

Volunteer English Teaching Experiences in a Foreign Country: A case study

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ABSTRACT

Each year a group of university students from English speaking countries go to Chile and work as volunteers under the National Volunteer Centre Program. The purpose of this case study is to examine how a group of novice volunteer teachers describe their experiences in a foreign country and how these experiences shape their understanding of teaching. Participants went through the process of open-ended questionnaires and one-on-one interviews of their experience. This study was sustained in the literature by the domains of *volunteerism*, *English Language Teaching*, and *volunteerism and ELT*, and a socio constructivist and experiential lens was adopted. Even though volunteer teaching abroad is an increasing worldwide trend, there are few studies that combine these areas, showing that the existing blend of volunteerism and English language teaching needs to be further examined. The analysis of the data showed that novice volunteer teachers experience five types of experiences when teaching English: *language teaching experiences*, *language learning experiences*, *challenges*, *general experiences*, and *volunteering experiences*. Novice teachers recalled their expectations before teaching and those were maintained, modified, or unfulfilled. Volunteers stated what teaching means to them after working in public schools, they were able to describe diverse language teaching experiences, and make recommendations to future volunteers.

Keywords: volunteerism, English language teaching, teaching English as a foreign language, teaching experiences.

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DEDICATION

To my daughter Emilia, my son Gabriel, and my husband Hector for understanding this is something I loved doing and for understanding that I spent hours in the library when I should have been with them.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

Globalization and the status of English around the world (Crystal, 2005) have increased the need of governments to provide their citizens with opportunities to learn a foreign language. Some of the main reasons for the increased necessity of counting on volunteer teachers are mainly due to shortage of qualified English teachers (Zhan & Shang, 2011), the need to improve the level of English of public school students who do not have many opportunities to interact with a native speaker (National Volunteer Centre [NVC], 2012), or the disparity of opportunities in education, such as it is the case of Latin America, which does not allow students to have equal access to English instruction (Matear, 2008).

Each year thousands of English speaking volunteers decide to embark and to experience teaching of English in foreign countries. In an email correspondence with Mr. Ian Birbeck, the Recruitment Director from Projects Abroad, (Birbeck, personal communication, April 2, 2012) he confirmed that during 2011 his institution sent 2000 volunteer English speakers to work abroad as teachers (see Appendix A for email correspondence). Volunteer teaching opportunities for native English speakers are vast. Searches through Google, show around 37,200,000 (2012) entries offering this type of teaching event in (developing and under developed countries).

The United Nations Volunteer, JET Program, Peace Corps, One Small Planet, the World Volunteer Web, Volunteer Canada, among many more, offer guidance, tips, suggestions, testimonials, and advice to people willing to help others. In terms of English language teaching, volunteers can find millions of positions to teach the language around the world. There are

guides available for the English speaking volunteer such as the “Guide for the volunteer teacher” by Hjelt (1986), “Guide for the volunteer tutor” by Biles (1999), the ALT Handbook 2011 by the JET Program, or the “Volunteer Manual” (2012) created by the National Volunteer Centre from Chile. They offer principles and methods to teach the language, descriptions of the educational and language needs of the countries, reference to cultural differences, and guidance on how to establish short and long term teaching goals.

Very well-known web sites that used to target ESL and EFL teachers and their classroom needs such as Dave’s ESL Cafe, English club, or ESL Teachers Board are now within this ELT trend and offer job positions on a volunteer basis. Universities, through their volunteer programs, are also providing helpful guidelines to their students who wish to volunteer. For example, the Colorado State University has a complete online guide where ESL learners, cultural issues, skills, and activities are described.

Diverse volunteer institutions (Global volunteer network, Projects abroad, Go abroad, World teach, United planet, etc.) propose voluntary teaching positions in places such as Kenya, Japan, China, Korea and Peru, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile in South America.

Chile is not behind in this teaching trend. The Chilean Ministry of Education with the support of the United Nations created the National Volunteer Centre (NVC) (Ministerio de Educacion, Chile [MINEDUC], 2012). Due to its geographical location, Chile gives its citizens very few opportunities to interact with native English communities.

Each year, a group of 300 to 400 English speaking volunteers from the United States, Canada, Australia, and Europe participate in the National Volunteer Centre Program as teaching assistants in Chile. Since 2004, volunteer teachers work in public schools helping local EFL teachers and students to develop oral proficiency, and to engage in extracurricular activities through the use of games, music, and drama (Matear, 2008) with the aim of providing public

school learners real life interaction opportunities, the possibility to improve their speaking and interacting skills, and the chance to learn about another culture (National Volunteer Centre [NVC], 2011).

My connection with volunteer teachers dates back to 2008 when I worked at the Chilean Embassy in Ottawa for the National Volunteer Centre promoting the program across Canada. This triggered my interest in this area as I saw this would be a riveting area for research given the lack of field studies done in Chile. Upon my return to Chile, the NVC gave me the opportunity to carry out this study before volunteers started teaching and after they came back from the schools.

Volunteers who enroll directly through the Ministry of Education or through partner agencies like BRIDGE, Experiment Chile, Teach Away. Inc. can be sent to five culturally different regions in the country (Great North; Small North; Central Valley; South; and Patagonia) and teach English in public and semi-private schools to primary and high school students. Once volunteers arrive in Santiago, they can take a Spanish language course before starting the teaching experience. After that, they attend an orientation week where they are given culturally responsive insights into how to teach EFL to pupils. The services provided to volunteers, such as the Spanish course, health insurance, accommodation and meals, a monthly stipend, and transfers to the regions are free. All this has been planned in order to make the program attractive, given the highly competitive volunteer teaching global market.

Due to this growing field and the increasing participation of volunteer teachers around the world, studying the experiences of novice teachers abroad merits to be researched, so the purpose of this study was to examine how a group of English speaking novice teachers describe their experiences in a foreign country like Chile and how these experiences shape their understanding of teaching. Following a qualitative approach and by way of interviews with volunteers who had

returned from teaching in their schools, I managed to grasp the most salient English language teaching experiences from a group of American, Canadian, and Australian volunteer teachers.

Statement of the Problem

As the volunteer participation in teaching has increased, there is need to document people's experiences abroad as volunteers, particularly in less commonly addressed contexts such as Chile. Moreover, there is a lack of research on this issue. So far the studies carried out at the NVC are mainly quantitative and aim at collecting demographic information from the volunteers (MINEDUC, 2012). Besides, the latest studies carried out by the Ministry of Education date back to 2010 and refer mainly to issues related to the Chilean education such as evaluation of materials, gender, literacy in semi-private schools, among others (MINEDUC, 2012).

Recently, English language has been given a higher status role in our educational system and different measures have been taken since 2004, as for example, English language instruction must start in first grade in primary public schools, teachers of English must receive training in English language and EFL methodology, the English Opens Doors Program was created together with the National Volunteer Centre, and a national goal was set: becoming a bilingual country (MINEDUC, 2012). Nevertheless, no studies in the field of EFL or volunteers' experiences when teaching in a monolingual country like Chile can be found in the archives of the Ministry of Education.

The lack of research of volunteer teaching in the Chilean context does not provide insights into what teaching English is like in Chile for novice foreign teachers, what challenges they experience as volunteers and mainly as language instructors. Volunteers come and go, they

are given basic training on how to teach during an orientation week before starting to work in schools but there's no formal in-depth empirical data that comes directly from their own voices.

To address this gap in the knowledge base associated with volunteerism and ELT, the purpose of this case study was to expose how a group of English speaking volunteer teachers describe their experiences in a foreign country and how these experiences shape their understanding of teaching. This study provides a first-hand source of information and experiences about working with Chilean students and teachers, about teaching and learning a second language, reflections and beliefs about being a language teacher, about teaching materials and activities, and the expectations and challenges of working abroad.

In order to foreground this study with relevant literature, two areas were explored: Volunteerism and ELT. Here I came up with one main constraint: the gap in the literature where these two domains are blended. On the one hand, a large body of studies examine volunteerism from the point of view of social activism (UNV, 2008), parents and teacher's involvement (Jedlicka, 1990), advocacy (Musick & Wilson, 2008), online volunteering (McKee & McKee, 2008; Cravens, 2006), volunteer motivation (Allen, 2005), education (Wilson, 2012; Darwen & Rannard, 2011), sex differences and volunteer presence (Wymer, 2011), or activism and free trade (Del Felice, 2012), among other areas.

On the other hand, in the domain of English language teaching, recent studies published in specialized journals in ELT focus on the following areas: cognitive linguistics and second language classrooms (Holme, 2012), reading attitudes and reading abilities (Stoeckel, 2012); narratives of classroom and second language teacher education narratives (Nelson, 2011;

Johnson & Golombek, 2011); study abroad experiences (Sasaki, 2011); and teacher based assessment (Davidson & Leung, 2009).

However, as very few studies combine the previously mentioned domains, it was not easy to find studies either in journals on volunteerism (*Voluntas*, *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration*, or the *Journal of Voluntary Action*), or in journals specialized in the field of ELT (*TESOL Quarterly*, *ELT Journal*, or *Modern Language Teacher*). From the studies found in which volunteerism and teaching are interrelated, only a few of them specifically relate to English speaking volunteer teachers. Deutchman (1966) reported the volunteers' perceptions of being a Peace Corps EFL teacher and the difficulties faced when teaching English in a different culture; Burnley (1997) referred to his experience in teaching English in Russia as a Peace Corps volunteer; Kenning (2009) described the need of English teachers due to globalization in developing countries and provides suggestions to enhance volunteer impact; and some volunteer teachers' testimonials found on the JET web site newsletter briefly refer to challenges such as verbal communication, learning how to react to unexpected situations, and to the importance of culture appreciation to learn a second language (Beale, 2012; Eastham, 2011; Yip, 2010).

So as to confirm the existing gap in the literature I had personal email correspondence with Dr. Rod Ellis from the University of Auckland (Ellis, personal communication, April 2, 2012) who said he doesn't really know any literature on volunteer teaching. I also contacted Dr. Wilson from Duke University (Wilson, personal communication, April 3, 2012) and Dr. Musick (Musick, personal communication, April 3, 2012) from the University of Texas, both from the field of volunteerism and the two of them confirmed the lack of studies in the field and said it is an area worth exploring (see Appendix B, C, and D for email correspondence).

Research Questions and Objectives

The following guiding research questions serve as the basis for this investigation:

How does a group of English speaking volunteers experience teaching English in a foreign country?

How do their experiences shape their understanding of teaching?

The main aims of this research are two folds: 1) to expose how a group of English speaking volunteer teachers describe their experiences in a foreign country and 2) to establish how these experiences shape their understanding of teaching.

In order to operationalize my research questions, the upcoming specific objectives were stated:

- To establish volunteers' expectations before teaching
- To determine how volunteer teachers experienced teaching English abroad
- To identify the salient experiences participants had as volunteers and teachers of English
- To ascertain the nature of the volunteers' experiences
- To confirm and report if volunteers' expectations of the teaching experiences were confirmed, modified, or unfulfilled after working in a public school

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The main aims of this chapter are to review relevant literature in three domains: volunteerism, English language teaching, and volunteerism and ELT and to determine the concepts and key factors that frame this study. The literature is presented to sustain the purpose of this research: to describe how volunteer English speaking teachers experienced teaching English as a foreign language.

Volunteerism

Safrit and Merrill (1995), state that volunteerism implies active involvement and participation, offering time, energies and talents without giving financial or material support, by being uncoerced, by not being motivated by financial benefit, and being focused on a common good (as cited in Merrill, 2006). Volunteerism is commonly seen as mutual help, based on a fundamental need to engage in altruist behavior towards other human beings. Its main aim is to help others through assisting a group of people, a cause, an organization, or a large community without expecting any type of material benefits (Jedlicka, 1990; Stebbins, 2004; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Similarly, the United Nations Volunteer program (2009), defines volunteerism as:

a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges and it can transform the pace and nature of development. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation. (United Nations Volunteer [UNV], 2009, "About us", para. 2)

In fact, the reasons why volunteers decide to embark on these types of activities are often diverse. For some of them volunteerism is a way of fulfilling a psychological need, such as the “need for experience, feelings for social responsibility, the need for social contact, responding to the expectations of others”, and so on (Musick & Wilson, 2008, p. 56). Volunteer English language teachers working in Chile stated the reasons why they decided to participate in the NVC program. Several of these reasons relate to Musick and Wilson’s description of motives to work on a volunteer basis.

To Musick and Wilson (2008) people embark on volunteer activities if they believe the act will serve “important psychological functions” or “one or more psychological needs” (p. 56) Musick and Wilson make reference to the following six main motives found in the research done in this area:

Values refer mainly to the wish of volunteers to achieve a personal goal, to do something that is personally important for them or because they care about others. Individuals have internalized a set of values, hope to see them “actualized” (p. 58) and enjoy doing this in order to carry out these values.

Enhancement is related to volunteers’ opportunity of experiencing learning about different people, other places, skills, and about themselves. Volunteering is a hands-on experience for individuals which imply experiencing physical and mental challenges.

Social is seen as the need of meeting new people, getting involved, interacting, and going along with other groups which are important to volunteers because it allows them fit and be part of a “cohesive group” (p. 59). This allows them to develop their solidarity, to share, and learn from others.

Career means volunteering is seen as a good chance to develop work skills and make new contacts that permits volunteers to gain career-related benefits and explore different career options. This reason is not related to one age group only. Young people volunteer if they are about to enter the “work force” (p. 61), young adults do it as a “substitute for paid work” until they get a real job (p. 61), and for older people who don’t have a job.

Protective refers to “enabling people to deal with inner conflicts, feelings of incompetence, uncertainties about social identity, emotional needs, and the like” (Musick & Wilson, 2008. p. 62). It is also related to the need of feeling useful by helping others. Volunteering becomes a means to help individuals to deal with their own personal problems by allowing them to recover from physical and psychological illness.

Understanding means the volunteering act is viewed as a means of *personal growth* and *ego-enhancement*. Volunteers feel important, gain a new perspective of things, or can even explore their own weaknesses and strengths. The volunteering act helps volunteers to feel good, to increase their self-esteem and get self-identity.

The context in which volunteers find themselves is varied as well. In some societies, volunteerism is seen as work done to help others without considering money as a relevant part of the process, such as civic engagement, citizenship, public advocacy, or as a social service delivery system. Whereas other social systems view it as a type of low-wage work, as a pre-employment or entry to the work force (Merrill, 2006).

The growing development of the field of volunteerism has inspired developing countries to create volunteer programs designed to target senior populations who later in life are fairly free from work pressures and family responsibilities (Merrill, 2006). Other programs seek to engage

young people. These forms of volunteerism are seen as opportunities to “instill an ethic of service in a new generation and promote the ideals of character and skill development, career exploration, and work/experience exposure” (Merrill, 2006, p. 11).

One of the many areas of volunteerism is education. When it comes to volunteering for educational purposes, studies show that educated people tend to participate more than poorly educated people (Musick & Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2012). To Musick and Wilson (2008), going to college and "more schooling encourage more cosmopolitan attitudes" (p.120) and encourage self-confidence and sympathy for less fortunate people. According to the American Bureau of Labour Statistics' report (2011), college students who volunteered in education were more willing to teach, tutor, and to provide management, and professional assistance compared to those volunteers with less than high education who preferred to collect and prepare food for a community, for example.

When revising some of the latest studies related to volunteering and education, it is possible to find studies such as Darwen and Rannard's (2011) who present the current state of volunteering in universities in England and the challenges faced due to funding issues. Gesthuizen and Scheepers's (2012) examine the socio economic and cross cultural educational differences in volunteering. Musick and Wilson (2008) remark on how attending high school and college affects the voluntary participation in education. Specifically about volunteerism and teaching, Zhen (2009) reported the experiences of a group of volunteer Chinese college students who taught English and biology in some of the mountain areas in China. Similarly, Zhou and Shang (2011) described the findings of a short term volunteer teaching report in which a group of Chinese university students worked in rural schools.

Summarizing, given the existing gap in the literature linking ELT and volunteerism and the purpose of this study, a review of the literature on volunteerism was made, definitions of volunteerism were provided, the reasons why people decide to volunteer, and how volunteerism has been related to education.

English Language Teaching (ELT)

ELT has become an expanding field due to the increasing amount of people studying this language around the world. In many of these contexts, English is studied as a foreign language such as is the case of Chile (Block, 2003; Crystal, 2005; Kenning, 2008). In this section, I will refer to Chile and the English language situation and to the main features that characterize learning and teaching this language in foreign countries.

ELT in Chile: an overview

For the Chilean Ministry of Education, English is studied as a foreign language as it is not a means of communication among people and because students do not have immediate access to it outside the classroom (Ministry of Education [MINEDUC], 2012). Moreover, English has gained relevance in the Chilean national curriculum as it is seen as a tool for accessing global communication, knowledge, and ICTs (Bases Curriculares de Ingles, MINEDUC, 2012). Through the use of English, Chilean students should be able to comprehend other people's realities all the while understanding and valuing their own language and culture (Bases Curriculares de Ingles, MINEDUC, 2012).

Even though English has gained a more relevant role in the national curriculum, the focus has been formal classroom settings where most of the instruction is form based, regularly done in L1, and where motivation to learn is low. The target language is rarely used by teachers and

students inside public classrooms (Matear, 2008). The “elite access to private schooling” and the “unequal distribution of wealth, resources, and knowledge” in the country (p. 134) have demonstrated that English language proficiency has increased slowly and unevenly despite the money invested.

In 2004, a National Diagnostic Test for Competence in English was conducted jointly between the Ministry of Education, and the University of Cambridge through the Cambridge ESOL examinations. One thousand students (1000) spanning 8th grade in primary school to 4th grade in secondary school comprised the sample (Matear, 2008). The aim was to have a “snapshot of the state of the language learning in Chilean schools” (p. 137). The results showed that by the end of the schooling process only 5% of students had achieved an adequate level of the language to be able to study abroad or use the language for future employment. As a follow up, the English Opens Doors Program (EODP) was implemented in 2004. The measures taken were the to add more hours of English teaching during the week, provide instruction of the foreign language since 5th grade in primary school, introduce the initiative in teacher training, and create the National Volunteer Centre (NVC) sponsored by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (Matear, 2008). English speaking volunteers were sought to work in public schools in order to help teachers and students develop communication skills.

In 2010, the evaluation process was repeated. Two hundred and forty thousand secondary students (240,000) took the TOEIC Bridge test designed by ETS to assess international communication (SIMCE, 2011). The results revealed that only 11% of the students comprehend basic everyday expressions and understand basic short written texts. In other words, 1 out of 10 students has attained a basic proficiency level in English. Inequality was obvious. Sixty five percent (65%) of the students who obtained the highest marks came from private schools

whereas students from low income schools obtained less than one percent (0,3%) of achievement (SIMCE, 2011). This time the EODP has established that as of 2012 English teaching and learning should begin in grade one of primary school. The Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) has proposed that English should be taught using the Communicative Language Teaching Approach complemented with other approaches such as the Natural Approach, Cooperative Language Learning, Content Based Instruction, and Task Based Learning (Bases Curriculares de Ingles, MINEDUC, 2012).

The current situation of English language teaching in Chile focuses on specific themes. These themes, EFL status, second language acquisition and learning, formal or informal language learning contexts, the influence of the first language, and motivation to learn a second language merit reviewing:

EFL status: The expansion and growth of English as an international language (EIL) has increased the number of people around the world studying this language in different contexts and settings. The main contexts in which English has been learnt so far are as a second or a foreign language (ESL – EFL). Even though global migration and new developments in technology and communications have reduced the gap between the two, still opportunities for language interaction remain different (Block, 2003; Brown, 2000). Block (2003) affirms that “the foreign context is the context of millions of primary school, secondary school, university and further education students around the world who rely on their time in classrooms to learn a language that is not the typical language of communication in their community” (p. 48). Even though the foreign and second language share the context of formal classroom setting, Block states that the second language learner has many more opportunities of contact with the target language outside

the school and needs the language in order to survive and thrive in that community (Harmer, 2007).

Second language acquisition and second language learning: Krashen's (1988) distinction between the notions of *acquisition* and *learning* into the area of language teaching is worthy of consideration. Second language *acquisition* resembles the process in which children acquire their mother tongue. "It requires meaningful interaction in the target language –natural communication- in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding" (Krashen, 1988, p. 1). On the other hand, second language *learning* is related to *conscious language learning* characterized by the correction of errors and the study of explicit language rules.

Formal or informal language learning environments: These directly affect second language proficiency (Krashen, 1988). *Formal* or artificial settings are typically related to classroom contexts, to the explicit presentation of rules, and to the presence of error correction, whereas *informal* environments are natural and there is more exposure to the language (Krashen, 1988). The formality of the settings provided in foreign language contexts (Block, 2003) does not offer foreign language learners enough opportunities for language learning because of the environment which, in the end, affects motivation to learn a language (Littlewood, 2006). Littlewood remarks (2006) "many aspects of the second language acquisition occur through natural learning mechanisms, which are activated when the learner is involved in communicative activity" (p. 58). However, in formal settings teachers influence the course of learning by controlling the language to be taught, making students pay attention to formal aspects of the language, and by giving them feedback based on their performance. Ellis has a different point of view (2008). He states that "even if the L2 knowledge derived from formal instruction is not

immediately available for use in spontaneous conversation, it soon becomes serviceable once the learner has the opportunity to use the L2” (p. 16).

Influence of the first language: This is an indicator of weak second language acquisition especially when the language performer uses L1 to substitute the production of utterances in the target language due to the lack of enough L2 (Krashen, 1988). This fact is often found in foreign language situations, as opposed to second language ones where opportunities for real communication are fewer.

Finally, *motivation to learn a second language:* For Ellis (2008) there is no doubt that motivation is a powerful factor in second language acquisition. Moreover, foreign language classrooms have not always been the best place for meaningful learning due to lack of motivation and the low importance foreign language students give to learning English and the target language (Brown, 2007). This directly affects their motivation to learn a second language. “The extent of this communicative need depends to a considerable extent on the nature of the social community in which the person lives” where “the language has no established functions inside the learner’s community but will be used mainly for communicating with outsiders” (Littlewood, 2006, p. 54). Dornyei’s work on language learning and motivation (2008, 1998, 2007, Cheng & Dornyei, 2007) show that motivation is a central part in achieving second language proficiency which is framed by the language learners’ context for learning, students’ attitudes, and teachers’ use of strategies.

Concluding, a description of the EFL status of English language teaching in Chile was presented together with the main characteristics of teaching English as a foreign language.

Aspects such as language acquisition and learning, formal and informal language learning environments, influence of the mother tongue, and motivation were exposed.

Having described the main features of foreign language learning, such as the case of Chile, it is relevant for this study to describe how the fields of volunteering and English language teaching intertwine, given that the trend of teaching English voluntarily in Chile has increased since the National Volunteer Centre created the program to teach in public schools in 2004 (NVC, 2012).

Volunteerism and English Language Teaching (ELT)

Due to globalization and the spread of the English language, a new perspective has been given to volunteerism. For Crystal (2005) learning a foreign language today is not a privilege of a small group of people who can afford studying it. However, in third world countries and developing countries, learning English is still a benefit for those who are able to pay (Kenning, 2009). Volunteer English teaching has become a trend that “takes a variety of forms, from supporting teachers in the classroom, through providing general assistance outside class by producing handouts, having informal conversations with students, and taking part in sport and/or extracurricular activities” (Kenning, 2009, p. 38). No matter the form this trend takes, no matter the teaching experience they have, volunteers will find themselves teaching in a variety of foreign language contexts where various levels of proficiency will be encountered (Kenning, 2009).

As previously mentioned in the Statement of the Problem, one of the difficulties encountered during this lit research was that there are very few studies where volunteering and English language teaching converge. In the mid 60’s, Deutchman (1966) described the problems

volunteers had to cope with when teaching abroad as a Peace Corps participant. Still related to what volunteers face nowadays, at that time he was able to give an account of the challenges volunteers face. The main difficulties described by Deutchman (1966) refer to are: the different expectations volunteers had about teaching and what was expected of them at Peace Corps; teachers' lack of teaching experience and their feeling of not being qualified enough to teach led to cross cultural barriers and finally, classroom discipline overwhelmed the majority of teachers as their pre-conceived ideas of teaching did not match their former experiences in America. These challenges provoked conflicts with their colleagues and superiors in that volunteers boasted around (p. 76) the superiority of their teaching methods or they became a threat to traditional local teachers because they had a deep interest in their students as human beings. Ultimately, a lack of a structured work plan at schools meant that volunteers used only a part of their normal work week. However, at Peace Corps conferences returning volunteers were asked if they contributed to the development of the country where they worked. A vast number of them replied affirmatively (Deutchman, 1966). Critically, Deutchman concludes that despite the lack of teaching experience, "volunteers are *at least* doing acceptable jobs". "All in all, one has the general feeling that inexperienced college graduates with commitment and enthusiasm are performing as well as if not better than experienced but often unmotivated host country teachers" (Deutchman, 1966, p. 79).

Similarly, Burnley (1997) describes his experience teaching English in Russia and the obstacles he faced when teaching in a traditional context as a Peace Corps volunteer. His frustrations were mainly related to how different it is to teach English in a traditional EFL context compared to the training he received as an ESL instructor. From the literature studied, Burnley is the only one who refers to English language teaching as such and how he had to find

ways of moving from a traditional grammar based approach to a contextualized grammar one that proved to be successful with students and his Russian colleagues. In 2001, Myers' PhD dissertation examined Peace Corps volunteers' teaching experiences abroad and the influence these experiences had in the teachers' current teaching practices when they went back to teach in the USA. Through the interaction with former Peace Corps volunteers, she found out that cross cultural teaching experiences changed teachers' views on teaching and improved their work in the classrooms.

More recently, Kenning (2009), states that globalization, the spread of the English language, the need of people to learn English to obtain better job opportunities and access to information, the development of ICT, as well as the inequities between those who can afford learning English and those who cannot, have increased volunteer recruitment around the world. Based on her experience of teaching English in a rural school in Cambodia, she stated that volunteer teachers confronted difficult working conditions. "Formal English language teaching in rural areas is likely to take place in buildings with poor lighting (making it difficult to see in the evening) and poor sound proofing (making it difficult to hear when it rains)" (Kenning, 2009, p. 38). Other challenges encountered are the lack of facilities in the classroom, the little availability of teaching resources, and the students' exposure to the written language mainly given by the teacher and the course book, whereas exposure to spoken language is delimited by teacher talk.

Likewise, Myers (2001) examined environmental constraints of returned Peace Corps volunteer teachers. She expressed that "many educational environments for Peace Corps volunteers involve adapting to a new culture, a new location, different disciplinary practices, harsh climate, and the ability to cope with a lack of resources, including everything from

electricity to textbooks, chalkboards, desks, writing utensils, and other tools and materials for learning" (p.10). This implies that volunteer teachers must be resourceful. Former JET program volunteers recall working with school children in Japan, and highlight the importance of participating in extracurricular activities, and to how communication can bring people together (Beale, 2012). The volunteers also state the importance of cross cultural understanding and the use of nonverbal forms to communicate in the community (Eastman, 2011). Interestingly, Yip (2010) provides more details about her experience teaching English in Japan. She recalls she was placed in an academic school where it was important to teach English in a formal manner. She refers to how she trained her students by giving speeches herself and by asking learners to give speeches on topics of interest. Exchanges between Japanese students with pen pals in the UK also helped them a lot to increase motivation.

In addition, Kenning (2009) elaborates on the role of the volunteer teacher who is asked to give students additional exposure to spoken English and to interact with students in order to build their self-confidence. This role assigned to the volunteer will change from class to class according to other factors such as their personality, their teaching skills, the students' level of English, or the host teacher's capacity and willingness to take advantage of presence of volunteer teachers. In terms of classroom work, volunteer teachers are required to introduce themselves, read English texts and dialogues aloud, help the teacher by providing language examples, participate in role-plays with the teacher, assist students with exercises, give students feedback, and to prepare games and sing in class (Kenning, 2009).

In order to enhance the impact of volunteers in this type of teaching contexts, Kenning suggests the following: bring and laminate some personal material like family photos in order to deal with the lack of class materials; leave some of these photos to future volunteers for them to

use with students in description games (through this, they will recognize their former teacher who once was part of the learners' life experience), use current technology such as MP3 to do audio recordings; make the English language more meaningful to the students' reality; and finally, volunteers should continue offering assistance after the teaching experience using new online technologies.

In summary, three domains were reviewed in this chapter: volunteerism, ELT and volunteerism, and ELT. We have learned that volunteerism is an altruist action that involves helping others and which benefits society and individuals who decide to embark in this activity (Jedlicka, 1990; UNV, 2009). Musick and Wilson (2008) define diverse motives for taking volunteer action such as *values, enhancement, social, career, protective, and understanding*.

We have learned also that it is important to differentiate ESL and EFL teaching. For the purposes of this study and because of the context in which this research takes place, the main features of EFL were described: English language teaching in foreign countries is directly affected by the status the target language has in the society and the context in which this occurs affects the opportunities learners have to use the language. In EFL contexts English is learnt formally and consciously and the proficiency language learners gain is affected by the artificial settings provided by formal classroom environments. Language proficiency in English is conditioned by the use of the L1 in monolingual countries as students make use of the mother tongue to produce utterances due to lack of enough L2. Lastly, motivation to learn a second language is decreased in foreign language contexts as learners do not see a real need to use the target language outside the classroom (Block, 2003; Brown, 2007; Harmer, 2007; Krashen, 1988; Littlewood, 2006; Ellis, 2008; Dornyei, 2007).

Finally, we have learned that the existing literature in the field of volunteerism and ELT is not extensive and is mainly based on personal experiences reported by former volunteers who have worked for institutions such as Peace Corps or the JET program (Myers, 2001; Burnley, 1997; Beale, 2012 & Yip, 2010). Specific studies (Myers, 2001) account for teaching English in rural areas and the difficulties of working in certain conditions where there is a lack of facilities and resources. In other studies, the roles of the volunteer teacher are described and tips for future participants are provided (Kenning, 2009), and Deutchman (1966) describes the cultural difficulties faced when being an inexperienced teacher.

The current existing literature in English language teaching and volunteerism is relevant for this research but it is not sustained by an in depth study in the field. The purpose of this research is to describe how a group of volunteer teachers experience teaching English in a foreign country and how their experiences shape their understanding of teaching. My study will add to knowledge base on the English teaching experiences in a country like Chile. Besides, this research goes beyond cultural experiences gained after teaching abroad as this examines the volunteers' language learning experiences, their own language teaching experiences, their beliefs about language teaching after working in public schools, how their expectations about teaching were reinforced, changed or unfulfilled, and how these experiences shaped their understanding of teaching.

Conceptual Framework

The main concepts and key factors that frame my investigation will be determined. Given the main aim of this study is to describe how a group of English speaking volunteers experience

teaching English in Chile and how their experiences determine their understanding of teaching, I will, first, situate my work within the social constructivist and experiential paradigm.

Very few volunteers who decide to enroll in various teaching programs around the world have some sort of previous teaching experience. Most of them are university or college students who volunteer for the first time and teach their mother tongue for the first time too (Yip, 2010; Eastman 2011; Beale, 2012). As a result of being immersed in a specific social educational context and interacting with students, host teachers, the school community and their host families, they undergo diverse experiences and start developing their own ideas of what teaching is like. The social constructivist paradigm shares Vygotsky's belief of knowledge construction as co-construction that occurs in a common cultural space (Bodrova, 2003). This research is shaped by the *social constructivist* lens (Creswell, 2007) in which the context and social interactions form the base of the human condition (Glassman, 2001). Under this paradigm, people seek understanding of the world where they live and work (Creswell, 2007) and develop varied and numerous subjective meanings of their experiences by interacting with others. In other words, human beings are essentially social beings who develop themselves as individuals through their relationship with others (Glassman, 2001). In this world view "the creation of knowledge cannot be separated from the social environment in which it is formed" (Adams, 2006, p. 246).

For many novice volunteer teachers travelling abroad, living in a different cultural community and teaching their mother tongue is a new experience that allows them to observe, think, make decisions on how to deal with traditional local teaching practices, to modify them to make the most of English teaching, and to learn what teaching is like (Burnley, 1997). Dewey's *principles of experience* have also helped me to frame this study. Dewey advocated for a new progressive education that considered personal experience one of its main goals. According to

him, “experience is a moving force” that does not evolve inside a person alone as it “influences the formation of attitudes of desire and purpose” (Dewey, 1938, p. 39). To Dewey, “every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had” (p. 39).

The fact of making use of the *physical* and *social* surroundings and extracting what they can offer us, contribute to constructing worthwhile experiences (Dewey, 1938). Each novice teacher in Chile is placed in a public school throughout different regions in the country to assist local teachers of English and students from different grades. How beneficial the volunteers’ experiences are? They will be influenced by each school context, situation and the interactions occurring in those places. These experiences affect their future teaching experiences and shape their understanding of the act of teaching. That is why Dewey’s principles of *interaction* and *continuity* are relevant for this research. On the one hand, the concept of interaction implies that past experiences interact with circumstances present in a given situation shaping each individual’s present experiences. On the other, the principle of continuity means that all experiences influence future ones. Both concepts are not independent of each other (Dewey, 1938). For Dewey,

an experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, whether the latter consists of persons with whom he is talking about some topic, the subject talked about being also part of the situation.
(Dewey, 1938, pp. 43-44)

Volunteers have different reasons for deciding to participate in altruist activities (Musick & Wilson, 2008) and those reasons are in direct relation with the context in which the volunteer action takes place, so determining the intentions volunteers have when deciding to teach English abroad in an EFL environment are relevant for this study because they condition

their experiences. I opted for Musick and Wilson's description of functional reasons to volunteer because it offered me clear definitions and guiding principles developed from research that could be applied to my study. To Musick and Wilson one single volunteering act can help "meet several different needs" (p. 57) so their model is open to more than one motif to act voluntarily and it proves to be more flexible at the time of identifying reasons for volunteering.

Concluding, apart from being little explored, the existing literature in the field of volunteering and ELT lacks formality and provides mainly information related to experiences that result from cultural challenges and very little is informed about English language teaching. Given the gap in the literature in the field of volunteerism in EFL, the intend of this study is to describe how a group of English speaking volunteers experience teaching English in Chile and how their experiences determine their understanding of teaching. So the main concepts that guide this research are:

- Volunteers have different expectations about the teaching context, about what to teach, and about what challenges to find before working in schools. This means that after going through the experience these expectations can be confirmed, modified, or unfulfilled (Deutchman, 1966).
- Volunteers live different experiences depending on the context where they teach and their motives to volunteer. Even though novice teachers are mainly placed in public schools, they differ in terms of infrastructure and facilities affecting the teaching experience (Kenning, 2009). As Chile is a Spanish speaking country, volunteers' main motives to volunteer are related to learning about another culture and improving this language. This last point also influences their teaching experience as novice teachers face

communication constrains with foreign language learners who do not speak English at all (Beale, 2012; Eastman, 2011; Yip, 2010).

- Volunteers' experiences and challenges faced when teaching are determined by the EFL role English is given in a foreign country. Teaching English in contexts where this language has a foreign status is characterized by being learnt formally in a classroom setting, by being controlled by the teacher who pays attention to formal aspects of the language, by the use of L1 when learners lack enough L2 to communicate, and by having less motivated students who study it (Block, 2003; Brown, 2007; Dornyei, 2008; Krashen, 1998; Littlewood, 2006).
- Volunteers' interaction with students, teachers, and the school community in general shape their teaching experiences (Creswell, 2007). Having the need to spend time with students and teachers in different public schools with different levels of English and diverse attitudes towards learning and teaching the language expose volunteers to situations in which teaching English becomes facilitated or complicated. Classroom management issues, frustration for not being able to innovate, and lack of teaching experience shape the volunteers' participation in the classroom (Burnley, 1997; Deutchman, 1966).
- Volunteers' teaching experiences shape their future understanding of teaching English allowing them to explain what teaching English is like and to make recommendations to future volunteers. Most volunteers are not teachers so going through the teaching process and after recalling their experiences they understand what teaching implies, they can refer to the challenges of teaching a foreign language, they can refer to the activities and

strategies used, and to how pedagogically resourceful they became (Dewey, 1938; Kenning, 2009; Myers, 2001).

As a conclusion, Vygotsky and Dewey's (1938) socio constructivist experiential lens together with Musick and Wilson's (2008) description of reasons to volunteer, and the features determined when teaching English as a foreign language (Block, 2003; Brown, 2007; Dornyei, 2007; Krashen, 1988) will help to determine how volunteers experience teaching in a foreign country, how these experiences shape their understanding of teaching, and will allow me to contribute to the EFL field by providing volunteer English teaching experiences based on the Chilean context.

Summarizing, this chapter contains a revision of the literature in the domains of volunteerism, ELT, and volunteerism and ELT, as well as a description of the main concepts that frame this study in the socio constructivist and experiential lens.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I intend to clarify the steps taken during the research process. A description of the research design, the selection of the participants, the interview strategies, the methods for collecting data, and the strategies for data analysis, all related to my research question and theoretical framework, will be provided.

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to examine how a group of novice volunteer teachers describe their experiences in a foreign context like the Chilean one and how these experiences frame their understanding of teaching. In order to study the way in which English speaking volunteer teachers experience and develop their understanding of the teaching of a language in a foreign country, I opted for a *qualitative* research design.

One of the ways of carrying out a qualitative study is through a case study (Yin, 2009). According to Creswell (2007), a case study is a “methodology, a type of design or an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry” (p.73). Other experts in the field of qualitative research refer to the case study as “an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community” (Merriam, 2002, p. 8). A case study allows the researcher to focus on an issue that is illustrated through a bounded case (Stake, 1995).

Interviews are a case study data collection strategy that allows the researcher to clarify the process of inquiry (Yin, 2009). So as to answer my research questions: *How does a group of English speaking volunteers describe their experiences teaching English in a foreign country?*

and *How do these experiences shape their understanding of teaching?* I interviewed participants so that through my interaction with them, they would recall their teaching experiences in Chile and provide me with in-depth data about English language teaching as a novice teacher. Talking to volunteers showed me that experiencing teaching abroad and through the social interaction with students, host teachers, and the community in which they were placed, they were able to construct knowledge about something they had never done before: teach their own mother tongue.

Participants and Recruitment

Volunteers who join the volunteer program from the Chilean Ministry of Education must "be native or near-native English speakers; have completed a bachelor's degree from an accredited university and be aged 21 and 35 years old; be mentally and physically capable of teaching children; have experience living or travelling in another country; have interest in the Chilean culture and in living in a developing country; be highly committed, responsible, and flexible; and have access to sufficient funds to cover personal expenditures throughout the duration of the program" (NVC, 2012, para 9). The program does not require teachers to have some ESL or EFL teaching experience. However, having a TESOL degree or some kind of teaching practical knowledge can be considered a plus.

In March 2010, 123 volunteers arrived in Santiago for the orientation week. I asked for formal permission to carry out the study to the NVC Coordinator at the time and later got the official permission (see Appendix E and F for request for doing the research and official access). I was given the opportunity to meet all of them during the orientation and training session that the National Volunteer Centre organizes before the teaching experience. I distributed to all of

volunteers a questionnaire (see Appendix G for open ended questionnaire) in order to obtain specific demographic data (see table below). This data showed that all volunteers were university or college students who were pursuing a degree in diverse domains such as Political sciences, International development, Philosophy, Anthropology and Geography, English literature, Spanish and journalism among others.

The demographic data obtained has been summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. Summarized demographic data (questionnaires)

Age	75% 22 – 25 years old 25% 18 – 21 years old
Sex	69% female 31% male
Country	81% USA 12% Canada 7% Other (UK, Australia, Brazil, Luxemburg)
Teaching experience	70% no previous teaching experience 30% (sports coach, substitute teacher, summer camp tutor, college or high school tutor, ESL tutor, teacher assistant)

In terms of their first language, 91% of the volunteers' spoke English as their mother tongue. The other languages volunteers spoke as their L1 were French, Spanish, Korean, Portuguese, German, Mandarin, and Kurdish. Regarding their second language, teachers' L2 was primarily Spanish and French. Extended demographic information about the volunteers is presented in the Findings chapter.

Data collection Instruments and Procedures

Data Collection Instruments

The data collected for this study took place in two phases. With the aim of obtaining in-depth pertinent information of volunteer teachers' experiences when teaching English in a foreign county, I used two data sources appropriate for a case study: *open-ended questionnaires* (used in phase one of the data collection process) and *one-on-one interviews* (used in phase two) (Creswell, 2008). These instruments permitted me to obtain some demographic information such as age, sex, years of teaching experience, nationality, first and second language spoken, motives for volunteering, and expectations. I also gathered background information from the volunteers so as to answer my research questions. They provided information about their expectations before teaching, their teaching experiences in public schools in Chile, the activities and strategies used for teaching English, reasons for volunteering, and about their understanding of their lived experience of teaching.

Instruments with *open-ended questions* require the participant to produce a response rather than selecting options given by the designer (Colton & Covert, 2007). These types of instruments are helpful when the response domain is unknown or when in-depth data about a specific subject is desired. Open-ended questions are relevant means of data collection to evoke the participants' feelings, ideas, or explanations of given events as well as rendering "much more detail and much richer descriptions, primarily because the respondent or observer is able to answer in his or her own words and is not limited to predetermined choices" (Colton & Covert, 2007, p. 228). With regard to this study, I designed the open-ended questionnaire keeping in mind my research paradigm. The socio constructivist and experiential paradigm allowed me to

find out information about volunteers' motives for embarking on this teaching experience in Chile under the NVC program, their previous teaching experiences, and their expectations prior to working as teacher assistants. All this data was relevant because it granted me the opportunity to modify the interview protocol for the one-on-one interview stage. The main modifications were related to the type of questions asked later in the interviews. I could obtain in depth information about their reasons for volunteering, their expectations about the teaching process, their previous teaching experiences, how these previous experiences helped them to teach English, the teaching strategies they used, and the contents they had to teach in English.

An interview is a “specific form of conversation where knowledge is produced through the interaction between an interviewer and the interviewee” (Kvale, 2007, p.1). Conversation, as a basic form of human interaction, allows us to know people and to learn about their experiences and feelings at work, at school, and within their social and family life (Kvale, 2007). Basically, the interview is used to obtain “descriptive data in the subjects’ own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world” (Biklen, 1992, p. 96). This study’s reliance on interviews is purposeful in that they provided me with detailed information on the volunteers' experiences and I was able to explore an area in the field that has been the subject of little research: volunteerism and English language teaching.

One-on-one interviews are conducted with individual participants at a time. In this process, the researcher asks questions and records the answers of one respondent in each occasion (Creswell, 2008). Given the nature of this study, this method of data collection was “ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably” (p. 226). The responses obtained through the open-ended questionnaire gave me hints to adapt some of the original interview questions I had designed. The volunteers’

responses about their expectations before teaching and about their previous teaching experiences made me decide to include questions about how their previous teaching experiences affected their teaching practices in the classroom and whether they confirmed their expectations after the English teaching experience in Chilean public schools. I first designed an interview protocol having in mind my conceptual framework, including questions such as: Why did you enter this volunteer program? What teaching background do you have? How did it influence your teaching experience? What were your expectations before going to school? Did your expectations change or remained the same? What was English teaching like? What teaching strategies did you use? etc.

Data Collection Procedures

As previously mentioned, the data gathered via the instruments described above, was obtained in two phases: *before* the volunteer teaching experience and *after* the teaching field experience. The decision of giving the questionnaires before the volunteers started teaching was basically to use them as a benchmark against which I could start studying their experiences about teaching English in a foreign country. Both instruments complemented each other in the sense that the responses allowed me to design the interview protocol and gave me some hints on what teaching experiences I could later study in depth (see Appendix H for interview protocol).

Initially, the open-ended questionnaires were given to 123 volunteers during their orientation week before starting to teach in public and semi-private schools in Chile. I was not granted permission to access volunteers and to have their contact emails, so they gave their consent to respond the questionnaires via email to the NVC coordinator who contacted them before starting the training course in Santiago. I got 123 responded questionnaires back. During

this week, teachers received basic training on how to teach English in a foreign context, how to plan lessons, and they studied the manual where they can find tips and activities, and watch videos with testimonials from former volunteers. On that occasion, I was also able to meet the participants, obtain demographic data, and invite them to be interviewed after their teaching experience.

The questionnaires took the respondents approximately 45 minutes and they were given a number to respect confidentiality. The data was saved in computer files created for this purpose and were secured with passwords. Only the research supervisor and I have access to the data.

In the second data collection phase I interviewed volunteer teachers once they had finished teaching. I sent an invitation via the NVC recruiting coordinator (see Appendix I for invitation). Later, 20 interested participants contacted me via email and we agreed on a convenient date and place for them to meet. I did need to have interviews done shortly as many of them left the country the day after the interviews. From the beginning, it was made clear that their participation was completely voluntary, they would not be harmed during the process, and their identities would remain absolutely confidential. Participants who volunteered to be interviewed were asked to contact me via email before returning to their native or home countries. Before starting the interviews, I handed the volunteers a letter of consent which was read and signed by them (see Appendix J for letter of consent). Also, I created an interview checklist in order to tick the questions I asked the participants not to leave any topics related to teaching English out (see Appendix K for interview check list).

The interviews took between 45 minutes and some a bit longer than one hour depending on how talkative the volunteers were, how well they recalled their teaching experiences, and on how much time they had to be interviewed. I adapted myself to their time and requirements.

Some of the volunteers asked me to interview them in the hostel paid by the Chilean government where they lived once their postings concluded. I invited others to meet at a well-known café. This idea was really appreciated because, as volunteers said, they hadn't had a decent cup of coffee for months. It was interesting to notice that all interviewed teachers were very curious about the results of this study and asked me to send them the final work. For the interviews, I used a digital audio recorder and took notes in case the recording machine failed. Once the data was collected, I transcribed the information and with the help of a native English speaker I made sure I had done it correctly. This data has also been saved and secured in files created to keep it protected.

From the 20 interviews carried out, 8 participants were selected for this case study because their responses represented the English teaching experiences I wanted to examine. For example, in the interviews they recalled a lot of information about their reasons to volunteer, their experiences teaching in public schools, their interaction with students and their host teachers, the teaching strategies and activities they used to teach English, and their beliefs about teaching English after going through the experience. This data helped me to respond the research questions: *How does a group of volunteer English speaking teachers experience teaching English in a foreign country? How do these experiences shape their understanding of teaching?* and to contribute to fill in the gap of the existing literature by providing information coming from the interaction with volunteers who had worked in the Chilean context.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the systematic process of seeking and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials accumulated in order to develop an understanding of the data obtained, and to be able to present it to others in the field (Biklen, 1992).

The data gathered in this qualitative research came from the responses to the open-ended questionnaires and the transcribed interviews. I began the data analysis stage simultaneously. This granted me the chance to examine the themes that came out from the responses of the participants (Creswell, 2008). Merriam (2002), states that “simultaneous data collection and analysis allows the researcher to make adjustments along the way, even to the point of redirecting the data collection, and to “test” emerging concepts, themes and categories against subsequent data” (p. 14).

With the data analyzed with the 2010 Nvivo software I started to extract the most relevant themes and patterns. After reading and re reading the data, I was able to code it into categories and obtain main findings and secondary ones. The findings were classified into categories of experiences and I complemented them with the corresponding citations obtained from the participants that best illustrated the themes.

In summary, the research method was the typical one carried out in a case study. First, participants were contacted through the recruiting coordinator of the National Volunteer Centre. Then, volunteers participated in an orientation week in Santiago where I was given the opportunity to meet them, hand them in an open-ended questionnaire to collect demographic data, and invite them to participate in an interview months later when they had finished teaching in public schools. When teachers finished working in the schools some of them got back to me

via email and offered to be interviewed. The data I collected through the questionnaires allowed me to frame the questions of my interview protocol. The testimonials gathered through the face to face interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the 2010 Nvivo software. After that I studied the patterns and themes that emerged from the data, and I was able to obtain first and secondary findings based on the volunteers' teaching English experiences in Chile. Those findings were classified into categories of experiences and were illustrated with citations acquired from the interaction and conversations with the novice teachers.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will present the findings and discussion in response to my research questions: *How does a group of English speaking volunteers experience teaching English in a foreign country? How do these experiences shape their understanding of teaching?*

Findings

As it was explained previously, the data in this case study was obtained in two phases. In phase one, volunteers were given an open-ended questionnaire and in phase two interested volunteers participated in an interview carried out when they finished teaching and were returning to their home countries. In this chapter I will present the findings and discussion in response to the research questions that sustain this study: *How does a group of English speaking volunteers experience teaching English in a foreign country? How do these experiences shape their understanding of teaching?*

First some demographic data obtained will be presented and then the most relevant experiences voiced by volunteers during the data collection interview process will be described and exemplified with citations.

Demographic Data

Table 2 summarizes the demographic data obtained through the questionnaires' responses and the selected interviewed volunteers.

Table 2. Summarized demographic data (questionnaires and interviews)

	Questionnaires (123 volunteers)	Selected interviews (8 volunteers)
Age	75% 22 – 25 years old 25% 18 – 21 years old	75% 22 – 25 years old 25% 18 – 21 years old
Sex	69% female 31% male	50% female 50% male
Country	81% USA 12% Canada 7% Other (UK, Australia, Brazil, Luxemburg)	6 Americans (75%) 1 Canadian (12.5%) 1 Australian (12.5%)
Teaching experience	70% no previous teaching experience 30% some kind of teaching experience (sports coach, substitute teacher, summer camp tutor, college or high school tutor, ESL tutor, teacher assistant)	40% no teaching experience 60% some kind of teaching experience (tutored refugees, worked in summer camps, taught one on one lessons, worked as TAs at the university, and very few had done some teaching abroad)
First language	91% English 9% Other (French, Spanish, Korean, Portuguese)	100% English
Second language	51% Spanish 14% French 9% no second language 26% Other (Italian, German, Portuguese, Mandarin)	75% Spanish 25% French

As described earlier, volunteers were placed in different regions of Chile and in different schools. Sixty seven percent of interviewed teachers taught in secondary schools and thirty three percent worked with elementary school students. Besides, sixty two percent volunteered in public schools and thirty eight percent taught in semi-private ones.

When asked how they learnt about the National Volunteer Centre program the main reasons given were: first, through internet search; second, through their university; publicity; and through friends. Considering the vast amount of teaching abroad opportunities, volunteers were asked why they chose Chile. The reasons they provided were, first, their desire to travel to South

America; second, because of friendship connections and the ease of the opportunity; third, due to their positive perception of the Chilean society; and fourth because they had come to Chile before or they had previous references.

With regards to their reasons for volunteering, interviewed novice teachers evoked: improve my Spanish (21%); learn about a different culture (21%); for personal growth (16%); previous references (16%); experience teaching (11%); the NVC program was suitable (5%); been to Chile before (5%); no specific reason (5%).

Very few volunteers seemed to be aware of the Chilean school context and most knew very little about the educational system in Chile. I next asked the volunteers what they expected from this teaching experience. Their expectations were categorized in three parts:

Expectations about the schools in Chile: volunteers expected to find more motivated students (7 participants); discipline problems (6 participants); students with higher level of English (5 participants); a different type of school (3 participants) welcoming and friendly people (1 participant); very few resources at school (1 participant); and large classes and lack of organization (1 participant).

Expectations about what to teach: novice teachers expected to teach listening and speaking (8 participants); basic everyday English (5 participants); grammar and structures (3 participants); topics related to the students' interests (4 participants); their own culture (3 participants); games (2 participants); and songs (2 participants).

Anticipated challenges: volunteers expected to face discipline and misbehavior problems (7 participants); minimal level of English (6 participants); language barriers (4 participants); lack of

student motivation (4 participants); troubles with lesson planning (2 participants); and maintaining students' interest and attention (1 participant).

Summarizing, the demographic data was obtained by the application of the questionnaires given to volunteers before teaching and by the interviews carried out after the teaching experience. Information was gathered about the volunteers' age, sex, country, teaching experience, first and second languages spoken, and what they expected to find in Chilean schools, what they expected to teach, and anticipated challenges.

Salient English Teaching Experiences

Having in mind the conceptual framework guiding this study, I looked for emerging themes that illustrated the socio constructivist and experiential worldview I adopted. As I worked for the National Volunteer Centre in Ottawa in 2008, and based on my experience teaching EFL in Chile for 20 years, I was interested in knowing what teaching English was like for someone who was not trained as a teacher of English and who hasn't received formal instruction. It was important to me to examine experiences from volunteers that showed that their understanding of English language teaching was shaped by their interaction with students and teachers in the community where they taught (Dewey, 1938; Creswell, 2007). Volunteers' experiences when teaching are influenced by their motives to volunteer (Musick & Wilson, 2008), the characteristics of an EFL context (Block, 2003, Brown, 2007), and the status the English language has in the foreign country (Kenning, 2009).

The most prominent categories obtained after interacting with volunteers once they finished working at schools will now be highlighted. With the aim of exemplifying these categories, I cite salient statements from the teachers. The most noteworthy categories

experienced by the volunteers who taught in Chile are classified by order of importance according to the frequency of experiences obtained after analyzing the transcriptions with the Nvivo software:

- Language learning experiences
- Language teaching experiences
- Challenges during the experience
- General learning experiences
- Volunteering experience

Some of these categories resulted to be learning experiences related to the fact of teaching EFL and to realizing that teaching goes beyond the mere act of instructing people to learn a foreign language.

Language Learning Experiences

Working as teachers of English in Chile, made volunteers reflect on their *own process of learning a second language* by being immersed in a Spanish speaking context. English native speakers stated that the main reason for joining this program was the opportunity to learn or improve their Spanish. Krashen's idea of learning a second language in natural environments as extensive exposure (Krashen, 1988) was shared by three volunteers who thought about the importance of being immersed in a country where the target language is spoken. One of them explained that his comprehension skills and fluency improved considerably making him feel good: "I wouldn't say my pronunciation is necessarily better. My comprehension is better and my fluency. Not necessarily things like grammatically correct, but I can get by in situations which are nice. I was always proud that I could have a good conversation with the "colectivo" driver. I always felt good about myself". He also added,

“being in Iquique helped too because it’s a very Chilean city. It’s not a big tourist destination. So you’re around wherever you go, whether with your family or with another volunteer’s host family, everyone speaking Spanish and I think being immersed for me that was the most important thing, because otherwise you wouldn’t really have the opportunity”.

Another volunteer shared the same vision of the importance of immersion in a second language. However it is interesting to see that her language proficiency level allowed her to teach English using L2:

“Just by being surrounded, by being forced to speak the language to survive this culture in another country. Obviously you have to learn the language and speak it and I was speaking it every day with my host family, with my teachers at school, in the classroom. I had to use it sometimes to explain the rules or something and my Spanish just dramatically improved”

A third volunteer made reference to her personal feelings about being surrounded by Spanish, the difficulties she had, and what she learned: “I came here. The first week in Santiago was terrible because I thought I’d ... I’d had taken Spanish about a year before and I thought I knew it decently. But speaking, you’re just sort of stumbling over your words and I feel very comfortable speaking now with my family. You’re conversing so much, you learn, you learn conversational Spanish”.

A second aspect related to the volunteers’ *language learning experience* has to do with *teaching another language*. One volunteer affirmed that teaching a language can be “boring” as long as it is not connected to the act of communicating and doing things with the language. The problem in Chile is the formality with which English is taught in the classroom by means of using a textbook, memorization, and learning rules (Matear, 2008). This can be connected to the

concept of *formal* or artificial language learning settings discussed in the literature review which are typically related to foreign classroom contexts, to the explicit presentation of rules, to the presence of error correction, and the lack of opportunities to offer foreign language learners (Block, 2003; Littlewood, 2006). One volunteer referred to this as follows:

“I think teaching a language is boring. That’s my first likebut it can be interesting because I think learning English can be interesting because it is about communication. Like for me, learning Spanish is really exciting because I can do things with it and ask for a cake and people can give me a cake. I think it’s very exciting when I can do that. But the average, like learning a language in the classroom with a textbook ... it’s difficult because it’s about memorization and learning rules, and it’s kind of boring because there’s not much to do”.

Language Teaching Experiences

Once the teaching experience finished, novice teachers made comments about the following aspects of EFL. These comments were classified into the following themes: *teaching strategies; language activities; the nature of language; language teaching material; and students learning a second language.*

(a) *Teaching strategies:* three interviewed volunteers said that their approach to language teaching came from two main sources: the way in which they learnt Spanish or French at school by using contrastive analysis and by recalling their previous background knowledge as students, and through the suggestions and tips they extracted from the manual they received during the orientation week. The manual proposed using a communicative approach. Some teachers said,

“I used different strategies to explain different things but what I tried to do most often was try to establish parallels to Spanish, so they can try some sort of analogy from what they know already

to something they are learning, for example, verb conjugation, how I learnt Spanish. So you have to write out and make a little grid with six cells: yo soy; tu eres”.

“They did some pretty good like, teaching us strategies to learn and they were useful because if I didn’t know them, it’s like ... you’re not born to teach you are not born a teacher. So this type of strategy was helpful, for sure. Otherwise, I cannot teach a class the way I teach basketball!”

“Not grammar. We were meant to encourage conversation. That was the idea and everyone told us we ought to ...”

The role of host teachers at the schools did not seem to be very helpful in showcasing strategies to teach the language. Three volunteer teachers noted this. One of them confided that his host teacher was pregnant and didn’t feel very well during his stay at school so she left the volunteer on her own. Another Chilean teacher was about to retire so her mind was focused on her life after teaching; and there was a newly graduate host teacher of English who was tentative about teaching. Only one volunteer teacher said his host teacher was used to working with volunteers from the NVC program and designed a co-teaching working plan where the English native teacher was given similar responsibilities in the classroom. She really appreciated this type of work.

(b) Language activities: the language activities used by the interviewed volunteers were aimed mainly at having students interact in pairs or groups. Volunteers also tried to provide students with authentic material taken from internet and related to what students enjoyed most. They stated that the activities were taken from the manual, from the internet, made up by themselves, or things they did at school when learning a second language. Teachers used activities that

targeted English pronunciation, development of conversational skills, and listening comprehension. The most frequently used activities were categorized as follows:

- Competitive games that implied getting a prize to increase “motivation” (21%)
- Listening to songs and understanding the lyrics by establishing connections to the students’ personal lives (14%)
- Tongue twisters plus repetition drills (15%)
- Use of music to teach culture (10%)

The other 40% of the activities used were varied, such as: Language games (the telephone, hangman, find someone who, or Pictionary), karaoke, group and pair work, conversation cards for interaction, use of flashcards and real objects (realia) for descriptions, teaching slangs and idioms plus repetition and translation, asking every class personal questions, watching You Tube video clips and movie trailers plus comprehension questions, drawing and acting out, interviewing people outside the school, debating and blogging, labeling activities, practicing dialogs, and using contrastive analysis to deal with structures.

(c) The nature of language: English volunteers became aware of formal aspects of their native language. In terms of syntax, most of the volunteers agree that learning a second language is not about learning grammar, especially when they have to connect it to pronunciation. Vocabulary plays an important role to some volunteers. Four participants declared to have taught a lot of vocabulary, to ask students to apply the words, and to drill and model students’ pronunciation of words.

“I wouldn’t be able to. I’m not a grammar person and English grammar is pretty hard. Spelling because nothing sounds the way it’s written. If I had to teach vocabulary and grammar, probably I wouldn’t apply the program ... if it wasn’t for speaking!”

“We did a lot of vocabulary. Some of the 5th grade book does a lot of classroom objects, places in the class. I generally used trying these pictures”.

“Vocabulary had to be ... it couldn’t just be written down because otherwise students wouldn’t do it. I had physical descriptions of tall, thin, short. I put those up on the board but I also had students like, pick up which one applied to them. So once they were doing something with it, or describe a friend ...”.

“So after introducing the vocabulary and doing the pronunciation, I’d first say the pronunciation. I’d say all the words and then I’d had them repeat after me”.

(d) Language teaching material: in terms of the use of teaching aids, volunteers did not refer to a type of material as being more important. Some of them did not prepare any materials at all as they were just supposed to “focus on speaking” so the board was the main element used in class. Others used online material like You Tube, short clips, and movies. One of the teachers who took a TEFL course before coming to Chile said she brought flashcards with her. She used a lot of real objects (realia), and made students make posters. The TEFL course gave this participant ideas to use other teaching strategies and tools other volunteers did not think of. Some other volunteers used the materials school students had already used in their previous English classes with their Chilean teachers.

(e) Students and language learning: this teaching experience in a monolingual country allowed novice teachers to make comments on their foreign language students. One volunteer spoke

about the difficulties Chilean students have with the speed in which the English language is spoken. Words change when they are said in context fast. She stated: “it was hard for the student and for me too, like understanding the pronunciation, being able to say, being able to break it down ... and some sounds just don’t really exist”. Another volunteer expressed his frustration with the proficiency level of certain students. He mentioned that younger learners (4th grade) knew much more than 8th graders mainly because children did want to learn English. Before starting to teach they expected students to have a low level of English. In the interview, one of the volunteers confirms this by saying that as the kids were not fluent in English she had to use Spanish to make herself understood, to give instructions and to explain content. The use of L1 is an indicator of low language level (Krashen, 1988). Finally, one teacher changed his initial view that students were unmotivated to learn English. Students really enjoyed learning the target language and he had positive reactions but, unfortunately, he had too little time to work with them before finishing the volunteer teaching experience.

Teachers also talked about their overall teaching experience. In general, they said it was a good one and they would definitely participate again. Some of the salient comments they made were:

- “The experience is about doing something new and helping to shape kids”.
- “It's about motivating learners and telling them that everything is possible”.
- “It's about how a person influences another person”.
- "I definitely learnt a lot about what I want to do after this".
- "It was an eye-opening experience, very educational for me, as much as I hope it was for the students”.
- “Chilean teachers are much more affectionate, but everyone in the school is a lot closer”.

- "I myself enjoy being creative and inventive. So in that sense just teaching a language kind of gave me an avenue to utilize my creativity, but in order to teach English you need passion".
- About less committed volunteers: "I don't think just a person who wants to come to teach English just for the opportunity to travel and I think they should meet an attitude of wanting to do this. Instead of having other motives that are more important than teaching".
- "The school is fantastic, the teachers were great. Whenever I needed help there was always a teacher there to help. So I was very lucky to have that".

Challenges during the Experience

In this study, volunteers recalled various challenges experienced during their teaching. I decided to group them into categories according to their frequency and to give them a name based on the information volunteers recalled and on the key words provided by the Nvivo software. They can be classified as follows: *classroom management and discipline; language barrier; student's language level and motivation; lesson planning; teaching English; being a teacher; activities and materials; school and host teachers; and home stay.*

(a) *Classroom management and discipline:* One of the major problems volunteers faced was the number of students in the classroom. Novice teachers described students as being energetic, rowdy, unmotivated, disrespectful, and defying authority. Volunteers were uncomfortable when students talked continuously, used their cell phones and texted in class. They hardly ever raised their hands to take turns, interrupted the class and walked around the classroom, and some yelled. During the orientation week, volunteers were told some of these behaviors would happen and were given advice from former volunteers such as giving kids choices; avoiding using

negative commands (Don't talk! Don't eat!), or waiting for them to be quiet without getting impatient. One participant referred to this as follows: "in the English Opens Doors orientation they talked about giving children choices. Instead of calling them out and being mean, like "don't talk" or something. I found that the students appreciated you more if you did that as well and they didn't necessarily think you were mean". Another one said: "I found that they, well, kind of warned us about this at the Ministry. It's gonna be louder, a bit more disorderly, students getting up, shouting at peers whenever".

Even though this seemed to be a relevant issue, some teachers took it as something challenging and appropriate, as one volunteer reported: "I thought classroom management was fine. It was actually sort of fun when the students were a bit more engaged if they were livelier. I enjoyed that more. You had to keep them in check out ... classroom management was fine".

(b) Language barrier: the non-familiarity with Spanish or not being very proficient with the community's mother tongue had some impact in the volunteers' willingness to communicate or teach. In some cases this affected teaching vocabulary because volunteers didn't have the equivalent word or couldn't make themselves understood and students misbehaved because they did not comprehend what the class was about.

(c) Student's language level and motivation: with regards to learners' level of English, volunteers never anticipated that their students' proficiency level of English and motivation would be so poor. After teaching, they realized that interaction in the target language was "low", they needed to use Spanish to understand what was being taught, or students were "very skittish or timid to speak in front of others", as one volunteer said. Concerning the learners' eagerness to learn English, two volunteers reported children were more willing to learn than pre-teens: "the 5th

graders actually, I usually spoke almost all in English and they could respond because they were much more engaged and wanted to. But the 8th graders ... was like pulling teeth"; "I think I got more frustrated with the 8th graders because at times I felt the fourth graders knew way more than they did and they've been at school for four more years. Whereas the fourth graders, like you had to go a little bit slower with them of course, but they want to learn more". Another teacher said that if students "aren't engaged then you feel you don't really feel like you're getting any results".

(d) Lesson planning: volunteers' lack of experience in lesson planning was a considerable challenge. Most of them used the format provided by the NVC manual and had a training session on planning during the orientation week but two volunteers commented that this was not enough or it was even a "joke". Another one used his past personal experience in learning a second language by imitating the planning strategy his former teacher used: planning content mixed with games and songs. Some volunteers took planning more seriously than others. While some spent a lot of time preparing lessons. One participant declared to have planned "the night before".

Novice teachers who hadn't done any planning at all found it really hard and stressful mainly because "you don't know what the students like and you like". One claimed: "I didn't know how to do a lesson ... that was extremely challenging and that was something I wasn't prepared for. I had no idea how hard that was going to be". Interestingly, two volunteers felt their classes fell flat and activities didn't work when they had not planned their lessons or their classes were "poorly planned". They gave planning the value of feeling safe and comfortable when going into the classroom. One participant said: "everybody liked to be prepared for things. I would spend a lot of time preparing every lesson and that's something, like for me, that I needed

to have to feel comfortable going into the classroom. So that was, and I stressed out. Lesson planning stressed me out because I needed that preparation. I needed to put that time into it”

(e) Teaching English: volunteers concluded that teaching one's own language can be a "fun challenge", especially because they realized there were things about English they weren't aware of or simply didn't know how to explain. Language aspects such as verb conjugations, types of nouns (countable and uncountable), simple past tense in interrogative form, and the relationship between spelling and pronunciation were not trouble-free. One participant stated: "... the best way to learn a language is to teach it but also no matter how stressed the situation ... it's best if you just remain calm". Another one said: "I myself enjoy being creative and inventive, so in that sense just teaching a language kind of gave me an avenue to utilize my creativity but in order to teach you need passion. I don't know if I can call it passion but just be there, the desire to teach”.

(f) Being a teacher: volunteers agreed that being a teacher is not easy. It implies having a well-balanced relationship with the students and dealing with the duality of the teacher's role ("you're not their friend, you're their teacher ... you don't have to be super strict, you can have fun"). A volunteer also became conscious of the fact that teachers need to be energetic and active in order to capture the students' attention, while another one said: "I have lot more respect now for the teacher, the profession because it's a judgment act. So specially just teaching a subject that many of the students are not interested in, makes it more difficult"

(g) Teaching materials: similarly to what Kenning states (2009), volunteers faced problems with resources in the schools. One teacher indicated he had prepared his lessons but at school the printer was broken, there was not ink and sometimes there wasn't electricity. The textbooks, freely provided by the Ministry of Education, were not helpful as volunteers found the books too

difficult for the students' level of English and they did not provide novice teachers with clear guidelines on what to teach. One participant referred to this as: "the textbook was all in English and the level of English was too advanced for their [students'] level, so what we would do was sit down and plan just the really basic things".

(h) School and host teachers: only one volunteer reported having received help and support from her host teacher, the others worked with teachers who were overloaded with work, very busy, traditional, laid back, or inexperienced. Participants reported that teachers were nice to them but they didn't get much help with lesson planning or didn't get any type of feedback or advice. Other host teachers didn't communicate with volunteers so the English speaker had no clue what the host teacher was doing or teaching in class. In relation to language, some host teachers did take advantage of the presence of the native speaker and practiced their English while others used only Spanish once they knew the volunteer could speak it.

(i) Home stay: traveling and being immersed in another culture was one of the main reasons for enrolling in this volunteer program. In general, volunteers had a good time with their host families but there were some cultural aspects that made their stay more complex. One volunteer reported she felt judged by her host family from the south of Chile who was very traditional and narrow minded. Compared to families in the U.S. where some of their children leave their homes at 18, Chilean families live with their children until they graduate and find a job, or simply when they get married. Overprotection was an issue for one volunteer. He had to follow the rules in the house, phone when he was late, and report to his host parents when he arrived. Even though he thought it was hard to get used to this the first months, he finally understood it was because the family cared about him. Other minor challenges reported were the different eating habits, getting

used to sharing one bathroom with the whole family, and being placed with a family who smoke all day.

Summarizing, volunteers in Chile experienced challenges when teaching English similarly to what was described in the review of the literature. Kenning (2008) refers to the challenges volunteers encounter in rural places like Cambodia. She mentions that teachers face problems such as poor lighting and poor sound proofing, classrooms with few facilities and there's a lack of teaching resources. Students' exposure to the written language is mainly given by the teacher and the course book, whereas exposure to spoken language is limited to teacher talk. In 2001, Myers recounted the experiences of returned Peace Corps volunteer teachers and how this experience influenced the volunteers' current practices in the classroom. She claims that "many educational environments for Peace Corps volunteers involve adapting to a new culture, new location, different disciplinary practices, harsh climate, and the ability to cope with a lack of resources, including everything from electricity to textbooks, chalkboards, desks, writing utensils, and other tools and materials for learning" (p.10).

General Experiences

Volunteer teaching is also hands-on work which made teachers reflect on other aspects of the experience that go beyond teaching a foreign language. Participants made comments on the following points as well: *comments about learning a second language; comments about how their own personality has changed through the experience; comments about the nature of the National Volunteer Centre Program; and formal and informal teaching training experiences.*

Comments about learning a second language: previous language learning experiences influence the way volunteers view second language learning. The formal theoretical aspects of learning

French and Spanish in their countries of origin were practiced by two volunteers even if they had it very clear in mind that speaking was the main aim of the program. Other volunteers favored the use of playful activities such as games and songs.

Comments about how their own personality has changed through the experience: teaching abroad is also a self-maturing learning experience. Two volunteers declared to have learnt about themselves more specifically on their level of tolerance.

"I learned I had a bad temper and normally don't want to yell but there were a few instances where controlling the class was very difficult ... it got to a point where I just couldn't hold my anger anymore. I yelled at all of them and I kicked them all out of the classroom".

"They sat down, someone graffitied on my board game. He just put a tag on my board game so I lost my temper then, really badly. I threw a chair at the wall, and so that was a really low point of my eight months, and I apologized to everyone and to the boy".

Comments about the delivery of the NVC program: during the data collection process volunteers declared to have joined this program in order to improve their Spanish, for personal growth, to experience and learn a different culture, among many others. Some novice teachers said the program fitted their schedules or it offered them a good chance to explore teaching. After the teaching experience, volunteer participants referred to the program as a "good opportunity for Chilean students to meet English native speakers"; as satisfactory and "good opportunity to teach with little qualifications"; and as something worth doing because of the "cultural exchange and the students". Some suggestions were given to improve the delivery of the program, such as extending its length because many classes were cancelled for two weeks in winter and during the 2010 World Cup; have more direct contact with the regional coordinator and have the orientation

week done in the regions where they have to teach; have more former volunteers leading the orientation week so as to have more straight forward information about teaching and the schools; and having more training on planning lessons.

Formal and Informal teaching training experiences: after this teaching experience some volunteers compared and realized that being a sports coach, working in a camp or doing community service is completely different from teaching a language so they thought their previous teaching experiences weren't so relevant to the purpose of the NVC program. In relation to the training week in Chile, some volunteers thought it was superfluous as the topics studied do not apply to all schools which receive volunteer teachers. On the other hand, two teachers thought the training was helpful and they got lots of good tips, good material, a good theoretical base, and good guidelines on classroom management and planning. With regard to informal training, participants said they found it interesting to have former volunteers giving testimonials or it was useful to them to meet some Chilean trainee teachers doing their practicum in the schools where they worked. From "practicantes" they learned by observing them, how they managed students, and acknowledged they had a better and solid theoretical base en EFL.

Volunteering Experience

If we pool the 123 responded questionnaires of volunteers before starting in teaching experience and the 8 interviews done after the teaching process, the following main nineteen ranked reasons were listed in Table 3:

Table 3. Reasons for volunteering

Motives for volunteering gathered through the questionnaires and interviews
To learn about the culture (12%) To enhance my career (11%) To experience teaching (11%) To learn and improve Spanish (10%) The program was good (8%) Wanted to visit Chile (8%) Had previous references (6%) To help others (6%) To travel (5%) For personal growth (5%) To experience living abroad (4%) It's an enriching experience (4%) To have a good time (4%) To learn about myself (3%) No clear motivation (2%)

Novice teachers' values to teach English abroad can be classified as follows:

Table 4. Value for volunteering in Chile

Value	Enhancement	Social	Career	Understanding
To help others It's an enriching experience	To learn about another culture To learn Spanish	The program was good To visit Chile To travel To live abroad To have a good time	To enhance my career To experience teaching	Had previous references To learn about myself For personal growth

In Table 4, it can be seen that the main value given by novice teachers to volunteer in Chile is related to the social domain. Later to understanding, and value, enhancement and career present the same frequency.

So as to have a clear view of the main experiences presented in this study, I decided to organize the data in Table 5 in order to summarize the most prominent experiences of volunteer English teachers in Chile (see Appendix L).

The open-ended questionnaires and the one-on-one interviews were applied to volunteers in Chile in order to obtain demographic data and to ascertain information from their voices about their expectations of schools, of what to teach, and of what anticipated problems they would live.

The most salient teaching experiences teachers lived were classified as: *language learning experiences, language teaching experiences, challenges, and general experiences*. Finally, it was possible to obtain the volunteers' motives to embark on this teaching experience and to ascertain the value they give to teaching on a volunteer basis in Chile.

Discussion

The main purpose of this qualitative research was to describe the English teaching experiences of a group of novice volunteer teachers in Chile and how these experiences shape their understanding of teaching. Two research questions were formulated: *How does a group of English speaking volunteers experience teaching English in a foreign country? How do these experiences shape their understanding of English teaching?*

A case study approach was done and an open-ended questionnaire and one-on-one interviews were used as data collection instruments (Creswell, 2007). I adopted a socio-constructivist and experiencing lens (Glassman, 2001; Creswell, 2007; Dewey, 1938) and considered the literature on volunteering and ELT. The notion of experience was proved. Volunteer teaching has been included by governments around the world as part of their English teaching programs with the main aim of giving their language learners the chance to experience living with a native speaker. On the other hand, thousands of volunteers pursue teaching abroad for various reasons, such as learning a second language, learning about a new culture,

experiencing teaching, etc. Given this framework I designed the data collection instruments and looked for categories in the data that would respond to my research questions.

Uncovering Expectations

First, I will refer to teachers' expectations and how these expectations were confirmed, modified, or unfulfilled during the teaching process. Initially, due to their lack of knowledge of the Chilean context and the educational system, volunteers who came to Chile had prior expectations about schools, about what to teach, and about the challenges they expected to find.

In relation to the *schools in Chile*, they expected to find welcoming and friendly people, students eager to learn, very few resources at school, students with very limited knowledge of EFL and low motivation to learn the language, large classes, and lack of organization and discipline problems. After the teaching experience this set of expectations were confirmed, unfulfilled, or modified.

Confirmed expectations: Most teachers complained of unmotivated students who misbehaved in class and made them feel frustrated. They referred to the lack of real need to use the language in their social context. Also the students' limited knowledge of English was an issue. Interaction was very low and volunteers who didn't speak Spanish faced language barriers to communicate with learners. Class size was also noted. Volunteers tended to compare the number of students per classroom in North America with the average number of students in Chilean classrooms. This made them feel unable to control discipline. Teachers were also able to verify their expectations about discipline problems. Some of them didn't even imagine the situation was that turbulent. Chilean students tended to interrupt the teachers, stand up with no reason, yell, use mobile phones, and talk a lot.

Modified expectations: The only modified expectation is related to resources. Just one volunteer said he wasn't able to use the printer and didn't at times have electricity. The other participants made use of the resources available in the schools and regularly used internet to download teaching material.

Unfulfilled expectations: Finding students eager to learn or motivated students was denied by one volunteer who reported to have worked with students interested to learn. She recognized though that these were primary school students. Pre-teens and teenagers were arduous to work with.

With reference to the volunteers' expectations about *what to teach* in English, the following content was mentioned: listening and speaking activities, conversational skills, basic vocabulary, games and engaging activities, songs, cultural teaching, grammar, and basic and everyday English. Most of their expectations were confirmed.

Confirmed expectations: Most of the language forms and activities teachers taught were mainly focused on developing students' ability to communicate. This involved teachers using songs and games to develop comprehension and generate conversation.

Modified expectations: even though teachers did not teach grammar because it was a requirement of the program, a couple of volunteers applied traditional verb conjugation and contrastive analysis based on the way they learnt French and Spanish at school. Thus, previous language learning experiences can influence the method used for teaching a second language

Unfulfilled expectations: As the NVC teaching program gives grammar a secondary role, volunteers avoided grammatical teaching because they were not asked to focus on grammar.

They realized they weren't familiar with certain formal aspects of the language, or simply they were not "grammar persons".

The *challenges* faced during the teaching experience were one of the most salient issues. Before teaching, volunteers said they expected to find: discipline, misbehavior, classroom management, language barriers, lack of motivation, problems with communication, minimal level of English, maintaining students' interest and attention, resistance to learning, troubles with lesson planning, and resistance to authority.

Confirmed expectations: Nine out of the eleven points mentioned were confirmed. Even though former volunteers informed novice teachers about these possible problems during the orientation week, experiencing them inside the classroom was different. Of all these challenges, the teachers' lack of lesson planning experience was most troublesome. Volunteers felt they spent a lot of time planning lessons to feel safe, they felt stressed out, and considered it to be one of the most difficult aspects of being a teacher. The lack of feedback given by the host teachers made some volunteers feel totally lost with planning.

Modified expectations: More than finding resistance to learning and to authority, volunteers were shocked by the lack of interest in learning English.

In this study it was possible to see how volunteers confirmed, modified, or unfulfilled the expectations they had before teaching. As previously mentioned, the intent of this study was to examine how a group of English speaking novice teachers described their experiences in a foreign country and how these experiences shaped their understanding of teaching.

Understanding of Teaching

Teaching EFL differs from teaching ESL mainly due to the context and the teaching and learning language situation. Foreign language learners are less motivated to study the target language and learn it in formal classroom environments which do not provide natural opportunities for interaction (Block, 2003; Brown, 2007; Harmer, 2007; Krashen, 1988; Littlewood, 2006; Ellis, 2008; Dornyei, 2007). After analyzing the transcripts and the emerging themes, I was able to notice that volunteers changed their attitudes towards teaching. Having little or no experience in English language teaching made volunteers modify their attitudes towards being a teacher of a foreign language. Novice teachers' understanding of teaching was shaped in the following way:

- Their early belief that the teaching experience would be "fun and challenging" changed afterwards. Volunteers realized that teaching can be difficult when students are not willing to learn a language because they don't find it useful. They even wondered if learning really takes place when students prefer to do something else.
- In relation to being a teacher, one volunteer said she respected this profession more after working as a teacher: "teaching is challenging but it's tiring". A participant made reference to how energetic and active teachers need to be to keep the attention of the students up.
- The act of teaching requires teachers to be attentive. As one volunteer said, "it's a judgmental profession where the teacher constantly makes decisions based on what is happening in the classroom". To teach, passion and a real desire to teach are needed.

- Concerning volunteers' mother tongue, they thought they knew it well. One participant recognized he didn't know English and that the best way to learn a language is by teaching it.
- Some novice teachers doubted whether learning really takes place if language is learnt in a classroom with a textbook and is disconnected from communication.
- Lesson planning was arduous for teachers because of their lack of experience but when done it helped them feel more prepared and classes didn't go flat.

Teaching Experiences

Deutchman (1966), Burnley (1997), and Myers (2001), examined Peace Corps volunteers' teaching experiences abroad as a cultural challenge. Kenning (2009) reports the difficulties volunteers have in rural contexts due to lack of basic facilities and discusses how volunteer teachers' work can be made beneficial for the teachers themselves and the students. Volunteers enrolled to teach for the JET program also provide their testimonials in the JET program newsletter (2010, 2011, 2012). They make reference to cultural differences, cultural heritage, to different extracurricular activities they participated in, such as joining drama club, participating in a marathon, learning to give speeches, among others.

My research provides similar teaching experiences and challenges. Some of these are common with what has been reported by Deutchman (1966) and Burnley (1997): volunteers' lack of experience to deal with classroom management and dealing with traditional teaching instruction at schools. Similarly, as mentioned by Kenning (2009), volunteers in Chile also referred to the difficulties of teaching when schools lack materials or adequate facilities. However, through my case study I can contribute to the existing literature by providing English language teaching experiences in a South American monolingual context.

In this research volunteers voiced varied types of experiences on language teaching, language learning, and challenges in teaching a foreign language. Moreover, during the interviews I was able to perceive how novice teachers recalled their experiences and I could notice how their understanding about teaching EFL evolved after teaching in public schools. It was very interesting to see how someone without or very little teaching instruction and experience could finally talk about teaching his/her own mother tongue, about language activities, and even about methodological strategies.

Even though there are limited studies which blend volunteering and language teaching the relevance of this work lies in that it gives information about the Chilean context, in which no research has been done on volunteer teaching and adds more in depth information about teaching on a volunteer basis.

In this chapter volunteers' previous expectations about the experience were described and it was possible to determine if they were confirmed, modified or unfulfilled, also the teachers' experiences and understanding of teaching was established from what they voiced during the interviews.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the knowledge base regarding teaching English on a volunteer basis. The findings of this study offer insights into how volunteer teachers experience and understand teaching in a monolingual country. Few studies connect the areas of volunteerism and English language teaching. Studies in the field mainly refer to the challenges of teaching in traditional educational contexts or in poor rural areas where the lack of facilities and materials force volunteers to adapt to hard working conditions (JET program testimonials, 2012, Kenning, 2009; Burnley, 1997; Deutchman, 1966).

During the research process I also faced some challenges. There are two important limitations of this study. Firstly, I am a novice researcher. This made me think and re think whether I was following the right path. Secondly, I had limited sources of information as in the data collection process I just had one opportunity to interview volunteers because they flew back to their home countries the day after the interviews.

Concerning the research questions that guided this study: *How does a group of English speaking volunteers experience teaching English in a foreign country? How do these experiences shape their understanding of English teaching?* They were answered in the following way:

How does a group of English speaking volunteers experience teaching English in a foreign country?

Novice teachers voiced different types of experiences when teaching English in Chile. These experiences were classified under these headings: *language teaching experiences* which

referred to teaching strategies, language activities, the nature of language teaching, language teaching material, and to students learning a foreign language; *language learning experiences* related to the volunteers' own process of learning Spanish in Chile and to the process of teaching their mother tongue; *challenges* faced during the teaching experience such as classroom management and discipline, language barriers, learner's level of language and motivation, lesson planning, teaching English, being a teacher, materials, the school and host teachers, and home stay; *general experiences* which refer to their previous language learning experiences used when teaching English in public schools, to how their personalities changed after working as teachers, to the nature of the National Volunteer Centre Program, to their formal and non-formal previous teaching training experiences and their relevance to teaching English abroad, and to general comments about the volunteering experience; *volunteering experiences* related to the value volunteers assign to the act of teaching abroad.

How do these experiences shape their understanding of English teaching?

Volunteers' teaching experiences go hand in hand with how they changed their perception of teaching their mother tongue. Novice teachers with almost no teaching experience in a foreign country were able to recall the teaching event and realize teaching English is not what they thought it would be. They voiced they now respect the teachers' work, that teaching is not an easy task, the importance of motivation to learn a language, and how challenging and tiring it is.

Recommendations

During the interviews, I asked volunteers to share recommendations for future volunteer teachers. They thought it was a tough question but it made them reflect on the whole teaching

process. How would they recommend something to someone without going through a reflective process on their teaching experience? This information was not included in the data analysis process as it was peripheral information not directly related to their teaching experiences. From her experience teaching English in Cambodia, Kenning (2009) provides suggestions to future volunteers. She recommends teachers to bring personal material (photos), use MP3 recordings, make English teaching more meaningful to student, etc. I thought it was worth mentioning what the interviewed novice teachers suggested future volunteers working in Chile.

Participant one suggested:

“Take it slowly. Don’t overwhelm students with trying to talk to them more than they can understand, because that undermines their confidence. Try to use a lot of cultural material which is an advantage in English because there’s already so much American culture exported but be cautious about what one is showing the students because there’s a lot of mainstream North American culture which is awful!. Try to focus more in genuine good content”.

Participant two said:

“I wouldn’t play tough with the students, like: I’m smarter than you and then I wouldn’t be the too sensitive thing, like too nice”.

Participant three stated:

“I’d recommend being as open minded as possible with the host family. The same principle at school because any school you’re at a new job. You can’t be entirely picky with whoever your boss is”. Have a good time and be willing to be laughed at because students always laughed at

my pronunciation of their names but if that made you upset then this isn't a good program for you cause you're never happy. Be open with you either".

Participant four mentioned:

"You need to be ready to be flexible". If you just act like you are here and everything is going to work as you wanted it to work, you don't have a very good sense of what you're getting into. The program might recommend you wanna bring some things. I wish I have had stuff to be more engaging, more posters of my own, comics, newspapers, magazines because it also costs a lot to print here. So I wish I had brought more materials because I think visuals are really important and students would like that more".

Participant five suggested:

"Have an open mind and be ready for anything. To know that you're gonna be discouraged at times but to realize, to be committed to this program. To really believe in the fact that English opens doors. I would also recommend it to people who want to be teachers. Be flexible, everything in Chile is, you're gonna get to school some days and there's gonna be no power and you can't teach the lesson you prepared ...".

Participant six stated:

"If I'd recommend, I'd say that you have to value teaching, to do the program at some point. I think some volunteers came, not really, thinking that this is just an eight month time off. You have to be ready to teach creatively with patience".

Participant 7 said:

“I would recommend just being really flexible getting involved with the family, getting involved in the activities. In term of the teaching, I’d say that you need to have good classroom management skills or learn very quickly how to manage a class, and just overall flexibility. And don’t get your expectations too high because you might be disappointed”.

Participant eight suggested:

“The best way to learn a language is to teach it but also no matter how stressful the situation, it’s best to just remain calm”.

This study provides local data about the Chilean context where volunteers worked in public schools under the National Volunteer Centre Program. Teachers talked about the program in the interviews. Their opinions served as recommendations for the officials in charge of running it. Some of these suggestions are:

- Improve the delivery of the program by offering longer teaching terms. Some schools changed their schedules or cancelled classes without informing teachers so they taught for a few weeks only.
- Having more contact with the regional coordinators of the NVC program was desirable.
- The orientation week should take place in the regions. In that way what is said during the training course in Santiago would be more related to the schools' reality outside the capital city.
- Have more former volunteers participating in the orientation week so as to get more straight forward and realistic information from their testimonials.

- The training they received about lesson planning was "a joke". Volunteers wished they received more sessions devoted to that.
- Volunteers should be advised to bring authentic material from their home countries before arriving in Chile. Comics, newspapers, maps, magazines, etc. would be much appreciated in the schools.

After going through the research process, the interaction with novice teachers, and my own twenty year personal experience teaching English in Chile, I would like to make some recommendations of my own. Firstly, to future volunteers who visit Chile, I would tell them to embark on teaching if that is their main motif; to find out about teaching English as a foreign language before working as teachers as the teacher training received from the Ministry of Education may not be enough to handle teaching situations, i.e. to research about approaches, methods, and activities to teach a language, and also about lesson planning and classroom management. It would be important for them to find out before travelling about the educational situation in the country, the importance given to English language, the characteristics of Chilean students, teachers, and schools in the different regions. Being familiar with the objectives behind the volunteer teaching program created by the NVC would help them to be aware of what is expected from them. For example, volunteer teaching programs look for teachers who teach foreign students to speak, to understand spoken language, to interact, to develop conversational skills, among others. So if the volunteer uses the students' mother tongue to instruct English, the exposure to real language coming from a native speaker will be less effective. Finally, I would tell them not to expect much in terms of classroom discipline. Chilean public schools have almost forty students in average in the classrooms so managing large groups is a challenge. For this, seek for help at the schools by finding out about the discipline policies and by asking key people such as the host teacher, inspectors, and administrative staff.

Secondly, I would recommend governmental organizations which offer volunteer teaching work to provide novice teachers with more extensive orientation weeks aiming at helping volunteers to gain confidence in planning lessons, to look for activities that develop language through learning significantly, to develop their own teaching materials, and to be familiar with diverse strategies to teach the target language. It would be paramount that institutions train their host teachers to work with volunteers or select teachers willing to accept a volunteer in their classrooms. This training would allow experienced teachers at schools to support the volunteers by providing them with recommendations, by being a role model of teaching a foreign language, by teaching them to plan lessons, by being approachable and motivating to teach. Lastly, institutions should be explicit about what volunteer teachers could come up with at schools by training them about the specific contexts where they will be placed.

Implications

After studying the literature in the field and going through the research process, I present some theoretical and pedagogical implications. For future research, this study could be expanded by studying volunteering teaching from different perspectives. For example, it would be interesting to study the impact volunteer teachers have on foreign language learners' motivation to learn a second language, to determine if second language proficiency improves with volunteer teaching, to study in depth the expectations volunteer teachers have before teaching, what happens after teaching, and how these expectations are modified, confirmed, or unfulfilled based on gender, or to establish the impact volunteers have in the school community. Pedagogically, the results of this research have helped me to state that teaching a foreign language requires some previous formal teaching training. This requirement would reduce the number of acceptable volunteers because few of them are teachers but coaching and working in summer camps do not

offer enough training to deal with what goes on inside the language classroom (teach the language, manage a class, provide productive language activities, etc.). Teaching a language would be easier if volunteers had more previous background information about the countries and the school contexts where they decide to teach. Organizations offering EFL training tend to provide general teaching strategies and information which does not always coincide with the reality lived in different regions in one same country. Lesson planning is an essential part of teaching a language. Volunteers should be given more time to learn how to plan lessons to make more use of their potential for teaching. Finally, it seems that anyone can be a teacher but can any teacher be effective? Effectiveness of volunteer teaching has to be evaluated so as to make the volunteer teaching experience an enriching one, for the volunteers themselves, for foreign students, and foreign teachers.

By examining this teaching trend through and by studying in depth the English teaching experiences of volunteer teachers in Chile, we can better understand their feelings and expectations when working in schools abroad, the difficulties of teaching one's mother tongue, the challenges of working immersed in another culture, and the experience of being a volunteer as well as an educator. With this understanding, future volunteers can have more realistic information and a clearer idea of what teaching is like in a foreign country; organizations dedicated to enroll volunteer teachers can add new elements about teaching a second or foreign language in their tutoring manuals and orientation training sessions; host teachers in foreign schools can become culturally aware and be more prepared to receive a volunteer teacher; foreign language students can be informed of the role of volunteers in their school communities; host families can also receive more information of what it is like to receive an English speaker; and finally, governmental institutions which promote the incorporation of native English

speakers in their educational system can better their volunteering programs. Volunteers dedicate part of their lives and free time working in schools, so a study like this can offer them concrete help.

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Appendix A: Email correspondence 1

Sent: Sat, 31 Mar 2012 19:46:39 +0100

Subject: number of volunteer teachers

Hi

I'm an off campus Ottawa U grad student doing a research on English volunteer teachers' experiences. I was wondering if you keep track of the number of volunteer teachers each year travel to foreign countries to teach English. Do you have a number?

I'd really appreciate your help.

Many thanks,

Santiago Chile

Dear,

Thank you for your email. We sent approximately 2,000 involved with teaching English although a lot of the others were also involved informally in teaching English with families they stayed with.

I hope this helps.

Regards,

Recruitment Director

Appendix B: Email correspondence 2

Dear Sir,

I'm an off campus masters student from the University of Ottawa carrying out a research on the experiences volunteer native English speakers have when teaching English abroad, in this case in Chile.

The lit review that backs up my study is related to volunteerism and ESL/ EFL. I'm using some of your work for the ESL chapter. I haven't been able to find much information and many papers written which blend these two fields. I came across Kenning (2009) and Deutchman (1966) and used them in my lit review..

I was wondering if you have heard of any studies or any one researching these two areas.

I'd really appreciate your response.

Many thanks, muchas gracias.

Santiago Chile

Dear

I am sorry but I really don't know any literature on volunteer teacher of this kind.

Appendix C: Email correspondence 3

Dear Sir

I'm a n off campus grad student from the University of Ottawa doing a masters research on the experiences English speaking volunteer teachers have when teaching English in a foreign country like Chile. I've used your work on volunteerism as part of my lit review. I was wondering if you have heard of any studies ... or any person researching these two areas: English language teaching on a volunteer basis.

I'd really appreciate your comments.

Thanks a lot.

G,

Unfortunately, I know of no such research off the top of my head. I did a quick search, and probably like you, I didn't find much out there. As you write you might consider broadening your thoughts on what constitutes a English teaching volunteer. They are, in essence, volunteering for an educational organization. What you might be able to do is draw on the literature of volunteering in educational settings in general, and use that literature to form your theories about how your specific context. Then once you do your research you can see how your own results match those of the broader educational volunteering literature. Any similarities or contrasts you find would be of use to the literature.

Good luck with your research. It sounds like a good topic and one worth exploring.

Best,
M. M

Appendix D: Email correspondance 4

Dear Sir,

I'm an off campus grad student from the University of Ottawa doing a masters research on the experiences English speaking volunteer teachers have when teaching English in a foreign country like Chile. I've used your work on volunteerism as part of my lit review. I was wondering if you have heard of any studies ... or any person researching these two areas: Englishlanguage teaching on a volunteer basis.

I'd really appreciate your comments.

Thanks a lot.

I do not think you will find a study with such a narrow topic.
J.W.

Appendix E: Email Request to Access MINEDUC Volunteer Teachers

To: Coordinator National Volunteer Centre

English Opens Doors Program

Chilean Ministry of Education

Dear Mrs.:

I would like to ask for permission to conduct a graduate level research with the volunteer teacher students who will go to Chile under the National Volunteer Centre Program from the Chilean Ministry of Education.

I am an EFL teacher from Chile and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Arts in Second Language Learning at the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa.

This study will help me gain insights into how volunteer teachers experience the teaching of English in a foreign country. My particular focus in this study is to investigate and describe how native English speakers experience English teaching abroad and go through this type of event.

I request for permission to expose volunteer teachers to two means of data collection instruments: an open-ended questionnaire that will be given during the NVC orientation week and a one-on-one interview done to interested participants after they finish the teaching process. The interview date will be agreed between the interviewee and the interviewer. Confidentiality will be always kept and participants can withdraw off at any moment. No names or any type of personal information will be given in this study. Each participant will be given a number to respect their identities.

It is important to consider that your official written approval is required before the Research Ethics Board from the University of Ottawa approves this study.

Any questions you may have, please do not hesitate to contact me via phone or email.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

MA in Second Language Education (c)

Faculty of Education

University of Ottawa

Appendix F: Official Written Approval from MINEDUC



Appendix G: Open-ended Questionnaire Given during Orientation Week.

VOLUNTEER TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

Participant number: _____ Date: _____

Demographic information

Career: _____ / Country: _____

 Tick the answer that best represents you

Age range:

- 18 - 21
- 22 – 25
- 26 – 29
- 30 – 33
- 34 – 37

Sex:

- Male
- Female

Previous teaching English experience:

- No experience
- Less than a year
- 1 year
- Between 2 and 3 years
- Between 3 and 4 years
- More than 5 years

Please, answer these questions

What is your professional background?

What is your first language?

Do you speak any other language(s)? Which one(s)?

What other teaching experiences have you had? List them.

Why have you decided to do volunteer English teaching under this program?

What do you know about the educational system of the country you will be teaching in?

What do you expect to find there?

What do you expect to teach in English and how do think you will teach the language?

What challenges do you expect to find?

What do you hope to gain after this teaching experience?

Thanks very much for your time!

Appendix H: Interview Prompt Protocol

VOLUNTEER TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

Interview prompt protocol

Type of interview: One-on-one interview

Date: _____ Place: _____ Time: _____

Interviewer: _____ Interviewee n: _____

Instructions for interviewer:

- Ask the participant about the city where he/she volunteered as an English teacher in Chile as an ice-breaker.
- Tell him/her you will be asking some questions about this event.
- Tell him/her the answers will be recorded unless he/she does not want to.

Demographic information:

City where volunteer taught: _____ Grades taught: _____

Questions:

1. Why did you enter this volunteer teaching program?
2. What teaching background do you have? How did it influence your volunteer teaching experience?
3. What were your expectations before going? Did your expectations change or remain the same once you were there? How?
4. What was significant in this teaching experience?
5. How different was the teaching experience overseas from what you have lived as a student or as a language teacher in your country?
6. What was English teaching like?
7. What teaching strategies did you use? How effective were they?
8. What kinds of challenges did you encounter and how did you work them out?
9. Would participate in another volunteer activity of this type?
10. What did you learn from this experience?
11. What would you recommend future volunteer teachers who want to experience teaching abroad?

Thank you very much!

COMMENTS:

Appendix I: Invitation Email sent to NVC Coordinator

Dear Coordinator:

This research is part of the requirements for obtaining the degree of MA in Second Language Education from the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa.

This study will help me gain insights into how volunteer teachers experience the teaching of English in a foreign country. My particular focus in this study is to investigate and describe how native English speakers experience English teaching abroad and how they go through this type of event.

The first data collection stage implies responding an open-ended questionnaire which will be given during the orientation week in Santiago. This questionnaire will not take participants more than 20 minutes. This questionnaire will be sent to you beforehand.

The second stage implies participating either in one-on-one interview after they end up teaching in schools. I'd appreciate it if you can help me send an invitation, through your data base, to volunteers to be interviewed a few weeks before they finish working in schools. The dates for the interview will be agreed between the volunteers and me at their own convenience. It also won't take you more than one hour of their time.

Thanks very much.

Best,

MA graduate student

University of Ottawa

Faculty of Education

Appendix J: Letter of Consent and Informed Consent

Researcher:

G.R.

Master of Arts in Second Language Education.

Faculty of Education.

University of Ottawa.

Description of Project

I am a graduate student at the University of Ottawa in the Faculty of Education. I am currently enrolled in a MA in Second Language Education and am conducting a research as part of the requirements to obtain my degree.

This study will help me gain insights into how volunteer teachers experience the teaching of English in a foreign country. My particular focus in this study is to investigate and describe how English native speakers experience English teaching abroad. I am specifically interested in how volunteers go through this type of event.

Participants in this study include students such as yourself. If you agree to participate in this project you will be given an open ended questionnaire during the orientation week to provide some demographic information and write about your previous teaching experience before teaching abroad and you will be interviewed face to face after you finish the process. A place and/or date for the interviews will be agreed at your convenience. The questionnaire will take 20 minutes and the interviews will take less than an hour.

Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. This means that even though you agree initially to the interview, you can withdraw from the interview at any point. You may ask questions of the researcher at any time and you may refuse to answer any of the questions without any negative consequences.

Your participation in this research is greatly appreciated, and it is meant to be an interesting experience. The results of this study will be presented in the final thesis . Your identity will remain confidential and a number will be used and no identifying information will be provided. All data will be destroyed after 5 years.

There are two copies of the consent form one of which you may keep. Any information requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project can be addressed to the Protocol Officer of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa.

If you are interested in participating please read and sign the consent form on the following page.

Informed Consent

I _____ have read the letter describing the research. I understand the purpose of the study and what is required of me, and I agree to participate. I have been assured that my participation is voluntary and that my identity will remain confidential. I agree to participate, and I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence.

I am aware that there are two copies of this consent form, one of which I my keep.

I am aware that any concerns about the ethical conduct of this project may be addressed to the Protocol Officer of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor's signature: _____ Date: _____

Informed Consent

I _____ have read the letter describing the research. I understand the purpose of the study and what is required of me, and I agree to participate. I have been assured that my participation is voluntary and that my identity will remain confidential. I agree to participate, and I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence.

I am aware that there are two copies of this consent form, one of which I my keep.

I am aware that any concerns about the ethical conduct of this project may be addressed to the Protocol Officer of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix K: Checklist Used in Interviews

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

	Reasons to enter this volunteer teaching program
	Teaching background. Influence your volunteer teaching experience
	Expectations before teaching. Changed? Confirmed?
	Any significant teaching experience
	Difference between teaching experience overseas from experience as a student or as a language teacher in your country
	English teaching like in Chile
	Teaching strategies used. Effective?
	Challenges encountered. Worked them out?
	Participate in another volunteer activity?
	Learnt from this experience
	Recommendations to future volunteer teachers

Appendix L: Summary of salient volunteer English teaching experiences abroad

Table 5. Salient volunteer English teaching experiences

Language learning	Language teaching	Challenges	General experiences	Volunteering
<p>Own process of learning a second language: value immersion in a Spanish speaking context; comprehension skills and fluency improved; feel good factor.</p> <p>Teaching another language: English teaching is boring unless connected to the act of communicating and doing things with the language; English is taught formally and traditionally in Chilean classrooms</p>	<p>Teaching strategies: imitated SL learning at school (contrastive analysis and background knowledge); from the NVC manual: CLT approach.</p> <p>Language activities: interaction in pairs or groups, targeted English pronunciation, development of conversational skills and listening comprehension.</p> <p>Nature of language: SLL is not about learning grammar; vocabulary and pronunciation are important.</p> <p>Teaching material: their use depends on the activity; online material, realia, and posters were used.</p> <p>Students and language learning: had difficulties with speed of spoken English, not fluent, with very basic level.</p>	<p>Classroom management & discipline: class size; unprepared teacher volunteers; energetic, rowdy, unmotivated disrespectful learners who defied authority; used their cell phones and texted in class; hardly ever raised their hands to take turns; suddenly interrupted the class; walked around the classroom; and yelled.</p> <p>Language barrier: volunteers' lack or low proficiency in SS' mother tongue impacted communication or teaching; SS misbehaved.</p> <p>SS' language level and motivation: low interaction, shyness; zero or very basic level of English; unmotivated students to learn the TL.</p> <p>Lesson planning: volunteers' lack of experience; tiring, stressing experience; some spent a lot of time planning, some others didn't; flat classes due to lack of planning.</p>	<p>Comments about learning a SL: previous language learning experiences influence the way volunteers view SLL; use of playful activities such as games and songs make LL more engaging.</p> <p>Nature of the NVC program: programme fitted their schedules or because it offered them a good chance to explore teaching; good opportunity for Chilean students to meet English native speakers.</p> <p>Suggestions: extend the length of the programme, have more direct contact with the regional coordinator; have the orientation week done in the assigned regions; have more former volunteers leading the orientation week; have more training on planning lessons.</p> <p>Personality changes perceived with the experience: self-learning experience;</p>	<p>Value: to help others; It's an enriching experience.</p> <p>Enhancement: to learn about another culture; to learn Spanish.</p> <p>Social: the program was good; to visit Chile; to travel; to live abroad; to have a good time.</p> <p>Career: to enhance my career; to experience teaching.</p> <p>Understanding: had previous references; to learn about myself; for personal growth.</p>

Language learning	Language teaching	Challenges	General experiences	Volunteering
		<p>Teaching English: fun challenge, lack of knowledge of L1.</p> <p>Being a teacher: not easy; good balance needed; unclear teacher role; need to be energetic and active.</p> <p>Teaching materials: lack of facilities; not helpful material from MINEDUC.</p> <p>School host teachers: provided little help with lesson planning or didn't give any type of feedback or advice; overloaded with work; very busy; traditional; laid back; or inexperienced.</p> <p>Home stay: traditional and narrow minded host family; overprotected; different eating habits</p>	<p>learnt about their personalities and their own level of tolerance.</p> <p>Formal & informal teacher training experiences: irrelevant informal teaching experiences for the purpose of the NVC programme; formal training helpful; provided lots of good tips and good material; a good theoretical base; and good guides on classroom management and planning; useless for some.</p>	