global North-based corporations and the primary role of the nation-state is to aid the global economic network rather than to provide social welfare services. Additionally, in-service and program participants hold differing, often contested, views of development: what it is and how it occurs (or doesn't occur) within English language voluntourism. The study concludes by situating English language voluntourism within broader societal trends that reflect neoliberal shifts in state formation and new forms of citizenship. I also suggest some possible implications of this study for policy and practice.

**INDEX WORDS:** Volunteer tourism, Voluntourism, Development, English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching, Neoliberalism, Globalization, Multi-sited ethnography, Language education, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Governmentality

TRAVELERS, TEACHERS, OR ALTRUISTS? A MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY  
OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE VOLUNTOURISM

by

CORA ANN JAKUBIAK

A.B. Ed., The University of Michigan, 1994

M.A., Eastern Michigan University, 2001

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2011

© 2011

Cora Ann Jakubiak

All Rights Reserved

TRAVELERS, TEACHERS, OR ALTRUISTS? A MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY  
OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE VOLUNTOURISM

by

CORA ANN JAKUBIAK

Major Professor: Linda Harklau

Committee: J. Peter Brosius  
Andrew Herod  
Peter Smagorinsky

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
August 2011

## DEDICATION

For D., P., and L., with love, and for the overarching miracle that brings Carolina wrens to nest in an Athens, Georgia gas grill every spring.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With humble thanks, first and foremost, to my dissertation committee, without whom I could not have begun—let alone completed—this work. To Linda Harklau: Thank you for being my “True North,” letting me loose when I needed time to explore, and for reeling me in when I needed that, too. To Pete Brosius: Thank you for putting into voice the thoughts I’d been having for years, and for directing me toward the theories and readings I needed to give professional form to my personal frustrations and worries. To Andy Herod (“Commissioner and Mayor Pro-Tempore”): Thanks for always modeling—in a classy, articulate way—what applied scholarship and theory can look like in real life. To Peter Smagorinsky: Thanks for being a mentor extraordinaire and, better yet, a good friend.

Hats off, too, to the good folks of the Department of Language and Literacy Education in the College of Education at the University of Georgia. Nothing would ever move forward there without the oversight and expertise of Becky Hendren, Marianne Roberts, and Dianne Fields. Thanks, so much, to all of you for your help, friendliness, and vacant office chairs at precisely the right (and desperately needed) moments.

To numerous and varied institutions at the University of Georgia: the Graduate School, the College of Education, the Department of Language and Literacy Education, the Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education (CLASE), and the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Institute (LACSI): Thank you for meaningful work, material sustenance, and years of travel and research funding. This dissertation study is a co-construction in no small measure. Special thanks, too, to Pedro Portes, Paula Mellom, and the CLASEGAs—*gracias para todos*,

but most importantly, for exactly the kind of conversations that I came to graduate school to have.

With grateful appreciation, too, to my Georgia friends and colleagues—positive conspirators and accomplices all. Special acknowledgement goes to Dell Perry Giles and Michelle Zoss: Thank you for first showing me that yes, this project was doable, and for pulling me along until I believed it, too. To Elizabeth Daigle, who swooped into Georgia like the true Nor’easter she is and kept me in good company until the end of this process and project (our short stories are forthcoming). With gratitude, too, to the Pinecrest Book Club (Sherry Clouser, Jenny Frye, Enid Hurley, LeAnne Minnick, and Nancy Thompson), David and Judy Lowe, Sue and Phil Ingram, Harriet Allison, and Charlie Mathies: All of you not only took care of me in countless ways, but made life here in Athens a warm, rich experience that is still—even in its final moments—wonderful and unfolding.

To my former students and colleagues in the Livonia Public Schools and Morgan County Schools: Thank you for the ongoing lessons in how theory and practice are always one and the same. *Abrazos*—or, as they say in Morgan County, thanks, y’all. (And that’s laced with kudzu, wisteria, honeysuckle, chinaberry trees, and dogwoods. I nod here to the inimitable Mary Mason DeVane, who first helped me see that I, too, could be a good Southerner and come to love my own version of Dixie.)

Finally, to my friends and family, near and far: I owe you a mountain of debt I can never repay. To Mom and Bruce: Thanks for always giving me the requisite space, time, and luxury to write and think, be it in the garage in Rochester or on the beach in Flagler. To K and Q: Thanks, especially, for the Redland years, and for helping to make my transition to life in Georgia infinitely easier than it otherwise would have been. Po and Poogs are miracles; I’m so proud and



happy that I get to share in their lives. To Nikki: Thank you for constantly keeping me in check, and for the central reminder that schooling doesn't necessarily make one smart. To Aunt Diane: Thank you for endless laughter, cheerfully taking late night phone calls, and steadfastly affirming that the world looks okay through my eyes. And, finally, to my father, the late Charles Jakubiak: I can only imagine that you'll be attending my graduation nevertheless. I love you all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW .....	1
Background of the Problem .....	1
Problem Statement .....	2
Literature Review .....	3
2 STUDY METHOD .....	14
Context of the Investigation .....	14
Data Collection .....	20
Data Reduction and Analysis .....	31
3 ENGLISH FOR THE GLOBAL: DISCOURSES IN/OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE VOLUNTOURISM .....	51
Abstract .....	52
Introduction .....	52
Topical Framework .....	54
Method .....	59
Findings .....	61
Discussion .....	78

References .....	81
4 “I WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL THEY COULD LOOK FORWARD TO AND HAVE”: ENGLISH LANGUAGE VOLUNTOURISM AS DEVELOPMENT...88	
Abstract .....	89
Introduction.....	89
Topical Framework .....	92
Method .....	98
Findings .....	103
Discussion .....	127
References .....	130
5 AMBIVALENCE AS AN OPTIMAL OUTCOME OF PARTICIPATION IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE VOLUNTOURISM PROGRAM .....	143
Abstract .....	144
Introduction.....	144
Topical Framework .....	146
Method .....	152
Findings.....	157
Discussion .....	182
References .....	185
6 CONCLUSION.....	196
Problem Solving in the Contemporary U.S. ....	196
Study Implications .....	201
7 REFERENCES .....	203

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Data Collected for Multi-Sited Ethnography, 2007-2010 .....	45
Figure 2.2: Protocol for Interviews with In-Service Program Participants .....	46
Figure 2.3: Protocol for Interviews with NGO Office Employees .....	48
Figure 2.4: Protocol for Interviews with Former Program Participants .....	49
Figure 3.1: Definitions of English Language Use Codes .....	85
Figure 3.2: English Language Use Code Frequencies .....	86
Figure 3.3: Sponsoring Organizations' Code Frequencies .....	87
Figure 4.1: Subordinate Category Frequencies.....	137
Figure 4.2: Codes for <i>English or other instruction as development</i> .....	138
Figure 4.3: <i>English or other instruction as development</i> Code Frequencies .....	140
Figure 4.4: Codes for <i>individual volunteer intervention as development</i> .....	141
Figure 4.5: <i>Individual volunteer intervention as development</i> Code Frequencies.....	142
Figure 5.1: Codes for <i>English language voluntourism is not development</i> .....	191
Figure 5.2: <i>English language voluntourism is not development</i> Code Frequencies .....	192
Figure 5.3: Codes for <i>what is development, anyway?</i> .....	193
Figure 5.4: <i>What is development, anyway?</i> Code Frequencies.....	195

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Background of the Problem**

Recently, scholars have noted “a general preoccupation . . . with philanthropic practice as a necessary feature of ‘proper’ citizenship and ‘good’ government” (King, 2006, p. xxvi) in countries such as the United States and Canada. These trends have been supported by such initiatives as the U.S. federal legislation, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 (H.R. 1388), which is designed to promote domestic and international voluntary service; the growing popularity of fee-requiring athletic events such as Race for the Cure (King, 2006); mandated community involvement requirements as a component of high school graduation (e.g., Schwarz, 2010); and the increased promotion of service-learning on college and university campuses.

This dissertation study investigates how one popular form of international voluntary service—*English language voluntourism*, or short-term, volunteer English language teaching—is situated within particular ideologies of development, citizenship, globalization, and English language education. In particular, I examine how participants who engage in this form of international voluntary service conceive of their roles as volunteer English language teachers. My data analysis suggests that participants frequently construct this role within the discourse and ideology of sponsoring organizations, groups that position the U.S. as a beneficent provider of “development,” or economic resources, programs, and projects designed to facilitate consumer-oriented, technology-driven, Global North standards of living in the Global South.

## Problem Statement

A number of factors complicate efforts to understand the impact of English language voluntourism on both local communities and participants. These factors include: conflicting claims made about the efficacy of English language voluntourism programs; unverified assertions by public policy organizations such as the Brookings Institution (2006, June) that unlimited expansion of international voluntary service programs such as English language voluntourism is both desirable and necessary; and, most broadly, the historical complexities of Global North nation-states' interventions around the world, particularly in the name of development (e.g., Davis, 2006; Escobar, 1995; Pigg, 1992). Framed within these complications, my broad research questions include the following:

1. What discourses of *development* and *English language use* predominate in English language voluntourism (i.e., in the voices of program participants and in promotional literature)?
2. How and in what ways do English language voluntourism program participants take up or contest these dominant discourses?
3. How is English language voluntourism a form of volunteer tourism, a practice that “involves aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society” (Wearing, 2001, p. 1)? What discourses and material practices render it so?

In answering these questions, my study reveals not only how participants in English language voluntourism programs conceive of their roles as volunteer English language teachers, but also where they find sponsoring organizations' conceptions of English language voluntourism problematic. Given how little empirical support there is for the claims frequently made by

English language voluntourism sponsoring organizations and their supporters, my research findings contribute to an important academic and policy gap. This research study provides evidence that 1) contests the foundations on which short-term, international voluntary service programs such as English language voluntourism are built; and 2) indicates a need for greater discussion about the roles that English language voluntourism and similar, volunteer-type projects may play as sites of articulation (or disruption) of social formations including, but not limited to, neoliberalism, globalization, citizenship, and new forms of governmentality.

Organized in a manuscript format, this dissertation study's findings are presented in three separate chapters. Chapter 3, "English for the Global: Discourses in/of English Language Voluntourism" focuses on five central discourses that provide the warrant for short-term, EFL teaching as a form of humanitarian aid in the Global South. Chapter 4, "'I was something special they could look forward to and have': English Language Voluntourism as Development," explores the ways in which participants speak when they suggest that, *yes*, English language voluntourism *is* development. Chapter 5, "Ambivalence as an Optimal Outcome of Participation in an English Language Voluntourism Program" centers on how some program participants contest the dominant development discourse that undergirds English language voluntourism—and how little space there is for their contestations.

## **Literature Review**

### **Volunteer Tourism, or Voluntourism**

The phenomenon of international volunteer tourism, or *voluntourism* (Callanan & Thomas, 2005, p. 183; Wearing, 2001, p. 9), is defined as the short-term—generally one week to three month (Callanan & Thomas, 2005)—practice of “volunteer[ing] in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the poverty of some groups in

society” (Wearing, 2001, p. 1). Voluntourism is a form of *new tourism* (Poon, 1993), also called *niche* tourism (Novelli, 2005) or New Moral Tourism (Butcher, 2003). Considered alternative tourism, new tourism practices respond to the numerous, strident critiques issued against traditional, international mass tourism in the last few decades—charges that include environmental degradation (Turner & Ash, 1975), cultural imperialism (Jaakson, 2004), and usurious economic practices in Southern communities (Urry, 2000). Described as flexible (i.e., catering to segmented markets), consumer-driven, sustainable (even “green”), activity-oriented (i.e., beyond sun, sand, and sightseeing), and sensitive to local cultures (Poon, 1993, p. 18), new tourism positions itself *contra* mass tourism. Specific forms of new tourism include, but are not limited to, research tourism, gastronomic tourism, wildlife tourism, space tourism, and volunteer tourism (i.e., voluntourism) (Novelli, 2005).

The phenomenon of international volunteer tourism has grown exponentially in recent years (Wearing, 2004). Although exact figures of international volunteer tourism growth are difficult to determine, the increasing number of organizations that offer international volunteer tourism programs suggests that the phenomenon is both significant and expanding (Brown & Morrison, 2003). Since the early 2000s at least, tourism researchers have noted a “volunteer tourism rush” among Western travelers (Callanan & Thomas, 2005, p. 183), and in response, some formerly traditional tour companies (e.g., operators specializing in bus tours, cruises, and the like) have been expanding their range of services to include various forms of alternative tourism, including volunteer tourism (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie, & Pomfret, 2003).

Groups outside of the tourism sector have also been influential in contributing to the growth and popularity of international volunteer tourism. However, unlike tourism industry operators, who are likely to promote international volunteer tourism in terms of its ostensibly light ecological



footprint and the supposedly authentic cultural encounters it can offer (Wearing, 2001), other individuals and organizations promote international volunteer tourism in the names of development aid and public diplomacy. That is, under the monikers, *international voluntary service*, *international civic service*, and *international volunteer service*, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based groups, and government actors promote international volunteer tourism as a form of altruism and American “soft power” (Nye, 2004).

Similar to how Wearing (2001) argues that “[v]olunteer tourism can be viewed as a development strategy” (p. 12), the U.S. federal initiative, Volunteers for Prosperity (VfP), created in 2003 by executive order under President George W. Bush, states as its mission to “encourage international voluntary service by highly skilled American professionals supporting the global health and prosperity goals of the U.S. government” and to “show the world the energy and idealism of the United States of America [through volunteerism]” (Volunteers for Prosperity, n.d.). Although VfP uses the term, *international voluntary service*, exclusively to describe the activities it promotes, a quick perusal of VfP partner organizations—over 200 corporations, faith-based-groups, and NGOs offering international voluntary service programs—indicates that short-term, international volunteer tourism programs are well represented within VfP. Three VfP partners, for example—NGOs Cross-Cultural Solutions, Global Volunteers, and United Planet—all sponsor short-term, unskilled volunteer English language teaching projects that can run as short as one week and require neither professional educator credentials nor specialized pedagogical skills in order to participate. Thus, VfP’s claim that all of its short-term international voluntary service projects will be staffed by “highly skilled American professionals” (Volunteers for Prosperity, n.d.) is a dubious one, rendering the semantic

difference between short-term *international voluntary service* and *international volunteer tourism*, or voluntourism, highly negligible.

Voluntourism, as a social practice, has both supporters and detractors. Although empirical evaluations of the actual outcomes of volunteer tourism programs on local communities in the Global South are few (for a critical exception, see Gray & Campbell, 2007), multiple stakeholders maintain that voluntourism harnesses the power of an expanding global civil society and offers an innovative way to solve long-standing social and economic problems (cf. Sherraden, 2007). Skeptics of voluntourism, however, argue that short-term, non-technical “aid” initiatives such as 6-week English language courses taught by uncredentialed, U.S. college students do little to alter the underlying structural causes of widespread global inequity. Instead, skeptics suggest that voluntourism may exacerbate participants’ pre-existing stereotypes and perpetuate simplistic understandings of poverty (Simpson, 2004). Other research offers that only particular—usually privileged—people have both the time and material means to participate in voluntourism programs, as program fees can run into the thousands of dollars. Consequently, voluntourism may be a means by which certain groups in society are able consolidate and affirm their own power. By parlaying their economic capital into symbolic capital through the purchase of a volunteer vacation, already privileged groups are able to appear altruistic, adventurous, and worldly—thus maintaining, in Bourdieu’s terms, their distinction (Heath, 2007).

### **English Language Voluntourism**

For the purposes of this research study, I define *English language voluntourism* as a practice in which native speakers of prestige-variety, or inner-core, English such as American Standard or British Standard English (Kachru, 1997) teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes on a short-term (i.e., one- to twelve-week) basis in the Global South as an alternative

form of travel. Although some faith-based organizations may sponsor short-term EFL teaching programs as part of their mission work (Snow, 2001), the focus in this dissertation is non-sectarian English language voluntourism as sponsored by Global North based non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs frame English language voluntourism as a development intervention. That is, whether characterized as “making a meaningful contribution to international education” (WorldTeach, n.d.), helping Southern people attain “a passport of poverty through employment” (Global Volunteers, n.d.), or increasing “educational and employment prospects for people who would not normally have the opportunity to learn English” (Cross-Cultural Solutions, n.d.), English language voluntourism, as depicted by sponsoring NGOs, provides positive benefits for local communities and constitutes humanitarian aid. NGO-sponsored English language voluntourism programs are listed with regularity in published international volunteer directories such as *World Volunteers: The World Guide to Humanitarian and Development Volunteering* (Ausenda & McCloskey, 2006) and *Volunteer Vacations: Short-Term Adventures that Will Benefit You and Others* (McMillon, Cutchins, & Geissinger, 2003), the titles of which reflect a similar, pro- development and altruistic stance. Additionally, NGO-sponsored English language voluntourism promotional materials are often linked to the development websites of organizations such as the U.S. federal initiative, Volunteers for Prosperity (VfP), a division of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the non-profit organization, Idealist ([www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)). These groups follow and support the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, a list of social initiatives that are based on a pro-growth, economically-oriented approach to development aid (cf. Global Volunteers, 2008).

The requirements for participation on most English language voluntourism programs are minimal. Neither formal educator credentials nor prior teaching experience are generally required in order to be a volunteer EFL teacher on most NGO-sponsored programs. One need not even possess a college degree. Instead, NGO-sponsored English language voluntourism programs stress both participants' native English language speaking skills as well as their good intentions. Text in English language voluntourism promotional materials, for example, generally looks like this:

- “Your own ideas and initiative will be welcomed by our partner schools. . . . [A] lack of formal qualifications can be more than made up for with plenty of enthusiasm and commitment” (Projects Abroad, n.d.)
- “Prior teaching experience is helpful but not required. Flexibility and enthusiasm are pluses!” (WorldTeach, n.d.)
- “Previous teaching experience is not required—just a positive attitude and a willingness to approach challenges with patience and enthusiasm!” (Global Service Corp, n.d.)

EFL teaching in the English language voluntourism context, then, does not rely on expertise in second language acquisition or even pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). Rather, the primary vehicles through which EFL is delivered via voluntourism are through participants' tacit English language knowledge and biding enthusiasm.

### **English as a Global Language**

Although significant work interrogating the global role of English and the rise of English's spread has been conducted in the past few decades (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Kachru, 1997; Holborow, 1999; Pennycook, 1994, 1998, 1999; Phillipson, 1992), there remains a wide, understudied, link between world-wide English language spread and late twentieth-century

economic globalization. Addressing this deficit, Sonntag (2003) writes that “the language factor remains underdeveloped in the study of global politics, and language is at best tangentially referenced in globalization studies” (p. 1). Similarly, Phillipson (2000) views the nexus of English language teaching with processes of globalization as an important, yet rarely examined, phenomenon—in large part because of its complexity. He writes:

The significance and role of the English teaching profession in the current intensive phase of globalization is under-explored and emphatically needs closer scrutiny.

Exploring it [however] is a messy business because of the interlocking of language with so many other dimensions, e.g., in education, the media, “aid”, and multiple commodification processes. (p. 92)

The junction at which the English language intersects with a posited new world order, then, remains a vastly open space. In the words of Phillipson (2000), “There is considerable literature on . . . English in all its diversity, and on . . . globalization . . . . By contrast there is an alarming absence of literature that brings the two together” (p. 87).

Also of great concern to many contemporary critical applied linguists is the dearth of research examining the discourse of world-wide English spread as natural, inevitable, and beneficent. Phrases such as “global English,” “English as the world’s lingua franca,” and English as the “universal” language obscure larger questions about the origins of English as a global, or world, language and elide the fact that English may operate in the interests of some groups better than others (Phillipson, 2000). “Many write loosely that English is *the* world language, but to describe English in such terms ignores the fact that a majority of the world’s citizens do not speak English,” Phillipson (2001) cautions. “Critical scholarship out to analyze the strong forces that are at pains to create the impression that English serves all the world’s

citizens equally well” (p. 188). Relatedly, Pennycook (1994) points out that the dominant fields in language education—linguistics and its disciplinary cousin, applied linguistics—have, historically, focused their global English debates on issues of standards and intelligibility (e.g., “Is Pakistani English ‘really’ English?”) to the neglect of sociopolitical concerns. He writes:

Sorely lacking from the predominant paradigm of investigation into English as an international language is a broad range of social, historical, cultural and political relationships. . . . [T]here is a failure to problematize the notion of choice, and therefore an assumption that individuals and countries are somehow free of economic, political, and ideological constraints when they apparently freely opt for English. (p. 12)

Pennycook thus admonishes his disciplinary colleagues for failing to more closely interrogate the contexts of English language spread. Though the linguistic field is certainly to be lauded for having catalogued, for example, extensive corpora of the distinctive grammatical features of Nigerian English (e.g., Crystal, 2003), Pennycook’s position is that such work often comes at the expense of more critical questions: e.g., Why it is that English remains popular in Lagos in the first place?

### **English and Development**

A central piece in the “English as a global language” debate, moreover, is a proffered link between English and development. Images of and discussions about English—especially in postcolonial states—often associate the language with technology, modernization, the internet, advancement, etc., and such discourses are pervasive in English language teaching materials, advertisements for English schools, and other products associated with English (Niño-Murcia, 2003; Pennycook, 2000). Akin to how discourses around certain beauty products promise its

buyers new youth, the “English as a global language” discourse promises Global North standards of living.

The connection, however, between the English language and so-called modern development (i.e., industrial production facilities, technological resources, increased job opportunities, higher standards of living, etc.), often leaves many people worshipping a false god. Said another way, the English alone rarely delivers on the material things the discourse around it promises. Particularly in postcolonial states, many people who study English in the hopes of escaping material poverty are let down hard (Niño-Murcia, 2003; Vavrus, 2002). In Peru, for example—where English is seen by many people as equivalent to the U.S. dollar, a valuable form of symbolic capital—students often learn the language in the hopes of going to the U.S., where they imagine they can find (and attain) the American dream (Niño-Murcia, 2003). However, while discourse around English language spread is rife with images of Global North development, it is thin on the truth of immigration. In the words of Niño-Murcia (2003), “Those who ‘invest’ in English language cultural capital have in practice little or no access to its marketplace” (p. 138). Although a stubbornly durable discourse associates English with pictures of development—and consequently, entices many people into teaching/studying the language—earning entrée to where “development” already exists is not part of the English language learning package.

While discourses connecting English to immigration and ideas of development may, tragically, offer false hope to individuals in places like Peru, elsewhere entire nations have put their money on the “English as development” horse to little payoff (Brock-Utne, 2002; Macedo, Dendrinos, & Gounari, 2003; Pennycook, 1994; Vavrus, 2002). In Tanzania, for example, where content in all secondary level schools is taught through an English medium, English has not only

failed to deliver Global North standards of living, but it has also compromised many students' educations overall. Throughout Tanzania, students often fail to grasp complex content in classes like science because of language barriers; also, many classrooms are highly undemocratic, as students with strong English language skills dominate discussions (Brock-Utne, 2002). Similarly, in Hong Kong, where parental demand has produced extensive English language schooling in the last few decades, English language education has actually displaced other, arguably more useful subjects—like Cantonese—in academic curricula (Pennycook, 1994).

In sum, the rhetoric of English as development—especially as it bears upon English language voluntourism, which views English spread as natural, neutral, and beneficial (see chapter 3, this volume)—is pernicious. Not only do English language skills alone fails to deliver the “goods” (i.e., jobs, reduced vulnerability), but the discourse around it is seductive. Like the simplistic, hyperglobalist discourse of globalization that predicts an inevitable, new world order in which all people will be equally competitive and prosperous (Ohmae, 1999), “English as development” discourse is simplistically alluring. As Niño-Murcia (2003) poignantly observes, the discursive link between English and development

is. . . an example of overgeneralized globalist analysis. It projects the ‘world English’ phenomenon as if it were a unitary universal, audible from all geographic and sociocultural difference. It simplistically places globalization discourse into a teleological sequence: ‘some day we will all be globalized’ and ‘we will all speak English’—a dubious prophecy, but an irresistible one, because it contains [for many people] a much-needed metaphor for hope. (p. 139)

In sum, the discourse of English as a global language, while often contested, is nevertheless a key driver of many political and educational programs and policies throughout the world. In the



following chapters of this research report, I trace the ways in which the discourse of English as a global language, among other discourses, is used within the context of English language voluntourism programs and in the talk English language voluntourism program participants. Before sharing my findings, however, I detail this dissertation study's methods.

## CHAPTER TWO

### STUDY METHOD

#### **Context of the Investigation**

This study was designed as a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) of English language voluntourism. In a multi-sited ethnographic project, a researcher pays keen attention to the ways in which larger, world-systems structures (cf. Wallerstein, 2004/1974) are made manifest at the local level, as well as to the permeability of the local/global binary itself (Marcus, 1996). Thus, multi-sited ethnography is well-suited to a study of English language voluntourism. The phenomenon is embedded within multiple world-systems contexts such as international development programs; ideological paradigms of globalization; and national language policy; yet, the specific sites in which English language voluntourism projects take place are often small, seemingly spatially-bounded, communities (e.g., hamlets in Amazonian Ecuador, villages in northern Costa Rica). Indeed, the opportunity to experience life in one of these so-called remote, “traditional” locales is no small contributing factor to English language voluntourism’s rising and sustained popularity (Simpson, 2004), a fact lending credence to Gupta and Ferguson’s (2007/1992) observation that “as actual places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, *ideas* of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient” (p. 340).

Multi-sited ethnography is also amenable to a study of English language voluntourism because it validates the ephemeral quality of “the field.” A field site of English language voluntourism is established in a particular locality exclusively when an individual from the

Global North travels to a host community to teach there. After the volunteer's service tenure is completed, the volunteer returns to his or her home country and the field site disappears. This process happens continually, worldwide, as English language voluntourism projects are created and completed in different communities throughout the world at various temporal junctures. Multi-sited ethnography allows a researcher to account for the brevity of an individual volunteer service project while simultaneously acknowledging that the broader phenomenon of English language voluntourism is ongoing and continually in flux.

English language voluntourism, then, takes place in multiple locations, at different times, and at a range of scales. However, outside of the recruitment and application process, individual participants in English language voluntourism programs often have little actual contact with the larger, Global North-based corporate or non-profit groups that sponsor them. A program participant's work in a host community, however, is influenced by the aims of these sponsors and the public policy centers, federal legislation, and national ministries of education from whom they receive support (e.g., The Brookings Institution, 2006; Volunteers for Prosperity, n.d.). Multi-sited ethnography allows a researcher to account for this deterritorialized, often vertiginous, quality: It allows researchers to attend to the micro-level manner in which English language voluntourism is practiced (e.g., through grammar lessons in a classroom in Costa Rica), as well as giving them a purchase on the macro-level contexts in which English language voluntourism is situated. These macro-level contexts include, but are not limited to, the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (cited in Global Volunteers, 2008, p. 6); a contemporary cultural and political landscape in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporations, and other groups outside of the nation-state are charged with solving wide-scale social problems (Spring, 2004); an American national climate in which acts of volunteerism and

service are promoted as ideals and indices of active citizenship (King, 2006); and a late twentieth, early-twenty-first century shift in the gestalt of American education away from progressive, constructivist notions of teaching and learning toward a standards-based, rational-technical model of schooling in which content knowledge rather than pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) takes primacy in defining the role of teacher (Labaree, 2004).

For this study, I followed English language voluntourism and traced its contours in three different locations (two actual, one virtual) over the course of two and a half years. In the summer of 2007, I participated in an English language voluntourism program in Costa Rica for eight weeks under the auspices of a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in a large, Northeastern U.S. city. I elected to work with this particular NGO because I was an alumna of one of its programs. I had participated on its Ecuador summer program for eight weeks in 2003, prior to graduate study, so I was already familiar with the NGO's recruitment and application procedures, the structure of its short-term programs, and the various locations to which it sends volunteers. I selected the Costa Rica summer program for my study from among six country options because the Costa Rica program focused exclusively on English language teaching (the NGO's Africa summer programs often require volunteers to teach instructional technology), and I had some background in Spanish language study. Also, because of Costa Rica's Central American location, I was eligible to apply for and receive travel funding toward the study from a Latin American and Caribbean studies center at my home university. This money was applied toward the overall program cost: In 2007, the NGO's fee (inclusive of roundtrip air travel between San Jose, Costa Rica and Miami, FL) for its summer-length program in Costa Rica was \$3999.00.

The NGO that sponsored my program is well-respected in the field of international volunteering at large. It was established in the mid-1980s by a group of undergraduate students at a prestigious, private university. Today, the NGO continues to be affiliated with the same university through an arrangement with one of its schools and by way of its board of directors, some of whom are university faculty members. The NGO has received positive media attention in outlets ranging from CNN to *The New York Times*. Additionally, the NGO is a standing, influential member of numerous national volunteer organizations such as the Building Bridges Coalition, the International Volunteer Program Association, and the federally-supported initiative, Volunteers for Prosperity. These are groups that aim to support international volunteering among Americans at numerous scales and to grow the international volunteering practice by actual participant numbers. Indeed, the links between this study's focal NGO and public policy are many: under the auspices of the Building Bridges Coalition, for example, alumni of the NGO provided Congressional testimony in support of the enacted legislation, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 (H.R. 1388), which directs federal funding toward international volunteerism. Since its inception, the NGO has sponsored over 4,000 volunteers abroad in year-long and summer-length (i.e., 8-10 week) programs in a total of 18 countries. In 2008 alone, the NGO sponsored 398 volunteers in 15 programs in 10 different countries. Nine of these programs were year-long, and six were of summer length.

In the summer of 2008, I worked in the Northeastern U.S. city-based organizational offices of the sponsoring NGO as a full-time program assistant for six weeks. In this administrative and volunteer role, I learned about program establishment, marketing, recruitment, financing, support materials preparation, alumni relations, and the various ways in which English language voluntourism and long-term volunteer teaching programs are supported,

developed, and structured from a U.S. base. The NGO, housed near the private university with which it is affiliated, employed ten full-time staff members in 2008. This group included an Executive Director, an Associate Director, a Finance Director, five program coordinators, and a Director of Admissions and Recruiting. All of the full-time program coordinators were former year-long or summer volunteers, and all were in their mid- to late twenties. Additionally, there were a host of part-time, undergraduate-aged program assistants working there between 10 and 20 hours a week. These employee demographics lent the NGO offices a hip, youthful feel. One gets the sense, while working there, that international volunteering in education is a field being run, in the main, by idealistic, well-educated, witty and visionary twenty-somethings—people who have, quite literacy, brushed elbows (if not co-mingled) with the likes of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg.

My own positionality was a frequent source of humor in the NGO offices, particularly among the undergraduate-aged program assistants and my direct supervisor, the Director of Admissions and Recruitment. This latter figure, an Asian American man in his mid-twenties and a graduate of the private university with which the NGO is affiliated, found it eccentric, if not comedic, not only that I was working as his subordinate, but also that I was investigating English language voluntourism with a critical eye. That said, he was more than generous in accommodating my research. He made sure I had access to nearly all of the NGO data bases and other materials dealing with admissions, recruitment, and alumni relations; he helped me to contact and arrange interviews with former program participants; he drew my attention to new plans the NGO had for building strategic alliances among state, private and NGO umbrella groups; and he directed me to related research about the focal NGO in particular and international volunteering at large. An aspirant to the U.S. Foreign Service (as of 2009, he did,

indeed, become a junior Foreign Service Officer), the NGO's Director of Admissions and Recruitment was unwavering in his commitment to what he perceived to be the positive value of international volunteering, a view of the U.S. as an exemplar of meritocracy, and the efficacy of international development aid programs as run by organizations like the World Bank. Our frequent and ongoing debates about these issues added an interesting twist to my time at and orientation to the NGO, as it was made clear to me through frequent conversations that critical interrogations of English language voluntourism and related practices are viewed within diplomatic channels as "liberal hand waving": impractical mental exercises that have limited real-life application. Despite our political differences, however, the NGO Director of Admissions and Recruitment and I remain good friends to this day; friendship between study participants and researchers, it has been well-noted, is an occupational hazard of ethnography (e.g., Peacock, 2001).

The third location to which I followed English language voluntourism for the purposes of this study was, quite literally, into the ether: the internet. I examined over 20 English language voluntourism sponsors' promotional websites and investigated the ways in which they presented, pictured, and referenced (or didn't reference) the following topics: English language skills (their purposes, transmission, uses, and for whom); international development; teaching methods, practices, and preparation; globalization; the Global South as geographical terrain; and Global South people. These topics were chosen both inductively (based on categories and ideas present on the actual websites, in interview participants' talk, or in my field notes) and deductively (based on categories and ideas implied in related academic literature). Given the internet's prominent role in the recruitment and application phases of English language voluntourism—e.g., the NGO at which I worked collected nearly all of its application materials from prospective

applicants via the internet, and most of its marketing campaigns, alumni newsletters, and promotional materials were geared toward the on-line world—it was germane to this study to incorporate the internet and the many English language voluntourism promotional websites available there as a component of my multi-sited fieldwork. As Edwards (1994/2007) observes, “the Net reveals to us that there is . . . a kind of simulated politics in the age of the global diaspora” (p. 352), and to the extent that English language voluntourism is implicated in these “simulated politics,” I wanted to see it in action.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Data Collection: Costa Rica**

While in Costa Rica, I engaged in participant observation as a volunteer English language teacher for eight weeks and took extensive field notes while there. For approximately six of the eight weeks of my stay, I lived with a 5-member host family in a small, north central village near the Nicaraguan border, and I taught English in a local public school in grades 6-8 for approximately 3 hours per day, 5 days a week. I recorded and described, among other topics, the prescribed content of my English language courses; the English language skills demonstrated by my students; my interactions with the school’s permanent English language teacher (a Costa Rican man in his early thirties); the goals and objectives of the Costa Rican national English language curriculum for grades 6-8; my students’ behavior and participation in English language classes; and my understandings of the community’s expectations of and reactions to me. This last category included jottings related to students’ responses to my teaching; interactions with colleagues in and out of school; and community members’ questions of and expressed interest in me and life in the U.S. in general. I also engaged in many social activities with my host family; played daily with local schoolchildren; and attended larger community goings-on including, but



not limited to, school field trips; weekly Catholic mass; family parties; town-wide sporting events; and the funeral of (and evening rosaries for) a relative of my host family. I recorded observations about these experiences and other key events in my daily field notes.

Prior to going to my teaching site, I also attended a week-long, pre-service orientation workshop with the 20 other U.S. volunteers in my NGO summer program cohort, a group comprised of 17 undergraduate students from institutions around the U.S. and 4 older (i.e., 25-35 year-old) working professionals (including me). This orientation, conducted in a Costa Rican central valley town, included briefings on cultural issues; workshops on teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL); Spanish language classes; and social events with local host families, among other events. Orientation sessions were led primarily by the summer program Field Director, a U.S citizen who identified as a white male in his mid-twenties who had previously served in Costa Rica as one of the NGO's year-long volunteers. Other sessions at the orientation were guest-led by other, visiting, year-long volunteers in their early to mid-twenties who identified as white and female. I recorded the content of each orientation session in my field notes, taking care to write up what I understood to be each session's aims, primary content, and effectiveness. I also took notes on the questions that other volunteers asked and the types of concerns that seemed to occupy their thoughts throughout the week (e.g., fears of teaching, anxiety about classroom management, concerns about health and homesickness).

In addition to the pre-service orientation, I also attended a two-day, mid-service conference in Costa Rica's capital city, San Jose, with the same Field Director and the other volunteers in my summer cohort. The mid-service conference was a forum in which program participants could share their volunteering experiences up until that point with one another; discuss teaching problems and successes; and brainstorm about what they hoped to accomplish

during the remainder of their service time in Costa Rica. Akin to the pre-service orientation, the mid-service conference was structured as a series of workshops led by the summer Field Director. I took extensive field notes during the mid-service conference, paying close attention to what other in-service program participants described as the struggles, successes, and meaningful experiences they were having in their respective host communities.

In addition to taking field notes and collecting documents such as EFL teaching guides, handouts, and cultural manuals during the orientation and mid-service conference, I conducted 16 open-ended, semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 1998) with 14 of the other volunteers in my summer cohort (I spoke with two participants twice, once during the orientation session and once during the mid-service conference). With the exception of one participant in her mid-thirties (a community college instructor) and two participants in their mid- to late twenties (a financial consultant and a former schoolteacher *cum* graduate student, respectively), all of my interview participants were undergraduate students majoring in social science fields (non-education) or the humanities. Two participants identified as Asian American (one undergraduate student and the financial consultant), the others as white. Five interview participants identified as male (the Asian American financial consultant; the others, undergraduates), and nine interview participants identified as female. A process of opportunity sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to obtain interview participants, as schedules were very hectic during the orientation and mid-service conference and interviews were most often possible when I and another program participant serendipitously happened to be free from group obligations at the same time. (In fact, I conducted one interview on public transportation when another volunteer and I coincidentally happened to be leaving the orientation site on the same bus.) Established social rapport between me and certain volunteers also affected who participated in my study. For example, two of the

other Costa Rica volunteers (henceforth referred to as *in-service program participants*) and I spent an afternoon exploring San Jose together at the conclusion of our week-long orientation; it was easy for me to sit and down and talk with each of them at the end of that day. During the orientation, interviews were most often conducted at the open-air restaurant in which the NGO-sponsored workshops were held; during the mid-service conference, interviews were conducted at the San Jose youth hostel in which our cohort stayed for one night. Another interview was conducted in San Jose at a different youth hostel a week after the mid-service conference when another in-service program participant and I ran into each other by chance during *quincecias*, the Costa Rican school summer break.

All interviews in Costa Rica lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour. An interview guide was used to prompt participants to discuss certain topics, including (but not limited to) the role of English language teaching/learning in Costa Rica; one's motivations for participating in an English language voluntourism tourism program; the similarities and differences between volunteering and international travel; one's understanding of international development (what the term means, what it looks like); and one's experiences of classroom teaching (in Costa Rica or elsewhere). All interviews were digitally audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. (See Figure 2.2 for the interview protocol used with in-service program participants in Costa Rica).

### **Data Collection: Northeastern U.S. City**

While working as a program assistant in the NGO offices in the summer of 2008, I wore many hats and learned many things about international volunteering “from the inside” including, but not limited to, marketing; recruitment; the application process; applicant screening; participant selection; the construction/organization of programs; pre-departure preparation; and alumni relations. One of my main roles as a program assistant was to work in the

admissions/recruitment division of the NGO. I answered email correspondence from prospective volunteers; corresponded with in-process applicants in reference to their (in)complete applications; conducted phone interviews with prospective year-long volunteers (summer-length programs at this NGO do not require interviews as part of the application process); and contacted NGO program alumni around the U.S. for the purposes of updating their filed information, involving them in NGO marketing/recruitment fairs, and arranging face-to-face interviews between alumni and prospective year-long volunteers. I also answered the NGO phone, speaking frequently with prospective volunteers about the process of applying to volunteer; the structure and location of the NGO's different programs; and the various ways in which program participants receive support and training while abroad. Being in my mid-thirties (nearly a decade or so older than the average NGO office worker), I was often given the calls placed by "non-traditional" prospective applicants (i.e., people older than 25), and I talked with them at length about the international volunteering experience, what they could expect to feel as a "non-traditional" volunteer in the field as well as the various ways in which international volunteering might (or might not) be suited to their lives and skill sets. Another responsibility I had in the program offices was to write articles for help coordinate the NGO alumni newsletter, a bi-annual document that is distributed exclusively on-line.

Working in the NGO offices added an at-times confusing dimension to my dissertation study. As Brosius (1999) cautions, "taking seriously the multi-sitedness of research projects . . . demands that we rethink the implications of our ethnographic presence" (pp. 349-350); "Our presence has the potential to reconfigure the very present that we observe" (p. 371). This observation has salience to my work: In an effort to collect data on English language voluntourism at multiple scales, I worked in the service of its promotion. By working in the

NGO offices (as a recruiter, as a writer for an alumni newsletter aimed at fundraising), I became (intentionally or not) an English language voluntourism advocate—one who “sold” the product in an effort to better understand it.

As a participant-observer in the NGO offices, I also took daily field notes of my experiences. I jotted down key events, patterns, and other moments of significance that I observed in the day-to-day activities such as the focus of discussions among staff members; interesting inquiries from prospective volunteers; and even the ways in which the offices were decorated (i.e., dozens of framed photographs of volunteers “in the field” lined the walls). I also collected numerous archival documents such as program training manuals; press releases; promotional literature; and application dossiers from previous summer volunteer program cohorts. The NGO, having a university affiliation, is quite amenable to research. Thus, it was with little effort that I acquired most of the documents that I asked to see. In fact, during the same summer that I was volunteering in the NGO offices, a team of researchers from a public, Midwestern university was conducting a mixed methods of study of international volunteering that focused on the same NGO. Shortly before my visit, a representative from this research team had come to the NGO, too—not to conduct ethnographic fieldwork but rather to collect, among other information, quantitative data about the backgrounds of in-service program participants; the size of volunteer cohorts; and the demographics of program alumni. I, too, was given copies of these documents.

While volunteering in the NGO offices, I was also able to conduct 14 semi-structured, open-ended interviews with 10 of the NGO’s employees (4 individuals were interviewed twice, once at the beginning of my office tenure and again in my final week there). I spoke with the NGO’s Executive Director, a person in her mid-fifties who identified as a white female; the

Associate Director, an employee in her mid-thirties who identified as an Asian American female; the Director of Admissions and Recruitment, a person in his mid-twenties who identified as Asian American male; and five program coordinators, all individuals in their mid-twenties who identified, respectively, as follows: three, white male; one, Latina American; and one, white female. I also interviewed three program assistants, all of whom were undergraduate students in their early twenties studying in the social sciences (non-education). The program assistants identified as female, Asian American, African American, and white, respectively. Similar to the interviews I conducted in Costa Rica, interviews in the NGO offices involved both purposeful and convenience sampling (Patton, 2002). That is, I selected interview participants mainly because of their central involvement in international volunteering (this was especially true among the program coordinators), but there was also an element of chance in participant selection, as peoples' busy schedules often did (or did not) open unexpectedly and allow for some quiet time to talk with me. All of the NGO office interviews were conducted on site, lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour, and were digitally audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Interview guides used in the NGO office setting were similar to those I employed in Costa Rica. Questions focused on participants' previous volunteer experiences (7 participants had volunteered with the NGO prior to their office employment); their feelings toward and understandings of international volunteering at large (its purposes, outcomes, and effectiveness); international development (what they understood the concept to mean, what it looks like, how it is measured); English language teaching (their understanding of effective language pedagogy, the purposes of English language teaching/learning in various contexts); and their understandings

of why international volunteering is popular at this moment in time. (See Figure 2.3 for NGO office interview protocol.)

At times, my NGO office interview protocol had to be changed to accommodate the various geographical regions and different types of volunteer programs overseen by the different program coordinators. The NGO sponsors both short and long-term volunteer programs in Latin America, Africa, Europe, and the Pacific Islands, and some programs focus exclusively on English language teaching while others stress instruction in technology and content areas. Interview protocols, then, varied slightly according to the individual with whom I was speaking. The interview protocol was also altered depending on whether interview participants had volunteered in short or long-term programs. Of the 7 full-time employees who had international volunteer experience with the NGO, 3 had participated in summer-long programs, 4 in year-long ones. Finally, given that the focus of this study is English language voluntourism, interviews varied in length, content, and focus depending upon whether the program each interviewee either coordinated or had participated in was directly or tangentially related to English language teaching.

Talking with NGO employees who had previously volunteered abroad was a rich experience. Often, these participants shared nuanced, critical views of what they had done: e.g., the limitations of their volunteer work; what they felt they did well; how the NGO might have helped or hindered them in their volunteer teaching, etc. Thus, talking with the NGO employees was critical in directing me to a new pool of data: retrospective interviews with former program participants. Anxious to talk with more NGO program alumni, I was given access by the NGO to computerized, alumni databases that listed, among other information, the names, email addresses, current residences, and current occupations of the NGO's former English language

voluntourism program participants (i.e., the alumni of its summer-length programs). Using information collected from this database, I contacted approximately 40 former program volunteers via email in the fall of 2008. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to identify program alumni who had volunteered with the NGO in the last two years (thus, presumably, able to recall rich details of their experience) and who were currently living in the Northeastern U.S. city metropolitan area (a high-density area for NGO program alumni). 27 former program participants responded to my email request; 23 of them agreed to meet and talk with me about their previous voluntourism experiences.

In January 2009, then, I returned to Northeastern U.S. city for ten days to conduct what ended up being a primary source of my data corpus: 20 open-ended, semi-structured interviews with 20 former program participants. 19 of these 20 individuals were current undergraduates at the private university with which the NGO is affiliated, so interviews with these participants were held on campus, in cafés adjacent to the university, or in the NGO offices. One interview participant, a person recently graduated in a social science (non-education) major from another university in the Northeastern U.S. city, also talked with me at the NGO offices. Of the 20 former program participants whom I interviewed, four identified as male, and they described themselves as Ecuadorian, Indian American, Jewish American, and white, respectively. Of the other 16 participants, all identified as female and as follows: 1 Indian American; 1 African American; 1 Asian American; 1 Latina; 2 Jewish American; and 10 white. Of the twenty former program participants, one was studying education (i.e., earning teaching licensure as part of her undergraduate work); all of the other former program participants were majoring in the social sciences (non-education), the humanities, or the hard sciences (e.g., biology).



Retrospective interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes each, and all were digitally audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. I employed an interview guide similar to the ones I used in Costa Rica and in the NGO offices. Participants were prompted to reflect on their volunteer experiences as whole, and they were asked to speak, among other topics, to the role of English language teaching and learning in their host communities; their roles as teachers and volunteers; their views of international development; the ways in which their experiences affected them; their motivations for having participated in a voluntourism program; their experiences in the classroom; and their current views on international volunteering and its larger purposes. Additionally (and exclusive to the retrospective interviews) each former program participant was asked to look at a sample of the NGO's current promotional literature and discuss the ways in which the product did or did not reflect their own volunteer experiences. Three of the participants interviewed retrospectively were former members of my 2007 Costa Rica summer program cohort (a fact that lent a feeling of shared camaraderie to these particular interviews); other former program participants were alumni of the following summer programs: 2008 Namibia (2), 2008 China (2), 2008 South Africa (2), 2008 Costa Rica (3), 2008 Ecuador (3), 2008 Bulgaria (1); 2007 Ecuador (1); 2007 Namibia (2) and 2007 Poland (1). (See Figure 2.4 for interview protocol.)

### **Data Collection: The Internet**

As an additional component of this multi-sited ethnography and to better understand how English language teaching is constructed as a form of volunteer tourism, a practice that involves "aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society" (Wearing, 2001, p. 1), I explored the ways in which English language voluntourism is talked about, marketed, and presented in the virtual world. That is, using a process of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), I

selected and analyzed the websites of 21 non-profit and corporate organizations that met the following criteria: 1) They sponsor short-term, English language teaching programs in the Global South (“short-term” being between 2 days and 12 weeks, with the majority of programs being around one month); 2) They are Global North-based; and 3) They are non-sectarian. Religious groups, I felt, took the notion of international volunteering in a different, missionary-like direction (cf. Snow, 2001) and was beyond the scope of this particular study.

As I, the researcher, had participated in three different English language voluntourism programs prior to undertaking this dissertation study (in 1998, 2002, and 2003 in Ukraine, Tanzania, and Ecuador, respectively), many of the sponsoring organizations whose websites I chose to analyze were already familiar to me through personal experience or by way of prior investigation into their programs. Other sponsoring organizations’ websites were selected through a process of snowball sampling (Patton, 2002). That is, numerous voluntourism sponsoring organizations’ websites were linked to major international travel and international volunteering website clearinghouses such as Volunteers for Prosperity, Transitions Abroad, and the International Volunteer Programs Association. I also identified sponsoring organizational websites by referencing them in printed guides such as *How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Overseas* and *World Volunteering*, trade books that publicize international volunteer tourism opportunities. Of the 21 sponsoring organizations whose websites I ultimately chose for analysis, 15 are based in the U.S. and 5 are based in the U.K. (One transferred its offices to Thailand since the beginning of this study). While some of these sponsoring organizations have been in existence for over 20 years and oversee programs in as many as 40 countries, other sponsoring organizations are newer, having been established as recently as 2001 and sponsoring programs in as few as 6 countries.

Having selected these 21 organizational websites as part of my data corpus, I visited these sites with regularity—approximately once every other month—between 2009 and 2010. During these on-line visits, I took extensive notes on the following topics (often cutting and pasting text samples from websites into Microsoft Word documents while doing so): the ways in which the English language was talked about (e.g., its purposes, uses, and by whom it is used, and where); English language teaching and learning (e.g., descriptions of how language is, can, or should be learned and taught); teaching in general (e.g., what teaching is, how one does it effectively); international development (e.g., what it is, who needs it and why); the Global South (e.g., how it is described, what occurs there, to what its problems can be attributed); and Global South people in general (e.g., who they are, how they are described, what their needs, hopes, and desires are). I also collected numerous on-line “newsletters” from various voluntourism sponsors over time, as while perusing organizations’ different websites, I often signed up to “receive more information.” These on-line newsletters were, and continue to be, sent to my personal email account with varying frequencies; I check them to confirm (or disconfirm) the analysis that I present here. (For a summary of my data collection, see Figure 2.1).

### **Data Reduction and Analysis**

I began my data analysis by reading and re-reading my ethnographic field notes, particularly those I took while volunteering in Costa Rica. Though not the primary source of my data corpus, these field notes helped to shape my interview protocols, both those I used with in-service program participants in Costa Rica and, later, those I used with NGO employees and former program participants in Northeastern U.S. city. For example, an early theme that emerged in my field notes was “English language use.” I had observed, and written extensively about, how the English language speakers in my Costa Rican village (i.e., a family who had lived in

New Jersey for a few years and then returned to Costa Rica), weren't using English at all to "further their job or career prospects," a statement made frequently on English language voluntourism program sponsors' websites and implied throughout the NGO orientation session. I incorporated this information into my interview protocol, later asking other in-service and former program participants whether residents in their host communities had possessed English language skills, and if so, to describe or characterize the purposes to which they had put them.

My field notes also occupied my thoughts as I examined voluntourism program sponsors' websites. My own experiences as a participant in an English language voluntourism program (in Costa Rica and in three, previous other experiences) often contradicted that which I saw written on-line. I would return to my field notes continually to confirm or disconfirm tentative data interpretations. For example, I wrote extensively in my field notes about the career aspirations of the members of my Costa Rican host family, their relatives, and other people in the local community. This developed into a theme of "career goals," which, among people I spoke with casually in Costa Rica, included such plans as running the family-owned restaurant, going to secretarial school, and becoming a wife and/or mother. Later, when I examined English language voluntourism program sponsors' websites and saw little, if any, mention of these types of career goals—and instead, read a lot about "English for accessing the global economy"—reading and re-reading my field notes helped to confirm what I later called came to call the conceptual category, "English language use" as well as the code, "English for the global" (explained below).

My overall analysis used a constructivist, grounded theory approach (following Charmaz, 2006). Constructivist grounded theory assumes that any theoretical rendering of data "offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10). Consequently, the analysis presented here is partial, situated; it is contingent upon the

experiential and theoretical perspectives that I (the researcher) bring to the analytic task. These experiential and theoretical perspectives include a critical perspective on English language voluntourism as development (an embodied perspective, as I am as a four-time voluntourism program alumna and quite skeptical about whether anyone ever learned any English language skills directly from me); a background in critical social theory that includes courses in economic globalization, postcolonialism, and Marxism; and a keen desire to understand how other English language voluntourism program participants perceive their own roles/effectiveness as volunteers. (That is, was anyone was as confused as I was about it meant to be doing these programs?) Thus, I came to my data analysis not *expecting* to find certain things but admittedly oriented toward particular concepts over others. I have pleasantly surprised, for example, to attend academic conferences over the past few years and meet other people investigating volunteer tourism in very different, yet complimentary, ways. Sinervo (2010), for example, studies love and caring as commodities within volunteer tourism, while Conran (2010) analyzes the ways in which discourses of “compassion” within volunteer tourism both reflect and promote the political prerogatives of American “compassionate conservatism.”

### **Data Reduction**

From about 2008-2009, I lived in the cozy space of transcription. That is, when colleagues or well-meaning family members asked how my dissertation research was coming along, I answered, “Great! I’m transcribing now.” This meant (at least to me) that I was busy, I was engaged—that I was “working on it.” In the end, though (for the purposes of this dissertation) what transcription really helped me to do was to make decisions about data reduction.

First, the corpus of interview transcripts I had from the NGO office setting—transcripts of interviews I had conducted in Northeastern U.S. city with program coordinators and the Executive Director of the NGO—differed greatly from those that detailed in-service and former program participants’ talk. That is, NGO office employees often spoke very reservedly, very cautiously—even smoothly—about English language voluntourism, the NGO, and the roles of these and similar programs in a “development” context. It struck me: This was their *employer* we were talking about, and an employee of any organization probably wants to keep that organization viable and/or promote its work as meaningful. Feeling (in some sense) that I was interviewing NGO promotional avatars rather than individuals—but not wanting to investigate this concept *too* far—I gently set this portion of my data aside (for now).

Documents, too, became overwhelming. I had collected them liberally over the course of two years: I saved all of my Costa Rica program’s orientation and teaching manuals; I collected boxes of application dossiers, press releases, and promotional literature while working at the NGO offices; I had notebooks filled with field notes written in Costa Rica and the Northeastern U.S. city. At least I was in good company: In Smagorinsky’s (2008) piece on the role of the methods sections in research reports, he writes that, as a professor, he has “often heard graduate students talk about their ‘thousands of pages of data,’ with which they are most impressed” (p. 397). He was, I think, describing me—but I wasn’t impressed with myself at all. So, akin to the corpus of NGO office interview transcripts, this material (save the promotional brochures) was set aside in terms of coding. (Incidentally, one set of the application dossiers has already formed the corpus of data for a different, separate study; see Jakubiak & Smagorinsky, 2011.)

Ultimately, three specific groups of materials comprised the central corpus of data for this dissertation study: one, the websites and promotional materials of the selected 21 voluntourism

sponsors; two, the 14 in-service program participants' interview transcripts; and three, the 20 retrospective interview transcripts. I decided to code strictly these groups of materials because I not only felt that they best helped to answer my research questions, but I also *liked* them the best. They were invested with *me*: these data were not found, but were (co)produced in the context of my larger, multi-sited ethnography. That is, I would not have had the same access to or rapport with in-service program participants had we not taken the same waterfall hikes in Costa Rica or struggled together in Spanish class. I would not have had as robust a response to my email request for retrospective interview participants had not the NGO Director of Admissions and Recruitment (on his own) called some of them up on the phone and said, "Hey, I know Cori; she's nice—go talk with her." It is unlikely that voluntourism sponsors' websites and promotional materials would have resonate with me in the same way had I not worked for a similar organization or participated in the advertised programs. Thus, my ultimate data corpus is a reflection of my research design: It is data produced ethnographically.

## **Data Analysis**

**Initial, or open coding and early conceptual category development.** Drawing from Mowforth and Munt's (2006) heuristic for analyzing new tourism forms, Escobar's (1995) theory of development as discourse, and theories of critical applied linguistics (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Young & Fitzgerald, 2006) as initial lenses, I began my data analysis by thoroughly reading the 34 interview transcripts and the 21 web pages (i.e., their home pages and any links to "English language teaching") as a complete corpus. This re-reading allowed me to "[take] in the entire record of the [research] experience as it evolved over time" and "elaborate and refine earlier insights and hunches" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 142). I then engaged in a process of initial, or open, coding, entering what Glesne (1999) calls the "code mines." Reading

each interview transcript and webpage separately and following Glaser (cited in Charmaz, 2006), I applied gerund-based codes to “chunks,” or each segment, of text to describe what was happening from the beginning to the end of each interview transcript or webpage. Each segment of separately coded text, or unit of analysis, represented one discrete unit of thought. Initial, or open, codes covered a wide range of topics and included such forms as: “Wanting to learn Spanish,” “Viewing English as necessary for ‘getting a job,’” “Wishing he had had a more structured curriculum,” “Putting forth the idea that English is a differential right” and “A pedagogy of enthusiasm.”

I also created and applied *in vivo* codes, or participants’ own language as codes, when multiple participants used the exact same phrasing to voice similar, but not immediately apparent, ideas. In vivo codes are “characteristic of social worlds and organizational settings. . . [that] reflect assumptions, actions, and imperatives that frame action” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 56), and thus are key to the way participants in any setting perceive “insider” concepts. When more than one participant (or organization) used a certain word or phrase in a related, unexpected way, then, I named these as in vivo codes. Examples of in vivo codes included “safety net” (i.e., traveling abroad under the sponsorship of a U.S.-based organization), “global awareness” (i.e., the idea that Global South people need to know more about Global North countries), “getting involved in [their] world” (i.e., the idea that Global South people can more learn about the world by meeting a visiting volunteer or learning English), and “making a difference” (i.e., the *prima facie* idea that English language voluntourism promotes positive change in a local community and/or leads to “development”).

Following initial, or open, coding, I engaged in a process of focused coding in which I took all of the initial, or open, codes and grouped them into broad, conceptual categories that



aligned with my initial research questions. For example, an early category, “Views of English,” was populated by initial, or open, codes such as “Feeling strongly that English is okay ‘for a global economy’ but that primary language literacy instruction is key for student success”; “Seeing critical thinking as more important than EFL teaching”; and “Seeing English as a ‘useful tool’ for building businesses.” Another early category, “Views of Development,” was comprised of initial, or open, codes such as “Feeling critical of the teleology ‘development’ implies,” “Questioning the idea of development in terms of the new problems it creates for local cultures,” and “Believing that a ‘common sense of humanity is what is gonna change the world.’”

Below, in illustration, I include a sample of some initial, or open, codes collapsed into a focused coding group:

*Focused code: Stressing the importance of local initiatives*

*Peg: Feeling that change in a community must occur locally—from within—and not from an outside influence*

*Joanne: Feeling that two months was way too short to understand the context of what was happening in her community*

*Joanne: Feeling that she has no business starting interventions in countries that she’s never had any contact with, that she doesn’t understand the impacts of interventions*

*Raj: Feeling that the effort needs to be in local teachers, in local schools—not technology or outside quick-fixes*

*Raj: Observing that teacher training/recruiting at the local level is the real issue—and that that’s outside the scope of [NGO]*

At this juncture in the analysis, I set aside some of my broad, conceptual categories (as well as their composite codes) and placed them into electronic folders for later use. I was

intrigued by some of the expected conceptual categories that emerged from my early data analysis, and imagined that I might come back to them post-dissertation. For example, a density of initial, or open, codes related to “Changes in One’s Life” led me to develop a conceptual category of the same name. Included within this category were open, or initial, codes such as “Wanting to now pursue a career in language policy”; “Becoming curious about the history of the progressive movement in U.S. education”; and “Revising one’s view of body image because of having been abroad.” Although I had not intended to gather this type of information from my research participants (indeed, none of my interview questions specially asked them if they had been personally changed or altered by the volunteer experience, a fact that reflects my own theoretical preoccupations), they provided it nevertheless.

Again, while I did go on to refine the early conceptual categories of “Views of English” and “Views of Development” (discussed below), I did not pursue the conceptual category of “Changes in One’s Life” to any greater extent. This choice demonstrates the ways in which “coding [a data set] establishes the researcher’s subjectivity in relation to the data and the framework through which data are interpreted” (Smagorinsky, 2008, p. 399). That is, my *lack of* interest in how participation in volunteer tourism affects volunteers’ subsequent life choices (and *concurrent* interest in the discourses of international EFL teaching and development) reflects my academic and experiential orientations. As a doctoral student who has been interested, for years, in the ways in which profit-making ventures (and ways of being) collude with public, non-profit organizations (e.g., schools, NGOs) to naturalize and perpetuate particular ideologies, I have taken coursework to find theoretical tools for conducting analyses of the same. Thus, my data analysis is a reflection of my primary personal and academic interests: economic globalization, neoliberalism, and new forms of governmentality. The codes I applied to my data did not simply

materialize from the data itself; rather, what “emerged” from my data analysis reflects the theoretical and situated interests I brought to this study as a researcher. Per Peacock (2001), “reporting the way ‘they are’ often reveals much about the way ‘I am’” (p. 71).

**Refining conceptual categories, final coding.** Having distilled my data focus to the preliminary conceptual categories of “Views of English” and “Views of Development” for the purposes of this study, I used an iterative, constant comparative process (following grounded theory) to refine these categories and the develop codes that comprised them.

**English language use.** First, “Views of English” became the category, *English language use*, a decision made to reflect a sociolinguistic orientation toward language as language-in-use (e.g., Rampton, 2006). Then, I divided my (now well-populated) focused codes into specific codes. These specific codes included *English for the global*, *English for the local*, *English for leaving the rural*, *English for personal empowerment*, *English for escaping poverty*, *English for addressing inequalities vis-à-vis English language education*, *English for accessing information*, and *English for intercultural communication*. Later, I collapsed some of these codes together (as some proved not to be as robust as first anticipated), and under the category, *English language use*, I ended up with five well-populated codes, which I later termed *discourses* of English language use. Following Burr (1995) who asserts that a discourse “refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statement and so on that in some way produce a particular version of events” (p. 48), I use my data codes to suggest that English language voluntourism puts forth five dominant discourses about EFL teaching/learning in the Global South. Voluntourism relies on and recreates these discourses in order to frame short-term, volunteer EFL teaching in the Global South as an “aid” or “development” intervention. These discourses ultimately became the following: 1) *English for the global*; 2) *English for the local*; 3)

*English for competing/escaping poverty through employment*; 4) *English for leaving the rural*; and 5) *English for personal empowerment*. These data are displayed as findings in chapter 3 of this manuscript.

***Views of development.*** The iterative process I used to explicate the early conceptual category, “Views on Development” was similar to that I used to develop *English language use* and its composite codes, or discourses. Focused codes (comprised of thematically grouped initial, or open, codes) led to me identify three key ways in which participants talked about English language voluntourism and development, or what I named the broad, conceptual category, *views of development*. These became the following superordinate categories: 1) *English language voluntourism is development*; 2) *English language voluntourism is not development*; and 3) *What is development, anyway?*

As literature demonstrates and my own analysis confirmed, voluntourism sponsors rarely engage with the language of *development* in their promotional materials (Simpson, 2004). Consequently, after initial, or open, coding, I did not draw further upon the internet data (i.e., voluntourism sponsors’ websites) to elaborate the three superordinate categories that comprised the broad, conceptual category, *views of development*. I did, however, read and re-read the initial, or open, codes that I had applied to my interview transcripts, and I refined and tightened my focused codes so as to make the three superordinate categories, *English language voluntourism is development*, *English language voluntourism is not development*, and *what is development, anyway?* clearer. In the end, this process resulted in two different coding schemes, which are represented as findings sections in two separate chapters of this manuscript. Below, I list the ultimate coding scheme I created for the broad, conceptual category, *Views of development*, in an outline form:

*Broad, conceptual category: Views of development*

*Chapter 4:*

*Superordinate category 1: English language voluntourism is development*

*Subordinate category 1: English or other instruction as development*

*Code 1: English for “understanding what’s going on”*

*Code 2: English for the global economy*

*Code 3: English for spreading (American) culture*

*Code 4: Volunteer teaching as providing critical thinking*

*Subordinate category 2: Development is an outcome of individual  
volunteer intervention*

*Code 1: Providing inspiration to local people*

*Code 2: Working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people*

*Chapter 5:*

*Superordinate category 2: English language voluntourism is not development*

*Code 1: English language voluntourism is too ineffectual to be  
development*

*Code 2: Development is something else*

*Superordinate category 3: What is development, anyway?*

*Code 1: Viewing development as reliant upon problematic  
ideological foundations*

*Code 2: Who benefits, or cui bono?*

*Code 3: Viewing development as causing new, unforeseen  
problems*

***Sample of coded text.*** Below, I include a section of coded data from an interview transcript to illustrate how I identified individual codes comprising the broader conceptual categories, *English language use* and *views of development*. In this segment of interview transcript, in-service program participant Edward and I are talking about the role of EFL teaching via voluntourism in Costa Rica. Edward had recently been pickpocketed while on a bus to San Jose, and he tied EFL teaching into the discussion.

E: I guess I like to think that English teaching is kind of a way to help other people to move beyond [poverty]. Move beyond the low economic status; have the opportunity so that they're not forced into situations where they feel it's necessary to take those actions.

C: And how do you think English will help them do that?

E :Especially in Costa Rica, it seems like the majority of the places I've traveled in the last week or so have been very-English speaking, a lot of tourists have come by. It seems like the main source of jobs for most of these communities. If the students of Costa Rica can become more proficient in English as a whole—obviously, a single teacher, it's not going to have a—me—a humongous difference—but, it would allow for great opportunities for those kids as they begin to move into both tourism in Costa Rica and world-wide business as a whole. (Edward, interview, July 7, 2007)

This segment of interview text received the initial, or open, codes of *viewing English language knowledge as a possible escape hatch from poverty* and *seeing English as a tool to help kids “move into both tourism in Costa Rica and world-wide business as a whole.”* Later, these codes were collapsed into (and helped to form) the broader conceptual codes of *English language use* and *views of development*. Within the category, *English language use*, this segment of interview text was then coded for the following discourses: *English for Competing/Escaping Poverty through Employment*, *English for the Local*, and *English for the Global*. Within the category, *views of development*, this segment of text received the code, *English for accessing the global economy*.

Finally, I must admit that my analysis was subject to continual “tweaking” throughout the final phases of this study. Consonant with Richardson (2000), who claims that “writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of ‘knowing’—a method of discovery and analysis” (p. 923), I made last-minute category alternations, sudden code-name changes, and multiple data sample swaps as I was writing-up my work. “Qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading,” Richardson continues (p. 924). Thus, as I read and re-read drafts of my different findings sections, I often made slight adjustments to my data displays, codes, and categories when I felt it was appropriate to do so.

Next, I share my findings. Chapter 3, “English for the Global: Discourses in/of English Language Voluntourism” focuses on five central discourses that provide the warrant for short-term, EFL teaching as a form of aid in the Global South. Chapter 4, “‘I was something special they could look forward to and have’: English Language Voluntourism as Development,” explores the ways in which participants spoke when they said that, *yes*, English language voluntourism *is* development. Chapter 5, “Ambivalence as an Optimal Outcome of Participation

in an English Language Voluntourism Program” centers on how some program participants contested the dominant development discourse that undergirds English language voluntourism—and how little space there is for these contestations.



Field Site	Data Collected
Costa Rica Summer 2007	Field notes of pre-service orientation, field notes of work/life in volunteer placement site, 16 interviews with 14 in-service volunteers, 1 interview with Costa Rican English language teacher, archival documents (e.g., teacher preparation manuals from NGO, handouts from orientation and mid-service conference, pre-departure and orientation manuals)
Northeastern U.S. City Summer 2008	Field notes of day-to-day work activities, staff meetings, and after-work programs (e.g., reception for retiring employee), 14 interviews with 10 NGO employees, archival documents (e.g., promotional materials, press releases, alumni newsletters, application dossiers for 6 summer program cohorts over five years)
Northeastern U.S. City January 2009	20 retrospective interviews with 20 former program participants (1 interview was a continuation of an interview I had conducted the previous summer)
The internet 2009-2010	21 on-line websites for 21 different voluntourism sponsoring organizations

**Figure 2.1: Data Collected for Multi-Sited Ethnography, 2007-2010**

*Protocol for participants interviewed prior to working in their field sites:*

1. What brought you to do this program?
2. What is your current position in school/work?
3. What are you hoping to achieve or accomplish through your volunteer experience?
4. (If applicable): You mentioned desiring to have a “meaningful” or “purposeful” experience. Can you talk more about that?
5. (If applicable): What might your contribution toward efforts to solve some of these problems that you describe?
6. (If applicable): I’m curious about something you said earlier. Could you talk more about what you describe as the inequity/unfairness/etc. that you see in the world?
7. To what do you attribute the sort of inequalities/problems/etc. that you describe?
8. How do you think your previous experiences volunteering/traveling/being abroad/being a student/etc. will inform the way you approach your job or your time here (in Costa Rica)?
9. How do you think what you talked about before—i.e., your desire to do something meaningful or helpful—will inform what you do here or your work as a volunteer?
10. What do you expect or hope that your impact on your local community will be?
11. What do you think the role of the English language is in all of this?
12. What do you think of the fact that the Costa Rican Ministry of Education invites [the NGO] to come?
13. How do you think your experience here as a volunteer is/will be different from that of a tourist?
14. (If applicable): Why do you think it is important for people from the U.S. to experience Costa Rica in a different (i.e., non-tourist) way?

*Additional questions for participants interviewed during the mid-service conference or otherwise after they had worked in their volunteer field site:*

15. Tell about how your experience is going.
16. What is the role of English in your host community?
17. Tell me about the teaching you’re doing. How is it going/what are you doing?
18. How is the experience turning out to be compared to what you thought it would be?

19. How do you perceive your role there in the community?
20. Have you had any particular experiences as a volunteer that have surprised you or for which you weren't prepared or didn't anticipate?
21. What do you hope your legacy will be after you leave?

**Figure 2.2: Protocol for Interviews with In-Service Program Participants**

1. How did you come to be involved with [NGO]?
2. What was volunteer experience like (where did you go, what did you do)?
3. What needs or expectations did your volunteer experience meet for you? (Or, what needs or expectations did it fail to meet?)
4. Tell me about your role here in the U.S. [NGO] office.
5. What do you think is the larger purpose or role of these types of volunteer programs?
6. What has been interesting or surprising to you about the work you do here at [NGO]?
7. From your position here as [a program coordinator, a director, etc.], you've looked at a lot of applications and talked with a lot of prospective applicants. What do you get the sense that most people do these volunteer programs for?
8. From talking with former program participants, what do you get the sense that volunteers come home from their experiences having learned?
9. Does the NGO have particular goals or expectations that it hopes to meet in terms of each particular program? For its volunteers?
10. How does the NGO measure whether its programs are effective in its different locations? What does "program effectiveness" look like in the program you coordinate/work for?
11. Part of the NGO's mission statement is "Education for international development." What does that mean or look like?
12. What do you think is the role of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching/learning in international development?
13. How would you characterize the EFL instruction that [NGO] provides? How would describe its quality or content?
14. What do you think is the overall impact programs such as [NGO] runs have on local communities? How are these impacts assessed or measured?
15. How has your own worldview been challenged or changed by the work you've done as a volunteer or as a (program coordinator, director, etc.) with [NGO]?

**Figure 2.3: Protocol for Interviews with NGO Office Employees**

1. Tell me how you came to be involved with [NGO].
2. Where does this idea of doing international volunteer work come from? Has someone in your family done this or something similar?
3. To what do you attribute the popularity of these programs at this moment in time?
4. Tell me about your volunteer experience in (Ecuador, Costa Rica, Poland, etc.).
5. What did you get the sense was the larger purpose of the NGO's volunteer program in (Ecuador, Costa Rica, Poland, etc.)?
6. Tell me about the teaching you did. How did it go, what did you do?
7. (If applicable): How did you make decisions about what and how to teach?
8. How were your students? How would you describe the relationships you had with them?
9. What did you get the sense that the local community needed or wanted English for?
10. What was the role of English in the local community in which you volunteered?
11. What do you think your overall impact ultimately was there in your host community? Or, what was the main role you played in your host community?
12. How did the experience meet (or not meet) or expectations?
13. Part of [the NGO's] mission statement is "Education for international development." What does this idea mean or look like to you?
14. In what ways did your volunteer experience change or complicate your worldview, if at all?
15. What are some of the changes that you think your local community needed or wanted to make?
16. (If applicable): What do you think is (or would be) the role of outside assistance in helping the local community to make (said) changes?
17. What would "development" look like in your host community, do you think?
18. How has your time as a volunteer in (Ecuador, Costa Rica, Poland, etc.) affected or affected your personal or professional life path, if at all?
19. Was there anything about your volunteer role or experience that made you uncomfortable?

20. This is a sample of promotional literature distributed by [the NGO]. To what extent do you think it accurately reflects your experience?
21. What advice would you have for a prospective volunteer?
22. Do you think—as volunteers from the United States—there is anything we need to be more cautious or careful of?
23. What did you get the sense was host community's understanding of why you were there?
24. Do you think doing this program was a sacrifice or a privilege? Why?

**Figure 2.4: Protocol for Interviews with Former Program Participants**

### CHAPTER THREE

## ENGLISH FOR THE GLOBAL: DISCOURSES IN/OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE VOLUNTOURISM<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Jakubiak, C. Submitted to *The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 03/15/11.

### **Abstract**

Short-term, volunteer English language teaching, or *English language voluntourism*, is a practice in which native speakers of prestige-variety English work as unpaid English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in the Global South as an alternative form of travel. Although the requirements for participation on most English language voluntourism programs are minimal, multiple stakeholders insist that English language voluntourism as a social practice makes a meaningful contribution to education and development in the Global South.

This manuscript reports on a 2-year, multi-sited ethnographic study of English language voluntourism. Data were collected through participant observation in Costa Rica, on an English language voluntourism program, and in a large, Northeastern U.S. city, in the offices of an NGO sponsoring organization. Findings suggest that English language voluntourism relies on and recreates a discourse of what Dicken (2003) calls hyperglobalism. This discourse comes largely from the Western business world, and it augers a future in which all countries are equally interconnected by a single, global economy and in which the primary role of the nation-state is to aid the global economic network rather than to provide social welfare services. Refracted through this hyperglobalist lens, English language skills alone become the proposed solution to a myriad of complex, structural problems in the Global South. Here, I discuss the ways in which English language voluntourism bolsters a specific development vision, one grounded in neoliberalism that, although it contradicts itself at times, is difficult to challenge or contest.

### **Introduction**

A 2007 *Time* magazine article entitled “Vacationing Like Brangelina: Does Volunteer Tourism Do Any Good?” poses a compelling question in reference to volunteer tourism. This is a practice in which well-meaning, often young, volunteers—people usually from the Global



North<sup>2</sup>, or industrialized, world—work on a short-term basis in fields like education, childcare, and nature preservation as an alternative form of travel and practice of humanitarian aid in the Global South (Wearing, 2001). The *Time* piece asks: “Are volunteer vacations . . . merely overpriced guilt trips with an impact as fleeting as the feel-good factor? Or do they offer individuals a real chance to change the world, one summer jaunt at a time?” (Fitzgerald, 2007, p. 49). Catchy as the question may be—i.e., Does volunteer tourism work or not?—the general nature of *Time*’s interrogation is revealing in what it overlooks. Given that 37% of all volunteer tourism projects fall under the category of teaching (Callanan & Thomas, 2005) and that “[t]eaching [English] is one of the most common volunteer assignments” (Collins, DeZerega, & Heckscherr, 2002, p. 8), a more pointed question to ask of volunteer tourism may not be *whether* it works but *how*. That is, unlike volunteer tourism projects with material, quantifiable outcomes such as post-earthquake debris removal in Port-au-Prince, Haiti or nature trail reconstruction in Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica, the goals and outcomes of English as a foreign language (EFL)

---

<sup>2</sup> The use of this term, *Global South*, indexes work in anthropology and critical geography that upsets the notion that industrialization indicates progress, and contests the idea that nations can be hierarchically ranked to indicate their economic, social, or cultural progress. Although “North” generally refers to the part of the world above the equator and “South” tends to identify nations below the equator, the terms Global North and Global South distinguish between social, technological, and economic differences rather than geographic location. These terms conceive of nation-states as existing in both present and historical relation to one another, and implicates the actions of the Global North in political, economic, and social problems arising the Global South, such as Belgium’s exploitation of mineral and agricultural resources in its colony of the Congo and its accompanying “*Dominer pour servir*” (“dominate to serve”) policy toward the indigenous population; the U.S. corporation Union Carbide India Limited’s role and lack of accountability in the Bhopal Chemical Disaster; Royal Dutch Shell Oil’s degradation of Ogoni land in Nigeria for the exploitation of oil reserves; and other actions taken by Global North nation-states that exacerbate global inequity and contribute to localized economic, political, and social problems in nation-states historically or currently under colonial rule.

teaching via volunteer tourism—i.e., *English language voluntourism*—are blurry and difficult to measure. As part of a larger research project and for the purposes of this study, I investigated the following two questions:

1. How is EFL teaching a form of volunteer tourism? What discourses and material conditions render it so?
2. How and in what ways do English language voluntourism program participants take up or contest these dominant discourses?

In answering these two questions, I seek to expand the meaning and significance of *Time*'s critical query, above. Whether volunteer tourism, defined broadly, ultimately “does any good” may depend not so much on what volunteer tourists actually do in the Global South sites in which they work but rather on the visions of success, ideas of social change, and model ways of being in the world that they and their projects carry forth.

## **Topical Framework**

### **Volunteer Tourism**

The phenomenon of volunteer tourism, or *voluntourism* (Callanan & Thomas, 2005, p. 183; Wearing, 2001), is defined as the short-term—generally one week to three month—practice of “volunteer[ing] in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the poverty of some groups in society” (Wearing, 2001, p. 1). Although the term, voluntourism, can be seen of late in the U.S. domestic context—for example, many upscale hotels now offer guests opportunities to participate in local, one-shot community volunteer projects in American cities like Miami (Villano, 2009), academic literature in tourism studies, critical development studies, and human geography characterizes volunteer tourism as an international phenomenon that moves primarily in a Global North-Global South flow. Volunteer

tourism is a form of *new tourism* (Poon, 1993), also called *niche* tourism (Novelli, 2005) or New Moral Tourism (Butcher, 2003), a form of alternative tourism that responds to the numerous, strident critiques issued against traditional, international mass tourism in the last few decades. These charges include environmental degradation (Turner & Ash, 1975), cultural imperialism (Jaakson, 2004), and usurious economic practices in Global South communities (Urry, 2000). Described as flexible (i.e., catering to segmented markets), consumer-driven, sustainable (even “green”), activity-oriented (i.e., beyond sun, sand, and sightseeing), and sensitive to local cultures (Poon, 1993), new tourism positions itself *contra* mass tourism. Specific forms of new tourism include, but are not limited to, research tourism, gastronomic tourism, wildlife tourism, space tourism, and volunteer tourism (Novelli, 2005).

The phenomenon of volunteer tourism has grown exponentially in recent years (Wearing, 2004). Although exact figures of volunteer tourism growth are difficult to determine, the increasing number of organizations offering volunteer tourism programs suggests that the phenomenon is significant and expanding (Brown & Morrison, 2003). Since the early 2000s at least, tourism researchers have noted a “volunteer tourism rush” among travelers from the Global North (Callanan & Thomas, 2005, p. 183), and in response, some formerly traditional tour companies (i.e., operators specializing in bus tours, cruises, and the like) have been expanding their range of services to include various forms of alternative tourism, including volunteer tourism (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie, & Pomfret, 2003).

Groups outside of the tourism sector have also been influential in contributing to the growth and popularity of volunteer tourism. Unlike tourism industry operators, however, who are likely to promote the practice for its ostensibly light ecological footprint and the supposedly culturally authentic encounters it can offer (Wearing, 2001), groups such as non-governmental

organizations (NGOs), faith-based coalitions, and state actors promote *de facto* volunteer tourism in the names of development aid, social responsibility, and public diplomacy—a.k.a., “soft power” (Nye, 2004). In these latter conceptualizations, volunteer tourism is often referred to as *international voluntary service*, *international civic service*, or *international volunteer service* (cf. McBride & Sherraden, 2007), umbrella terms that group volunteer tourism together along with long-term, residential volunteer programs such as the U.S. Peace Corps and highly technical volunteer service projects such as those directed by the French NGO, Doctors without Borders. Whatever their monikers, NGO-sponsored volunteer tourism programs are often quite expensive (fees for eight week trips can cost up to \$4000.00 and higher). For these fees, NGOs coordinate volunteer placements and often provide volunteers with an assortment of support services such as pre-departure and in-country orientation sessions, on-site field staff supervision, and help with travel arrangements to and from the host country (Ausenda & McCloskey, 2006).

Volunteer tourism, as a social practice, has both supporters and detractors. Although empirical evaluations of the actual outcomes of volunteer tourism programs on local communities in the Global South are few (for a critical exception, see Gray & Campbell, 2007), multiple stakeholders maintain that short-term, international volunteer efforts harness the power of an expanding global civil society and can generate unique solutions to seemingly intractable problems (Sherraden, 2007). Skeptics of volunteer tourism, however, aver that short-term, non-technical “aid” initiatives such as 6-week English language courses taught by uncredentialed, U.S. college students do little to alter the underlying structural causes of poverty and may instead exacerbate participants’ pre-existing stereotypes (Simpson, 2004). Other research offers that only particular people have both the time and material means to participate in volunteer tourism programs, making the phenomenon a means by which certain groups in society are able

consolidate and affirm their own power. By parlaying their economic capital into symbolic capital through the purchase of a volunteer vacation, already-privileged people are able to appear distinctly altruistic, adventurous, and worldly (Heath, 2007).

Next, I focus on one type of volunteer tourism, the one most germane to this study: EFL teaching, or English language voluntourism.

### **English Language Voluntourism**

For the purposes of this report, *English language voluntourism* is defined as a form of volunteer tourism in which native speakers of prestige-variety, or inner-core (Kachru, 1997), English such as American Standard or British Standard English teach EFL on a short-term (i.e., 1- to 10-week) basis in the Global South. Consistent with other forms of volunteer tourism, the requirements for participation on most English language voluntourism programs are minimal. Neither formal educator credentials nor academic familiarity with language pedagogy are generally required in order to be an EFL teacher on a volunteer tourism program. One need not even possess a college degree. Rather, what English language voluntourism program sponsors stress as prerequisites for participation are native English language speaking skills, the ability to pay a program fee, time (off), and affective traits like energy or good intentions. The words of Global Volunteers, a prominent English language voluntourism sponsor, capture these characteristics well in the following description of a typical English language voluntourism program participant:

Any native English speaker can be a valuable resource in a classroom in Africa, Asia, Europe, [or] Mexico . . . . Even if you've never formally taught a classroom subject, you can teach conversational English skills. All you need is enthusiasm and a desire to help adult and youth students. (n.d.)

As the last sentence of this quote indicates, the actual settings in which English language voluntourism takes place and the students whom volunteers teach can vary widely from place to place as well as among (and even within) sponsoring organizations and programs. Some English language voluntourism programs run consistently across a country (e.g., the program on which I conducted participant-observation for this study—discussed below—was run as a collaboration between the Costa Rican Ministry of Education and the NGO program sponsor; all short-term volunteers were placed in public school classrooms). Alternately, some English language voluntourism programs work with local NGOs (groups who have autonomy in deciding where and whom a volunteer will teach) as well as with local community centers, private schools, and other, innumerable groups. Therefore, English language voluntourism program participants may serve in any number of EFL teaching and learning settings including, but not limited to, adults in night school classes at community centers; junior high school students in collaboration with a full-time English language teacher in a public school; or primary school students at a fee-requiring, summer English language camp. Moreover, the amount of on-site assistance—including whether a volunteer has a supervisor, a curriculum, or even any materials (e.g., books, paper, or a chalkboard)—depends on the setting in which they teach.

Although many faith-based organizations sponsor short-term, volunteer EFL teaching programs as part of their mission work (cf. Snow, 2001), my focus for the purposes of this study is on non-sectarian English language voluntourism as sponsored by Global North-based corporations and NGOs. These groups frame English language voluntourism as a development intervention. That is, whether characterized as “making a meaningful contribution to international education” (WorldTeach, n.d.) or increasing “educational and employment prospects for people who would not normally have the opportunity to learn English” (Cross-

Cultural Solutions, n.d.), English language voluntourism as depicted by sponsoring corporations and NGOs provides positive benefits for local communities and constitutes humanitarian aid. I now turn to a discussion of this study's methods.

### **Method**

Data for this study were collected as part of a larger, multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) of English language voluntourism that took place in three different settings. In the summer of 2007, I engaged in participant-observation as a volunteer EFL teacher in Costa Rica under the auspices of an American NGO-sponsored program for eight weeks. In 2008, I conducted participant-observation in the organizational offices of the U.S.-based NGO that sponsored my program. From 2008 to 2010, I conducted research in the virtual world, where I examined over 20 corporate- and NGO-sponsored English language voluntourism websites and on-line promotional web pages.

In this study, 34 interview transcripts and 21 organizational websites form the primary data corpus. While engaging in participant-observation in Costa Rica, I conducted 16 open-ended, semi-structured interviews with 14 of the other 20 American volunteers in my summer volunteer cohort (2 participants were interviewed twice; their interviews were condensed and each counted as one). Approximately half of these interviews were conducted during a week-long, NGO-sponsored, pre-service orientation in early June; the other interviews were conducted at an NGO-sponsored, mid-service conference in mid-July. Interview participants in Costa Rica were selected using convenience sampling (Patton, 2002), as most interviews occurred when I and another volunteer serendipitously happened to be free from orientation and/or mid-service obligations at the same time.

The other 20 interviews—also open-ended and semi-structured—were conducted with former program participants in 2009 in the northeastern U.S. city where the focal NGO of my study is based. Participants were recruited via email, as during my time working in the NGO offices, I had been given access to alumni databases. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to identify and contact former program participants who currently resided in the northeastern U.S. city area and had volunteered on one of the NGO’s summer programs in the past two years.

All 34 interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes and were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. An interview guide was used to prompt in-service and former program participants to discuss certain topics, including, but not limited to, their impressions of the volunteer experience; their motivations for having participated in a volunteer program; their understandings of the role of English language teaching/learning in the communities in which they were serving (or had served); and their understandings of international development in education (the NGO’s mission). 31 of the 34 participants were between the ages of 18 and 22; the others were 25, 27, and 35, respectively. The youthful tenor of my interview participant group is representative of broader demographics in volunteer tourism and related phenomena at large (i.e., short-term, international volunteering done in the context of European student “gap years”), which reveal that the greatest percentage of volunteer tourists are people under the age of 30 (Callanan & Thomas, 2005).

I also conducted a content analysis of the websites of 21 corporations and NGOs that sponsor English language voluntourism programs. I used a process of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) to identify organizations that run 1-10 week EFL teaching programs in the Global South; do not require program participants to have prior teaching experience; are non-sectarian;



and are based in the United States or United Kingdom. Over the course of 2009-2010, I checked these groups' websites on monthly basis, taking notes of the ways in which they discussed English language teaching (content and pedagogy); development; the Global South; and the role of volunteering at large, among other topics.

Both interview transcripts and sponsoring organizations' websites were analyzed using a constructivist, grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). Conceptual codes were developed deductively (based on ideas and categories implied in academic literature or in the interview questions) as well as inductively (based on ideas and categories presented by participants' comments or in website material). I came to call these conceptual codes *discourses*, drawing upon Burr's (1995) definition of discourse: "A set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (48). It is to a discussion and explication of these discourses—five in total—that I now turn. (For a summary of code definitions and code frequencies, see Figures 3.1-3.3).

## **Findings**

### **English for the Global**

The language used on the websites and in the promotional literature of English language voluntourism sponsors frequently characterizes English language proficiency as part of a "global skill" set (GeoVisions, n.d.), a component of a functional-like toolkit from which users can ostensibly draw in order to access (following Anderson, 1983) a global imaginary—a "world stage" as one organization calls it (Global Volunteers, 2008). This discourse, *English for the global*, was present in the talk of 25 of 34, or 74% of study participants, and on the websites of 17 of 21, or 81%, of the focal voluntourism program sponsors.

*English for the global* suggests that unlimited social and economic opportunities exist on the world stage and that English language skills alone will permit admittance. Projects Abroad, a voluntourism sponsor, frames this idea as follows: “Brazilians are discovering that learning English is an important way to improve their lives and gain access to this increasingly globalized world” (n.d.). Similarly, Global Volunteers, another voluntourism sponsor, invites prospective applicants to “[H]elp Chinese students and teachers prepare for work in the global arena, where English serves as the universal language of commerce, technology, and opportunity” (n.d.). Whether described as a “stage” or “arena,” *the global* in *English for the global* is presented as an actual place, terra firma, a locality set apart from or outside the purview of Global South peoples’ current day-to-day lives. It is suggested that English is the *lingua franca* of this imagined global terrain, and it is primarily through English language skills that people are allowed free entry (though through the use of which language modality—speaking, listening, reading or writing—it is unclear). In the words of Hands Up Holidays, a tourism agency that coordinates short-term volunteer projects in conjunction with luxury travel, “[In Thailand], [t]here is a great demand for more knowledge, more contact with foreigners, learning English and getting in touch with the world” (n.d.). The world, this statement implies, is a land outside of Thailand; Thai people thus need English language skills if they want to communicate with the world.

In-service and former program participants also used the discourse of *English for the global*—the idea of a global imaginary, the globe as a place—in explanations of why English language skills are needed among people in the Global South. “I don’t know if this is [the NGO’s] goal,” Scott, an in-service program participant, said during an interview in Costa Rica, “but it’ll probably end up—if it at least succeeds in teaching English—in getting [local people] involved in their world” (Scott, interview, June 28, 2007). Akin to Hands Up Holidays’

comment, above, Scott's statement suggests that Global South people are currently out of touch with the broader world and that the solution to this problem is learning English. Heidi, a former program participant who had taught English for approximately six weeks in a Bulgarian orphanage, reflected on the larger purpose of her service time in a way similar to Scott: "We're really just working one on one with these kids. It's . . . a combination, I think, of sort of helping with the globalization needs of countries. You know, to sort of give these kids a foundation for a world that is becoming vastly more global" (Heidi, interview, June 28, 2007). Here, we see *English for the global* as well as a confluence of individual and national interests. It is implied that if a nation-state's individual children possess English language skills, nation-states, by extension, will have access to the global arena.

### **English for the Local**

Its promotion of a global imaginary notwithstanding, English language voluntourism discourse also presents the need for English language skills as patently local. That is, descriptions of English as requisite for accessing a "world stage" or "global arena" are often buttressed by arguments that English is urgently needed at the community level. This discourse, *English for the local*, offers that people of all ages throughout the world—from rural Costa Ricans to urban Thais—require English language skills right where they are, in place, to maintain their current standards of living or to make incremental progress toward the future. Among the 34 study participants, 16, or 47%, expressed *English for the local*, while 16 of 21, or 76%, of the voluntourism program sponsors did so.

Volunteer Adventures, a voluntourism sponsor, illustrates *English for the local* in claiming: "In an increasingly global society, English is rapidly becoming a basic requirement for economic and social progress" (n.d.). The idea that English language skills are fundamental to all

people, whomever and wherever they are, implies that the global is no longer an outside imaginary, a geographically distant place to which English language skills are essential for access. Rather, it is offered that the global has subsumed the local, rendering English language skills necessary for any and all people at multiple scales of life. Another English language voluntourism program sponsor, Global Volunteers, demonstrates *English for the local* like this: “Increasingly, English language skills have become crucial to success in virtually any profession” (n.d.). Thus, while English language voluntourism discourse suggests that English language skills are the portal to a global imaginary, it also avers that English language skills are necessary regardless of one’s current place of residence, present social status, or future career aspirations.

This idea of English language skills as requisite for life at the local level, however, augurs more modest uses of English language skills than does *English for the global*. The latter is largely optimistic and often centers on expanding peoples’ professional career prospects. To wit: “To access opportunities in an increasingly international economy and society, China’s younger generation will need English language skills” (WorldTeach, n.d). Or, as Edward, an in-service program participant commented, greater English language proficiency among rural Costa Rican students “would allow for great opportunities for those kids as they begin to move into both tourism in Costa Rica and world-wide business as a whole” (Edward, interview, July 9, 2007). The above quotations offer that English language skills will give local people a boost, a leg up, a chance to avail themselves of more cosmopolitan or lucrative job prospects than those in the offing at present. In contrast, *English for the local* often ties English language skills to minimum quality of life issues at a local scale. In illustration, Projects Abroad proclaims that

Costa Rica is attracting ever-increasing numbers of visitors, but many local people still live in very basic conditions. Knowledge of English is vital in order for them to make the most of growing opportunities for work in tourism and commerce. (n.d.)

It is *English for the local*, this voluntourism sponsor asserts, that will allow people to improve their conditions of life. Similarly, another voluntourism sponsor, Experiential Learning International, offers that: “Being able to speak English is quickly becoming a necessary skill. . . . By helping [Costa Ricans] learn English, volunteers will give them a chance to greatly improve their standard of living” (n.d.).

There is a tone of desperation to these statements. “Basic conditions” of life in the Global South, it is suggested, are not the consequences of structural poverty, inequitable resource distribution, or the legacy of colonial policies. Rather, low standards of living are framed as the result of local peoples’ current lack of English language skills—a deficiency that renders them unable to access the global that has now come to them. It is intimated that if Global South people only possessed English language skills, they could easily and quickly improve the material conditions of their lives by gaining fruitful and steady employment in their places of residence. One voluntourism sponsor takes this idea so far as to suggest that the broad-scale provision of English language skills in Mexico might help to solve a particularly sticky problem vis-à-vis people and place:

Our university host partners [in Mexico] report that becoming fluent in English is a priority for their students, who laud volunteers’ help in their career development. Your efforts will help Mexican university students gain the skills to find good jobs and prosper in their homeland. (Global Volunteers, 2008)

It merits stressing that the local employment for which voluntourism sponsors claim English language skills are necessary bears little resemblance to the career tracks that supposedly exist in the global imaginary. Discussions of *English for the global* generally characterize English language skills as providing entrée to greater, more expansive life options: e.g., “[Volunteers] help students master the English skills that open doors to better career opportunities” (Cross-Cultural Solutions, n.d). Although what these “better career opportunities” actually are remains unstated, there is a suggestion that work in the global imaginary is well-paid and perhaps even white-collar. In contrast, *English for the local* portends distinctly more humble outcomes for language users. As one voluntourism sponsor advertises, “[o]ur EFL program aims to improve students’ conversation skills in English and prepare students to gain employment in Local and International NGOs, companies, and garment factories” (Global Service Corps, n.d.). Similarly, another voluntourism sponsor suggests that volunteers on its Peru program can “work with a local Peruvian organization by . . . helping with leather purse-making workshops, teaching English (which is an essential work skill in Cusco), and organizing activities for street children” (United Planet, n.d.). English language skills, in these latter examples, no longer provide access to a global imaginary in which professional career opportunities abound in the knowledge economy. Characterized instead as a “work skill,” English language proficiency has become the means by which local people can find employment making mass-produced clothing—or, perhaps, selling leather purses on the street.

In-service and former program participants also invoked the idea that English language skills are expedient for unskilled workers at the local level. Discussing the broader purpose of English language learning in Costa Rica, Danica, a former program participant, stated that

the ability to speak English is something that's very useful . . . the money—the amount you get per hour per day could double or something like that if you got a job in one of the hot tourist areas versus if you are a taxi driver in an all-Tico [Costa Rican] area.

(Danica, interview, January 28, 2009)

Danica's suggestion that one's financial returns could double if one were to drive a taxi in a tourist location instead of one frequented primarily by host nationals envisions a very different use for English language skills than do calls for English for accessing a global imaginary. *English for the local*, it is implied, is linked to jobs like taxi-driving—not, in the aforementioned parlance of program participant Edward, “world-wide business as a whole.”

Suzanne, another program participant, envisioned a similar, pragmatic reason for Costa Ricans to possess *English for the local*: to augment their current jobs selling wares in open-air markets. Interviewed while in Costa Rica, she suggested that

if American [tourists] can see, you know, English, or know that they will see signs in English . . . when they go try to buy fruit, the [seller] will be able to say, you know, *avocado* and not *aguacate* . . . it'll . . . be more likely to increase tourism . . . [A]nd the tourism will not only earn the government, but the people, more money. (Suzanne, interview, June 5, 2007)

Suzanne employs the discourse of *English for the local* to suggest that Costa Ricans might use English language skills not to climb white-collar career ladders, but rather to help make visiting or expatriate Americans feel at home. If Americans hear English in Costa Rica, Suzanne proposes, tourism to the Central American nation might increase, thereby earning not only “the government, but the people, more money.” In this scenario, English language skills are not

accoutrements for broadening individual Costa Ricans' career portfolios or accessing a global imaginary; rather, English language skills are linked to a version of trickle-down economics.

### **English for Competing/Escaping Poverty through Employment**

While simultaneously presenting English language skills as the means for accessing a global imaginary and as the way to improve local peoples' standards of living through modest, community-based employment, English language voluntourism discourse also offers that English language skills can make people more competitive and thereby able to evade vulnerability. This discourse, *English for competing/escaping poverty through employment*, offers that English language skills will provide individuals in the Global South with a value-added edge, an advantage—a means of breaking free of meager material or social circumstances. Although only 10 of 34 participants offered this view (29%), nearly all of the voluntourism program sponsors in this study indicated *English for competing/escaping poverty through employment* on their promotional websites (19 of 21, or 90%). This idea of movement or escape through English language skills is captured in the words of GeoVisions, a voluntourism program sponsor, in its statement that “English is a much sought-after skill in Thailand and one that can lead to otherwise unattainable upward social mobility” (n.d.). Similarly, Global Volunteers explains that “[i]n many places, knowing English provides a passport out of poverty through employment” (n.d.).

In conjunction with this notion of escape, the discourse of *English for competing/escaping poverty through employment* also intimates that the possession of English language skills can differentiate certain people from others, availing these marked individuals of wage-earning possibilities that are unavailable to members of the broader collective. Per Cross-Cultural Solutions, “in many of the communities where we work, language barriers can make it



difficult to compete for sought-after opportunities” (n.d). Similarly, the Institute for Field Research Expeditions, another voluntourism sponsor, reports that “[o]pportunities exist for those with strong English skills” (n.d.) even in the poorest of places.

The discourse of *English for completing/escaping poverty through employment* is productive in multiple ways. First, it frames broad-scale sociopolitical problems in the Global South as beyond the scope of human intervention. Volatile labor markets, insufficient employment opportunities, and minimal public safety nets, *inter alia*, are not characterized as structural problems in need of human-directed remedy, but as permanent conditions from which individuals can and should escape through the acquisition and use of English language skills. Jaime, a former program participant, takes up the discourse of *English for competing/escaping poverty through employment* in his discussion of English’s utility among people in rural China. He states that if rural Chinese residents

do want to go out and get those better jobs and those better positions, they have to learn English. It's almost not a choice. . . . It's just a fact. And, unfortunately, it's a fact that constrains them a lot. (Jaime, interview, January 25, 2009)

Although Jaime alludes to it with his mention of the term, “constraint,” unaddressed in the discourse of *English for competing/escaping poverty through employment* is what happens to the remaining residents of resource-poor, Global South communities as more competitive, escape-minded English language learners earn their “passport[s] out of poverty through employment” and hit the road literally or figuratively. The discourse makes no provisions for those individuals who can’t or don’t learn English—except, perhaps, to frame their poverty as an indictment for failing to do so. Moreover, as *English for competing/escaping poverty through employment* does not address the root causes of Global South poverty in the first place, it offers little in the way of

long-term, substantive change for the greatest number of people—including those people who do not have the time or material means to learn a second (or third) additional language.

Finally, *English for competing/escaping poverty through employment*'s consenting nod to individualism naturalizes life as a zero-sum game in which people are more rivals for scarce resources than they are members of larger, often symbolic and identity-affirming, communities. The discourse encourages people to differentiate themselves from the crowd—to adopt new ways of being—through English language learning, and whether such a goal is politically inflected or even culturally appropriate in particular contexts remains largely unexamined. Meaghan, an in-service program participant, expressed concerns about the implicit messages of *English for competing/escaping poverty through employment* during an interview in Costa Rica. She noted that within English language voluntourism, there seems to be little attention paid to the broader, cultural politics of English language teaching as it moves in a Global North-Global South flow:

[W]hat [English language voluntourism] is doing is, like, providing and, and spreading English as sort of the international language without necessarily much . . . awareness of, like, the deeper meaning of all of that. . . . [L]ike, power-wise. Like . . . 'You, you can get so far with your native language, with Spanish, but, like, if you REALLY want to succeed, you need to speak the language that, like, they speak in the United States and England'. . . . [W]hat are the political implications of, like, teaching English in a country that's considered developing by, by other countries that consider themselves to be developed? So what are the politics of that? (Meaghan, interview, June 6, 2007)

Meaghan's commentary highlights some of the unchecked assumptions of *English for competing/escaping poverty through employment*. First, the discourse presumes that Global South people want to leave or separate themselves from their communities, especially if those

communities are poor. Second, the discourse takes as *a priori* that for people in situations of vulnerability, taking on the language of a more powerful, outside group is both desirable and unproblematic.

### **English for Leaving the Rural**

*English for leaving the rural* is another discourse that circulates within English language voluntourism promotional materials and in the talk of in-service and former program participants. That is, 25 of 34, or 74% of study participants and 7 of 21, or 33%, of English language voluntourism sponsors offered that *the rural* is a constraining factor in peoples' lives. Small villages and communities distant from urban metropolises are often characterized as decreasing peoples' chances of economic security, limiting their present and future happiness, and reducing their overall prospects. *English for leaving the rural* proposes that small, traditional communities—while fun or exotic for visiting volunteers—are places to be vacated or surpassed by permanent residents, and it is offered that English language skills can grease the wheels of such movement. WorldTeach, a voluntourism sponsor, exemplifies this discourse in saying:

[Our] volunteers have been able to provide rural students with more than just English language education. They are also offering them access to greater economic opportunity. Graduates of the *Liceo Rural* program [the summer program on which volunteers worked in 2009] enter a professional network that offers them contacts and opportunities beyond their home village. (n.d.).

The “home village,” in this scenario, is an entity beyond which “contacts and opportunities” are required if one wants to further one’s life prospects. The rural must be transcended if one is to make the most of one’s life—and English language skills, it is offered, can lead the way.

Program participants' comments also reflected *English for the leaving the rural*.

Catherine, an in-service program participant, asserted that the rural students she was going to be teaching “are going to be so thankful to have learned something . . . they can maybe go out into a city in Costa Rica and practice [English], like, make more of a life for themselves” (Catherine, interview, June 4, 2007). Relatedly, but in a more critical vein, many program participants noted that there had been few immediate applications for English language skills in the rural host communities in which they had taught. Leaving, they reported, was necessary if residents had wanted to put the English language skills they were learning to any economic use. Josh, a former program participant in Costa Rica, illustrates this idea in his comment that “it did seem like there was a disconnect between the . . . very rural setting [in which I taught] where they're probably never going to use English” (Josh, interview, January 29, 2009). Shrushti, another former program participant, also observed that English language skills had little relevance to the majority of the residents living in her rural, Costa Rican host community. Individuals who did learn English, she noted, usually moved away to a tourist location:

[N]o one really spoke very much English. . . . [T]he people that learned and spoke English went . . . into Quepos/Manuel Antonio . . . . [S]ome of [my students] . . . really wanted to learn English, but a lot of them didn't because they were like, 'Well, we're just gonna, like, grow up and work in the cooperativa, like, doing some kind of, like, field work with the vegetables or, like, the animals, so, like, what's the point of English?' Which makes sense. (Shrushti, interview, January 28, 2009)

As Shrushti points out, *English for leaving the rural* implies that English language skills are often linked to relocation. For those students who find the idea of leaving their rural communities

unappealing or irrelevant to their future life plans, English language learning can hold little purpose, meaning, or relevance.

### **English for Personal Empowerment**

A final discourse reflected in English language voluntourism promotional materials and in program participants' commentary is *English for personal empowerment*. In this discourse, English language teaching and learning are linked to the building of Western, pop-psychology style, self-improvement traits such as self-esteem, confidence, and motivation. 10 of 34, or 29%, of program participants offered comments indicative of *English for personal empowerment*, while 19 of 21 (90%) of voluntourism program sponsors did so. *English for personal empowerment* offers that through the process of English language learning—be it memorizing words, learning simple English phrases, or even just practicing pronunciation—individuals can increase their cache of self-confidence, be filled with hope for future, and, in general, build the positive feelings that are linked to greater personal agency. Projects Abroad exemplifies *English for personal empowerment* in its statement of a volunteer's purpose: "Volunteer teachers will work alongside local teachers assisting in class and helping students improve their pronunciation. By bringing enthusiasm and a new approach, volunteers can really help to motivate and encourage students" (n.d.). Global Crossroad, another voluntourism sponsor, demonstrates *English for personal empowerment* in a description of one of its programs: "[P]articipants will work in an orphanage—sharing their love and time with the needy children, teaching them basic conversational English and encouraging them to face the challenging world where English is becoming more and more of a necessity" (n.d.).

Implicit in the discourse of *English for personal empowerment* is the idea that Global South people currently lack—and, conversely, that Global North people possess the means of

fostering—self-management traits like positive thinking, personal responsibility, and motivation. A key facet of English language teaching, then, in the discourse of *English for personal empowerment* is the promotion of self-help characteristics redolent of Norman Vincent Peale's tome, *The Power of Positive Thinking* or Steven Covey's "Successories" line of motivational products. i to i, a voluntourism sponsor, illustrates *English for personal empowerment* in this message to prospective volunteers: "Helping the children with special needs on [our] project[s] will undoubtedly bring you the biggest smiles possible when you sing, dance and help to enrich their lives with your enthusiasm" (n.d.). Suggested here is that life enrichment can occur not through the building of language skills, but through song, dance, and the elicitation of transnational smiles.

In-service and former program participants' talk also reflected *English for personal empowerment*. English language teaching was often characterized by program participants as more an exercise in offering personal support to Global South people than an instructional endeavor aimed at building additional language capacity. Morgan, an in-service program participant, expressed this view during an interview in Costa Rica. She explained:

I see, like, a lot of who I am as . . . encouraging people in different ways. Like, just loving them and just supporting them, and I feel like I say 'Good job!' in my class, like, at least 20 times. Like, I'm always like, 'Good job! Good job!' Like, 'You're doing well'—even if the sentence is completely wrong. 'Cause so much of, I feel like it's important—people just need encouragement. . . . So . . . that legacy would be fantastic, if I could just leave them with the encouragement and just the will to love themselves and be better.

(Morgan, interview, June 27, 2007)

Suzanne, mentioned above in relation to fruit-vending, also deployed *English for personal empowerment* in a discussion of what she hoped to accomplish during her time as a volunteer EFL teacher in Costa Rica. She characterized Costa Rican students *en masse* as a group in need of love and encouragement, and she imagined her role as a volunteer teacher there as a provider of these intangible qualities:

I . . . hope . . . that I can help them. . . . I can certainly bring enthusiasm. . . I'd like [my students] to believe that if they really want it, that they could go on to, go on to college or they could—even if they don't go on to college—they could learn English, or they can at least know that there's somewhere out there—maybe not in Costa Rica, but there's someone out there in the world who will remember them and will believe in them.

(Suzanne, interview, June 5, 2007)

In the perspectives of some volunteers, then, whether students feel loved, believed in, or encouraged under an EFL teacher's tutelage takes precedence over whether they are learning an additional language. Indeed, this view is epitomized by Morgan's admission, above, that she offered students enthusiastic praise for their English language productions even if their sentences were error-ridden. Rather than focusing on the effectiveness of their language pedagogy or concerning themselves with how students might continue language learning at the end of their volunteer tenure, both Morgan and Suzanne were primarily focused on promoting students' self-esteem by way of EFL teaching.

Former program participants, too, took up the discourse of *English for personal empowerment*. Josie, interviewed approximately six months after volunteering in Ecuador, viewed the EFL teaching she had done in a primary school there as less pivotal to her role there than the work she had done to facilitate “empowerment.” She explained: “I do think . . . even just

teaching them ‘Very well, thank you, how are you?’—if that’s the only thing I taught them this summer, it’s valuable because . . . it’s empowering” (Josie, interview, January 29, 2009). Another former program participant, Stacey, also looked back on her volunteer service time as being less about EFL teaching than offering her students an exciting diversion from their daily lives. She reported:

I wasn’t, like, an entertainer, but I don’t think I taught them so much English. . . . [F]or a bunch of the kids, I think I sparked their . . . interest in English. . . . I think it was more like . . . making them excited. . . . [I]t was entertaining for them, and it was something for them to do, and it was something fun. (Stacey, interview, January 28, 2009)

For Josie and Stacey, akin to Morgan and Suzanne, above, English language voluntourism is more an exercise in promoting peoples’ positive self-concepts than one in which focused, guided language study is the focus. This reflects a curious component of *English for personal empowerment*: There is imagined to be a social domino effect following from the sheer presence of an enthusiastic, visiting EFL teacher from the Global North. Through the energy, enthusiasm, and encouragement transmitted by a visiting volunteer, Global South people can ostensibly increase their own levels of self-confidence and take on more personal responsibility: In sum, they can acquire the “soft skills” requisite for making their own life changes. As Josie, referenced above, put it: “[If] I, for instance, volunteer—go to . . . Ecuador, interact with those people, [it] maybe inspires them even in a little way . . . that could, you know, move them forward to do something” (Josie, interview, January 29, 2009).

Josie’s comment is reminiscent of the language often seen on English language voluntourism sponsors’ websites, where it is also suggested that the motivational presence of a



Global North volunteer does as much, if not more, for Global South people than any direct language instruction. In the words of Cross-Cultural Solutions,

Your fluency in English motivates working adults and recent graduates to practice their English and improve career options. Your stay may be short, but . . . [y]ou can bring new energy and enthusiasm to community members who are dedicated to social change. Your personal and professional path offers local people new insight into life, education, and careers overseas. (n.d.)

English language study within English language voluntourism, then, is in large part *English for personal empowerment*. The English language classroom, even more than site of language study, is constructed as a contact zone where Global South people can meet and be influenced by visiting Global North volunteers, people whose mere presence alone ostensibly provides motivation, inspiration, and heretofore unimagined life insights.

The discourse of *English for personal empowerment*, however, was also challenged by some program participants. Joanne, interviewed a year and a half after her service time in Costa Rica, expressed discomfort with English language voluntourism in large part because of what she felt were the numerous, naïve assumptions behind *English for personal empowerment*. The extent of her criticism was such that she reported not wanting to participate on any similar volunteer programs in the near future. She explained:

[M]y criticism. . . is couched in the broader criticism of, like, what international development work is currently . . . it operates under an attempt to sort of ameliorate the situation of a lot of people materially . . . with this word, like, ‘empowerment,’ but it doesn’t change the structures at all. . . . [I]f I was thinking like this two years ago, I probably wouldn’t have gone and done it, because I currently, like, wouldn’t go and do it

again. . . . I realize how little I understand what I'm doing. And I would rather spend the next phase of my life understanding better before I go and, you know, participate in microfinance and 'empower women' and all this stuff without knowing, like—having no idea what that means. (Joanne, interview, January 30, 2009)

Joanne's clear identification of the concept, empowerment, as one that permeates English language voluntourism and similar, intervention-type programs suggests the preeminence of this discourse. Further, that Joanne would not feel comfortable participating in English language voluntourism again because of her reticence toward *English for personal empowerment* reveals not only the limited space that exists for challenging this dominant discourse, but also the few opportunities program participants ever have for exploring English language voluntourism's overall underlying precepts and their comfort with what these precepts mean.

### Discussion

As noted at the beginning of this manuscript, volunteer tourism is becoming a visible enough social phenomenon that critiques of it have begun to appear in the popular media. However, these critiques are generally restricted to themes around *cui bono*: i.e., who benefits more from volunteer tourism, Global North volunteers or the Global South recipients of their service. In this study, I sought to widen the scope of this discussion by investigating a different set of questions. The answer to my first question, "How is EFL teaching a form of volunteer tourism? What discourses and material conditions render it so?" reflects and provides some insights on the current historical moment.

The findings of my study suggest that EFL teaching is a form of volunteer tourism—a practice that "involve[s] aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society" (Wearing 2001)—because within English language voluntourism discourse, there is no scale at

which English isn't spoken and nothing that English can't do. It has the allure of symbolic capital (*English for the global*); ostensible pragmatic use (*English for the local*); it is claimed to facilitate human capital (*English for competing/escaping poverty through employment*); it supposedly allows one to follow a well-trodden development trajectory (*English for leaving the rural*); and it offers, in the learning of it, the chance for one to develop personal responsibility (*English for personal empowerment*). Although these discourses are quite disparate (indeed, they even contract one another at times) the fact that they cover so much ground makes them very difficult to contest.

English language voluntourism's discursive framing of the English language as simultaneously global, local, a requisite component of the 21<sup>st</sup> century shape-shifting portfolio, a tool for urbanization, and a means of accruing personal responsibility, however, has real social and material effects. In essence, it relies on and recreates a discourse of what Dicken (2003) calls hyperglobalism. Hyperglobalism comes largely from the Western business world, and it augers a present/future that rings of neoliberal formations: a world in which consumer tastes are homogenized by Global North-based multinational corporations; a political system in which the primary role of the nation-state is to aid the global network rather than to provide social welfare services; and a lifeworld in which market rationalities prevail in formerly public (and even private) domains. Refracted through this hyperglobalist lens, English language alone become the proposed solution to a myriad of complex social problems in the Global South including, but not limited to, inefficient or corrupt national/local governments, a scarcity of public resources, volatile global labor markets, and massive underemployment (Dicken, 2003). English language voluntourism, then, in its ostensible provision of English language skills, bolsters specific ways of being in the world (e.g., people as competitors, people as personally responsible for all aspects

of their lives) and other, arguably neoliberal, means of structuring social and political life, including new forms of governmentality (Rose, 1999).

The answer to my second question, however, suggests some alternative possibilities. In asking, “How and in what ways do English language voluntourism program participants contest these dominant discourses?” I discovered that by virtue of participating in English language voluntourism, some in-service and former program participants come to a critical awareness of the same ideological foundations on which these programs are built. That is, in the experience of *going*, some facets of hyperglobalism become legible to program participants in a way they never were so previously. Thus, English language voluntourism programs may constitute nascent sites of resistance: spaces in which program participants develop a critique of the dominance of not only hyperglobalism, but also its theoretical and ideological underpinnings.

According to McMillon, Cutchins, and Geissinger (2003), “volunteering is one of the best ways to halt the tide of the nastier effects of globalization, and instead promote the benefits of international understanding and cooperation” (xxi). I take their comment one step further. In the case of English language voluntourism, the aforementioned nasty globalization tide may not be halted by the actual volunteering. Instead, the hope for stemming this tide might come through participants’ experiences: their reflections, in the final instance, of what “good” means to whom, and how we get there.

## References

- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Ausenda, F. & McCloskey, E. (2006). *World volunteers: The world guide to humanitarian and development volunteering* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Milano, Italy: Green Volunteers di Fabio Ausenda.
- Brown, S. & Morrison, A. M. (2003). Expanding volunteer vacation participation: An exploratory study on the mini-mission concept. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 28, 73-82.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. New York: Routledge.
- Butcher, J. (2003). *The moralization of tourism: Sun, sand. . . and saving the world?* London: Routledge.
- Callanan, M. & Thomas, S. (2005). Volunteer tourism: Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment. In M. Novelli (Ed.), *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends, and cases* (pp. 183-200). Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Collins, J., DeZerega, S. & Heckscher, Z. (2002). *How to live your dream of volunteering overseas*. New York: Penguin.
- Cross-Cultural Solutions (n.d.) Cross-Cultural Solutions. New Rochelle, NY: Author. Retrieved May 6, 2009 from <http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org>.
- Dicken, P. (2003). *Global shift: Reshaping the global economic map in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) New York: Guilford Press.
- Experiential Learning International (n.d). Experiential Learning International. Retrieved June 24, 2011 from [www.eliabroad.org](http://www.eliabroad.org)

Fitzpatrick, L. (2007, August 6). Vacationing like Brangelina: Does volunteer tourism do any good? *Time*, 170, 49-51.

GeoVisions (n.d.). GeoVisions. Chesterfield, NH: Author. Retrieved May 23, 2009 from [http://www.geovisions.org/pages/418\\_our\\_aims\\_for\\_sustainability.cfm](http://www.geovisions.org/pages/418_our_aims_for_sustainability.cfm)

Global Crossroad. (n.d.) Global Crossroad. Irving, TX: Author. Retrieved January 23, 2011 from [www.globalcrossroad.com](http://www.globalcrossroad.com)

Global Service Corps (n.d.). Global Service Corps. San Francisco, CA: Author. Retrieved May 6, 2009 from [globalservicecorps.org](http://globalservicecorps.org)

Global Volunteers (2008). *Adventures in service* [Brochure]. St. Paul, MN: Author.

Global Volunteers (n.d.). Retrieved May 8, 2009 from [www.globalvolunteers.org](http://www.globalvolunteers.org).

Gray, N. & Campbell, L. M. (2007). A decommodified experience? Exploring aesthetic, economic, and ethical values for volunteer ecotourism in Costa Rica. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 15, 463-482.

Hands Up Holidays (n.d.). Hands Up Holidays. Retrieved May 23, 2009 from [Handsupholidays.com](http://Handsupholidays.com)

Heath, S. (2007). Widening the gap: pre-university gap years and the 'economy of experience.' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28, 89-103.

Institute for Field Research Expeditions (n.d.). Teaching English in rural schools in India. Dallas, TX: Author. Retrieved January 23, 2011 from [http://www.ifrevolunteers.org/india/teaching\\_english.php](http://www.ifrevolunteers.org/india/teaching_english.php)

Jaakson, R. (2004). Globalization and neocolonialist tourism. In C. M. Hall and H. Tucker (Eds.), *Tourism and postcolonialism: Contested discourses, identities, and representations* (pp. 169-183). London: Routledge.

- Kachru, B. (1997). World Englishes 2000: Resources for research and teaching. In L. E. Smith & M. L. Forman (Eds.), *World Englishes 2000* (pp. 209-251). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- Marcus, G. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95-117.
- McMillon, B., Cutchins, D., & Geissinger, A. (2003). *Volunteer vacations: Short-term adventures that will benefit you and others* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Chicago: Chicago Review Press.
- McBride, A. M. & Sherraden, M. (2007). *Civic service worldwide: Impacts and inquiry*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Novelli, M. (Ed.). (2005). *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends, and cases*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Nye, J. (2004). The decline of America's soft power. *Foreign Affairs*, 3, 16-21.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Poon, A. (1993). *Tourism, technology, and competitive strategies*. Oxon, UK: CABI Publishing.
- Projects Abroad. (n.d). Volunteer abroad teaching English in Vietnam. New York: Author.  
Retrieved January 23, 2011 from <http://www.projects-abroad.org>
- ProWorld. (n.d.). ProWorld. Retrieved February 10, 2011 from [www.proworld.org](http://www.proworld.org)
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Sherraden, M. M. (2007). International civic service: A step toward cooperation in a global world. In A. McBride & M. Sherraden (Eds.), *Civic service worldwide: Impacts and inquiry* (pp. 181-205). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Simpson, K. (2004). 'Doing development': the gap year, volunteer tourists and a popular practice of development. *Journal of International Development*, 16, 681-692.
- Snow, D. (2001). *English teaching as Christian mission: An applied theology*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Turner, L. & Ash, J. (1975). *The golden hordes: International tourism and the pleasure periphery*. London: Constable.
- United Planet (n.d.). United Planet. Retrieved May 7, 2009 from [www.unitedplanet.org](http://www.unitedplanet.org)
- Urry, J. (2002). *The tourist gaze* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Sage.
- Villano, M. (2009, November 16). Silver-spoon voluntourism: Luxury hotels offer day trips to help vacationers connect with communities. *Time*, 53.
- Volunteer Adventures (n.d.) Retrieved May 22, 2009 from [http://www.volunteeradventures.com/projects\\_teaching.htm](http://www.volunteeradventures.com/projects_teaching.htm)
- Wearing, S. (2001). *Volunteer tourism: Experiences that make a difference*. Oxon, UK: CABI Publishing.
- Wearing, S. (2004). Examining best practices in volunteer tourism. In R. Stebbins and M. Graham (Eds.), *Volunteering as leisure/leisure as volunteering*, (pp. 209-224). Oxon, UK: CABI Publishing.
- WorldTeach (n.d.). WorldTeach. Cambridge, MA: Author. Retrieved May 12, 2009, from <http://www.worldteach.org>



Code	Definition	Example
English for the Global	English language skills are needed in order to access a “global imaginary”: an actual place—a world stage, a global arena—in which English is the exclusive language	“Our four Hanoi host partners . . . are committed to helping Vietnamese youth become fluent in English—the language of commerce, technology and opportunity—so they can compete on the world stage” (Global Volunteers, 2008)
English for the Local	English is urgently needed by people at the local level—e.g., for education, for employment	“Tourism is . . . growing in Vietnam and speaking English well is now essential to get a good job” (Projects Abroad, n.d.).
English for Competing/ Escaping Poverty through Employment	English language skills render individual people more competitive or equipped with marketable skills, therefore able to escape poverty and find jobs, get a head start, or access opportunity	“Opportunities exist for those with strong English schools” (Institute for Field Research Expeditions, n.d.).  “English is a much sought-after skill in Thailand and one that can lead to otherwise unattainable upward social mobility” (GeoVisions, n.d.).
English for Leaving the Rural	English language skills will help one leave the constraints of one’s small, rural village	“WorldTeach volunteers have been able to provide rural students with more than just English language education. They are also offering them access to greater economic opportunity. Graduates of the <i>Liceo Rural</i> program enter a professional network that offers them contacts and opportunities beyond their home village” (WorldTeach, n.d.).
English for Personal Empowerment	English language skills are linked to confidence and self-esteem, thus allowing individuals to make responsible, better choices	“Join before, during or after-school programs designed to give children and their families confidence and skills to change their lives” (ProWorld, n.d.).

**Figure 3.1: Definitions of English Language Use Codes**

English Language Use Code Frequencies: In-Service and Former Program Participants					
	<i>English for the Global</i> 25 of 34, 74%	<i>English for the Local</i> 16 of 34, 47%	<i>English for Competing/ Escaping Poverty through Employment</i> 10 of 34, 29%	<i>English for Leaving the Rural</i> 25 of 34, 74%	<i>English for Personal Empower- ment</i> 10 of 34, 29%
<i>In-service program participants (n=14)</i>					
Amanda	X			X	
Catherine	X	X	X	X	X
Christina	X	X			X
Edward	X		X	X	
Heidi		X	X		X
Jim		X		X	X
Joanne	X				
Josh		X			
Mary	X	X	X	X	
Meaghan	X		X		
Mike	X	X		X	
Morgan	X			X	X
Scott	X		X	X	
Suzanne	X	X		X	X
<i>Former program participants (n=20)</i>					
Amanda	X	X		X	
Ana	X			X	
Audrey		X			
Chris	X		X	X	
Danica		X		X	
Heather	X			X	X
Jaime	X	X	X	X	X
Jillian					
Joanne	X			X	
Josh	X			X	
Josie		X		X	X
Karen	X			X	
Lauren				X	
Peg				X	
Raj	X				
Shannon	X			X	
Shelly	X	X		X	
Shrushti	X	X		X	
Stacey	X		X	X	X
Taylor	X	X	X		

**Figure 3.2: English Language Use Code Frequencies**

	<i>English for the Global</i> 17 of 21, 81%	<i>English for the Local</i> 16 of 21, 76%	<i>English for Competing/ Escaping Poverty through Employment</i> 19 of 21, 90%	<i>English for Leaving the Rural</i> 7 of 21, 33%	<i>English for Personal Empower- ment</i> 19 of 21, 90%
Cross-Cultural Solutions	X	X	X		X
Experiential Learning International	X	X	X		X
GeoVisions	X	X	X		X
Global Crossroad		X	X		X
Global Leadership Adventures	X		X		X
Global Routes	X			X	
Global Service Corps		X	X		
Global Vision International	X	X	X		X
Global Volunteers	X	X	X		X
Globe Aware		X	X	X	X
Hands Up Holidays	X		X		X
I to I	X	X	X		X
Institute for Field Research Expeditions	X	X	X	X	X
Mondo Challenge		X	X		X
Projects Abroad	X	X	X		X
ProWorld	X		X	X	X
Travel-to-Teach	X		X	X	X
United Planet	X	X			X
Voluntary Projects Overseas	X	X	X	X	X
Volunteer Adventures	X	X	X		X
WorldTeach	X	X	X	X	X

**Figure 3.3: Sponsoring Organizations' Code Frequencies**

## CHAPTER FOUR

“I WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL THEY COULD LOOK FORWARD TO AND HAVE”:  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE VOLUNTOURISM AS DEVELOPMENT<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Jakubiak, C. To be submitted to the *Journal of International Development*.

## Abstract

English language voluntourism, or short-term, volunteer English language teaching, is a social phenomenon in which well-meaning, often uncredentialed, people from the Global North teach English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Global South as an alternative form of travel and as a means of humanitarian aid. Although empirical evaluations of the actual effects of English language voluntourism on Global South communities are few, multiple stakeholders maintain that English language voluntourism makes a meaningful contribution to development in the Global South. As part of a larger, 2.5-year, multi-sited ethnographic study of English language voluntourism, I investigated how English language voluntourism program participants (both those in the field and alumni) talk about what development is (and what it looks like) in and through English language voluntourism. This manuscript discusses the ways in which in-service and former program participants conceive of development within English language voluntourism when they claim, affirmatively, that yes, English language voluntourism is a form of development. Results of the study suggest that development has widely disparate, often contradictory, meanings among program participants.

## Introduction

*[D]espite manifold historical instances to the contrary, the welcome ring of the idea of helping has survived in the consciousness of ordinary people. Help thus appears to them as innocent as ever, although it has long since changed its colours and become an instrument of the perfect—that is, elegant—exercise of power. The defining characteristic of elegant power is that it is unrecognizable, concealed, supremely inconspicuous. (Gronemeyer, 1992, p. 53).*

It was the summer of 2003. Ken<sup>4</sup>, a fellow volunteer, and I were having beers at the Che Guevara pizza place (or so we called it, because of the number of posters of the well-known revolutionary prominently displayed on the walls). The only two people from our non-governmental organization (NGO)-sponsored summer volunteer program cohort placed in Amazonia, Ecuador, Kevin and I were regulars at Che's. We met there frequently to speak in English, take a break from our Spanish-speaking host families, and talk about our respective experiences. "Yeah, the kids like me," I said. "I mean, groups of them wait to play UNO with me after class. We hold hands; we go tubing down the river; we take hikes. But what, in the big picture, are we *doing* here?" Ken and I were starting to wonder. In about week six of an eight week voluntourism program in which we were teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in very different settings (Ken, in a community center to Spanish-speaking adults; me, in a public school to Quechua-speaking students aged 6-17), it was clear that our roles were limited. At least, no one was becoming fluent in English under *my* tutelage. Shoot—I had no books, no materials, and every day was a constant battle to keep the students in the classroom and the chickens out. "Really?" I asked Ken. "Is this *development*?"

Ken sipped his drink, and shrugged.

\*       \*       \*

According to Wearing (2001), *volunteer tourism*, or *voluntourism* (Callanan & Thomas, 2005, p. 8) refers to the practice of "volunteer[ing] in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society" (Wearing, p. 1). Although the term, *voluntourism*, has more recently been appropriated to the U.S. domestic context (e.g., Villano, 2009), in the academic literature, volunteer tourism indexes

---

<sup>4</sup> All program participants' names are pseudonyms.

unskilled, short-term (i.e., one-week to three-month) travel/volunteering that moves primarily from the Global North<sup>5</sup> to the Global South (Callanan & Thomas, 2005). While some volunteer tourism projects involve assisting with childcare in orphanages or building/painting physical structures, EFL teaching is a popular volunteer tourism option (Collins, DeZerega, & Heckscher, 2002). Within EFL teaching via volunteer tourism—what I call, for the purposes of this report, *English language voluntourism*—one’s primary task is to teach EFL and/or other subjects (e.g., English language arts, technology) in settings that vary by placement.

Consonant with other forms of volunteer tourism, the requirements for participation on most English language voluntourism programs are minimal. One needs neither formal educator credentials nor prior classroom teaching experience in order to be an EFL or other subject-area teacher in a voluntourism program. Instead, what is mandated for participation are prestige-variety (Kachru, 1997) native English language speaking abilities and soft skills like flexibility, creativity, and “enthusiasm” (e.g., Cross-Cultural Solutions, n.d.). Non-sectarian English language voluntourism programs are generally run under NGO or private sponsorship, and fees for participation can be substantial. Under the auspices of one prominent NGO, for example, an eight week English language voluntourism trip costs about four thousand dollars (WorldTeach, n.d.).

As the opening vignette indicates, I (the author) have a personal connection to English language voluntourism. The 2003 trip referenced above was the third time I had engaged in such a venture (the other two trips being summers in Ukraine in 1998 and Tanzania in 2002,

---

<sup>5</sup> My use of the terms, Global North and Global South, indexes work in critical anthropology and human geography that views binaries such as developed/undeveloped or First/Third world in reference to nation-states as fallacious. Global North and Global South, while still problematic in their own ways, evokes the perspective that resource concentration in the certain parts of *the* world is due to historic and ongoing processes of Global North imperialism in the Global South.

respectively). Due to an ongoing interest in and critique of my own role as a participant in English language voluntourism programs, I came to this field as a scholar in 2007. That is, wanting to untangle some of my own confusion about my work as an English language program participant (i.e., whether what I'd done was good or bad, whether EFL teaching in the Global South on such a short-term basis is even pragmatic) and finding a paucity of academic literature on the topic, I developed a research study that centered on the following questions.

1. How do in-service and former English language voluntourism program participants define *development*? What do they understand *development* to mean, and what forms does it take in the programs in which they participate(d)?
2. How and in what ways do in-service and former English language voluntourism program participants' definitions and/or understandings of development cohere among or contradict one another? Do in-service and former program participants define/understand development in the same way, or do they do so differently?

For the purposes of the study presented here, I share and discuss the ways in which English language voluntourism program participants discussed development when they responded affirmatively—that is, when they said, *yes*, English language voluntourism *is* development. Before I explicate their views, however, I situate volunteer tourism within a body of related research.

### **Topical Framework**

The phenomenon of volunteer tourism has grown exponentially in recent years (Wearing, 2004). Although exact figures of volunteer tourism growth are difficult to determine, the



increasing number of organizations offering volunteer tourism programs suggests that the phenomenon is significant and expanding (Brown & Morrison, 2003). Since the early 2000s at least, tourism researchers have noted a “volunteer tourism rush” among vacationers in the Global North (Callanan & Thomas, 2005, p. 183), and in response, some formerly traditional tour companies have been expanding their range of services to include various forms of alternative tourism, including volunteer tourism (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie, & Pomfret, 2003).

Groups beyond the tourism sector have also been influential in contributing to the growth and popularity of volunteer tourism. Unlike tourism industry operators, however, who are likely to promote the practice in terms of its revised ecological footprint and the ostensibly “authentic” cultural encounters it can offer (cf. MacCannell, 1976; Mowforth & Munt, 2006), other organizations promote volunteer tourism in the name of international development. That is, under the monikers, *international voluntary service*, *international civic service*, or *international volunteer service*, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based groups, and government actors alike promote volunteer tourism as a form of development aid or humanitarian relief (cf. Sherraden, Stringham, Sow, & McBride, 2006). Similar to how Wearing (2001) argues that “[v]olunteer tourism can be viewed as a development strategy” (p. 12), the U.S. federal initiative, Volunteers for Prosperity (VfP), created in 2003 by executive order under President George W. Bush, states as its mission to “encourage international voluntary service by highly skilled American professionals supporting the global health and prosperity goals of the U.S. government” and to “show the world the energy and idealism of the United States of America” (Volunteers for Prosperity, n.d.). In this context, international volunteering represents a form of what Nye (2004) calls *soft power*: “the ability to attract others by the legitimacy of U.S. policies and the values that underlie them” (p. 16).

Although VfP uses the term, *international voluntary service*, exclusively to describe the activities it promotes, a quick perusal of VfP partner organizations—over 200 corporate, faith-based, and NGO groups offering short-term international voluntary service programs—indicates that volunteer tourism programs are well represented within VfP. To illustrate, three VfP partners, Cross-Cultural Solutions, Global Volunteers, and United Planet, all sponsor short-term, volunteer English language teaching programs in the Global South that can run as short as one week and require neither professional teaching credentials nor prior teaching experience to be a participant. Thus, VfP’s claim that all of its short-term international voluntary service projects will be staffed by “highly skilled American professionals” (Volunteers for Prosperity, n.d.) is a dubious one, rendering the difference between short-term *international voluntary service* and *volunteer tourism* semantic if not highly negligible.

Recently passed U.S. federal legislation, moreover, portends an increase in both the significance of and the number of people participating in volunteer tourism programs, particularly in the name of development. Under provisions of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009, signed into law by President Barack Obama on April 21, 2009, the VfP Office (now administrated through the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID) receives approximately \$10,000,000 per annum to promote volunteer service domestically and abroad (Volunteers for Prosperity, n.d.). According to the bill, this federal money is to be used “to provide eligible skilled professionals with matching grants to offset the travel and living expenses of volunteering abroad with nonprofit organizations” and, more generally, in the service of “otherwise promoting short- and long-term international volunteer service” (H.R. 1388, p. 139). To the extent that many VfP partners sponsor *de facto* volunteer tourism programs, the Serve America Act of 2009 effectively puts federal money behind volunteer

tourism. Further, as language in the bill states that “Americans engaged in international volunteer service . . . play critical roles in responding to the needs of people living throughout the developing world” (H.R. 1388, p. 138), volunteer tourism, in its various forms, has become a federally endorsed development strategy by fiat as well as by practice.

Despite the broad-scale promotion of volunteer tourism in numerous realms, however, volunteer tourism as a whole remains largely understudied. While scholarship on long-term international volunteer service programs such as the U.S. Peace Corps or Britain’s Voluntary Service Overseas is relevant to the discussion of voluntourism—particularly in terms of participants’ motivations and their experiences of culture and re-entry shock (e.g., Rice, 1985)—this work fails to address the ephemeral, one-to twelve-week nature of voluntourism that is the phenomenon’s distinction. Similarly, although scholarship in the field of international voluntary, or civic, service offers important insights into the roles and meanings of an expanding global civil society (e.g., McBride & Sherraden, 2007), this work does little to problematize the time differential between short- and long-term volunteering. This oversight is key, as long-term, development-oriented volunteer service programs such as the U.S. Peace Corps often require its participants to possess foreign language competency or/or specific professional or educational credentials while short-term programs do not (Collins, DeZerega, & Heckscher, 2002). Further, *international voluntary service* and *international civic service* are umbrella terms that group together a myriad of international volunteer activities. Pursuits as disparate as administering vaccines for two weeks, guarding turtle nesting sites for one month, and teaching conversational English for eight weeks all fall under the rubric of international voluntary, or civic, service (e.g., Sherraden, et al. 2006). Thus, despite its heuristic utility, scholarship on international voluntary, or civic, service overlooks important material and ideological differences among short-term

international volunteer service projects such as degrees of intervention, the goals and outcomes of various programs, and the roles played by individual volunteers at the local level.

A small but growing body of scholarship at the intersection of tourism studies and human geography, however, is beginning to look more closely at the various forms and aspects of volunteer tourism. While much of this work focuses on the motivations, personal development, and spiritual growth of volunteers (e.g., Wearing, 2001; Mustonen, 2005), other studies look at specific types of volunteer tourism and the claims made about them, particularly in the name of development. Gray & Campbell's (2007) study of volunteer ecotourism in Costa Rica, for example, interrogates Wearing's (2001) argument that volunteer tourism represents a decommodified exchange between hosts and guests. The authors point out that despite a summer-long stay in Costa Rica, the volunteer participants in their study continued to privilege their own aesthetic and environmental values vis-à-vis sea turtles over local peoples' economic concerns. Simpson (2004), in her study of the gap year, avers that the proliferation of short-term, international volunteer tourism opportunities in the Global South perpetuates simplistic understandings of poverty and promotes the idea that development is "doable" by well-meaning, inexperienced teenagers. She also takes the volunteer tourism industry to task for failing to engage with the language of development at all. Within gap year programs, for example, she observes that

[w]hatever 'genuine value' or 'needs' participants will meet are never spelled out.

Indeed, there is a vagueness that permeates the entire industry, and reflects the entire approach taken toward development work. Centrally, what is being promoted, and at times even created, is a 'geography of need.' (Simpson, 2004, p. 686)

These critical studies on volunteer tourism as development have salience to the report I present here. For one, English language voluntourism program sponsors also engage very little with the language of development. Although numerous scholars have placed the concept, *development*, under intense, critical interrogation in the last two decades and charged that development itself is a discursive formation with neocolonial effects (e.g., Escobar, 1995; Sachs, 1992; Pigg, 1992), this work is largely absent within English language voluntourism. Other metrics of development such as those put forth by classical economists (e.g., per capita gross national product) are also missing. What is present, however, within English language voluntourism is oblique talk of “help” or “making a difference.” Language in promotional literature generally looks like this:

- “Extend a helping hand to . . . youth and adults. . . . No teaching experience is required to be truly helpful!” (Global Volunteers, n.d., p. 9)
- “As an international volunteer you can effect positive change for people around the world. . . . [A]ny volunteer can make a difference.” (Cross-Cultural Solutions, n.d.)
- “By bringing enthusiasm and a lively approach to language learning, volunteers can really help to motivate and encourage students.” (Projects Abroad, n.d., p. 13)

Development within English language voluntourism, then, is expressed not in terms of quantifiable material or social change, but in terms of “being helpful” or “extending a hand.” There seems to be an *a priori* assumption that any teaching a volunteer might do in the Global South is better than none at all; thus, any intervention is “helpful.”

The link between EFL teaching and development within voluntourism, moreover, is largely *terra incognita*. In the realm of long-term, sustained EFL teaching, broad misconceptions already exist at the intersection of language and development. In the pursuit of economic growth

and modernization, numerous countries throughout the Global South have already made English the medium of instruction in public schools, despite evidence that education and literacy are more effectively achieved in a known, or primary, language (Williams & Cooke, 2002). As Appleby, Copley, Sithirajvongsa, and Pennycook (2000) note, *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). In the context of English language voluntourism—a situation in which EFL teaching stints may be short, disconnected from broader curricula, and haphazardly organized—it is unclear whether EFL is for *English as development*, *English for development*, or something else entirely. Program participants themselves are often unsure, which leads to the findings of my study. Before moving on to participants' views, however, I detail the methods of this investigation.

### **Method**

Data for this investigation were collected as part of a larger, multi-sited (Marcus, 1995) ethnographic study of English language voluntourism. In multi-sited ethnography, a researcher traces a cultural phenomenon ethnographically across multiple sites. Like traditional ethnography, multi-sited ethnography is also “predicated upon attention to the everyday, an intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities” (Marcus, 1995, p. 99). However, multi-sited ethnography problematizes the notion of the single, bounded fieldsite and looks at the ways in which world-system structures (cf. Wallerstein, 1974) are made manifest at the local level and vice-versa. Thus, through multi-sited ethnography, I was able to account for not only the micro-level ways in which English language voluntourism takes place on the ground (e.g., in

classrooms in host communities), but also the macro-level contexts in which it is situated (e.g., in federally supported development initiatives like Volunteers for Prosperity).

### **Context of the Investigation**

Consistent with multi-sited ethnography, this study was conducted in different locations and at multiple scales. In the summer of 2007, I conducted participant observation in Costa Rica as a volunteer English language teacher under the auspices of an NGO-sponsored program. As one of a cohort of twenty-one volunteers, I attended a week-long orientation session and a two-day, mid-service conference. I also taught EFL in a public junior high school and lived with a Costa Rican host family in a small village near the north central Nicaraguan border for approximately six weeks.

In the summer of 2008, I worked as volunteer program assistant in the Northeastern U.S. home offices of the NGO that had sponsored my Costa Rica program. The NGO is approximately 20 years old (it was established in 1986), and it has a loose affiliation with a prestigious, private university, from among whose faculty it draws its board of directors. In 2008, the NGO sponsored a total of 15 programs in 11 countries; 6 of these programs were summer long and 9 were a year in length. As volunteer program assistant for six weeks, my roles were many and varied. Most frequently, I interacted with prospective volunteers on the telephone and worked in the admissions process. I also wrote articles for the NGO's alumni newsletter, ran errands, and assisted in the updating of alumni databases. Additionally, I worked alongside full-time NGO employees (all alumni of the NGO's programs, either short or long-term) with the goal of understanding how English language voluntourism programs are designed, supported, and monitored from a U.S. base.

In January 2009, I returned to the northeastern city in which the NGO is located for ten days to conduct a series of retrospective interviews with program alumni. I contacted these alumni via email using addresses accessed through the NGO's databases. During this 2009 data collection period, I stayed at the home of my key informant, a twenty-something NGO alumni whose professional role was Director of Admissions and Recruitment at the focal NGO. His assistance was pivotal to my study, as he helped to me to schedule interviews from afar, contacted program alumni that he knew, and advised me as to whom among NGO alumni might be interesting to talk to.

### **Data Collection**

**Interviews.** Data for this particular study consist exclusively of 34 interview transcripts. While volunteering in Costa Rica, I conducted 16 open-ended, semi-structured interviews with 14 other members of my 21-person volunteer cohort (two participants were interviewed twice; I combined their respective interviews each into two single, separate documents). Interviews were conducted primarily during the one-week orientation session (prior to teaching) or during the two-day, NGO-sponsored, mid-service conference (at which point, volunteers had been teaching for approximately four weeks). Participants were selected using a process of convenience sampling (Patton, 2002); that is, if and when a fellow volunteer and I happened to be simultaneously free from other obligations (e.g., host family outings, Spanish language classes, lesson planning), I asked if we could sit down and talk. Interview questions in the Costa Rican context were drawn from a pre-established protocol that sought to explore participants' motivations for having volunteered; their perceptions of the purposes of EFL teaching/learning in the host country and/or the local community; and their understandings of the significance and role of English language voluntourism programs in Costa Rica and the Global South more



broadly. All interviews in Costa Rica lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, and most were conducted at either the open-air restaurant compound that comprised the orientation site or at the youth hostel in which the program cohort stayed during the mid-service conference. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

The other 20 interview transcripts that round out the corpus of data for this study were those drawn from interviews conducted with former English language voluntourism program participants in January, 2009. Questions for these interviews were taken from a protocol similar to that used in Costa Rica: i.e., I sought to have participants speak to their motivations for having volunteered; their perceptions of the purposes of EFL teaching/learning in their former host country and/or community; and their understandings of the significance and role of English language voluntourism programs in general. Overall, the retrospective interviews were longer than those conducted in Costa Rica (suggestive of how busy and preoccupied many in-service program participants were), and they lasted between 30 and 75 minutes each. A process of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to recruit interview participants for this portion of the study. As aforementioned, I used the NGO's alumni databases as well as the assistance of the NGO's Director of Admissions and Recruitment to contact summer program alumni who had volunteered in the last two years and who currently resided in the northeastern U.S. city area. All retrospective interviews were conducted in coffee shops near the NGO offices, in the NGO offices themselves, or on the campus of the private university with which the NGO is affiliated. As in Costa Rica, all interviews audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

**Participants.** In both settings (Costa Rica and the northeastern U.S. city), interview participants' identity categories were consistent with research in international volunteering at large. This body of work suggests that participants in volunteer tourism are likely to be female,

under 30, and of middle to upper-middle class backgrounds (Heath, 2007). Out of 31 total participants (3 of my interview participants were interviewed in both 2007 and 2009), 19 (61%) identified as female; all but 1 were under age thirty (indeed, 28, or 90%, were traditionally-aged undergraduate students); and at least 20 (65%)—to judge from the private, prestigious universities they attended—possess markers of middle to upper-middle class cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979/1984). Many of my interview participants, moreover, had received full or partial financial support from their home universities for their volunteer efforts; therefore, fewer than half of them had paid full program fees. In terms of other identity categories, my participants identified as white (22 of 31), Asian American (3 of 31), Indian American (3 of 31), Latina American (1), Ecuadorian (1), and African American (1).

### **Data Analysis**

Interview transcripts were analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach (following Charmaz, 2006). In contrast to an objectivist approach to grounded theory, which “attends to data as real in and of themselves and does not attend to the processes of their production” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131), a constructivist grounded theory approach seeks to interpret the social world. Thus, the findings presented here are (by theoretical design) partial—a social construction.

Following a recursive process that involved initial, or open, coding, writing analytical memos, and focused coding (e.g., Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), I ultimately generated three superordinate categories that expressed the different ways in which participants talked about development. Superordinate categories were generated inductively (based on ideas in interviewees’ talk) and deductively (based on ideas implicit in the interview questions or present in academic literature). The first superordinate category, *English language voluntourism as*

*development*, is the focus of this paper and is explicated below. The other two superordinate categories, *English language voluntourism is not development* and *What is development, anyway?*, form the basis of a separate report (see chapter 5, this volume).

Subsumed within the superordinate category, *English language voluntourism as development* are two subordinate conceptual categories. These include *English or other instruction as development* and *individual volunteer intervention as development*, which are, in turn, comprised of separate codes. Verbatim quotes in the text below serve either as typical examples (or exceptions to) conceptual categories, and were selected based on how well they communicate the central idea of a conceptual category. The first results section focuses on *English or other instruction as development*; the second, on *individual volunteer intervention as development*. It is to a discussion of these findings that I now turn.

## **Findings**

### **English or Other Instruction as Development**

Approximately 76% of study participants (26 of 34) expressed the view that English language voluntourism is development. Of these participants, 81% (21 of 26) indicated that within English language voluntourism, development is an outcome of EFL or other direct instruction (category: *English or other instruction as development*). Participants tied increased English language skills or other knowledge among Global South people to a variety of outcomes that, they claimed, produce or suggest development. These outcomes included (and were coded as): 1) *English for “understanding what’s going on”*; 2) *English for the global economy*; 3) *English for spreading (American) culture*; and 4) *volunteer teaching as providing critical thinking*. All four of these codes together comprised the broader, conceptual category, *English or other instruction as development*.

**English for “understanding what’s going on.”** Among the 82% of program participants who saw *English or other instruction as development*, approximately 43% (9 of 21) expressed that view that English could help people “understand what’s going on” (code: *English for “understanding what’s going on”*). Segments of interview text that were coded this way suggested that English language skills could help people in numerous ways including, but not limited to, the following: understanding business transactions; following world news; being cognizant of the Global North; and becoming a world or global citizen.

To illustrate, Morgan, an in-service program participant, likened English language skills among Costa Rican people to a necessary defensive arsenal against an incursion of Global North commercial and private interests in that country. She explained that English language voluntourism constitutes development in Costa Rica because as the Global North financial and tenant presence increases there, Costa Rican citizens need English skills to “understand what’s going on.” She explained:

[I]n Costa Rica there's so much, like, real estate being developed and people, things buying—like, realtors coming in and buying stuff up. A lot of the fathers in [the] . . . community [where I’m teaching] are actually in the States right now, working to . . . save up money to buy back their farms or, at least, keep their farms from—I’m assuming, Americans, or, like, you know, obviously people not in Costa Rica. . . . So, a lot of them are going to America to do that, and then a lot of English speakers are coming into their country to buy up the land to make hotels and, you know, developments and stuff. So, being able to interact with them, I think, is important to—for them to really understand what's going on. (Morgan, interview, June 27, 2007)

In Morgan's perspective, English language voluntourism facilitates development through the direct provision of English language skills—skills, it is implied, that are needed by Global South people for securing their own assets. Despite the irony that many of the residents of her host community are already working in an English-language speaking country (the U.S, for money), Morgan insists that it is linguistic, not financial, capital that will allow people to retain their own land.

*English for “understanding what’s going on”* was also applied to segments of interview text in which program participants claimed that greater, or increased, English language skills among Global South people would expand those peoples' views of the world. Many program participants suggested that development could (and did) occur through EFL teaching via English language voluntourism because increased English language knowledge equates to an increased understanding of world events, a better perception of other nation-states, and a greater appreciation of internationalism. Christina, an in-service program participant, voiced this perspective. Discussing what she hoped to accomplish in Costa Rica during her time there as summer volunteer, she asserted:

I think what I want to bring to these kids is just a wider view of the world, because . . . they don't really have a scope of knowledge about, like, where they are in the world. Like, “Is Costa Rica—or, is America as big as Costa Rica?” . . . English is kind of an international language, and it is important if you want to, I don't know, kind of stay connected to other countries outside of, like, Latin America. So, like, if you want to know what's going on in, like, England or America—like, America is really important, because we are kind of the big superpower here. But, so, they should know what's going on..

(Christina, interview, June 9, 2007)

To her credit, Christina's claim that English language skills will help people "stay connected and know what's going on" in the international (or superpower) arena mimics claims frequently made by English language voluntourism program sponsors in their promotional literature. Websites and published brochures are rife with sentiments suggesting that English language teaching via voluntourism promotes international understanding, global connection, intercultural exchange, etc. To wit: "Deeply ingrained in the hearts of the young people of these communities [in South India] is a desire to speak English, the language that can put them in touch with the rest of the world" (Projects Abroad, n.d). In a sense, then, comments like Christina's are reflections of a broader (already published) discourse on what English language voluntourism can and does do for Global South people.

Particularly concerning about *English for "understanding what's going on,"* however, is the hierarchy it presumes in terms of who is "in touch" with the world (i.e., English language speakers) and who is not (i.e., people who don't speak English). This view calls to mind what Pennycook (2000a) calls the *modernization* model of global English language spread: the idea that English is the language of computers, global business, international communication, *ad nauseum* (cf. Crystal, 2003). Within this construction, English is the language of "the world," and other languages are relegated to local—often distinctly more humble—purposes such as child-rearing, gossip, and religious practice. "English is linked to processes of modernization not only as the most modern of languages, but also through its supposed role as the means to social and material change," Pennycook notes (p. 6). Thus, to have English language skills is not only to be "in the know," but also to possess a cache of symbolic capital. "Learning English has become a component of an 'imagined global citizenship,' one of the many ways of 'imagining globalization,' Niño-Murcia (2003, p. 121) writes, and people throughout the world—to judge by

the profitable industry that is English language teaching—seem to concur (Phillipson, 1992). The sad truth in reality, though, is that English language skills alone rarely deliver on the material or social goods that the discourse around it promises. Particularly for women and the very poor in the Global South, it is L1, or first language, literacy skills (not English) that correlate most strongly to reduced economic vulnerability, increased personal autonomy, and broader access to tertiary education (Bruthiaux, 2002).

**English for accessing the global economy.** In addition to expressing the category, *English language or other instruction as development* through the code, *English for “understanding what’s going on,”* 18 of 21, or 86% of program participants, explained that English language voluntourism provides development in the Global South because the English language skills it facilitates there will allow nation-states greater access to the “global economy.” That is, increased English language skills among the population of a nation-state will ostensibly facilitate that same nation-state’s entry into a broader economic grid, thus ensuring development. Suzanne, interviewed in Costa Rica about the English language teaching she would be doing in a small, rural school there, illustrates this code, *English for accessing the global economy*, as follows:

Just in the global economy—since America and, and England, I suppose—are pretty big players in the global economy, who knows? Some of these kids—maybe they're from small towns, so probably not—but some of these kids could grow up to be in government, and if the government can understand English, then they can have more of a role in the global economy and not be a so-called third world country. (Suzanne, interview, June 5, 2007)

In Suzanne's perspective, English language skills provide *de facto* access to the "global economy," a social formation in which "having more of a role" is equated with development. Such a view is, regrettably, ahistorical, as it fails to account for the ways in which less advantaged and/or exploited parts of the world have always played central roles in international trade and commerce networks—most often to their long-term detriment. From seventeenth century mercantilism to twentieth century trade agreements, ventures in wealth concentration have consistently relied upon the transfer of natural and human resources from, in Wallerstein's (1974) terms, the periphery to center. Being a key player in the global economy, sadly, does not necessarily render victory's spoils.

Moreover, Suzanne's personification of Costa Rica as an actor whose current economic and social problems are due to its lack of English language proficiency (i.e., "if the government can understand English, then they can have more of a role in the global economy") reflects a curious theme that many participants voiced: nation-states (not people) need English language skills. Catherine, another in-service program participant, gave word to this idea explicitly.

Interesting to note is her use of the pronoun, *they*, in reference to the country, Costa Rica:

English opens doors for—it'll, it'll be big with the tourism, but also hopefully they'll be able to bring things from the U.S. that will be good for them here, and they'll be able to communicate that and figure out what could work here that has worked in the English-speaking countries. Because so far, [the English-speaking countries] are functioning, you know, very well, and here, they're—they still need a lot, a lot of things, you know. And so, I think they can live a lot better if they have that English to communicate the things that they need. (Catherine, interview, June 4, 2007)



Similar to Suzanne, above, Catherine conflates English language skills—skills taught to individual people at the local level—with increased self-determination on a national scale. In this equation, English language voluntourism constitutes development because as it spreads the English language among people (by design) it ostensibly bolsters the agency and power of the host country (by effect).

A remarkably similar logic, however, has helped to shape modern-day language policies in nation-states throughout the Global South. In Tanzania, for example, English has been the medium of instruction in all of its public secondary schools since the early 1980s. Created with an eye toward economic development, this policy has instead resulted in schools' stressing English language skills at the expense of subject matter learning. Unable to develop the high level English language proficiency necessary for accessing academic content, many Tanzanian secondary school graduates lack critical knowledge in science and math—the very subject areas that might, more practically than English alone, help them to gain fruitful employment or move into postsecondary education (Brock-Utne, 2002). Tanzanians' faith in the power of English, however—its role as an “international language,” its apparent links to technology, its seductiveness as the language of travel—make local people resistant to policy amendment (Vavrus, 2002).

**English for spreading (U.S.) culture.** In addition to viewing English language voluntourism as development because of the role English might play in “understanding what’s going on,” participants also saw EFL instruction via voluntourism as development because of the language’s role as a cultural carrier. That is, 8 of 21, or 38% of participants considered English language use as on par with being a U.S. citizen; to teach EFL was to offer Global South people the chance to acquire U.S. habits. Participants offered that this sort of cultural assimilation could

then lead to U.S. standards of living—ergo, development. Scott, interviewed in Costa Rica, exemplified the code, *English for spreading (U.S.) culture*, in this way:

[W]hat we're doing is we're teaching them English. Right now, they only know one language. We're teaching English; we're, like, essentially giving them a part of our culture. The reasons that they need to know English is because English and our culture are, like, becoming really widespread in the world, and that's why they need to know it. And so, we're just, like, spreading our culture and . . . raising them to our status a little. . . . And maybe, like, if they're educated, there will be less crime. San Jose is, like, really, really crime-ridden. (Scott, interview, June 28, 2007)

Scott's oversight of comparable U.S. urban crime notwithstanding, his suggestion that EFL teaching is essentially the teaching of U.S. culture suggests that in the purview of some volunteers, development means making other people (or nation-states) more American. In this perspective, development occurs through English language voluntourism less in the teaching of English than in the fostering of new ways of being. Perhaps this view is encouraged by English language voluntourism program sponsors, whose on-line promotional materials often make similar claims. Websites are rife with comments such as following:

- “Your presence speaks volumes to local people who appreciate your unique perspectives. . . . Your personal and professional path offers local people new insight into life, education, and careers overseas” (Cross-Cultural Solutions, n.d.).
- “[V]olunteers have the chance to use their skills and energy to encourage the children [they teach] to become good citizens and productive members of society” (Experiential Learning International, n.d.).

In these examples, it is implied that the (positive) cultural modeling U.S. volunteers do in Global South host communities trumps EFL instruction in terms of local or long-lasting impact.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that some participants go on these programs assuming the same.

Whatever its origin, the view implicit in *English for spreading (U.S.) culture* is concerning on multiple accounts. For one, although English language spread is often tied to simplistic ideologies of modernization, there is a widening body of scholarship suggesting that world-wide English language spread represents not U.S. or British hegemony but English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Seidlhofer, Breiteneder, & Pitzl, 2006). Alternately referred to as English as an International Language (EIL) (e.g., Modiano, 2001) or World English (WE) (e.g., Rajagopalan, 2004), ELF is a deterritorialized, technical tongue. It is the English language spoken in international airports, printed in computer manuals, and bereft of ties to a nation-state. Some scholars go so far as to suggest that Global North, monolingual English language speakers (such as U.S. voluntourists) do not know ELF, or WE, at all; therefore, they are unqualified to teach it (Rajagopalan, 2004).

Program participants' insistence, however, on linking language (English) to culture (U.S.) not only ignores ELF and similar phenomena, but also belies the ways in which "globalization is . . . uncoupling . . . the 'natural' link between languages and cultures" (Mignolo, 1998, p. 42).

Given the extensive communication and travel networks that now exist around the world (e.g., broadband connections, cell phone towers, airline flights), international entities may be closer in relative distance than are entities within single nation-states in absolute terms (Herod, 2009).

That is, by way of globalization tendencies, businesspeople operating in Tokyo may use more spoken English on a day-to-day basis over Skype with people in Quito than do U.S. individuals

working among one another in New York while plugged into personal Ipods in separate, foam-covered cubicles.

Who or what culture gets to claim English, then, is a contested and possibly moot point. Particularly in what Kachru (1997) calls the Expanding Circle—nation-states in which English is learned as an additional, or foreign, language (the very countries in which English language voluntourism programs take place)—research indicates that well-learned English is more likely to be put to local purposes than U.S. or British ones (Pennycook, 2000; Sonntag, 2003). Resistance to Tamil militarism in Sri Lanka over the last decade, for example, has taken the form of English language use. Although ultra-nationalist, Tamil Tiger forces have worked tirelessly to promote a policy of “pure Tamil” language use in Sri Lanka, more moderate citizens have continued to code-switch between English and Tamil. This practice, in Canagarajah’s (2000) terms, “evoke[s] a discourse of cultural pluralism and internationalism that assumes anti-totalitarian and anti-chauvinistic ideological interests against the dominant separatism” (p. 128). Thus, despite some voluntourism program participants’ beliefs that teaching/learning EFL is equivalent to spreading U.S. culture, English language learners in the Expanding Circle are unlikely to feel the same way.

Moreover, the idea that Global South people require cultural alterations (through English language learning) so as to bring about development (i.e., “we’re spreading our culture. . . we’re raising them to our status a little”) bespeaks a colonial ethic. Although there is a concerted effort on the parts of some English language voluntourism sponsors to present their programs as equal exchanges—for example, a Cross-Cultural Solutions brochure states that “[Our] mission is to operate volunteer programs around the world in partnership with sustainable community initiatives” (n.d.) and Global Volunteers claims that they are “[a]lways working hand-in-hand

and under the direction of local people” (2008, p. 28)—Scott’s interpretation of his volunteer role (as well as voluntourism’s persistent Global North to Global South unidirectionality) hints at ongoing paternalism.

As has been well-noted in academic literature, world-wide English language teaching is historically implicated in ethnocentric, often violent, projects of dominance that run the gamut from colonialism and missionary work to modern-day warcraft (Edge, 2003; Holborow, 1999; Macedo, Dendrinos, & Gounari, 2003; Pennycook 1994; 1998; 1999; 2000; Phillipson, 1992; 2000). As a result, social-justice oriented EFL teachers are charged with a particular set of pedagogical obligations. These obligations include, but are not limited to, understanding issues of world-wide language rights (Skutnabb-Kangass, 2000); investigating the ways in which EFL teaching may carry forth certain ideological commitments (Pennycook, 1998); and engaging in critical praxis to promote equity among speakers of various language groups (Pennycook, 1994). Comments suggestive of *English for spreading (U.S.) culture*, however, suggest that participants in English language voluntourism programs may not be receiving adequate professional preparation—or, at least, not professional preparation in teaching for social justice.

**Volunteer teaching as providing critical thinking.** In addition to classifying English language voluntourism as development because of *English for “understanding what’s going on,” English for accessing the global economy*, and *English for spreading (U.S.) culture*, 6 of 21, or 29% of program participants deemed the phenomenon development because it promotes “critical thinking.” Put differently, when asked to discuss their roles as short-term volunteer EFL teachers, program participants often asserted that volunteers bring much-needed critical thinking or creativity skills to Global South people. These comments generated the code, *volunteer teaching as providing critical thinking*, which was applied to segments of interview text in which

participants discussed how the teaching of critical thinking (through voluntourism) fosters development. Danica, a former program participant who had taught EFL in Costa Rica, expressed this code like this:

[I]nternational development. I think the idea is that—that American college students or people just out of college are given pretty great critical thinking skills and abilities to teach that they can share with other students in other countries whose educational systems may not be that good or maybe it's just that they're not as well-funded. So . . . it's helping give not necessarily equal, but better, opportunities to kids to learn those skills that are applicable in any job and in any situation really. . . . I think that the more valuable thing that a [volunteer] can teach is not specifically the language but, but the thought process that we go through to solve problems. Problem-solving ability. I think that most of the teaching in the school system that I was at was the teacher would write something on the board; the kids would copy it down. It was very much memorization. It wasn't critical thinking; it wasn't thinking outside the box. . . . [and] if some, if some well-developed countries value those things and are using those skills to come up with ways to solve the next generation of problems and all Costa Rican kids don't have those abilities, it will be harder for them to collaborate with other countries and it will be harder for them to work within their own country to solve their problems. (Danica, interview, January 28, 2009)

As Danica reveals, implicit in the perspective of *volunteer teaching as providing critical thinking* is the view that Global South people currently lack (or never had) the skills necessary for generating and sustaining their own development, be those skills EFL or problem-solving abilities. The role of English language voluntourism in this perspective, then, is to challenge a

host community's current educational paradigm: to provide the English language and/or critical thinking skills assumed to presage development.

Despite its good intentions, however, the beliefs undergirding *volunteer teaching as providing critical thinking* are disconcerting in their short view of history. Many of the educational practices that remain dominant in Global South classrooms today are legacies of colonialism. Under colonial regimes, indigenous educational patterns and traditional, site-based or tribal pedagogies were frequently displaced by colonizers' methods. These new methods were very often standardized, reductive ways of teaching and learning designed to produce a docile, compliant workforce. Focused on outcomes that could be regulated and quantified (and therefore, used to sort people), these methods were applied across subjects (Altbach, 1971/1995). As London (2003) reports, a dominant educational objective in the colonial schools of Trinidad and Tobago, for example,

was to promote the use of standard official English, and this determination led to what might be described as hypercorrection in the teaching-learning process. Teachers became preoccupied with the use of "correct" English . . . . This preoccupation led to a structure in which form very often took precedence over content. . . . Recitation and rote learning were . . . important . . . pedagogical devices. (p. 303)

In colonial schools such as those in Trinidad and Tobago, London continues, "Teachers insisted on the mechanics of English as a language, even at the expense of understanding what was read" (p. 311). Form rather than content was the goal.

Thus, the pedagogical practices of rote memorization and repetition that Danica observes in Costa Rica—the "not thinking outside the box"—find root in a larger, historical formation. Indeed, one of the tragedies of colonialism is that over time and under the tight, political control

and ideological sway of imperial regimes, the colonized can internalize the practices, ways of being, and institutional habits of the colonizer (Memmi, 1965/1991). Consequently, colonial traditions can continue in a nation-state long after a colonizer has departed. This feature of *postcoloniality*—“the cultural and ideological aspects of colonialism that continue to influence the present” (Vavrus, 2002)—may help to explain why reductive pedagogies persist in Global South classrooms. And while the volunteer impulse to correct this pedagogy with a “critical thinking” counterweight may be a liberatory one (cf. Friere, 1970/2003), embedded in this same perspective is the notion that contemporary problems in the Global South are caused by postcoloniality rather than a consequence of it. Said differently, within *volunteer teaching as providing critical thinking*, rote learning becomes an explanation for a nation-state’s problems, not a feature of its postcolonial status.

### **Development as an Outcome of Individual Volunteer Intervention**

In addition to viewing English language voluntourism as development because of the skills it ostensibly provides (*English or other instruction as development*), 21 of 34 study participants reported that development occurs through voluntourism because of non-instructional, individual volunteer efforts. That is, approximately 62% of study participants viewed development as a phenomenon that would follow in the wake of their personal enthusiasm, role modeling, or individual example. These actions included (and were coded as): 1) *providing inspiration to local people* and 2) *working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people*. Both of these codes together comprised the broader conceptual category, *individual volunteer intervention as development*.

**Providing inspiration to local people.** 21 of 23, or 91% of program participants who viewed *individual volunteer intervention as development* (category) felt that this occurred by



way of *providing inspiration to local people* (code). Josie, a former program participant, exemplified *providing inspiration to local people* in a discussion of what she felt she had accomplished as a volunteer in Ecuador. Reflecting on her summer experience, Josie stressed that what she had done in terms of EFL teaching there paled in comparison to the influence of her sheer presence alone. Local people, she felt, had been inspired by her—and whether she taught English or not, her presence had “touched” her host community. She explained:

Even if they didn't remember a word of English . . . I was entertainment for two months, you know, something special that they could look forward to and have. . . . I think that the . . . act of sending an American college student abroad to a place . . . like the one I went to kind of promotes international development. . . . It's constantly improving the lives—or how about touching the lives—of the people [volunteers] meet in, in hopefully a positive way, and that can bring about change. . . . I am most proud that I was able to go in and demonstrate to the people I met that there . . . is someone is the U.S. who cares about them. . . . I mean, it's a whole other world, and, I mean, we—if, like, when they can get a signal on their TV, I mean, they see the lives we live. And we—we have it a whole—a lot better than they do. And that someone, like, so far away and with so many resources at their fingertips, you know, cares about them, and, you know, chooses to spend their time with, like, with these people. . . . I think it's particularly special. (Josie, interview, January 29, 2009)

Josie's impression of her volunteer self as not primarily a language instructor but “something special [Ecuadorians] could look forward to and have” suggests that among some program participants, what one does (teach EFL) is less important than who one is (a person from the Global North) in terms of affecting development. In this construction, service to a host

community is simply being there: One's (Global North) presence alone is, ostensibly, enough to guide (Global South) people into changing their ways.

Lortie's (1975) concept of the apprenticeship of observation may help to shed explanatory light on the thinking behind *providing inspiration to local people*. The apprenticeship of observation refers to the idea that people learn a professional identity by watching someone else rather than through direct, professional assistance or guided instruction. In a sociological study of new teacher induction, Lortie discovered that inexperienced teachers rely less on the skills or concepts learned in their teacher preparation programs than they do on their apprenticeships of observation—that is, on their personal recollections of what constituted good teaching when they were younger. Thus, among new teachers, impressions formed between the ages of five and eighteen can play a larger role in new teachers' thought processes than any (more recently learned) pedagogical strategies. Given that most of my study participants had little or no prior teaching experience (Josie, a biology major, was no exception), volunteers' conceptions of their teaching roles may have been largely informed by their apprenticeships of observation. As many program participants had attended private, exclusive secondary schools or gifted/talented programs (14 of 34 participants said so directly), their apprenticeships of observation may have revealed much about teaching as fun or inspirational (e.g., "I was entertainment for them") and less about the ways in which well-used pedagogical content knowledge can impact student achievement (Shulman, 1986). Lacking pedagogical content knowledge, or knowledge about *how* to teach English, many volunteers may have relied on their early conceptions of teaching/learning—i.e., teaching as offering inspiration.

On a different note, Josie's confidence in the across-the-board superiority of U.S. life vis-à-vis life in Ecuador was startling to me as the interviewer. First, her assessment relies on the

problematic construction of an Us/Them national binary that renders illegible differences in standards of living *within* single nation-states (cf. Scott, 1998). As anyone who has ever visited Quito, Ecuador might attest to, the malls on Amazonas Avenue there rival those of Beverly Hills. Second, as Josie and I met in the NGO offices, Josie would had to have skirted—if not, quite literally, stepped over—more than a handful of homeless people on the way to our interview appointment. The commercial area in which the NGO is situated is notorious for its indigent population. Presumably, televised scenes of these “residents” and their existence on U.S. streets is not what Josie is referring to when she says of the (housed, television-owning) Ecuadorians in her host community, “I mean, they see the lives we live. And we . . . have it a whole lot better than they do.”

Lauren, a former program participant in South Africa, shared Josie’s conviction that individual volunteers do as much, if not more, for development in the Global South through their presence and inspirational capacities than through any of the skills or the content that they might teach. In discussing her role as a volunteer English language arts teacher in South Africa, Lauren revealed *providing inspiration to local people* through the following narrative:

I always knew [development work] was kind of—it was within me. . . . I’d always saw [sic] myself in a white T-shirt and jeans and working in a small village. . . . Ever since I was little, we had *National Geographic* come in the mail, and it was just looking through those pictures and just kind of seeing a COMPLETELY different life that lacks so many things that we have here. So I think it was just seeing the bare minimum—just, you know, seeing pictures of the people there. So, I kind of grew up that way. . . . I think education’s the first way to installing [sic] in kids what their potential is and how big their potential is. So, and if kids know that, then they’ll want to succeed—they’ll want to go

past fifth grade, past sixth grade, and kind of become a leader in their community. . . .

[I]f you have a class full of 50 kids and you come in with the energy that hasn't been there before—just because it is such an exhausted community—and you inspire that one kid, then they will become the, a leader in their community that will build a family that will become, you know, a role model within the community. (Lauren, interview, January 29, 2009)

Lauren's characterization of South African communities as "exhausted"—and, by contrast, visiting, denim-clad, Global North volunteers as energetic and inspiring—casts protracted difficulties in the Global South (as well as their remedies) in a narrow, simplistic light. In the context of *providing inspiration to local people*, long-term, broad-scale social problems in the Global South such as insufficient public resources, underemployment, and structural poverty, among any number of other economic or political considerations, are not the consequences of years of apartheid or the legacies of long-term colonialism. Rather, destitution, gross inequality, and other societal ills (including those given publicity in popular media such as *National Geographic*) are evidence of individual failure, communal resignation, or fatigue—a social lethargy that can be overcome by the enthusiastic, well-meaning presence of a visiting volunteer.

The facile perceptions of development implicit in *providing inspiration to local people*, however, are neither generated in a social vacuum nor as odd as they may seem. Views like Josie's and Lauren's find their origins in contemporary, neoliberal notions of self-regulating citizenship (e.g., Rose, 1999). That is, under the auspices of neoliberalism—a broad, often contested, political label used to describe the pro-free market, pro-corporate, anti-big government ideology that has become hegemonic among Global North nation-states and supranational

financial institutions in the last few decades (Harvey, 2005)—ideas of civic engagement and what it means to be an active citizen are reframed.

In the last three decades in the United States, as four successive administrations have been in thrall to neoliberal doctrines, rates of participation in community organizations and in long-standing forms of collective, public action such as political letter-writing, union membership, and protest rally attendance have declined dramatically (Putnam, 1995). Concurrently, there has been a rise in more private, individually-oriented forms of civic participation such as fee-requiring athletic events (e.g., Crop Walks), socially-conscious consumption (e.g., buying “pink” items for breast cancer awareness) (King, 2006), and fee-requiring volunteering and service (e.g., voluntourism). These hybrid civic/private practices rely not on 1960s-style clamor to generate social change, but on what Duggan (2003, p. 14) calls neoliberalism’s “valorized concepts”: *privatization* and *personal responsibility*. “In both arenas, neoliberals have promoted ‘private’ *competition*, *self-esteem*, and *independence* as the roots of *personal responsibility*, and excoriated ‘public’ *entitlement*, *dependency*, and *irresponsibility* as the source of social ills,” Duggan writes (2003, p. 14, emphasis in original). Voluntourism program participants’ beliefs, then, that wide-scale social or economic change—i.e., development—can be wrought by way of inspiration may be read as reflection of broader, neoliberal shifts in state formation and the new forms of “active” citizenship that they engender and uncritically promote.

**Working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people.** Alongside *providing inspiration to local people*, another way in which program participants expressed *individual volunteer intervention as development* was in discussions of *working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people* (code). That is, 13 of 23, or 56% of the program participants who saw

*individual volunteer intervention as development* felt that because of the settings in which English language voluntourism programs often take place—i.e., rural, resource-poor communities—optimal conditions exist for delivering development. In the words of in-service program participant Catherine, introduced above,

I think [the NGO] actually [sends volunteers] to where [help is] needed. I mean, two [volunteers' sites] are on the map of Costa Rica, and the rest are in the little places that are unknown. . . . And so, they're putting us in places where you can't find. I looked on the internet for [my placement site], and I couldn't find it anywhere—like, I just saw a little region. And so, I mean, you know that you're going to the places where the people don't have anything, and where you can make the most difference because they're not going to get it any other way. You know, and they're going to be the ones that are going to be so thankful to have learned something. (Catherine, interview, January 4, 2007)

As Catherine opines, the code, *working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people*, relies heavily on an assumed correlation between rural, remote locations and abject poverty or neediness. Exclusion from Google Maps signifies “a place where the people don’t have anything. . . where [volunteers] can make the most difference,” whatever it is that they do there. This view, however, of rural and remote places as distinctly needy or depraved (within an already-marginalized country) belies what Davis (2006) calls the contemporary urbanization of global poverty. That is, given the poor sanitation, limited employment opportunities, and lack of public infrastructure in most Global South cities, poor people in rural communities may actually be less likely than their urban counterparts to fall through the cracks. In smaller, rural communities in the Global South, informal, familial, and/or community-based supports networks often remain

intact—mitigating the effects of broader, structural problems in a way that cities cannot (Davis, 2006).

On a different note, *working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people* was also reflected in the surprise some participants expressed about their volunteer placement sites. That is, some program participants felt confusion—even disappointment—about the lack of poverty they had perceived or experienced in their respective host communities. Participants offering this view judged schools that appeared to possess adequate material resources, for example, as undeserving of outside help. They also complained that placements in seemingly well-outfitted schools or communities minimized a volunteer's role and mitigated against one's chances of engaging in important development work. Ana, a former program participant, spoke to this point directly. Discussing her volunteer placement in a private boarding school in South Africa, she said:

I definitely thought I would be working more in, like, a township area—like, an area that REALLY needed my help. . . . Especially, there was one set of schools . . . that, it looked like a suburb of San Diego. Like, when I looked around, I just thought, “This is a really nice school.” You know, what the volunteer there was doing was helping kids not just learning the basics of computers, but like, really advanced programs where she worked with computers. She was like, “I didn't learn this stuff until college!” Like, and so she was really upset that she was there tutoring these kids on something like this when she came to help kids, like, in the townships, who needed help with basic stuff like reading and writing and that kind of thing. So, so, in that way, we were—I think we all kind of were taken aback by that. . . . [Some of the volunteers] thought, you know, “I spent all this money to come here. This is what I thought I'd be doing, and this is not—like what,”

and, you know, [one of the volunteers was] like, “If I wanted to tutor, you know, high school kids in these advanced computer programs, I can do that in the U.S. You know, in, like, regular schools in the U.S. And that’s not why I came here,” kind of thing. . . . [J]ust like, “They don’t NEED help.” (Ana, interview, January 27, 2009)

As Ana’s narrative highlights, a key component of *working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people* is a preconception among volunteers of what “counts” as an appropriate intervention and appropriate receiver of charity. Teaching “basic stuff like reading and writing” to township residents is viewed as acceptable service, but tutoring uniformed high school students in “advanced computer programs” is not. Despite the fact in many voluntourism programs, local authorities such as ministries of education determine where volunteers go and what they do there (NGO, personal communication), volunteers themselves make autonomous assessments about whether their service is required or “needed.”

Alternately, Ana’s paraphrasing of her colleague’s disappointment—that she had “spent all this money to come here” —hints at another dimension of *working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people*. Within this perspective, the experience of working among poor, Global South people is something available for purchase. That is, the act of “teaching basic reading and writing” to township-dwelling South Africans is an experiential commodity one can seemingly order up through an English language voluntourism program. When one is dissatisfied with their “purchase,” however (as Ana’s colleague seemed to be), there is little recourse for the buyer save verbal complaint.

Another former program participant, Shelly, also expressed the category, *individual volunteer intervention as development* by way of the code, *working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people*. Like Ana and the colleague she paraphrases, Shelly also felt that her



opportunities to provide *individual volunteer intervention as development* were truncated by the lack of need she perceived among the students under her tutelage. The English language summer camp at which Shelly had been placed to teach in China was attended by fee-paying students; consequently, Shelly felt conflicted about the role of volunteer service there. She explained:

Well, I think there's sort of an odd setup in that—so, I feel like the concept of volunteer teaching—you go and think, “I'm gonna teach the underprivileged children, to help them.” Whereas, I think the situation was with [NGO] is very much—kids pay a lot to be at the [English summer] camp. And so, we weren't teaching underprivileged kids. And so, I didn't—you know, I didn't feel the same way about the kids I was teaching as about sort of the area. And it was one of those things where, you know, I mean, if I was to go back to China, or anywhere else to teach English, I know I wouldn't be a volunteer. 'Cause I think the people who need it wouldn't pay, and, and the kids you're teaching—by a volunteer—the kids are going to pay. . . . I was sort of conflicted about the whole—I don't know—how the financial thing was working out. About . . . this sort of weird situation where you're teaching . . . where volunteers came and . . . these kids whose parents are paying for them to learn English. . . . I think, you know, they—the way they kind of explained it to us, they were saying that the richer kids really need English; they're the ones who have the opportunity to use it. . . . The really poor kids aren't going to ever use English; they don't have—so, teaching it to them doesn't really make any sense. . . . Then the whole volunteer aspect of it becomes strange. You're saying, “Okay, am I volunteering to advance the progress of China through the education of some of its citizens or what?” (Shelly, interview, January 29, 2009)

Shelly's concluding statement here is telling. In her view, the purpose of English language voluntourism is not to advance the overall economic progress of a nation-state, but rather to teach, as she puts it, "underprivileged kids." Although many classical economists might point out that advancing a nation-state's per capita gross national product does, indeed, qualify as development work (cf. World Bank, 1981), for Shelly and volunteers of a similar persuasion, development is *working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people*. It is bringing the lowest common denominator of a focal society up to an (unclear) minimum standard, not, in Shelly's terms, "advancing the progress" of a nation-state vis-à-vis other countries. Incidentally, Shelly's overall discomfort what she termed "the whole financial thing" (i.e., students paying to attend the camp at which she taught; she, herself, having paid to be there) suggests that in within the perspective of *working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people*, only one side of the host/visitor binary is understood to possess economic power.

Finally, the idea that English language voluntourism program participants will be uniformly welcomed and are direly needed by Global South host communities is another component of *working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people*. This point is made well by Shannon, a former program participant, who noted in a retrospective interview that she had gone to her Namibia placement site with some incorrect preconceptions vis-a-vis how she would be received and what Namibian people would be like. She explained:

I kind of went in thinking that people [in Namibia] would be unhappy with where they were in life, maybe? I mean, I, I guess that's kind of bad to go in assuming that, but I was like, "Oh, I'm going in as a volunteer, so they need me here. So things must be bad." But . . . [t]hey were fine, you know what I mean? Does that make sense? They were just, like, content . . . And I was like, "Well, what am I doing, coming in here, like, saying,

“Oh, you need, like, satellite technology. You need to, like, go to school and, like, you need to, like, get these jobs.” (Shannon, interview, January 30, 2009)

Shannon’s earnest surprise that the people in her Namibian host community were not across-the-board wretched, distressed, or anxiously awaiting deliverance from their circumstances suggests the dominance of *working with the poor or neediest people* within English language voluntourism. Program participants often assume that their role as a summer-long volunteer will be a Messianic one: a chance to deliver the Truth from the Global North. Upon discovering that this perception is inaccurate or misguided, many program participants report some cognitive dissonance (see chapter 5, this volume).

### Discussion

According to Williams (1983), a word becomes a *keyword* when the problem or clarity of its meaning becomes inextricably fused with the problems or concepts it is employed to discuss. Keywords indicate not only certain forms of thought, but they also make implicit connections to particular formations of meaning—to ways of interpreting experience and making sense of the world. “Certain uses [of keywords] [bind] together certain ways of seeing culture and society,” Williams writes (p. 15). “Certain other uses . . . open up issues and problems, in the same general area, of which we all [need] to be . . . much more conscious” (p. 15). Very often, keywords themselves are central components of the very issues or troubles they are employed to describe. Keywords take on multiple meanings, thus blurring the exact concepts they are meant to make clear. Williams notes: “[W]ords that seem to have been there for centuries, with continuous general meanings, have come in fact to express radically different or radically variable, yet sometimes hardly noticed, meanings and implications of meaning” (p. 17). One might confidently say, for example, that lexical items such as *freedom*, *patriotism*, and *terrorism* have

become keywords since September 11, 2001. Imbued with the U.S.'s interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, these words have taken on lives of their own and complicated the very ideologies that they are meant to explain.

Williams' notion of the *keyword*, I offer, is critical to the findings of this study. Although Williams himself judged *development* to be a keyword more than twenty years ago (Williams, 1983, 102-104), the twisting, personalized, and often obtuse ways in which English language voluntourism programs participants enact and understand *development* suggests that Williams' assessment remains valid even today. Among the participants in this study, *development* means all kinds of things: providing people with EFL or critical thinking skills; inspiring people with words or one's presence; helping the (ostensibly) least resourced people in a society meet some sort of minimum standard. If development is all things to all people (as it seems to be within English language voluntourism), how is it measured or accounted for? What, moreover, are the ultimate goals of English language voluntourism as development? To the extent that development means little within English language voluntourism, how does its stakeholders' appropriation of the term (for example, in the Volunteers for Prosperity context), further erode its meaning and/or significance? As Sachs (1997) observes,

[D]evelopment has become a shapeless amoeba-like word. . . . They who pronounce the word denote nothing but claim the best of intentions. Development thus has no content but it does possess a function: it allows any intervention to be sanctified in the name of a high evolutionary goal. (1999, p. 7)

Within English language voluntourism, unfortunately, Sach's observation seems to hold true.

What I suggest is sorely lacking within English language voluntourism is a firmer conception of what, exactly, these programs are designed to do. As this study's findings suggest,

without a coherent, articulated position on how English language voluntourism operationalizes *development*, individual participants themselves come to do their own defining. In doing so, they imbue *development* with all kinds of meanings—meanings that, as I have illustrated, can be tinged with neocolonialism, facile conceptions of teaching/learning, and other, often patronizing, points of view. If, as the U.S. agency Volunteers for Prosperity avers, participants in volunteer tourism programs “show the world the energy and idealism of the United States of America” (Volunteers for Prosperity, n.d.), it would behoove these programs to make clear what our young peoples’ energy and idealism are being mobilized in the service of. Without this conceptual clarity, *development*, with the help of English language voluntourism, may go the way of the twenty-first century, post 9-11 U.S. flag: a sign that can mean only *one* thing. And, furthermore, in the context of flying of it, debate around other, possible meanings is limited or cut off altogether.

\*       \*       \*

Week seven, back at Che’s. Ken and I are no further along on figuring out what development looks like via English language voluntourism in Ecuador. I do know, however, that the beer is cold, the jungle is loud—and oh, the bus rides are long. I’ll return to the U.S. from my English language voluntourism program experience soon: wiser about packing lightly, certain that nothing is more exhilarating than riding an inner-tube down the Rio Pano, and no clearer as to what I did for anyone.

## References

- Altbach, P. G. (1995). Education and neocolonialism. In B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, & H. Tiffin (Eds.), *The post-colonial studies reader* (pp. 452-456). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1971)
- Appleby, R., Copley, K., Sithirajvongsa, S., & Pennycook, A. (2002). Language in development constrained: Three contexts. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(3), 323-346.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1979)
- Brock-Utne, B. (2002). *Language, democracy, and education in Africa*. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Brown, S. & Morrison, A.M. (2003). Expanding volunteer vacation participation: An exploratory study on the mini-mission concept. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 28, 73-82.
- Bruthiaux, P. (2002). Hold your courses: Language education, language choice, and economic development. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(3), 275-296.
- Callanan, M. & Thomas, S. (2005). Volunteer tourism: Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment. In M. Novelli (Ed.). *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends, and cases* (pp. 183-200). Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2000). Negotiating ideologies through English: Strategies from the periphery. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *Ideology, politics, and language policies: Focus on English* (pp. 121-131). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Collins, J., DeZerega, S., & Heckscher, Z. (2002). *How to live your dream of volunteering overseas*. New York: Penguin Books.

- Cross-Cultural Solutions. (n.d.). Cross-Cultural Solutions. Retrieved May 6, 2009 from <http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org>
- Cross-Cultural Solutions. (n.d.). *Cross-Cultural Solutions* [Brochure]. New Rochelle, NY: Author.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Duggan, L. (2003). *The twilight of equality? Neoliberalism, cultural politics, and the attack on democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Edge, J. (2003). Imperial troopers and servants of the lord: A vision of TESOL for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37, 701-709.
- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the third world*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Experiential Learning International. (n.d.). Experiential Learning International. Retrieved May 23, 2009 from <http://www.eliabroad.org>
- Friere, P. (2003). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition) (M. Bergman Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1970)
- Global Volunteers. (2008). *Global Volunteers: Adventures in service* [Brochure] St Paul, MN: Author.
- Gray, N. & Campbell, L.M. (2007). A commodified experience? Exploring aesthetic, economic, and ethical values for volunteer ecotourism in Costa Rica. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 15, 463-482.
- Gronemeyer, M. (1992). Helping. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The development dictionary: A guide to knowledge as power* (pp. 53-69) London: Zed Books Ltd.

- H. Res. 1388, 111th Cong., 111th Cong. (2009). (enacted)
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Herod, A. (2009). *Geographies of globalization: A critical introduction*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Holborow, M. (1999). *The politics of English: A Marxist view of language*. London: Sage.
- Kachru, B. (1997). World Englishes 2000: Resources for research and teaching. In L. E. Smith & M. L. Forman (Eds.), *World Englishes 2000* (pp. 209-251). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- King, S. (2006). *Pink ribbons, inc.: Breast cancer and the politics of philanthropy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). Dangerous liaison: Globalization, empire, and TESOL. In J. Edge (Ed.), *(Re)locating TESOL in an age of empire* (pp. 1-26). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- London, N. A. (2003). Ideology and politics in English-language education in Trinidad and Tobago: The colonial experience and a postcolonial critique. *Comparative Education Review*, 47(3), 287-320.
- MacCannell, D. (1976). *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*. New York: Sulouken.
- Macedo, D., Dendrinos, B., & Gounari, P. (2003). *The hegemony of English*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Marcus, G. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95-117.
- McBride, A. M. & Sherraden, M. (2007). *Civic service worldwide: Impacts and inquiry*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.



- Mignolo, W. (1998). Globalization, civilization processes, and the relocation of languages and cultures. In F. Jameson & M. Miyoshi (Eds.), *The cultures of globalization* (pp. 32-53). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Modiano, M. (2001). Linguistic imperialism, cultural integrity, and EIL. *ELT Journal*, 55(4), 339-346.
- Mowforth, M. & Munt, I. (2006). *Tourism and sustainability: Development and new tourism in the third world* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.
- Mustonen, P. (2006). Volunteer tourism: Postmodern pilgrimage? *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 3(3), 160-177.
- Niño-Murcia, M. (2003). "English is like the dollar": Hard currency ideology and the status of English in Peru. *World Englishes*, 22(2), 121-142.
- Novelli, M. (Ed.). (2005). *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends, and cases*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Nye, J. (2004). The decline of America's soft power. *Foreign Affairs*, 3, 16-21.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. London: Longman.
- Pennycook, A. (1998). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. London: Longman.
- Pennycook, A. (2000a). Development, culture, and language: Ethical concerns in a postcolonial world. In J. Shaw, D. Lubelska, & M. Noullet (Eds.), *Partnership and interaction: Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Language and Development, Hanoi, Vietnam* (pp. 3-22). Bangkok: Asian Institute of Technology.

- Pennycook, A. (2000b). English, politics, ideology: From colonial celebration to postcolonial performativity. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *Ideology, politics, and language policies: Focus on English* (pp. 107-119). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R. (2000). English in the new world order: Variations on a theme of linguistic imperialism and “world” English. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *Ideology, politics, and language policies: Focus on English* (pp. 87-106). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Pigg, S. L. (1992). Constructing social categories through place: Social representations and development in Nepal. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34(3), 491-513.
- Poon, A. (1993). *Tourism, technology, and competitive strategies*. Oxon, UK: CABI Publishing.
- Projects Abroad. (n.d.). Retrieved February 10, 2010 from [www.projects-abroad.org](http://www.projects-abroad.org)
- Projects Abroad. (n.d.). *Volunteer and intern abroad* [Brochure]. New York, NY: Author.
- Putnam, R. D. (1995) *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks.
- Rajagopalan, K. (2004). The concept of ‘World English’ and its implications for ELT. *ELT Journal*, 58(2), 111-117.
- Rice, G. T. (1985). *The bold experiment: JFK’s Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, IN: University Press.
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sachs, W. (Ed.) (1992). *The development dictionary: A guide to knowledge as power*. London: Zed Books Ltd.

- Sachs, W. (1999). *Planet dialectics: Explorations in environment and development*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Seidlhofer, B., Breiteneder, A., & Pitzl, M. (2006). English as a lingua franca in Europe: Challenges for applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 26, 3-34.
- Sherraden, M. S., Stringham, J., Sow, S. C, and McBride, A. M. (2006). The forms and structure of international voluntary service. *Voluntas*, 17, 163-180.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). *Linguistic genocide in education—or worldwide diversity and human rights?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Shulman, L. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.
- Simpson, K. (2004). “Doing development”: The gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development. *Journal of International Development*, 16, 681-692.
- Sonntag, S. K. (2003). *The local politics of global English: Case studies in linguistic globalization*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Spring, J. (2004). *How educational ideologies are shaping global society: Intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, and the decline of the nation-state*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Swarbrooke, J., Beard, C., Leckie, S., & Pomfret, G. (2003). *Adventure tourism: The new frontier*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Vavrus, F. (2002). Postcoloniality and English: Exploring language policy and the politics of development in Tanzania. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(3), 373-397.

Villano, M. (November 16, 2009). Silver-spoon voluntourism: Luxury hotels offer day trips to help vacationers connect with communities. *Time*, 53.

Volunteers for Prosperity. (n.d.). Volunteers for prosperity. Retrieved June 24, 2011 from [www.volunteersforprosperity.gov](http://www.volunteersforprosperity.gov)

Wallerstein, I. (1974). *The modern world-system: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. New York: Academic Press.

Wearing, S. (2001). *Volunteer tourism: Experiences that make a difference*. Oxon, UK: CABI Publishing.

Wearing, S. (2004). Examining best practices in volunteer tourism. In R. Stebbins & M. Graham (Eds.), *Volunteering as leisure/leisure as volunteering*, (pp. 209-224). Oxon, UK: CABI Publishing.

Williams, E. & Cooke, J. (2002). Pathways and labyrinths: Language and education in development. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(3), 297-322.

Williams, R. (1983). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society* (Revised ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

World Bank. (1981). *Accelerated development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An agenda for action*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

WorldTeach. (n.d.). WorldTeach. Retrieved April 13, 2011 from [www.worldteach.org](http://www.worldteach.org)

Superordinate Category: English Language Volontourism is Development (26 of 34, 76%)		
	Subordinate category: <i>English or other instruction as development</i> (21 of 26, 81%)	Subordinate category: <i>Individual volunteer intervention as development</i> (21 of 26, 81%)
<i>In-service program participants (n=14)</i>		
Amanda	X	X
Catherine	X	X
Christina	X	X
Edward	X	
Heidi	X	X
Jim	X	X
Joanne		X
Josh		
Mary		
Meaghan		
Mike	X	
Morgan	X	X
Scott	X	X
Suzanne	X	X
<i>Former program participants (n=20)</i>		
Amanda		X
Ana	X	X
Audrey	X	X
Chris	X	X
Danica	X	X
Heather	X	X
Jaime	X	X
Jillian		
Joanne		
Josh	X	X
Josie		X
Karen		
Lauren	X	X
Peg		
Raj	X	
Shannon	X	
Shelly		X
Shrushti		X
Stacey		
Taylor	X	

**Figure 4.1: Subordinate Category Frequencies**

Code	Definition	Example
English for “understanding what’s going on”	Global South people (and nation-states) need English language skills in order to better understand the Global North (i.e., its business agents in the Global South, its day-to-day news, its geopolitical influence in the broader world)	I mean, it's important. I mean, learn—I think learning English nowadays is just important in the world, to know it. So [teaching it] is helping others” (Morgan, interview, June 27, 2007).
English for accessing the global economy	Global South people need English language skills in order to engage in/with a broader, international economic network	“[W]hen you speak English, I guess you do have more, you know, opportunities in a sense, you know. I mean, it is the language of global—the international language of, you know, success and communication and work” (Meaghan, interview, June 6, 2007).
English for spreading (U.S.) culture	Global South people need to become more like people in the U.S. (or Global North) in general in terms of customs and habits, and this can be facilitated by English language learning	“Costa Rica as a country has a lot to offer an American as a tourist, like, and America has a lot to offer Costa Rica and a Costa Rican as a tourist. But, I don't know that . . . a Costa Rican has anything to offer an American, whereas an American has a lot to offer a Costa Rican. Aside from like regular, personable things or, like, friendship or something like . . . I mean, like, learning-wise, I guess, and culturally, I don't know that there's any part of the Costa Rican culture that is not also a part of American culture, whereas there is a lot of American culture that is not a part of Costa Rican culture” (Scott, interview, June 28, 2007).

Volunteer teaching as providing critical thinking	Instruction delivered via English language voluntourism facilities critical thinking or problem-solving ability, not just language	<p>“[A]bsolutely everything was, 'What I say, you write down.' So I, like, realized very quickly that these kids were like, 'Well, should I write the heading over here? Or, or, 'Miss—what's the heading? What's the heading?' And I said, 'There is no heading. We're writing a creative writing story on If You Could Travel Anywhere.' And, their, just, scope of their community of their academic, you know, creative thought was so limited, that they, they, like, couldn't do it. They struggled so much just with that. And they would spend twenty minutes going, saying, 'Well that's—where does the heading go?' You know, 'Where does creative writing story heading go?' So, they were just kind of taught by the book” (Lauren, interview, January 29, 2009).</p>
---	--	---

**Figure 4.2:** Codes for *English or other instruction as development*

Category: English or Other Instruction as Development (21 of 26, 82%)				
	Code: <i>English for “understanding what’s going on”</i> (9 of 21, 43%)	Code: <i>English for accessing the global economy</i> (18 of 21, 86%)	Code: <i>English for spreading (U.S.) culture</i> (8 of 21, 38%)	Code: <i>Volunteer teaching as providing critical thinking</i> (6 of 21, 29%)
<i>In-service program participants (n=14)</i>				
Amanda		X		
Catherine	X	X	X	
Christina	X	X	X	
Edward		X	X	
Heidi	X		X	
Jim		X	X	
Joanne		X		
Josh				
Mary				
Meaghan				
Mike		X	X	
Morgan	X		X	
Scott	X		X	X
Suzanne	X	X		
<i>Former program participants (n=20)</i>				
Amanda		X		
Ana				X
Audrey				X
Chris		X		
Danica	X			X
Heather	X	X		
Jaime	X	X		X
Jillian				
Joanne				
Josh		X		
Josie				
Karen				
Lauren				X
Peg				
Raj		X		
Shannon		X		
Shelly		X		
Shrushti		X		
Stacey				
Taylor		X		

**Figure 4.3: English or other instruction as development Code Frequencies**



Code	Definition	Example
Providing inspiration to local people	Development occurs via English language voluntourism as individual volunteers act as role models, provide enthusiastic praise and/or emotional support for Global South people	“I would like to show [my host community] that there are more options than they know. Like, if they want, they can just hang out in their town for the rest of their lives, and they might be happy with that, but there might be others who want to, you know, come to San Jose to study and then go live somewhere else maybe. But I think it's important to give them, you know, the perspective that there are different options and if you, you know, if you work hard and if you get an education, I guess you can have the option of doing whatever you want to do” (Jim, interview, June 9, 2007).
Working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people	Development occurs via English language voluntourism because individual volunteers work directly among the people with the fewest material and social resources in a society or larger group	“I feel like . . . there's poverty and starvation and all of these things in America, but the, the blatant differences between the standard of living in America and a lot of developing countries—it's just . . . so painstakingly obvious that I feel like while there would be opportunities to volunteer in the U.S. and you know, I've obviously, I've taken part in many of them, I feel that, you know . . . what I saw is the advantage of, of volunteering abroad versus the United States was . . . the opportunity to experience . . . a difference in need.” (Mike, interview, June 9, 2007).

**Figure 4.4:** Codes for *individual volunteer intervention as development*

Category: Individual Volunteer Intervention as Development (23 of 26, 88%)		
	Code: <i>Providing inspiration to local people</i> (21 of 23, 91%)	Code: <i>Working one-on-one with the poorest or neediest people</i> (13 of 23, 56%)
<i>In-service program participants (n=14)</i>		
Amanda		X
Catherine	X	X
Christina	X	X
Edward		
Heidi	X	X
Jim	X	X
Joanne	X	
Josh		
Mary		
Meaghan		
Mike	X	
Morgan	X	X
Scott	X	
Suzanne	X	X
<i>Former program participants (n=20)</i>		
Amanda	X	
Ana	X	X
Audrey	X	
Chris		X
Danica	X	
Heather	X	X
Jaime	X	
Jillian		
Joanne		
Josh	X	
Josie	X	X
Karen		
Lauren	X	X
Peg		
Raj	X	
Shannon	X	
Shelly		X
Shrushti	X	
Stacey		
Taylor		

**Figure 4.5: Individual volunteer intervention as development Code Frequencies**

## CHAPTER FIVE

AMBIVALENCE AS AN OPTIMAL OUTCOME OF PARTICIPATION IN AN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE VOLUNTOURISM PROGRAM<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Jakubiak, C. To be submitted to *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*

## Abstract

English language voluntourism, or short-term, volunteer English language teaching, is a popular form of international voluntary service—a practice in which people from the Global North travel to the Global South to engage in unskilled aid, or development, work. Although numerous stakeholders maintain that voluntourism is efficacious, English language voluntourism in particular has been subject to little critical scrutiny. Part of a larger, multi-sited ethnographic study, this manuscript reports on how in-service and former program participants in English language voluntourism program contest the idea that English language voluntourism is development. In explicating participants' voices, this manuscript reveals the ways in which participants in English language voluntourism program—through the experience of going abroad—come to contest the ideological foundations on which these programs are built.

## Introduction

*“Not all kids get their heroes from comic books and TV.” (WorldTeach promotional flyer, n.d.)*

*“There's an imbued meaning in, like, this [English language voluntourism] promotional stuff and what we're told and we think about it. That kind of makes me really uncomfortable, because I'm not sure anyone's thought about the meaning or, more than that, knows what the meaning is.” (Joanne, interview, January 30, 2009)*

This paper explores the ways in which participants in one form of volunteer tourism, *English language voluntourism*, or short-term, volunteer English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching, take issue with the oft-marketed claim that these programs constitute *development* in

the Global South<sup>7</sup>. This manuscript presents the findings of a larger research study that investigated the following questions:

1. How do in-service and former English language voluntourism program participants define *development*? What do they understand *development* to mean, and what forms does it take in the programs in which they participate(d)?
2. How and in what ways do in-service and former English language voluntourism program participants' definitions and/or understandings of development cohere among or contradict one another? Do in-service and former program participants define/understand development in the same way, or do they do so differently?

While many participants in English language voluntourism programs do, indeed, view these programs as development (see chapters 3 and 4, this volume), this article reveals that such perspectives do not go uncontested. Here, I explore the ways in which participants in English language voluntourism programs *do not* view these programs as development. That is, although volunteer tourism at large may purport to be a practice in which people “volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society” (Wearing, 2001, p. 1), some people who participate in these programs heartily disagree. In addition to arguing that English language voluntourism programs often fall short in doing what they are supposed to do (i.e., teach EFL), some program participants insist that development itself is a larger—even problematic—social formation that programs like English language voluntourism cannot and do not touch. Although the voices of such “dissenting” volunteer tourism program participants are not frequently heard (cf. Simpson, 2004), I share them here to illustrate how even within hegemonic formations such as

---

<sup>7</sup> The use of the terms, Global North and Global South, indexes work in anthropology and human geography that views terms such as *developed/undeveloped* and *third/first world* as ahistorical and neocolonial.

economically-driven development paradigms (e.g., Robbins, 2005), individual actors working *within* these same formations can open up spaces of resistance.

## **Topical Framework**

### **English Language Voluntourism**

For the purposes of this report, I define *English language voluntourism* as a practice in which native speakers of prestige-variety, or inner-core, English such as American Standard or British Standard English (Kachru, 1997) teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes on a short-term (i.e., one- to twelve-week) basis in the Global South as an alternative form of travel. Although some faith-based organizations may sponsor short-term EFL teaching programs as part of their mission work (Snow, 2001), the focus in this paper is non-sectarian English language voluntourism as sponsored by Global North based non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs frame English language voluntourism as a development intervention. That is, whether characterized as “making a meaningful contribution to international education” (WorldTeach, n.d.), helping Southern people attain “a passport of poverty through employment” (Global Volunteers, n.d.), or increasing “educational and employment prospects for people who would not normally have the opportunity to learn English” (Cross-Cultural Solutions, n.d.), English language voluntourism, as depicted by sponsoring NGOs, provides positive benefits for local communities and constitutes humanitarian aid. NGO-sponsored English language voluntourism programs are listed with regularity in published international volunteer directories such as *World Volunteers: The World Guide to Humanitarian and Development Volunteering* (Ausenda & McCloskey, 2006) and *Volunteer Vacations: Short-Term Adventures that Will Benefit You and Others* (McMillon, Cutchins, & Geissinger, 2003), the titles of which reflect a similar, pro-development stance. Additionally, NGO-sponsored English language voluntourism promotional

materials are often linked to the development websites of organizations such as the U.S. federal initiative, Volunteers for Prosperity (VfP), a division of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the non-profit organization, Idealist. These groups follow and support the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, a list of social initiatives that are based on a pro-growth, economically-oriented, approach to development aid (cf. Global Volunteers, 2008).

The requirements for participation in most English language voluntourism programs are minimal. Neither formal educator credentials nor prior teaching experience are generally required in order to be a volunteer EFL teacher on most NGO-sponsored programs. One need not even possess a college degree. Instead, NGO-sponsored English language voluntourism programs stress both participants' native English language speaking skills as well as their good intentions. Text in English language voluntourism promotional materials, for example, generally looks like this:

- “Your own ideas and initiative will be welcomed by our partner schools. . . . [A] lack of formal qualifications can be more than made up for with plenty of enthusiasm and commitment.” (Projects Abroad, n.d.)
- “Prior teaching experience is helpful but not required. Flexibility and enthusiasm are pluses!” (WorldTeach, n.d.)
- “Previous teaching experience is not required - just a positive attitude and a willingness to approach challenges with patience and enthusiasm!” (Global Service Corp, n.d.)

Thus, EFL teaching in the English language voluntourism context does not rely on expertise in second language acquisition or pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). Rather, the

primary vehicles through which EFL is delivered via voluntourism are through participants' tacit English language knowledge as well as their biding enthusiasm.

### **English as a “Global Language”**

Although significant work interrogating the global role of English and the rise of English's spread has been conducted in the past few decades (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Kachru, 1997; Holborow, 1999; Pennycook, 1994, 1998, 1999; Phillipson, 1992), there remains a wide, understudied, link between world-wide English language spread and late twentieth-century economic globalization. Addressing this deficit, Sonntag (2003) writes that “the language factor remains underdeveloped in the study of global politics, and language is at best tangentially referenced in globalization studies” (p. 1). Similarly, Phillipson (2000) views the nexus of English language teaching with processes of globalization as an important, yet rarely examined, phenomenon—in large part because of its complexity. He writes:

The significance and role of the English teaching profession in the current intensive phase of globalization is under-explored and emphatically needs closer scrutiny.

Exploring it [however] is a messy business because of the interlocking of language with so many other dimensions, e.g., in education, the media, “aid”, and multiple commodification processes. (p. 92)

The junction at which the English language intersects with a posited new world order, then, remains a vastly open space. In the words of Phillipson (2000), “There is considerable literature on . . . English in all its diversity, and on . . . globalization . . . . By contrast there is an alarming absence of literature that brings the two together” (p. 87).

Also of great concern to many contemporary critical applied linguists is the dearth of research examining the discourse of world-wide English spread as natural, inevitable, and



beneficient. Phrases such as “global English,” “English as the world’s lingua franca,” and English as the “universal” language obscure larger questions about the origins of English as a global, or world, language and elide the fact that English may operate in the interests of some groups better than others (Phillipson, 2000). “Many write loosely that English is *the* world language, but to describe English in such terms ignores the fact that a majority of the world’s citizens do not speak English,” Phillipson (2001) cautions. “Critical scholarship out to analyze the strong forces that are at pains to create the impression that English serves all the world’s citizens equally well” (p. 188). Relatedly, Pennycook (1994) points out that the dominant fields in language education—e.g., linguistics and its disciplinary cousin, applied linguistics—have, historically, focused their global English debates on issues of standards and intelligibility (e.g., “Is Pakistani English ‘really’ English?”) to the neglect of sociopolitical concerns. He writes:

Sorely lacking from the predominant paradigm of investigation into English as an international language is a broad range of social, historical, cultural and political relationships. . . . [T]here is a failure to problematize the notion of choice, and therefore an assumption that individuals and countries are somehow free of economic, political, and ideological constraints when they apparently freely opt for English. (p. 12)

Pennycook thus admonishes his disciplinary colleagues for failing to more closely interrogate the contexts of English language spread. Though the linguistic field is certainly to be lauded for having catalogued, for example, extensive corpora of the distinctive grammatical features of Nigerian English (e.g., Crystal, 2003), Pennycook’s position is that such work often comes at the expense of more critical questions: e.g., Why it is that English remains popular in Lagos in the first place?

## English and Development

A central piece in the “English as a global language” debate, moreover, is a proffered link between English and development. Images of and discussions about English—especially in postcolonial states—often associate the language with technology, modernization, the internet, advancement, etc., and such discourses are pervasive in English language teaching materials, advertisements for English schools, and other products associated with English (Niño-Murcia, 2003; Pennycook, 2000a). Akin to how discourses around certain beauty products promise its buyers new youth, the “English as a global language” discourse promises Global North standards of living.

This connection, however, between English and so-called modern development (i.e., industrial production facilities, technological resources, increased job opportunities, higher standards of living, etc.), often leaves many people worshipping a false god. Said another way, the English alone rarely delivers on the material things the discourse around it promises. Particularly in postcolonial states, many people who study English in the hopes of escaping material poverty are let down hard (Niño-Murcia, 2003; Vavrus, 2002). In Peru, for example—where English is seen by many people as equivalent to the U.S. dollar, a valuable form of symbolic capital—students often learn the language in the hopes of going to the U.S., where they imagine they can find (and attain) the American dream (Niño-Murcia, 2003). However, while discourse around English language spread is rife with images of Global North development, it is thin on the truth of immigration. In the words of Niño-Murcia (2003), “Those who ‘invest’ in English language cultural capital have in practice little or no access to its marketplace” (p. 138). She continues:

English is in reality a very minimal factor in whether people are able to surmount the barrier [to immigration]. While the popular media contain vast amounts of false information about both English and the countries where it prevails, they give little or no accurate information about how in fact the immigration/illegal migration system works. It is the financial requirements of the embassy, not the language factor at all, which actually sets limits on legal access to the USA. While capital and goods can ‘freely’ move, the human element should stay where they ‘belong.’ (p. 132)

Despite a discursive structure, then, that links the English language to global opportunity, business, development, etc., the truth is more disquieting. Although a stubbornly durable discourse associates English with pictures of development—and consequently, entices many people into teaching/studying the language—earning entrée to where “development” already exists is not part of the English language learning package.

While discourses connecting English to immigration and ideas of development may, tragically, offer false hope to individuals in places like Peru, elsewhere entire nations have put their money on the “English as development” horse to little payoff (Brock-Utne, 2002; Macedo, Dendrinos, & Gounari, 2003; Pennycook, 1994; Vavrus, 2002). In Tanzania, for example, where all secondary level schools are in an English medium, English has not only failed to deliver Global North standards of living, but it has also compromised many students’ educations overall. Throughout Tanzania, students often fail to grasp complex content in classes like science because of English language barriers, and many classrooms are highly undemocratic, as students with strong English language skills dominate class discussions (Brock-Utne, 2002). Similarly, in Hong Kong, where parental demand has produced extensive English language schooling in the

last few decades, English language education has actually displaced other, more useful subjects—like Cantonese—in academic curricula (Pennycook, 1994).

In sum, the rhetoric of English as development—especially as it bears upon English language voluntourism, which views English spread as natural, neutral, and beneficial (see chapter 3, this volume)—is pernicious. Not only do English language skills alone fails to deliver the “goods” (i.e., jobs, reduced vulnerability), but the discourse around it is seductive. Like the simplistic, hyperglobalist discourse of globalization that predicts an inevitable, new world order in which all people will be equally competitive and prosperous (e.g., Ohmae, 1999), the “English as development” discourse is simplistically alluring. As Niño-Murcia (2003) poignantly observes, the discursive link between English and development

is. . . an example of overgeneralized globalist analysis. It projects the “world English” phenomenon as if it were a unitary universal, audible from all geographic and sociocultural difference. It simplistically places” and “we will all speak English”—a dubious prophecy, but an irresistible one, because it contains [for many people] a much-needed metaphor for hope. (p. 139)

This “metaphor for hope” that is English, moreover, undergirds English language voluntourism (see chapter 3, this volume). However, many participants in English language voluntourism programs come to contest this notion. Before I turn to their voices, however, I explicate the methods of this study.

### **Method**

This study was part of a larger, multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) that spanned the course of two and a half years. In the summer of 2007, I conducted participant observation in Costa Rica as a volunteer English language teacher under the auspices of an NGO-sponsored

program. As one of a cohort of twenty-one volunteers, I attended a week-long orientation session and a two-day, mid-service conference. I also taught EFL in a public junior high school and lived with a Costa Rican host family in a small village near the Nicaraguan border for approximately six weeks.

In the summer of 2008, I worked as volunteer program assistant in the Northeastern U.S. home offices of the NGO that had sponsored my Costa Rica program. The NGO is approximately 20 years old (it was established in 1986), and it has a loose affiliation with a prestigious, private university, from among whose faculty it draws its board of directors. In 2008, the NGO sponsored a total of 15 programs in 11 countries; 6 of these programs were summer long and 9 were a year in length. As volunteer program assistant for six weeks, my roles were many and varied. Most frequently, I interacted with prospective volunteers on the telephone and worked in the admissions process. I also wrote articles for the NGO's alumni newsletter, ran errands, and assisted in the updating of alumni databases. Additionally, I worked alongside full-time NGO employees (all alumni of the NGO's programs, either short or long-term) with the goal of understanding how English language voluntourism programs are designed, supported, and monitored from a U.S. base.

In January 2009, I returned to the northeastern city in which the NGO is located for ten days to conduct a series of retrospective interviews with program alumni. I contacted these alumni via email using addresses accessed through the NGO's databases. During this 2009 data collection period, I stayed at the home of my key informant, a twenty-something NGO alumni whose professional role was Director of Admissions and Recruitment at the focal NGO. His assistance was pivotal to my study, as he helped to me to schedule interviews from afar, contacted program alumni that he knew, and advised me as to whom was interesting to talk to.

## Data Collection

**Interviews.** Data for this particular study consist exclusively of 34 interview transcripts. While volunteering in Costa Rica, I conducted 16 open-ended, semi-structured interviews with 14 other members of my 21-person volunteer cohort (two participants were interviewed twice; I combined their respective interviews each into two single, separate documents). Interviews were conducted primarily during the one-week orientation session (prior to teaching) or during the two-day, NGO-sponsored, mid-service conference (at which point, volunteers had been teaching for approximately four weeks). Participants were selected using a process of convenience sampling (Patton, 2002); that is, if and when a fellow volunteer and I happened to be simultaneously free from other obligations (e.g., host family outings, Spanish language classes, lesson planning), I asked if we could sit down and talk. Interview questions in the Costa Rican context were drawn from a pre-established protocol that sought to explore participants' motivations for having volunteered; their perceptions of the purposes of EFL teaching/learning in the host country and/or the local community; and their understandings of the significance and role of English language voluntourism programs in Costa Rica and the Global South more broadly. All interviews in Costa Rica lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, and most were conducted at either the open-air restaurant compound that comprised the orientation site or at the youth hostel in which the program cohort stayed during the mid-service conference. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

The other 20 interviews that round out the corpus of data for this study were those conducted with former program participants in January 2009. Questions for these interviews were taken from a protocol similar to that used in Costa Rica: i.e., I sought to have participants speak to their motivations for having volunteered; their perceptions of the purposes of EFL

teaching/learning in their former host country and/or community; and their understandings of the significance and role of English language voluntourism programs in general. Overall, the retrospective interviews were longer than those conducted in Costa Rica (suggestive of how busy and preoccupied many in-service program participants were), and they lasted between 30 and 75 minutes each. A process of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to recruit interview participants for this portion of the study; as aforementioned, I used the NGO's alumni databases as well as the assistance of the NGO's Director of Admissions and Recruitment to contact summer program alumni who had volunteered in the last two years and who currently resided in the northeastern U.S. city area. All retrospective interviews were conducted in coffee shops near the NGO offices, in the NGO offices themselves, or on the campus of the private university with which the NGO is affiliated. As in Costa Rica, all interviews audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

**Participants.** In both settings (Costa Rica and the northeastern U.S. city), interview participants' identity categories were consistent with research in international volunteering at large. This body of work suggests that participants in volunteer tourism are likely to be female, under 30, and of middle to upper-middle class backgrounds (Heath, 2007). Out of 31 total participants (3 of my interview participants were interviewed in both 2007 and 2009), 19 (61%) identified as female; all but 1 were under age thirty (indeed, 28, or 90%, were traditionally-aged undergraduate students); and at least 20 (65%)—to judge from the private, prestigious universities they attended—possess markers of middle to upper-middle class cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979/1984). Many of my interview participants, moreover, had received full or partial financial support from their home universities for their volunteer efforts; therefore, fewer than half of them had paid full program fees. In terms of other identity categories, my participants

identified as white (22 of 31), Asian American (3 of 31), Indian American (3 of 31), Latina American (1), Ecuadorian (1), and African American (1).

### **Data Analysis**

Interview transcripts were analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach (following Charmaz, 2006). In contrast to an objectivist approach to grounded theory, which “attends to data as real in and of themselves and does not attend to the processes of their production” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131), a constructivist grounded theory approach seeks to interpret the social world. Thus, the findings presented here are (by theoretical design) partial—a social construction.

Following a recursive process that involved initial, or open, coding, writing analytical memos, and focused coding (e.g., Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), I ultimately generated three superordinate categories that expressed the different ways in which participants talked about development. Superordinate categories were generated inductively (based on ideas in interviewees’ talk) and deductively (based on ideas implicit in the interview questions or present in academic literature). The first superordinate category, *English language voluntourism as development*, is the focus of a separate report (see chapter 4, this volume). The other two superordinate categories, *English language voluntourism is not development* and *what is development, anyway?*, form the basis of the report presented here.

Subsumed within the superordinate category, *English language voluntourism is not development*, are two subordinate conceptual codes. These include *English language voluntourism as ineffectual* and *development as something else*. Verbatim quotes in the text below serve either as typical examples (or exceptions to) conceptual codes, and were selected based on how well they communicate the central idea of a conceptual category. The first results



section focuses on the conceptual category *English language voluntourism is not development*. The second results section focuses on the conceptual category *what is development, anyway?* which is comprised of the following three codes: 1) *viewing development as reliant upon problematic ideological foundations*; 2) *development for whom, or cui bono*; and 3) *viewing development as something that causes new, unforeseen problems* (for a complete list of codes and categories, see Figures 5.1-5.3).

## Findings

Although the percentage of my study participants who believed that English language voluntourism constitutes development was robust (approximately 76%; see chapter 4, this volume), others did not share this view. Half of study participants (17 of 34) offered that English language voluntourism is not development.<sup>8</sup> Among those participants who reported that English language voluntourism is not development, two main reasons were shared. First, participants offered that English language voluntourism is too ineffectual to be development. Second, participants said that development is something else—a process or phenomenon that is beyond the scope of English language voluntourism. Thus, the conceptual category, *English language voluntourism is not development* was comprised of two underlying codes: *English language voluntourism as ineffectual* and *development as something else*.

### English Language Voluntourism is Not Development

**English language voluntourism as ineffectual.** Of the 50% of study participants who reported that English language voluntourism is not development, approximately 88% (15 of 17) reported that English language voluntourism programs are too weak on the ground to generate

---

<sup>8</sup> Reporting in this study on whether English language voluntourism is or is not development does not add up to 100 percent because some study participants answered in more than one way. That is, some participants' interview transcripts received codes indicating that English language voluntourism is development as well as codes suggesting that English language voluntourism is not development.

substantive social or economic change in host communities. One way in which participants expressed the code, *English language voluntourism as ineffectual*, was in saying that these programs are unsustainable at the local level. Many in-service and former program participants had been the exclusive English language resource in their host communities, and they observed that these same communities had little or no way to continue English language learning at the end of a volunteer's tenure. Thus, claims that these programs reliably deliver EFL skills to people in the Global South may be tenuous at best. Stacey, a former program participant in Ecuador, expressed this view as follows:

[T]he reality is that like, like, the village doesn't really have any means to continue English language learning. . . . [I]t's not really international development; it's like international exchange, for the summer program. . . . And maybe people who are teaching in Quito and are doing, like, more advanced classes are—are, have different experiences. But at least, being in the village, I didn't feel like I was furthering anyone's economic capabilities. . . . I don't think that . . . the summer program is sustainable from the, from the community perspective. . . . There wasn't [a role for English]. I mean, it was a, it was a bilingual school—it was a new school set up to be bilingual—but it's Quechua and Spanish. So English is a third language, which I understand—that's really hard to do. Like, here's kids who are going from Quechua class to English class, and Quechua they hear from their parents all the time, and English they hear for eight weeks over the summer. (Stacey, interview, January 28, 2009)

Stacey expresses *English language voluntourism as ineffectual* because she sees short-term, one-shot English language study as impractical in a small, under-resourced community. The local public schools in her placement site were already stretched thin promoting Spanish-Quechua

bilingualism—a hard-won victory, incidentally, for indigenous rights groups in South America (Hornberger, 1998). Thus, Stacey rightfully questions the efficacy of adding a third, isolated, eight-week English language course into this instructional mix.

Her comment, however, that “maybe people who are teaching in Quito are having different experiences” (*vis-à-vis* development) merits closer examination. This observation suggests that short-term, EFL courses such as those taught through English language voluntourism might have more impact in an ongoing, structured teaching/learning setting in which people already know or use EFL with some kind of regularity. Indeed, Taylor, the one participant in my study who *did* teach in Ecuador’s capital city, taught advanced level EFL to local professionals. Taylor’s students needed EFL proficiency certificates to qualify for raises or job promotions. As Stacey imagines, the Quito volunteer placement site was in a very structured, established private school—a fact that eased Taylor’s EFL lesson preparation and offset her limited pedagogical experience. Despite these obvious benefits, however, to both Taylor and her EFL students, Taylor insisted that her volunteer situation was “non-traditional,” and in some ways, very disappointing. She explained:

I taught at [a private school], which also was, I think, sort of a non-traditional experience, because it was very, very organized. It’s run by an American couple—the husband is actually Ecuadorian—but, they go back and forth between the U.S., and the wife is American and from Wisconsin. . . . it’s like, it’s very organized—you have to, like, sign up to—like 48 hours in advance to make copies. They had scheduled movie days . . . they had tests you had to, like, give certain days, and they, like, made the tests for you, and you taught from *Interchange* [a book]. So it was very—it was very different from a lot of, some of the other [volunteer] experiences. . . . I had, like, working adults,

and they were great, and they really liked me and they were a lot of fun. [But], like, I don't know. I was sort of, like, a little sad when I went, because a lot of my students like weren't as, like, warm and like, you know, like, taking me home like some of the other sites. (Taylor, interview, June 27, 2008)

Taylor's clear interpretation of her urban volunteer experience as "non-traditional" because, among other things, she had a lot of teaching support (something useful—even optimal—for an uncredentialed, inexperienced language teacher) confirms research suggesting that what volunteer tourism sells to prospective participants, more than anything, is geographic and cultural *difference* (Simpson, 2004). That is, the opportunity to live and work in a traditional, out-of-the-way, exotic (even distinctly poor) place where one will struggle, independently, to "deliver" development and be treated as visiting royalty forms the backbone of volunteer tourism's allure. The chance to be distinctly welcomed and appreciated is packaged as "part of the deal": "What a warm, welcoming, and energetic community we entered," a former volunteer states in a Global Volunteers (2008) brochure. "I've not felt as appreciated as a teacher in 11 years of teaching in the States as I did during two weeks in Crete!" (p. 13). Taylor's description of her organized, instructionally-heavy, urban experience as "non-traditional" and even a let-down reveals the extent to which volunteer tourism (at least among participants) is not primarily about educational impact or Global South development. Rather, volunteers arrive, as Taylor did, expecting to "be taken home." If and when this doesn't occur, one's experience is classified as "non-traditional," outside the "norm" of what volunteer tourism is supposed to be or do.

Another former program participant, Karen, also *expressed English language voluntourism as ineffectual*. Similar to Stacey, above, Karen also thought that her EFL courses

were disjointed, haphazardly-organized, and unsustainable ventures in teaching/learning. Asked what she thought the larger purpose of English language voluntourism was in rural Poland, her placement site, Karen responded like this:

Theoretically, I think it was there to teach English and to teach, you know, about America and broaden these kids' horizons, I guess, if you want to say, or just share information with them while improving their English. I mean, honestly, I don't feel like . . . it does very much. That's just maybe from my experience, because the kids, like, maybe particularly weren't motivated or didn't have—they didn't have a lot of English skills to begin with, and some people probably felt that they were making a lot more progress with them, or they learned more. . . . I mean . . . maybe just [my] being there and [them] experiencing what it's like to have someone, some random American in your family is very interesting . . . . But in terms of actually making a significant difference in teaching English, I mean, the fact that it's summer and people go on vacation and you have random kids coming in and out and it's not that long anyway—you're teaching for, like, six weeks—I don't think that it . . . makes a difference in terms of English. I, maybe I'm not supposed to think that, but. (Karen, interview, January 28, 2009)

Karen's reflection of *English language voluntourism as ineffectual* is grounded in the observation that student attendance in volunteer-taught, short-term EFL courses can be and is often spotty. Indeed, in my own field work experience volunteer EFL teaching in Costa Rica (and this was in a public school, not an optional summer course like Karen's), class attendance fluctuated daily even when and if overall school classes weren't arbitrarily cancelled. In order for any education-related program to be effectual (in a development-oriented way or not), students must at least be in attendance.

Further, Karen's reticence to share her negative opinion about English language voluntourism's educational impact is concerning on multiple levels. For one, it suggests that frank, open discussions of English language voluntourism's impact on local communities (at least, volunteers' perceptions of its impact and effects) are rare if not discouraged. Second, Karen's framing of a critical perspective as wrong or aberrant (i.e., "maybe I'm not supposed to think that, but") prohibits the dialogue from moving forward. Any discussion of how EFL teaching under English language voluntourism *might* be more impactful, effective, or useful (for both program participants and their students) is shut down before it can begin.

Comments expressive of *English language voluntourism as ineffectual* also touched on the overall brevity of volunteer tourism. The programs in which volunteers in this study participated averaged about two months (including a week of orientation and a 2-day mid-service conference); consequently, most participants felt that their classroom contact time (approximately 6 weeks at maximum) had been too limited to promote student achievement in any real way. Amanda, a former program participant in Costa Rica, gave voice to this concern as follows:

I'm just thinking about the, the statement, "education for international development." It sounds kind of like a magic equation, where, you know, you give them more education, and then, they're equipped and they're developed and they do their own thing. Along the ground it's a little bit of a slower process. If you're only there for two months, you're spending the first couple of weeks getting to know people and getting to know your students, to be the most effective, you know, person in the classroom that you can be. And you spend the last month getting ready to say goodbye. So, it leaves very little time to, to actually impart anything. (Amanda, interview, January 27, 2009)

If the development driven by English language voluntourism relies on local people actually acquiring English language skills under a volunteer's tutelage, time itself may make this proposition untenable. As Amanda suggests, two months is “very little time to . . . actually impart anything,” a statement with which the average foreign language teacher is unlikely to disagree. The U.S. Foreign Service Institute, for example, suggests that 8 weeks, or 240 hours, of intensive language training are required for an adult to achieve minimum speaking proficiency in an Group 1 language (that is, an additional language that shares roots with one's primary language) (Omaggio Hadley, 2001). Given that EFL courses taught in the English language voluntourism context can be as little as one hour a day or a week for 1-8 weeks (this was my own experience in Costa Rica, as I only met with certain classes 5 or 6 times throughout my entire eight-week stay), it is hard to imagine that English language acquisition occurs in a rigorous, consistent way by way of an individual volunteer's efforts.

Along with the observations that EFL teaching under voluntourism can be unsustainable, disorganized, and brief, participants expressed *English language voluntourism as ineffectual* in terms of the difficulties of teaching. These difficulties included structural challenges as well as classroom ones, particularly as 32 of this study's 34 participants were not credentialled educators and possessed little to no prior teaching experience. Participants spoke about complexities ranging from a lack of knowledge about content curricula to discomfort with instructional methodology. Joanne, a former program participant in Costa Rica, exemplified the code, *English language voluntourism as ineffectual*, in these words:

It was only much later that I—well, maybe a few months later—that I started thinking about in, in the bigger scheme of things, the fact that the English teachers that they have don't speak English. And so they've just had me come in, sweep—you know, it's fun for

them. It's like—sort of like summer vacation, because I, I don't give them tests that they're responsible—like, I give them tests, but it doesn't have any bearing on their actual, like, school grade. So it's like—it's fun. The, you know, the young . . . American girl comes and does lots of games with them. But then they go back and have English class with a teacher who doesn't speak English and have to take national exams for which I haven't prepared them, because no one's told me what they're supposed to be learning or what the exam is. . . . I mean, I guess I did know there were exams and was trying to gear my lesson plans towards them, but, like, in two months, you can't possibly, like, jump in in the middle of the year and then teach all this stuff. So I didn't—I'm not sure that I served them in the way that [the NGO] thinks that we're serving them. . . . I'm [also] always wondering how the English teachers [in Costa Rica] felt after I came . . . because their kids obviously know that they don't know English. (Joanne, interview, January 30, 2009)

An anthropology major, Joanne nevertheless reveals tacit knowledge of major concepts in teaching and learning—concepts that, she observes, are missing in the instructional settings of many English language voluntourism programs. For one, she sees a lack of accountability as prohibitive to language acquisition (i.e., “I give them tests, but it doesn't have any bearing on their actual, like, school grade”). Research in second language education suggests that purposeful, ongoing, formal and informal assessment (e.g., homework, tests, and conferences) can be as important to school-based language acquisition as the process of instruction itself (Folse, 2004; Genesee & Upshur, 1996). Therefore, Joanne's discomfort with simply “playing games” is instructionally warranted. Ongoing and summative evaluations can not only provide



incentives for students to engage with new classroom material, but also give teachers important information about whether their students are learning.

Second, Joanne's reflection on what happens when a short-term, native English language speaker displaces a local teacher indexes important, if rarely discussed, issues. As Joanne intimates, who, exactly, *is* responsible if and when students do poorly on a later national English examination? What are the personal and professional effects on a local teacher when a young, glamorous outsider comes in and usurps their classes? What forms of local authority and/or professional identity are disrupted by a visiting volunteer? Although these questions are beyond the scope of this particular study, research on the roles of native English language speakers as EFL teachers in international classrooms suggests that the consequences are many (Kubota, 2002). Mainly, these practices manifest and encourage the "native speaker myth" (cf. Phillipson, 1992): the idealization of prestige-variety, Inner Circle (Kachru, 1997) English language speakers as having innate, perfect knowledge of English and therefore best qualified to teach it. Also, given that most participants in English language voluntourism programs are not certified teachers, the EFL classrooms in which they work become politically-charged sites. In the context of English language voluntourism, participants are able to try on professional identities that they don't possess and experiment with those identities on real people (Simpson, 2004). Such a practice is fraught with power relations. Tourism in general already operates in the Global South through matrices of inequality; travelers experimenting with new identities and presenting themselves to their hosts as experts only exacerbates these inequitable conditions (Hutnyk, 1996).

Shelly, a former program participant in China, also viewed *English language voluntourism as ineffectual* because of its inherent structural problems. Unlike Joanne, however,

who was distressed by a lack of curricular knowledge and concerned about displacing the local English teacher, Shelly was disenchanted with the overall instructional format of English language voluntourism. Most English language voluntourism programs stress an “immersion,” or English-only, approach to language teaching, which Shelly found to be ineffective on the ground. She commented:

I think the whole concept of sort of volunteer English teaching when you don't really speak the other language is so difficult. Because [in the U.S.], they, you, you know, you talk about having immersion classes, but the fact is, you don't put a teacher who has no knowledge of the language that students speak in to try to teach them a language that they don't speak . . . one of my classes, none of them had ever learned any English. I didn't know any Mandarin when I arrived, and it was just crazy. I was like, “Hi, hi, hi”—like, for the whole week. “Hello, hello, hello—what's up?” . . . I don't think it was very much in terms of an . . . impact. (Shelly, interview, January 29, 2009)

Total immersion—or what is termed the *natural approach* (e.g., Krashen, 1982; Terrell, 1977) to language instruction—is, indeed, employed in many L2, or second language, educational settings throughout the world. However, other perspectives on language teaching and learning suggest that the liberal use of students' L1, or primary language, is important in introductory level L2 classrooms, particularly for the generation of meaning (e.g., Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2008). Shelly's observation that an English-only instructional approach to language teaching among beginners led to a lot of reductive wheel-spinning (“I was like, ‘Hi, hi, hi’ for the whole week”) suggests that Shelly understood intuitively that EFL instruction within English language voluntourism may not be methodologically sound. Consequently, she pronounced *English language voluntourism as ineffectual*.

For participants like Joanne and Shelly alike, then, time in the EFL classroom under the auspices of an English language voluntourism program was not time engaged in effective EFL instruction. Joanne felt that her lack of curricular knowledge as well as teacher authority prohibited her from preparing her students well for national examinations. For Shelly, the lack of a mutual, communicative medium between teacher and students reduced language instruction to the very basic. For these and similarly-minded program participants, English language voluntourism is not development because it fails to deliver quality language instruction. If development ostensibly occurs as a result of EFL teaching, English language voluntourism may not be delivering the goods.

**Development is something else.** Among study participants who suggested that English language voluntourism is not development, approximately 56% (9 of 16) claimed that this is so because development looks or is different. That is, *development as something else* was the second code to comprise the broader, conceptual category, *English language voluntourism is not development*. This code was applied to segments of interview text in which participants stressed that development is a project that occurs on a different, often broader, scale than English language voluntourism: It is structural change, or it involves projects that are easily sustainable at the local level. Jaime, a former program participant, offered commentary that illustrates the code, *development as something else*. Although he had fond memories of his time as a volunteer teacher in China, Jaime saw a clear distinction between the one-on-one, short-term service he had conducted there and development. In fact, he claimed that the public's unfortunate tendency to confuse one-on-one service with broader, structural change can actually *prohibit* development. He explained:

I do feel that in order to truly service other people, in the end, you have to change some of the structural conditions. . . . I do believe that one-on-one service is very meaningful, and it's something that I really like and want to do. But fundamentally, you have to deal with structural issues if you really want to get down to solving the problems. . . . [W]hen you have someone come in, sort of an inspirational figure, saying "Hey, you guys can do what I did! Look at me, I'm, you know, Magic Johnson or I'm this guy, you can be like me," and then you leave, and you don't do anything to help them . . . that's almost doing a disservice to the student. And, I, I would even say that even just going in and helping one-on-one and thinking that that somehow "solves the problem" is not actually doing too much to help the problem. Because . . . [the] same conditions remain. Same conditions remain. . . . [T]here's a disconnect in society, and I think a lot of the disconnect has to do with our perceptions of what community service is supposed to do. (Jaime, interview, January 25, 2009)

As Jaime's statement demonstrates, in-service and former program participants who expressed *development as something else* held few illusions about the extent of their influence. Unlike program participants who saw themselves as individually saving a community through short-term volunteering (see chapters 3 and 4, this volume), Jaime and others of his ilk were conservative in their assessments of what English language voluntourism programs can and do accomplish in the Global South. While programs such as English language voluntourism might be personally meaningful for volunteers, as Jaime states, they may not, in and of themselves, lead to broad-scale change.

Raj, another former program participant, shared an outlook similar to Jaime's when it came to a discussion of whether his volunteer experience in Namibia constituted development.

While he viewed Global North intervention in Namibia as helpful in the short-term, he questioned the long-term efficacy and consequences of volunteer tourism and similar programs there. Here,

Raj:

Overall, I've always have the feeling toward these teaching programs—in a lot of senses, they're a stop-gap solution. Because, unless you want these countries and these schools to be relying on volunteer teachers indefinitely, you know, you have to do something to fix the problem that requires this volunteer teacher to be there. . . . [I]f . . . a reasonably untrained, 19-year-old college student can go in and . . . do the same workload as a full-time teacher, and this isn't making anybody redundant, then, I think it's safe to say that you're needed there . . . which is a problem! . . . [W]hen you rely on a volunteer to do what should be someone's job, you know, because you can't fill that job, that's not . . . something to celebrate. (Raj, interview, January 26, 2009)

Raj's argument that volunteer teaching is “not something to celebrate” contrasts sharply with the feel, look, and discourse of most English language voluntourism sponsors' promotional materials. To judge from the language and pictures in the glossy, colorful pages of most organizational brochures, to participate in English language voluntourism is to join in a worldwide party where smiling, traditionally-costumed natives make frequent appearances. “Explore the deepest corners of the world—and your heart,” an insert in a well-known voluntourism sponsor's promotional brochure proclaims (Cross-Cultural Solutions, n.d). This hearty invitation to prospective volunteers is a far cry from Raj's assessment, one that views volunteer teaching as a “stop-gap” solution to a larger set of grave social problems.

Joanne, introduced above, also expressed the perspective inherent to *development is something else*. In a spirited narrative, Joanne shared her view that English language

voluntourism and other, similar Global North-led intervention programs are not development for a number of reasons. First, she said, they fail to facilitate long-term, structural changes in the Global South; second, they enable local people to do less for themselves in the short term. Finally, Joanne argued that the money it costs to fund volunteer tourism programs could be put to much greater use elsewhere. Here is Joanne, discussing how she had felt particularly angered during her volunteer time in Costa Rican when a group of American volunteers visited her host village to build a school structure there:

[If] one of the goals is to quote “empower” these people to get better jobs, to build better houses, to get nicer TVs . . . why don’t you just give them the money, then? . . . [L]ike, why, why should these kids from however many thousands of miles away pay thousands of dollars to come and build the school that my kids who are healthy, young teenagers can totally build with their own two hands—and should be building with their own two hands—because it’s their school! Why should these, like, rich white people come and build the school FOR them?” And I just—it made me so mad, and I was probably, like, so rude to them. But in the same way, like, I could be as critical as, of my place. Like, why should I come and teach English rather than funnel the money into improving the entire national educational system so that the English teachers actually can teach English? (Joanne, interview, January 30, 2009)

Joanne’s admitted “rudeness” to outside, American volunteers combined with a sense of self-consciousness that she, too, was engaged in a similar, intervention-type project demonstrates a rare level of self-reflexivity. This quality might be attributable, in part, to her background in anthropology, a field that teaches one to explicitly attend to one’s own positionality—to become, in Peacock’s (2001) term, an *observer-describer*. As an observer-describer, one no longer sees facts;

rather, one sees one's own versions of facts. In Joanne's case, the observation of an outside, American adventure-service group coming in to "save" Costa Rica helped her to better describe herself.

### **What is Development, Anyway?**

In addition to claiming that English language voluntourism is not development, 18 of 34 study participants (53%) expressed confusion, or uncertainty, about what development means, looks like, or is. These views generated the conceptual category, *what is development, anyway?* which was comprised of three, separate codes: 1) *viewing development as reliant upon problematic ideological foundations*; 2) *development for whom, or cui bono?*; and 3) *viewing development as something that causes new, unforeseen problems*. It is to a discussion of each of these codes that I now turn.

**Viewing development as reliant upon problematic ideological foundations.** Among the 18 participants whose views comprised the category, *what is development, anyway?* 13, or approximately 72%, saw development as reliant upon ideological foundations with which they struggled or disagreed. Statements to this effect received the code, *viewing development as reliant upon problematic ideological foundations*. Ana, a former program participant in South Africa, communicated this code in our interview. Glancing at the cotton totebag the NGO provides *gratis* to each program participant—a totebag that has the phrase, "international development in education" on it—Ana made the following comments:

When organizations say they're going to go to help "develop" a country, I kind of have a problem with that kind of saying or that kind of perspective. I don't really like the terms, developing country, developed, anyways . . . because it's saying that there's, like, a certain point of which you need to reach, and other countries are not at that point yet.

And, thus, we need to go to help them develop, like, you know, help them reach that point. And I think it just shows a kind of elitism—subtly—in this very P.C. world. . . .

Because there's a connotation that goes with it. (Ana, interview, January 27, 2009)

Whether she knows it or not, Ana's concern about the term, *development*, and the teleology it implies has been well-researched in academic circles. Escobar (1995), for example, drawing on Foucault's notion of discourse, gives an impassioned account of the way in which the binary, *developed/undeveloped*, is a discursive formation that was created with the stroke of a pen. Under the Truman Doctrine in the mid-twentieth century, half of the world became suddenly characterized as "living in conditions approaching misery" with an "economic life that is primitive and stagnant," and the solution, it was proposed, was a "more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge" (Truman, 1949, cited in Escobar, 1995, p. 3). With the widespread adoption of this view, entire populations of Global South nation-states became instantaneously and uniformly "undeveloped"; they became solid blocks of wretchedness and poverty. In the face of the level depravity that supposedly existed across Global North-Global South lines, differences *within* single nation-states (including gross wealth disparity among groups in the U.S., for example) were erased, and the binary, *developed/undeveloped*, became the commonsensical way of coding the world (cf. Scott, 1998).

Since the mid-twentieth century into the present, the dualism, *developed/undeveloped*, has "achieved the status of a certainty in the social imaginary" (Escobar, 1995, p. 5) with both sides taking ownership of the same. While the privileged side of the binary has worked assiduously to "provide development" through rational planning, technical interventions, and market adjustments designed to increase "standards of living" (Latouche, 1992), other people have been subject to a process of neocolonialism. In either taking on the personal designation of



“undeveloped” or resigning themselves to residency in “undeveloped countries,” many individual, Global South people have come to view themselves in terms of lack (Pigg, 1992). Among many groups, acquiring the goods of “development”—be these items televisions, tins of Nescafé, or any number of other, technological accoutrements of the so-called “modern” world—has become in and of itself a mark of betterment.

Ana’s stated discomfort, then, with the implied trajectory of *development* finds root in a complex, often contested, social formation. Her statement, “I think [development] shows a kind of elitism,” suggests not only the code, *viewing development as reliant upon problematic ideological foundations*, but it also suggests tacit knowledge of Foucaudian ideas of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1969/1972): the ways in which seemingly neutral, or benign, concepts or structures may always be what they seem.

Amanda, introduced above, also expressed *viewing development as reliant upon problematic ideological foundations*. Unlike Ana, however, who was troubled by the term, *development*, Amanda was centrally concerned with what she saw as the unequal outcomes of many development projects. Following the logic of English language voluntourism, for example—a phenomenon suggesting that widespread English language skills among Global South people are useful or helpful (see chapter 3, this volume)—Costa Ricans’ identities as workers rather than participants in international tourism are affirmed. Amanda commented:

[E]ducation development is equipping kids to go work at tourist locations and allowing them to make money to provide for their families in this linkage between, you know, first world tourists and third world Costa Rican workers and that sort of thing, which is a weird, hierarchical thing that I’m not pleased with. (Amanda, interview, January 27, 2009)

Amanda's observation that English language skills will render Costa Ricans particularly suited to working in the service of Global North tourists recalls similar, cautionary, applied linguistics scholarship. Disparaging the widespread, often uncritical promotion of "English for development" in countries around the world, observers note that English not only frequently displaces other, more critical subjects in educational curricula (Bruthiaux, 2002), but that it also often provides people with an inadequate education in and through their first language (Pennycook, 1998). Furthermore, English language skills absent other, work-related competencies (e.g., advanced literacy skills or technological know-how) do not guarantee individual employment let alone national "development" (Niño-Murcia, 2003; Vavrus, 2002). Most tragically, educational curricula targeted solely at English language skills can render people fit for little but servile work. As Ordoñez (1999) notes, in school systems like those in the Philippines where English language learning has been promoted to the exclusion of critical content, there is "a decided advantage in the export market of domestic helpers and laborers. [One can] [c]ite their knowledge of English as that advantage" (p. 20).

Amanda's concern that development, English language voluntourism-style, creates a hierarchical linkage "between first world tourists and Costa Rican workers" is also reflective of writings in critical tourism. Noting the persistent unidirectionality of Global North-Global South tourism despite new, or alternative, tourism forms (e.g., eco-tourism), many observers insist that international travel *writ large* remains a (neo)colonial practice (Mowforth & Munt, 2006). Additionally, the ways in which tourism transforms Global South people, environments, and places into objects of Global North consumption (Urry, 2002) provokes some commentators to worry that Global South people lose agency and/or become frozen in time in the name of touristic authenticity (MacCannell, 1976). In her study of tourism in Göreme, Anatolia, for

example, Tucker (1997) reports that visiting tourists preferred to see local residents living in crumbling, traditional houses (at great peril to their personal safety) rather than in refurbished ones. Similarly, tourists expressed disappointment when local residents were seen using cars as transportation rather than donkeys and carts. If Global South communities want to attract and retain tourist dollars, they often have to conform to Global Northerners' expectations of whom and what they should be (Butcher, 2003). Thus, Amanda's fears of a development project creating what she terms a "hierarchical linkage" between hosts and guests in the context of Costa Rican tourism are not only reasonable, but justified.

**Development for whom, or *cui bono*?** A second way in which program participants expressed the category, *what is development, anyway?* was through the code, *development for whom, or cui bono?* That is, among the 53% of study participants who communicated confusion about what development means or is, approximately 61% (11 of 18) questioned whom, in the end, benefits from English language voluntourism: the participants or the recipients of their service. Said differently, the segments of interview transcript that received the code, *development or whom, or cui bono?* indicated that most often the "development" taking place in English language voluntourism is the development of the visiting volunteer.

Audrey, a former program participant in Ecuador, gave voice to *development for whom, or cui bono?* in an extended narrative about what she saw as a serious contradiction between the way in which English language voluntourism is marketed and for whom, in the end, these programs are actually designed. She scoffed at the notion of English language voluntourism as being inherently benevolent or altruistic. Upon glancing at some of the promotional materials I had brought as fodder for the interview, Audrey made the following statements:

[I]t's promoted like . . . it's saving the world. It's not really saving the world at all. I mean, you're going for your own benefit. I mean, you're teaching them English—but you're not really—I mean, you're only there for two and a half months. . . . I think the literature, like, makes, makes you feel like you would be a good person if you went. . . . like, “Good people do this. Good people go and volunteer.” This is like, “Change your world view, and blah, blah, blah.” And I think that you can be a bad person and still volunteer. . . . I think what the literature fails to—fails to stress is the fact that you have to go understanding that you're going to further your own experiences. (Audrey, interview, January 28, 2009)

Audrey's observation that English language voluntourism is promoted as “saving the world” is offered with no sense of irony. Indeed, her comments reflect a dominant, singular message that often appears in English language voluntourism sponsors' promotional literature: Volunteers are needed. Statements like these abound on websites and in promotional flyers:

- “Whether you teach with us in a Mexican school or work with us on a veterinary placement in India . . . you will be in demand and you will be needed. You will make a difference wherever you go.” (Projects Abroad, n.d.)
- “Hundreds of millions of children the world over are in desperate need. The statistics are staggering. . . . Amidst the suffering, you can truly be a lifeline for needy children in our host communities around the world.” (Global Volunteers, 2008, p. 5)
- “[Volunteer] participants will work in an orphanage project (Kathmandu or Chitwan) - bringing a ray of hope into the lives of destitute orphans.” (Global Crossroad, n.d.)

Audrey's comments originate, then, from within a larger, discursive formation that rarely questions either the value of English language voluntourism or the motives of its participants.

Within English language voluntourism promotional materials, “need” is presented as a matter of fact, and volunteers are simply meeting the “demands” or “needs” of other people by participating in these programs (cf. Simpson, 2004).

Audrey’s insistence that “you can a bad person and still volunteer,” however, brings up an interesting point. It calls to mind what King (2006) calls “the narrative of American generosity.” In this narrative, “Americans give more than any other of the world’s people . . . and they have done so ‘from the beginning’” (p. xi). It is narrative used to justify any number of projects, interventions, or activities that are done—regardless of intent or outcome—in the name of philanthropy or altruism. Within the narrative of American generosity, activities as disparate (and variously ideological) as reading the bible to prison inmates, distributing foods in soup kitchens, and participating in a Race for the Cure all become indices of virtuosity. If one is volunteering, the narrative goes, one’s intentions are good.

Audrey, however, hints at the flipside of this narrative. Particularly in the contemporary neoliberal moment in which volunteerism and other private, individual acts of philanthropy are needed to mitigate a lack of public resources (Harvey, 2005; King, 2006), volunteerism in general has become a “yardstick against which the capacities of individuals to become proper Americans is measured” (King, 2006, p. xii). In contexts ranging from President Barack Obama’s 2008 “call to service” (Obama, 2008) to the twenty-first century college application process (Heath, 2007), Americans are encouraged (indeed, expected) to participate in volunteer service. Those people who don’t—or can’t—risk losing important symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1979/1984). Audrey’s comment, above, that “you have to go understanding that you’re going to further your own experiences” may be, in the end, a moot point. Given the importance or even necessity of participating in volunteer service for many U.S. citizens—for example, students

seeking college entry—the issue of *cui bono?* in volunteer tourism may be a difficult question to answer.

One former program participant, Peg, in fact, explicitly poked fun at the narrative of American generosity. Discussing the ways in which volunteer tourism is popular in the contemporary moment, Peg suggested that this is so not because voluntourism helps people in the Global South, but because it allows Global Northerners to have adventures. An African studies major, Peg expressed *development for whom, or cui bono?* quite clearly. During her volunteer experience, Peg been especially bemused by the perspectives of other volunteers in her Namibia program cohort:

[T]hey were like, “I just wanted to go to Africa.” . . . I think there are a lot of, like, volunteer programs that are very fashionable because you can go to, like, a developing country and—whatever that means—or, like, a third world country—it cracks me up when people say that. Like, “the third world.” What’s that? You know. Anyway, Whatever. Or, like, “Africa.” These—these words that are sort of glamorous, and everybody will say, “Good luck on your trip to Africa. Good luck on your trip to the third world,” whatever that means. So, it’s associated with, like, a lot of prestige here, I think, in a sense. . . . [T]here’s a certain fascination, like I said, with the developing world and like, Africa, that people who don’t have a lot of privileges, I think, don’t have. . . . because they see more immediate needs in their own communities. (Peg, interview, January 28, 2009)

Munt (1994) uses the term, *ego-tourism*, and draws upon Bourdieu’s (1979/1984) notion of symbolic capital to characterize the way in which Global North people have historically used Global South travel experiences as a way to enrich themselves. From the early twentieth-century

European Grand Tour to late twentieth-century backpacking, practices that allow people to gather trinkets, pictures, and stories from far-off places have helped to create cosmopolitan identities (Hannerz, 1990). Cosmopolitan people, then, are plied with a cache of experiences, which they can then parlay into other identity-creating (or even cash-generating) projects (e.g., see Gee's (2002) notion of shape-shifting portfolios). As Peg observes, people with "more immediate needs in their own communities" (e.g., the poor, the working) are less likely than the privileged to be preoccupied by fascination with other places and people. Thus, projects like volunteer tourism help to recreate a historical process. By way of volunteer tourism—still a form of international travel—already-privileged groups are able to appear generous, adventurous, and worldly, thus consolidating their cosmopolitan identities and securing their own cultural capital (Heath, 2007). Peg's commentary reflective of *development for whom, or cui bono?* may not be far off the mark.

**Viewing development as something that causes new, unforeseen problems.** A final way in which participants conveyed the category, *what is development, anyway?* was in expressions that were coded as *viewing development as something that causes new, unforeseen problems*. That is, out of the 18 participants who felt confused or conflicted about what development might mean, 7 (39%) were of the opinion that development (in whatever form it takes) generates new, unanticipated problems in a local community. Taylor, for instance, the participant who volunteered in urban Ecuador, was disturbed by what she characterized as the outcomes of "modernization" and "globalization" in Quito. In a detailed, almost apologetic, account, Taylor shared how witnessing what she termed a new kind of "grinding poverty" was the most memorable part of her volunteer experience. Seeing what she perceived to be evidence

of the “negative” sides of globalization, Taylor began to re-think her view of “Western” ways of doing things as a result of teaching in Quito. Here is Taylor describing<sup>9</sup> her time abroad:

I had a life-changing experience, but it wasn't like—it wasn't like the typical, I guess, life changing experience. . . It more so made me, like, think about the West differently. . . . I think because I was living in an urban city, and like, seeing indigenous people, like, sell, like, Chiclets, like, all that kind of stuff, was kind of weird, and like, the poverty you see in a city is, like, different from rural poverty. . . . it's a different, like, grinding poverty, I think—and it sort of made me—not, like, question globalization . . . it's tough to say this, 'cause I think I come off sounding like a bad person. . . . I, like, don't mean to sound like countries shouldn't, like, develop. . . . But it sort of made me think about, like, the cultural ramifications of it. . . . [I]t's weird that, you know, you modernize and you get all of these great things, but then you also, like, have this new, like, poverty in like a different form that you wouldn't have had. . . . So, like in that way, like, my time abroad really did have a huge impact on me, but . . . it . . . more so complicated how I felt about where I came from, like, the U.S., and sort of our . . . effect on the rest of the world. . . . [I]t's almost like, when you go on programs like this, it's like you presuppose that, like, the Western way is, like, the right way to do things? And that's—I don't know. . . . I'm not sure.

(Taylor, interview, June 27, 2008)

I devote ample space to Taylor's narrative for multiple reasons. First, her self-conscious use of the phrase, “life-changing experience” (i.e., “I had a life-changing experience, but it wasn't the

---

<sup>9</sup> As in all my transcripts, I retained participants' syntax—including hesitation words such as “like”—in order to render an accurate description of each participants' discourse. In the case of Taylor, however, I found the numerous “likes” to be particularly potent. I interpret her frequent use of the word, “like,” as not only indexing her tender age (she was 19 at the time of our interview), but also revealing the extent to which she felt hesitant, or reluctant, to express her critical views on globalization/modernization.



typical . . . life changing experience”) is extremely revealing. This is a term re-appropriated from English language voluntourism promotional literature, where prospective volunteers are continually called upon to have “the experience of a lifetime” (Cross-Cultural Solutions, n.d.), engage in “life-changing opportunities” (Teaching and Projects Abroad, n.d.), and see how “traveling to foreign lands changes your life forever” (Global Volunteers, 2008, p. 17). Taylor’s use of “life-changing experience,” however, indexes something very different. To Taylor, what was life-changing about participating in English language voluntourism was not the warmth or exoticism of local people, but that it changed her perspective on the U.S. and its role in promoting what she terms modernization. In confessing to this discrepancy (i.e., the life-changing experience “you normally hear about” versus the way she uses it), Taylor suggests that a “life-changing” experience *a la* voluntourism is not supposed to be that which happened to her. Rather, one is supposed to accept that “the Western way is the right way of doing things,” and a “life-changing” experience in the context of voluntourism should be one in which the construction of the Global North as a benevolent provider of modernization and other resources remains intact.

Second, Taylor’s discomfort with what she calls the “cultural ramifications” of modernization/globalization and “grinding poverty” in the urban context—captured in the visual image of an indigenous person selling Chiclets—calls to mind critical scholarship on development and globalization. This body of work charges that the economic-growth oriented approach to development endorsed by a myriad of government agencies, NGOs, and multilateral groups like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over the last thirty years has resulted in tragic, possibly intractable, conditions of poverty throughout the Global South and in Global South cities in particular. Years of debt-imposed structural adjustment and policies

of agricultural deregulation, among other development initiatives, have generated what Davis (2006) calls a new “urban climacteric”: sprawling megacities of joblessness and homelessness where “people turn to self-built shanties, informal rentals, pirate subdivisions, or the sidewalks” (p. 17) as forms of housing, where people “squat in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay” (p. 19) in their day-to-day lives.

That Taylor may have caught a (metaphorical) whiff of this urban climacteric is unsurprising. Shantytowns surround the Antisana reservoir, one of Quito’s most vital watersheds, and in the *quintas*, Quito’s formerly magisterial colonial neighborhoods, dozens of people live in former single-family dwellings *sans* municipal services (Davis, 2006). Rather, what is surprising about Taylor’s commentary is her reluctance to share her newly troubled views on globalization, modernization, and the West. In hedging, “it’s, like, tough to say this, ‘cause I think I come off sounding like a bad person” or “ I, like, don’t mean to sound like countries shouldn’t, like, develop. . . . I’m not sure,” Taylor suggests that there is difficulty in issuing critique or becoming critical of development in the context of English language voluntourism. While I would offer that Taylor’s critical commentary reflects a *positive* outcome of having participated in a volunteer tourism program—that is, it made her think differently—Taylor doesn’t seem to think so. Her uses of phrases like “this is tough to say” and “I come off sounding like a bad person” suggest that *viewing development as something that causes new, unforeseen problems* is not normal or good—indeed, in the context of English language voluntourism, it is perceived as dangerous or bad.

### Discussion

In the form of some final concluding comments, I wish to discuss the ways in which data in this study reflect an important, often little discussed, outcome of English language

voluntourism. While the dominant discourse of English language voluntourism is a vague, economic (even neoliberal) orientation to development (see chapters 3 and 4, this volume), the data presented in this manuscript suggest that many participants in English language voluntourism programs do not buy into this discourse equally. In fact, many English language voluntourism program participants emerge from these programs quite critical of the very foundations on which these programs are based. The results of this study's findings, then, lead to another set of questions.

For one, how might the development of critical perspectives on English language voluntourism's ideological underpinnings come to be seen as a positive outcome of participation in these programs? If, as my data suggest, English language voluntourism is not development (in the economic-growth sense) but rather the development of visiting, Global North volunteers, what should this development be? How should program participants develop, and in what ways? If the goal of English language voluntourism is, indeed, "life changing experiences" (Teaching & Projects Abroad, n.d.), organizational sponsors (and other stakeholders) should be clearer as to whose life is changed and how. My study's findings suggest that volunteers' disciplinary majors may impact volunteers' perceptions, for example; do voluntourism sponsoring organizations take this into account when selecting (or preparing) volunteers?

Second, what is to be made of the fact that if and when English language voluntourism program participants come to some critical awareness of these same programs' philosophical foundations, they are often afraid to voice them? The consistency with which participants in this study expressed hesitancy, insecurity, and even apology for their critical views suggests that—somewhere down the line—they received the message that developing critical views is wrong. Perhaps this is a consequence of the promotional literature (glossy and rife with "goodness");

perhaps this is a consequence of broader, reductive trends in U.S. education over the last ten years, trends that promote an uncritical acceptance of content rather than critical thinking (Spring, 2004). Whatever the case, it is disconcerting that program participants' critical views are the ones most often not heard. Indeed, prior to conducting this study, I had heard them exclusively in my own head.

Foucault (1976/1978) writes that “silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name . . . is less the absolute limit of a discourse . . . than an element that functions alongside the things said” (p. 27). Despite English language voluntourism's persistence, then, on framing itself as a cure-all—a fun place of “meaningful experiences” and “helping hands”—this is only one part of the story. Participants' heavy critiques—of economic-oriented development, of short-term EFL teaching, of English-only pedagogy, etc.—comprise a part of the phenomenon. Failing to attend to participants' critique is a failure to engage with what English language voluntourism is and does. If, as Global Volunteers (2008) puts it, these “adventures in service” (p. 1) through English language voluntourism are likely to continue into the future, advocates of a more just world order would be wise to attend to *all* the voices that constitute—and are created by—this same experience. As the opening epigraphs of this report indicate, the various stakeholders in English language voluntourism program often hold contradictory views. Rather than being incommensurate, these differences may constitute a space in which the beginnings of alternative kinds of social change might occur.

## References

- Ausenda, F. & McCloskey, E.. (2006). *World volunteers: The world guide to humanitarian and development volunteering* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Milano, Italy: Green Volunteers di Fabio Ausenda.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste* (R. Nice, Trans). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1979)
- Brock-Utne, B. (2002). *Language, democracy, and education in Africa*. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Bruthiaux, P. (2002). Hold your courses: Language education, language choice, and economic development. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(3), 275-296.
- Butcher, J. (2003). *The moralization of tourism: Sun, sand. . . and saving the world?* London: Routledge.
- Canagarajah, A.S. (1999). On EFL teachers, awareness, and agency. *ELT Journal* 53(3), 207-214.
- Cross-Cultural Solutions. (n.d.). *Cross-Cultural Solutions* [Brochure]. New Rochelle, NY: Author.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Davis, M. (2006). *Planet of slums*. London: Verso.
- Echevarría, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D.J. (2008). *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP model*. Boston: Pearson.
- Edelman, M. & Haugerud, A. (Eds.) (2005). *The anthropology of development and globalization: From classical political economy to contemporary neoliberalism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the third world*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Folse, K. (2004). *Vocabulary myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge* (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.) New York: Vintage Books. (Original work published 1969)
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality, volume 1: An introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books. (Original work published 1976)
- Gee, J. P. (2002). Millennials and Bobos, *Blue's Clue's* and *Sesame Street*: A story for our times. In D. E. Alvermann (Ed.), *Adolescents and literacies in a digital world* (pp. 51-67). New York: Peter Lang.
- Genesee, F. & Upshur, J. A. (1996). *Classroom-based evaluation in second language education*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Global Service Corps. (n.d.). Global Service Corps. Retrieved May 6, 2009 from [www.globalservicecorps.org](http://www.globalservicecorps.org)
- Global Volunteers. (2008). *Adventures in service* [Brochure]. St Paul, MN: Author.
- Hannerz, U. (1990). Cosmopolitans and locals in world culture. In M. Featherstone (Ed.), *Global culture: Nationalism, globalization, and modernity* (pp. 237-252). London: Sage.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Heath, S. (2007). Widening the gap: pre-university gap years and the 'economy of experience.' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28, 89-103.
- Holborow, M. (1999). *The politics of English: A Marxist view of language*. London: Sage.

- Hornberger, N. (1998). Language policy, language education, language rights: Indigenous, immigrant, and international perspectives. *Language in Society*, 27, 439-458.
- Hutnyk, J. (1996). *The rumour of Calcutta: Tourism, charity, and the poverty of representation*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Kachru, B. (1997). World Englishes 2000: Resources for research and teaching. In L. E. Smith & M. L. Forman (Eds.), *World Englishes 2000* (pp. 209-251). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Kubota, R. (2002). The impact of globalization on language teaching in Japan. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and language teaching* (pp. 13-28). New York: Routledge.
- Latouche, S. (1992). Standard of living. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The development dictionary: A guide to knowledge as power* (pp. 250-261). London: Zed Books Ltd.
- MacCannell, D. (1976). *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*. New York: Sulouken.
- Macedo, D., Dendrinis, B., & Gounari, P. (2003). *The hegemony of English*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Marcus, G. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95-117.
- McMillon, B., Cutchins, D., & Geissinger, A. (2003). *Volunteer vacations: Short-term adventures that will benefit you and others* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Chicago: Chicago Review Press.
- Mowforth, M. & Munt, I. (2006). *Tourism and sustainability: New tourism in the third world* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.

- Munt, I. (1994). Eco-tourism or ego-tourism? *Race and Class*, 36(1), 49-60.
- Niño-Murcia, M. (2003). "English is like the dollar": Hard currency ideology and the status of English in Peru. *World Englishes*, 22(2), 121-142.
- Obama, B. (2008, September 11). Barack Obama: A call to service. *Time*. Retrieved April 25, 2011 from [www.time.com/magazine/article/0,9171,1840636,00.html](http://www.time.com/magazine/article/0,9171,1840636,00.html)
- Ohmae, K. (1999). *The borderless world: Power and strategy in the interlinked economy* (Revised ed.). New York: HarperBusiness.
- Omaggio Hadley, A. (2001). *Teaching language in context* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Ordoñez, E. (1999). English and decolonization. *Journal of Asian English Studies*, 2(1-2), 17-21.
- Peacock, J. L. (2001). *The anthropological lens: Harsh light, soft focus* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. London: Longman.
- Pennycook, A. (1998). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. London: Longman.
- Pennycook, A. (2000a). Development, culture, and language: Ethical concerns in a postcolonial world. In J. Shaw, D. Lubelska, & M. Noullet (Eds.), *Partnership and interaction: Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Language and Development, Hanoi, Vietnam* (pp. 3-22). Bangkok: Asian Institute of Technology.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.



- Phillipson, R. (2000). English in the new world order: Variations on a theme of linguistic imperialism and “world” English. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *Ideology, politics, and language policies: Focus on English* (pp. 87-106). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Pigg, S. L. (1992). Constructing social categories through place: Social representations and development in Nepal. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34(3), 491-513.
- Projects Abroad. (n.d.). *Volunteer & intern abroad* [Brochure]. New York: Author.
- Robbins, R. H. (2005). *Global problems and the culture of capitalism* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Shulman, L. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.
- Simpson, K. (2004). ‘Doing development’: the gap year, volunteer tourists and a popular practice of development. *Journal of International Development*, 16, 681-692.
- Snow, D. (2001). *English teaching as Christian mission: An applied theology*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Sonntag, S. K. (2003). *The local politics of global English: Case studies in linguistic globalization*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Spring, J. (2004). *How educational ideologies are shaping global society: Intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, and the decline of the nation-state*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Teaching & Projects Abroad. (n.d.). *Teaching and Projects Abroad: Life-changing opportunities* [Brochure]. West Sussex, UK: Author.

- Terrell, T. D. (1977). A natural approach to second language acquisition and learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 61, 325-337.
- Tucker, H. (1997). The ideal village: Interactions through tourism in Central Anatolia. In S. Abram, J. D. Waldren, & D. V. L. Macleod (Eds.), *Tourists and tourism: Identifying with people and places* (pp. 107-128). Oxford: Berg.
- Urry, J. (2002). *The tourist gaze* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Sage.
- Vavrus, F. (2002). Postcoloniality and English: Exploring language policy and the politics of development in Tanzania. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(3), 373-397.
- Volunteers for Prosperity. (n.d.). *Volunteers for prosperity*. Retrieved April 13, 2011 from [www.volunteersforprosperity.gov](http://www.volunteersforprosperity.gov)
- WorldTeach. (n.d.). WorldTeach. Accessed May 10, 2009 from [www.worldteach.org](http://www.worldteach.org)

Code	Definition	Example
English language voluntourism as ineffectual	English language voluntourism is not development because the EFF instruction it delivers is haphazard and has little impact—i.e., Global South people learn very little actual English under a volunteer teacher’s tutelage.	[My job there] was to teach English. . . . But, I don’t—it was just difficult because I couldn’t see, like, what they wanted to get out of the class. Like, especially with, like, my morning class, which was, like, beginners, like, from all ages. Like, there was, like, a mom there taking it to, like, get better for, like, business, and kids whose parents made them go. Like, my afternoon class were, like, older teenagers and, like, one of them was like, 'I'm gonna be an accountant. Like, I need to learn this English to be, like, better—to get a better job.' . . . [I]n terms of like, my, my mission, I don't know . . . . I essentially felt I was, like, play-schooling for them during the summer while they weren’t in school” (Chris, interview, January 30, 2000).
Development as something else	Development refers to sustainable, broad-scale social or economic projects (or political change) that affect larger structural formations, something English language voluntourism cannot or is not designed to do	“[T]here were other, like, more pressing problems instead of using technology. . . there were only, like, three textbooks for thirty-three kids, or something like that. And the textbooks that they have are from, like, 1985. So, like, I don't know why they were like so focused on like satellite technology as a nation” (Shannon, interview, January 30, 2009).

**Figure 5.1:** Codes for *English language voluntourism is not development*

Category: English Language Voluntourism is Not Development (17 of 34, 50%)		
	Code: <i>English language voluntourism as ineffectual</i> (15 of 17, 88%)	Code: <i>Development as something else</i> (9 of 17, 53%)
<i>In-service program participants (n=14)</i>		
Amanda		
Catherine		
Christina		
Edward		
Heidi		
Jim		
Joanne		
Josh		
Mary		X
Meaghan		
Mike		
Morgan		
Scott		
Suzanne		
<i>Former program participants (n=20)</i>		
Amanda	X	X
Ana		
Audrey	X	
Chris	X	
Danica		
Heather	X	
Jaime		X
Jillian	X	
Joanne	X	X
Josh	X	X
Josie		
Karen	X	X
Lauren	X	X
Peg	X	X
Raj	X	X
Shannon	X	
Shelly	X	
Shrushti	X	
Stacey	X	
Susie		

**Figure 5.2: English language voluntourism is not development Code Frequencies**

Code	Definition	Example
English language voluntourism as reliant upon problematic ideological foundations	Feeling that the development endorsed or implicitly encouraged by English language voluntourism and similar programs is troublesome or not as apolitical as it is reported to be	“[I]nternational development work is really in style now. And this particular brand of it—like, microfinance—and English education by volunteers who pay a HUGE sum to go volunteer is what is thought of now as the best way to make the world a better place. That's, like, basically, the end goal, right? And this is one way to do it. And I happen to be critical of that way” (Joanne, interview, January 30, 2009).
Development for whom, or <i>cui bono</i> ?	Feeling that, in the end, the volunteers who go on these programs as teachers receive more benefit than do the communities that are the recipients of a volunteer's service	[My main role there] was officially to teach English, and that's why we were invited, and probably why we were allowed to come and have this kind of close interaction with the community. . . . But, for the individuals going, it's probably more to have the experience of, of traveling to the country and experiencing the community, like I said before. And I guess the same thing goes for, like, the Peace Corps, where they say it's for development, but in reality, it appears to be more of a personal development-type project. Where you learn about yourself and you help in a little way, but by no means are you revolutionizing the community . . . . [English language voluntourism] is definitely an Americans going abroad program” (Josh, interview, January 29, 2009).

Viewing development as creating new, unforeseen problems	Believing that development, as a social formation or program of change, causes unforeseen consequences that may have a negative impact on a local community	<p>“I heard of tons of, you know, like, corruption in Tanzania and Kenya. And I'm trying to understand why that necessarily was and why there's so much corruption. Like, is there not the check and balance? And I think by having a third, like, very big player—which is the NGOs, especially in Tanzania, like, a huge, huge amount of funding comes from them, to like, make up their, like, most of their government expenditure—I think a lot of the policy and even just day-to day-life gets affected by, you know, the higher levels that don't necessarily realize what it's like on the ground” (Jillian, interview, January 30, 2009).</p>
--	---	---

**Figure 5.3: Codes for *what is development, anyway?***

Category: What is Development, Anyway? (18 of 34, 53%)			
	Code: <i>Viewing development as reliant upon problematic ideological foundations</i> (13 of 18, 72% )	Code: <i>Development for whom, or cui bono?</i> (11 of 18, 61%)	Code: <i>Viewing development as something that causes new, unforeseen problems</i> (7 of 18, 39% )
<i>In-service program participants (n=14)</i>			
Amanda	X	X	
Catherine			
Christina			
Edward			
Heidi			
Jim			
Joanne	X	X	
Josh			
Mary	X		X
Meaghan	X		
Mike			
Morgan			
Scott			
Suzanne			
<i>Former program participants (n=20)</i>			
Amanda	X		X
Ana	X		
Audrey		X	
Chris			
Danica		X	
Heather	X		
Jaime			
Jillian	X	X	X
Joanne	X	X	X
Josh		X	
Josie			
Karen		X	
Lauren	X	X	
Peg		X	X
Raj	X	X	
Shannon	X		X
Shelly			
Shrushti			
Stacey			
Taylor	X		X

**Figure 5.4: What is development, anyway? Code Frequencies**

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

#### **Problem Solving in the Contemporary U.S.**

Throughout this study, I have demonstrated the ways in which English language voluntourism relies on and recreates particular, often simplistic, discourses of English language use and development in order to market itself as a beneficent intervention that helps people throughout the Global South. While many of the claims made by English language voluntourism programs sponsors (e.g., that their programs reliably provide EFL skills) may be tenuous or patently untrue, the most problematic component of English language voluntourism, I offer, is its role in disabling other ways of being in the world. Said differently, while people are busy marketing, promoting, investigating, and packing for English language voluntourism experiences, few people are looking to see *why* short-term EFL teaching is being promoted throughout the Global South and whether or not these programs even result in their intended effects. English language voluntourism, like many other political projects or responses to societal ills, is troublesome not in what it does but rather in the ways that it refocuses and reframes our attention. To illustrate this point further, I discuss some similar social projects that have relevance to this dissertation study. The formations listed below are threads in a larger cloth, so to speak, which is also comprised of English language voluntourism.

#### **Saving the Earth**

In his observations of the late twentieth-century environmental movement, farmer/scholar Berry (1990) writes that the framing of problems as “global,” “planetary,” or “world-wide”



renders these problems unsolvable. That is, if a problem is described as “planetary,” it moves beyond the realm, concern, or consequence of the actions of any one individual. “How, after all, can anybody—any particular body—do anything to heal a planet?” Berry asks. “The suggestion that anybody could do so is preposterous. The heroes of abstraction keep galloping in on their white horses to save the planet—and they keep falling off in front of the grandstand” (p. 197). Jargon such as “save the planet,” Berry observes, is not only too abstract to cause any substantive changes in peoples’ day-to-day lives, but also dangerous in that it fails to address the root causes of why the planet needs saving in the first place. If restraining from paper napkin use or deciding to re-use hotel towels counts as “saving the planet,” for example, the urgency of this message is diluted. Additionally, if “saving the planet” is mainly couched in the language of making better or different consumer choices, the consumptive realm is the only space in which concerns about the planet hold sway. Calls for individuals to voluntarily “save the planet” or heal the problems of the world not only dim the reality of resource depletion and pollution, but also foreclose other, potentially more effective, ways of addressing environmental problems and their causes.

### **Tragedy and the Tourism of Kitsch**

In another example of how one response to a social problem can shut down other responses, Sturken (2007) calls attention to the ways in which recent acts of violence in the United States have produced what she calls a tourist culture of kitsch. As a result of horrendous acts such as the Oklahoma City bombing and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, people now visit these sites as tourists, where they purchase memorial tokens like snow-globes and leave tributes such as teddy bears atop grave markers. Sturken cautions that these simplistic responses to tragedy allow for the maintenance of the U.S. as

perpetually innocent and prohibit other, critical forms of political engagement. “The consumer culture of memory helps to affirm a culture of innocent victimhood,” Sturken writes.

This preoccupation with victim status is a paradoxical aspect of American culture; at a time when the United States is the sole superpower, with enormous economic and military power . . . its culture is immersed in concepts of innocence and victimhood and a belief in the transcendent power of healing to smooth over history’s burdens. . . . These discourses work effectively to create a national identity that sees itself as exceptional and separated from the rest of the world. (p. 31)

Akin to Berry’s observation, above, that calls to “save the planet” do little to address either the base causes of environmental troubles or the practical means to solve them, simple pilgrimages to sites of tragedy allow for neither a deeper understanding of why the U.S. is a target of violence nor reflection on how U.S. geopolitical (and domestic) strategies generate widespread discontent. In the calls or the need to “do” something—i.e., save the planet, go green, assuage the loss of lives through the purchase of a stuffed toy—other, potentially transformative, even disruptive—social or political practices are overlooked.

### **The Pink Corporatization of Breast Cancer**

King (2006) sees the “pink” corporatization of breast cancer as working in a similar, attention-diverting, vein. The contemporary swell of consumer-based civic action around breast cancer issues (i.e., shelves of pink products and a focus on individually-oriented, fee-requiring philanthropy such as “Race for the Cure”) obscures numerous, politically-charged questions about the disease as well as the collective’s responsibilities to it. These questions include an interrogation of the links between environmental pollutants and breast cancer, how and by whom breast cancer research is conducted in the Global North, and, as King poignantly notes, whether

breast cancer awareness even matters in a context in which axes of class and race determine who lives and who dies of the disease. She states:

The limited focus of consumer-oriented activism . . . shaped as it is by an ideology of individualism and an imperative for uncomplicated, snappy market slogans, has allowed for the emergence of a preoccupation with early detection to the virtual exclusion of other approaches to fighting the epidemic and a failure to address the barriers, financial and otherwise, to treatment. This has resulted in a situation in which uninsured women with breast cancer have more reliable access to screening but are frequently left with no means to receive treatment after diagnosis. (p. 118)

Constrained by the hegemony of pink, the U.S. citizen is actually *disengaged* from breast cancer activism in several ways. Although a sparkly pink ribbon purchase might identify one as sympathetic to breast cancer awareness, it is a limited form of social action that simultaneously pushes aside other, potentially more effective, modes of expressing broad-scale concerns about the origins and rise of breast cancer and dissatisfaction with the nation-states' response to it.

### **English Language Voluntourism**

Work like Berry's, Sturken's, and King's, I suggest, is germane to the work presented here. For one, English language voluntourism also operates on a grandiose scale. It purports to be a simple "solution" to deep, historical problems that young, well-meaning volunteers often know little about. As Berry (1990) pens, "That will-o'-the-wisp, the large-scale solution to the large-scale problem, which is so dear to governments, universities, and corporations, serves mostly to distract people from the small, private problems that they may, in fact, have the power to solve" (p. 198).

Second, English language voluntourism also maintains the fiction that the source of Global South problems like poverty, joblessness, and low standards of living, among any number of issues, resides directly in the Global South. Volunteers are needed to “fix” problems elsewhere, not to step back and examine the ways in which the very forces that allow them the time and material resources to travel to the Global South are the same forces that make the reverse process nearly impossible. Similar to the way in which “a belief in the global marketplace (with its attendant neoliberalism) is accompanied by a set of narratives about the U.S. consumer as an innocent bystander to the destructive aspects of that marketplace” (Sturken, 2007, pp. 17-18), English language voluntourism suggests that American volunteers are innocent, well-meaning people that stand outside the structures and policies that generate the exact problems that their service is intended to remedy.

Finally, as King (2006) writes, “[t]he period since September 11, 2001, has seen an intensification of the normalizing discourses that tie philanthropic practice to proper citizenship” (p. 124). In the contemporary (neoliberal) moment, active, or good, citizens are *prima facie* those people that participate in community service, charitable works, or volunteer programs. Those people that don’t—or can’t—are viewed as inactive, dependent people who constitute a drain on societal resources (Rose, 1999). As the findings of this study reveal, however, volunteer programs such as English language voluntourism are often merely symbolic. Program participants themselves admit that short-term, ad hoc EFL classes rarely result in quality language instruction. Moreover, the “development” goals that English language voluntourism supposedly facilitates in the Global South are indeterminate and even contested. Yet, the social phenomenon of English language voluntourism continues unabated. Its participants—those people who can afford not only the high program fees but also the time to volunteer—leave these

programs indelibly marked as proper citizens. Ultimately, one wonders at what cost (and at whose expense) these programs inherently operate. At the same time that English language voluntourism seems to do little on the ground for the recipients of its service, it furthers and hones the gap between “active” and “inactive” citizens in the Global North.

### **Study Implications**

My work on English language voluntourism, first and foremost, has implications for these programs themselves. If English language voluntourism purports to deliver quality EFL instruction, my data suggests that it doesn’t do so. Overall lack of teacher preparation, unfamiliarity with language pedagogy, and little knowledge of course scope and sequence, among other issues, prohibit volunteer teachers from doing the very job they are sent to do. If English language voluntourism programs take seriously the EFL instruction they claim to provide, sponsoring organizations must attend more closely to the quality of their teachers. Such an effort might include increased teacher preparation, greater on-site support for volunteers, or even a more rigorous applicant screening process. In this sense, English language voluntourism finds kinship with Teach for America and other programs that aim to solve teacher shortages by placing uncredentialed, well-meaning young people in the classroom. A research study that would bring these two fields together might be fruitful and mutually beneficial.

Second, the development perspective that undergirds English language voluntourism—i.e., a neoliberal, pro-growth, rational planning model of development that aligns with the visions of groups like the World Bank—needs to be articulated clearly and to multiple audiences. Among the program participants in my study who felt a vague (even direct) discomfort with their volunteer roles, knowledge of what they were “getting into” initially might have helped them make more informed decisions about participation. Alternately, coming home “changed” in

one's orientation toward development as a result of having participated in English language voluntourism needs to be recognized as a possible—and even positive—outcome of these experiences. If the goals of these programs indeed are intended—as sponsoring organizations like to insist—to be meaningful and life-changing for volunteers, what that meaning is or looks like must not be preordained.

Finally, given the ways in which conditions of neoliberalism encourage and promote voluntary service as a sign of personal virtuosity and act of civic engagement, the extent to which programs such as English language voluntourism are (or are not) available to a wide variety of people merits further study. If metrics of civic involvement and personal goodness (which can then be parlayed into other forms of capital) rely on peoples' ability to participate in English language voluntourism and other, similar intervention and volunteer-type programs, access to these opportunities must be equitable. And yet. . . equal opportunity to be neocolonial? Now there's one I'll have to keep thinking about.

## REFERENCES

- Berry, W. (1990). *What are people for?* New York: North Point Press.
- Brookings Institution. (2006, June). International volunteering: Smart power. (Policy Brief No. 155). Washington, DC: L. Rieffel & S. Zalud.
- Brosius, J. P. (1999). Locations and representations: Writing in the political present in Sarawak, East Malaysia. *Identities*, 6(2-3), 345-386.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. London: Routledge.
- Butcher, J. (2003). *The moralization of tourism: Sun, sand. . . and saving the world?* London: Routledge.
- Callanan, M. & Thomas, S. (2005). Volunteer tourism: Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment. In M. Novelli (Ed.). *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends, and cases* (pp. 183-200). Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage.
- Conran, M. (2010, November). “*They really love me!*”: *Exploring the politics of sentimentality in volunteer tourism*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, New Orleans, LA.
- Davis, M. (2006). *Planet of slums*. London: Verso.
- Dicken, P. (2003). *Global shift: Reshaping the global economic map in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) New York: Guilford Press.

- Edwards, D. B. (2007). Afghanistan, ethnography, and the new world order. In A. C. G. M. Robben & J. A. Sluka (Eds.), *Ethnographic fieldwork: An anthropological reader* (pp. 347-358). Malden, MA: Blackwell. (Original work published 1994).
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the third world*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Longman.
- Global Volunteers. (2008). *Global Volunteers: Adventures in service* [Brochure] St. Paul, MN: Author.
- Gupta, A. & Ferguson, J. (2007). Beyond 'culture': Space, identity, and the politics of difference. In A. C. G. M. Robben & J. A. Sluka, *Ethnographic fieldwork: An anthropological reader* (pp. 337-346). Malden, MA: Blackwell. (Original work published 1992)
- H. Res. 1388, 111th Cong., 111th Cong. (2009). (enacted)
- Jakubiak, C. & Smagorinsky, P. (2011, April). *The discourse of voluntourism: American exceptionalism in applications submitted to a summer overseas volunteer teaching program*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.
- King, S. (2006). *Pink ribbons, inc.: Breast cancer and the politics of philanthropy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.



- Labaree, D. (2004). *The trouble with ed schools*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Marcus, G. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95-117.
- Marcus, G. (1986). Contemporary problems of ethnography in the modern world system. In J. Clifford & Marcus, G. (Eds.). *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* (pp. 165-193). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mowforth, M. & Munt, I. (2006). *Tourism and sustainability: New tourism in the third world* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.
- Novelli, M. (Ed.). (2005). *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends, and cases*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Peacock, J. L. (2001). *The anthropological lens: Harsh light, soft focus* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Pigg, S. L. (1992). Constructing social categories through place: Social representations and development in Nepal. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34(3), 491-513.
- Rampton, B. (2006). *Language in late modernity: Interaction in an urban school*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 923-948). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schwarz, K. C. H. (2010). *Unequal opportunities for citizenship? Diverse student experiences completing Ontario's community involvement requirements*. (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Toronto, Toronto, CA.

- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shulman, L. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.
- Simpson, K. (2004). 'Doing development': the gap year, volunteer tourists and a popular practice of development. *Journal of International Development*, 16, 681-692.
- Sinervo, A. (2010, November). *Moral economies and gendered tourists: Intimacy, care, and aid in the volunteer tourism industry of Cusco, Peru*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, New Orleans, LA.
- Smagorinsky, P. (2008). The method section as conceptual epicenter in constructing social science research reports. *Written Communication*, 25(3), 389-411.
- Spring, J. (2004). *How educational ideologies are shaping global society: Intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, and the decline of the nation-state*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sturken, M. (2007). *Tourists of history: Memory, kitsch, and consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Volunteers for Prosperity. (n.d.). Volunteers for prosperity. Retrieved April 13, 2011 from [www.volunteersforprosperity.gov](http://www.volunteersforprosperity.gov)
- Wallerstein, I. (2004). The rise and future demise of the world capitalist system. In F. L. Lechner and J. Boli (Eds.), *The globalization reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 63-76). Malden, MA: Blackwell. (Original work published 1974)
- Wearing, S. (2001). *Volunteer tourism: Experiences that make a difference*. New York: CABI Publishing.

Young, L. & Fitzgerald, B. (2006). *The power of language: How discourses influence society*. London: Equinox.